



“Clear Policy Direction on Maritime Expansion and Inland Waterways Outlined in President’s Address”: Sarbananda Sonowal

“Focused Investment in Ports & Logistics Reflect a Long-Term policy vision to make India a Global Maritime Hub”: Sonowal

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New Delhi, 28 January, 2026: Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) Sarbananda Sonowal termed the President’s address to Parliament as visionary which has reinforced the government’s long-term policy commitment to strengthening India’s maritime sector, inland waterways and blue economy, describing it as a clear affirmation of the national strategy to build globally competitive logistics and shipping capabilities.

“The Hon’ble President’s address has clearly reaffirmed the government’s unwavering commitment to strengthening India’s maritime sector, inland waterways and blue economy. The expansion of national waterways, major shipping reforms and focused investment in ports and logistics reflect a long-term policy vision to make India a global maritime hub while driving sustainable growth, employment generation and regional development,” **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) Sarbananda Sonowal affirmed.**

Earlier, the President of India, Droupadi Murmu underscored the government’s renewed focus on strengthening India’s maritime sector, inland waterways and blue economy, saying the expansion of national waterways and major policy reforms are reshaping logistics, trade and coastal livelihoods. In her address to a joint sitting of Parliament at the start of the Budget Session, Murmu said India has made significant progress in developing inland water transport infrastructure over the past decade.

“My government has also undertaken several steps for the development of inland waterways. Earlier, India had only five national waterways, which have now crossed the mark of 100,” the **President** said. She said the expansion has helped states in eastern India — including Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal and Bihar — emerge as logistics hubs, easing pressure on road and rail networks while lowering transportation costs.

President Murmu also highlighted the growing contribution of cruise tourism to regional economies. “Cruise tourism is leading to an increase in tourism in the areas near rivers and coasts, thereby strengthening the local economies,” she said.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi said the President’s address reflected the government’s development priorities and future policy direction. “The Budget Session of Parliament commenced today with Rashtrapati Ji’s inspiring address to both Houses. In our parliamentary traditions, this address has a special

importance, as it spells out the policy direction and collective resolve that will guide our nation's developmental journey in the coming months," **PM Modi** shared his reaction on social media. He added that the address reflected India's recent development trajectory while outlining a roadmap for the future.

The President also drew attention to the government's efforts to strengthen the blue economy and expand livelihood opportunities linked to agriculture and allied sectors. "Today, along with foodgrain production, farmers are also being connected to livestock, fisheries and beekeeping as new avenues of economic progress," President said. She said new policies have been framed to extend benefits of the Exclusive Economic Zone to fishermen living along the coastline and to enable utilisation of resources in the high seas.

Highlighting structural challenges in the shipping sector, Murmu said India had lost much of its maritime dominance after decades of neglect following colonisation. "Today, 95% of India's trade is carried on foreign ships, with more than ₹6 lakh crore spent annually," President said. She said the government is working to reverse this trend through a historic package of around ₹70,000 crore for the shipping sector, granting infrastructure status to large ships and revamping outdated maritime laws.

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal said the President's address reaffirmed the strategic importance of maritime development to India's economic growth. "The expansion from five to over 100 national waterways has opened new economic corridors and strengthened multimodal logistics," Sonowal said.

Sonowal added that inland waterways have emerged as a sustainable and cost-effective mode of transport under the Modi government, supporting regional development and reducing logistics costs. Focused investment in ports, shipping and cruise tourism is creating employment opportunities and boosting coastal economies, Sonowal added.

"With large-scale reforms, infrastructure investment and modernised maritime laws, India is steadily moving toward reclaiming its position as a global maritime nation," Sonowal said.

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