“Union Budget Instrumental in Sailing Bharat towards Becoming a Top Global Maritime Superpower”: Sarbananda Sonowal

“Union Budget Accelerates ‘Reform Express’, Boosts India’s Economic Transformation”: Sarbananda Sonowal

“₹10,000-Crore Container Scheme to Boost Maritime Atmanirbharata, Strengthen Supply Chain Resilience”: Sarbananda Sonowal

“20 New National Waterways to boost Bharat’s Green, Sustainable Logistics Movement”: Sonowal

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Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said the Union Budget has provided a powerful thrust to India’s economic transformation by accelerating the Reform Express, strengthening the foundations of growth and ‘positioning the maritime sector as the anchor in achieving the vision of Viksit Bharat’. The Union Minister said the Budget reflects the government’s commitment to the three Kartavyas — accelerating and sustaining economic growth, fulfilling aspirations by building capacity, and ensuring inclusive development in line with the vision of ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas’.

“PM Narendra Modi ji’s dynamic leadership has resulted in the acceleration of the Reform Express which is firmly on track as it maintains its momentum to help us fulfil our Kartavya, our duties. This budget enhances productivity, builds economic resilience and ensures that every sector, region and community has access to opportunities for meaningful contribution,” **Sarbananda Sonowal** said.

Sonowal said the Union Budget has clearly positioned the maritime sector as a strategic enabler of India’s trade competitiveness, logistics efficiency and long-term economic resilience. “Maritime sector emerges as a strategic growth engine. The Budget has created an enabling ecosystem that empowers our stakeholders, transporters and industry partners to build capacity, expand operations and grow further,” **Sarbananda Sonowal** said. He expressed gratitude to Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman, who presented her ninth consecutive Union Budget, calling it a testament to policy continuity, reform stability and women empowerment.

A major highlight of the Union Budget is the announcement of a Container Manufacturing Assistance Scheme (CMAS) with a total outlay of ₹10,000 crore over the next five years. The scheme aims to establish a globally competitive container manufacturing ecosystem in India, supporting the rapid growth of containerised cargo, which accounts for nearly two-thirds of the value of international trade. Under the initiative, India targets achieving an annual domestic manufacturing capacity of approximately one million

TEUs over the next decade. The programme is expected to generate a total market value of nearly ₹1.07 lakh crore, reflecting a multiplier impact of about eight times the government support. It is also projected to create around 3,000 direct jobs and more than 50,000 indirect jobs, while catalysing the development of ancillary industries such as corner castings, wooden frames, specialised steel and water-based paints. The initiative will significantly reduce India's dependence on imported empty containers, which currently stands at nearly two million units, and strengthen national supply-chain resilience.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal said, "This scheme will build a strong domestic ecosystem capable of meeting the rising demand of containerised cargo and enhancing India's competitiveness in global trade. The scheme represents a transformative step in India's maritime growth journey. With a targeted capacity of one million TEUs annually over the next 10 years and a potential market creation of over ₹1 lakh crore, this initiative will generate large-scale employment, strengthen ancillary manufacturing and significantly reduce import dependence. Together with the Bharat Container Shipping Line, this marks a decisive move toward maritime self-reliance and a more resilient logistics supply chain for the country."

The Union Budget provides renewed momentum to India's inland waterways revolution. India will operationalise 20 new National Waterways over the next five years, further expanding the national network and enabling greener, cost-effective cargo movement. Sonowal recalled that while only five national waterways existed prior to 2014, the number has since expanded to 111 waterways under the National Waterways Act. Cargo movement on inland waterways has increased from 18.1 million metric tonnes in 2013–14 to 145.5 million metric tonnes in 2024–25, recording nearly 700 percent growth with a compound annual growth rate of about 21 percent. The operational length of waterways has expanded from 2,716 km to more than 5,155 km, easing congestion on road and rail networks.

"The Union Budget has given fresh momentum to India's inland waterways transformation. The decision to operationalise 20 additional waterways over the next five years will further strengthen green, cost-effective logistics and reduce pressure on road and rail networks. The focused development of National Waterway-5 on the Mahanadi system will unlock the economic potential of eastern India by connecting mineral belts, industrial centres and ports, reinforcing waterways as a key pillar of India's multimodal transport and sustainable growth strategy," **Sarbananda Sonowal** said.

An important announcement in the Budget is the focused development of National Waterway–5 on the Mahanadi river system in Odisha. The waterway will connect the mineral-rich areas of Talcher and Angul with major industrial centres such as Kalinga Nagar and ports at Paradeep and Dhamra. Major terminals will be developed at Kakudi, Kurunti and Pankapal, with coal, coking coal and limestone as principal cargo. The corridor has a cargo potential of approximately 10 million tonnes by 2032, increasing to 20 million tonnes by 2047, with an estimated investment of around ₹13,000 crore.

To fulfil the Kartavya of building capacity, the Union Budget announced the establishment of training institutes as Regional Centres of Excellence (RCoE) for skill development in the inland waterways sector. Training centres will be set up in Kolkata and Varanasi, enabling youth across the entire waterway stretch to acquire specialised maritime and logistics skills. In addition, a dedicated ship repair ecosystem catering to inland waterways will be established at Varanasi and Patna, improving operational reliability while generating skilled employment. A RCoE is also being developed in Dibrugarh, Assam.

The Budget announced the launch of a **Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme** to incentivise modal shift from rail and road to waterways. Under the scheme, India aims to increase the share of inland waterways and coastal shipping from 6 percent to 12 percent by 2047, supporting lower logistics costs, reduced emissions and enhanced energy efficiency. To strengthen multimodal integration, the Budget proposed the development of new Dedicated Freight Corridors connecting Dankuni in the east to Surat in the west.

These corridors will significantly improve port connectivity, cargo evacuation efficiency and industrial logistics. Enhanced integration of waterways with major ports, particularly Paradeep and Dhamra, will further reduce pressure on road and rail transport.

The Budget also proposed indigenisation of seaplane manufacturing, along with a Viability Gap Funding scheme to support operations. The initiative aims to improve last-mile connectivity, promote tourism and enhance access to remote and island regions including Andaman and Nicobar Islands and Lakshadweep.

To promote Indian ship ownership, the Budget extended the tax deduction period for units in GIFT IFSC and Offshore Banking Units from 10 to 20 consecutive years within a 25-year span. The sunset clause for customs duty exemption on import of small vessels has been extended until March 2028, while the exemption on large vessels has been permanently removed. “These measures will encourage Indian flagging, fleet expansion and tonnage growth,” Sonowal said.

The Budget places strong emphasis on ‘Purvodaya', with focused initiatives for eastern and northeastern India. Key announcements include development of an East Coast Industrial Corridor, creation of five major tourism destinations, deployment of 4,000 e-buses, and a dedicated scheme for the development of Buddhist Circuits across Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Sikkim and other northeastern states. Sonowal said these initiatives honour India’s rich spiritual heritage while transforming the region into a powerhouse of culture, commerce and connectivity. Sonowal also welcomed the decision to elevate the Tezpur mental health institute into a regional apex body for mental health wellness.

Sonowal said the Union Budget clearly positions waterways, shipping, shipbuilding and container manufacturing as strategic enablers of India’s logistics and trade competitiveness. “This Budget is instrumental in propelling Bharat toward becoming a leading global maritime superpower. It balances ambition with inclusion and chooses action over ambivalence and reform over rhetoric,” Sonowal said.

With its strong focus on the three Kartavyas — accelerating growth, fulfilling aspirations and ensuring ‘Sabka Saath, Sabka Vikas’ — the Budget lays a solid foundation for the nation’s next phase of development. “PM Narendra Modi ji’s vision is reflected through this budget which is people centric, welfare oriented, capacity enhancing and holistic development of our country. This is a budget for every Indian. It empowers our Yuva Shakti, strengthens regional equity and ensures that the fruits of development reach the last mile,” **Sonowal** added.

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