



Sarbananda Sonowal chairs 2nd Governing Council meeting of National Maritime Heritage Complex Society, reviews progress at Lothal

Phase 1A crosses 82% physical progress; 13 nations sign MoUs for India's maritime heritage project

13 nations already on board, as global collaboration effort for NMHC Lothal expands towards 35+ countries

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The **Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal**, chaired the 2nd Governing Council Meeting of the National Maritime Heritage Complex (NMHC) Society, reviewing the progress of the ambitious project coming up at Lothal, Gujarat, that seeks to revive and showcase India's maritime legacy spanning over five millennia.

Calling NMHC one of the most significant cultural and maritime initiatives undertaken by the Government of India, Sonowal said the project aims to establish Lothal as a globally renowned centre of maritime heritage, knowledge, education and tourism. "NMHC at Lothal is one of the most significant cultural and maritime initiatives undertaken by the Government of India," **Sonowal** said, recalling that the Governing Council had laid down a clear vision and direction when it first met in June 2025.

The Union Minister noted that the Society has since completed key statutory registrations, including income tax exemption, CSR and Darpan registrations, strengthening its institutional framework for future resource mobilisation. He was particularly encouraged by the international response the project has received, with 13 countries, including Portugal, the UAE, Vietnam, Thailand, the Netherlands, Denmark, Oman, Israel, Germany, the Republic of Korea, Italy, New Zealand and Singapore, having signed MoUs for collaboration, with discussions underway with several more nations towards a proposed pipeline of 35-plus partnerships. "These partnerships are enabling exchange of artefacts, replicas, ship models, research collaboration and cultural engagement, making NMHC a powerful instrument of maritime diplomacy," **Sonowal** said.

On construction progress, the Council was informed that Phase 1A has reached approximately 82 percent physical completion. The Minister urged implementing agencies to maintain strict supervision to meet the revised completion target of 31 October 2026, flagging components such as Galleries 4 and 6, Lothal Town and Aquatic Theming that remain to be completed. He also drew attention to 1,492 artefacts already readied for installation, calling for expedited approvals so exhibits can be commissioned in time for visitor operations.

Looking beyond the museum, the Council reviewed plans for Phase 1B and Phase 2, which will add further galleries, a 5D Dome Theatre, Coastal States Pavilion, a Lighthouse Museum planned in collaboration with the Directorate General of Lighthouses and Lightships (DGLL), a Maritime Research Institute (MRI) being developed with the Indian Maritime University (IMU), a Museotel and an Eco Resort. The proposed Lighthouse Museum, the Minister noted, has the potential to become the world's tallest lighthouse museum.

The Governing Council also took note of progress on external infrastructure, including the completed Dholera Expressway, a finalised plan for the high-speed rail corridor, and ongoing excavation at Lothal, now at 70 percent, being carried out by the Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), alongside continued support from the Government of Gujarat on connectivity, power, water and visitor amenities. The Council additionally considered and approved the proposed NMHC Bye-laws, providing a governance framework for the Society's transition into a fully operational institution.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal attributed the momentum behind the project to the vision of Prime Minister Narendra Modi, under whose leadership India's maritime heritage has been placed at the centre of national policy. "Under the dynamic leadership of Prime Minister Modi, we are not just building a museum at Lothal, we are reviving five thousand years of India's maritime civilisation and presenting it to the world," Sonowal said.

Sonowal thanked the NMHC team, IPRCL, the Government of Gujarat, the Indian Navy, IMU, major ports and partner ministries for their contribution, expressing confidence that with continued momentum, NMHC would emerge as a global landmark celebrating India's maritime legacy and future aspirations. "With collective effort, coordinated action and continued guidance from this Governing Council, I am confident that the National Maritime Heritage Complex will emerge as a global landmark," he said.





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