



Sarbananda Sonowal Woos Korean Firms for India's Shipyards, Seeks Global Shipping Rules All Can Follow

Union Minister joins IMO Chief and Ministers from South Korea, Norway and Cyprus at World Maritime Day roundtable

Universal rules, differentiated implementation: Sonowal's pitch at World Maritime Day roundtable

Sonowal pitches India's growth story to KOMEA members, invites them for a mutually beneficial growth of the maritime sector

Common standards and outcomes, supported by cooperation that enables every Member State to implement them effectively:
Sarbananda Sonowal

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Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbananda Sonowal, in Busan, South Korea, used a high-level ministerial roundtable on World Maritime Day and talks with South Korea's marine equipment industry to press one case: India wants maritime rules that every country can put into practice, and partners willing to build and grow with India.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal spoke at the government roundtable at the World Maritime Day. **Sonowal shared the stage with International Maritime Organisation (IMO), Secretary-General Arsenio Dominguez; Nam Jaeheon, South Korea's Vice Minister of Oceans and Fisheries; Marianne Sivertsen Næss, Norway's Minister of Fisheries and Ocean Policy; and Marina Hadjimanolis, Cyprus' shipping Deputy Minister. Moon Seong-hyeok, a former South Korean minister of oceans and fisheries, chaired the session.**

India's starting point, Sonowal said, is that international standards should stay ambitious and universal, while their implementation recognises differences in national circumstances, development, technology and access to finance. He cited the principle of common but differentiated responsibilities and respective capabilities.

"The objective should therefore be common standards and outcomes, supported by cooperation that enables every Member State to implement them effectively," **Sonowal** said.

The Union Minister called IMO conventions an "operational lighthouse" for shipping at a time of geopolitical instability, piracy and disruption in the Red Sea, protecting seafarers, trade and supply chains. The best way to narrow gaps, he said, is practical partnership: joint working groups that pair countries that have implemented a convention with countries still building the capacity, training surveyors and inspectors, helping draft laws and setting time-bound plans. The aim, he said, is to leave behind "permanent national capability rather than creating continuing dependence."

India has done its own groundwork, Sonowal said. Five maritime laws enacted in 2025 took effect in March 2026, India's Maritime Single Window covers 69 ports and terminals, and the Alang-Sosiya yard has 115 ship recycling facilities that comply with the Hong Kong Convention (HKC) within the IMO framework.

The same theme ran through Sonowal's meeting with the Korea Marine Equipment Association, known as KOMEA, a group founded in 1980 that represents 304 equipment makers, design firms, shipbuilders and repairers. Its members include HD Hyundai, Hanwha Ocean and Samsung Heavy Industries.

KOMEA will open its first India office in Mumbai on Oct. 30, a step the two governments welcomed in April under VOYAGES, their framework for cooperation in shipbuilding, shipping and maritime logistics. In February 2025, the association offered to work with Indian yards on design, modernization, technology transfer, joint education programs and the local manufacture of marine equipment and spare parts.

"Every ship built in India needs engines, propulsion, deck machinery, and electrical and navigation systems," **Sonowal** said. Much of that high-value equipment is imported today, he said, which is the opportunity for Korean suppliers.

KOMEA Chairman Ho-il Kang said members have begun preparing to enter the Indian market within the next two years. KOMEA members including SB Sunbo, Daeyang, KASEMEC, JO Engineering and others discussed their plans for possible investment in India's maritime sector.

Sonowal made the business case with numbers. India approved a shipbuilding package worth about \$7.8 billion in September 2025. Since scheme approval, the shipbuilding output rose 40% in 2025 on a year on year basis. The output has further grown by more than 80% in 2026. Since the scheme approval, the pipeline of vessels receiving direct government assistance covers more than 120 ships worth over \$1.27 billion, with export orders making up more than 80% of the value. "We are already building for the world," **Sonowal** said.

Further, demand from Government entities has also been aggregated by MoPSW to provide an order book visibility of more than 400 vessels worth about \$23 billion to Indian Shipyards in the next 10 years.

He called the Mumbai office a long-term platform for Korean firms, whether through joint ventures, licensing or their own factories, and said the ministry stands ready to help them set up. The Minister's four day visit continues tomorrow with additional meetings and

visits.



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