India’s Thoothukudi Mega Shipyard Picks Up Pace as Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal Meets HD Hyundai Chairman Chung Ki-sun in Seoul

Joint Working Group (JWG) to steer progress; JV structure to be worked out with DPR expected within Six months

Technology transfer and workforce skilling at heart of Thoothukudi plan, with Indian industry and academia to be brought in

Thoothukudi Shipyard envisaged as a Flagship Initiative under the India–Republic of Korea Special Strategic Partnership

Strategic partnerships, technology collaboration and localised manufacturing: Sarbananda Sonowal on HD KSOE’s India role

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Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, today met **Chung Ki-sun, Chairman of HD Hyundai**, in Seoul and discussed the next steps for India’s proposed greenfield shipyard at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. The meeting took place during Sonowal’s four-day visit to South Korea, which is focused on deepening India–Korea cooperation in shipbuilding and the wider maritime industry.

The meeting added momentum to the project, and the day’s engagements produced a clear path forward. HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering (HD KSOE), HD Hyundai’s shipbuilding arm, reiterated its intent to participate as a primary strategic investor, and the project partners expressed their shared intent to take the yard forward. A joint working group (JWG) will now oversee project development, the two sides will work towards agreeing a joint venture structure, and the Detailed Project Report (DPR) is expected to be finalised within six months.

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal told HD Hyundai Chairman Chung Ki-sun that his main goal in Seoul is to turn into reality, as quickly as possible, the shared vision the Chairman had set out to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, that India is a core pillar of HD

Hyundai's global future, as India–Korea maritime ties gain new energy since President Lee Jae Myung's visit to New Delhi earlier this year.

Speaking at the meeting, **Sarbananda Sonowal** said, "We have a clear mandate to scale up our work together. The MoU we signed on 20 April 2026 is the bedrock of what we want to build together in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu. A greenfield shipyard with $4 Billion investment is a massive milestone, and we are completely committed to backing it. Your team has done an incredible job during the site assessment and has been continuously collaborating with the teams from both Central as well as the State governments."

National Shipbuilding & Heavy Industries Park, Tamil Nadu Limited (NSHIP-TN) and HD Korea Shipbuilding & Offshore Engineering Co., Ltd. (HD KSOE) expressed their shared intent to take forward the proposed greenfield shipyard at Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu.

The discussions built on the India–Republic of Korea Comprehensive Framework for Partnership in Shipbuilding, Shipping and Maritime Logistics adopted in April 2026 and the Memorandum of Understanding signed on 20 April 2026 between HD-KSOE and NSHIP-TN on the sidelines of the state visit by the President of the Republic of Korea, H.E. Lee Jae Myung. During the meeting HD-KSOE expressed its appreciation of the enabling conditions created by the Government of India towards implementation of the project.

The proposed shipyard, being developed under the Government of India's Shipbuilding Development Scheme, is envisaged to have an annual shipbuilding capacity of approx. **2.5 million Gross Tonnage (GT)**, subject to validation through Detailed Project Report (DPR). Once operational, it is expected to be India's largest commercial shipyard, significantly strengthening domestic shipbuilding capacity and India's competitiveness in the global maritime industry.

During the meeting HD KSOE reiterated its strong intent in participating as a primary strategic investor, bringing its global expertise in shipyard design, construction, advanced manufacturing and operations. Discussions will now focus on finalising the proposed investment structure, equity participation and implementation arrangements, subject to due diligence and requisite approvals. Similarly, NSHIP-TN reassured its support for setting up of the greenfield shipyard, including all coordination with the government authorities both at Central as well as the State level.

Speaking about the domestic demand in India, **Sarbananda Sonowal** said, "The domestic market in India is booming right now. Our public agencies are looking to acquire more than 400 vessels in the coming years. I am sure that apart from the export orders the mega greenfield shipyard in Thoothukudi, Tamil Nadu would be instrumental in construction of many of these identified vessels. We look forward to HD KSOE deepening its footprint in India through strategic partnerships, technology collaboration and localised manufacturing, thereby contributing to India's emergence as a global shipbuilding hub."

To accelerate implementation, a working group comprising officials from both sides would oversee project development and coordinate key activities. The two organisations will endeavour to agree on a suitable joint venture structure and are expected to finalise the DPR within six months, covering vessel product mix, production capacity, infrastructure requirements, project costs and implementation schedule.

NSHIP-TN will facilitate the availability of suitable waterfront land, development of enabling infrastructure and utilities, and coordination with relevant authorities for timely statutory approvals, in accordance with applicable laws and procedures. In parallel, preparatory activities, including site assessments, infrastructure planning and preliminary dredging/reclamation studies, will be progressed to support project readiness.

Beyond infrastructure development, the collaboration aims to establish a **globally competitive shipbuilding ecosystem in India**, with emphasis on technology transfer and workforce skilling. Opportunities for technical training, knowledge exchange and collaboration with Indian industry and academic institutions will be explored to strengthen indigenous shipbuilding capabilities and generate skilled employment.

In his closing remarks, **Sarbananda Sonowal** said, “This partnership will be a truly vital & defining cornerstone of the broader India-Korea relationship. By bringing together South Korea’s world-class technological genius with India’s economic energy and market scale, we are creating a partnership that will genuinely reshape the global maritime landscape.Let’s join hands to bring this incredible shipyard to life on the ground. I am eager to hear your thoughts on how we can accelerate this journey together.”

The proposed Thoothukudi shipyard is envisaged as a **flagship initiative under the India–Republic of Korea Special Strategic Partnership**, combining Korea's advanced shipbuilding expertise with India's industrial capabilities and long-term maritime ambitions.







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