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India: the new kid on the global shipbuilding block?



Indian maritime sources, euphoric over the recent French shipping line CMA CGM's shipbuilding contract to Cochin Shipyard Limited (CSL) in Southern India, have portrayed India as the new kid on the block in the ship-building sector, have portrayed India as the new kid on the global shipbuilding block.

CMA CGM signed a letter of intent with Cochin Shipyard Ltd (CSL) to build six LNG-powered feeder containerships, marking the first-ever order by a global liner operator at an Indian yard. The total value of the vessels, each with a 1,700 TEU capacity, is around \$300 million.

Shipping circles following the CMA CGM path in India suggest the design is expected to draw on an existing HD Hyundai Heavy Industries platform, following Cochin Shipyard's cooperation agreement signed with the South Korean shipbuilder earlier this year. CMA CGM has maintained close maritime ties with India for 34 years.

In addition to shipping, CMA CGM holds stakes in strategic Indian ports, including Nhava Sheva Freeport Terminal in Navi Mumbai and Mundra Port in Gujarat.

The group's Global Business Services (GBS) hub in Chennai supports 160 agencies globally, employing over 9,000 people and managing over 60% of the Group's core transactional functions.

CEVA Logistics, CMA CGM's logistics subsidiary, operates across 105 sites in 31 Indian cities, managing nearly 900,000 sq/m of warehouse space. Its 2023 acquisition of Stellar VCS further strengthened its contract logistics presence in the country.

Despite having a thriving shipbuilding industry, India has yet to make a mark on the global shipbuilding market, as China, South Korea, and Japan have. India trails far behind the three Asian shipbuilding nations; the Indian government is now aggressively promoting the country's shipbuilding industry, and wants India to be among the world's top ten shipbuilding nations by 2030 and indeed among the top five by 2047, as outlined in the Maritime India Vision 2030, an initiative aimed at boosting India's maritime sector through expansion/modernization of India's port infrastructure, shipbuilding, advancing sea-trade connectivity, upgrading technology for improving maritime sector.

India has been constructing ships, ranging from small boats to large commercial tankers and naval vessels.

The CMA CGM contract did not surprise some Indian experts who had been expecting it since Prime Minister Narendra Modi, accompanied by French President Emmanuel Macron, met with the CMA CGM chief executive Rodolphe Saadé at the shipping line's headquarters in Marseille some time back.

India's Shipbuilding Clusters

India's shipbuilding industry was concentrated, mostly, in the coastal regions, particularly Gujarat, Bengal, and Odisha. These ancient shipbuilding centers facilitated historic trade with Southeast Asia, Africa, and West Asia. New shipbuilding yards such as the Mazagaon Dock Limited (MDL) in Mumbai emerged during the British colonial period; MDL was established primarily to build vessels for the British navy and merchant fleets. Indeed, both MDL and CSL are important players in building ships for the Indian navy, and the commercial sectors.

Nevertheless, India has merely a small fraction of the global shipbuilding market, which is dominated by China, South Korea, and Japan. India has about a dozen companies engaged in various forms of shipbuilding and vessel repairs/modifications. Modi's government has announced plans to build multiple shipbuilding clusters in collaboration with coastal states.

While meeting with representatives of coastal states in Goa nearly a year back, India's Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MPSW) discussed establishing shipbuilding and ship-repair clusters in coastal states aimed at strengthening India's shipbuilding supply chain. According to MPSW officials, all the coastal states showed keen interest in promoting maritime development, including shipbuilding, with Andhra Pradesh state pledging to allocate 20,000 acres of land for maritime development.

India's Hindustan Shipyard Limited (HSL), with an estimated 18% share of the Indian market, builds a diverse range of vessels, including bulk carriers, tankers, and offshore supply vessels, while Larsen & Toubro (L&T) Shipbuilding focuses on high-tech defense vessels, offshore platforms, and warships.

Meanwhile, the Indian International Maritime Dispute Resolution Centre (IIMDRC), a specialized platform, will offer solutions to resolve maritime disputes efficiently; it will function as a branch of the India International Arbitration Centre (IIAC), and will be based in Mumbai.

Collaboration with Foreign Shipbuilders

During an official visit to Norway some months back to participate in the Nor-Shipping Conference, Indian Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sonowal held talks with Japan's Minister of Infrastructure and Transport Terada Yoshimichi, aimed at deepening maritime ties between India and Japan. The two ministers reviewed the progress of a possible partnership deal between Indian and Japanese shipyards.

Sonowal expressed India's interest in collaboration between Indian shipyards and Japanese shipbuilding companies such as Imabari Shipbuilding, JMUC, Kanagawa Dockyard, and Mitsubishi Heavy Industries.

"Japan's expertise in shipbuilding and ship repair is well recognized, and I see great scope for collaboration in this area. We also invite Japan's big three maritime companies, NYK Line, Mitsui O.S.K. Lines, and K Line, to explore joint ventures and investment opportunities in India's growing maritime sector," Sonowal said.

Imabari Shipbuilding is already exploring Greenfield investment possibilities in India's Andhra Pradesh state. In February, Imabari's President Yukito Higaki led a high-level delegation to meet Andhra Pradesh Chief Minister N. Chandrababu Naidu, where the two parties discussed potential investments in shipbuilding.

Andhra Pradesh has adopted a cluster-based approach, zoning off land in specific port areas for allocation to shipbuilding and ship-repairing companies. The land may be provided for a long-term lease (30-60 years) at a nominal rate.

In discussions with the Norwegian Shipowners' Association (NSA), Sonowal called for shipowners to consider investing in India's maritime sector. The minister recognized that Indian shipyards currently account for 11% of NSA's order book. India has already made strong inroads into the Norwegian shipping community, for example, with the autonomous barges for ASKO Maritime, a division of a Norwegian grocery chain.

In April, India's Udupi Cochin Shipyard delivered the first dry bulk vessel, Wilson Eco 1, to the Norwegian Wilson Ship Management. The vessel is the first in a series of six 3,800 DWT cargo ships, which Wilson ordered at the yard in June 2023.

India has also courted South Korea's shipbuilding industry, encouraging partnerships and development of yards in India. It has also courted shipping lines, including Maersk and MSC, with proposals for ship repair and shipbuilding at India's yards.

(Source: American Journal of Transport



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India's Bharat Container Line moves a step closer to reality

New Delhi is set to realise its ambition to create the Bharat Container Line as it finalises the investor structure for the new company

Rail operator Concor and the Shipping Corporation of India (SCI) will be the major shareholders in the newly established container line with a host of secondary investors from the port sector.

Seen as a strategic investment to meet India's needs as a developing manufacturing hub all the investors will be government controlled companies, with SCI and Concor designated as so-called navratna companies, being the major shareholders. Navratna translates as nine gems and is used to describe high performance and well managed Indian firms.

Government owned port companies, including Chennai Port Authority, Kamarajar Port and Tuticorin's VO Chidambaranar Port Authority are expected to hold minor equity stakes in BCL.

India's Economic Times quoting a government source said: "Discussions are going on between the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and Ministry of Railways to set up the container line."

The source added that the equity partners will be finalised by the end of next week, and "a Memorandum of Understanding will be signed by the equity partners after which a business plan will be prepared for the container line".

SCI is expected to charter vessels while Concor, will provide the 56,000 teu container fleet and manage the inland logistics. Concor operates 66 terminals including inland container depots container freight stations and domestic container terminals.

In addition, the logistics company operates over 400 container trains, with more than 370,000 square metres of warehouse space that is expected to play a key role in the movement of cargo.

According to local reports the government owned ports are required as equity partners with the aim of "sucking out surplus cash from these ports, to share the risks and make it a well-capitalised company".

VesselsValue data confirms that SCI currently owns and operates three container ships, the 9,000 teu *SCI Delhi*, built in 2014 is on charter from German owner Deomar Schifffahrts: the 2008 built *SCI Mumbai*, which has a capacity of 4,460 teu and the *SCI Chennai* also has a capacity of 4,460 teu. All three ships were built in South Korea, *Chennai* and *Mumbai* are SCI owned. (Source: Sea Trade Maritime News)

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Indian Port Sector

Vizhinjam Port phase II development to start mid-January: Vasavan



With the launch of the commercial operations on December 3, 2024, the port has handled 13.25 lakh TEUs by handling 636 ships. Kerala government is looking at inaugurating the second phase of Vizhinjam International Seaport development during mid-January.

The Port Minister V.N.Vasavan, after reviewing performance of the terminal, said the opening the second, third and fourth phases of construction would see an investment of ₹9,700 crore by Adani Vizhinjam Port Pvt. Ltd. (AVPPL). In the second phase development, the existing 800-m berth will be increased by 1,200 meters to 2,000 m, while the 2.96-kilometre breakwater will also be increased by another 920 m.

With the launch of the commercial operations on December 3, 2024, the port has handled 13.25 lakh TEUs by handling 636 ships. The port also contributed around ₹97 crore to the exchequer by way of tax. Vizhinjam has also become the first port in India to handle cargo with more than 40 ultra-large container ships with a length of 399 m during this period, the Minister said adding that more than 155 vessels with a length of more than 300 metres and over 45 ships with drafts of more than 16 metres called.

Besides, the approach road to the port from NH-66 will also be inaugurated to facilitate the gateway cargo movements to and from the port. The work on acquiring land for linking the project with the existing rail network at Balaramapuram railway station through an underground tunnel is progressing, he said.

Around 50 hectares will have to be acquired to set up port-related infrastructure facilities. The land will be used for the development of a yard, security apparatus, customs and police aid posts and so on, he added. The State has also plans to commence cruise tourism based at the Vizhinjam port, and discussions are under way to arrange necessary infrastructure facilities for cruise tourism in the port. (Source: The Hindu)

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New Mangalore Port to develop satellite port at Pavinakurve



Figure 15: Proposed Port Location at Pavinakurve

The New Mangalore Port Authority will develop a new port at Pavinakurve in Uttara Kannada, Karnataka.

The proposed port will be located on the banks of the Sharavathi and Badagani rivers near Pavinakurve village in Honnavar taluka. The port is planned to handle 14 million tonne (mt) of cargo initially, with expansion potential to 37.4 mt by 2050. It will feature water depths suitable for Capesize vessels, the largest dry bulk ships. Previous efforts by the Karnataka Maritime Board, involving global tenders and private investment of Rs 3,047.86 crore, did not attract bidders.

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said in a written response to the Lok Sabha, "New Mangalore Port Authority had earlier expressed interest in developing Pavinakurve as a satellite port," marking a shift to development under the Central Port Authority's direct initiative.



Kerala Court Orders Arrest of MSC Ship at Vizhinjam Port

The Kerala High Court mandated the conditional arrest of the MSC Manasa F, currently docked at Vizhinjam Port. This decision stemmed from a damages claim made by Mangalath Cashews, a Kollam-based exporter, asserting that the Mediterranean Shipping Company (MSC) was responsible for a cargo loss during the sinking of MSC Elsa 3 off the Alappuzha coast last month. The exporter requested \$180,000 in damages, raising fears that the MSC Manasa F might soon depart, as MSC lacks physical assets in India. The court stipulated that the arrest would only be lifted if the claimed damages were deposited or secured.

While this legal situation unfolded, a fire erupted on board another vessel, the Singapore-flagged Interasia Tenacity, as it traveled along the Kerala coast from Port Klang to Nhava Sheva. The ship, carrying 1,387 containers and manned by a crew of 21 Filipinos, sent out a distress signal. Fortunately, the ship's captain managed to control the fire and declined further assistance, with no injuries reported. Nevertheless, the Indian Coast Guard (ICG) is maintaining vigilance given the recent uptick in maritime mishaps.

Compounding these issues is the ongoing emergency operation involving the Singapore-flagged Wan Hai 503, which caught fire on June 9, approximately 42 nautical miles off Beypore in the Arabian Sea. The ecological risks from its fuel and hazardous cargo have escalated, with smoke still rising from the vessel's hold days after the blaze began. An Indian Air Force helicopter has dropped 2,600 kg of fire-retardant chemical powder on the ship's deck to help control the flames, but internal fires persist. The ICG has commenced towing the Wan Hai 503 into deeper waters to mitigate risks to the coastline, while T&T Salvage prepares to take control once conditions are suitable.

Additionally, search efforts continue for four missing crew members from this incident, and another tugboat is being dispatched to replace the Ocean Warrior, which returned to port due to technical issues. Efforts are also underway to manage pollution risks from the sunken MSC Elsa 3, including oil removal to prevent further ecological damage.

Multiple projects worth Rs 1.93 billion inaugurated at Kandla Port

December 17, 2025

The Secretary, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has recently inaugurated and laid foundation stone for multiple projects totalling investment of Rs 1.93 billion at the Deendayal Port. The initiatives are designed to strengthen port infrastructure, enhance cargo evacuation, modernise operations and support long-term expansion of one of India's key maritime gateways.

Key components include development of land for a new shipyard facility, improved coastal road connectivity to National Highway-141, modern storage facilities, and essential utility upgrades such as chemical pipeline networks and fender system enhancements.

Deendayal Port, Kandla is also advancing its sustainability agenda with the rollout of a green electric vehicle loader fleet and charging bay, and the port's first 5 tonnes per day green methanol facility to support alternative marine fuels.

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Indo-Bangladesh Maritime News

coastal shipping can redefine India–Bangladesh trade corridors

Ahamedul Karim Chowdhury, independent consultant and former ICD Kamalapur and Pangaon ICT head, says Bangladesh's maritime sector stands at a crossroads.



Bangladesh's maritime transformation is at a defining crossroads. The Matarbari Container Terminal (MCT) the country's first deep-draft facility capable of handling 8,000-TEU mainline vessels — symbolizes the nation's entry into the era of direct global connectivity. Yet, deep ports alone do not make a maritime power; what truly matters is deep connectivity. Linking Matarbari to an integrated inland transport ecosystem through multimodal logistics corridors is now the most urgent task. The government's National Multimodal Transport Plan, guided by Sheikh Moinuddin, Special Assistant to the Chief Adviser for the Ministry of Road Transport and Bridges and Railways, envisions merging road, rail, and waterways under a unified data-driven system. Supported by the Asian Development Bank (ADB) and the World Bank, this plan seeks to cut logistics costs, improve reliability, and ensure greener trade connectivity nationwide.

Within this vision, Pangaon Inland Container Terminal (ICT) near Dhaka must evolve beyond its current limitations into a trimodal logistics hub integrating river, road, and rail access. Extending the Padma rail link directly to Pangaon would complete a vital chain, connecting Matarbari, Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra ports through both inland and coastal corridors. Such connectivity would ensure the continuous movement of containers even during adverse weather, when coastal shipping halts under Signal No. 4. For Bangladesh's ready-made garment (RMG) exporters, this would offer a predictable, cost-effective supply chain alternative that bypasses Dhaka's overburdened roads and reduces congestion in traditional logistics nodes.

The Coastal Shipping Agreement: A Foundation for Regional Integration

A major pillar supporting this multimodal future is the India–Bangladesh Coastal Shipping Agreement signed in June 2015, followed by a detailed Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) in November 2015. The agreement allows river-sea vessels to operate directly between the two countries’ ports, substantially cutting both time and cost. Earlier, containers from India to Bangladesh or to India’s northeastern states had to be transshipped through distant ports like Colombo or Singapore, taking up to 30 days. Under this framework, the same cargo can now reach its destination in 6–7 days, at significantly reduced cost.

The agreement’s objectives were multifaceted:

- ♣ To reduce transit costs and time for bilateral trade;
- ♣ To boost trade volume by introducing a direct maritime link;
- ♣ To enhance regional connectivity by allowing India to use Bangladeshi ports for access to its northeastern states; and
- ♣ To decongest congested land borders, such as Benapole–Petrapole, by shifting traffic to sea routes.

This was to be achieved through mutual recognition of crew identity documents, simplified customs procedures, and clear mechanisms for dispute resolution, as detailed in the 2015 SOP.

The First Kolkata–Pangaon Service and Its Collapse

The agreement’s most visible milestone came in February 2017, when the first container vessel service between Kolkata and Pangaon was launched. Pangaon ICT built to relieve the overburdened Dhaka–Chattogram highway offered a sustainable inland alternative. However, the service did not continue successfully. Despite early optimism, the route became dominated by one-way traffic: vessels carried full loads of goods from India to Bangladesh but returned empty.

Several interlinked challenges caused the collapse. High operating costs were the primary issue with vessels returning without cargo, operators were forced to increase freight rates, making the service uncompetitive compared to trucking. Exporters were reluctant to use Pangaon because of unpredictable schedules, additional costs, and customs complexities. Businesses often faced procedural delays and even harassment during clearance, deterring further use.

A few incidents aggravated matters notably, when a container fell into the river and customs seized cargo for an extended period, eroding trust. Coupled with demurrage charges, these problems led importers to avoid Pangaon entirely. Furthermore, a lack of coordination among port authorities, customs, and logistics providers produced inefficiencies. The result was a cost-inefficient system where multiple layers of fees from mainline and barge operators to trucking syndicates made the route unattractive for most shippers.

A New Opportunity: RMG Exports to India

The current trade dynamics, however, have opened a new window of opportunity. Global retail giants such as H&M, Marks & Spencer (M&S), and IKEA have established outlets in India and are sourcing apparel directly from Bangladesh. Their supply chains naturally

align with the Pangaon–Kolkata corridor, since RMG consignments can be shipped efficiently via coastal vessels instead of congested land routes.

Initially, these consignments moved through the Benapole–Petrapole border, but recently the Indian government redirected traffic through the Chattogram–Colombo–Mumbai Sea route a longer and more expensive path. If India recognizes the Pangaon–Kolkata container movement as a standard maritime trade route under the Coastal Shipping Agreement, it could reignite two-way traffic and unlock a new phase of bilateral logistics growth. This shift would not only restore cost-efficiency but also revive the Kolkata–Pangaon service, with potential extension further to Visakhapatnam (Vizag).

Linking Matarbari and Pangaon through Multimodal Integration

The success of the Matarbari Port Project depends not only on deep-sea access but on seamless inland distribution. If Pangaon becomes the principal consolidation point for cargo moving to and from Matarbari, the two facilities can function as one synchronized logistics system. By connecting Pangaon’s river terminals to Matarbari via inland water transport and complementing that with a direct rail corridor through the Padma link Bangladesh can establish a resilient “ocean-to-market” route immune to weather disruptions.

Moreover, under a Public-Private Partnership (PPP) model, bringing in global terminal operators like MSC or Maersk with Viability Gap Funding would inject international expertise and efficiency. A unified operator managing both Matarbari and Pangaon could synchronize vessel scheduling, digital tracking, and customs clearance through a single integrated IT system ensuring consistency across the entire multimodal chain.

The Way Forward: Shared Prosperity through Maritime Partnership

Bangladesh’s maritime future will not be measured by how deep its harbors are but by how efficiently containers move from ocean to market. If Matarbari and Pangaon evolve together within the multimodal framework and India reopens and standardizes the Pangaon–Kolkata route for RMG exports the result could be transformative. The corridor could emerge as a model of BIMSTEC and BBIN cooperation, anchoring South Asia’s transition from fragmented logistics to integrated regional trade.

Reactivating the coastal shipping link would mark not just the resumption of a failed route but the beginning of a new era of maritime partnership one that aligns strategic infrastructure, private investment, and regional connectivity to power shared prosperity for both India and Bangladesh.

Compiled by Dr. Sham Choughule through various sources for private circulation

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