

Business Standard

GMB seeks help from Shipping Ministry to develop first maritime cluster

The intent of GMB is to develop soft maritime infrastructure and services in Gujarat

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Representative Image

Gujarat, one at GIFT city and another at Bhavnagar. Gujarat Ports Infrastructure & Development Co. Ltd, a fully owned subsidiary of GMB, is the nodal body for creating the complete ecosystem of port and shipping services within the state.

A cluster covering existing shipyards along with retail and leisure components as well as an ancillary cluster is proposed at Bhavnagar. Further, to promote and develop shipbuilding industry in the state, a shipbuilding park is planned at Bhavnagar.

As a part of its cluster plan, GMB has asked the Ministry of Shipping to set up a branch office of the director general of shipping, which issues chartering licenses, at GIFT city, informed a senior official in the Gujarat government.

A key incentive for charterers based in Gujarat is to arrange for a branch office of DG, Shipping here which can issue chartering licenses after Indian National Shipowners Association (INSA) is obtained online. This will help decongest Mumbai, as currently all charterers need to either have an office or an agent in Mumbai to obtain the

Gujarat Maritime Board (GMB), which administers and regulates the 41 state-owned non-major ports of Gujarat, has sought assistance from the Union Ministry of Shipping for developing a Maritime Cluster, the first in the country.

Two hubs are planned for the cluster which is expected to develop soft maritime infrastructure and services in

certificate. This certificate is normally issued for a single voyage and has to be issued for every vessel chartered.

While the bulk of ship broking and other service skills are in Mumbai, Delhi and Chennai, there are several industries and trades in Gujarat who have developed chartering teams to service their requirements. This includes Essar Steel, Adani Enterprises, Sanghi cements, Tata Chemicals, Reliance (Jamnagar and Hazira) among others.

With these Gujarat based charterers shifting to the cluster, the broking services will follow, especially the brokers servicing these clients, said an official close to the development.

Senior officials close to the development informed that the intent is to develop soft maritime infrastructure and services in Gujarat like shipping agents, ship owners, shipping agencies, ship manning and chandlers, shipping finance & insurance, classification and registers of ships etc.

Currently most of these services are located near Mumbai. Whatever limited maritime services India offers, are scattered around different locations. Several countries like UK (London), Netherlands (Rotterdam), China (Hong Kong, Shanghai), Japan (Tokyo, Osaka) and USA (New York) have adopted the concept of clusters.

It is envisaged that the cluster would have globally competitive tax structure.

Gujarat government feels that as 38 per cent (564 km) of the 1500 km long Dedicated Freight Corridor (DFC) will pass through the state, around 70-80 per cent (shift largely from JNPT) future traffic of the northern state traffic would be using Gujarat ports in the future.

Meanwhile, under its flagship Sagarmala programme, the Ministry of Shipping has identified 39 key projects worth Rs 84,046 crore in Gujarat. Majority of these projects are at various stages of development and implementation and are related to port modernization, port connectivity, port led industrialisation and coastal community development.