

# Modi flags off Ro-Ro ferry in Gujarat, says ports gateway to prosperity

Nimesh.Khakhariya  
@timesgroup.com

**Ghogha:** Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the first phase of his 'dream project', the Rs 650 crore 'roll-on-roll-off' ferry service between Ghogha in Bhavnagar and Dahej in Bharuch in the Gulf of Cambay, on Sunday, saying that the project was not only important to the country, but also set a benchmark for the South Asian region as a whole.

Describing the roll-on-roll-off (Ro-Ro) ferry service in the Gulf of Cambay as a unique model for other states, the PM said that he had to struggle hard for the completion of project because of 'hostilities' of the previous (UPA) government at the Centre that had 'prohibited' development in the coastal.

"Efforts were made to stall industries' and Gujarat's growth. Over last three years, we have changed that and given importance to development," said Modi.

He slammed the UPA government for not focusing on ports which are gateways for the country's development. "Sadly, our transport sector was not integrated enough. We have



PM Modi performs 'Poojan' at Ghogha Sea Ferry Point to mark the inauguration of Ghogha-Dahej Ro-Ro Ferry Service, in Ghogha, Bhavnagar on Sunday

changed that in the last three years. The goal is to make our transport sector integrated and state of the art."

The PM stressed on the importance of integrated transport system that includes waterways, road, railway and air transport. The ferry service is expected to reduce travel time between Bhavnagar and Bharuch from eight hours (360km by road) to 1.5 hours (31km by sea). In the second phase, the ferry will also transport trucks,

light commercial vehicles and cars along with passengers.

"I have been hearing about Ghogha-Dahej Ro-Ro ferry service since my school days. I think Balvantrai Mehta was the CM then," said Modi. "Many governments have gone but the project never took off. It is destiny that all good works are being carried out during my tenure," he said at his third rally this month in poll-bound Gujarat.

"I had laid the foundation stone for the project in 2012, but

for doing work in the ocean, you had to remain dependent on the Central government then. There were such people in the Central government that they had put a ban on development from Vapi to Mandvi in Kutch along coastal Gujarat," he said.

"I wanted this service to begin when I took over as CM, but you won't believe the structural mistakes the previous governments had made in the ro-ro ferry service design. They had asked the operators to build terminals. How can bus operators or airline operators be asked to build bus stations and airports? We changed the policy and made the terminal and did the dredging. Now, the operations will be handed over to the private operator and government will be partner in profits," the PM added.

Recollecting the maritime history of Gujarat, Modi said that the history of human civilization illustrates the vitality of rivers and maritime trade. "Gujarat is the land of Lothal. How can we forget these aspects of our history? This project is all about reviving our glorious past, connecting people of Saurashtra and South Gujarat," he added.