

Speech by Sameer Kumar Khare IAS (retd)
Chairman, National Shipping Board
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Speech

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Distinguished Office Bearers of the Maritime Union of India,

Esteemed Seafarers and Industry Leaders,

It is a privilege to address this distinguished gathering of the Maritime Union of India—an organisation that has, for decades, represented the heartbeat of India's maritime workforce. I stand here today not just as the Chairman of the National Shipping Board, but as someone who deeply values the contribution of every Indian seafarer who sails under our flag and strengthens our maritime presence across the globe. India's maritime sector is at a decisive moment. With global supply chains evolving, coastal and inland shipping expanding, and India positioning itself as a global logistics hub, our seafarers have become indispensable ambassadors of professionalism, resilience, and excellence.

Acknowledging the Role of MUI and Indian Seafarers

MUI has played a vital role in: protecting the rights and welfare of seafarers, ensuring fair and transparent working conditions, promoting training and skill enhancement, and maintaining industrial harmony in the shipping sector.

Our seafarers—whether on board cargo vessels, tankers, passenger ships, offshore units, or coastal shipping fleets—have consistently shown commitment even in the most challenging times. The COVID-19 pandemic was a defining moment. It was India's seafarers who kept global supply chains moving when the world came to a standstill. Their contribution must be celebrated, remembered, and honoured.

Government Commitment to Seafarer Welfare

The National Shipping Board has consistently advised the Government to focus on: improved working and living conditions on board; timely sign-on and sign-off processes; enhanced medical support and mental-health care; streamlining of approvals, licensing, and documentation;

and expanding employment avenues for Indian seafarers globally. We are actively recommending reforms to support higher wage competitiveness, safe working environments, and greater job security. A special focus is being placed on women seafarers, ensuring diversity, inclusion, and equal career growth opportunities.

Skill Upgradation & Modern Training

The maritime world is shifting rapidly with the introduction of: autonomous vessels, green shipping technologies, alternative fuels like LNG, methanol, and hydrogen, and advanced navigation and engine systems. To prepare India's workforce, the Board is supporting: upgrading maritime training institutes, introducing global-standard simulators, and establishing partnerships with international maritime universities. Our goal is to make Indian seafarers the most future-ready in the world.

Expanding Employment Opportunities

We are working with shipping companies, flag-state administrations, and global maritime employers to increase: placement of Indian officers and ratings, participation in international maritime operations, opportunities in cruise liners and offshore segments. The aim is to position India firmly as a maritime talent capital of the world.

Industrial Harmony & Collaboration with MUI

Industrial harmony has been the foundation of the sector's growth. I acknowledge MUI's constructive engagement in wage agreements, dispute resolution, and promoting a balanced and cooperative environment between employers and employees.

I assure you that the National Shipping Board values this partnership deeply. We believe that any industry grows only when its workers grow, when their families feel secure, and when their aspirations are respected.

Vision Ahead

The next decade offers unprecedented opportunities. With the Prime Minister's vision of Maritime India 2030 and Amrit Kaal for Ports and Shipping, we are committed to expanding India's fleet size, promoting shipbuilding and ship repair, boosting coastal trade and inland waterways, and increasing India's global maritime share. But the

success of every policy, every reform, and every initiative ultimately rests on people—and the first among them are our seafarers.

Conclusion

To the members of the Maritime Union of India:

You are the backbone of our maritime sector. Your hard work, sacrifice, professionalism, and discipline make India proud in every corner of the world. As Chairman of the National Shipping Board, I reaffirm our commitment to work with you closely—to build a safer, stronger, and more prosperous maritime future for India.

Thank you.

Jai Hind.