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Sagarmala is a very ambitious project of the Indian Government: Rajive Kumar, Shipping Secretary

By ET Now | Updated: Mar 23, 2017, 03.35 PM IST

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In an interview with **ET Now**, **Rajive Kumar**, **Shipping Secretary** talks about the much anticipated **Sagarmala Project** and how the project is going along. He also spoke about some key priority areas for the Shipping Ministry.

Edited excerpts:

What are some of the key priority areas and reforms that you at the Ministry are currently working on for the shipping industry?

You have rightly pointed out that in the last three years this ministry and the sector is driven by the vision of our honourable Prime Minister and the dynamism of our minister.

Starting with our flagship programme Sagar Mala as you are aware that this is a very ambitious plan which was approved by the government for an integrated development of all maritime-related activities. We have almost 7500 km of coastline, about 14500 km of navigable waterways and geographically our country is blessed because it is situated at a place where most of the major maritime routes pass by. There is a huge scope for tapping into all these and Sagar Mala programme intends to do exactly that.

Can you walk us through the phase wise development plan of Sagar Mala project?

Sagar Mala programme has total of four components; one, of course, is that the port capacity has to go up, their efficiencies have to go up.

The second pillar is that relatable to the ports we should try and cultivate port led industrialisation and development because that cuts hugely into the logistics cost which is one of the major issues challenging the economic growth in the country.

The third component is connectivity with the hinterland because unless the connectivity with the hinterland is improved and the transportation cost brought down the competitive of our exports, imports and domestic transportation would not improve.

Fourth and major component is that development of the coastal communities because we cannot expect development without taking these communities along with that so all these four components are included under Sagar Mala and the national perspective plan was unveiled on 14th April 2016 in the first ever maritime **India** Summit which was held in Mumbai by the honourable Prime Minister.

Under the plan, we had projects more than 400 projects with the cost of almost Rs 8 lakh crore which were to be implemented over the next 10 to 15 years. We have identified 199 core projects which we will be taking up in the next three years under the Sagar Mala programme and the total cost of these 199 projects is Rs 3.31 lakh crore and we have started work on projects of worth more than Rs one lakh crore which are either being implemented or will shortly be launched.

What is the vision around port connectivity with freight corridors and linking inland waterways that you are currently working?

Sagar Mala Programme originally was envisioned by our then Honourable Prime Minister Mr **Atal Bihari Vajpayee** and the linking of rivers is a separate programme which the water resources ministry looks after.

But on the integration I think you are absolutely right, one of the key issues in moving things smoothly in the country and for exports is an interlinking of all modes of transport and from that perspective the western dedicated freight corridor is now slowly coming to its completion and we are now working for providing of spur lines to the major ports on the west coast.

The line in any case will terminate on JNPT and our effort is that all other major ports along that corridor should be linked to the western dedicated freight corridor.



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Now we have started concept of multimodal hubs and I am happy to report that in [Varanasi](#) we are bringing up an inland terminal for waterway national highway number one which will have connectivity with two national highways.

It will also be connected to the railway line and interestingly because Mughal Sarai is presently the last point of the eastern dedicated freight corridor. Inland Waterways Authority which is implementing the project has an MOU with the dedicated freight corridor corporation so that that can act as a transfer point for all cargo which is going further towards Haldia and Kolkata and this would be an interchange point.

Similarly at other places also for example at Paradip and Vizag and all other ports we are looking for developing these multimodal hubs with connectivity into the hinterland and this concept is only going to grow.

ET Now: When will we see the first movement on these projects, I am afraid sir lot of these projects as of now on paper for them to see reality and for them to really become part of India's infrastructure lot of work needs to be done. When do you think the first brick will be moved?

I had just mentioned about Varanasi and coincidentally I had visited the terminal which is being built at a very fast speed in Varanasi. I invite you to join and see the position there at site and we are very hopeful that by end of 2018 this terminal will be operational.

So it is not that these plans are on paper, as I said that almost Rs one lakh crores worth of projects are already on the move and we expect substantial movement on the ground by 2018-19.

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