

Vizhinjam International Seaport

Posted at: 05/05/2025

Vizhinjam International Seaport: India's Maritime Gateway

Why in News?

- **Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the ₹8,867 crore Vizhinjam International Deepwater Multipurpose Seaport in Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.**
- It marks **India's first deep-water, semi-automated container transshipment port**, operational under Phase 1.
- The port aims to reduce India's dependence on foreign transshipment hubs and position India as a key player in global maritime trade.

Context

- Currently, **~75% of India's transshipped cargo is handled by foreign ports** like Colombo, Singapore, Klang.
- India seeks to establish a **domestic transshipment hub** to capture this trade and reduce costs.
- Vizhinjam's commissioning aligns with India's **Sagarmala Programme** to promote **port-led economic growth** and regional development.

Introduction

- Vizhinjam is located in **Thiruvananthapuram district, Kerala.**
- Positioned **just 10 nautical miles from key international shipping lanes.**

- Offers a **natural draft of 20 metres**, enabling docking of **Ultra Large Container Vessels (ULCVs)**.
 - Designed as a **hub port for transshipment, logistics, and maritime trade** in South Asia.
-

Historical and Strategic Significance

- Historically known as **Rajendra Chola Pattinam** during the Chola dynasty.
 - Lost prominence under colonial shift to **Madras and Cochin ports**.
 - First study commissioned by **Travancore State in 1940s**; project realized after **80 years**.
 - Geographically **closest Indian port to international shipping lanes**, enabling competition with Colombo and Singapore.
-

Phase 1 Development and Key Features

- Built under **Public-Private Partnership (PPP)** at **₹8,867 crore**:
 - **₹5,595 crore** - Kerala Government
 - **₹2,454 crore** - Adani Ports (concessionaire)
 - **₹817.8 crore** - Viability Gap Funding (Union Government)
- Highlights:
 - **20m natural depth**
 - **Semi-automated operations** with women crane operators trained at community skill park
 - Operational from **July 2024**; commercial operations began **December 2024**

- Achievements:
 - Target: **1 lakh TEUs/year** → Actual: **6 lakh TEUs handled in initial months**
 - **280 vessels docked; 1.08 lakh TEUs handled in March 2025**
-

Global Engagement and Milestones

- Integrated into **MSC's Jade and Dragon shipping services**.
 - Key milestones:
 - Docked **MSC Claude Girardet** (24,116 TEUs) - South Asia's largest container ship
 - Handled **10,330 containers** from **MSC Anna** in a single visit (Indian port record)
 - **MSC Irina**, world's largest container ship, expected in **May 2025**
-

Future Expansion Plans (Phases 2 & 3)

- Completion target advanced to **2028** (originally 2045).
- Planned upgrades:
 - Capacity increase: **1 million → 4.87 million TEUs**
 - Berth length: **1,200m → 2,000m**
 - Additional investment: **₹20,000 crore**
- **Environmental clearance granted - March 2025**
- Featured at **World Economic Forum 2025, Invest Kerala Global Summit**

Operational Challenges

- Pending approval for **Integrated Check Post (ICP)** from **Union Home Ministry**.
- **Delays in ship handling** due to lack of adequate support systems (e.g., **40 ships awaiting in Feb 2025**).
- **Customs office opened recently; Port Health Office still awaited**.
- Last-mile connectivity and allied infrastructure require strengthening.

Associated Economic and Industrial Initiatives

- Kerala Government initiatives:
 - **Vizhinjam Development Zone** and industrial corridor
 - Business centers near the port
 - Appointing a **dedicated IAS officer** for Vizhinjam Economic Growth Corridor
 - Promotion of **shipbuilding, logistics, warehousing, clean bunkering (hydrogen, ammonia)**
- **ANERT exploring green hydrogen and wave energy** initiatives

Vision for Port-Led Growth

- Proposal to declare Vizhinjam as a **Special Investment Region (SIR)**.
- Draft **SIR Bill** focuses on:
 - Creating a **Special Economic Zone (SEZ)**

- Ensuring **compensation and rehabilitation** for landowners
 - Adopting **global best practices (e.g., Shenzhen SEZ model)**
 - Concerns:
 - **Viability Gap Funding repayment may increase from ₹817.8 crore → ₹10,000 crore**
 - Proposed **Colachel port may affect Vizhinjam's viability**
-

Conclusion

Vizhinjam International Seaport represents a **strategic step toward self-reliance in maritime trade**, reducing dependency on foreign ports. Its success depends on **effective state-centre coordination, addressing operational bottlenecks, and leveraging global shipping partnerships** to establish India as a **regional maritime leader**.



AKKA IAS ACADEMY
www.akkaias.com