



IWDC bats for major infra upgrade on National Waterways, to invest ₹50,000 crore in five years

IWDC moots Riverine Community Development Scheme

“More than ₹3,000 crore to be invested for Development of NW 2, NW 16 and IBPR by 2030”: Sarbananda Sonowal

“1000 Green Vessels to be launched in next FIVE years to boost Green Shipping Inland Waterways:” Sarbananda Sonowal

Success of Kochi’s Water Metro Project to be expanded to 15 cities of India including Guwahati”: Sarbananda Sonowal

“Ship repair facilities to be established at more National Waterways soon”: Sarbananda Sonowal

Union Minister Sarbananda Sonowal launches National River Traffic & Navigation System

Sarbananda Sonowal Announced 62 new jetties across states to Amp Up Inland Waterways Transport

Quick Pontoon Opening Mechanism to be installed at all operational National Waterways for seamless passenger movement

“More than ₹23,000 Crores earmarked for New National Waterways Development and Green Shipping initiatives in Inland Waterways:” Sarbananda Sonowal

8 Amphibian Dredgers & 4 Cutter Suction Dredgers to maintain fairway of National Waterways

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The Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC), apex meet for policy deliberation for promotion & propagation of inland waterways in India, witnessed major announcements to boost infrastructure along national waterways.

The second meeting of IWDC, organised by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), the nodal agency for development of waterways under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), announced investments of more than ₹50,000 crore in next FIVE years. A series of new initiatives across 21 Inland Waterway States were announced worth more than ₹1400 crore, on the occasion. The meeting was presided by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal.

The IWDC began with a traditional lamp lighting ceremony by the Chief Minister of Assam, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma along with the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal at Kohora in Kaziranga. The meet also witnessed ministerial participation of Union Minister of State for MoPSW, Shri Shantanu Thakur; Ports Minister of Goa, Aleixo Sequeira; Transport Minister of Assam, Jogen Mohan; Transport Minister of Manipur, Khashim Vashum; Transport Minister of Jammu & Kashmir, Satish Sharma; Transport Minister of Mizoram, Pu Vanlalhlana and Transport Minister of Arunachal Pradesh, Ojing Tasing, among others.



A major policy initiative in the form of Riverine Community Development Scheme was mooted at the IWDC meet to improve the socio-economic well-being of coastal communities by developing infrastructure, promotion of trade and tourism along with riverine ecosystem, providing skill enrichment trainings and upgrading traditional knowledge of river of the communities in an attempt to upgrade the quality of lives of the people living by the banks of the National Waterways.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, *“IWDC has anchored a new vista for cooperative federalism as both the governments at Union and the states discussed, deliberated, debated and dwelled on multiple aspects for strengthening of inland waterways. Historically, the role of inland waterways has been paramount for civilisations. However, this basic tenet of development remained ignored until 2014. Under the dynamic leadership of our Hon’ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, we are attempting at rejuvenating the support system of inland waterways so that we decongest railways and roadways and at the same time, provide a viable, economic, sustainable and efficient mode of transportation for both passengers and cargo operators. At IWDC, we levelled up solutions to tide over challenges in an attempt to unlock the opportunities for economic development. In this regard, we have aimed at launching 1000 Green vessels.”*

At the IWDC, Union Minister Shri Sonowal unveiled initiatives with an investment of more than ₹1400 crore to boost inland waterways transport network in 21 states of the country. In an effort to ensure seamless and sustainable movement of Inland vessels and also ensure its safety, the National River Traffic and Navigation System (NRT&NS) has been launched. Top performing Cargo vessel owners/movers were awarded for their role in the productive use of National Waterways for movement of goods. The Central Database Module and Issuance of Certificates was launched with an aim to smoothen out the process of certification for vessel owners.



Highlighting the focus of IWDC on employment generation and skill training, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, *“Major projects of upgrade in Inland Waterways Transport (IWT) has been conceived*

today at the meeting. To build a robust IWT in the country, the government is planning to develop shipbuilding and ship repair facilities across all the NWs. This will reduce logistics costs, boosting the ancillary industries, and encouraging inclusion of riparian communities through employment opportunities. Further to the NINE Regional Centres of Excellence (RCoE) to skill up manpower and encourage innovation and research in the marine and IWT sector being developed by the Ministry, more CEOs will be created all across the nation.”

Highlighting the growth of inland waterways in the country, Shri Sonowal said, “In the current financial year from April to November 2024, National Waterways have recorded a growth of almost 7% as compared to last year. Apart from the Northeast, comprehensive development of National Waterways across India including NW-3, NW-4, NW-5 and 13 New National Waterways is also being undertaken at ₹267 crores. A significant growth has been made in last one decade in river cruise tourism. The river cruise vessels have increased from 3 in 2013-14 to 25 in 2023-24. We have also recently launched the ‘Cruise Bharat Mission’ to boost cruise tourism in India over next five years, aiming to establish 10 sea cruise terminals, 100 river cruise terminals, and five marinas. Through strategic regional projects and agreements with neighbouring countries such as Bangladesh, Nepal, Bhutan, Myanmar and others, we are facilitating regional trade and seamless transport connectivity in South Asia.”

In a major boost to inland waterways transport in Andhra Pradesh, the Union Minister announced setting up of SIX floating steel jetties on river Godavari (NW 4) at Gandipochamma Temple, Pochavaram, Perantapalli village. A feasibility study on river Penna (NW 79) was also announced along with DPR of NW 4 to get additional inputs for development.



For Assam, the Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal announced setting up of Regional Centre of Excellence (RcoE) in Dibrugarh. The aim of this institution will be to incubate an ecosystem to train and develop manpower for IWT sector in the Northeast region encouraging innovations. The historic

building of IWAI in Dibrugarh has been identified for refurbishment and preserve its glory as a Historic Building. Shri Sonowal also announced setting up of FOUR new Tourist Jetties at Biswanath Ghat, Neamati Ghat, Silghat and Guijan. A new link road of 500 meters will be constructed between the under-construction Ship Repair Facility to Pandu Port in Guwahati. Shri Sonowal further announced design, construction, supply, testing and commissioning of 12 vessels while one survey vessel for river Barak (NW 16). It was also decided to procure TWO Steel pontoons with gangway for providing terminal facility under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).

Speaking on the development in Assam and the Northeast, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal said, *“The strategic significance is underscored by a substantial investment of over ₹1,000 crore in Assam in the last couple of years dedicated to advancement of these waterways. Projects such as Comprehensive development of NW 2, Ship repair facility at Pandu, Bogibeel terminal development, last mile connectivity to Pandu are some of the projects have already taken off. Further huge investments are envisaged for development of North-Eastern waterways which stand as a resounding testament to their critical role in propelling economic growth and prosperity.”*

For Goa, the Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal announced TEN community Jetties on river Mandovi (NW 68), river Cumberjua (NW 27) and river Zuari (NW 111) while THREE additional jetties on river Sal (NW 88) and river Chapora (NW 25). Proposal for fairway maintenance in NW 68, NW 27 and NW 71 have been approved. VTMS are also to be set up on all NWs of Goa.

Building on the success of QPOM on river Ganga (NW 1), the facility is now being extended to all the National Waterways, as discussed at the IWDC today. Sonowal also launched 2 Quick Pontoon Opening Mechanism (QPOM) designed by IIT – Kharagpur which will be deployed in the states of UP and Bihar. FOUR locations in Bihar and another FOUR locations in Uttar Pradesh have been identified for installation of QPOM. In Uttar Pradesh, the Government is planning to boost inland waterways transport by building 8 floating jetties in Mathura and 2 steel jetties in Ayodhya along with Electric Catamaran. A Ship Repair Facility is also going to come up at Ghazipur to minimise downtime owing to either emergent breakdown of the vessels or planned periodic maintenance of the inland vessels.

For bolstering of national waterways network, the Union Minister also announced setting up of 7 jetties on river Jhelum (NW 49) for cruise tourism & urban transportation in Jammu & Kashmir. Sonowal also announced operationalisation of river Chenab (NW 26) and river Ravi (NW 84) for tourism. It will cover NW 84 stretch in Himachal and Punjab also. Government is also planning to operationalise river Sutlej (NW 98) for bathymetric survey. In Ladakh, 2 jetties and 1 green vessel are being set up on river Indus (NW 46).

In Uttar Pradesh, the government plans to enhance inland waterways transport with 8 floating jetties in Mathura, 2 steel jetties in Ayodhya, and an electric catamaran. Additionally, a ship repair facility is set to be established in Ghazipur to reduce vessel downtime from breakdowns or scheduled maintenance, announced Sonowal. To boost river cruise tourism, a circuit is being developed from Kailash Mandir to Taj Mahal stretch of NW 110 in Agra. This is going to give a whole new experience of Taj Mahal from the river.

IWAI has endeavoured to develop NW-1 passing through the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal, as a reliable cargo logistics route under Jal Marg Vikas Project with an investment of more than ₹5000 crore. Arth Ganga program under the JMVP Project focusses on

economic activities in & around the hinterland of river Ganga empowering local communities through river transportation of goods and passengers, skill development and capacity developments.

With a view to increase this growth further, 'Jalvahak' scheme has been launched for incentivizing the movement of long-haul cargo via NW 1 (river Ganga) as well as for NW 2 (river Brahmaputra) and NW 16 (river Barak). Under this Jalvahak scheme, Fixed Scheduled Service between Kolkata - Patna – Varanasi and back on NW 1 and between Kolkata-Pandu and back on NW 2 via IBPR has been launched. This scheme would empower our vessel operators and encourage our business enterprises with safe and timely delivery of cargo in a cost-effective manner. This scheme adds meaningfully to the Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modiji's vision of transformation via transportation as India sails towards becoming a Viksit Bharat.

Since 2014, there has been a 767% increase in number of operational national waterways and 635% increase in volume of cargo handled on NWs. This has been made possible as a result of the 233% increase in investments in national waterways as compared to earlier years prior to 2014. Pathbreaking legislative reforms such as the enactment of National Waterways Act 2016 and Inland Vessels Act 2021 have streamlined the safe and smooth movement of the vessels across the country. Cargo traffic on national waterways has witnessed an exponential growth in the last ten years – from 18 million tonnes a decade ago to 133 million tonnes in FY 2023-24 at a CAGR of over 22%. Jalvahak scheme, which was launched last month to provide 35% incentive to promote utilisation of IWT sector by cargo owners, is being extended to other National Waterways covering other States and Union Territories.

Inland Waterways Development Council (IWDC) set up in 2023 is an exercise to derive the maximum economic potential out of the Inland Water bodies, it requires exceptionally coordinated Centre-State relationship, collaborations and cooperation in the spirit of Cooperative Federalism.

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