

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

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UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 2709
ANSWERED ON 12.08.2025

CARGO MOVEMENT ON NATIONAL WATERWAYS

2709. SHRI PRAMOD TIWARI:

Will the Minister of PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether cargo movement on National Waterways has registered a record high recently;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether inland water transport sector is relatively underdeveloped; and
- (d) if so, the efforts being made by Government to tackle challenges of inadequate depth and air draft, shortage of IWT vessels, lack of terminals, lack of night navigation infrastructure, shortage of MRO facilities, inadequate private investment, augmentation of capacity building and Geo Political challenges?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
(SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL)

(a) & (b) The cargo movement on National Waterways (NWs) have witnessed growth during last five years. The cargo movement on NWs in 2020-21 was 83.61 million tonnes which has increased to 145.84 million tonnes in 2024-25 with a growth of 74.43%. The cargo movement during last five years along with growth is given below;

Year	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	2024-25
Cargo movement (in Million Tonnes)	83.61	108.79	126.15	133.03	145.84
Annual Growth over previous year	-	30.13%	15.95%	5.45%	9.63%

(c) & (d) Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways through Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), an autonomous body under this Ministry has taken several initiatives for developing the declared National Waterways. In March, 2016, 106 new NWs were declared under National Waterways Act, 2016 increasing the total to 111 NWs in the country. As on date, 29 NWs have been made operational and IWAI has initiated the process to develop additional 47 NWs by 2027. The details of efforts made to tackle challenges in order to promote inland water transport sector in the country are given at **Annexure -1**

The steps taken to tackle challenges in inland water transport and to ensure sustainability of NWs in the country:

- i. Fairway maintenance works (river training, maintenance dredging, channel marking and regular hydrographic surveys) are taken up in various National Waterways (NWs) for providing a navigation channel of 35/45 m width and 2.0 / 2.2 / 2.5 / 3.0 m least available depth (LAD) for operation of vessels.
- ii. 53 community jetties, 20 floating terminals, 3 Multi-Modal Terminals (MMTs) and 1 Inter-Modal Terminal (IMT) have been constructed on NW-1 (River Ganga) in addition to 5 pre-existing permanent terminals.
- iii. 13 floating terminals provided on NW-2 (River Brahmaputra) along with MMTs at Pandu, Jogighopa and terminals at Bogibeel and Dhubri. Four dedicated Jetties for cruise vessels have been provided at Jogighopa, Pandu, BiswanathGhat and Neamati. In addition to this, Jetties for cruise and passengers have been constructed at Sadiya, Lyka and OriumGhat in Assam.
- iv. 9 Permanent Inland Water Transport terminals with godowns and 2 Ro-Ro/Ro-Pax terminals have been constructed on NW-3 (West Coast Canal in Kerala).
- v. 04 floating concrete jetties were provided to Govt. of Goa and installed in Mandovi River (NW-68).
- vi. 04 Tourist Jetties on NW-4 (River Krishna) in Andhra Pradesh have been commissioned. Construction of 12 Nos. floating jetties on NW-110 (River Yamuna) in Mathura-Vrindavan stretch in Uttar Pradesh, 2 Jetties on NW-73 (River Narmada) & 2 Jetties on NW-37 (River Gandak) in Bihar have been taken up.
- vii. A new Navigation Lock at Farakka and 2 Nos. Quick Pontoon Opening Mechanisms (QPOMs) have been constructed on NW-1 to facilitate smooth & faster movement of vessels.
- viii. A scheme for providing 35% incentive to promote the utilization of inland waterways transport sector by cargo owners and for scheduled service for cargo movement on NW-1 and NW-2 and NW-16 via Indo Bangladesh Protocol by Inland & Coastal Shipping Limited (ICSL) has been launched by the Government. This scheme is expected to divert 800 million tonne Km cargo on IWT mode, which is nearly 17% of the current cargo of 4700 million tonne Km on NWs.
- ix. The National Waterways (Construction of Jetties / Terminals) Regulations 2025 have been notified, allowing private companies to invest and operate Inland Waterways

infrastructure by providing a clear regulatory framework to attract private sector investment for facilitating the growth of inland waterways sector.

- x. To increase ease of doing business in the IWT sector, along the same lines as 'vahan' and 'sarathi', a central data base and portal has been developed for registration of vessels and crew all over the country. This will facilitate registration of vessels and crew digitally and would also provide accurate status on number of vessels and crew in the country and thus help in planning.
- xi. The cargo movement on the waterways suffer from problems of multimodality because of lack of industries along the waterways. Therefore, projects for development of cargo aggregation hub – Freight Village at Varanasi and Integrated Cluster- cum-Logistics Park, Sahibganj have been taken up. NHLML, a PSU under the Ministry of Road Transport and Highways has been engaged for development of these MMLPs. The work of Rail connectivity for three MMTs has been assigned to M/s Indian Port and Rail Company Ltd. (A PSU under MoPSW).
- xii. Indo Bangladesh Protocol route no. 5 & 6 between Maia and Sultanganj has been operationalized recently with successful trial movements.
- xiii. For modal shift of cargo to waterways, more than 140 Public Sector Units have been approached to plan their movement using Inland Water Transport mode. They have been requested to outline their current status of cargo movement through the waterways and their plan for modal shift of cargo. The Ministry of PNG, Co-operation/ Fertiliser, Food & Public distribution, Heavy industries, Steel and Coal have been requested to advise the PSUs under their jurisdiction to utilise IWT mode as far as possible and earmark certain percentage of their cargo for IWT mode keeping in line the MIV targets.
