

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
LOK SABHA
STARRED QUESTION NO. *35
ANSWERED ON 03/02/2023

DEVELOPMENT OF FERRY SERVICE

*35. SHRI SUNIL KUMAR MONDAL:

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

पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्री

- (a) whether the Government has any proposal to launch other cruises on the lines of Ganga Vilas at various places for further development of ferry services in India and if so, the details thereof along with the estimated profits likely to accrue therefrom;
- (b) whether Government has made any plan under which passengers cruise ships advancement work and service could be done in more better and modern way including their safety and security in comparison to foreign cruises in India,
- (c) if so, the details thereof along with the future initiatives taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (d) the details of the Ganga Vilas Cruise launched recently along with the steps taken for its safety and security indicating the expenditure incurred thereon and for development of infrastructure for cruise services?

ANSWER

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

- (a) to (d) A statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a) TO (d) OF LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO.*35 FOR 03.02.2023 RAISED BY SHRI SUNIL KUMAR MONDAL, HON'BLE M.P. ON "DEVELOPMENT OF FERRY SERVICE"

(a) Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways had organized the 1st Incredible India International Cruise Conference 2022 at Mumbai on 14-15 May, 2022 wherein leading cruise operators of the world had participated. The work done by Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) in ensuring draft and navigational aids in waterways and the jetties constructed and planned were shared. They have shown keen interest in harnessing the potential of river cruise tourism in India. MoUs were also signed with M/s. Heritage River Journeys Pvt. Ltd. (Operated under the brand name 'M/s. Antara River Cruise'), M/s Adventure Resorts & Cruise Pvt. Ltd. and M/s. J.M. Baxi & Co. This ground work done on waterways-

i. Led to start of the longest river cruise from Varanasi to Dibrugarh Assam via Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route on 13.01.2023.

ii. Has led to increased bookings on several river cruises on Ganga, Brahmaputra, Kerala Backwaters, Odisha, etc.

The initiatives taken by the Government and benefits of promotion of river cruise tourism are detailed at Annex. -1.

(b)& (c) IWAI has conducted a study for preparation of "River Cruise Vision 2047" with Action Plan for development of river cruise tourism in India. IWAI is providing navigable waterway and jetties on the National Waterways which are being used by the cruise operators, by providing the best in world cruise vessels and services, attracting Indian and foreign tourists from all over the world. The State Governments are collaborating by providing their best cultural, handicraft, tourism and hospitality products to such tourists.

(d) Hon'ble Prime Minister flagged off (online) the longest river cruise voyage by Ganga Vilas on 13th January 2023 from Varanasi (Uttar Pradesh) on the NW-1 scheduled to reach Dibrugarh (Assam) on 1st March, 2023 on the Brahmaputra River (NW-2) covering a waterway distance of about 3200 km between NW-1 & 2 via Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route.

Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) is responsible for development and regulation of National Waterways (NWs) for shipping and navigation as per IWAI Act, 1985. The infrastructure including terminals developed for cargo vessels are also being utilized by river cruises. IWAI acts as a facilitator for river cruise tourism. Pilotage and escorting for safe navigation is provided to the vessel by IWAI.

Initiatives taken by the Government

- i. Maintaining Navigational Channel; carry out bandaling & dredging work
- ii. Navigational aids like buoys with lights, night navigation (high density stretches), masts, etc.
- iii. Hydrographic survey of the channel & update on Digital Map with markers
- iv. Tugs & rescue vessels in case of emergency
- v. Coordination with Bureau of Immigration and Customs Department
- vi. Coordination with Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) for navigational assistance
- vii. Portal for Asset & Navigational Information (PANI) to enable stakeholders to have access to key information on NWs.
- viii. Terminal infrastructure for berthing of vessels; power supply, bunker oil
- ix. Co-ordination with State Govt. for pontoon bridge opening, HT lines

Benefits of promotion of river cruise tourism

- i. River cruise can promote tourism in the hinterland states, enhance India's tourism revenue after developing modern amenities and infrastructure.
- ii. It would generate employment and benefit the local communities in addition to benefits created to national economy.
- iii. It would provide skilled/non skilled employment through training of local boat operators, hoteliers and restaurants operators to handle domestic as well as international tourists.
- iv. It would also benefit the local markets i.e handicrafts to some extent.
- v. Thus, it would help in uplifting the lives of people living in the hinterland of waterways by providing employment.
- vi. It would also improve the health status of local community living in the hinterland regions.
