

CARGO SHIP SAILS FROM PATNA TO PANDU HERALDING A NEW AGE OF LOGISTICS FOR ASSAM

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Ports & Waterways

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal flagged off an inland waterway vessel MV Lal Bahadur Shastri from Patna to Guwahati today. The vessel started its journey from Patna today and is carrying 200 Metric Tonnes of foodgrains headed for Pandu in Guwahati & will travel via Bangladesh to reach the destination by early March, 2022.



The minister also laid the foundation stone for construction of Kalughat intermodal terminal at Saran in Bihar on National Waterway - 1 (river Ganga).

This historic event was also attended by Union Minister of Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution, Piyush Goyal (virtually); Union Minister of State for Consumer Affairs, Food & Public Distribution and Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Ashwani Kumar Choubey; Union Minister of State for Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shantanu Thakur; Deputy Chief Ministers of Bihar, Tarkishore Prasad and Renu Devi; Mangal Pandey, Minister of Health and Family Welfare, Mr Khalid Mahmud Chowdhury, Minister of State, Ministry of Shipping, Government of People's Republic of Bangladesh; Rajiv Pratap Rudy, MP (Lok Sabha); Sushil Kumar Modi, MP (Rajya Sabha); Ravi Shankar Prasad, MP (Lok Sabha) among other dignitaries & senior officials from the state government and Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).



The vessel starts its sail on National Waterway-1 (river Ganga) through Bhagalpur, Manihari, Sahibganj, Farakka, Tribeni, Kolkata, Haldia, Hemnagar; Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route through Khulna, Narayanganj, Sirajganj, Chilmari and National Waterway-2 through Dhubri, and Jogighopa covering a distance of 2,350 km. The vessel will take about 25 days to cover the entire voyage and is expected to reach Pandu in Guwahati by early March.

This historic feat will usher a new era of growth for all the states of Northeast India. The waterways will cut through the landlocked access which has been crippling development in the region for long. The waterways not only remove this geographical hindrance on the road of progress in the region but also provides an economical, swift and convenient transportation for the businesses and people of the region.

In line with the “Act East” policy of the Prime Minister, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW) has taken up several infrastructure projects on National Waterway-1, Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route, and NW2, through the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI). These steps will improve the connectivity with North Eastern Region (NER) through waterways. The Government has undertaken the ambitious Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) with an investment of about Rs. 4600 crore for the capacity augmentation of NW-1 (river Ganga) for safe and sustainable movement of vessels upto 2000 tonnes.

Speaking on this landmark moment, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, said, “This is a historic moment for all of Northeast as we embark to reap the benefit of the most seamless cargo transportation through Brahmaputra. This is not just a journey from Patna to Pandu but it is a journey of unfulfilled desires & aspirations to reach out to a wider world via waterways. The opportunity for the people of Assam & Northeast is tremendous. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister, the Northeast region is no longer relegated but every effort is made to act & unlock the value that the Ashalakshmi promises. We are confident that by restarting the cargo movement via waterways is going to play a pivotal role in energising India’s northeast as the engine of growth.”

IWAI aims at running regular scheduled services on these routes. The Protocol on Inland Water

Transit and Trade (PIWTT) between India and Bangladesh allows mutually beneficial arrangements for the use of their waterways for the movement of goods between the two countries by vessels of both countries. National Waterway-1 (River Ganga) is connected to National Waterway-2 (River Brahmaputra) and National Waterway-16 (River Barak) through Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) routes. To improve the navigability, two stretches of IBP routes, i.e., Sirajganj-Daikhowa and Ashuganj-Zakiganj are also being developed at a cost of Rs. 305.84 crores on an 80:20 share basis (80% being borne by India and 20% by Bangladesh). The development of these stretches is expected to provide seamless navigation to NER via the IBP route. The contracts for dredging on the two stretches for providing and maintaining requisite depth for a period of seven years (from 2019 to 2026) are underway.

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