

BRAHMAPUTRA (NW2) GETS CONNECTED WITH GANGA (NW1) VIA INDO BANGLADESH PROTOCOL ROUTE; CARGO SHIP CARRYING FOODGRAINS FROM PATNA DOCKS AT PANDU

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

Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways and AYUSH, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal received the maiden voyage of food-grains from Patna to Pandu via Bangladesh in Guwahati today. Chief Minister of Assam, Dr Himanta Biswa Sarma and MP of Lok Sabha for Guwahati, Queen Oja joined the celebration along with Sanjay Bandopadhyay, Chairma, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) to welcome self propelled vessel MV Lal Bahadur Shastri carrying a total of 200 MT of foodgrains for Food Corporation of India (FCI) as it completed the maiden pilot run from Patna to Pandu via Bangladesh. IWAI is planning to run a fixed schedule sailing between NW1 and NW2 heralding a new age of inland water transport for Assam & the Northeast India.



The vessel started its sail from Patna on National Waterway-1 (river Ganga) and passed 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 dignitaries welcomed this wonderful beginning that has the potential to revolutionise cargo movement. Another vessel **MV Ram Prasad Bismil** with two barges **Kalpana Chawla** and **APJ Abdul Kalam** started voyage from Haldia on 17th Feb 22 and is on the way to Pandu. The vessel is carrying **1800MT Tata steel** and already reached Bangladesh Border at Dhubri. The **ODC (over Dimensional cargo,**

252 MT) of Numaligarh Bio-refinery reached Silghat on 15th February from Haldia through IWT via IBP route. Another ODC (250MT) consignment is also on the way to Silghat.

Speaking on the occasion, the **Chief Minister of Assam, Himanta Biswa Sarma** said, *“The start of cargo movement through ships through Indo Bangladesh Protocol Route (IBRP) marks the beginning of a new age of economic prosperity for the whole region of Northeast. I am confident that the vision of our Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and enterprise of our Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal dangoriya will pave the way for growth & development of the inland water transport.”*



Speaking on this landmark moment, the **Union Minister Shri Sarbananda Sonowal**, said, *“Today marks the beginning of a new age of inland water transport in Assam. This is going to provide the business community a viable, economic & ecological alternative. The seamless cargo transportation is a journey of unfulfilled desires & aspirations of the people of Assam. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister, the Northeast region is ready to unlock the value of the Astalakshmi. We are confident that the cargo movement via waterways is going to play a pivotal role in energising India's northeast as the engine of growth.”*

The sustained effort to rejuvenate the historical trade routes via Bangladesh got a fillip under PM Gati Shakti. It has been envisioned that Northeast will slowly turn & convert into a connectivity hub. The integrated development plan, under PM Gati Shakti, has been envisioned in order to amp up swift movement of cargo over Brahmaputra.

The IWAI is also planning to run a regular scheduled service on these routes. The protocol on Inland water transit and Trade (PIWTT) between India & Bangladesh will be optimally beneficial when we can unlock the value from the cargo trade in the region. 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 crore 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. Once the IBP Route no. 5 & 6 from Maia near Farakka in India to Aricha in Bangladesh, the IWT distance connecting NW1 to NW2 (North Eastern Region) will further reduced by nearly 1000 km, which will reduce time and cost to a great extent.

In line with the “Act East” policy of Prime Minister, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), has taken up several infrastructure projects on National Waterways-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.

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.

The meeting was attended by Sanjay Bandopadhyaya, Chairman, IWAI along with Vinit Kumar, Chairman, Syama Prasad Mookerjee Port and top officials of Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways.

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