

INLAND WATERWAYS AUTHORITY OF INDIA: GEOGRAPHY

NEWS: IWAI sets up its new office in Srinagar; launches initiatives to develop river navigation infrastructure in J&K

WHAT'S IN THE NEWS?

The IWAI has launched a ₹100 crore initiative in Jammu & Kashmir to develop inland waterways and promote river tourism, aligning with India's goal to expand eco-friendly and cost-efficient transport under the Blue Economy vision.

Context:

- The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has opened a new regional office in Srinagar, marking its first operational presence in Jammu & Kashmir.
- A ₹100 crore investment has been committed to develop three National Waterways in the region:
 - River Chenab (NW-26)
 - River Jhelum (NW-49)
 - River Ravi (NW-84)

Key Developments:

1. MoU with Jammu & Kashmir Government:

- Aimed at promoting river cruise tourism in the Union Territory.
- IWAI and J&K Government will jointly develop floating jetties and landside infrastructure.

2. Infrastructure Plan:

- Ten floating jetties to be installed at strategic sites including:
 - Akhnoor, Reasi, Pantha Chowk, Zero Bridge, Amira Kadal, and Safa Kadal.
- Dredging operations to maintain navigational fairways for vessel movement.

About Inland Waterways in India:

1. National Waterways Act, 2016:

- Declared 111 inland waterways as National Waterways (NWs).
- Total NW length: 20,275 km across 24 states.

2. Operational Stretches:

- Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly (NW-1)
- Brahmaputra (NW-2), Barak River (NW-16)
- West Coast Canal in Kerala (NW-3)
- Godavari-Krishna-Buckingham Canal (NW-4)
- Rivers in Goa, Maharashtra, and the Krishna-Godavari delta.

About IWAI (Inland Waterways Authority of India):

1. Formation & Jurisdiction:

- Established in 1986 under IWAI Act, 1985.
- Functions under Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways.
- Mandated to develop, maintain, and regulate National Waterways.

2. Headquarters and Offices:

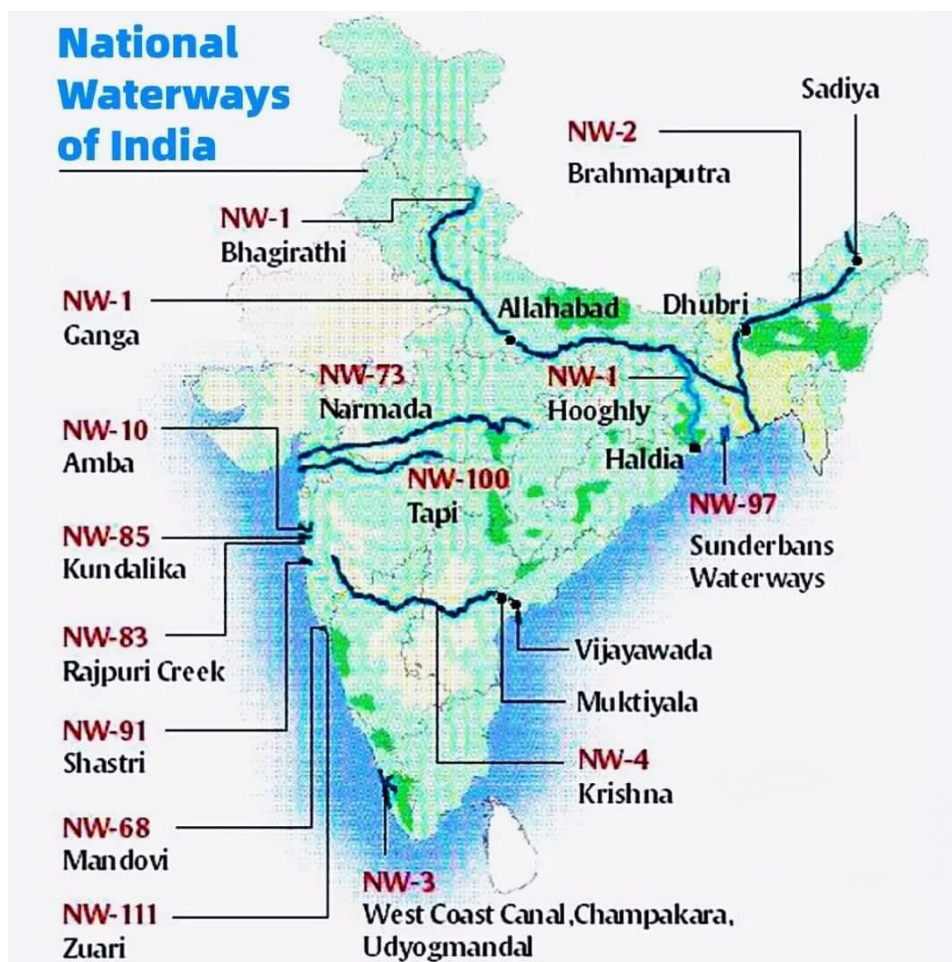
- HQ: Noida, Uttar Pradesh
- Regional Offices: Kolkata, Patna, Varanasi, Guwahati, Kochi, Bhubaneswar
- Sub-Offices: Dibrugarh, Farakka, Haldia, Prayagraj, Vijayawada, and others

Key Functions of IWAI:

- Development and regulation of National Waterways
- Hydrographic surveys, installation of navigational aids
- Construction of terminals, jetties, and lock systems
- Policy implementation, monitoring and funding of IWT projects
- Promotion of river cruise tourism and ferry services

Major National Waterways:

1. NW-1: Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly (Haldia to Prayagraj, 1,620 km)
2. NW-2: Brahmaputra (Dhubri to Sadiya, 891 km)
3. NW-3: West Coast Canal (Kottapuram to Kollam, 205 km)
4. NW-4: Godavari, Krishna Rivers & Buckingham Canal (Kakinada to Puducherry, 1,095 km)
5. NW-5: Brahmani, Mahanadi & East Coast Canal (Talcher to Dhamra, 623 km)
6. NW-16: Barak River (Lakhipur to Bhanga, 121 km)



Advantages of Inland Water Transport (IWT):

1. Cost Efficiency:

- Cheapest mode of bulk transport:

- 1 litre of fuel moves:
 - 24 tonnes/km by road
 - 95 tonnes/km by rail
 - 215 tonnes/km by IWT

2. Decongesting Road and Rail:

- Railways and highways are overburdened; IWT offers an efficient alternative.
- Enhances multi-modal logistics integration.

3. Environmental Benefits:

- Lower greenhouse gas emissions
- Reduces urban congestion and air pollution

4. Diverse Applications:

- Roll-on/Roll-off (Ro-Ro) services enable vehicles to cross rivers.
- River cruise tourism promotes eco-tourism and regional income.
- Passenger ferry services for last-mile, remote-area connectivity.

Government Initiatives to Promote IWT:

1. Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP):

- Aims to develop NW-1 with:
 - Multi-modal terminals (Varanasi, Haldia, Sahibganj)
 - Navigational locks and river information systems
 - Vessels and freight movement systems

2. Jalvahak Scheme:

- Provides financial incentives to cargo operators.
- Targets increase in IWT share from 2% to 5% by 2030.

3. Green Shipping & Tech Promotion:

- Hybrid-electric and hydrogen-fuel vessels are being piloted.
- Harbour Craft Green Transition Programme promotes clean fuels in ports.

4. National Waterways (Construction of Jetties/Terminals) Regulations, 2025:

- Formulated by IWAI to streamline:
 - Permissions, land use, construction approvals
 - Promotes ease of doing business in the IWT sector

5. Coastal Green Shipping Corridor:

- First route: Kandla–Tuticorin, with the goal of zero-emission port operations.

Challenges in Inland Water Transport:

- River Depth Limitations: Seasonal water fluctuations impact navigation.
- Dredging Costs: Maintaining depth is capital-intensive.
- Inadequate Infrastructure: Lack of terminals, jetties, and intermodal links.
- Private Investment Hesitation: Uncertain returns discourage private players.
- Awareness Gap: Cargo owners often unaware of IWT benefits.

Future Prospects and Conclusion:

- Inland waterways can emerge as a key pillar of India's Blue Economy.
- With low operating cost, eco-friendliness, and connectivity potential, IWT can transform cargo, tourism, and passenger logistics.
- Government's push for infrastructure, regulation, and green technologies, along with public-private partnerships, is essential to unlock IWT's full potential.

Source: <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=2128419>