

IWAI signs MoU with global giant Rhenus Logistics India to push cargo growth on national waterways

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In a major development, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with Rhenus Logistics India Private Limited, today, to operate their barge services in various national waterways in India. Rhenus Logistics is a Germany-based international logistics service provider operating globally in more than 70 countries with an annual turnover of EUR 8.2 billion.



The agreement was signed in the presence of Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways Shri Sarbananda Sonowal in New Delhi. Shri T.K. Ramachandran, Secretary, MoPSW; Shri Vijay Kumar, Chairman, IWAI, along with other senior officials of the Authority and representatives of Rhenus Logistics India were present at the occasion.

Under the MoU, Rhenus Logistics will deploy 100 cargo vessels along with pusher tugs in a phased manner along NW-1, NW-2, NW-16 and the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) routes. During the first phase -- starting from the third quarter of 2025, about 20 barges and six pusher tugs are expected to be deployed in these waterways. A combination of pushers and barges, to suit low-draft navigation in waterways, will be used to transport both bulk and break-bulk cargo across North and East India, North-East India, and subsequently to neighbouring countries. The operations will gradually be scaled up to include other national waterways in the country.

Union Minister Shri Sonowal called the MoU between IWAI and Rhenus Logistics India a bold step towards building a resilient multi-modal logistics ecosystem in the country. He termed it a significant moment for private participation in the IWT sector and expressed hope that it will open new opportunities of innovation and capital investments in the sector. This move will ensure effective utilisation and expansion of waterways

infrastructure thereby lowering the operational costs, making IWT sector more competitive and responsive to market demands.

The partnership between IWAI and Rhenus Logistics India is a testament to the success of Jal Marg Vikas Project being implemented with the financial assistance of the World Bank - for the capacity augmentation of National Waterway -1 (River Ganga). Under this project, IWAI is undertaking end-to-end maintenance dredging, building IWT terminals and navigational locks, setting up community jetties and providing navigational aids all along the waterway for smooth and efficient passenger and cargo movement.

With the visionary leadership of Hon'ble Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi and the able guidance of Hon'ble Minister, MoPSW, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, IWAI has made several infrastructural interventions to develop waterways as a robust engine of growth. The total number of operational waterways in the country has gone up from 24 to 29. As on date, river cruises are being operated on 13 national waterways. Cargo traffic on national waterways has touched an all-time high of 145.84 million tonnes. The newly-introduced 'Jalvahak' Cargo Promotion Scheme is expected to further push this growth. Launched in December last year, it incentivises cargo owners and movers to the extent of up to 35% of the total actual operating expenditure incurred on waterways journey thus making it more lucrative than before. A fixed scheduled service for cargo movement has also been initiated on NW-1, NW-2 and NW-16 via IBP route under the scheme.

GDH/HR

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