

Govt Boosts Inland Waterways for Logistics Movement, Secures Global Logistics Expertise for NWs

IWAI Signs MoU with Rhenus Logistics to Boost Multimodal Cargo Movement

100 Barges to be Deployed in Phased Manner, Phase I to Position 20 Barges & 6 Pushers on NW1, NW2 & NW16

MoU to Launch 20 Barges & 6 Pushers, Targets One Million Tonnes of Cargo movement by 2025

“Narendra Modi Govt committed to enable Inland Waterways with Global Best Practices, enabling Opportunities for Sustainable Development”:
Sarbananda Sonowal

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In a significant boost to inland waterways sector of India, the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), the nodal agency for National Waterways under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the global logistics major Rhenus Group here today. The Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal attended this important event, underscoring unwavering commitment to building an energy-efficient, environment friendly, effective integrated transport system through the development of inland water transport (IWT).

The MoU facilitates Rhenus Logistics India Pvt. Ltd. to commence scheduled barge operations across key National Waterways (NWs) in India. As part of MoU, Rhenus will introduce 100 barges in a phased manner in the national waterways while 20 barges and 6 pushers to be deployed in the first phase, targeting the movement of more than one million tonnes of cargo annually by the end of 2025. The MoU will introduce Inland Waterways Transport solutions, barge scheduled services. This will be scaled upto 100 barges within a

few years to cover more NWs under its ambit.

Speaking on the occasion, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping & Waterways (MoPSW), Sarbajit Sonowal said, “Inland waterways offer a remarkable opportunity to create a greener, cost-effective, and efficient logistics network. Under the visionary leadership of Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi ji, the Ministry is working on implementing the framework of the Maritime India Vision 2030. Today, with this MoU, we are enabling our rich and dynamic waterways system to be empowered with global expertise and revamp its efficacy as the preferred mode of bulk cargo movement in the country. Our ministry, with such initiatives, are focused on unlocking the full potential of inland water transport as a national growth engine powering the hinterland towards sustainable development and vigorous growth.”

At the onset, Rhenus will operate on National Waterways 1 (Ganga), 2 (Brahmaputra), and 16 (Barak), as well as the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route. These operations will facilitate the movement of bulk and break-bulk cargo across North, East, and Northeast India, with gradual expansion to other NWs.

Leveraging Rhenus expertise in European inland navigation and a global fleet of over 1,100 barges, the partnership aims to integrate global best practices into the Indian IWT ecosystem. A combination of pushers and barges to suit the low draft navigation will be used to transport both bulk and break bulk cargo.

The partnership is a testament to the success of ‘Jal Marg Vikas’ Project for the capacity augmentation of National Waterway. 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.

The event was also attended by TK Ramachandran, IAS, Secretary, MoPSW; Vijay Kumar, IAS, Chairman, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) among other senior officials of the ministry. From Rhenus, the team was led by Vivek Arya, CEO of Rhenus Logistics India among others.

India’s inland water transport sector has witnessed remarkable progress under MoPSW. The number of operational National Waterways has grown from 3 in 2014-15 to 29 in 2024-25. Cargo movement has surged from 30 MMTPA in 2014-15 to 145.84 MMTPA in 2024-25, contributing to a cumulative movement of over 779 MMT in the past decade. The sector currently spans 14,500 km of navigable waterways across 111 declared National Waterways, the sector is poised to play a transformative role in the country’s multimodal logistics framework.



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