

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3282
ANSWERED ON 07.08.2026

**DAMAGE TO EMBANKMENTS IN SUNDERBANS DUE TO CARGO SHIP
MOVEMENT**

3282. SHRI BAPI HALDAR:

Will the Minister of PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS be pleased to state:

पत्तन, पोत परिवहन और जलमार्ग मंत्री

- (a) whether the Government is aware that the frequent movement of large cargo vessels through the inland waterways of the Sundarbans delta is causing severe erosion and damage to riverbank embankments in districts such as South 24 Parganas, including the Mathurapur region;
- (b) whether any study has been undertaken to assess the ecological and structural impact of heavy ship traffic on small islands such as Mousuni, Ghoramara, Kumirmari, Satjelia, Chhotomollakhali and Amtoli that are facing existential threats due to embankment breaches, saline water ingress and wave pressure;
- (c) if so, the details thereof and the corrective steps taken by the Government in this regard; and
- (d) whether the Government is considering either limiting or regulating the cargo movement through ecologically fragile zones or allocating special funds under Sagarmala or any other scheme for long-term protection and fortification of embankments, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF PORTS, SHIPPING AND WATERWAYS
(SHRI SARBANANDA SONOWAL)

- (a) Riverbank erosion is a complex natural phenomenon influenced by several factors, including river morphology, sediment transport, hydrological regime, tidal action, bank material and local hydraulic conditions. Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), an autonomous organization under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW) undertakes only navigational interventions for maintenance of fairways in only 30-45 meter channel of the river and no specific evidence has been established indicating that movement of shallow-draft Inland Water Transport (IWT)

vessels operating on National Waterway (NW)-97 (Sundarbans Waterways) has caused riverbank or embankment erosion. Fairway maintenance activities are planned keeping in view navigational requirements and applicable environmental safeguards.

(b) & (c) No dedicated study has been undertaken by IWAI and Govt. of West Bengal to establish a direct correlation between IWT operations and riverbank erosion in NW-97. However, IWAI carries out periodic hydrographic surveys and continuous monitoring of channel conditions for maintenance of navigable fairways. The hydrographic data, together with river behaviour and navigational requirements, forms the basis for planning and implementation of fairway maintenance measures.

(d) IWAI regulates the movement of vessels through ecologically fragile zones with following measures:

- Restricting speed of the vessels within the sanctuary.
- Fitting vessels with propeller guards and dolphin deflectors.
- Restricting navigation to designated channels.
- Using non-toxic anti-fouling paints.

MoPSW has not allocated special funds under Sagarmala or any other scheme for long-term protection and fortification of embankments.
