SAGARMALA PROJECT, NATIONAL WATERWAYS AND COASTAL SHIPPING

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At the end of the 15th financial cycle, an independent third-party impact evaluation of the projects under the Sagarmala scheme was done by the National Productivity Council (NPC). These projects are under various pillars of Sagarmala scheme including port modernization, port connectivity, coastal community development and coastal shipping and inland waterways development. No project has been sanctioned for financial assistance under the port led industrialization pillar of Sagarmala scheme.

During financial year (FY) 2025-26, total cargo movement recorded on National Waterways (NWs) was 218 million metric tons. To promote the cargo traffic on National Waterways, a scheme (Jalvahak) for providing 35% incentive to cargo owners and introduction of scheduled service on NW-1 (Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System) and NW-2 (river Brahmaputra) and NW-16 (river Barak) via Indo Bangladesh Protocol by Inland & Coastal Shipping Limited (ICSL) has been approved by the Government.

The average turnaround time of Major Ports has improved to 48.84 hours in 2025-26 from 52.87 hours in FY 2021-22. The Container Port Performance Index (CPPI) published by the World Bank provides an objective and comparable assessment of container port performance based on the time vessels spend in port. As per the CPPI 2025, Jawaharlal Nehru Port ranked 22nd, comparable with Hong Kong (9th), Singapore (21st), and Shanghai (23rd).

The policy initiatives taken by the Government to attract private investment in coastal shipping and inland water transport are under:

Coastal-shipping infrastructure is strengthened under Sagarmala scheme through coastal berths, Ro-Ro/Ro-Pax and passenger jetties, port-connectivity projects.

In the Union Budget 2026-27, a Coastal Cargo Promotion Scheme has been announced to incentivize modal shift of cargo from road and rail to coastal shipping and inland waterways, with the objective of increasing their combined modal share from 6 per cent to 12 per cent by 2047. The scheme is expected to expand the addressable cargo base and generate opportunities for private investment in vessels, terminals, ship repair, cargo handling and multimodal logistics.

Development of National Waterway-5 (NW-5) in Odisha to connect the mineral-rich regions of Talcher and Angul with industrial centers such as Kalinga Nagar and with the ports of Paradip and Dhamra has been announced in the Union Budget 2026-27.

A scheme for providing 35% incentive to promote the utilization of inland waterways transport sector by cargo owners and for scheduled service for cargo movement on NW-1 and NW-2 and NW-16 via Indo Bangladesh Protocol by Inland & Coastal Shipping Limited (ICSL) has been approved by the Government.

An extension of the tonnage tax scheme to inland vessels registered under the Indian Vessels Act, 2021 was announced in the Union budget 2025-26 which has benefitted the Inland vessels operating on National Waterways, rivers, and canals.

The National Waterways (Construction of Jetties / Terminals) Regulations 2025 have been notified, allowing private companies to invest in and operate Inland Waterways terminals by providing a clear regulatory framework to attract private sector investment for facilitating the growth of inland waterways sector.

This information was given by the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, Sarbananda Sonowal, in a written reply to the Rajya Sabha.

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