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Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade

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Why in News

Recently, the **second Addendum to the Protocol** on Inland Water Transit and Trade was signed between India and Bangladesh.

The Protocol will further facilitate the trade between two countries with **improved reliability** and **cost effectiveness**.

Key Points

- **Protocol on Transit and Trade:** Bangladesh and India have a long standing and time-tested Protocol on Transit and Trade through inland waterways.
 - This Protocol was first signed in 1972.
 - It was last renewed in 2015 for five years with a provision for its automatic renewal for a further period of five years.

- **Second Addendum to the Protocol:** The second addendum includes new **Indo Bangladesh Protocol (IBP)** routes and declaration of new Ports of Call to facilitate trade between the two countries.
 - **Routes:**
 - As per the Protocol on **Inland Water Transit and Trade**, inland vessels of one country can transit through the specified routes of the other country. Under the Protocol, 50:50 cargo sharing by Indian and Bangladeshi vessels is permitted both for transit and inter country trade.
 - The number of **IBP** routes has been **increased from 8 to 10**.
 - Inclusion of **Sonamura-Daudkandi stretch of Gumti river** in the Protocol will improve the **connectivity of Tripura** and adjoining States with Indian and Bangladesh's economic centres.
 - The operationalization of **Rajshahi-Dhulian-Rajshahi Route** and its **extension up to Aricha, Bangladesh** will help the augmentation of infrastructure in Bangladesh. It will also decongest the Land Custom Stations on both sides.
 - **Port of Call:**
 - A port of call is an **intermediate port** where ships customarily stop for supplies, repairs, or transshipment of cargo.
 - There were six Ports of Call each in India and Bangladesh under the Protocol. These are Kolkata, Haldia, Pandu, Karimganj, Silghat and Dhubari in India and Narayanganj, Khulan, Mongla, Sirajganj, Ashuganj and Pangaon in Bangladesh.
 - **Five new ports of call:** Dhulian, Maia, Kolaghat, Sonamura and Jogigopha are on the Indian side while Rajshahi, Sultanganj, Chilmari, Daudkandi and Bahadurabad are on the Bangladesh side.
 - **Two extended Ports of Call** i.e. Tribeni (Bandel), West Bengal and Badarpur, Assam on Indian side and Ghorasal and Muktarpur on the Bangladesh side.
 - Inclusion of **Jogighopa** in India and **Bahadurabad** in Bangladesh will provide connectivity to Meghalaya, Assam and Bhutan.
 - Multimodal Logistics Park is proposed to be established in Jogighopa.
- **Movement on shallow draft mechanized vessels:**
 - It would introduce trade between **Chilmari (Bangladesh) and Dhubri (India)** through the use of shallow draft mechanized vessels.
 - This would allow export of stone chips and other Bhutanese and North East cargo to Bangladesh.
 - It would give an easy access for the traders to the hinterland of Bangladesh, enhancing the local economy in Bangladesh and the lower Assam region of India.

- **New opportunities on cargo movement:**

- Under this Protocol, Inland vessels of both the countries can work on the designated protocol route and dock, notified for loading/unloading of cargo.
- The Indian transit cargo is mainly **coal, fly-ash, Over Dimensional Cargo (ODC)** for power projects in North East region.
- The other potential cargo for movement is fertilizers, cement, food grains, agricultural products, containerized cargo etc.

Source: PIB