



Inland Vessel Bill 2021

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Why in News

Recently, the Union Cabinet approved the **Inland Vessels Bill, 2021**, which will replace the **Inland Vessels Act, 1917** after passing in Parliament.

The Bill will **regulate safety, security and registration of inland vessels**.

Key Points

- **Features of the Bill:**

- A key feature of the Bill is a **unified law for the entire country**, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
 - The **certificate of registration** granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States.
- The Bill provides for a **central database** for recording the details of vessel, vessel registration, crew on an electronic portal.
- All **non-mechanically propelled vessels will also** have to be enrolled at the district, taluk or panchayat or village level.
- It enlarges the definition of '**inland waters**', by including **tidal water limit** and **national waterways** declared by the Central Government.
- It also deals **with pollution control measures** of Inland Vessels. This Bill directs the Central Government **to designate a list of chemicals, substances, etc. as pollutants**.

- **Inland Waterways:**

- **About:**

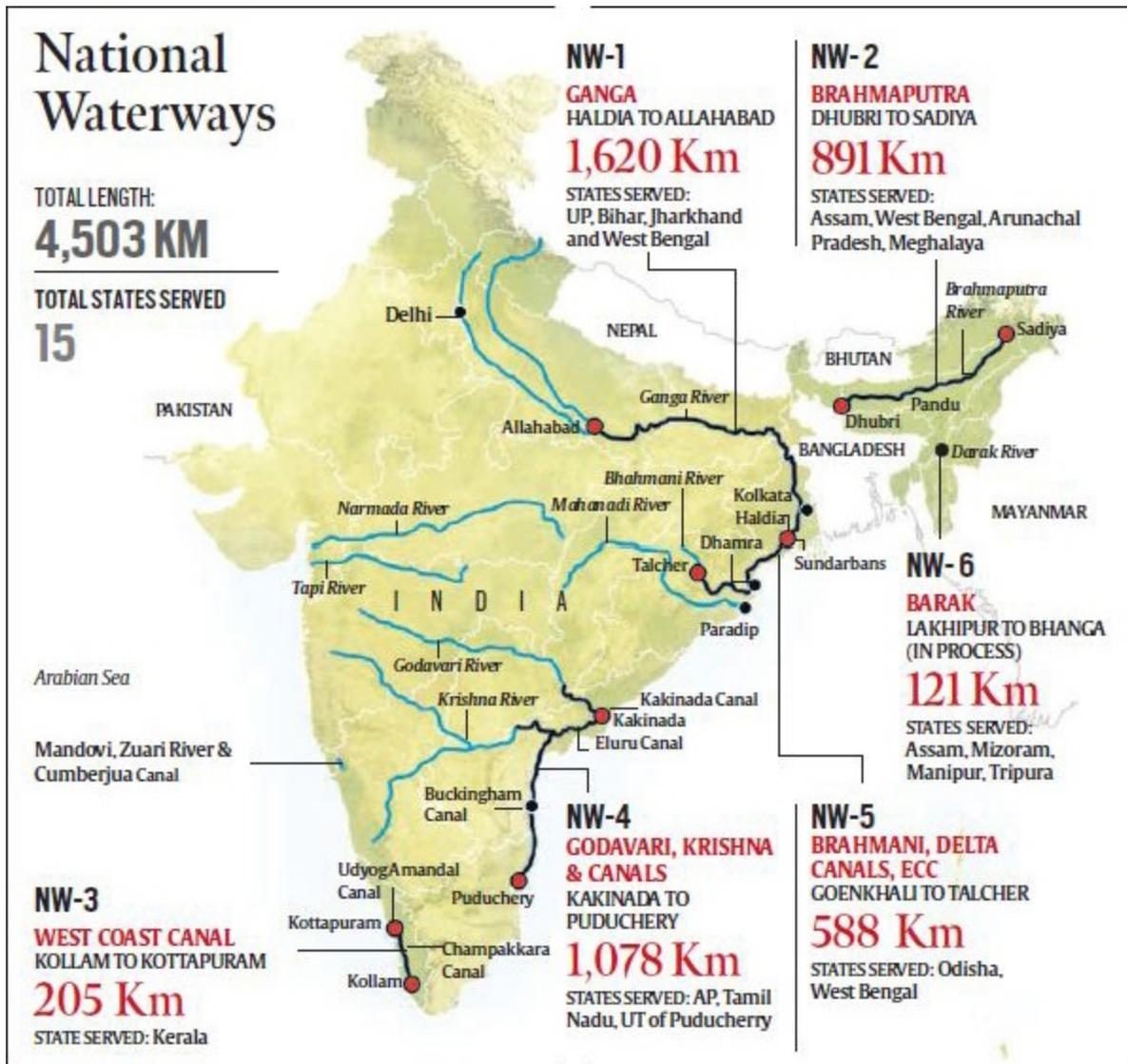
- India has **about 14,500 km of navigable waterways** which comprise of rivers, canals, backwaters, creeks, etc.
- As per the **National Waterways Act 2016**, **111 waterways** have been declared as **National Waterways (NWs)**.
 - **NW-1: Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River System (Prayagraj-Haldia)** with length 1620 km is the **longest National Waterway** in India.
 - The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** is implementing the **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** for capacity augmentation of navigation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch of Ganga (part of NW-1) with the technical and financial assistance of the **World Bank**.

- **Utilization:**

- About **55 million tonnes of cargo** is being moved **annually by IWT (Inland Water Transport)**, a fuel-efficient and environment-friendly mode. However, **freight transportation by waterways is highly underutilized** in the country as compared to developed countries.
- Its operations are **currently restricted to a few stretches** in the **Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly rivers, the Brahmaputra, the Barak river** (northeastern India), the **rivers in Goa, the backwaters in Kerala, inland waters in Mumbai** and the **deltaic regions of the Godavari - Krishna rivers**.
- Besides these **organized operations by mechanized vessels, country boats** of various capacities also operate in various rivers and canals and **substantial quantum of cargo and passengers are transported in this unorganized sector** as well.
- In India, IWT has the **potential to supplement the overburdened railways and congested roadways**. In addition to cargo movement, the IWT sector also provides a convenient function in related activities such as **carriage of vehicles {on Roll-on-Roll-off (Ro-Ro) mode of cross ferry} and tourism**.

- **Steps Taken:**

- The waterways will also **be linked to the eastern and western Dedicated Freight Corridors (DFCs), as well as the Sagarmala Project**, which aims to promote port-led direct and indirect development.
- Further, the provisions of the **Indo-Bangladesh (Sonamura-Daudkandi) and Indo-Myanmar protocol (Kaladan)** permitting transshipment of goods through Bangladesh and Myanmar waters – which, in many cases, are a continuum of India's inland waterways – enabling quicker shipments and deeper market penetration in India's North East.



Inland Waterways Authority of India:

- It came into existence on **27th October 1986** for development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- It primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of **IWT (Inland Water Transport) infrastructure** on national waterways through grants received from the **Ministry of Shipping**.
- It is **headquartered at Noida** (Uttar Pradesh).

Source: TH