



The World's Longest River Cruise 'Ganga Vilas'

Why In News?

- On January 8, 2023, Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and AYUSH Sarbananda Sonowal said that the launch of the **world's longest river cruise with MV Ganga Vilas in Varanasi** on January 13, 2023 by Prime Minister Narendra Modi will mark the beginning of a new era of river cruise tourism for India.

Key Points

- This luxury cruise will cover a distance of more than 3,200 km in 27 river systems in 5 states of India and Bangladesh .
- MV Ganga Vilas Cruise has been equipped to perform the best of the country in front of the world. A 51-day cruise trip to 50 tourist destinations, including world heritage sites, national parks, river ghats, and major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahib Ganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam has been planned.
- MV Ganga Vilas's itinerary has been designed to showcase India's rich heritage while staying at places of historical, cultural and religious importance.
- From the famous '**Ganga Aarti**' in Varanasi, it will stop at Sarnath, a place of great reverence of Buddhism. It will also cover Mayang, which is known for its tantric lore and is the centre of Majuli, the largest river island and Vaishnava culture in Assam. The pilgrims will also visit Bihar School of Yoga and Vikramshila University, which will give them an opportunity to get acquainted with the rich Indian heritage in spirituality and knowledge.
- The cruise will pass through the biodiversity-rich World Heritage Sites of the Sundarbans in the Bay of Bengal Delta, famous for the Royal Bengal Tigers, as well as the Kaziranga National Park, famous for one-horned rhinoceros.
- The MV Ganga Vilas cruise is 62 meters long, 12 meters wide and runs with a draft of 1.4 meters. It has three decks, 18 suites on board with a capacity of 36 tourists, which have all the facilities to provide a memorable and luxurious experience for the tourists.
- The ship adheres to permanent principles at its core, as it is equipped with pollution-free systems and noise control techniques. In the first visit of MV Ganga Vilas, 32 tourists from Switzerland will enjoy the journey from Varanasi to Dibrugarh. The expected date of arrival of MV Ganga Vilas in Dibrugarh is March 1, 2023.
- MV Ganga Vilas Cruise is a first-of-its-kind cruise service. The success of this service in collaboration with Inland Waterways Authority under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways is likely to encourage entrepreneurs to take advantage of river cruises in other parts of the country.
- The global river cruise market has grown at 5 percent in the last few years and the cruise market is expected to reach 37 percent by 2027. In the world, Europe is growing with about 60 percent share in terms of river cruise ships.
- In India, 8 river cruise ships operate between Kolkata and Varanasi, while cruise movement also operates on National Waterway 2 (Brahmaputra). Tourism activities like river rafting, camping, sightseeing, kayaking, etc. are operated at many places in the country.
- 10 passenger terminals are being constructed on National Waterway 2 which will further increase the chances of river cruise. Currently, four river cruise ships are operating in National Waterway 2, while it is National Waterway 3 (West Coast Canal), National Waterway 8, National Waterway 4, National Waterway 87, National Waterway 97, and National Waterway 5 Working in limited

capacity.

- Now that capital expenditure for capacity building in inland waterways is being ramped up, river cruises, with a systematic forward and backward linkage to the economy, are set to develop, especially on both sides of rivers.

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