



# Inland Vessel Bill 2021

## 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:

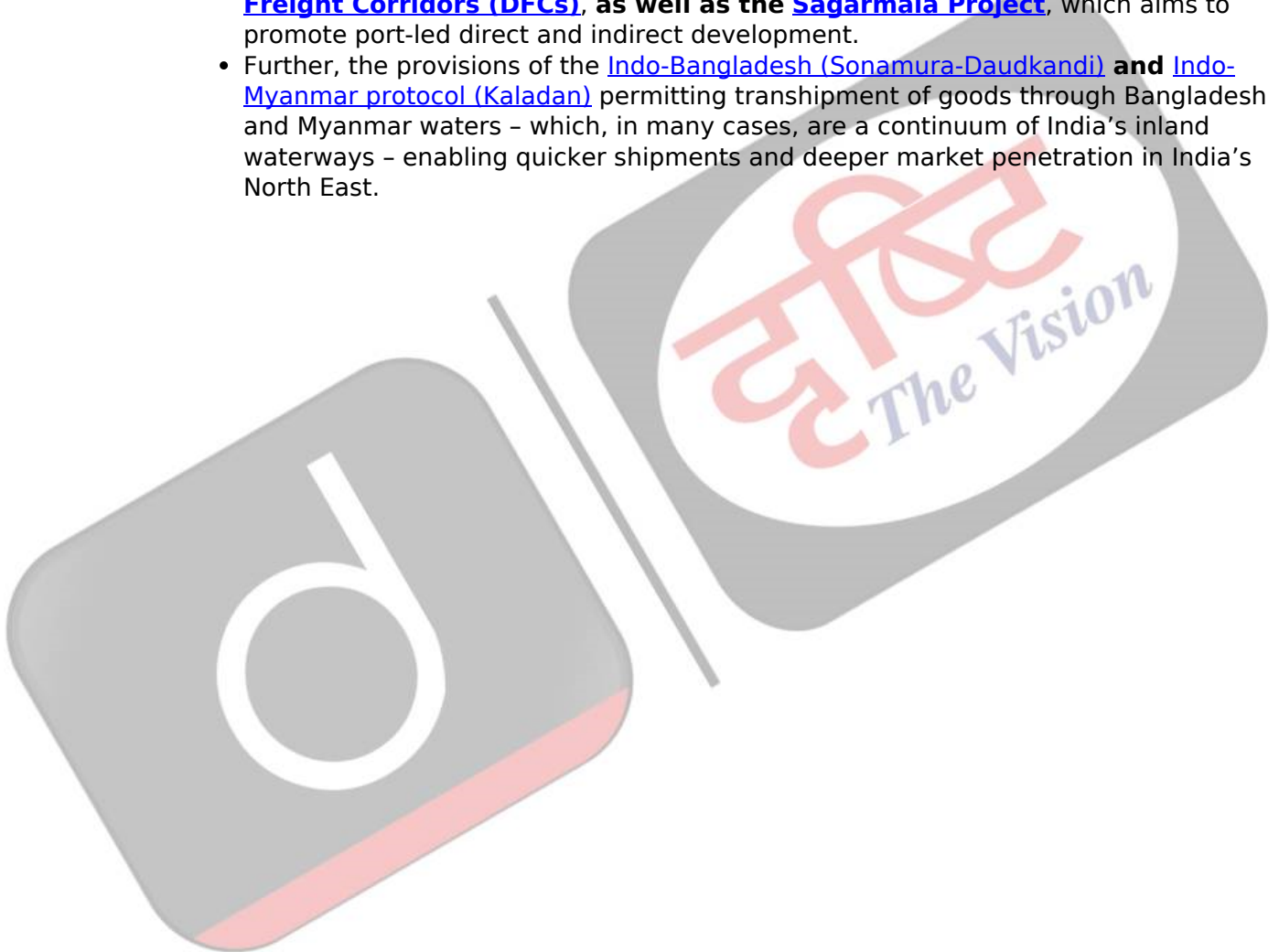
- A key feature of the Bill is a **unified law for the entire country**, instead of separate rules framed by the States.
  - The **certificate of registration** granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions 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.



# National Waterways

TOTAL LENGTH:  
**4,503 KM**

TOTAL STATES SERVED  
**15**



## ▪ Inland Waterways Authority of India:

- It came into existence **on 27<sup>th</sup> 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**