



World's Longest River Cruise- MV Ganga Vilas in Varanasi

Why In News?

- On January 13, 2023, Prime Minister Narendra Modi flagged off the **world's longest river cruise - MV Ganga Vilas** – and inaugurated the Tent City in Varanasi via video conference.

Key points

- On the occasion, the Prime Minister also inaugurated and laid the foundation stone of several other inland waterway projects worth over Rs 1,000 crore.
- The Prime Minister said that the longest river cruise from Kashi to Dibrugarh will put north India's tourist destinations on the world tourism map.
- The Prime Minister also said that other projects worth Rs 1,000 crore being dedicated in Varanasi, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar and Assam will boost tourism and employment prospects in eastern India.
- Highlighting the experience of river cruise, the Prime Minister said that there is something special for everyone in it. Destinations like Kashi, Bodh Gaya, Vikramshila, Patna Sahib and Majuli will be covered for those interested in spirituality.
- Tourists looking for a multinational cruise experience will have the opportunity to pass through Dhaka in Bangladesh and for those who want to see the natural diversity of India, it will pass through the Sundarbans and the forests of Assam.
- The Prime Minister said that this cruise will pass through 25 different river streams, so this cruise has special significance for those who have a keen interest in understanding India's river systems.
- MV Ganga Vilas will start its journey from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and travel about 3,200 km in 51 days to reach Dibrugarh in Assam via Bangladesh, crossing 27 river systems in India and Bangladesh.
- MV Ganga Vilas has three decks with all luxury amenities, 18 suites with a capacity of 36 tourists. In the first trip, 32 tourists from Switzerland are going for the entire journey.
- The MV Ganga Vilas Cruise has been designed to showcase the country's best performance to the world. The 51-day cruise tour is planned for 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.
- The visit will give a great experience to the tourists and an opportunity to get involved in the art, culture, history and spirituality of India and Bangladesh.
- In line with the Prime Minister's endeavor to promote river cruise tourism, the launch of this service will enable it to reap the benefits of river cruises' vast untapped potential and usher in a new era of river cruise tourism for India.
- Tent City in Varanasi is envisaged on the banks of river Ganga to tap the tourism potential of the area. The project has been developed in front of the ghats of the city which will facilitate accommodation in Varanasi especially since the inauguration of Kashi Vishwanath Dham and cater to the growing number of tourists.
- It has been developed by Varanasi Development Authority in the model of Public Private Partnership. Tourists will reach the Tent City by boats from various ghats nearby. The tent city will continue from October to June every year and will be removed for three months due to rise in the water level of the river during the rainy season.
- On the occasion, the Prime Minister inaugurated the Haldia Multi-Modal Terminal in West Bengal. Developed under the Waterway Development Project, the Haldia Multi Model Terminal has a cargo

handling capacity of about 3 million metric tonnes per annum (MMTPA) and the berth is designed to handle vessels up to about 3000 deadweight tonnes (DWT).

- The Prime Minister also inaugurated four floating community jetties at Saidpur, Chochakpur, Zamania in Ghazipur district of Uttar Pradesh and Kanspur in Ballia district. Apart from this, the Prime Minister laid the foundation stone of five community ghats at Digha, Nakta Diyara, Barh, Panapur in Patna district and Hasanpur in Samastipur district of Bihar.
- More than 60 community ghats are being constructed along river Ganga in the states of Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal to boost economic activities and improve the livelihood of local communities in the region. Community jetties will play an important role in improving the livelihood of the people by providing simple logistic solutions for small farmers, fish units, unorganized agro-productive units, horticulturists, floriculture and artisans focusing on economic activities in the hinterland of river Ganga.
- The Prime Minister also inaugurated the Maritime Skill Development Centre for the North East in Guwahati. It will help in carving the rich talent pool in the North Eastern Region and provide better employment opportunities in the fast growing logistics industry.
- The Prime Minister also laid the foundation stone for a ship repair facility and an elevated road at Pandu Terminal in Guwahati. The ship repair facility at Pandu Terminal will save precious time.

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