

Manthan Adhyayan Kendra

MONTHLY UPDATES ON NATIONAL INLAND WATERWAYS OF INDIA

UPDATE-15
November 2019

This update covers the following:

- [Vessels of largest container shipment from Haldia to Pandu Port get stuck due to inadequate water depth in rivers](#)
- [Centre approves inland water transport improvement project in Loktak Lake; concerns raised for fisherfolks in Loktak Lake](#)
- [Ghogha-Dahej Ro-Ro service in troubled waters again](#)
- [Majuli Island Ro-Ro service remains suspended for the last five months](#)

1. Vessels of largest container shipment from Haldia to Pandu Port get stuck due to inadequate water depth in rivers

“In line with Government’s focus on improving connectivity to the North Eastern Region (NER), a landmark container cargo consignment will sail on inland waterways from Haldia Dock Complex (HDC) to the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) terminal at Pandu in Guwahati on 4 November, 2019.” [PIB release, Ministry of Shipping, 3 November 2019](#)



Cargo vessel to transport coal getting loaded at Haldia Dock Complex. (Source: [The Telegraph](#))

The vessel MV Maheshwari carrying 53 TEUs of container cargo sailed from Haldia (National Waterway-1) to Pandu port (National Waterway-2) via Indo-Bangladesh Protocol Route (which includes part of National Waterway-97). The cargo belonged to Adani Wilmar and Hindustan Petrochemicals. Along with the vessel, two more vessels sailed from Haldia to Pandu Port carrying [1200 tonnes coal for Star Cement Plant in Sonapur](#). This ‘largest container movement,’ however, had to face the wrath of cyclone Bulbul on the way. One of the vessel carrying coal got stuck due to inadequate water depth. The vessels were sailed further with the help of a dredger. These vessels were destined to reach the destination in 12 days; however, according to the news reports, the vessels were, almost a month after, 200 km from their destination. Read more at <https://economictimes.indiatimes.com/industry/transportation/shipping/-transport/dry-run-indias-plan-for-an-inland-water-route-from-kolkata-to-guwahati-hits-a-rough-patch/articleshow/72419509.cms?from=mdr>

2. Centre approves inland water transport improvement project in Loktak Lake; concerns raised for fisherfolks in Loktak Lake

On 28th November 2019, Ministry of Shipping approved the inland waterway improvement project on the Loktak Lake in Manipur. ([PIB release, Ministry of Shipping, 28 November 2019](#)). The project of development of inland water transport in Loktak Lake is not part of the National Waterways Programme. The Loktak Development Authority (LDA), Manipur has prepared a DPR for development of Loktak Inland Water Transport for providing IWT in three designated routes connecting economically important villages / islands and having lack of basic transport system as listed below under Centrally Sponsored Scheme (CSS).

- i. Connecting Toupokpi village (Ningthoukhong and Khordak village via Karang, Thanga islands and Komlakhong village): Total distance – 16.5 km
- ii. Connecting Toupokpi village (Ningthoukhong and Mayang Imphal via via Karang island): Total distance – 11.75 km
- iii. Connecting Thanga island and Mayang Imphal via via Karang island: Total distance – 11.45 km

The Manipur government also desires to conduct DPR studies on the following ferry services on Loktak lake during second phase. (Source: Identification of potential of inland waterways in North-East Region, Final Report 2011, Inland Waterways Authority of India p 99-100.)

However, environmental activists and the fishing communities residing around the Loktak Lake have strongly objected to the Inland waterway project claiming that it will destroy the lake's biodiversity and the livelihood of fisherfolks.



Loktak Lake at Manipur. Source: [The Indian Express](#)

“Environmentalist Ram Wangkheirakpam said the project goes against the idea of conservation of the lake which has international importance under the Ramsar Convention. Moreover, the project has also ignored the National and State Wetland rules, he asserted.

“How can the ministry give approval to a project of such scale without even conducting a proper environmental impact assessment of an eco-system which is very sensitive? This is not a wise decision?” questioned Wangkheirakpam.

Read more at <https://indianexpress.com/article/north-east-india/manipur/manipur-inland-waterways-project-will-destroy-loktak-lakes-biodiversity-says-fishing-community/>

3.Ghogha-Dahej Ro-Ro service in troubled waters again

The Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi inaugurated the Phase-1 of the Ro-Ro-service between Ghogha and Dahej on 22nd October 2017. On this event, he said that this launch of ferry between Ghogha and Dahej is of vital importance to the entire nation. ([PIB release, Ministry of Shipping, 22 October 2017](#)). The “fully operational” Ghogha –Dahej Ro-Pax ferry service started on 27 October 2018. The total cost of the project is estimated to be 615 Crore of which 117 Crore has been funded by Central Government under the Sagarmala programme with the main objective of promoting coastal shipping and reducing logistic costs. ([PIB release, Ministry of Shipping, 24 October 2018](#))



Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi during the launch of the Phase-I of this ferry service between Ghogha and Dahej in 2017. Source: [The Indian Express](#)

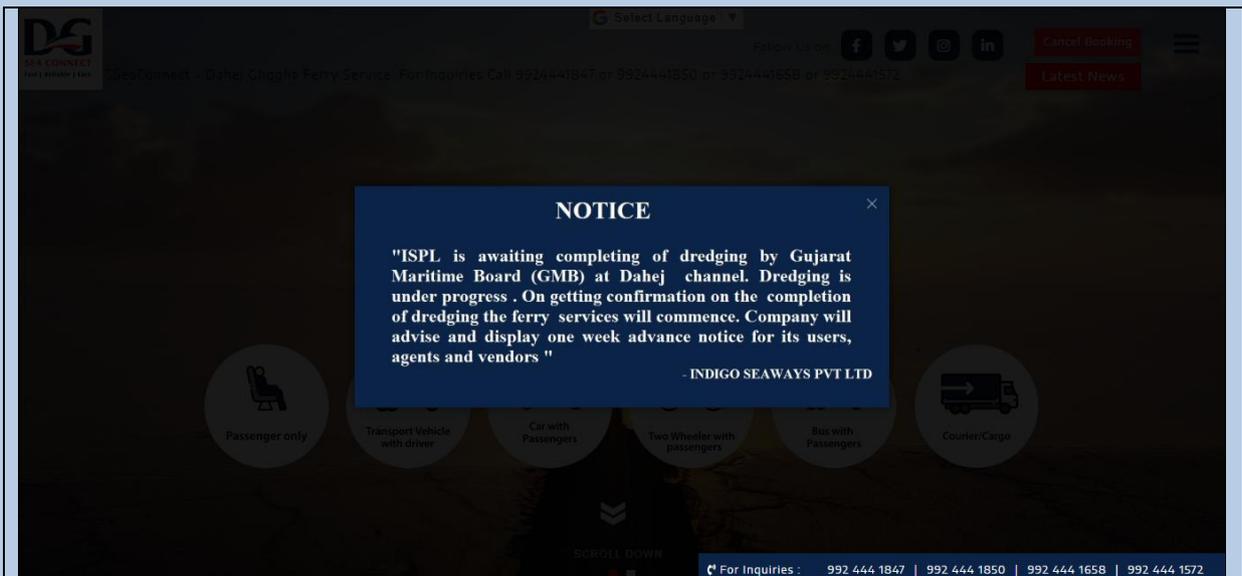
A month after the service was opened, the Ro-Ro ferry vessel transporting people between Ghogha in Saurashtra and Dahej in South Gujarat came to a standstill mid-sea and was sailed further with the help of a tug boat. See https://www.business-standard.com/article/pti-stories/ro-ro-ferry-vessel-stuck-mid-sea-towed-to-safety-by-tugboats-118112101103_1.html

This Ro-Pax service was put on a halt a month after the service was inaugurated in 2018. See <http://www.uniindia.com/ro-pax-ferry-service-between-ghogha-dahej-resumed-in-gulf-of-cambay/business-economy/news/1437526.html>

According to the latest news report, “The famed vessel which ferried Prime Minister Narendra Modi in 2017 during inauguration of the rollon-roll off (Ro-Ro) ferry service between Gogha and Dahej in Gujarat has been put up for sale by its loss-making operator.” Chetan Contractor, head of Indigo Seaways –the ferry service operator was quoted in [The Print](#) saying that Indigo Seaways might turn bankrupt soon owing to the losses, and therefore they plan to sell Island Jade (vessel used to ferry people and cargo) within a month.

The services of the vessel, Island Jade, and another vessel, Voyage Symphony, [were suspended in September this year](#) as enough draft was not available to run the vessel.

Apart from the accidents and operational difficulties in keeping this service operational, a major bottleneck has been the accumulation of silt around the Gulf of Cambay. The contractor was reported [in a news report](#) saying that, “in the long run, we may thinking of exiting the business if we do not get the required depth of 5 meters to operate the ferry without the trouble.”



(Screenshot of the notice by the [Indigo Seaways](#) for suspension of the ferry services.)

4. Majuli Island Ro-Ro service remains suspended for the last five months

In October 2018, Inland Waterways Authority of India started a new Ro-Ro service facility in collaboration with the Government of Assam to provide connectivity for Majuli Island. The Ro-Ro service was started to cut down the circuitous road route of 423 km that trucks take from Neamati to Majuli Island via Tezpur road bridge with the use of river route which limits the distance to only 12.7 km. ([PIB release, Ministry of Shipping, 10 October 2018](#))



Source: <https://nenow.in/north-east-news/assam/aasu-seeks-resumption-of-ro-ro-service-to-majuli.html>

According to a news report, this Ro-Ro service has remained suspended for the last five months. Read more in the link below.

<https://nenow.in/north-east-news/assam/aasu-seeks-resumption-of-ro-ro-service-to-majuli.html>