

MONTHLY UPDATES ON NATIONAL INLAND WATERWAYS OF INDIA

UPDATE- 17
July, August & September 2021

This update covers the following:

- [Chemicals laden barges narrowly avoided accident on NW-3 in Kerala](#)
- [Boat tragedy on the Brahmaputra River \(NW-2\) took lives of two people in Assam](#)
- [Parliament passed the Inland Vessels Bill 2021, passed amid opposition protest](#)
- [Capital dredging in National Waterway -3 in Kerala without prior EC](#)
- [Tourism proposed on National Waterway-2 on Brahmaputra River](#)
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- [Problems of Water transport in Prayagraj, Status of National Waterways in Uttar Pradesh](#)
- [MoU between Numaligarh Refinery and IWAI for transport of ODC & Project Cargo using Inland Waterways](#)

1. Chemicals laden barges narrowly avoided accident on NW-3 in Kerala

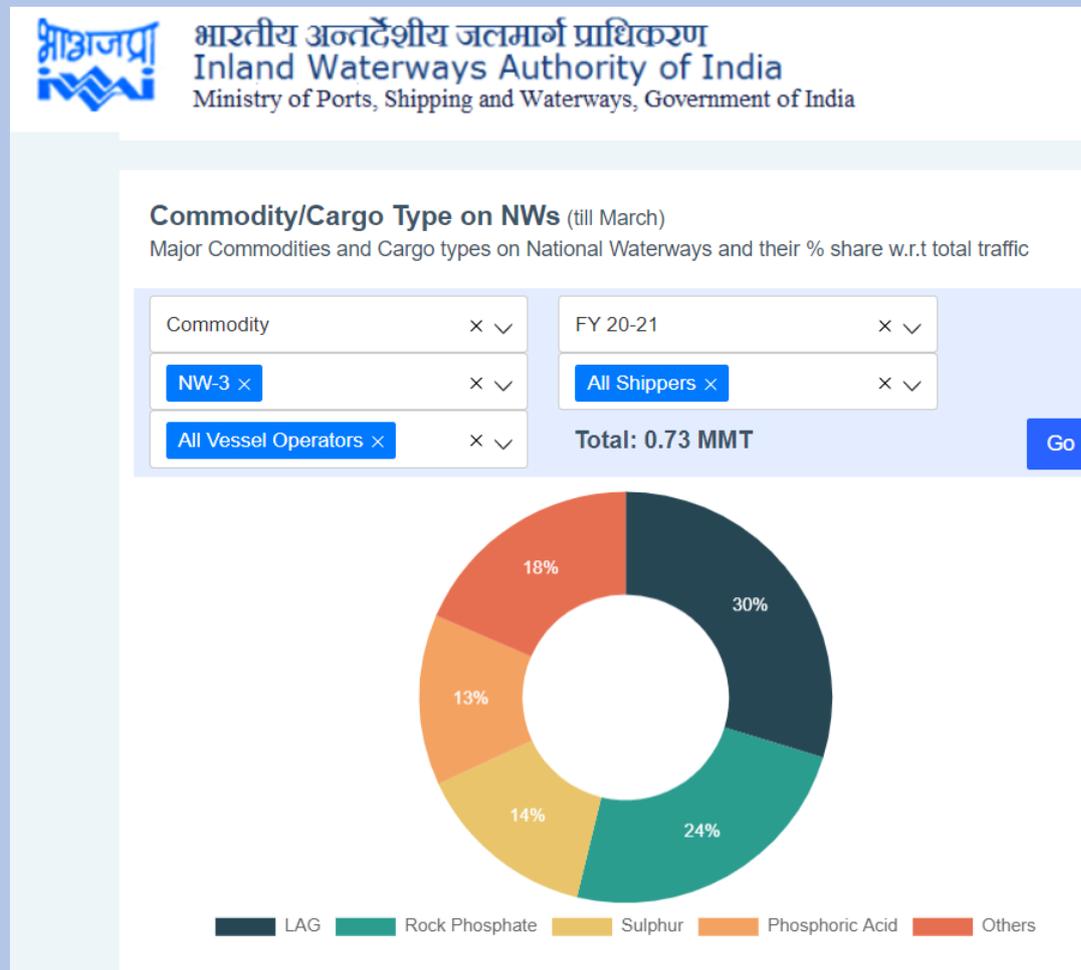
On 26th September 2021, a barge carrying rock phosphate to Ambalamugal and an ammonia carrier barge proceeding to Eloor on National Waterway -3 in Kerala were involved in a near-miss incident that could have turned disastrous.

“The general secretary of Kerala Maritime Organisation, A.M. James, who owns an Italy-registered barge that transports liquefied ammonia, explained how utmost caution must be exercised, since barges carry sulphuric acid, phosphoric acid, and rock phosphate and sulphur through Kochi’s waterways. “Crew members must be experienced, since many areas are narrow and have curves in abundance. They ought to up their vigil since 23 Water Metro ferries, each carrying up to 100 passengers, are set to commence services in early 2022,” he said.”

Source: <https://www.thehindu.com/news/cities/Kochi/near-miss-involving-barges-in-kochi-iwai-for-heightened-alert/article36702948.ece>

According to the Car D portal of Inland Waterways Authority of India, 0.73 MMT of cargo was transported in 2020-21 on National Waterway -3 in Kerala of which LAG constituted 30 %, Rock Phosphate constituted 24%, Sulphur 14 %, Phosphoric Acid 13%, and others 18 %.

According to the Statistics of Inland Water Transport (2019-20), the cargo composition of freight traffic shows that Chemicals (99.07%) and Mix (0.93%) were the major commodities moved through NW-III during 2019-20. These commodities are primarily raw materials of Fertilizers and Chemicals Travancore Ltd (FACT) from Cochin port to FACT factory jetty on NW-3 traversing a distance of about 20 km.



(Source: Car-D-IWAI)

2. Boat tragedy on the Brahmaputra river (NW-2) took lives of two people in Assam

On 8th September 2021, a smaller private boat heading to Majuli Island collided with a bigger government ferry steamer near Nimatighat at Jorhat district in Assam. According to a [news report](#), two lives are lost and one person is missing. This accident on the mighty Brahmaputra river - which is also a declared National Waterway (NW-2) in India - highlights the need of devising and implementing safety measures on the movement of vessels and boats on the waterways.



Sarbananda Sonowal ✓ @sarbanandsonwal · Sep 8

Anguished to learn of the **ferry** accident in **Majuli**. I have talked with Assam CM Shri @himantabiswa regarding the accident and he has informed me of ongoing rescue and relief operations.

I have directed @shipmin_india to provide all necessary support to help the victims.

(Source: Twitter)

On the launch of the 'Mahabahu-Brahmaputra' in February 2021, the Prime Minister performed the Bhumi-pujan of the Majuli bridge. The progress, however, has been slow; although the foundation of the said bridge is laid [twice in the past five years](#) – first in 2016 by Nitin Gadkari and earlier this year in February by the Prime Minister.



Himanta Biswa Sarma ✓ @himantabiswa · Sep 17

Pleased to have flagged off 5 IWT vessels to be pressed into services in Guwahati, Dhubri & **Majuli**.

It will improve institutional framework for water transport & develop **ferry** services, in view of discontinuation of single engine **ferry** services following the #Nimatighat accident



(Source: Twitter)

After this boat tragedy, Sarbanand Sonowal, the Union Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways has assured that the bridge would be constructed in the next four years.

Read more: <https://www.indiejournal.in/article/majuli-boat-tragedy-how-safe-are-brahmaputra-waterways>

Union Minister for Ports, Shipping & Waterways and Ayush, Shri Sarbananda Sonowal visited Majuli on 10th September in the aftermath of the tragic boat accident. While speaking to the media, he said that Central and State Govt. agencies will work in tandem to dredge the river Brahmaputra so that

Ro Pax vessels could travel between Majuli and Jorhat in the winter season.

(Source: <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1753890>)

3. Parliament passed the Inland Vessels Bill 2021, the bill passed amid opposition protest

On 2nd August 2021, the Parliament passed the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021 'to usher a new era in the inland water transport sector.' Shri Sarbananda Sonowal, Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways moved the bill in the Rajya Sabha "emphasizing the requirement of a new legal regime, which is adaptive and favourable for future technological developments, capable of facilitating present and future prospects of trade and transportation and safe navigation by inland vessels was necessitated.

" ([PIB, Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, 2nd August 2021](#))

According to the [Inland Vessels Act 2021](#), it is "an Act to promote economical and safe transportation and trade through inland waters, to bring uniformity in application of law relating to inland waterways and navigation within the country, to provide for safety of navigation, protection of life and cargo, and prevention of pollution that may be caused by the use or navigation of inland vessels, to ensure transparency and accountability of administration of inland water transportation, to strengthen procedures governing the inland vessels, their construction, survey, registration, manning, navigation and such other matters connected therewith or incidental thereto."

While the Inland Vessels Act, 2021 aims to replace the Inland Vessels Act, 1917 in order to improve the regulation of inland vessels based on current complexities of the inland water transport sector, it is reported that the Bill was passed in the Parliament amid opposition protest as the opposition emphasized that the new Bill encroaches [on the rights of the states](#).

4. Capital dredging in National Waterway -3 in Kerala without prior EC

The Minister of Ports, Shipping and Waterways responded to a question regarding the development of National Waterway -3 in Kerala in the Rajya Sabha on July 26th 2021. While giving the status of development, it is stated by the Minister that capital dredging/widening along the allied activities in the stretch Edappalikotta & Kollam has been sanctioned. The Environment Impact Assessment Notification 2006 requires capital dredging projects to apply for Environment Clearance before the work starts. In this case, no Environment Clearance has been taken.

The minister further notes that, "development of waterways for the stretch of Kollam to Kottapuram of West Coast Canal and Champakara canal & Udyogamandal Canals has been completed except for 1.20 km between Edappalikotta & Kollam and is being maintained with a channel of 2 m Least Available Depth and 32/38 m bottom width."

More on development of NW-3 in Kerala can be accessed from

<http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/176/AU1809.pdf>

5. Tourism proposed on National Waterway-2 on Brahmaputra

River

“The Ministry of Tourism has taken the initiative of identifying, diversifying, developing and promoting niche tourism products including waterways routes in the country. The inland waterways have enormous potential to develop cruise tourism. To develop river cruise tourism on NW-2, the Ministry of Tourism has sanctioned Rs 12 45 crore (including GST) for development of 4 tourist jetties at Neamati, Pandu, Jogighopa and Biswanathghat.”

Source: Lok Sabha unstarred Question Answered on 5th August 2021, ‘Tourism Potential of New Waterways.’ <http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/176/AU2974.pdf>

Based on the outcome of techno economic feasibility and Detailed Projects Reports (DPRS) prepared for National Waterways (NWs), 23 NWs have been found to be viable for cargo and passenger movement and 2 NWs have been found to be viable for tourism purpose.

Source: Lok Sabha unstarred Question Answered on 26 July 2021, ‘ROPEX and Water Taxi Services’ <http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/176/AU482.pdf>

6. Status of Development of National Waterways

“Based on the outcome of techno-economic feasibility of NWs, 23 NWs have been found viable for cargo and passenger movement by Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI). Out of these, developmental activities have been taken up in 13 NWs.”

A statement was laid on the table of the house mentioning the status of development of National Waterways in India. It can be accessed at – Rajya Sabha, Starred Question No 143, Answered by Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways on August 2nd, 2021, <https://pqars.nic.in/annex/254/AS143.pdf>

7. Problems of Water transport in Prayagraj, Status of National Waterways in Uttar Pradesh

According to the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, the estimated investment in National Waterways-I in Uttar Pradesh during 2019-2024 is about Rs. 462 crore in projects/works including a)Completed Projects: Construction of multi-modal terminal at Varanasi, Setting up of River information System, and b)Ongoing Projects such as Fairway Development and maintenance works in NW-1 between Prayagraj and Balliya, Maintenance of floating jetties at Prayagraj, Rajghat and Ramnagar, Construction of 2 tourist jetties at Prayagraj and 1 at Varanasi, Feasibility and DPR for 15 community jetties, Intermodal terminal at Ghazipur and Pre-investment activities for freight village at Varanasi. (Source: Rajya Sabha, Unstarred Question No. 1562, answered on August 2nd, 2021, ‘National Waterways in Uttar Pradesh,’ <https://pqars.nic.in/annex/254/AU1562.pdf>)

On problems for not starting Water transport in Prayagraj, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways states that Varanasi-Prayagraj stretch of National Waterway -1 has low cargo potential. It was further added that IWAI and private sector vessels have operated in the stretch. During lean season of about 6 months when the discharge of water upstream Prayagraj (Allahabad) is very low, movement of vessels face problems due to low depth of water. Source: Lok Sabha, Unstarred Question No 1805, Answered on 29th July 2021, ‘Water Transport in Prayagraj,

<http://164.100.24.220/loksabhaquestions/annex/176/AU1805.pdf>)

8. MoU between Numaligarh Refinery and IWAI for transport of ODC & Project Cargo using Inland Waterways

“A Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed on 26th August 2021 between Numaligarh Refinery Limited and Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) for ‘Transportation of Over-Dimensional Cargo and Project Cargo of Numaligarh Refinery Using Inland Water Transport.’ “



(Source: Twitter)

In 2002, the trial movement-cum-demonstration was done as a joint effort of Oil Coordination Committee, Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited, Numaligarh Refineries Limited, CIWTC Limited and Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI).

“A self-propelled barge of Central Inland Water Transport Corporation (CIWTC) viz., M.V.Naharkatia loaded at Silghat with 1200 MT of. HSD traversed a distance of 1710 kms. and reached Budge Budge on December 31, 2001. The vessel came through Bangladesh inland waters under a Protocol exists between the two countries. This successful trial movement would encourage all vessel operators to look for transporting POL products on Brahmaputra and Ganga Rivers.”

(Source: <https://archive.pib.gov.in/archive/releases98/lyr2002/rjan2002/01012002/r010120023.htm> !)