

MONTHLY UPDATES ON NATIONAL INLAND WATERWAYS OF INDIA

UPDATE-13
September 2019

This update covers the following:

- [Prime Minister inaugurates second multi-modal terminal on river Ganga for National Waterway -1](#)
- [Statement released by civil society organisations demands addressal of social and environmental violations before the inauguration of Sahibganj Terminal](#)
- [The Wire reveals that decision to declare 106 waterways of the country as 'National Waterways' was met with strong opposition from NITI Aayog and Finance Ministry.](#)
- [Shortage of barges on National Waterway-1.](#)
- [States opposed the National Waterways Bill proposed in 2015.](#)
- [National Waterway-5 in doldrums.](#)

1. Prime Minister inaugurates second multi-modal terminal on river Ganga for National Waterway -1

The Prime Minister of India inaugurated the second multi-modal terminal on river Ganga for National Waterway-1 on 12th September 2019 in Jharkhand. According to the [PIB release](#), the terminal is built at a cost of Rs 290 crores in a record time of about two years. The Prime Minister himself had laid the foundation stone of IWAI's Sahibganj multimodal terminal in April, 2017. This is the second of the three multi-modal terminals being inaugurated on river Ganga under Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP). Earlier, in November, 2018 the Prime Minister had inaugurated the multi-modal terminal at Varanasi.

Although the terminal has been inaugurated by the Prime Minister, many social and environmental concerns remain to be addressed, including the fact that environmental clearance was exempted for the terminal in a questionable manner. Read more at <https://thewire.in/environment/inland-waterways-flagship-project-varanasi-ganga-environment>

The multi-modal terminals (at Varanasi, Sahibganj and Haldia) are being built as part of the Jal Marg Vikas Project (National Waterway-1) to develop the stretch of river Ganga between Varanasi and Haldia for navigation of large vessels (1500-2000 tonnes weight) by maintaining a draught of 2-3 metres in this stretch of river.



(Sahibganj Multi-modal Terminal. Source: [PIB](#))

The terminal is to be developed in two phases – this inauguration is for the first phase of the terminal. In addition to the multi-modal terminal, a freight village and integrated vessel maintenance and repair centre is also proposed in Sahibganj in the vicinity of the terminal.

“The capacity of the terminal is 30 lakh tonnes per annum. It will grow to 54.8 lakh tonnes per annum after an investment of Rs 376 crores for capacity enhancement in Phase II under PPP mode. The development in Phase II will be entirely made by the private concessionaire. Further, a freight village is also proposed on 335 acres of land in contiguity with the terminal.” ([PIB release](#))

2. Statement released by civil society organisations demands addressal of social and environmental violations before the inauguration of Sahebganj terminal.

The Sahibganj multi-modal terminal was inaugurated by the Prime Minister on 12th September even though many of the social and environmental issues associated with the terminal remain to be addressed. Manthan Adhyayan Kendra, National Alliance of People’s Movement and other organisations released a statement urging the Prime Minister to address the social and environmental concerns of the people of Sahebganj before the inauguration of this multi-modal terminal.

The terminal is built after displacing around 485 families. More displacement and land acquisition is imminent with the announcement of the freight village which is proposed in the land in contiguity of the terminal. No environmental clearance has been taken prior to the development of this terminal.

“Around 485 families have been identified as project affected families; resettlement of many families

is yet to be done. The people of Sahibganj have lost their land and are on the edge of losing their livelihood due to the multi-modal terminal. They are distressed with the process of resettlement and compensation, discrepancies in the resettlement surveys, and have contacted the authorities to address their issues but to no avail. Further, a freight village (industrial cum logistic park and integrated vessel repair and maintenance complex) is also proposed on 335 acres of land in contiguity with the terminal which means more displacement is being lined up.”

Read full statement here: <https://www.manthan-india.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Sahibganj-Multi-Modal-Terminal-website.pdf>

Read full statement in hindi [here](#).

3. The Wire reveals that decision to declare 106 waterways of the country as ‘National Waterways’ was met with strong opposition from NITI Aayog and Finance Ministry.

In 2016, 106 New National Waterways were declared on various rivers, canals, and estuaries in India for the purpose of commercial navigation and shipping. TheWire.in reveals that the Centre’s two major departments, the NITI Aayog and the Ministry of Finance, had strongly objected to the decision to declare so many waterways at one go.

“The Ministry of Shipping had been expressly warned that it would not be right to declare any waterway a National Waterway without proper prioritisation and extensive deliberation. It had also been told that if such a huge number of waterways are declared National Waterways, it will become a huge financial liability on the Centre and can cause irreversible damage to the aquatic ecosystem.”

Read more at https://thewire.in/environment/national-waterways-finance-ministry-niti-aayog?fbclid=IwAR3o68ghrx9jVVhuTJ59SSDgn3Rdryld7FmhN-apYqSV4tXDm7Say_zOmH4

4. Shortage of barges on National Waterway-1

The Jal Marg Vikas Project or the capacity augmentation of National Waterway-1 on river Ganga is being developed with financial and technological assistance from the World Bank. Earlier last year, designs of low draft vessels were made public on the website of [Inland Waterways Authority of India](#). Also in April 2018, [Joint statement was released from the Prime Minister of India and Nepal](#) to develop National Waterways which will provide connectivity to Nepal through National Waterway -1 (Ganga), possible through National Waterway -37 (Gandak) and National Waterway-58 (Kosi).

According to a news report, National Waterways-1 will require at least 100 additional barges to transport cargo to Nepal once the Sahibganj terminal in Jharkhand becomes operational. But, there seems to be an acute shortage of freight boats as banks and NBFCs have cut funding to barge owners. The financial stress of barge owners has got worse after many of them defaulted in debt servicing following a ban on iron ore mining in Goa. Read more at

<https://www.financialexpress.com/infrastructure/shortage-of-barges-may-impact-nepal-cargo-traffic-on-national-waterways-1/1712878/>

5. States opposed the National Waterways Bill proposed in 2015

The Wire has accessed official documents in response to a Right to Information request which reveal that the Centre has declared national waterways in states without proper deliberation with the respective governments.

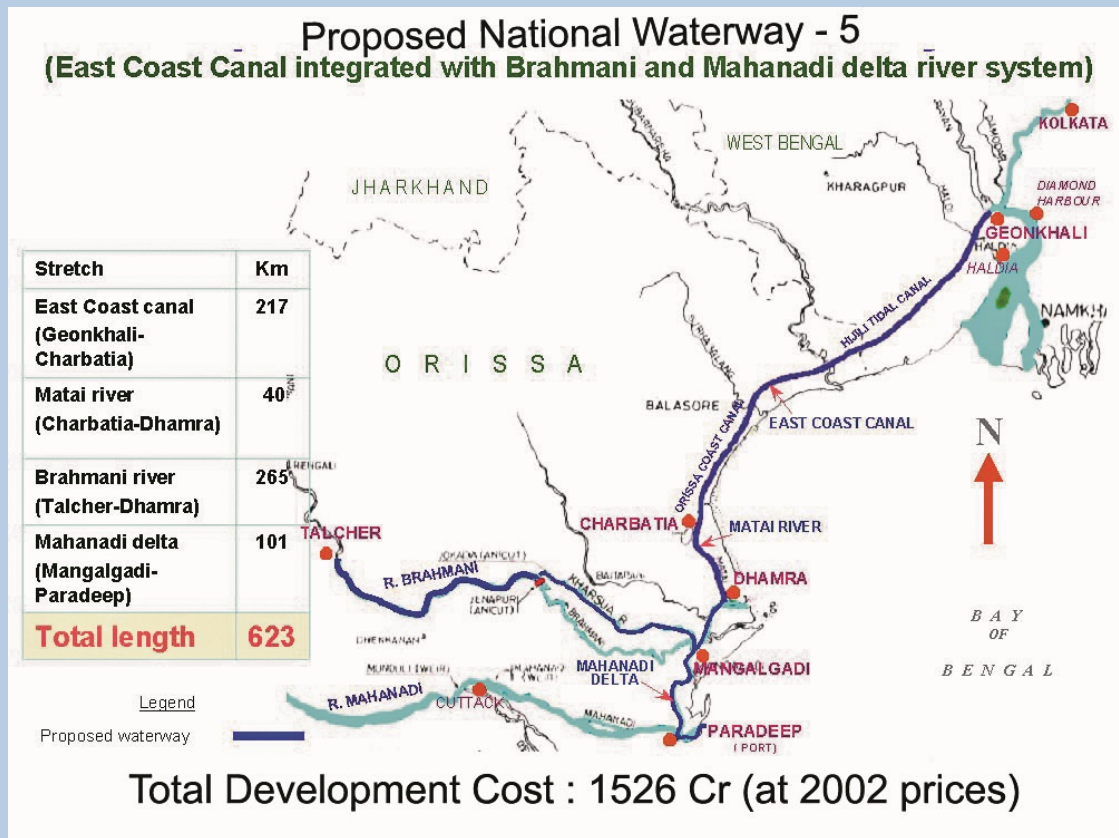
Read more at <https://thewire.in/government/national-waterways-bill-bjp-states-opposition>

6. National Waterway -5 in doldrums

In a bid to ensure cost effective transportation of goods, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) had planned development of National Waterway (NW)-5 on river system of Brahmani, Kharsua, Mahanadi delta river, Matai river along with East Coast Canal (ECC) for navigation in a phased manner. This stretch was declared as the National Waterway -5 on November 25, 2008. In 2016, Inland Waterways Authority of India prioritised the development of NW-5. However, according to the news report, *“The National Waterway – 5 project proposed on River Brahmani in Odisha has remained only on paper even though a decade has passed to the announcement of the project. The authorities concerned are yet to start work at the ground level.”*

Read more at <https://www.orissapost.com/national-waterways-projects-a-pipedream/>

Earlier locals alleged that although 11 lakh cubic metres of sand was mined from the riverbed, the district administration failed to collect royalty for it. Read more at <https://www.orissapost.com/sand-dredged-for-national-waterway-project-disappears/>



(Source: Orissapost)

In January 2015, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) granted the terms of reference for the development of stretch between Pankapal to Dhamra and Paradip in Odisha for National Waterway-5. The Terms of References (TORs) granted by the MoEF&CC mandated that Public Hearing be done and recommendations of the state coastal zone management authority be taken. In June 2018, the validity of the TORs was extended till 11.01.2019. Inland Waterways Authority of India then requested for further extension for the validity of the TORs and baseline data. The project has now been ‘delisted’ according to the website of the PARIVESH, maintained by the MoEF&CC.

Since the stretch of this waterway passes through the CRZ-1 area, the Odisha Coastal Zone Management Authority discussed the proposal of CRZ clearance for this stretch of the Waterway in January 2019. According to the documents accessed by Manthan through the RTI, Eastern Regional Office of MoEF&CC, Bhubaneswar pointed out that dredging in this eco-sensitive region and in the

presence of mangroves is not advisable.

“Accordingly, the Regional Office of the MoEF&CC is of the view that when sea- route is available, opening additional revenue disturbing the environment as well as ecology of the said eco-sensitive areas is not advisable.” (Notes on the Proposals of Odisha Coastal Zone Management Authority during 31st Meeting held on 25.01.2019)

The Eastern Regional Office, MoEF&CC further asked the government to seriously discuss and deliberate on the ecological issues for the development of this stretch.