



PRESS INFORMATION BUREAU
(Research Unit)
Ministry of Information and Broadcasting
Government of India



Development of National Waterways in North East India

(Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways)

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“Government is investing in waterways in a way that was never seen before.”

Narendra Modi¹

Introduction²

Lack of physical connectivity and poor infrastructure had contributed to the isolation of Northeastern India for many decades. Prime Minister Narendra Modi has brought an unprecedented focus on connectivity to achieve the vision of establishing the Northeast as the growth engine of India. In the last eight years, numerous long-pending projects have been completed and delivered to the public. The list includes iconic projects such as the [Bogibeel Bridge³](#), inaugurated by PM Modi in 2018, sixteen years after its announcement by PM Atal Bihari Vajpayee. Along with Road, Rail, and Air connectivity, connectivity through waterways is being stressed on like never before.

Waterways for Connectivity and Prosperity of the North East

Northeast India has many large and small rivers providing facilities for water transport. Recognizing the significance of rivers for connectivity and prosperity, [20 rivers in the North East⁴](#) were declared as National Waterways under the [National Waterways Act, 2016⁵](#). The Government of India has sanctioned two projects for the **development of the Inland Water Transport (IWT) infrastructure** on two NWs (NW-2 and NW-16) for a period of five years, from 2020-21 to 2024-25. Feasibility studies



¹ <https://www.narendramodi.in/text-of-prime-minister-narendra-modi-s-address-at-the-inauguration-of-maritime-india-summit-2021-554252>

² <https://mdoner.gov.in/print/infrastructure/inland-waterways-in-ner>

³ <https://pib.gov.in/Pressreleaseshare.aspx?PRID=1557286>

⁴ <https://iwai.nic.in/departments/north-east-region-cell/north-eastern-waterways>

⁵ <https://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2016/168716.pdf>

for the remaining 18 NWs are underway.

Project⁶	Cost (in Rs. / crore)	Completion
National Waterway – 2	461	March 2025
National Waterway – 16	145	March 2025

National Waterway – 2⁷

River Brahmaputra from Dhubri (Bangladesh Border) to Sadiya (891 km) was **declared National Waterway-2 (NW-2) in 1988**. The waterway is currently being developed with a fairway of required depth and width, day and night navigation aids and terminals.



River Barak was declared a **National Waterway-16 (NW-16) in the year 2016**. It connects Silchar, Karimganj and Badarpur in Cachar valley of Assam with Haldia and Kolkata ports through Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) Route.

Additional Projects for Development of Inland Water Transport (IWT)⁹

Several additional projects for the development of IWT infrastructure are at various stages of implementation through respective State Governments in the Northeast.

SINo	State	Name of project	Project cost (in crore)
1.	Assam	Construction of 15 nos. (17 m long) floating terminals at 15 Ghats on NW-2 (Assam)	6.07
		Construction of 15 nos. of (17 m long) floating terminals at 15 Ghats on NW-16 (Assam)	6.37
		Construction of 25 nos. (17 m long) floating terminals at 25 Ghats on NW-2 (Assam)	10.97
		Construction of 16 nos. (25 m long) floating terminals at 16 Ghats on NW-2 (Assam)	13.70
2.	Manipur	Loktak Inland Water Transport Project-II on Loktak Lake (Manipur)	7.88

⁶ <https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleaseDetail.aspx?PRID=1810976>

⁷ <http://iwai.nic.in/waterways/national-waterways/national-waterways-2?id=2524>

⁸ <http://iwai.nic.in/waterways/national-waterways/national-waterways-16>

⁹ <https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1810971>

		Project proposal for utilising the savings under CSS for 'Survey of River Barak (Manipur side)'	0.40
		Loktak Inland Waterways Improvement Project for Loktak Lake (Manipur)	25.58
3.	Mizoram	Preparation of DPR for Tuichawang / Karnaphuli River (Mizoram)	0.57
		Development of IWT on river Khawthlangtuipui- Tuichawng in Lunglei District, Mizoram	22.93
4.	Tripura	Setting up of linkage with Meghna river system in Bangladesh by developing Gumti River (Tripura)	24.83

Connecting the North East with Neighbouring Countries

The Ministry of External Affairs is funding the following projects for connectivity of North Eastern States with neighbouring countries like Myanmar & Bangladesh:

1. **Kaladan Multimodal Transit Transport Project**¹⁰:

The project provides an alternate access route to the North-Eastern region of India and contributes to the region's economic development. Being a critical connectivity project, it will **promote economic, commercial, and strategic links between India and Myanmar**. The Union Cabinet, chaired by Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi, approved the **Revised Cost Estimate (RCE) of Rs. 2904.04 crores** for the Kaladan Multi-Modal Transit Transport Project in Myanmar.



2. **Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT)**¹¹: Bangladesh and India have a long-standing and time-tested Protocol on Transit and Trade through inland waterways of both countries. The Protocol was first signed in 1972 and **last renewed in 2015 for five years**, with a provision for its automatic renewal for a further period of five years, giving long-term assurance to various stakeholders. Jogigopha in India and Bahadurabad in Bangladesh have been introduced as a new Port of Call, which will provide **connectivity to Meghalaya, Assam, and Bhutan**.

¹⁰ <https://pib.gov.in/newsite/printrelease.aspx?relid=128699>

¹¹ <https://www.mea.gov.in/Portal/LegalTreatiesDoc/BG15B2421.pdf>

3. For the use of **Chattogram and Mongla Ports of Bangladesh** for the movement of goods to and from India, [Memorandum of Understanding](#)¹², dated 06.06.2015, [Agreement](#)¹³, dated 25.10.2018 and [Standard Operating Procedure](#)¹⁴, dated 05.10.2019 have been finalized. It [provides connectivity](#)¹⁵ to Agartala (Tripura) via Akhura; Dawki (Meghalaya) via Tamabil; Sutarkandi (Assam) via Sheola and Srimantpur (Tripura) via Bibirbazar to Chattogram / Mongla Ports in Bangladesh.

More Recent Developments:

1. [First Ever Movement of Container Cargo on Brahmaputra \(National Waterway -2\)](#)

In line with Government's focus on improving connectivity to the North Eastern Region (NER), a landmark container cargo consignment sailed on inland waterways from Haldia Dock Complex (HDC) to the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) terminal at Pandu in Guwahati on November 4, 2019.

2. [Waterways Conclave 2022 – Regional Connectivity through Waterways](#)¹⁶

Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways along with Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) organized a Waterways Conclave 2022 between 11 – 22 April in Dibrugarh, Assam. Along with the aspirations of PM Gati Shakti National Masterplan, the aim of the conclave was to aid in the speedy development of Multimodal projects in the North-Eastern region to energize the economic activities and augment employment generation.

[Cargo Potential of Waterways in North East](#)¹⁷

IWAI conducted a study on “[Modal shift of cargo passing through Siliguri Corridor destined for North East and neighbouring countries to IWT](#)”¹⁸ in 2017. Based on the study, it was found that approx. 49 MMTPA of cargo moves in and out of the North East Region. 30 MMTPA of cargo moves within the North East region. Of the overall volumes, approx. 8 MMTPA of cargo have divertible potential to IWT. Development of adequate infrastructure on NW-2 and NW-16 would provide penetration to hinterlands of lower Assam, Manipur, Tripura, Mizoram & Nagaland and would facilitate EXIM cargo movement to/from Bangladesh for key commodities, such as Fly ash & food grains.

From being on the margins of the India story, the Northeast is quickly becoming one of the country's growth engines. The Government of India is fully committed to developing the **Northeast as the Gateway to the South-East Asian nations.**

¹²<http://iwai.nic.in/sites/default/files/Agreement%20on%20the%20use%20of%20Chattogram%20and%20Mongla.pdf>

¹³<https://shipmin.gov.in/sites/default/files/agree.pdf>

¹⁴https://iwai.nic.in/sites/default/files/SOP%20of%20the%20Agreement%20on%20the%20use%20of%20Chattogram%20and%20Mongla%20Ports_0.pdf

¹⁵<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1810971>

¹⁶<https://pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1815664>

¹⁷[Cargo Potential of Waterways in North East | Inland Waterways Authority of India, Government of India \(iwai.nic.in\)](#)

¹⁸<https://iwai.nic.in/sites/default/files/Study%20for%20Modal%20shift%20of%20cargo%20passing%20through%20Siliguri%20Corridor%20to%20North%20East%20and%20Neighbouring%20countries%20to%20IWT.pdf>

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<https://www.pib.gov.in/PressReleasePage.aspx?PRID=1816004>

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AG/HP/RC/MZ