

Workshop on 'Freight Traffic Potential' for inland waterways under Sagarmala

The Ministry of Shipping organized a workshop on 'Freight Traffic Potential In Inland Waterways' under its Sagarmala Programme, at New Delhi. The workshop focused on the ways to increase the share of inland waterways in India's modal mix to reduce logistics costs with minimal investment, as envisioned in the Sagarmala National Perspective plan.

The workshop was chaired by Shri Amitabh Verma, Chairman, Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) and was attended by representatives from the Government (Ministry of Shipping, IWAI), private and public sector companies like Tata Steel, SAIL, Ultra-tech and IFFCO.

The workshop deliberated on the freight traffic potential in National Waterways 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6 additional inland waterways identified for early development.

The scope for leveraging the Indo-Bangladesh agreement on coastal shipping and extended protocol routes on inland water transit was also discussed. This will enable cheaper movement of cargo to and from North East India and will decongest the road and rail networks, via Siliguri corridor, which are currently being utilized for the same.

IWAI representatives highlighted the infrastructure development work currently being undertaken to increase the navigability of the National Waterways and the business development efforts to increase the freight traffic volumes. It was also informed that IWAI will take forward the discussion with the private sector and public sector companies who have expressed long term interest in utilizing the National Waterways for freight movement. The main challenges and issues faced by the potential shippers in utilizing the inland waterways for freight movement were also discussed during the workshop.

India has an extensive network of inland waterways in the form of rivers, canals, backwaters and creeks. Of the total navigable length of 14500 km, 5200 km of the rivers and 4000 km of canals can be used by mechanized craft. However, approximately 90 percent of freight in India currently moves via land transport (road, rail, pipelines). Share of waterways (coastal shipping and inland waterways) in India's modal mix is lower as compared to countries like USA and China.