

Alternative Water Route to the North-East will boost Economic Development in the Region in a big way: Shri Mansukh Mandaviya

In a reply to a question in Rajya Sabha today the Minister of State for Shipping (I/C) and Chemicals & Fertilizers, Shri Mansukh Mandaviya stated that a Protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade (PIWTT) exists between India and Bangladesh since 1972. Under this protocol, Inland Vessels of one country can pay on the designated Waterways routes of another country. There are specified inland water routes and equal number of Ports of call in each country for Exim trade through the Inland Water Transport (IWT). The said protocol is valid up to 05th June, 2020 with a provision of automatic renewal after 5 years. The North eastern States are connected with the mainland through Inland waterways of Brahmaputra (NW-2) and Barak (NW-16) with Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hoogly river system (NW-1) via Sunderbans (NW-97) through the Indo-Bangladesh Protocol (IBP) route.

For strengthening round the year navigation on Indo-Bangladesh Protocol route, Shri Mandaviya also informed the House that a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) was signed between India and Bangladesh on 8th April, 2017 for fairway development of Sirajganj-Daikhowa stretch of Jamuna river and Ashuganj-Zakiganj stretch of Kushiya river in Bangladesh. The estimated cost of the project is Rs 305.84 crore on a cost sharing ratio of 80:20 between India and Bangladesh.

Shri Mandaviya, further explained that under the MoU Agreement and Standard Operating Procedure (SOP), Bangladesh has allowed use of its Chattogram and Mongla Ports for transit movement of our goods through waterways, rail, road or multi-modal transport in its territory. There are eight routes provided under the Agreement which would enable access of North East region (NER) via Bangladesh. These identified routes allow entry/exit to Agartala and Srimantpur in Tripura, Dawki in Meghalaya and Sutarkandi in Assam, and hence the alternate transport connectivity would boost huge Economic Development in the NER, the Minister concluded.