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Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

Published On: 24-11-2025

Why in News?

The **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)** has signed multiple **MoUs** to enhance **cargo movement, passenger transport, and river-based tourism** in the **Northeast**, strengthening inland water transport (IWT) as a sustainable logistics mode.

About Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

Genesis & Status

- **Established:** 1986
- **Nodal Ministry:** Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways
- **Headquarters:** Noida, Uttar Pradesh
- **Nature:** Statutory body responsible for development and regulation of National Waterways.

Mandate & Core Functions

- **Development & Regulation:**
 - Planning, development, and regulation of inland waterways for **shipping and navigation**.
- **Infrastructure Creation:**
 - Dredging, river training works
 - Navigational aids
 - Construction of terminals, jetties, and multimodal hubs
- **Operational Functions:**
 - Facilitating safe and efficient movement of **cargo and passengers**.
 - Promoting inland water transport as an economical, eco-friendly mode.
- **Policy Support:**
 - Advising Central Government on IWT development.

National Waterways

- **National Waterways Act, 2016** expanded the number of National Waterways to **111**.
- IWAI is responsible for their **development, management, and operationalisation**.
- Key developed NWs include:
 - **NW-1:** Ganga (Haldia–Prayagraj)
 - **NW-2:** Brahmaputra (Dhubri–Sadiya)
 - **NW-16:** Barak River

Significance of the Recent MoUs (Northeast Focus)

- **Boost to Cargo Movement:**
 - Enhances multimodal logistics connectivity in Assam, Meghalaya, and Tripura.
- **Improved Passenger & Tourist Mobility:**
 - River cruises and ferry services to boost regional tourism.

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- **Economic Integration:**
- Strengthens trade links within the Northeast and with Bangladesh under the **India–Bangladesh Protocol Routes**.
- **Environmental Benefits:**
- IWT reduces fuel use, carbon emissions, and logistics cost vs road transport