

Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)

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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