

UP to set up Inland Waterways Authority to promote and regulate water transport

The transport department that is currently responsible for regulating water transport in the state, is scheduled to give a presentation on the proposal to the chief secretary by the end of the week before it is sent to the Cabinet for approval.

Lucknow: To harness the untapped potential of its waterways and strengthen the transport sector, Uttar Pradesh would soon establish an Inland Waterways Authority to promote and regulate water transport in the state, officials dealing with the issue confirmed.

To be set up on the line of the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) established in 1986, the proposed statutory body will be known as the Inland Waterways of Uttar Pradesh with an independent office and infrastructure.

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“The government has decided to set up an Inland Waterways Authority in the state to promote and regulate passenger and freight transport in various rivers,” principal secretary, transport, L Venkateshwar Lu told the HT. “A proposal in this regard will be sent soon to the Cabinet for approval,” he added.

According to transport commissioner Chandra Bhushan Singh, the government will also enact a law to frame rules laying down powers, functions etc of the proposed body that will explore the possibilities of promoting water transport in rivers in the state. He said some states, including Kerala, had already set up similar bodies.

“The water transport has already begun in Varanasi and we feel there is a lot of scope for expanding the same to other rivers and other water bodies, more so when there are cruises that can operate in shallow water as well,” Singh pointed out.

As per the proposal, Inland Waterways Transport Authority of Uttar Pradesh will be responsible for formulating policies, guidelines and regulations pertaining to water transport. It will work closely with various stakeholders, including boat operators, cargo handlers and other entities involved in the sector, to establish standardized practices and ensure compliance with safety and other norms.

Additionally, the authority will undertake initiatives to develop necessary infrastructure, such as terminals, jetties and navigational aids to facilitate seamless water transport operations. Special emphasis will be placed on

improving connectivity between different regions, including hinterland areas, industrial zones, and major cities.

In November last year, Union ports, shipping and waterways minister Sarbananda Sonowal and UP chief minister Yogi Adityanath launched seven community jetties to boost water connectivity between Varanasi and bordering districts like Chandauli, Ghazipur and Ballia.

The government's plan to set up the Inland Waterways Authority to promote water transport in rivers in the state is being as its broader vision to diversify the transportation network and reduce the burden on the road infrastructure.

"The establishment of the Inland Waterways Transport Authority of Uttar Pradesh will mark a significant step towards unlocking the potential of these waterways. The authority will focus on developing and maintaining navigable routes, ensuring safe and efficient water transport operations including that of boats and attracting investments in the sector," the transport commissioner said.

The Ganga - Bhagirathi - Hooghly river system between Haldia (Sagar) and Allahabad (1620 km) was declared as National Waterway-1 (NW-1) in 1986. Since then, IWAI is carrying out various developmental works on the waterway for improvement of its navigability and also development and maintenance of other infrastructure such as navigation aids and terminal facilities.

The IWAI has identified 106 new waterways across the country, 10 of them being in UP. They are Asi, Betwa, Chambal, Gandak, Ghaghra, Gomti, Karamnasa, Tons, Varuna and Yamuna.