

Cargo movement through waterways up 700% in 10 years

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New Delhi: Govt's push for cargo movement by inland waterways (rivers and creeks) has resulted in 700% increase in ferrying of goods by the greenest transportation mode in the past 10 years. Data shows that freight transported by waterways increased to 126 million tonnes (MTs) in 2022-23 from 18 MT in 2013-14.

In the current financial year, 100 MT of cargo was transported by inland waterways till Dec 2023. "We are confident that cargo transport by March will surpass last year's total and it will be a record. Govt has taken several steps, including giving incentives, in recent years to promote waterways as a preferred mode of transportation of goods," said an official.

In a written reply to Lok Sabha last week, shipping and waterways minister Sarbananda Sonowal said 32.4 MT of cargo was transported by 12 national waterways in 2022-23 compared to only 6.9 MT in 2013-14, regis-

tering a 4.5-fold increase. Till Dec, these waterways transported 22.1 MT. Among these waterways, NW-1 (Haldia-Allahabad stretch of Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system) carried 9.6 MT freight during the current financial year.

Data shows that cargo movement through national waterways in Maharashtra, Gujarat and Goa showed a steep increase. In Maharashtra, cargo transported by waterways went up by six times — from 10.2 MT in 2013-14 to 63.1 MT in 2023-23 — and in the current financial year it was 52.4 MT till Dec. In Gujarat, cargo movement went up to 27.7 MT in 2022-23 compared to 11.5 MT in 2017-18. This financial year, till Dec, nearly 23.5 MT of freight was transported by Narmada and Tapi waterways in the state.

In its bid to promote inland waterways as a supplementary mode of transport, the shipping and waterways ministry has allowed the waiver of waterway user charges initially for three years.