

New Regulations To Boost Private Investment In India's Inland Waterways Sector

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The Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) has introduced the National Waterways (Construction of Jetties/Terminals) Regulations, 2025, aimed at facilitating infrastructure development and promoting private sector participation in India's inland waterways sector. The new regulations, formulated under the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways (MoPSW), are expected to enhance ease of doing business, attract investment, and improve logistical efficiency across the country's vast waterways network.

Under the regulations, private, public, and joint venture entities will now be able to develop and operate jetties and terminals on national waterways, subject to obtaining a No Objection Certificate (NoC) from IWAI. The framework covers both existing and new terminals, with provisions for permanent terminals, which can be maintained for a lifetime, and temporary terminals, initially granted for five years with options for extension. Developers and operators will be responsible for the technical design, construction, and accessibility of terminals, aligning with their business models.

To streamline the process, IWAI is developing a digital portal for terminal applications, allowing stakeholders to submit requests and track approvals seamlessly. This initiative aligns with the government's focus on digitalisation and Ease of Doing Business (EODB), ensuring a transparent and efficient application process.

India's inland waterways sector has seen remarkable growth, with cargo movement increasing from 18 million tonnes to 133 million tonnes over the past decade. The newly launched Jalvahak scheme is expected to further accelerate this progress by shifting 17% of cargo transport to national waterways, boosting private sector involvement.

With these regulatory reforms, private players are set to play a pivotal role in expanding and modernising India's inland water transport infrastructure, contributing to economic growth and reducing transportation costs. The government's focus on sustainable development and efficient cargo movement is expected to position inland waterways as a key driver of India's logistics and trade ecosystem.