

IWAI seals MoUs worth ₹6,000 cr to modernise Ganga waterways

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VARANASI: Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), the nodal agency under the ministry of ports, shipping and waterways (MoPSW) for development of waterways in the country, announced to develop and strengthen Uttar Pradesh's inland waterways network, signing key agreements at India Maritime Week 2025 (IMW) held in Mumbai in October.

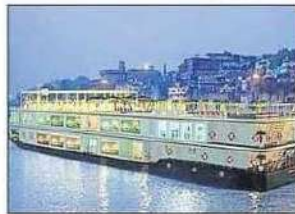
IWAI signed MoUs worth over ₹6,000 crore for the development and expansion of Inland Waterways network on river Ganga (NW 1) with an aim to strengthening river cruise tourism, ship repair infrastruc-

ture, multimodal connectivity and clean-energy transportation along National Waterway-1 (Ganga), according to an official communiqué.

As many as 25 MoUs were inked to support inland waterways development, with UP receiving a substantial share of commitments focused on expanding operations in Varanasi and along the Ganga corridor.

IWAI signed an agreement with Heritage River Journeys Pvt Ltd to develop, induct new cruise vessels and expand cruise tourism on national waterways. Another pact with Alaknanda Cruises will support the operation of cruise vessels on NW-1, enhancing premium river tourism and heritage circuits in Varanasi. A total of more than ₹800 crore has been earmarked for the purpose, the communiqué said.

To develop UP as a regional maritime services hub, IWAI entered into an MoU with the UP government for the development of a new ship repair facility in Varanasi, providing critical infrastructure and utilities



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support, with an investment of ₹350 crore.

Two new river cruise terminals, with an investment of ₹200 crores, will also be developed in Varanasi, improving passenger comforts and operational capacity at one of India's fastest-growing cruise tourism destinations.

Union minister for ports, shipping and waterways Sarbananda Sonowal said the agreements reflect India's commitment to modernising its river systems. "These MoUs demonstrate how inland waterways are emerging as engines of growth, tourism and regional integration," Sonowal said, calling the development a transformative moment for India's maritime future.

To promote clean and sustainable river mobility, the state approved a project for electric vessel charging infrastructure, aligning with India's National Green Shipping Mission and the vision for low-emission river transport. A ₹100 crore MoU will enable rollout of electric charging infrastructure for vessels, supporting the National Green Shipping Mission.

Another ₹200 crore initiative to establish a regional centre of excellence (RCoE) in Varanasi, focused on skill development. The new RCoE will promote research, skills training and innovation in inland water transport operations, vessel design and green technologies. An MoU with Rhenus Logistics at ₹1,000 crore will enable induction of modern tug-barges on the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers, significantly enhancing cargo transportation capacity and improving multimodal logistics efficiency, the communiqué said.

A sum of ₹1,500 crore has been earmarked under the MoU signed between IWAI and NTCPCW of IIT-Madras for

dredging works supervision on NW1 (Ganga). To accelerate the vision of PM Gati Shakti, rail connectivity for the Multi-Modal Terminals at Varanasi, Sahibganj & Haldia is being proposed. This initiative will be undertaken through an MoU signed between IWAI & IPCL for preparing the DPR & PMC services, at ₹1,500 crore investment.

Minister of state for MoPSW Shantanu Thakur said the partnerships in UP would strengthen electric vessel infrastructure, ship repair capability and training ecosystems.

Secretary, MoPSW, Vijay Kumar said that the combined agreements reinforce India's goal of a resilient maritime economy driven by innovation, investment and sustainability.

IWAI chairman (I/C) Sunil Kumar Singh said the MoUs would significantly accelerate the development of the inland water transport ecosystem in UP, enhancing seamless connectivity along the Ganga and advancing the state's role in sustainable river logistics and cruise tourism.