

Inland water transport gets big push, Vns gains

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LUCKNOW: The Union Budget 2026-27 has given a major push to inland water transport with the announcement of ship manufacturing and repair centres at Varanasi and Patna, a move expected to transform eastern Uttar Pradesh into a key hub of river-based logistics and mobility. Presenting the budget in Parliament, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the government would develop a complete ecosystem to support vessels operating on inland waterways, along with plans to operationalise 20 new national waterways over the next five years to promote cost-effective transport.

The selection of Varanasi, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Lok Sabha constituency, is being seen as strate-

gically significant as the city lies on National Waterway-1 along the Ganga, one of India's most crucial inland shipping corridors connecting the hinterland with eastern ports. The proposed hub is expected to provide maintenance, repair and manufacturing support for cargo vessels, ferries and passenger boats.

"The proposed Varanasi hub could generate significant employment in marine engineering, operations, training and support services, while also benefiting small businesses linked to logistics and tourism," deputy transport commissioner, Radhey Shyam said. Currently, he said, ships were manufactured and repaired in distant cities like Mumbai and Kolkata.

(With inputs from Varanasi)

