

Inland Vessels Bill, 2021

Key Features of the Inland Vessels Bill, 2021

- This will be a **unified law for the entire country** and will supplant the separate rules framed by the States
- The **certificate of registration granted under the proposed law will be deemed to be valid in all States and Union Territories**, and there will be no need to seek separate permissions from the States
- A total of 4000 km of inland waterways have been operationalised
- As per the bill, a **central database will be maintained** that shall record each vessel's details like its registration and crew, all on an electronic portal
- The **vessels which are mechanically propelled will have to register themselves mandatorily as per the bill**, and the **non-mechanically propelled vessels will also have to compulsorily register themselves at district, taluk or panchayat or village level**
- It **enlarges the definition of 'inland waters'**, by including **tidal water limit and national waterways** declared by the Central Government

Objectives of Inland Vessels Bill, 2021

- This Bill will promote economic and safe transportation and trade of inland waterways and bring uniformity in the application of the law
- It will also help in reducing the water pollution caused by these inland vessels as this bill directs the Central Government to designate a list of chemicals, substances, etc. as pollutants

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Inland Waterways in India

- About 14,500 km of navigable waterways are present in India, which comprises canals, rivers, lakes, etc.
- India has constantly been taking up initiatives for the development of waterways and water transport in the country. A few of these include:

- **Sagarmala Project** – Cabinet approved scheme, launched in 2015 to promote port-led development in India. The project also seeks to boost infrastructure for transporting goods to and from ports quickly, efficiently, and cost-effectively
- **Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP)** – Announced in the Union Budget of 2014, the project is implemented by the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) aims to develop the National Waterways of the country. It is financially supported by the World Bank and is expected to be completed by 31st December 2023
- **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)**, constituted in October 1986, is the body responsible for the development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation in the country. It also assists States in the development of the **Inland Water Transport (IWT)** sector and provides a subsidy to IWT operators for acquiring a fleet for transportation of cargo and passengers

What is Inland Water Transport (IWT)?

Inland water transport is a viable alternative or addition to road and rail transport. It is environmentally friendly and, frequently, the most economical mode of inland transport.

In India, around 55 million tonnes of cargo is being moved annually by Inland Water Transport.