

MV Ganga Vilas: World's Longest River Cruise

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Why in News?

Recently, the Prime Minister of India flagged off the world's longest river cruise – MV Ganga Vilas, and laid the foundation of several schemes and inaugurated other projects (including tent city at Varanasi) worth more than ₹1,000 crore for Varanasi.

What is the importance of waterways?

- India has **more than 125 rivers and river streams** which can be developed to transport goods and ferry people while also giving **impetus to further expanding port-led development**.
- Waterways are not just **beneficial to the environment but also help in saving money**, as the cost of operating waterways is 2.5 times lesser than that of roadways, and one-third lesser when compared to railways.
- Highlighted in the National Logistics Policy 2022, **India has the potential** to develop a waterway network of thousands of kms. The need is to build a modern **multi-modal network of waterways**.
- The PM will soon inaugurate **Haldia Multi-Modal Terminal** (developed under Jal Marg Vikas Project) in West Bengal.

What is MV Ganga Vilas?

Image caption: Route of MV Ganga Vilas

- MV Ganga Vilas is a cruise that will begin its journey from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and travel around **3,200 km** in 51 days to reach Dibrugarh in Assam via Bangladesh.
- It will **sail across 27 river systems in India and Bangladesh** (including Ganga, Hooghly, etc) and will cover **50 tourist spots** (like Kashi, Patna Sahib, Bodh Gaya, Vikramshila and the Sundarbans) including World Heritage Sites, National Parks, River Ghats.
- It will pass through **major cities** like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam.
- While it will be managed by private operators, the **Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI)**, under the Ministry of Shipping, Ports and Waterways, has supported the project.
- The journey of MV Ganga Vilas (capacity – 36 tourists), will allow tourists to engage on an experiential voyage and **immerse themselves in the art, culture, history, and spirituality of India and Bangladesh**.
- With this cruise service boost, the huge untapped potential of river cruises will be unlocked and it will **herald a new age of river cruise tourism for India** and create new employment opportunities.

News Summary with Respect to the Launch Event

What are the main points of the PM's speech at the event?

- This decade of the **21st century is a decade of infrastructure transformation** in India. From social (houses, toilets, hospitals) to digital, physical connectivity infrastructure (railways, waterways), all are strong indicators of the rapid growth of India.
- In the last 8 years various steps were taken to expand the tourism sector in the country.
- **The New Tent City**, infused with modernity, spirituality and faith, will provide a novel experience to the tourists.

- In 2014, only 5 national waterways were in the country, now there are **111 national waterways** in the country and about two dozen are in operation already.

What is the significance of the event?

- India is entering into **a robust phase of tourism** as with a growing global profile, curiosity about India is also increasing and **today's event is a reflection of the policies**, decisions and direction taken in the country.
- It will help in **making eastern India a growth engine for Developed India**, by connecting Haldia multimodal terminal with Varanasi and with India-Bangladesh protocol route and Northeast.
- This will facilitate business from Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, and West Bengal to Bangladesh via **Kolkata port**.
- A cruise ship or a cargo ship would **not only give a boost to transport and tourism, but the entire industry associated** with their service also creates new opportunities.
- The river of India will give **new heights to water power and trade and tourism**, which is essential for building a developed India.

Q1) What is the name of longest National Waterway of India?

NW-1 or Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly River system, which runs from Prayagraj in UP to Haldia in WB is the longest waterway in India. It is 1,620 km long across the Ganges River and passes through Jharkhand and Bihar along with UP and WB. It is of prime importance amongst all the NWs considering its locational advantages.

Q2) What is the route of MV Ganga Vilas?

It will begin its journey from Varanasi in UP and travel around 3,200 km in 51 days to reach Dibrugarh in Assam via Bangladesh. It will sail across 27 river systems in India and Bangladesh and will cover 50 tourist spots, passing through major cities like Patna in Bihar, Sahibganj in Jharkhand, Kolkata in West Bengal, Dhaka in Bangladesh and Guwahati in Assam.

Source: [Modi flags off world's longest river cruise from Varanasi to Dibrugarh](#) | [IE](#) | [ToI](#) | [PIB](#)

Video: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QBPXcHv2zuw>

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