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1. If executed well, waterways can change inland transportation

- Is it new for India transport people and goods using waterways?
- How is India handling its freight movement compared to western countries and China?
- Why the central government is pouring such a huge investment on its waterways project?
- What are the genuine ecological concerns of developing the waterways?

GS paper 3 (Infrastructure, waterways)

In this video, you can find detailed answers for all the above questions.

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<https://www.hindustantimes.com/editorials/if-executed-well-waterways-can-change-inland-transportation/story-YwPyvSQw4ipnnjisp8Jv3N.html>

What is the context about?

- Recently, Prime Minister Narendra Modi inaugurated the country's first inland waterways terminal in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh.

- ❑ The terminal is a part of the first phase of the government's National Waterway 1 project to ferry cargo from the eastern seaport of Haldia in West Bengal to Varanasi, around 1,360 km inland.

Is it new for India transport people and goods using waterways?

- ❑ Using waterways for transporting people and goods is nothing new for India.
- ❑ Until about a hundred years ago, the Ganga river was a busy waterway that was used for the movement of commodities such as tea, jute, and spices. But with the coming of the railways, this watercourse fell into disuse.

How is India handling its freight movement compared to western countries and China?

- ❑ At present, according to a World Bank report, India's freight movement traverses mainly on roads (65%). Railways come next (27%); waterways account for just 0.5% of the movement.
- ❑ The freight movement on waterways across countries is also much higher in the West and China than in India: In the US, it's about 8.3%; in Europe, 7%; and in China, it is 8.7%.

Why the central government is pouring such a huge investment on its waterways project?

There are several reasons why the Centre is so enthusiastic about the waterways project.

- ❑ First, transporting freight via river systems is much cheaper and greener than using road and rail. According to the World Bank, which is financing the National Waterway Project, the cost to transport one tonne of freight over one km for highways is Rs 2.28. It is Rs 1.41 for railways, and Rs 1.19 for waterways.
- ❑ Second, it's greener. As per RITES Report of 2014 on 'Integrated National Waterways Transportation Grid', one litre of fuel moves 24 tonnes km by road, 95 tonnes km on rail and 215 tonnes km on Inland Water Transport."
- ❑ Third, ferrying goods via waterways is faster than on congested road and rail networks, which slows the movement of cargo, adding to uncertainties, and increasing the costs of trade.
- ❑ Fourth is the pollution cost of traffic bottlenecks.

What are the genuine ecological concerns of developing the waterways?

While there are several positives of the waterways project, any infrastructure development will have environmental costs, and those must be taken into account while evaluating the benefits of the project.

- ❑ One important aspect of this "training" a waterway is dredging, which is required to ensure that the required

water depth is maintained everywhere for the goods carriers to pass.

- ❑ Environment activists allege that the Environmental Impact Assessment report prepared by Inland Waterways Authority of India ignores the severe impact of the movement of ships and dredging on biodiversity in critical but legally non protected stretches of the river.