Press Release

With the initiatives of the present government, the entire waterways sector is revisited with deeper focus: Shri Pravir Pandey, IA & AS, Vice-Chairperson, IWAI

The two subregions of India and Bangladesh are bonded by common history, culture and their rich heritage: H E Shajahan Khan, Honorable Shipping Minister, Ministry of Shipping, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh

Speaking at the ‘Inland Waterways Transport in India and Coastal Shipping Summit’ organized by the Indian Chamber of Commerce in association with the Ministry of Shipping & Inland Waterways Authority of India at the Hotel Taj Bengal, Kolkata today, H E Shajahan Khan, Honorable Shipping Minister, Ministry of Shipping, Government of the People’s Republic of Bangladesh highlighted the significance of the waterways in Bangladesh and the role of the government of Bangladesh including the Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) in strengthening the connectivity through waterways between India, Bangladesh as well as the North East. Waterways are the cheapest mode of transport in Bangladesh through which the remotest areas can be accessed. He mentioned about the three ports in Bangladesh namely Chittagong, Payra and the Mongla port. During 1996 to
2001 under the leadership of Sheikh Hasina there was an increase in the number of fleets, ferries and cargo vessels and from 2009 onwards there was an increase in the total number of dredgers. In order to enhance the bilateral movement of passengers, tourist and cruise as well as credibility, accuracy, efficiency and transparency both the countries agreed to adopt the standard operating procedure (SOP). He mentioned about the Kolkata-Ashuganj-Tripura transit facility under the revised Inland Water Transit and Trade Protocol between India and Bangladesh which has become operational long back. He was of the view that the inland water transport between Bangladesh and India would lead to regional connectivity, effective transportation, increase the livelihood and employment opportunities of people along with increase in trade and commerce. Bangladesh and Bhutan signed a MoU on Use of Inland Waterways for Transportation of Bilateral Trade and Transit Cargoes to provide connectivity with Chittagong and Mongla ports which would boost opportunities of bilateral trade between the two countries and beyond. Finally, he recommended simplified custom procedures along with introduction of container services and a protocol for easy procedure of loading and unloading of vessels as well as collaboration of private stakeholders in order to boost and strengthen the waterways connectivity.

Mr. Zaw Win, Managing Director, Inland Water Transport, Ministry of Transport and Communications, The Republic of the Union of Myanmar discussed some of the major completed and ongoing projects to enhance waterways connectivity between Myanmar and India which include the Kaladan Multi Modal Transit Project Port, Yangon port, Sitwe port, Kyaukpyu port. He was of the view that these projects would help increase occupational, commercial as well as trade and commerce opportunities between India and Myanmar.

Shri Rabindra Kumar Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Sagarmala Wing, Ministry of Shipping, Govt of India observed that the share of roadways in the modal mix is 55%, railways contribute to 35% while contribution of inland waterways and coastal shipping to modal transportation is 6%. He suggested that government should focus attention for the development of this sector and increase the share of waterways transport to atleast 10-12% of the total share from 6%. He spoke about the various initiatives in the shipping and waterways sector taken by India
including abetment of service tax in coastal shipping, fertilizer movement through railways, roadways along with inland waterways and shipping, 80% of tax relaxation for vessels and development of cruise ships. He also said that Mumbai is repositioning itself as a major cruise destination. In order to make the city the gateway to international cruise tourism in India, the Mumbai Port Trust (MbPT) has decided to construct a massive passenger terminal at its docks, a project worth Rs. 250 crore which is a major push by the government of India. He mentioned that the armed forces in India have collaborated with the Inland Waterways Authority of India as there is a huge demand for RORO (Roll-on/roll-off) ships. Shri Agarwal mentioned about the five National Waterways. As per The National Waterways Act, 2016, 111 waterways have been declared as National Waterways (NWs) including the five existing NWs. Out of the 111 NWs, NW-1, 2, & 3 are already operational. Cargo as well as passenger/cruise vessels are plying on these waterways. Detailed Project Report for development of NW-4 & 5 was completed in 2010. For the newly declared 106 NWs, techno-economic feasibility studies have been initiated. He was of the view that a milestone has been achieved under the able leadership of Nitin Gadkari, Minister for Road Transport and Highways and Shipping.

Shri Pravir Pandey, IA & AS, Vice-Chairperson, IWAI, discussed about the The Jal Marg Vikas Project (JMVP) for capacity augmentation of National Waterway-1 (NW-1) between Haldia and Varanasi which is being implemented with the technical and financial assistance of the World Bank. He also discussed about the other five existing national waterways as well as 106 new national Waterways out of which 30 are more viable compared to the rest. He also mentioned that one of the major focuses of Inland Waterways Transport Authority (IWAI) of India is to strengthen the Indo Bangladesh protocol routes. Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) and Standard of Procedures (SoP) on passenger and cruise services on the coastal and protocol route has been signed between Bangladesh and India wherein 80% of funding is done by India and 20% of the funds are provided by Bangladesh. He further mentioned that Kolkata will be a major destination for vessel repair and maintenance.
Dr. Rajeev Singh, Director General, ICC stated that the relationship between India, Myanmar and Bangladesh have been strengthened over the years, therefore various opportunities and roadblocks needs to be looked after between the sub regions such that a seamless connection is established among the nations.

Capt BVJK Sharma, Chairman, ICC Shipping Committee & JMD & CEO, JSW Infrastructure Ltd. was optimistic that by 2025 around 2500 million metric tons of cargo transportation would take place through India and GDP figures would improve to double digit while revenue generation might go up to 28 lakh crores through various sectors post GST. He was of the opinion that government at the state and central level should collaborate to strengthen coastal corridor program as well as logistic sector. He stated that the need of the hour is to reduce logistics cost, introduce regulations, increase traffic speed, introduce research and development centres in various universities as well as allocate a significant portion of budget for research and support failures and most importantly the private sector should come forward and take responsibility for strengthening the coastal shipping and inland waterways sector. He also stated that the Ministry of Shipping has prepared a vision for “Coastal Shipping, Tourism and Regional Development” in consultation with stakeholders in order to increase the share of coastal shipping and inland water transportation to 10% by 2019-20. Capt. Sharma ended the session by delivering a formal vote of thanks.

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Rajeev Singh
Director General