



## MV GANGA VILAS: A Welcome Push For Riverine Tourism

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Paper - III  
(Indian Economy)

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The travel, tourism, and hospitality sectors got a symbolic boost on Friday, with the Prime Minister launching the MV Ganga Vilas from Varanasi. The luxury 51-day cruise operated in partnership with private players by the Inland Waterways Authority will traverse several states, and two countries and make stops at about 50 tourist and heritage sites along the Ganga and Brahmaputra river systems. The Ganga cruise,



though, should be just the beginning of tapping the unrealized potential of India's numerous and diverse river systems for tourism. At the same time, the expansion must take into account the best practices from around India and the world, while ensuring local communities and the environment are not given short shrift.

### Tourism In Travel

From Kipling's Kim to Gandhi's travels and the Palace on Wheels, the Railways have been essential to how travel is imagined and depicted across the Indian Subcontinent. At approximately Rs 25,000 per day per person, MV Ganga Vilas is more in line with the latter than the former. Both the PM and Shipping & Ports Minister Sarbananda Sonowal have cited the jobs that riverine tourism could bring to states like Uttar Pradesh, West Bengal, Bihar, and Assam. But employment generation must go hand-in-hand with the ecological repair.

## Matter Of Concern

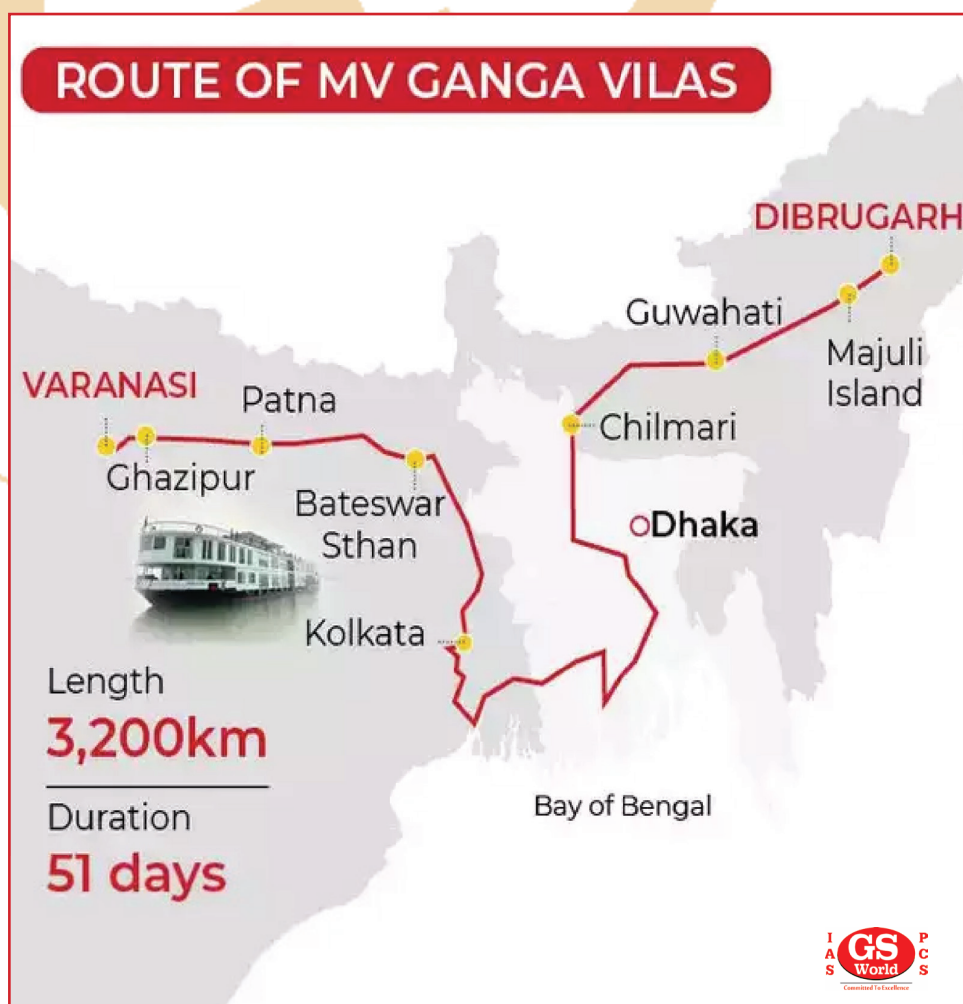
Two of the greatest threats to India's river silting and pollution must be addressed for the government to realize its goal to increase cruise passenger traffic from 4 lakh people to nearly 10 times that figure. But this growth, to be sustainable, must involve local communities. While there is potential for larger, luxury liners, riverine tourism could also expand and cater to travelers from different economic strata. Also, smaller vessels may pose less of an ecological challenge.

## This Is A Welcome Step

While the Centre's push in the sector, with the PM as the face, is welcome, states and the private sector too must be brought on board. There is, for example, much that east Indian states can learn from how Kerala monetises and maintains its backwaters.

## Importance Of Hospitality Sector

The hospitality sector is labour-intensive and can provide some of the formal jobs that a transitioning Indian economy so desperately needs. And given the growing global market for ecologically-conscious travel, India can if it is meticulous and enterprising in its planning — protect its rivers and create jobs at the same time.



### Other Important Points

- Ganga Vilas is a cruise ship which is the longest river cruise ship in the world and the first cruise ship made in India. It is being operated by Antara Luxury River Cruises.
- MV Ganga Vilas will start its journey from Varanasi and will end at Dibrugarh (Assam) via Bangladesh. During its 51-day journey, the cruise will travel 3,200 km across 27 river systems. The cruise will visit 50 tourist destinations including world heritage sites, national parks, river basins and major cities.
- The cruise will be managed by private operators, the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI) under the Ministry of Shipping, Ports and Waterways (MoPSW) has supported the project.

### Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI):

- IWAI came into existence on October 27, 1986 for the development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
- IWAI primarily undertakes projects for development and maintenance of Inland Water Transport (IWT) infrastructure on National Waterways through grants received from the Ministry of Shipping.
- IWAI is headquartered at Noida and has regional offices at Patna (Bihar), Kolkata (West Bengal), Guwahati (Assam) and Kochi (Kerala) and sub-offices at other places across India.

### National Waterway

Apart from connecting National Waterway-1 (NW-1) on river Ganges and National Waterway-2 (NW-2) on Brahmaputra, the cruise will connect 27 rivers. And the Ganges-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system between Haldia (Sagar) and Allahabad (1620 km) was declared NW-1 in the year 1986.

### Contribution of hospitality industry to the Indian economy

- Indian tourism sector to create 31,000,000 jobs in 2022 which is about 7% of total employment in India, hospitality industry is considered as a rising industry in India, India is a developing country so it is one of the important factors in the growth and development of Indian economy may play an important role.
- The tourism sector contributes about 9% to the country's GDP. Its share in employment, revenue and foreign exchange reserves. India's third largest source of foreign exchange is the tourism and hotel industry.
- By 2030, tourism is expected to generate US\$ 250 billion in India's GDP, generate 137 million jobs in the tourism sector, generate US\$ 56 billion in foreign exchange earnings and attract 25 million foreign tourist arrivals.

### Expected Question

**Que. With reference to the Inland Waterways Authority of India (IWAI), consider the following statements–**

1. It came into existence in 1986 for the development and regulation of inland waterways for shipping and navigation.
2. It mainly undertakes projects for the development and maintenance of Inland Water Transport (IWT) infrastructure on National Waterways through grants received from the Ministry of Shipping.
3. Its headquarter is in Gurugram (Haryana).

Which of the statements given above is/are correct?

- (a) 1 and 2                      (b) 2 and 3  
(c) 1 and 3                      (d) 1, 2 and 3

**Answer : A**

### Mains Expected Question & Format

**Que.: Recently Indian Prime Minister launched “MV Ganga Vilas”. Throw light on the contribution of tourism especially the hospitality industry to the Indian economy.**

**Answer Format :**

- ❖ Tell about 'MV Ganga Development'.
- ❖ Explain the contribution of tourism especially hospitality industry in the Indian economy.
- ❖ Give a balanced conclusion.

**Note:** - The question of the main examination given for practice is designed keeping in mind the upcoming UPSC mains examination. Therefore, to get an answer to this question, you can take the help of this source as well as other sources related to this topic.