

THE BHARAT PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY INLAND WATERWAYS AND BLUE ECONOMY CONNECTION ACT

Scarcity is a Policy Choice

PARLIAMENT OF INDIA, 18TH LOK SABHA, SECOND SESSION

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PARLIAMENT OF INDIA

18th Lok Sabha, Second Session

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BILL No. ____ OF 2026

INTRODUCED BY THE MINISTER FOR _____ (or, alternatively, as a Private Member's Bill under Rule 65 of the Rules of Procedure and Conduct of Business in Lok Sabha)

CONCERNING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A NATIONAL MISSION TO RESTORE, CONNECT, AND EXTEND THE INLAND WATERWAYS OF INDIA THROUGH THE CONTINUOUS ROBOTIC LABOUR OF THE BHARAT PRODUCTIVE CAPACITY AUTHORITY, AS A NEW INFRASTRUCTURE ACTIVITY OF INDIA'S BLUE ECONOMY, ON THE FRAMEWORK OF THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS ACT, 2016 AND THE JAL MARG VIKAS PROJECT; TO CONNECT AND DEEPEN THE NOTIFIED NATIONAL WATERWAYS FOR THE MOVEMENT OF GOODS, WATER, AND POWER; TO BIND THE MISSION TO THE PRESERVATION OF EXISTING WATER LAW, ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, AND THE RIGHTS OF THE PEOPLE OF THE RIVER; AND FOR MATTERS CONNECTED THEREWITH OR INCIDENTAL THERETO.

A BILL FOR AN ACT

LONG TITLE

AN ACT to provide for a national mission by which the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority restores, connects, deepens, and extends the inland waterways of India through continuous robotic labour, as a new infrastructure activity of India's blue economy; to build upon the National Waterways Act, 2016, which declared and provides the legal framework for one hundred eleven notified National Waterways, and upon the Jal Marg Vikas Project on National Waterway 1, the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system between Haldia and Varanasi; to coordinate the mission with the Sagarmala Programme of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways and with the Inland Waterways Authority of India; to direct the mission to move goods, to convey water for drought relief and irrigation, and to generate power at conduit and low-head sites along the network; to bind the mission to the preservation of existing water law, the environmental law of India including the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the consent and rights of the riparian and Tribal communities, and the ecological flow of the rivers; to fund the mission through the layered Union-State-Local architecture of the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority Act; to provide for the mission's compliance with the doctrine of Antyodaya as articulated in Integral Humanism; and to provide for matters connected therewith or incidental thereto.

LEGISLATIVE ROUTING NOTE

FILING PROCEDURE: This Bill, being an Ordinary Bill within the meaning of the Rules of Procedure of either House of Parliament, may be introduced in either the Lok Sabha or the Rajya Sabha. The Bill is not a Money Bill within the meaning of Article 110 of the Constitution of India. After introduction and First Reading, the Bill will, in the ordinary course, be referred to the relevant Department-related Parliamentary Standing Committees for examination, public consultation, and report, and shall come into force on receiving the assent of the President.

COMMITTEE REFERENCES:

- Standing Committee on Transport, Tourism and Culture (inland waterways, Sagarmala, Inland Waterways Authority of India)
- Standing Committee on Water Resources (river systems, water conveyance, ecological flow)
- Standing Committee on Science and Technology, Environment, Forests and Climate Change (environmental clearance, river ecology)

FISCAL IMPACT: The Comptroller and Auditor General of India shall, in accordance with Article 148 of the Constitution of India, prepare an independent fiscal impact statement on the Bill's provisions. This Bill draws upon the funding architecture of the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority Act and requires no separate appropriation beyond a Union grant under Article 282 of the Constitution of India for start-up, with continuing finance from the Authority's operating revenue and the statutory industry levy of that Act, which levy shall not at any time exceed two per cent of the assessed industry revenue base in any quarter.

CONSTITUTIONAL BASIS: This Act is enacted pursuant to Article 246 read with the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution of India, including List I Entry 24 (shipping and navigation on inland waterways declared by Parliament by law to be national waterways) and Entry 56 (regulation and development of inter-State rivers and river valleys to the extent declared by Parliament to be expedient in the public interest); read with the environmental power exercised through the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, and the entries in List II relating to water preserved by the coordination provisions of Section 6 of this Act, including the awards of tribunals constituted under Article 262 and the Inter-State River Water Disputes Act, 1956. This Act gives effect to, and is in furtherance of, the Directive Principles of State Policy under Part IV of the Constitution of India, including Article 39 (equitable access to the material resources of the community) and Article 48A (protection and improvement of the environment, and safeguarding of the rivers); and it extends the productive-capacity mission of the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority Act.

LEGISLATIVE DECLARATION

BE IT ENACTED by Parliament in the Seventy-Seventh Year of the Republic of India as follows.

THE PARAMOUNT DECLARATION OF THIS ACT

(I) THE RIVER IS INDIA'S OLDEST HIGHWAY.

The Congress of this Parliament finds that the rivers of India carried the commerce and the civilisation of the subcontinent for thousands of years before the road and the rail, and that a connected inland waterway remains the cheapest, most fuel-efficient, and least polluting means of moving heavy goods over long distance. The National Waterways Act, 2016 declared one hundred eleven National Waterways and gave them a legal framework, and the Jal Marg Vikas Project has begun to deepen and equip National Waterway 1 on the Ganga. This Act finds that the continuous robotic labour of the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority can complete, connect, and extend that network at a pace and a cost that ordinary construction cannot reach.

(II) THIS ACT IS BLUE ECONOMY INFRASTRUCTURE, CARRIED INLAND.

This Parliament finds that the blue economy, as the Ministry of Earth Sciences and the international community describe it, is the sustainable use of water resources for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and employment, while preserving the health of the water. The recognised activities of that economy have centred on the coast and the port. This Act carries the framework inland, to the rivers and canals of the nation, and treats the connected inland waterway as blue economy infrastructure that moves goods, water, and power while it keeps the water clean and the river alive.

(III) THE RIVER BELONGS TO THE PEOPLE OF THE RIVER.

This Parliament finds that the mission of this Act is bound to the people of the river. It shall preserve existing water law, honour the consent and the rights of the riparian and Tribal communities, maintain the ecological flow that keeps the river a living river, and comply with the environmental law of India. The Authority builds the waterway for the nation and holds it in trust for the people who live along it.

SECTION 1. Legislative findings.

This Parliament finds and declares as follows.

FINDINGS RELATING TO THE INDIAN COMPETENCE TO UNDERTAKE THIS MISSION:

(a) INDIA POST AND THE UNION'S UNIVERSAL-SERVICE COMPETENCE. On the establishment of the Imperial Post Office in 1854 and its continued operation for one hundred and seventy-two years through more than one hundred and fifty-six thousand post offices, the largest postal network in the world, the Union has demonstrated the institutional competence to carry a public service to every citizen across the whole of the territory. The connection of the nation by inland water is a public undertaking of the same order.

(b) THE INDIAN SPACE RESEARCH ORGANISATION AND THE UNION'S ENGINEERING COMPETENCE. The Indian Space Research Organisation, established on 15 August 1969, has operated continuously across every government of the Union, built indigenous capability at the technological frontier, and financed its commercial activities without loss of Union ownership. This demonstrates that a Union-chartered body can carry a national engineering mission of the magnitude the National Inland Waterways Mission requires.

(c) THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS ACT, 2016 AND THE UNION'S ESTABLISHED WATERWAY COMPETENCE. By the National Waterways Act, 2016, Parliament declared one hundred and eleven inland National Waterways and constituted their legal framework through the Inland Waterways Authority of India, and the Jal Marg Vikas Project has developed National Waterway 1 on the Ganga in operation. This demonstrates that the connection and development of the inland waterway is, in India, an established and continuing public function that this Act carries to completion.

FINDINGS RELATING TO THE WATERWAY MISSION OF THIS ACT:

(1) THE NATIONAL WATERWAYS ACT, 2016 IS THE FRAMEWORK THIS ACT COMPLETES.

The National Waterways Act, 2016, enacted on the twenty-fifth day of March, 2016, declared one hundred eleven inland National Waterways and provides the legal framework for their development and regulation through the Inland Waterways Authority of India. This Act builds directly upon that framework, directing the Authority to complete, connect, deepen, and extend the notified waterways.

(2) THE JAL MARG VIKAS PROJECT PROVES THE METHOD ON THE GANGA. The Jal Marg

Vikas Project has been implemented on National Waterway 1, the Ganga-Bhagirathi-Hooghly river system, for capacity augmentation on the Haldia-Varanasi stretch, with terminals, navigation locks, and fairway development. This Act finds that the continuous robotic labour of the Authority can carry that proven method to every notified waterway at far lower cost and far greater speed.

(3) **SAGARMALA HAS BUILT THE PORT AND VESSEL ECOSYSTEM.** The Sagarmala Programme of the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, launched in the year 2015, has advanced port-led development and the modernisation of India's coastal and inland logistics. This Act coordinates the inland-waterway mission with the Sagarmala ecosystem so that the river connects to the port and the port to the sea as one blue economy network.

(4) **THE WATERWAY MOVES MORE THAN GOODS.** This Parliament finds that a connected inland waterway can carry water as well as cargo. Where the network reaches a summit or a canal, it can convey water toward regions of drought and toward irrigation, and it can generate power at conduit and low-head sites without the large dam. The mission is therefore transport, water security, and power at once.

(5) **CONTINUOUS ROBOTIC LABOUR IS WHAT CHANGED.** This Parliament finds that the historic obstacle to a complete inland network was the cost and the labour of the many locks, channels, terminals, and lifts required. The Bharat Productive Capacity Authority supplies continuous robotic labour, so the many proven small works, the lock, the dredged channel, the aqueduct, the mechanical lift, become affordable at national scale.

(6) **THE HUMAN PROFESSIONS ARE PRESERVED.** This Parliament finds that every waterway is sited, designed, cleared, and approved by licensed human engineers, hydrologists, and environmental professionals of record, and by the lawful processes of the Union and the States. The robots supply the labour. The judgment remains human.

SECTION 2. Definitions.

In this Act, unless the context otherwise requires,

- (a) "Authority" means the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority constituted under the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority Act.
- (b) "National Waterway" means an inland waterway declared as such under the National Waterways Act, 2016.
- (c) "blue economy" means the sustainable use of the water resources of India for economic growth, improved livelihoods, and employment, while preserving the health of the water ecosystem.
- (d) "State Mission" means a State-level Productive Capacity Mission constituted under the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority Act.
- (e) "ecological flow" means the flow of water required to maintain the river as a living ecosystem, as determined by the competent authority.

SECTION 3. The National Inland Waterways Mission.

(a) ESTABLISHMENT. The Authority shall establish and operate a National Inland Waterways Mission to restore, connect, deepen, equip, and extend the National Waterways of India through continuous robotic labour.

(b) COORDINATION. The Mission shall coordinate with the Inland Waterways Authority of India, the Sagarmala Programme, the Ministry of Ports, Shipping and Waterways, and the water-resources departments of the States.

(c) PRIORITY. The Mission shall build first upon the proven National Waterway 1 corridor and shall extend outward to the notified network, prioritising waterways that connect regions of production to regions of need and to the ports.

SECTION 4. Works and Engineering.

(a) **THE PROVEN SMALL WORKS.** The Mission shall gain elevation and cross divides by the proven small works spread over distance, the staircase of locks, the dredged and lined channel, the aqueduct that carries water across a gap, and the mechanical boat lift, rather than any single impossible structure.

(b) **WATER CONVEYANCE.** Where a waterway reaches a summit or a suitable alignment, the Mission may convey water toward drought-affected and irrigation-need regions, subject to Section 6.

(c) **CONDUIT AND LOW-HEAD POWER.** The Mission may generate electrical power at conduit and low-head sites along the network, without the construction of large storage dams.

SECTION 5. Funding.

(a) INHERITANCE OF THE AUTHORITY'S ARCHITECTURE. The Mission is financed through the layered Union-State-Local funding architecture of the Bharat Productive Capacity Authority Act, comprising the statutory industry levy on the Digital Bharat Nidhi model, Union grants under Article 282, Sixteenth Finance Commission devolution, State co-financing, and Panchayati-Raj-Institution delivery.

(b) START-UP GRANT. A Union grant under Article 282 shall provide the Mission's start-up capital, with continuing finance from the Authority's operating revenue and the statutory levy.

SECTION 6. Preservation of Water Law, Ecology, and the Rights of the River.

(a) **EXISTING WATER LAW.** Nothing in this Act shall override the existing law governing the allocation, use, and inter-State sharing of river water. The Mission shall operate within the awards of the Inter-State River Water Disputes Tribunals and the agreements among the States.

(b) **ECOLOGICAL FLOW.** The Mission shall maintain the ecological flow of every river it works, so that the river remains a living river.

(c) **CONSENT OF THE COMMUNITIES.** The Mission shall honour the consent and the rights of the riparian and Tribal communities, including the rights recognised under the law governing the forest-dwelling and Scheduled Tribe communities.

(d) **ENVIRONMENTAL CLEARANCE.** The Mission shall obtain environmental clearance under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and shall comply with the river-conservation and pollution-control law of India.

SECTION 7. Lessons of the River City.

This Parliament finds that a nation that builds upon and beside its water must build for the water. The Mission shall design against flood, siltation, bank erosion, and the disturbance of the fishery, and shall build the waterway so that it strengthens rather than weakens the river and the communities upon it.

SECTION 8. Non-Personhood and the Human Beneficiary.

The robotic systems that build and operate the waterway are property and tools of the Authority. They are not legal persons and hold no right of their own. The people of India are the beneficiaries of the Mission, and the Mission exists to connect the nation by water while it keeps the water clean.

SECTION 9. Effective date.

This Act shall come into force on such date as the Central Government may, by notification in the Official Gazette, appoint, and different dates may be appointed for different provisions.

END OF ACT TEXT