

## Trade between BD, India by inland waterways to bolster

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Dhaka : Trade between India and Bangladesh by inland waterways is estimated to flourish more by the middle of 2022 as heavy cargo ships from Varanasi in Uttar Pradesh and Haldia in West Bengal will sail to Pandu port in Assam through the neighbouring country.

India's Shipping and Waterways Minister Sarbananda Sonowal on January 10 said this while briefing the media in Guwahati, according to reports.

Sonowal mentioned dredging works at critical junctures in the Ganga and Brahmaputra rivers have already commenced by his ministry to facilitate the movement of large cargo ships.

The Bangladesh government, with support from the Indian government, is working on a stretch of the Jamuna river to make the 2,000km long waterway from Sadiya in Assam to Haldia in West Bengal through the neighbouring country, a smooth passage, he claimed.

"We are working to connect (Indian states of) Mizoram, Tripura, and Assam to three strategic ports -- Sittwe in Myanmar and Mongla and Chattogram in Bangladesh," the Minister noted.

"By mid-2022, I am hopeful that cargo ships of 2,000 metric tonnes from Haldia and Varanasi will start sailing to Pandu. This is going to be a major boost to trade and

industry of the North-eastern region," Sonowal added.

He further added the waterways of the northeastern Indian region and connecting them to major ports in the Bay of Bengal will not only unlock the economic potential of the region but also allow the landlocked region to have direct access to international trading routes.

Support from experts in Tezpur University in Assam, Indian Institute of Technology in Guwahati and Indian Institute of Management in Shillong will be sought to make the dredging work successful in the Brahmaputra, the minister also mentioned.

India's Prime Minister Narendra Modi has directed the concerned authorities to make arrangements to dredge a stretch of 2-2.5 metre in the two rivers so that cargo vessels, passenger ships, and even seaplanes can use the water bodies, Sonowal expressed.