

Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA)

To set up Authority for development, maintenance and control of inland water transport and of certain inland navigable waterways the then East Pakistan Government on 31st October 1958 promulgated an ordinance called the East Pakistan Inland water Transport Authority Ordinance 1958 (E.P. Ordinance, NO LXXV of 1958). On November 4, 1958 the Government by an order constituted a three member Authority of East Pakistan Inland Water Transport Authority (EPIWTA). The BIWTA came in to existence on promulgation of the above ordinance 1958 as the successor of the former EPIWTA. An advisory committee have subsequently been constituted to advise the authority in respect of all matters related to development, maintenance and operation of inland water transport and of inland waterways in Bangladesh.

Bangladesh has about 24,000 km. of rivers, streams and canals that together cover about 7% of the country's surface. Most part of the country is linked by a complex network of waterways which reaches its extensive size in the monsoon period. Out of 24,000 km. of rivers, streams and canals only about 5,968 km. is navigable by mechanized vessels during monsoon period which shrinks to about 3,865km. during dry period. The IWT sector carries over 50% of all arterial freight traffic and one quarter of all passenger traffic.

Development and Maintenance Functions:

As per Section 15 of the Ordinance E. P. Ordinance No. LXXV of 1958; amendment Ordinance No. LV of 1977, the Authority performs statutory functions of development, maintenance and regulatory nature. The Functions in brief:

- Carry out river conservancy works including river training works for navigational purposes and for provision of aids to navigation including marks, buoys, lights and semaphore signals;
- Disseminate navigational and meteorological information including publication of river charts;
- Provided pilotage and hydrographic survey services;
- Draw up programmers of dredging requirements and priorities for efficient maintenance of existing navigable waterways and for resuscitation of dead or dying rivers, channels, or canals, including development of new channels and canals for navigation;
- Develop, maintain and operate inland river ports, landing/ferry ghats and terminal facilities in such ports or ghats;
- Carry out removal of wrecks and obstruction in inland navigable waterways;
- Conduct traffic surveys to establish passenger and cargo requirements on the main rivers, feeders and creek routes;
- Develop rural water transport by progressing of schemes for modernising and mechanizing country craft;
- Ensure co-ordination of Inland Water Transport with other forms of transport, with major sea ports, and with trade and agricultural interests for the optimum utilisation of the available transport capacity;
- Conduct research in matters relating to Inland Water Transport including development of
 - Craft design
 - Technique of towage
 - Landing and terminal facilities
 - Port installations
- Arrange programmes of technical training for Inland Water Transport personnel
- Maintain liaison with the shipyard and ship repair industry to meet the requirements of the Inland Water Transport fleet repairs and new constructions
- Maintain liaison with the Government and facilitate import of repair materials for the Inland Water Transport Industry
- Prepare plans or schemes for carrying out any of the above mentioned functions.

Regulatory Functions:

- Fixation of maximum and minimum fares and freight rates for Inland Water Transport on behalf of the Government;
- Approve time tables for passenger launch services;
- Inspection shies, cargo and inland vessel to ensure compliance with the provision of ISO -1976;
- Act as the Competent Authority of Bangladesh for the protocol on Inland Water Transit and Trade, looking after the use of waterways of Bangladesh on behalf of the Govt. of Bangladesh for the purpose of trade and transit between Bangladesh and India as provided in the Protocol.