

Length of inland waterways	24,000 km
Length of navigable waterways	Monsoon: 5,968 km Dry season: 3,865 km
Least available depth range	3.90 m to 1.50 m
Annual water discharge (Source: BWDB)	1400 billion cubic meter
Annual quantum of silt (Source: BWDB)	2.5 billion tons
No. of passenger carried (In year)	87.80 million
Quantum of cargo carried (In year)	58 million tons
Total manpower- 1682	

During emergencies, there is little probability that it will be used by agencies, being too slow compared to road or helicopter deliveries. Nevertheless at local level, it is probable that many remote areas will – in the initial phases – only be reachable by IWT / coastal sea-trucks.

Navigable River Routes

Both Bangladesh Inland Water Transport Authority (BIWTA) and Corporation (BIWTC) provide pilotage facilities to about 7,000 inland water vessels. They regulate the movement of about 2000 passenger launches and maintains 22 inland ports along with about 800 launch ghats including terminals. Approximate 6000 km Navigable River route is further classified into following 4 categories by BIWTA depending on the draught and clearance:

Class	Minimum Draught	Length & %	Minimum Vertical Clearance	Minimum Horizontal Clearance	Remarks
Class-I	3.66 m	683 km (11%)	18.30 m	76.22 m	Least Available Draft (LAD) of 3.6 m required to be maintained round the year.
Class-II	2.13 m	1000 km (17%)	12.20 m	76.22 m	Links major inland ports or place of economic importance to class I routes
Class-III	1.52 m	1885 km (32%)	7.62 m	30.48 m	Being seasonal in nature, it is not feasible to maintain higher LAD throughout the year
Class-IV	Less than 1.52 m	2400 km (40%)	5.00 m	20.00 m	These are seasonal routes where maintenance of LAD of 1.5m or more in dry season not feasible
Total		5968 km			

BIWTC is facilitating passenger and cargo movement in the inland waterways and also offshore islands in the public sector vis-à-vis private sectors. It is operating 35 ferries in different routes. On the other hand, ocean shipping performs 80% of the export-import trade. A WB study reveals that IWT has been the least expensive mode of transport, than that of rail and road. As such, considering the facts of land-man ratio and scarcity of land for further expansion of road networks in the country, IWT sub-sector has given the outmost importance specially dredging various river routes for making them navigable round the year. To develop a balanced and cheap transport system in Bangladesh, it is important to improve IWT both from infrastructure and technological points of view. IWT sub-sector suffers from (i) siltation problem in inland waterways, (ii) day & night navigational problem of waterways, (iii) shortage of passenger & cargo handling facilities including transit shed at river ports, (iv) Presence of manual loading/unloading of cargo at river ports, (v) underdeveloped rural launch landing stations, inadequate number of water crafts both for river and ocean going etc. Moreover, for transportation of containers by inland waterways to and from two seaports, the container handling facilities have not yet been developed. Decades of insufficient investment, and challenged governance Ltd the development of the port sector of the country.

Due to geographical position and topological condition of the country rivers are becoming more and more narrow and thin by siltation. As such, implementation of comprehensive capital dredging program is the biggest challenge for the IWT sub-sector. Specific challenges identified in the sub-sector are: (i) channeling of the existing waterways through massive dredging and procurement of dredgers, (ii) construction of deep sea port to streamline international trade; (iii) improvement of day and night navigation for water crafts by providing navigational aids; and (iv) construction of inland container river port for transportation of containers by waterways to/from sea ports etc.

Transportation Through Waterways

BIWTA and corporation BIWTC are the 2 main players of the government which keeps the inland waterways navigable and safe for smooth transportation of cargo and passengers. IWT continues to be an important mode of transport not only in the inland movement of freight and passengers but also in the transportation of import and export items through the ports of Chattogram, Mongla, and Payra. The high degree of penetration of the IWT network provides access to about 25% of the rural household in Bangladesh.