



NGT Suggests National River Rejuvenation Mechanism

Why in News

Recently, the [National Green Tribunal \(NGT\)](#) directed the Ministry of **Jal Shakti** to devise an appropriate **National River Rejuvenation Mechanism** for effective monitoring of steps to curb pollution and for rejuvenation of all polluted river stretches across the country.

Key Points

▪ Background:

◦ Assessment of the CPCB:

• Findings:

- According to the 2016-17 assessment of the [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#), the **number of polluted stretches of the country's rivers has increased to 351** from 302 two years ago, and the number of critically polluted stretches — where water quality indicators are the poorest—has gone up to 45 from 34.
- Among them, **117 such river stretches are in the States of Assam, Gujarat, and Maharashtra.**

• Basis of the CPCB Assessment:

- The CPCB, since the 1990s, has a programme to monitor the quality of rivers primarily by measuring [Biochemical Oxygen Demand \(BOD\)](#), which is a proxy for organic pollution—the higher it is, the worse the river.
- The CPCB considers a BOD **less than 3 mg/l** an indicator of a healthy river.

◦ Initiative Taken:

- The **NGT had constituted a Central Monitoring Committee to prepare and enforce a national plan** to make over 350 river stretches across the country pollution free as it has caused serious threat to safety of water and environment.

▪ About the Latest Direction:

◦ Observation:

- There has been **deterioration in the quality of water in rivers in spite of the Water Act** which was enacted way back in 1974 which was intended to bring about improvement.

◦ Establishment of NRRM:

- NGT suggested the mechanism could be called '**National River Rejuvenation Mechanism (NRRM)**'. NRRM may consider setting up a **National, State or district environment data grid** at appropriate levels as an effective monitoring strategy.

◦ Expansion in the Scope of NRRM:

- The process of **rejuvenation of rivers need not be confined to only 351 stretches** but may be applicable to all small, medium and big polluted rivers, including those dried up.
- **Implementation:**
 - Effective measures should be taken by **Chief Secretaries of all States and UTs** in terms of action plans for abatement of pollution and rejuvenation of rivers.
 - The Chief Secretaries are also required to **personally monitor progress at least once every month and the NRRM every quarter.**
 - The **accountability** for failure to comply with the direction **for payment of compensation** will be **of the Chief Secretaries concerned.**
- **Causes of Polluted River Stretches:**
 - Rapid **urbanisation** and lack of efficient **waste disposal** systems.
 - **Industrial Cities** on the banks of rivers.
 - Run-off from **agricultural activities**, etc.
- **Impact of Pollution:**
 - The World Bank estimates that the **health costs of water pollution in India equal three percent of India's GDP.**
 - It has also been suggested that **eighty percent of all illnesses in India and one-third of deaths can be attributed to water-borne diseases.**
 - The danger Ganga's polluted water poses is not only to the humans but also to **the animals**. Some of the important threatened species include, more than 140 fish species, 90 amphibian species, reptiles such as the **Gharials**, and mammals such as the **South Asian River Dolphin**.
- **Related Constitutional Provisions:**
 - **Article 21:** The **fundamental right to clean the environment**, and further, pollution-free water, has been protected under the broad rubric of the **right to life**.
 - **Article 51-A (g):** It mandates as a **fundamental duty** of every citizen of India to protect and improve the natural environment including forests, lakes, **rivers and wildlife**.
- **Initiatives to Tackle Water Pollution:**
 - **National Water Policy (2012):**
 - It aims to take cognizance of the existing situation, to propose a framework for creation of a system of laws and institutions and for a plan of action with a unified national perspective.
 - Started by the Ministry of Water Resources, it highlights the importance of water for human existence as well as for economic development related activities.
 - It suggests frameworks to conserve water resources through optimal, economical, sustainable and equitable means.
 - **National Water Mission (2010):** It ensures integrated water resource management leading to water conservation, less wastage, equitable distribution forming better policies.
 - **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)** which envisages a **five-tier structure at national, state and district level** to take measures for prevention, control, and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga.
 - It aims to ensure continuous adequate flow of water so as to rejuvenate the river Ganga.
 - **Namami Gange Project:** It integrates the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga River in a comprehensive manner.

Source:TH

