



57th Meeting of National Mission for Clean Ganga

For Prelims: [National Mission for Clean Ganga \(NMCG\)](#), [Ganga River](#), [Mahakumbh](#), [Sewage Treatment Plants](#) [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#), [Smart Laboratory for Clean River' \(SLCR\) Project](#), [National Ganga Council](#), [Environment \(Protection\) Act \(EPA\), 1986](#).

For Mains: Functioning of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) and its role in maintaining ecological health of Ganga river.

Source: PIB

Why in News?

Recently, the **57th Executive Committee (EC)** meeting of [National Mission for Clean Ganga \(NMCG\)](#) approved key projects in various states.

- These projects aimed towards the **conservation and cleanliness** of the [Ganga River](#), and, for **IEC (Information, Education, and Communication)** activities during [Mahakumbh 2025](#).

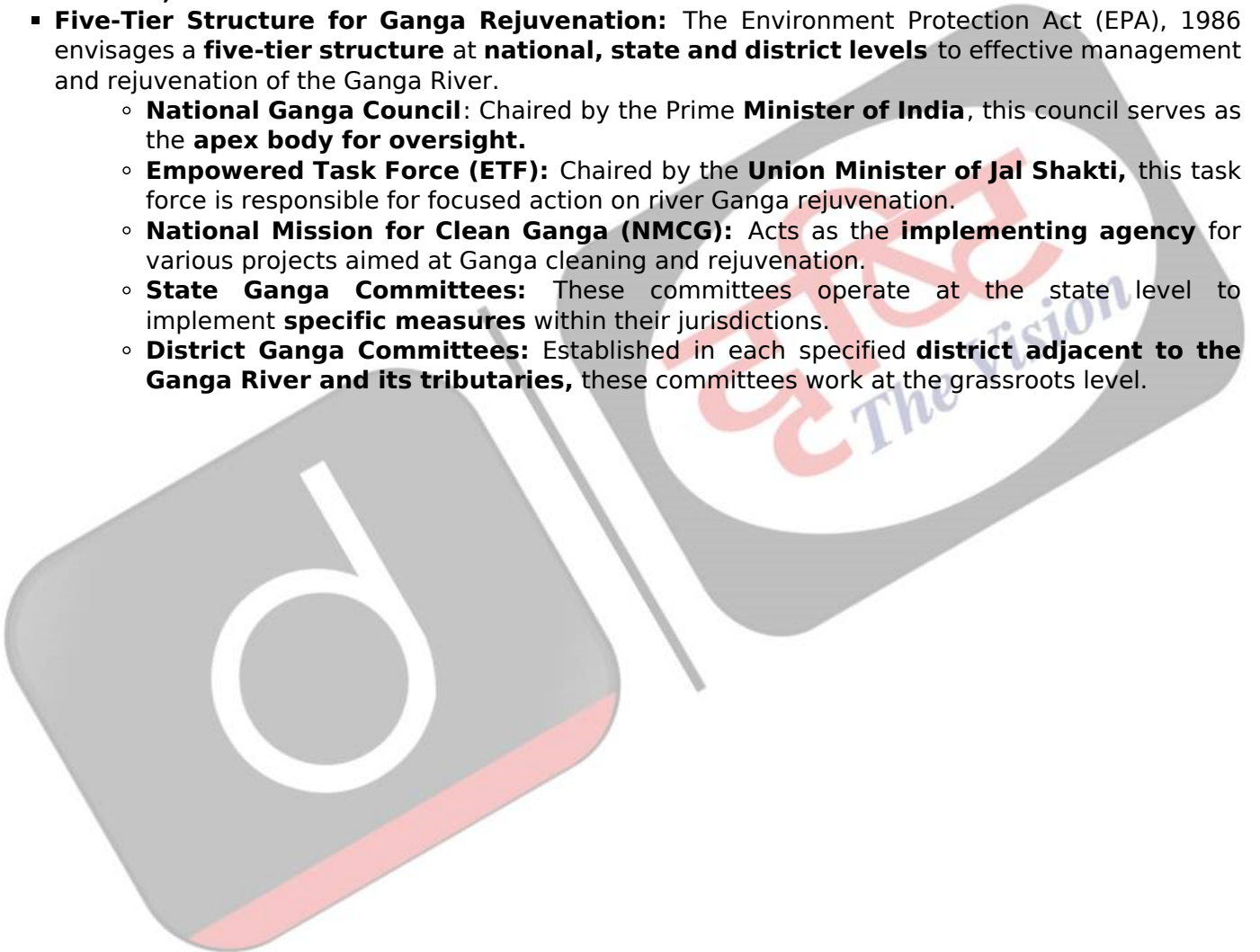
What are the Key Projects Approved during the Meeting?

- **Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs):** The EC approved [STPs](#) in Katihar and Supaul in Bihar and Aligarh, Uttar Pradesh.
 - STPs purify water by **removing sewage and contaminants**, making it suitable to be released into natural water sources.
- **Monitoring of STPs:** It includes the installation of an [Online Continuous Effluent Monitoring System \(OCEMS\)](#) for strengthening the online continuous monitoring of existing STPs in the Ganga River Basin.
- **Mahakumbh 2025 IEC Activities:** To enhance cleanliness and awareness during Mahakumbh 2025, an IEC (Information, Education, and Communication) activity-based project has been approved.
 - The project includes decorating the mela area and city through '**Paint My City**' and [mural art](#).
- **PIAS Project:** The Committee also approved restructuring manpower under the [Pollution Inventory, Assessment, and Surveillance \(PIAS\)](#) project to enhance its effectiveness.
 - PIAS project is piloted by [Central Pollution Control Board \(CPCB\)](#) for the monitoring of industrial pollution.
- **SLCR Project:** The Committee approved key components of the '[Smart Laboratory for Clean River' \(SLCR\) project](#) to accelerate the rejuvenation of **small rivers** across the country.
- **Turtle and Gharial Conservation:** Approval was granted for the **freshwater turtle** and **gharial conservation** breeding program at the [Kukrail Gharial Rehabilitation Center](#) in Lucknow, Uttar Pradesh.

What are Key Facts About NMCG?

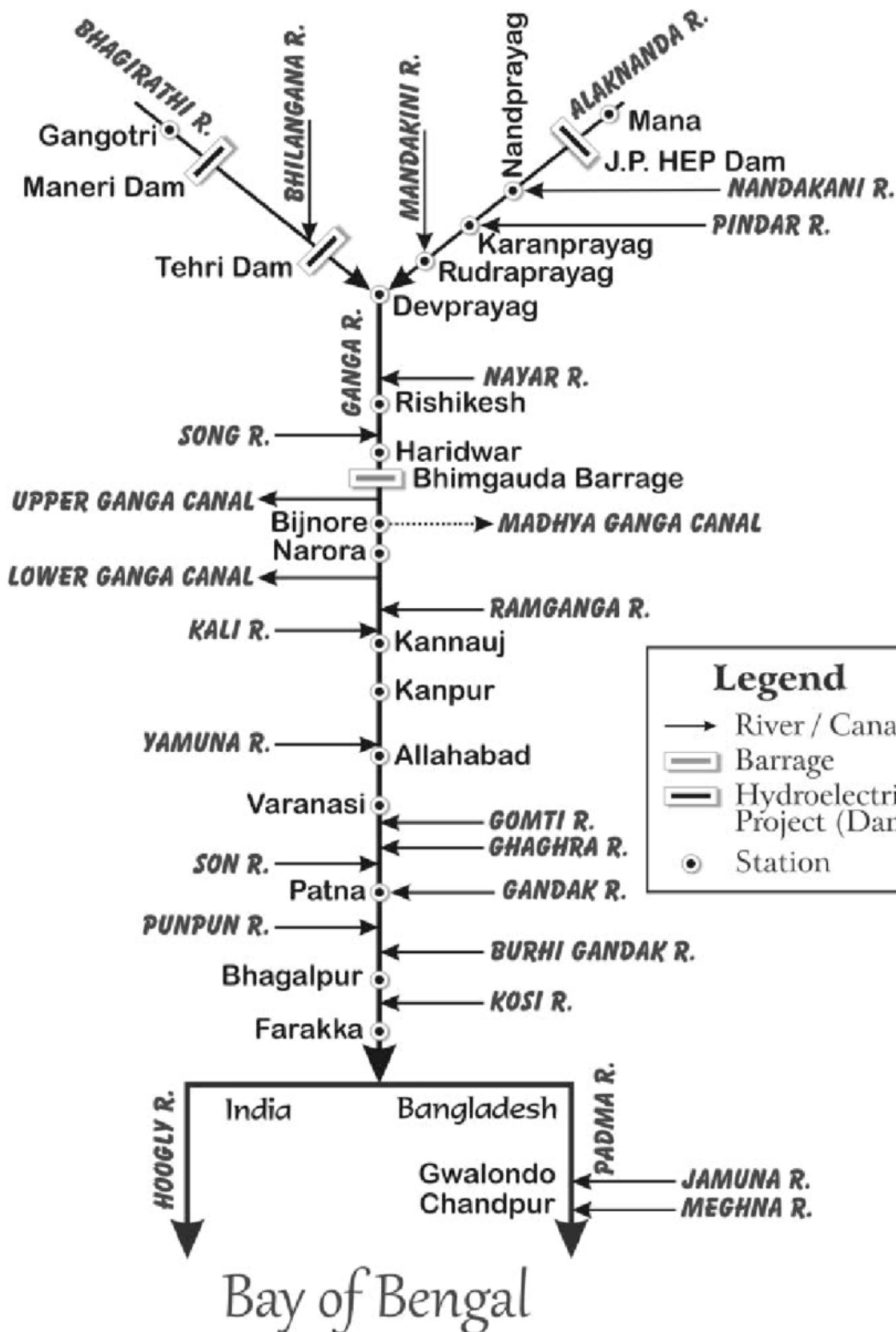
- **About:** It plays a crucial role in the **rejuvenation and protection** of the Ganga River.
 - It was registered as a society on 12th August 2011 under the **Societies Registration Act, 1860**.
- **Legal Framework:** It acted as the implementation arm of [National Ganga River Basin Authority \(NGRBA\)](#) which was constituted under the provisions of the [Environment \(Protection\) Act \(EPA\), 1986](#).
 - After the dissolution of NGRBA in 2016, it is the implementation arm of **National Council for Rejuvenation, Protection and Management of River Ganga (National Ganga Council)**.
 - NGC ensures continuous adequate flow of water in the river and to prevent, control, and abate environmental pollution.
- **Management Structure of NMCG:** NMCG operates with a **two-tier management structure** and both are headed by the **Director General (DG) of NMCG**.
 - **Governing Council:** Oversees the general policies and direction of the NMCG.
 - **Executive Committee:** Authorised to approve projects with a financial outlay of up to **Rs 1,000 crore**.
- **Five-Tier Structure for Ganga Rejuvenation:** The Environment Protection Act (EPA), 1986 envisages a **five-tier structure** at **national, state and district levels** to effective management and rejuvenation of the Ganga River.
 - **National Ganga Council:** Chaired by the Prime **Minister of India**, this council serves as the **apex body for oversight**.
 - **Empowered Task Force (ETF):** Chaired by the **Union Minister of Jal Shakti**, this task force is responsible for focused action on river Ganga rejuvenation.
 - **National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG):** Acts as the **implementing agency** for various projects aimed at Ganga cleaning and rejuvenation.
 - **State Ganga Committees:** These committees operate at the state level to implement **specific measures** within their jurisdictions.
 - **District Ganga Committees:** Established in each specified **district adjacent to the Ganga River and its tributaries**, these committees work at the grassroots level.

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Flow Chart of the Ganga River Basin

(Not To Scale)



What is the Namami Gange Programme?

- **About:** It is an **integrated conservation mission** to accomplish the twin objectives of effective

abatement of **pollution, conservation and rejuvenation** of National River Ganga.

- It was approved as '**Flagship Programme**' by the Union Government in June **2014** with a budget outlay of **Rs. 20,000 Crore**.
- Flagship programmes are those which address **major national concerns** on health, education, environment, irrigation, urban and rural development etc.

▪ **Key Pillars of the Programme:**

- **Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure:** To manage **wastewater** effectively.
- **River-Surface Cleaning:** Removing **solid waste and pollution** from the river's surface
- **Afforestation:** Planting trees and restoring **green cover**.
- **Industrial Effluent Monitoring:** To protect the river from **harmful industrial discharges**.
- **River-Front Development:** Creating **public spaces** along the river to promote community engagement and tourism.
- **Biodiversity:** Enhancing the river's **ecological health** and supporting diverse biological communities.
- **Public Awareness:** Educating citizens about the importance of **river conservation**.
- **Ganga Gram:** To develop the villages located along the main stem of river Ganga as **model villages**.

▪ **Integrated Mission Approach:** It emphasises the linkage of **economic development with ecological improvement**, showcasing a commitment to sustainable growth.

- **Clean energy, waterways, biodiversity conservation, and wetland** development are identified as priority areas for ongoing and future initiatives.

Case Study of Thames' Recovery

▪ **Overview:** The River Thames was declared '**biologically dead**' in the **1950s**, with extremely low **dissolved oxygen levels** caused by urban pollution, industrial waste, and **inadequate sewage systems**.

- The river became a dumping ground for waste due to **increasing city populations and poorly managed sanitation**.
- Prominent tributaries like the **Fleet**, which runs through central London, became notorious for their **foul odours**.

▪ **The Great Stink of 1858:** The culmination of the river's pollution issues occurred during the **hot summer of 1858**, known as the **Great Stink**.

- High levels of human and industrial waste in the Thames prompted widespread **public health concerns**, leading to the implementation of a sewage network designed by civil engineer **Sir Joseph Bazalgette**.

▪ **Restoration Efforts:** By the 1970s, all sewage entering the Thames was **treated**, and regulations enacted between **1961 and 1995** improved water quality.

- Established in 1989, **National Rivers Authority** played a crucial role in **monitoring** and maintaining water quality.
- The installation of oxygenators, known as "**bubblers**," in the late 20th century significantly improved **DO levels**.
 - These devices **inject oxygen** into the water, supporting fish populations and overall aquatic health.

What is the National Ganga Council?

▪ **About National Ganga Council (NGC):** It was constituted in **2016**, under the provisions of the **Environment (Protection) Act, 1986**, following the dissolution of the **National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA)**.

▪ **Objective:** The NGC aims to ensure the **rejuvenation, protection, and management** of the Ganga River and its tributaries through a comprehensive and coordinated approach

▪ **Ministry:** The **Ministry of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation (MoWR, RD & GR)** is the nodal Ministry for the NGC.

▪ **Functions:** It **formulates policies** and strategies and **monitors the progress** of initiatives related to pollution abatement, ecological restoration, and sustainable management of river resources.

▪ **Governance:** It is chaired by the **Prime Minister** and the Chief Ministers of the States through

which Ganga flows, viz., **Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal**, among others.

What are the Challenges in the Namami Gange Programme?

- **Lack of Data and Effective Monitoring:** Until 31st December, 2023, **457 projects** had been taken up. Of these, **only 280** have been completed and “**made operational**”. Most of these projects pertain to construction of STPs but there is **no data** which shows that the STPs are **actually functioning**.
- **Neglect of Tributaries:** Experts point out that **neglecting smaller rivers** has hampered overall cleanup efforts. For example, the **Gomti River** suffers from **low oxygen levels**, making it inhospitable for biodiversity.
- **Industrial Pollution:** Tanneries in **Kanpur** do not properly treat effluents, leading to high levels of harmful substances like **chromium** in discharged waste.
- **Cost Overruns:** **CAG** pointed out poor financial management for the programme in its report saying **only 8 - 63% of the funds** were utilised during **2014-15 to 2016-17**. The CAG expressed **strong concerns** regarding the Centre's **excessive spending on media campaigns**.
- **Ongoing Environmental Threats:** **Illegal sand mining and riverfront development** projects require dredging the river that further interferes with the river's flow.

Way Forward

- **Enhance Financial Management:** Improve **financial management practices** by ensuring that funds allocated to the **Namami Gange programme** are utilised effectively and transparently. Implement stringent **auditing and reporting** mechanisms to track expenditures.
- **Strengthen Regulations:** Promote **sustainable industrial practices** through incentives for adopting eco-friendly technologies and waste management systems.
- **Revitalise Tributary Restoration Efforts:** Targeted actions must be taken to improve **health**, including restoring **natural flow and biodiversity** of tributaries and smaller rivers.
- **Monitoring and Data Systems:** Develop a **centralised database** that integrates data from all projects under the Namami Gange programme, allowing for better tracking of progress and identification of areas needing improvement

Drishti Mains Question:

Q.How does the Namami Gange Programme and National Mission for Clean Ganga contribute to the conservation and rejuvenation of the Ganga River?

UPSC Civil Services Examination, Previous Year Questions (PYQs)

Mains

Q. Discuss the Namami Gange and National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) programmes and causes of mixed results from the previous schemes. What quantum leaps can help preserve the river Ganga better than incremental inputs? **(2015)**