

Minutes of the 3rd Meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) held on 17th April, 2012

The 3rd meeting of the National Ganga River Basin Authority (NGRBA) chaired by the Prime Minister was held in 7, Race Course Road, New Delhi on 17th April, 2012. The list of participants is annexed.

2. Welcoming the participants to the meeting, the Prime Minister emphasized the need for ensuring a right balance between environmental and ecological conservation of Ganga and the imperatives of development. He stated that whereas a comprehensive Ganga River Basin Management Plan is being prepared by the IIT Consortium, urgent action was required to treat the domestic sewage and industrial effluents to maintain ecological flow in river. The Prime Minister highlighted the projects being sanctioned in the States and urged the States Governments to send proposals for new projects for creation of additional treatment facilities, and requested them to speed-up the process of implementation of the sanctioned projects and strengthen the enforcement mechanisms in the States to control industrial pollution. He also requested the Chief Ministers to make an assessment of the situation with regard to untreated sewage and industrial pollution affecting the water quality in Ganga and present a report to the NGRBA, so that the institutional, administrative and financial problems coming in way of effective implementation of pollution control measures can be addressed. The Prime Minister mentioned that there should also be a policy for ensuring minimum environmental flows in the river based on detailed examination of reports of various scientific institutions by a multi-disciplinary group, which can recommend broad principles and actions that should

be taken for conservation of Ganga Basin and need of water for irrigation and hydro-power projects, while maintaining the desired environmental flows.

3. The Minister of State (I/C), Environment and Forests presented the Agenda while stating that the Government is committed to preserving the flow and purity of river Ganga and a number of steps are being taken under the NGRBA programme to achieve this. As the task was complex and gigantic, all stakeholders would need to work together to implement the programme in a co-ordinated manner.

4. Swami Avimukhteshwaranand Saraswati ji desired that it would be appropriate that Part-I of the Agenda, which pertains to the issues raised by the Ganga Sewa Abhiyan, should be discussed in detail in the presence of Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanandji, who is presently hospitalized in AIIMS. He also stated that the Ganga Sewa Abhiyan would, however, like to hear the views of the NGRBA expert members and others on their Agenda.

Acharya Pramod Krishnam ji, from the Ganga Sewa Abhiyan delegation, stressed the need for stopping work on various dams in the upper reaches of Ganga so that continuous flow of the river is not disturbed in any way. He stated that we need to preserve Ganga not only for scientific reasons or propagating flora and fauna, but also for ensuring that religious sentiments are not hurt and rituals can be performed.

5. The NGRBA expert members made the following observations:

Prof. R.H. Sidiqqi

The letter sent by the NGRBA expert members to the Prime Minister and Minister of State (I/C), Environment and Forests in November, 2011 and the draft legislation relating to 'Ganga River Conservation Act' prepared by them should be

put in the Agenda of the NGRBA meeting and discussed. The members should be consulted on the type of projects to be implemented.

Prof. K.J.Nath

The Agenda Items should be discussed one by one.

Shri Ravi Chopra

- (i) A separate meeting should be held in which Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanandji makes his presentation on the various issues raised in the Agenda given by Ganga Sewa Abhiyan.
- (ii) Adequate flow in the river should be ensured and work on all hydro-electric projects, both proposed and under-construction on Alaknanda, Mandakini and other rivers in the upper reaches should be stopped.
- (iii) NEERI Report of July, 2011 indicates that as the river traverses down the Himalayas, it comes in contact with its sediment, which has particles with higher radio activity, resulting in greater self-purification capacity of Ganga water. As more than 90% of the sediment load of Bhagirathi is retained by the Tehri Dam, the special properties of Ganga water are not available to the people down-stream. Thus, further obstruction of water on Alkananda should be stopped and it should be allowed to flow unhampered.

Prof. B.D. Tripathi

- (i) An Expert Group should be set up to determine the issues of environmental flow and ground water recharging.
- (ii) The State Pollution Control Boards need to enforce environmental regulations strictly so that industrial effluents now being discharged into the sewers and causing problems in the functioning of STPs (Sewage Treatment

Plants) are controlled. Proper monitoring and evaluation of the implementation of sanctioned works should also be done.

- (iii) Proper use of the expertise of NGRBA expert members should be made.
- (iv) Conserving rainwater should be a priority.

Shri Rajender Singh

- (i) As the various tributaries of Ganga are inter-linked with the main river, the six other States of the Ganga basin should also be included and represented in the NGRBA.
- (ii) Expertise of NGRBA expert members should be put to proper use.
- (iii) The Authority needs to give a fresh direction to controlling pollution in the Ganga.

Smt. Rama Rauta

- (i) Work on all dams in Uttarakhand should be stopped.
- (ii) There is a need to ensure that data required by the IIT Consortium for preparation of the Basin Management Plan is provided expeditiously by the States and the Ministry of Water Resources.
- (iii) Large scale deforestation in Uttarakhand should be stopped.
- (iv) Proper use of expertise of NGRBA expert members should be made.

Prof. R.K. Sinha

- (i) Emphasized the need for conserving and reviving wetlands in the Ganga Basin, which will ensure greater flow in the river along its flood plains.

- (ii) The problem of solid waste needs to be tackled in addition to untreated sewage.
- (iii) Need to save and conserve ground water, which helps in recharging the river.
- (iv) If we can save the dolphin, the flow and purity of Ganga will be preserved.

6. The Chief Minister of Uttarakhand emphasized that his State is committed to preserving the Ganga. However, development of the State is equally important and the needs of the people living on the banks of the river in the higher reaches is required to be given due consideration. Thus, hydro-power generation in the State in a balanced manner and on a scientific basis is necessary as only a fraction of the potential has been tapped so far. He requested the following based on the decisions taken in an all-party meeting as well as the Cabinet of the State:

- (i) Detailed basin studies should be carried out to determine the requirement for environmental flow, which should be agreed by all and monitored regularly.
- (ii) The work on the nine hydro-electric projects should not be stopped and the work on already closed projects should be started again.
- (ii) The 135 km stretch of river Ganga from Gaumukh to Uttarkashi should not be notified as eco-sensitive zone, as it will impede the developmental activities in the region and the existing environmental laws are adequate for ensuring the conservation of Ganga.
- (iv) Mining of sand should not be stopped and it should be allowed to be carried out in scientific manner.
- (v) All NGRBA projects in Uttarakhand should be funded on 90:10 basis.

7. The Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh observed that all the stakeholders need to work together to conserve the river. However, development works would need to be taken up hand in hand with environmental and flow issues. He also informed the following:

- (i) A composite Ganga Basin Management Plan should be prepared by Ministry of Water Resources (as they have all the requisite data relating to rivers) in consultation with the State Governments and the civil society. This Plan should include agriculture, environment, energy, flood management, industry, urban development, forestry and water resource management. The IIT Consortium should submit their reports/Plan urgently, which should form part of the composite Plan of Ministry of Water Resources.
- (ii) It would not be feasible to maintain 200 cumecs flow from Narora to Allahabad as suggested by the Ganga Sewa Abhiyan. During the non-monsoon period, the virgin discharge in the river is only 35-65 cumecs. As per the directions of the Hon'ble Allahabad High Court, 50% of the available discharge is to be allowed from Narora to flow in the river and the Government of Uttar Pradesh is following this order.
- (iii) All works sanctioned under NGRBA in Allahabad will be completed before the ensuing Kumbh Mela starting in early 2013.
- (iv) Permission for mining in the flood plain of Ganga is being allowed in UP only after obtaining prior environmental clearances.

(v) The capital cost projects should be shared by the Centre and the States in the ratio of 90:10. In addition, the sharing of O&M cost on the same pattern should be for a period of 15 years, instead of 5 years at present.

(vi) While the State Government agrees with the proposition that the grant of environmental clearances for projects (on river Ganga) may continue to be done by the concerned authorities; it is not in favour of creating additional levels of approval. The Competent Authority may, however, consult the NMCG/NGRBA.

(vii) Project proposals for establishing CETPs at Kannauj and Kanpur will be prepared after obtaining the inputs of experts and submitted to Government of India for funding.

(viii) Government of India may provide additional funds to the State Government for dealing with flood related problems in the State.

8. The Chief Minister, Jharkhand informed that Ganga flows through the State for only a small stretch of 45 kms. There are 2 towns, namely Sahebganj and Rajmahal on the banks of river Ganga, for which project proposals would be submitted to the NGRBA. The river has great religious importance in the State as water of Ganga at Sahebganj is carried by pilgrims for offering at Deoghar.

9. The Chief Minister, Bihar observed that the flow of river Ganga has reduced at Patna even though a large number of tributaries meet the river in Bihar and increase the water flow substantially. He desired that the purity and flow of the river should be restored and also suggested the following:

(i) Setting up of a separate permanent and full-time Committee/Commission/Council which will deal with all the issues relating to NGRBA in detail, after obtaining scientific inputs from experts.

(ii) Commissioning a study on the impact of Farrakka Barrage as it is causing a lot of siltation in the river, especially in Bihar.

10. The Minister in-charge of Municipal Affairs and Urban Development, West Bengal requested that the proposals submitted by the State Government under the NGRBA programme may be sanctioned expeditiously. He also made the following observations:

(i) The State Government would reformulate the project proposals of Resuscitation of Beliaghata Circular Canal, Tolly's Nalla and Kestopur Canal in line with the prescribed guidelines for reconsideration of the NGRBA.

(ii) Any cost escalation, be it for capital or O&M costs, should also be borne in the prevailing ratio of 70:30 between the Centre and to State Governments.

(iii) The O&M costs should be shared between the Central and the State Governments for a period of 10 years. The clause for review after 3 years should be reconsidered.

(iv) Powers to sanction projects up to a certain limit may be delegated to the State Government. The States may also be delegated powers to sanction minor deviations from the sanctioned projects during execution, as well as sanction a lump-sum budget for public outreach and communication components.

Budgetary provision for capacity building of implementing agencies and urban local bodies may be increased to enable them to effectively deliver the services.

(vi) A model framework for DBO (Design Build and Operate) methodology for STPs may be indicated by NGRBA, which can be taken up by the States.

(vii) A Knowledge Centre may be set up at Kolkata.

(viii) Technical and financial support may be provided to the State Government for preparing the Management Plan for tackling the problem of erosion of river embankments in towns along the Ganga.

11. After discussions, the following decisions were taken:

(i) The recommendations relating to environmental flows made in the reports of IIT, Roorkee and Wildlife Institute of India should be examined by a multi-disciplinary group, including the concerned State Governments. The group would need to look holistically at the various options available and recommend broad principles and actions that need to be taken with regard to conservation, irrigation use and running of the hydro-electric projects that will ensure uninterrupted flow of the river Ganga. Based on the recommendations of the multi-disciplinary group, a road map would be drawn up for further action.

(ii) The issues raised by the Ganga Sewa Abhiyan will be discussed separately with Swami Gyan Swaroop Sanand ji.

12. Part-II of the Agenda relating to actions on the decisions taken in the 2nd Meeting of the NGRBA, review of progress of various components of the NGRBA programme and environmental clearances was noted by the NGRBA.

13. The Minister of State (I/C), Environment and Forests informed that the views expressed by the State Governments, Expert Members and Special Invitees would be considered by the Government of India.

14. The meeting concluded with a vote of thanks to the Chair.

Annexure

List of Participants in the 3rd NGRBA Meeting at 7, Race Course Road, New Delhi on 17th April, 2012

1. Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister - In Chair
2. Sri Pranab Mukherjee, Union Minister of Finance
3. Sri Pawan Kumar Bansal, Union Minister for Parliamentary Affairs and Water Resources
4. Smt. Jayanthi Natarajan, Union Minister of State (Independent Charge), Environment and Forests
5. Sri Nitish Kumar, Chief Minister, Bihar
6. Sri Akhilaesh Yadav, Chief Minister, Uttar Pradesh
7. Sri Arjun Munda, Chief Minister, Jharkhand
8. Sri Vijay Bahuguna, Chief Minister, Uttarakhand
9. Shri Firhad Hakim, Minister-in-Charge, Municipal Affairs and Urban Development, West Bengal
10. Dr. Mihir Shah, Member, Planning Commission
11. Dr. Veer Bhadra Mishra, President, Sankat Mochan Foundation, Varanasi
12. Ms. Sunita Narain, Director, Centre for Science and Environment
13. Shri Rajendra Singh, Chairman, Tarun Bharat Sangh, Jaipur
14. Smt. Rama Rauta, Convenor, Save Ganga Movement, Pune
15. Prof. B.D.Tripathi, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi
16. Dr. Ravi Chopra, Director, Peoples' Science Institute, Dehradun
17. Dr. R.K.Sinha, Patna University, Patna
18. Prof. R.H.Siddiqi, former Professor, Aligarh Muslim University, Aligarh
19. Prof. K.J.Nath, former Director, All India Institute of Public Health and Hygiene, Kolkata
20. Swami Avimukteshwaranand Saraswati ji, Sri Vidyamath, Kedar Ghat, Varanasi (Special Invitee)
21. Acharya Pramod Krishnam ji, Sri Kalki Peethadhishwar, Kalki Dham, Moradabad (Special Invitee)
22. Swami Shivanand Saraswati ji, Matri Sadan, Haridwar (Special Invitee)
23. Swami Parmanand Saraswati ji, Hindu Dharam Acharya Sabha (Special Invitee)

24. Shri Maulana Kalbe Jawaad, Shia Dharam Guru, Lucknow (Special Invitee)
25. Acharya Lokesh Muni, President, Ahimsa Vishwa Bharati, Delhi (Special Invitee)
26. Shri Pulok Chatterjee, Principal Secretary to PM
27. Shri T.Chatterjee, Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests
28. Shri Jawed Usmani, Chief Secretary, Uttar Pradesh
29. Smt. Mira Mehrishi, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests
30. Shri Pankaj Pachauri, Media Adviser to PM
31. Dr. Rajiv Sharma, Mission Director (Joint Secretary), National Mission Clean Ganga, Ministry of Environment and Forests
32. Shri Shatrughna Singh, Joint Secretary to PM
33. Sri Joydeep Sarkar, PS to PM
34. Shri Utpal Kumar Singh, Principal Secretary, Peyjal, Uttarakhand
35. Shri S.S.Sharma, Principal Secretary, Urban Development, Bihar
36. Dr. Nitin Kulkarni, Secretary, Urban Development, Jharkhand
37. Shri Vivek Bhardwaj, CEO, Kolkata Metropolitan Development Authority
38. Shri Dheeraj Gupta, Director, PMO
39. Shri Brijesh Sikka, Director (NRCD), Ministry of Environment and Forests