

Ministry of Jal Shakti



16th Meeting of Empowered Task Force on Ganga Rejuvenation Held under Chairmanship of The Union Minister for Jal Shakti C.R. Paatil

Minister Stresses Cultural, Ecological and Livelihood Importance of Ganga; Calls for Swift Action on Wetland Protection, Pollution Abatement and River Rejuvenation

Report on Geomorphic and Ecological Impacts of Sand Mining in Large Rivers Released; Focus on Strengthening Regulatory Framework for River Conservation

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Giving new impetus to the rejuvenation of River Ganga, the 16th meeting of the Empowered Task Force (ETF) was held today under chairmanship of the Union Minister for Jal Shakti Shri C.R. Paatil. The Minister emphasized that the conservation of the Ganga is not just an environmental effort, but is intrinsically linked to India's cultural heritage, faith, and the lifeline of millions of people.



The meeting brought together key stakeholders from various ministries and state governments, including Secretary, Department of Water Resources, Shri V.L. Kantha Rao, Director General of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) Shri Rajeev Kumar Mital, JS&FA Department of Water

Resources Shri Gaurav Masaldan, Shri Anurag Srivastava (Principal Secretary Namami Gange U.P.) Shri Nalin Srivastava (Deputy Director General, NMCG), Shri Anup Kumar Srivastava (Executive Director, Technical), Shri S.P. Vashisth (Executive Director, Admin), Shri Bhaskar Dasgupta (Executive Director, Finance), Ms Nandini Ghosh (Project Director, West Bengal SPMG), Shri Animesh Parashar (Chairman of BUIDCO), Sh. Suraj Project Director (Jharkhand), Shri Prabhash Kumar (Project Director, Uttar Pradesh SMCG), along with senior officers of NMCG and participating states.



Expressing satisfaction over the achievements, the Minister appreciated the collective efforts and highlighted that nearly 80% of the issues taken up during the past year by Empowered Task Force have been successfully resolved. He further stated that these works are laying a strong foundation for Ganga rejuvenation, with efforts across diverse fields creating a holistic framework for the Ganga and its tributaries.

Special focus was laid on the status of wetlands in Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, where 282 and 387 wetlands were assessed respectively, with 40 in Uttar Pradesh and 19 in Bihar identified as high priority. The Minister urged both states to expedite notifications and provide legal protection to these 59 wetlands, emphasizing that wetlands are the backbone of flood control, groundwater recharge, and biodiversity conservation, and their protection is vital for ecological balance and local livelihoods.



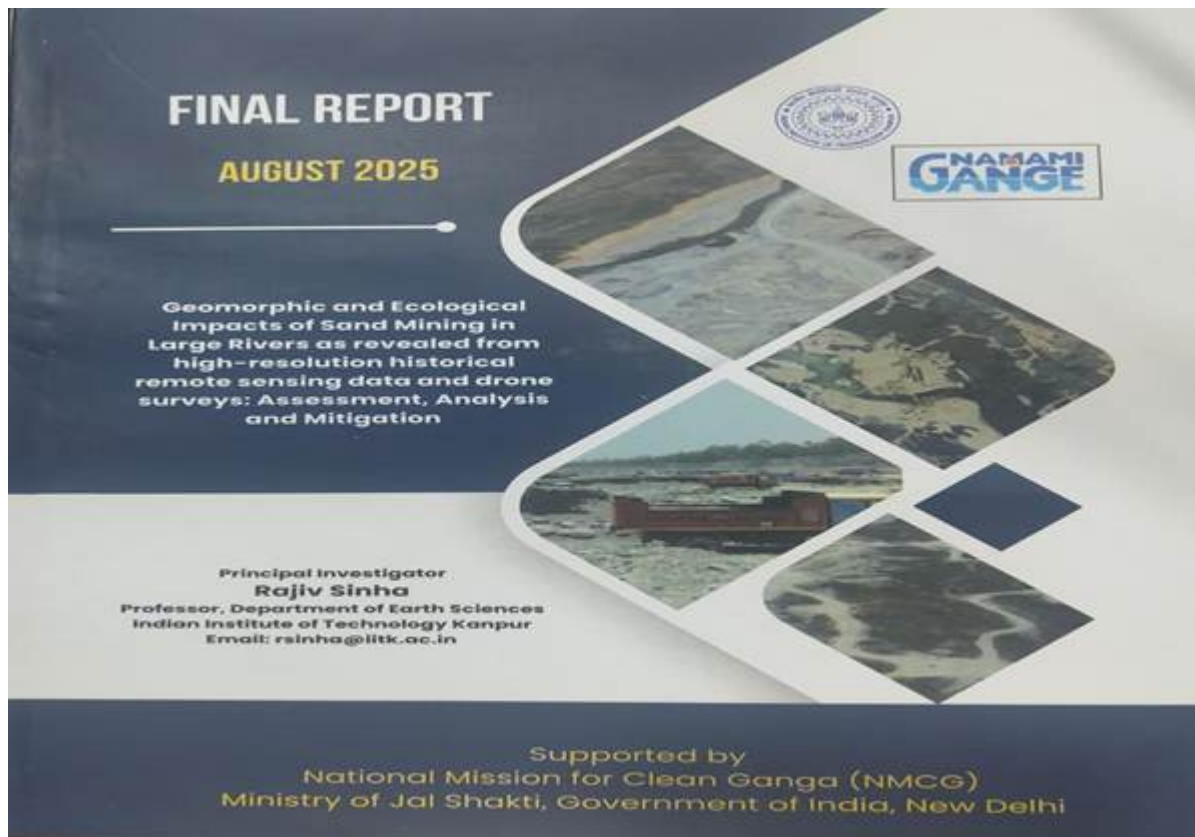
Reviewing the status of pollution abatement in Uttar Pradesh, it was informed that while larger cities have developed a sewage treatment capacity of 4,651 MLD with an additional 1,708 MLD under construction, the focus should be increased on smaller urban bodies. The Minister directed the state government to prioritize City Sanitation Action Plans under Swachh Bharat Mission 2.0 and prepare DPRs at the earliest for project approvals.

Hon'ble Minister emphasized focus on small river rejuvenation and reviewed the "Namami Niranjana Campaign." The Niranjana (Falgu) River, once revered as a sacred river associated with Lord Buddha's enlightenment and religious rituals, has now dried up. For its rejuvenation, NMCG and local institutions are working on measures such as community awareness, afforestation, rainwater conservation, and sustainable farming. The Minister directed the Bihar government to formally support this campaign, stating, "Rejuvenation of the Niranjana is not just the revival of a river, but a revival of our cultural heritage."



The meeting also focused on strengthening of regulatory framework and discussed floodplain demarcation, with the Minister urging all Ganga basin states to implement the Central Water Commission's technical guidelines, stressing that such regulation is essential to regulate activities in sensitive areas. In line with this, the Minister also highlighted the functioning of the dedicated Cell constituted within NMCG on 7th December 2023 to grant prior permission for specific activities under Sections 6 and 42 of the 2016 Authorities Notification. The Cell, comprising officers from CPCB, CWC, NMCG, the concerned State Mission for Clean Ganga, and a legal expert, reviews project proposals ensuring adequate due diligence and focus on river sensitive development.

The Hon'ble Minister also reviewed and released the project report on "Geomorphic and Ecological Impacts of Sand Mining in Large Rivers" prepared by IIT Kanpur under the guidance of Prof. Rajiv Sinha. Supported by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), Ministry of Jal Shakti, this report provides an in-depth assessment, analysis, and mitigation strategies regarding sand mining using high-resolution remote sensing data and drone surveys. It marks an important step towards understanding and addressing the ecological challenges posed by sand mining in India's rivers and would help in bringing out a policy framework on regulating sand mining.



Concluding the meeting, the Minister called upon all states and departments for swift and coordinated action. He said, "The Ganga is not just a river. It is our culture, our faith, and our lifeline. We must achieve the goal of its rejuvenation in a time-bound manner. All concerned departments and states must work together to fulfill the resolve of making the Ganga 'Aviral and Nirmal'."

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