

**L-64/2/2021/NMCG/
National Mission for Clean Ganga
Department of Water Resources, River Development
& Ganga Rejuvenation, Ministry of Jal Shakti**

1st Floor,
Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium
India Gate, New Delhi-110002
Dated: May 2021

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: Minutes of the meeting of the Chief Secretaries of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on follow up Action on advisory dated 11th and 12th May, 2021 issued by Director General, NMCG to State Government of UP and Bihar towards adherence to Covid safety protocol of Government of India Guidelines on Covid 19 Dead Body Management held on 15.05.2021 from 03:00 PM onwards

Meeting of the Chief Secretaries of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on follow up Action on advisory dated 11th and 12th May, 2021 issued by Director General, NMCG to State Government of UP and Bihar towards adherence to Covid safety protocol of Government of India Guidelines on Covid 19 Dead Body Management was held through video conferencing on 15.05.2021 from 03:00 PM onwards under Chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti. A copy of the minutes of the said meeting is forwarded herewith for your kind information and necessary action.

18311
16.5.2021

(D. P. Mathuria)
Executive Director -Technical
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Encl.: As above

To,

1. Chief Secretary, Government of Uttar Pradesh, Lucknow
2. Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar, Patna
3. Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forests & Climate Change, New Delhi
4. Chairman, Central Water Commission, New Delhi.
5. Chairman, Central Pollution Control Board, New Delhi.
6. Member Secretary, UP Pollution Control Board
7. Member Secretary, Bihar Pollution Control Board

Copy for kind information:

1. PPS to Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Govt. of India
2. PPS to Addl. Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, Govt. of India
3. PS to Director General, NMCG, New Delhi
4. PS to ED (Project/ Finance), NMCG, New Delhi

Minutes of the meeting with Chief Secretaries of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar on follow up Action on advisory dated 11th and 12th May, 2021 issued by Director General, NMCG to State Government of UP and Bihar towards adherence to Covid safety protocol of Government of India Guidelines on Covid 19 Dead Body Management held on 15.05.2021 from 03:00 PM onwards

Members Present:

Ministry of Jal Shakti & NMCG

1. Sh. Pankaj Kumar	Secretary, MoJS
2. Sh Rajiv Ranjan Mishra	DG, NMCG
3. Ms. Debashree Mukherjee	Addl. Secretary, MoJS
4. Sh. Saumitra Halder	Chairman, CWC
5. Sh. Ashok Singh	Executive Director (Projects), NMCG
6. Sh. D. P. Mathuria	Executive Director (Technical), NMCG
7. Sh Rozy Agrawal	Executive Director (Finance), NMCG
8. Dr. Pravin Kumar	Director (Technical), NMCG
9. Sh. S. Mukhopadhyay	Env. Expert, NMCG
10. Sh. Rajat Kumar Gupta	Sr. WMS, NMCG
11. Dr SK Raghuvanshi	Scientist-D, NMCG
12. Dr. Hema Patel	Project Officer, NMCG
13. Dr Anu Chetal	Scientist, NMCG
14. Sh. Kumar Ajitabh	Project Officer (Legal), NMCG
15. Mrs Sanjam Chima	Sr Consultant, Communication, NMCG

Government of UP

16. Sh. Rajneesh Dubey	ACS, Urban Development Dept., Govt. of U. P.
17. Sh. Anurag Srivastava	PS, Namami Gange & RWSD, Govt. of U. P.
18. Sh. Acche Lal Yadav	APD, SMCG-UP
19. Sh. Ashish Tiwari	Member Secretary, UPPCB
20. Sh Sitaram Tagore	Env Expert, SMCG-UP

Government of Bihar

21. Sh. Anand Kishore	PS, UDHD, Govt. of Bihar
22. Dr. Navin Kumar	Board Analyst, BPCB

Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB)

23. Sh. Prashant Gargava	Member Secretary, CPCB
24. Sh Sudhakar	Addl Director, Scientist, CPCB

A Meeting was convened under the Chairmanship of the Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti (MoJS) with the Chief Secretaries of Uttar Pradesh and Bihar. The Chief Secretaries of two States could not attend due to their preoccupation and they deputed concerned senior officials from State government of UP and Bihar. Central organisations also attended the meeting conducted via video conferencing.

The meeting commenced at 3:00 PM with Secretary, MoJS in Chair. **Shri Pankaj Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti**, welcomed the dignitaries in his address

and informed that the instant meeting has been called to deliberate upon some of the serious issues arising out of uncontrolled practise of burying dead bodies near the banks of river or throwing/consigning in the flowing river in some parts of the State of UP, Bihar and others due to various reasons including paucity of means for proper cremation or burial as is being widely publicized in recent media reports. The follow up action taken by the State administration in compliance of the Advisory dated 11th and 12th May, 2021 issued by Director General, NMCG to State Government of UP and Bihar among others towards adherence to Covid safety protocol of Government of India Guidelines on Covid 19 Dead Body Management was flagged for discussion. The Chair highlighted that this issue has also been taken into cognizance by the National Human Rights Commission (NHRC) on 13.05.2021 and reports have been sought from the concerned State Govts. as well as the Central Govt with regards to steps undertaken to stop this practise of dumping of dead bodies in the holy River Ganga. The Chair further remarked that it may not be ruled out that such incidences of people dumping dead bodies in the rivers/ lakes/ ponds or other water bodies may be occurring in parts of other States/Union Territories in the country and therefore, it warrants to be flagged at the highest level so that the concerned authorities/local bodies/panchayats are instructed and/or sensitized to effectively utilize infrastructure of crematoria/burial ground for cremation/burials of dead bodies instead of consigning/throwing them into rivers or other water bodies.

Rajiv Ranjan Mishra, DG, NMCG thanked the Chair and the participating officials for being able to join in a meeting convened at such short notice for review and discussion on such a critical issue that may impact river health as well as life and safety of the communities living along the bank of the river Ganga. He said that primary task is immediate stoppage and prevention of dumping of dead bodies, half burnt dead bodies in the rivers. He mentioned that there should be quick and safe disposal/cremation of the dead bodies as per the standard Operating procedure and guidelines. Besides stringent patrolling and vigilance all along the river Ganga should be done by the concerned agencies so as to prevent such dumping/burial of dead bodies along the river Ganga or on its banks. He further emphasized on financial support for proper cremation facilities, especially in the rural areas abutting River Ganga and its tributaries. He informed that a team of NMCG officials are pursuing the matter with district administrations of some of the sensitive districts like Unnao, Kanpur Dehat, Ballia, Ghazipur in Uttar Pradesh as well as Buxar and Saran in Bihar. He also informed that the news from other districts in UP and Bihar also have been coming such as Kannauj, Fatehpur, Prayagraj, Mirzapur, Varanasi, Kanpur, and Patna. State authorities should be having detailed information and there may be involvement of other districts as well. Further, he expressed that the need of hour is that a proper mechanism is established for regular authentic reporting on the issue, in order to have proper perspective and accurate monitoring. He further pressed on the need of monitoring with increased frequency and maintaining the water quality of the river Ganga by various monitoring agencies such as CPCB and CWC. Apart from enforcement, there is urgent need to ensure that the families are given all required

support including arrangement for free and financial support for cremation. There is need for humane approach and if needed, Project Directors can assess and also give support to District Ganga Committees for this out of NMCG funds available with them while keeping NMCG informed. ED, Project, NMCG has also undertaken a review of utilisation on ground of the crematoria constructed under Namami Gange and the overall management of these and other existing crematoria needs to be kept optimal and efficient to avoid any harassment.

Ms. Debashree Mukherjee, Addl. Secretary, MoJS expressed that there is urgent need for supporting proper cremation of Covid 19 dead in line with Covid-safety protocol. Besides urgent assessment of the risks imposed to the river-side communities by the PCBs is also required to be followed with proper guidelines and spreading awareness with the river side communities on do's/ don't for the use of river water to prevent the spread of infection in current scenario of Covid 19 surge.

Sh. D.P. Mathuria, Executive Director (Technical), NMCG briefly presented the agenda of the meeting and the issues arising out of the notice of **Hon'ble NHRC (No. 1561/4/7/2021 dt. 13.05.2021)** which are as following:

- Violation of Human rights of deceased persons by uncontrolled practice of disposing dead bodies into rivers
- Contravention of the River Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016
- Harmful effect on water quality and life of people due to disposal of dead bodies in River Ganga
- Steps undertaken for spreading awareness and checking consigning of half burnt or unburnt dead bodies into the rivers
- Fixing of liability and action against negligent public authorities/institutions

Sh. Anurag Srivastava, Principal Secretary, Namami Gange & RWSD, Govt. of U. P. informed that the NMCG guidelines have been circulated to all the DMs of the districts along the river Ganga for urban as well as rural areas and concerned District Magistrates have already started taking action for proper cremation of the deceased and patrolling along the river has also been stated. He further informed that all the thirteen crematoria built in the State of U.P. under the *Namami Gange Programme* and those constructed out of State resources are functional and are being optimally utilized. Special attention and action are being taken at the strategic locations such as Ghazipur and Ballia where more incidences of dead bodies have been observed. Reporting mechanism has been developed and they have received report today from 7 districts. He also informed that orders have been issued for providing financial support for cremation in urban areas.

Sh. Rajnish Dubey, Additional Chief Secretary, Urban Development Dept., Govt. of U. P. informed that funding provision has been made and orders have been issued by the Panchayati Raj department, Govt of UP for funding the cremation in rural areas also for Covid 19 dead. It was informed that apart from GO providing assistance of

Rs. 5000 for covid related deaths, the Panchayati Raj Institutes has issued an order on 29th April, 2021 providing financial assistance of Rs. 5000/- for the cremation of the dead bodies. Later on 14th May another order has included death due to COVID or any reason for support so as to check disposal of dead bodies in river and support for proper cremation. Funding is from the Finance Commission funds to Panchayats. To enforce these, two GO have been issued by the UDD and Panchayati Raj institution and also local committees have been constituted for over sight. Govt. orders to this effect have also been issued and copies of which will be shared shortly. He further informed that the practise of dead body being disposed in the rivers is prevalent in two particular stretches in central/eastern U.P. and the epicentre of which is in Kanpur-Unnao region in central U.P and Banaras-Ghazipur area in eastern U.P. DG, NMCG suggested that process of patrolling has to be expedited for locating such instances. Mr Dubey informed that stringent patrolling has been undertaken by the concerned agencies at these places, inclusive of deployment of State Disaster Response Forces (SDRF) battalions for surveillance. He also informed that Hon'ble Chief Minister has also been reviewing the situation and instructing. It was informed that Western districts have not been reporting such incidences while they are more in central and eastern part of the UP mainly from Kannauj to Balia.

Sh. Anand Kishore, Principal Secretary, UDD, Govt. of Bihar informed that apropos receipt of NMCG advisory and call from DG, NMCG, DMs were alerted and Video Conferencing has been conducted with all the ULBs/ Panchayat Pramukhs to prevent such incidences of consigning dead bodies/unclaimed corpses into the rivers in the future. In all, the aforementioned bodies have come floating from the Uttar Pradesh. State Government has put *mahajal* along the river bank for trapping the dead bodies in the river. It was informed that on the first day 61 bodies were found floating in Buxar and on the second day 10 bodies was found in the *Mahajal*. He agreed that Buxar and Saran are the two sensitive districts in Bihar and therefore, regular patrolling on both the banks of the river Ganga at Buxar and Saran districts is being done by river-boat police. Also, awareness drives are also being conducted and stringent action will be taken against those found dumping the dead bodies into the river or burial along the banks of river Ganga. It was also informed that Government of Bihar has notified that in case of any death due to Covid 19 or Covid 19 related symptoms, the expenses for cremation would be borne by the State Government. He further informed that Hon'ble Chief Minister and also Chief Secretary; Government of Bihar have also taken cognizance of the situation and are also monitoring the situation. With respect to putting *mahajal* along the river bank, DG, NMCG advised for sensitizing of people and concerned agencies to prevent the entangling of Dolphin in those areas into the *mahajal* which is being used for trapping the dead bodies being dumped into the river and its implementation is to be ensured in urban as well as rural areas. He expressed that the District Forest Officers may co-ordinate in this regard and submit report to NMCG. DG also alerted on keeping special vigil on bridges over Ganga to check any miscreant throwing dead bodies, particularly in Saran –Balialia border. Govt of Bihar confirmed action on these points.

Mr S. Haldar, Chairman, CWC informed the Chair that monitoring Water Quality of river Ganga is being done at frequency of every 10 days. He further informed that water quality monitoring is being carried out at 11 water quality monitoring stations in 27 districts in Uttar Pradesh and it would be further carried out with enhanced frequency. Field staff has been alerted and monitoring river water quality is being continued. Last samples were collected on 11th May, 2021 and they are being analysed. In Bihar there are 4 water quality monitoring stations. Report of the water quality monitoring shall be submitted shortly. As for the flows in the river, flow observed was 77 cumecs in Kanpur, 260 cumecs in Prayagraj and 330 cumecs in Banaras, which is the usual flow of the river in this season and is sufficient as per the last 10 years data.

Sh. Prashant Gargava, Member Secretary, CPCB informed about the various measures being taken for monitoring of probable contamination of water quality of river Ganga and the sewage. The spread of the virus in sewage also needs to be monitored. There can be lesser chances of detection of virus in the drinking water supplies as due to chlorination and other disinfection methods, the survival of the virus is ruled out. He informed that as per the real time water quality monitoring data not much variation is observed in the river water quality due to dead body discharge as far as biological parameters are concerned. He said that guidelines about handling sewage coming from contaminated areas including measures to be taken when coming in contact with the sewage from the contaminated area is to evolve. As per the CPCB, chances of spreading of virus through sewage are not expected. He also informed that as per the report of WHO, water spread of virus is not expected. Chances of survival of virus in river water are ruled out. He further informed CPCB has written to the SPCB to monitor the water quality and have to look out at bacteriological parameters in addition to the conventional parameters. He opined that for Covid virus analysis, samples can be sent to the National Institute of Virology (NIV), Pune. For this sampling is to be done by the respective SPCB and CWC. CPCB would do coordination with the SPCBs and the institute for the same.

In this respect, Executive Director (Technical), NMCG suggested that it is learnt that National Chemical Laboratory, Pune has recently established protocol for testing Covid 19 virus in the sewage and has started testing. DG, NMCG stated that Executive Director (Technical), NMCG may coordinate with NCL, Pune and CPCB in this respect. Secretary, MoJS emphasized to get in touch with CPCB and SPCBs to get the water samples analysed for the monitoring of contamination of Covid 19 virus and intensified monitoring of other important parameters. He also emphasized on the need of the association with the health department by the state pollution control boards so as to ensure the collection and analysis of samples as per the specified protocols and guidelines.

Sh. Ashish Tiwari, MS, UPPCB informed the Chair that weekly monitoring of the water samples of the river is being done for the conventional parameters of pH, Color, BOD, COD etc. UPPCB has also shared the monitoring data with the Executive Director

(Technical), NMCG. As per the data not much difference in the water quality of the river was observed. It is also informed that the flow of the river is adequate. Analysis of the covid virus from the water samples involves the extraction of RNA, which can be done by the appropriate institutes having expertise for the same. He assured that increase in frequency of monitoring will be done at strategic locations.

Sh. Naveen Kumar, Board Analyst, Bihar State Pollution Control Board, informed that the BPCB has collected water samples for the analysis of the river Water Quality on 13th May, 2021 and the samples are being analyzed for conventional water quality parameters and report shall be submitted shortly. State was directed to analyze viral load of the water with the help of the health department of the State and the samples should be collected immediately and send to the concerned institute for analysis of presence and viral load of the covid-19 virus. Additional Secretary, DoWR suggested that CPCB should lead these efforts and coordinate with all concerned.

Recommendation& Suggestions:

- Strict compliance of the advisory and guidelines issued by NMCG is to be ensured by State Governments and also by CPCB, SPCBs and other concerned agencies. State Govts. should send report on actions taken/contemplated to be taken by **17.5.2021** followed by weekly reports.
- The dumping of dead bodies into the river Ganga and also the burial of the dead bodies along the bank of the river should be immediately stopped and prevented.
- There should be prompt and safe disposal/cremation of the spotted dead bodies in the river Ganga or buried on the banks of river Ganga as per the Standard Operating Procedures and guidelines.
- Besides stringent patrolling and vigilance all along the river Ganga should be done by the concerned agencies so as to prevent the dumping/burial of dead bodies into river Ganga or on its banks.
- The rural areas should be especially taken care of due to availability of limited availability of financial resources and proper cremation facilities. So Cremation support is urgently needed for urban as well as rural areas and state funding support as reported should be effectively implemented.
- It was also emphasized to get in touch with concerned agencies such as CPCB, SPCBs, CWC to get the water samples analyzed for the monitoring of contamination of COVID 19 virus and intensified monitoring for other conventional important parameters. Specialized institutes such as National Institute of Virology, Pune and National Chemical Laboratory may be associated for testing of the Covid 19 virus in the water samples. CPCB to do overall coordination.
- The health department may be associated by state PCBs so as to ensure the collection and analysis of samples as per the specified protocols and guidelines. Project Directors of State Missions can coordinate as needed.

- The spread of the virus in sewage may also be monitored by undertaking studies.
- There is a need for sensitizing and awareness among people and concerned agencies to prevent the entangling of Dolphin into the Mahajal which is being used for trapping the dead bodies dumped into the river Ganga and its implementation is to be ensured in urban as well as rural areas.
- SMCG UP & Bihar in co-ordination with the State Govts. should audit the infrastructure for crematoria/ burial grounds and submit a report on the status and utilization to the NMCG.
- A task force at senior level should oversee the arrangements for cremation, take up physical inspections on utilisation of crematoria and ensure that no one overcharges and all support is ensured to deserving families.
- CPCB/SPCB should furnish report on WQ of rivers.
- CPCB in co-ordination with the SPCBs should issue guidelines or raise awareness with the river side communities on do's/ don't for the use of river water to prevent the spread of infection in current scenario of Covid 19 surge.
- States should take up a major awareness drive to educate the riverside communities in districts along Ganga and other tributaries so as to prevent such incidents and also for ensuring health and hygiene of the communities.

The meeting ended with thanks to the Chair.
