

Collaborative Effort Underway to Initiate Robust Urban River Management Plan in Delhi: NMCG (Department of Water Resources, River Development and Ganga Rejuvenation) Sets New Course for Yamuna Revival in Delhi

National Mission for Clean Ganga under the aegis of Ministry of Jal Shakti, in collaboration with the National Institute of Urban Affairs and Government of NCT of Delhi organised an Inception Stakeholder Workshop today at Bharat Mandapam

The workshop marked the formal initiation of an integrated planning approach aimed at cleaning and rejuvenating the Yamuna River

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In a decisive step towards restoring the lifeline of the capital, the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) under the aegis of Ministry of Jal Shakti, in collaboration with the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and Government of NCT of Delhi organised an Inception Stakeholder Workshop today at Bharat Mandapam to kickstart the preparation of the Urban River Management Plan (URMP) for Delhi. The event was presided over by Chief Secretary (Delhi), Sh. Dharmendra and Secretary (DoWR) Ms. Debashree Mukherjee was Guest of Honour for the event. Other distinguished speakers and participants included Director General (NMCG), Sh. Rajeev Kumar Mital, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to India Ms. Marisa Gerards, Chief Executive Officer, (DJB) Sh. Kaushal Raj Sharma, Ms. Rebecca Epworth (World Bank); Laura Sustersic Project Director (GIZ), Sh. Rajiv Ranjan Mishra (Chief Advisor, Water and Environment, NIUA), Sh. Sandeep Mishra Member Secretary, Delhi Pollution Control Committee, Debolina Kumdu, Director (NIUA) and Prof. C.R. Babu Prf. Emeritus University of Delhi.

The workshop marked the formal initiation of an integrated planning approach aimed at cleaning and rejuvenating the Yamuna River. The initiative brought together representatives from 14 key departments and agencies, comprising a Multi-Stakeholder Group constituted by the Department of Urban Development, Government of NCT of Delhi. The workshop aimed at fostering a shared understanding amongst different stakeholders about the URMP approach and the process to be adopted to develop the URMP for Delhi.



In his opening remarks, DG NMCG Shri Rajeev Kumar Mital highlighted the urgent need for an integrated and collaborative approach to rejuvenate River Yamuna. He emphasized that the Urban River Management Plan (URMP) must go beyond being just a document, serving instead as a dynamic planning and action tool grounded in scientific understanding, risk-based assessment, and active stakeholder participation. The framework, he added, is designed to capture the holistic essence of the river and embed river-sensitive thinking into Delhi's urban planning for long-term sustainability.

Sh. Dharmendra, Chief Secretary, Government of Delhi, in his keynote address delivered a stark message: "Yamuna improves, Delhi improves." He called for urgent, visible results, and stressed on a practical and implementable plan as the essence for Yamuna rejuvenation. He underlined the river's role as the city's lifeline, urging stakeholders to embrace responsibility—from upgrading drain treatment and sewage infrastructure to rekindling Delhi's relationship with the river. He expressed need for an urgent action from all stakeholders for river sensitive urban development of Delhi. He stressed on use of URMP framework for catalysing sustainable development of city and improving the quality of life of the citizens of the National Capital.

Keynote speaker Ms. Debashree Mukherjee, Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, mentioned that "A healthy Yamuna will lead to a healthy life for the people of Delhi," stressing that water management is now central to the urban experience in the era of climate change. Ms. Mukherjee called Urban River Management Plan (URMP) to be more than just a stand-alone document and urged for a collective and sustained movement involving the government, media, partner institutions, and citizens alike, to bring the river back to life and build a resilient future for the capital.



Delivering a special address, Ms. Marisa Gerards, Ambassador of the Kingdom of the Netherlands to India, spotlighted the deepening India-Netherlands partnership in water management. She emphasized the significance of international collaboration in tackling urban water crises and announced the upcoming Centre of Excellence on Urban Water Resilience—a joint venture with NMCG and IIT Delhi which will play a key

role in URMP preparation. Ms. Gerards also highlighted the role of creative public engagement and praised the River Cities Alliance (RCA) for galvanizing collective action around river health. She emphasized that the Dutch concept of Water as Leverage can be integrated in the URMP framework to make it more robust and practical.



Representatives of World Bank Ms. Rebecca Epworth brought out case study from Australia for Urban River Management and mentioned that it was heartening to see the elements of URMP would obviate some of the mistakes which happened in Australian urban planning and development such as stakeholders' involvement and shared responsibilities, presence of an institutional framework etc. World Bank expressed its commitment and support for URMP preparation. Representatives of IIT (Delhi) mentioned the importance of data in URMP process particularly that related to flood risk assessment and management. IIT (Delhi) will focus on Urban Flooding aspect of URMP. Professor C. R. Babu mentioned the importance of Nature Based Solutions and focus on biodiversity as a key to Yamuna rejuvenation.

The workshop presented a detailed overview of the URMP's structure and roadmap. It emerged that the plan, will be prepared jointly by NIUA and IIT Delhi and would be supported by the upcoming Centre of Excellence with Dutch collaboration. The URMP would aim to tackle pollution, improve wetland management, encroachments, and promote water reuse through coordinated, multi-agency interventions. Notably, the plan will be monitored through the new Urban River Management Index, tracking improvements across ten key domains. The project is set to culminate in actionable projects and Detailed Project Reports (DPRs), funded through a blend of government, viability gap, and ULB resources.

The workshop featured interactive sessions, quizzes, and activities, underscoring the importance of public participation in river revival. It was stressed that the success of the URMP hinges on broad-based engagement and sustained, cross-sectoral cooperation. With today's workshop, Delhi signals its resolve to reclaim the Yamuna—not just as a water body, but as the heart of a resilient and vibrant city.

As the workshop concluded, the message echoed with clarity and conviction—Delhi is ready to reclaim the Yamuna, not just as a river, but as the heart of the city's identity and resilience. The Urban River Management Plan marks a transformative shift from fragmented efforts to a unified, action-driven vision for river restoration. Backed by scientific insight, global cooperation, and empowered citizen participation, this initiative promises more than environmental revival—it signals a cultural and civic awakening. The rejuvenation of the Yamuna is not a distant hope, but a bold, collective journey that has already begun.

Mayusha A.M

Director

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