

Jal Shakti Minister Shri C.R. Paatil chairs 20th Meeting of Empowered Task Force on Ganga Rejuvenation

Prime Minister Shri Narendra Modi's vision on integrating water into education, highlighted during the Departmental Summit on Water, carried forward by Shri C. R. Paatil at the 20th ETF Meeting; calls for water-related curricula in schools, water-specific subjects in engineering and technical universities, and water management and governance courses in higher educational institutions

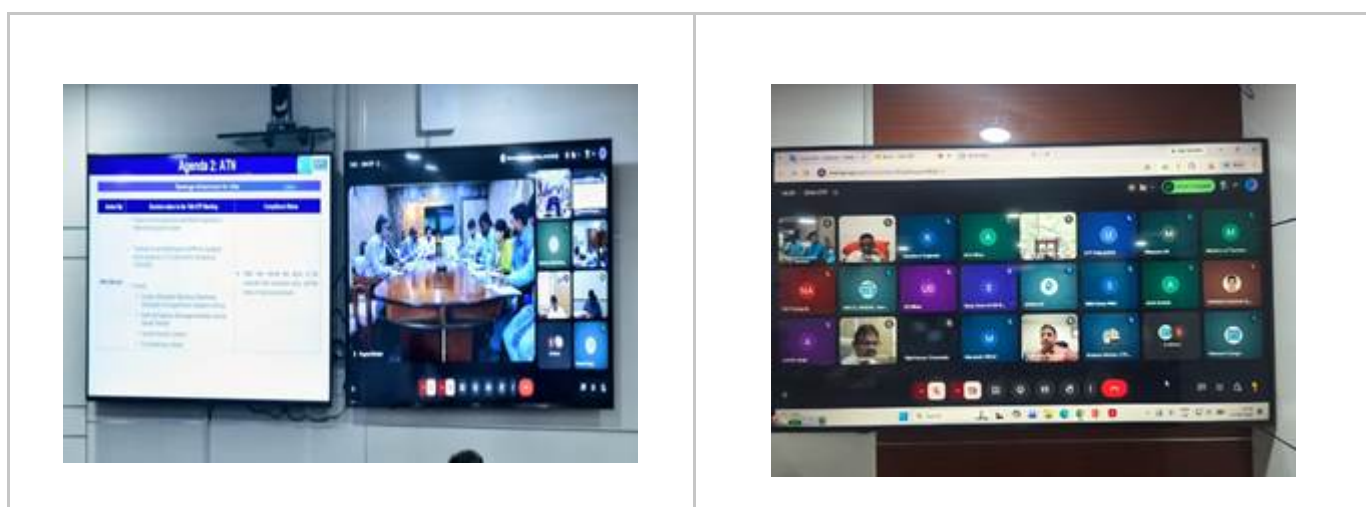
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Strengthening the Government's commitment towards holistic river rejuvenation, **the 20th Meeting of the Empowered Task Force (ETF)** was held in New Delhi under the chairmanship of the **Union Minister for Jal Shakti, Shri C. R. Paatil**. The meeting reviewed the progress of the Namami Gange Programme and deliberated on key interventions aimed at accelerating river rejuvenation through improved sewage infrastructure, scientific water management, safe reuse of treated wastewater, ecological restoration, groundwater management, Nature-based Solutions and enhanced coordination among stakeholders.



The meeting was also joined by MoS Jal Shakti, Shri Raj Bhushan Chaudhary along with key stakeholders from various ministries and state governments, including Secretary, Department of Water Resources, Smt. Archana Varma; Secretary, Department of Drinking Water & Sanitation, Shri Ashok K.K Meena; Director General of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) Shri Rajeev Kumar Mital; JS&FA Department of Water Resources Shri Gaurav Masaldan; and with senior officers of NMCG and participating states.

The meeting reviewed the status of **sewage infrastructure, DPR preparation and appraisal, land availability, Safe Reuse of Treated Wastewater (SRTW), aquifer mapping, wetlands, City Sanitation Action Plans (CSAP), aerial drainage mapping and regular meetings of State Ganga Committees**. It was informed that the revised DPR for the Barauni Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) has been received and sent to IIT-BHU for appraisal, while the DPR for Shantipur STPs in West Bengal has been approved by the Executive Committee. Bihar and West Bengal have notified their policies on reuse of treated wastewater, while Jharkhand is in the process of obtaining State Cabinet approval.



The meeting reviewed the overall status of projects under the Namami Gange Programme and the programme's performance during FY 2025-26. As of August 2026, **527 projects have been sanctioned at a total cost of ₹43,266 crore, of which 368 projects have been completed**. Under sewerage infrastructure, **219 projects have been sanctioned**, creating a treatment capacity of **6,603 MLD** along with a sewer network of **5,245 km**. Of these, **147 projects have been completed**, creating **4,339 MLD of sewage treatment capacity** and completing **4,615 km of sewer network**. The Namami Gange Programme also embraces interventions relating to bioremediation and innovative sewage treatment, solid waste management, industrial effluent treatment, surveillance and monitoring, research and development, biodiversity and afforestation, livelihood generation, public outreach and knowledge management. The Minister emphasized the need to maintain the pace of implementation and directed the concerned agencies and State Governments to ensure timely completion of ongoing projects and expeditious action on pending DPRs, land-related issues and other implementation bottlenecks.

The meeting also reviewed the **academic courses developed under the River City Alliance**, in line with the direction to develop water-related courses and facilitate the inclusion of Water Governance and Management in higher education curricula. NMCG and NIUA have developed and facilitated two courses — **Principles of Urban River Management** and **Eco-friendly Waterfront Development**. The first course is being offered at Mitraj Sarvajani, formerly known as SCET Surat, and OP Jindal Global University, while the second is being offered at the School of Planning and Architecture, Bhopal. The

courses cover areas including watersheds, drainage basins, river morphology, stormwater management, environmental flows, eco-friendly riverfront design, basin-city connections, floodplain regulation, riparian ecology, water-sensitive urban design and climate resilience.

One of the main focus of the meeting was the **rejuvenation of Gomti Udgam Sthal in Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh**. The Master Plan for Rejuvenation and Integrated Development of Gomti Udgam Sthal was approved in the 68th Executive Committee meeting of NMCG held in December 2025. In the meeting it was informed that the DPR pertaining to **lake restoration and sewage treatment through a 1 MLD Nature-Based Solutions-based STP** has been approved, with Administrative Approval and Expenditure Sanction issued on **17 September 2026**. The DPR relating to restoration of **turtle habitat and Panchvatika** is being considered in the 74th Executive Committee, while the DPR relating to infrastructure development is under examination. The Minister advised that implementation of the approved interventions be initiated without delay and emphasized the need for timely completion of the bidding process and constitution of the State-level Steering Committee.

The meeting also reviewed the proposed **rejuvenation of the Niranjana/Falgu River in Bihar**, with interventions aimed at improving the river ecosystem and enhancing water availability through measures including afforestation, groundwater recharge and recharge trenches. Following a letter issued to the Chief Secretary, Government of Bihar, the **Secretary, Water Resources Department, Bihar**, has been nominated as the State-level Nodal Officer for the Niranjana rejuvenation initiative. The State-level Nodal Officer has been requested by NMCG to examine and confirm the **Bill of Quantities (BOQ) and detailed cost estimates** in consultation with all concerned State Departments, including verification of quantities, items and rates as per the latest applicable Schedule of Rates (SOR). The State has been requested to furnish the confirmation at the earliest to facilitate further approval and grounding of the project. Shri C. R. Paatil emphasized the importance of adopting an **integrated approach to river rejuvenation**, combining ecological restoration with groundwater management and measures aimed at enhancing water availability.

The meeting also reviewed the status of NMCG-related interventions for **rejuvenation of River Yamuna**. In Uttar Pradesh, NMCG has sanctioned projects in **Mathura-Vrindavan, Kosi-Chhata, Agra, Firozabad and Etawah**, aimed at strengthening sewage collection, conveyance, treatment and management infrastructure and reducing the discharge of untreated or inadequately treated sewage into the Yamuna and its associated watercourses. In Delhi, apart from wastewater management interventions others include the constitution of Yamuna Ecological Task Force, wetland-related interventions, preparation of Urban River Management Plan for Delhi, drone-based surveys of drains, Nature-Based Solutions, monitoring of pollution-related flows, Grossly Polluting Industries and the Interceptor Sewerage Project, besides augmentation of environmental flows in River Yamuna through the Coronation Pillar and Okhla STPs.

The Minister emphasized that such academic initiatives can contribute to building a strong knowledge base and a cadre of professionals equipped to address the **ecological, social, cultural, economic and policy dimensions of river management**. It was also noted that the courses may be promoted at the city and State levels for river professionals and students, and students undertaking these courses may be considered for river-related assignments in cities.

The meeting also reviewed key outreach and public participation initiatives undertaken since the 19th ETF meeting. Under **Swachhta Hi Seva 2026**, cleanliness drives, awareness campaigns and community engagement activities were undertaken across various locations. The Union Minister of Jal Shakti also interacted with **water conservation and river rejuvenation warriors from across the country**, recognising their grassroots efforts towards water conservation, environmental protection, river rejuvenation and community mobilisation. The Minister appreciated the contribution of these grassroots champions and emphasized that sustained and focused public participation is essential for translating river rejuvenation efforts into long-term and community-led action.

The meeting further reviewed the **National level Consultation Workshops on the Framework for Small River Rejuvenation**, organised in **New Delhi, Pune and Guwahati during July and August 2026**, focusing on scientific planning, Nature-Based Solutions, groundwater recharge, environmental flows and community participation. The workshops sought to strengthen a systematic and scientific approach towards the rejuvenation of small rivers and watercourses, while incorporating local ecological conditions and community knowledge.

During the **9th India International Water Week 2026**, the **Sustainable Urban River Management (SURM) Framework** and the **Protocol for Riverine Microplastics Monitoring** were also launched/released to strengthen sustainable river-city management and scientific monitoring of river pollution. The initiatives are aimed at supporting cities and river authorities in adopting sustainable approaches to urban river management and strengthening scientific monitoring of emerging pollution challenges, including riverine microplastics.

On **World River Day**, the **39th Ganga Task Force of 137 CETF BN (TA)** conducted awareness campaigns and cleanliness drives at key riverfront locations in **Prayagraj, Varanasi, Kanpur, Lucknow and Delhi**, further strengthening public participation in river conservation. The 20th meeting of the Empowered Task Force reiterated the importance of sustained coordination among **Central Ministries, State Governments, Urban Local Bodies, scientific institutions and local communities** for achieving the objectives of river rejuvenation.

Shri C. R. Paatil emphasized that river rejuvenation requires a holistic approach that goes beyond pollution abatement to encompass **water availability, ecological health, groundwater security, biodiversity conservation, sustainable urban development and community participation**. He called for continued coordination and close monitoring at all levels to ensure that interventions translate into measurable outcomes on the ground.

The 20th meeting of the Empowered Task Force reiterated that sustained and coordinated efforts across the Ganga Basin will remain central to strengthening the vision of **Aviral & Nirmal Ganga**, while advancing long-term water security, ecological resilience and sustainable development across the river basin.

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