

Prime Minister approved the flagship of Namami Gange Program

By : INVC Team Published On : 13 May, 2015 08:10 PM IST

INVC NEWS

New Delhi, The Union Cabinet, chaired by the Prime Minister, Shri Narendra Modi today approved the flagship "Namami Gange" Program which integrates the efforts to clean and protect the Ganga river in a comprehensive manner. The program has a budget outlay of Rs. 20,000 crore for the next 5 years. This is a significant four-fold increase over the expenditure in the past 30 years (Government of India incurred an overall expenditure of approximately Rs. 4000 crore on this task since 1985). Marking a major shift in implementation, the Government is focusing on involving people living on the banks of the river to attain sustainable results. Drawing from the lessons learnt from previous implementation, the program also focuses on involving the States and grassroots level institutions such as Urban Local Bodies and Panchayati Raj Institutions in implementation. The program would be implemented by the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), and its state counterpart organizations i.e., State Program Management Groups (SPMGs). NMCG will also establish field offices wherever necessary. In order to improve implementation, a three-tier mechanism has been proposed for project monitoring comprising of a) High level task force chaired by Cabinet Secretary assisted by NMCG at national level, b) State level committee chaired by Chief Secretary assisted by SPMG at state level and c) District level committee chaired by the District Magistrate. In order to ramp up progress, the Centre will now take over 100% funding of various activities/projects under this program. Taking a leaf from the unsatisfactory results of the earlier Ganga Action Plans, the Centre now plans to provide for operation & maintenance of the assets for a minimum 10 year period, and adopt a PPP/SPV approach for pollution hotspots. In an attempt to bolster enforcement the Centre also plans to establish a 4-battalion Ganga Eco-Task Force, a Territorial Army unit, apart from contemplating on a legislation that aims to check pollution and protect the river. The program emphasizes on improved coordination mechanisms between various Ministries/Agencies of Central and State governments. Major infrastructure investments which fall under the original mandate of other ministries viz. Urban Development (UD), Drinking Water & Sanitation (DWS), Environment Forests & Climate Change (EF&CC) etc., will be undertaken in addition. 'Namami Gange' will focus on pollution abatement interventions namely Interception, diversion & treatment of wastewater flowing through the open drains through bio-remediation / appropriate in-situ treatment / use of innovative technologies / sewage treatment plants (STPs) / effluent treatment plant (ETPs); rehabilitation and augmentation of existing STPs and immediate short term measures for arresting pollution at exit points on river front to prevent inflow of sewage etc. Significantly the approach is underpinned by socio-economic benefits that the program is expected to deliver in terms of job creation, improved livelihoods and health benefits to the vast population that is dependent on the river.

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