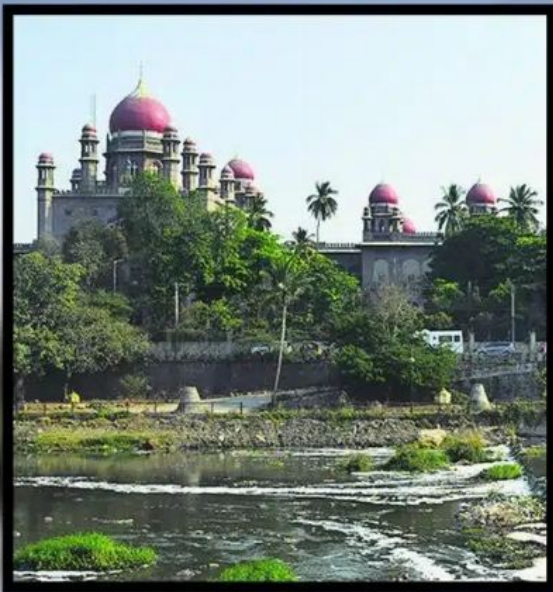


River Pollution in India - CPCB Shows Marginal Reduction

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RIVER POLLUTION

River Pollution Latest News

- The CPCB's latest report shows a marginal reduction in polluted river stretches across India, though several rivers, especially in Maharashtra, remain critically contaminated.

Introduction

- Rivers are the lifelines of India, sustaining agriculture, industry, and millions of people.
- However, unchecked urbanisation, untreated sewage, and industrial effluents have turned several rivers into highly polluted water bodies.
- The **Central Pollution Control Board** (CPCB) regularly monitors river health, measuring **biological oxygen demand** (BOD) levels to identify polluted stretches.
 - BOD measures the oxygen consumed by microorganisms to decompose organic matter in water, serving as a key indicator of organic pollution in aquatic ecosystems.

- Its latest report indicates a marginal reduction in the number of polluted river stretches across India, though concerns remain about severely contaminated segments.

River Pollution in India

- River pollution in India has been a persistent challenge, with most urban centres discharging untreated sewage directly into rivers.
- Industrial units, despite regulations, contribute chemical pollutants, while agricultural runoff adds pesticides and fertilisers.
- According to CPCB, **a polluted river stretch is defined as two or more consecutive locations on a river where BOD levels exceed 3 mg/L**, rendering water unfit for bathing.
- **Major Causes**
 - **Untreated sewage** – Cities generate over 72,000 MLD of sewage, of which only about 30% is treated.
 - **Industrial effluents** – Chemical and textile hubs like Gujarat, Maharashtra, and Tamil Nadu release toxic waste.
 - **Agricultural runoff** – Fertilisers and pesticides flow into rivers during monsoons.
 - **Encroachments and sand mining** – These degrade river ecosystems and floodplains.
- **Impact**
 - Decline in aquatic biodiversity.
 - Unsafe drinking and bathing water, leading to waterborne diseases.
 - Economic loss to fisheries and agriculture.
 - Social unrest, as seen in protests around rivers like the Yamuna and Ganga.
- The Ganga, Yamuna, Sabarmati, Godavari, and Musi are among India's most polluted rivers, with stretches frequently falling into the CPCB's "Priority I" category, meaning they require immediate remediation.

News Summary: CPCB's Latest Findings

- **Marginal Improvement**
 - According to CPCB's **2023 report**, the number of polluted river stretches decreased from **311 to 296**, covering 271 rivers across 32 states and Union Territories.
- **Most Affected States**
 - **Maharashtra** continues to top the list with **54 polluted stretches**.
 - Kerala (31), Madhya Pradesh and Manipur (18 each), and Karnataka (14) also reported significant pollution.
- **Priority Classifications**
 - **Priority I** (BOD > 30 mg/L) – 37 stretches, down from 46 in 2022. These include the Yamuna in Delhi, the Sabarmati in Ahmedabad, the Chambal in Madhya Pradesh, and stretches of the Tungabhadra and Sarabanga.
 - **Priority V** (BOD 3.1–6 mg/L) – Indicating less polluted stretches needing minimal intervention.
- **Rivers Showing Deterioration**
 - Despite marginal progress overall, certain rivers recorded worsening conditions.

- These include **Jhelum (J&K), Ganga and Sikrahna (Bihar), Hasdeo and Mahanadi (Chhattisgarh), Cauvery and Tungabhadra (Karnataka), Periyar (Kerala), and Krishna (Telangana)**.
- **Long-Term Monitoring**
 - CPCB, in collaboration with State Pollution Control Boards, monitors water quality at over **4,700 locations** under the National Water Quality Monitoring Programme.
- **Institutional Interventions**
 - Following a 2018 directive by the **National Green Tribunal (NGT)**, states are mandated to prepare river rejuvenation action plans.
 - The current CPCB report emphasises catchment management, sewage treatment, and floodplain protection as critical measures for reducing river pollution.

Challenges in River Rejuvenation

- **Infrastructure gaps** – Sewage treatment plants (STPs) are under-capacity or non-functional in many cities.
- **Coordination failures** – Overlapping jurisdictions between CPCB, State Boards, and local authorities hinder accountability.
- **Funding and monitoring** – Many state-level action plans lack financial backing and robust evaluation.
- **Urbanisation pressures** – Continuous encroachments and waste generation outpace clean-up efforts.

Future Outlook

- While the marginal reduction in polluted stretches offers cautious optimism, India's river rejuvenation efforts must scale up significantly.
- Initiatives like the **Namami Gange Mission, Jal Jeevan Mission**, and the push for decentralised sewage treatment are steps in the right direction.
- However, tackling agricultural runoff, enforcing industrial compliance, and engaging communities will be crucial for sustainable outcomes.

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