

Apex Court transfers cleaning Ganga to NGT

Why in news?

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- The Supreme Court wrapped up a PIL on cleaning of river Ganga and sent it to the National Green Tribunal (NGT) for more effective adjudication. The apex court had been monitoring the issue for 31 years.

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Why it was transferred?

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- A bench headed by Chief Justice JS Khehar said since **NGT was dealing with the issue related to municipal solid waste and industrial waste** on a daily basis, the concern regarding domestic sewage and other sources of pollution should be heard by it.

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- The green court will submit an interim report to it every six months, only to inform it about the progress made and difficulties faced, if any.

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History of Events:

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- **Advocate MC Mehta**, who had filed the PIL in 1985, brought to focus the problems arising from unabated pollution in the river by referring to reports alleging that BHEL near Haridwar was discharging untreated industrial effluents into the Ganges.

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- He sought several reliefs primarily aimed at restraining polluting industries that had mushroomed on the banks of the river from polluting it.

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- Subsequently in September, 1985, the apex court issued notices to all

industries situated in urban areas on the banks of Ganga to **stop discharging effluents without treating them properly** in accordance with the standards prescribed by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

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- In its first major order in September, 1987, the apex court directed closure of 20 tanneries working on the banks of Ganga and discharging effluents into it.

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- Similarly, in January, 1988 the apex court, while reiterating the earlier directions, ordered the municipalities concerned to **set up Sewage Treatment Plants (STPs)** to ensure that untreated domestic sewage does not enter the river.

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- In 2006, it took note of the CAG report on the **expenditure on the Ganga Action Plan**. It said that audit test check in the states, however, found many instances of financial mismanagement.

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- Several other important orders were also passed by the apex court on the PIL including that industrial units shall submit a time bound action plan for setting up of anti- pollution measures to be completed before March 31, 2015.

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Namami Gange - Action Plan:

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ACTION PLAN

Eight ministries to work on specific issues for three years to carry forward these 21 action points under the '**Namami Gange**' programme:

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|  | | and at Ganga Sagar <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Engagement of Ganga Task Force ➤ Providing support to states for preparation of Detailed Project Reports ➤ Coordination between various ministries of the central government and concerned state governments; capacity building of state governments, urban local bodies and panchayati raj institutions |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ Taking up comprehensive measures to determine and maintain environmental flow of Ganga round the year ➤ Rehabilitation and upgradation of existing sewage treatment facilities and taking up new projects of sewage infrastructure ➤ Treatment of sewage and other effluents flowing directly into the river through various drains by adoption of suitable technology and financial models ➤ Tackling industrial pollution ➤ Promoting sanitation in rural areas on the banks of the river Ganga and development | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> of select village panchayats as model panchayats to be christened as 'Ganga grams' ➤ Tackling pollution coming from use of chemical fertilisers and pesticides ➤ Tackling religious refuse entering into the river, including cleaning of river surface and ghats ➤ Creating model cremation ghats on the banks of the river ➤ River-front development and ghats at selected seven places and also at other places of cultural significance ➤ Development of public amenities in Char Dham Yatra | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ➤ GIS and spatial mapping of Ganga Basin ➤ Research projects including Ganga River Basin Management Plan ➤ Establishment of National Ganga Monitoring Centre ➤ Establishment of Ganga Institute of River Sciences at a suitable location along Ganga ➤ Afforestation drive for medicinal plants and native tree species ➤ Conserving diversity of Gangetic aquatic life ➤ Creation of Ganga Vahini ➤ Communication and public outreach activities |

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