

The Hindu- 02- September-2023

# Seven years on, mission to clean the Ganga remains a work in progress

Treatment plants capable of treating just 20% of sewage spewing into the river set up so far; NMCG hopes to increase this to 33% by 2024 and 60% by 2026; Centre says it will only build capacity for 7,000 MLD, States must set up the rest

Jacob Koshy  
NEW DELHI

In the seven years since the government unveiled its ambitious ₹20,000-crore National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), it has installed treatment plants capable of treating just 20% of the sewage estimated to be generated in the five major States that lie along the river. This is expected to increase to about 33% by 2024. According to the latest projections by senior officials in the NMCG, the treatment plants will be capable of treating 60% of sewage by December 2026.

These calculations are premised on sewage to the tune of 11,765 million litres per day (MLD) being generated in the five States – Uttarakhand, Uttar Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand and West Bengal – through which the river courses. This figure derives from a report submitted to the National Green Tribunal earlier this year. However, the NMCG plans on setting up sewage treatment plants (STPs) capable of treating about 7,000 MLD of sewage by 2026; the States are expected to set up the re-



The Centre has given approval for projects worth ₹37,396 crore, but only ₹14,745 crore has been released to the States. K.R. DEEPAK

maining capacity, both on their own, and drawing on separate initiatives by other arms of the Union government.

"The main objective of the Namami Gange mission is to ensure that no untreated sewage flows into the river. The estimate of 11,765 MLD is dynamic and also includes sewage that is generated within the State, but which doesn't necessarily flow into the river. It also isn't exact and is a projection based on expected population trends," NMCG Director-General G. Asok Kumar told *The Hindu*. "Other States are also working on their own in setting up plants and we

work with them. By our projections, if we are able to set up capacity worth 7,000 MLD, it should suffice, for now, to ensure no untreated sewage flows in the main stem of the river."

## Picking up pace

Projects to set up STPs and sewerage networks are at the heart of the Namami Gange mission and account for about 80% of the overall project outlay. As of July 2023, STPs capable of treating 2,665 MLD have actually been commissioned, and are now functional. From 2014, when the mission was first announced, to 2021, only 811 MLD of capacity was com-

pleted. In the last financial year 2022-23, however, 1,455 MLD capacity was completed.

Several plants took time to be commissioned as there were problems with land acquisition. The Detailed Project Reports – which prescribe all the steps necessary to execute a project, and the roles of agencies, Centre, State and the private contractors – needed revision, said Mr. Kumar. "States were under the impression that building treatment plants was entirely the Centre's responsibility. We had to work to correct that and now most of the sanctioned projects are progressing well," he added.

With 36, Uttarakhand has the highest number of plants that have been set up or upgraded in the case of older plants, followed by Uttar Pradesh (35), and West Bengal (11). Though the NMCG is a ₹20,000-crore mission, the government has so far given in-principle approval for projects worth ₹37,396 crore, of which only ₹14,745 crore has been released to the States for infrastructure work, as of June 2023. The river's wa-

ter quality is now within "prescribed limits of notified primary bathing water quality", an NMCG fact-sheet, viewed by *The Hindu*, noted.

## More dolphins

Mr. Kumar said that a conspicuous sign of the improvement in water quality along the Ganga was the rise in dolphin population from 2,000 to about 4,000. "We are also seeing the presence of dolphins in new stretches of the river as well as in tributaries [of the Ganga]. Fishermen are also reporting the increased presence of Indian carp [a fish species] that only thrives in clean water. So we have nature's verdict on river improvement," he added.

The typical parameters used by the Central Pollution Control Board – such as the levels of dissolved oxygen, biochemical oxygen demand, and faecal coliform – vary widely along various stretches of the river. The NMCG is now working to develop a water quality index, on the lines of the air quality index, to be able to better communicate about river-water quality, he added.

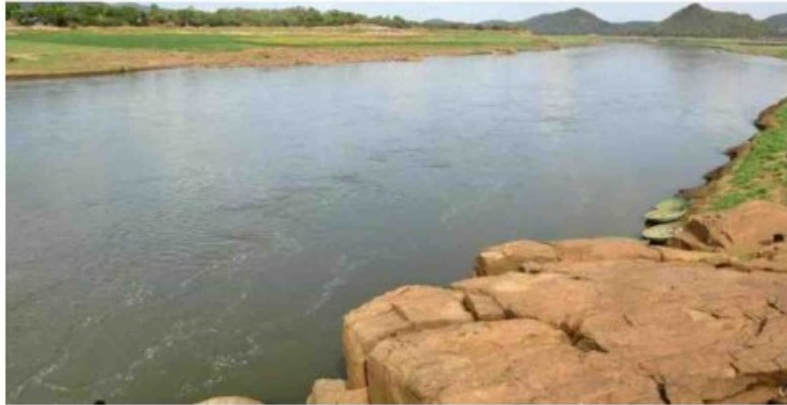
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# Biligundlu yet to record increased flow in Cauvery despite Karnataka releasing water to Tamil Nadu

**T. Ramakrishnan**  
CHENNAI

Despite Karnataka reportedly releasing water to Tamil Nadu in line with the Cauvery Water Management Authority's order for 5,000 cubic feet per second (cusecs) to be realised at Biligundlu on the inter-State border for 15 days, the measurement of the flow does not reveal any increase in the quantum of water realised.

According to the Authority's order dated August 29, water shall be released from August 29 to September 12 at the rate of 5,000 cusecs a day, amounting to 6.48 thousand million cubic feet (tmc ft).



The Cauvery Water Management Authority's report to the Supreme Court showed that the quantum released from August 12 to 26 was 1,49,898 cusecs or 12.95 tmc ft.

On August 30, the flow recorded at Biligundlu was 2,805 cusecs. "It was around 2,500 cusecs on

Thursday (August 31)," an official of the Tamil Nadu government said. The flow could increase from Friday

night, he said.

Karnataka had almost implemented the Authority's first direction. The

**According to CWMA's order dated August 29, water shall be released from August 29 to September 12 at the rate of 5,000 cusecs a day**

neighbouring State should have ensured the realisation of 1,50,000 cusecs at the rate of 10,000 cusecs for 15 days (from August 12 to 26).

The Authority's report to the Supreme Court showed that the quantum released was 1,49,898 cusecs or 12.95 tmc ft. Nearly 70% of the quantum of water was received in a week, from August 17 to 23.

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# Karnataka water release increases flow at Hogenakkal

**SANJEEVI ANANDAN | DC**  
DHARMAPURI, SEPT. 1

Water flow in the Cauvery river at Hogenakkal has surged due to the release of water from Krishnaraja Sagar (KRS) dam located in neighbouring Karnataka.

In accordance with directives of the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA), the upper riparian state of Karnataka has commenced the daily release of 5,000 cusecs of water for the next 15 days to Tamil Nadu. This decision was reached during the CWMA meeting held on August 29.

Following the CWMA orders, the outflow from KRS dam was increased from 2,345 cusecs to 4,448 cusecs on Wednesday. Notably, the subsequent day witnessed an even



Cauvery inflow leads to a surge in water flow at Hogenakkal in Dharmapuri.

—DC

higher outflow of 7,329 cusecs, marking an increase of 2,881 cusecs, compared to the previous day's 4,448 cusecs.

As a consequence of the water release, the level at Hogenakkal in Dharmapuri surged to 8,000 cusecs, as recorded

by the Central Water Commission on Friday.

In the light of these changes, residents of Hogenakkal have been urged to remain vigilant and stay well-informed about any potential consequences arising from the shifting water

dynamics. Local authorities said entry into the main falls area and coracle operations will be restricted only if the water inflow surpasses 20,000 cusecs.

The augmented inflow of water has not only brought about a remarkable transformation in the visual appeal of the river but has also generated an enthralling natural spectacle in various locations within Hogenakkal on the Tamil Nadu side.

**The upper riparian state of Karnataka has commenced the daily release of 5,000 cusecs of water for the next 15 days to Tamil Nadu**



Deccan Herald- 02- September-2023

# K'taka situation grim, bleak, due to deficit rainfall, says DKS

**'Govt will urge CWMA to visit state to check the water crisis'**

BENGALURU, DHNS

Karnataka is facing a "grim and bleak" situation and the government will urge the Cauvery Water Management Authority (CWMA) to visit the state to witness the crisis due to rainfall deficit, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar said on Friday.

Karnataka's move comes even as Tamil Nadu has approached the Supreme Court seeking more water from Cauvery. "I hope (CWMA) will visit us, witness the situation and take a decision," Shivakumar, the Water Resources minister, said. At this juncture, Karnataka is not planning to approach the Supreme Court in this issue and will instead seek intervention from the CWMA.

This decision was taken after consulting the legal experts, Shivakumar said.

Karnataka will also press for the Mekedatu project, which will help Tamil Nadu, he said. "In fact, this project will help Tamil Nadu, more than Karnataka. All that Karnataka can do is store water and release it to the neighbouring state during distress," he added.

"Tamil Nadu should empathise with Karnataka as the neighbouring state is aware of the distress we are facing. Last year, they used 80% excess water than prescribed," Shivakumar said. Karnataka is committed to protecting the interests of its people while respecting the law, Shivakumar said, explaining that the state is releasing water to Tamil Nadu as specified by



**Karnataka is committed to protecting the interests of its people while respecting the law, Deputy Chief Minister D K Shivakumar, who also holds the water resources portfolio, said, adding that the state is releasing water to Tamil Nadu as specified by the CWMA. The KRS dam (in the picture) is only 46% full. DH PHOTO**

the CWMA. Karnataka has been directed to release 5,000 cusec per day for 15 days starting August 29.

As for the opposition leaders protesting the release of water, Shivakumar said they were free to take their political stand before the media, while the government has already appraised them of the situation at an all-party meeting.

Meanwhile, protests, demanding the government to

stop the release of water to Tamil Nadu from the KRS dam, heated up across Mandya district, on Friday.

As the water level dips in the dam, the farmers' organisations have been staging protests over the last few days, against the state government and Congress, for releasing water to the neighbouring state when the farmers here are in a crisis due to deficit rains.

**Cauvery: SC to hear the matter on September 6**

The Supreme Court on Friday posted Tamil Nadu's plea seeking directions to Karnataka regarding the release of Cauvery water to September 6.

Senior advocate Mukul Rohtagi, representing Tamil Nadu, said before the three-judge bench of the Supreme Court, comprising Justices B R Gavai, P S Narasimha and P K Mishra, that there was an injustice to Tamil Nadu from the Cauvery Water Management Authority and the matter should be heard on Monday.

Senior Advocate Shyam Divan, representing Karnataka, informed the bench that the CWMA has asked Karnataka to release 5,000 cusecs per day for 15 days to Tamil Nadu from August 29. As per its order, the state

has been releasing the water to Tamil Nadu. So, the next hearing should be held on September 11. Then, the bench said the next hearing would be on September 6.

Tamil Nadu had sought the release of 24,000 cusecs from Karnataka from August 14. It also asked the court to direct Karnataka to make up for the shortfall in June-July and ensure it releases the water stipulated by the award of the Cauvery Water Disputes Tribunal (as modified by the Supreme Court in 2018) for the month of September. The CWMA, in its status report submitted to the top court, has said that Karnataka released over 13 tmcft of water to Tamil Nadu in August complying with its direction.