

The Times of India- 22- October-2023

# Yamuna Floodplain Gets NGT Push

## Panel Under Chief Secy Set Up To Demarcate It, Prepare Conservation Plan

Kushagra.Dixit  
@timesgroup.com

New Delhi: National Green Tribunal (NGT) has appointed a high-level committee to be headed by Delhi's chief secretary to inspect, demarcate, and prepare an action plan to conserve O-II zone of the Yamuna floodplain.

Earlier in July, the level of the river had broken previous records and reached 208.6 metres, flooding several low-lying areas, including Rajghat and ITO.

The tribunal took a suo motu cognisance of the TOI's report "Why flooding has forced DDA's master plan rethink" published in August, and asked the committee to chalk out a plan on how the encroachment could be removed from the zone and what are the environmental threats. The tribunal has asked the committee to submit its report by January 30, 2024.

"As per the said report, flooding in Delhi is on account of

YOU READ IT HERE

### Why Flooding Has Forced DDA's Master Plan Rethink

Authority Considers Putting A Stop To Construction In Zone O-II

By Alia Mathur | timesgroup.com

New Delhi: The recent floods in the capital that inundated several unauthorised colonies in low-lying areas have prompted the government to re-evaluate its policy allowing regulated development in Zone O-II of the Yamuna and its floodplain. Sources said that after the union ministry of housing and urban affairs sought information from the Delhi Development Authority (DDA), a meeting was held on the floodplain, inundated when the Yamuna waters broke an all-time record and flooded 200.46 hectares at the Old Railway Bridge.

A DDA official said the authority gave the ministry the information about the colonies and the villages affected by the flooding and people displaced from the area.

"The ministry will take the final call if the previous master plan related to regulated development of some portion of the floodplain needs to be changed," the official said.

Aug, 22  
2023



WHEN PARTS OF DELHI WENT UNDER

unauthorised constructions in the river floodplain. Around thousands of hectares of the floodplain are present in 22km stretch of the Yamuna falling in Delhi from Wazirabad to Palla. The delineation of Yamuna is required to prevent illegal developments in the floodplain. It is stated that there are about 76 unauthorised co-

lonies in the area concerned and large-scale encroachment exists," the tribunal noted.

The tribunal bench, headed by chairperson Prakash Shrivastava, stated that it is of view that the floodplain of Yamuna in the area concerned is required to be "identified, demarcated and notified in the light of the River

Ganga (Rejuvenation, Protection and Management) Authorities Order, 2016."

"Hence, at this stage, we deem it proper to form a high-level committee headed by Delhi chief secretary and comprising nominee from Delhi Development Authority (DDA); secretary, environment, the Delhi government; secretary, ministry of Jal Shakti; executive director, National Mission for Clean Ganga; and commissioner, Municipal Corporation of Delhi. The environment secretary will act as the nodal agency for coordination and compliance. The joint committee will get the spot inspection done and ensure demarcation of the floodplain of the Yamuna in the area concerned and suggest measures to prevent and remove the encroachment and unauthorised constructions falling within the floodplain," the tribunal ordered.

The DDA's master plan 2041 divides O zone in two categories — Zone O-I, which is

highly encroached and comprises about 35% of the total floodplain, and Zone O-II.

The O zone is one of about 15 zones marked by DDA, which have areas of the Yamuna and the riverfront. It has ecological significance, is prone to floods and should be a no-construction zone, yet it is vastly encroached.

While TOI had earlier reported that the officials were thinking of regulating encroachment in O-I and working to adopt a policy of zero-tolerance against construction in O-II. The experts, however, doubted if dividing the O zone would be a solution to the problem of floods. With floodplain of the Yamuna believed to be vast than mere 10,000 hectares confined under the terminology of "O Zone", a part of which is likely to be compromised forever, experts had been pointing out that a detailed study would be required to figure out the ways through which the impact of floods could be reduced in near future.

The Hindu- 22- October-2023

# Does India need to relook the Dam Safety Act?

Do the frequency and scale of disasters like in Sikkim and Himachal Pradesh reveal a pattern of neglect?

**Saumya Kalia**

## The story so far:

India has almost 6,000 large dams and about 80% of them are more than 25 years old and carry safety risks. A new Dam Safety Act (DSA) was passed in late 2021. On October 4 this year, a glacial lake outburst flood (GLOF) in North Sikkim's South Lhonak Lake washed away one of the biggest hydropower projects in India, the Teesta III dam at Chungthang. Reports have since revealed there were no early warning systems, no risk assessment or preventive measures in place as required under the Act.

## What are the provisions of the Act?

The Dam Safety Act was tabled in the Rajya Sabha in December 2021, as a response to deficient surveillance and maintenance causing dam failure-related disasters. The Act listed key responsibilities and mandated that national and State-level bodies be established for implementation. It said a National Committee on Dam Safety would oversee dam safety policies and regulations; a National Dam Safety Authority would be charged with implementation and resolving State-level

Experts say the Sikkim incident exemplifies blind spots in both legislation and implementation. The Chairman of the Central Water Commission (CWC) would head dam safety protocols at the national level; a State Committee on Dam Safety (SCDS) and State Dam Safety Organisation (SDSO) would be set up. Sikkim formed an SCDS on August 17 with nine members and experts in hydrology and dam design.

## What do the States need to do?

Provisions require States to classify dams based on hazard risk, conduct regular inspections, create emergency action plans, institute emergency flood warning systems, and undertake safety reviews and period risk assessment studies.

Importantly, States were asked to report and record incidents of dam failures. Until now, no statutory provision required systemic reporting of failures and no single agency was tasked with tracking this data. The CWC keeps a record but the list is not updated regularly, Devendra Damle argued in a 2021 working paper for the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy.

## Is any action taken for failing to comply?

Failure to comply with any provision of the Act is punishable with imprisonment and/or fines, and "if such obstruction or refusal to comply with directions results in loss of lives or imminent danger thereof, [entity] shall be punishable with imprisonment for a term which may extend to two years." For example, in February this year, the Sikkim High Court ordered the Gati Hydropower Project company to pay ₹70 lakh to two widowed mothers, for non-compliance with the Dam Safety Act.

## What are the challenges?

Experts say the Sikkim incident exemplifies blind spots in both legislation and implementation. The DSA does not promote risk-based decision-making and fails to incentivise transparency. Himanshu Thakkar, an environmental activist and coordinator of South Asia Network on Dams, Rivers and People, says that the frequency and scale of such disasters reveal a pattern of neglect: "It keeps happening regularly, people face disastrous consequences and we call these 'natural disasters'. But there's nothing natural about them."

## How is dam safety undertaken?

Dam safety is a function of many parts: designing and constructing dams that adhere to safety margins, maintaining and operating them per guidelines, recording data in real-time in an accessible format, forecasting hazardous events and instituting emergency plans, to name a few. The Sikkim GLOF reveals poor compliance at all levels, from the dam's design to the spillway capacity (which controls the release of water from a reservoir). Hazard profiling and regular assessment are also mandated by the Act. Hazard risk fluctuates at the slightest touch, responding to climate change, urbanisation, and the way people/companies use water or where they are located. Periodic reviews are expected to bring forth fresh inundation maps and new rule curves (which determine the capacity of dam reservoirs), all of which contribute towards the safety of the downstream areas. Spillway capacity and other metrics should be reviewed every five years or so, but Mr. Thakkar says periodic reviews are often not conducted or if they are, their findings are not easily available in the public domain. The Act requires dam builders to conduct comprehensive dam safety evaluations, but "there is no standardisation of how the failure is analysed and reported," Mr. Damle stated. The Himachal Pradesh government recently served notices to 21 hydroelectric projects, finding them guilty of non-compliance with the DSA during the July-August floods.

Millennium Post- 22- October-2023

## Rejuvenation of Yamuna: NGT seeks reports from DJB, Delhi govt, CPCB

### OUR CORRESPONDENT

**NEW DELHI:** The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has expressed dissatisfaction over the reports submitted by the Delhi Jal Board (DJB), the city government and the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) regarding the revival measures for the Yamuna and sought fresh documents from them.

The NGT was hearing a matter regarding the rejuvenation of the river. It had earlier sought reports from the agencies concerned.

A bench of NGT Chairperson Justice Prakash Shrivastava took note of the reports and said, 'Let fresh reports be filed by all the concerned states or authorities on or before the next date of hearing (December 7) with a clear indication as to how many drains have been totally tapped and the number of remaining drains still discharging treated or untreated or partially-treated wastewater directly into the river Yamuna, affecting the water quality with respect to the pre-

scribed standard.' According to DJB's report, it is in the process of holding a joint survey of all the drains in the national capital to identify the sources of sewage entering the drains and take remedial action to ensure sewage-free drains, the bench, also comprising judicial member Justice Sudhir Agarwal and expert member A Senthil Vel, noted.

'The DJB has given a list of 11 drains of which five (one at Shiekh Sarai Phase-I, Khirki Extension, Panchsheel Vihar and Savitri Nagar and the other four drains at Chirag Delhi village) have been tapped so far and action for six is yet to be taken,' the bench noted.

According to the Delhi govt's report, several steps are still to be taken, including tapping all drains, complete treatment of sewage, laying a sewage network in 1,799 unauthorised colonies and 639 Jhuggi Jhopri (JJ) clusters, industrial effluent management by 13 common effluent treatment plants (CETPs), faecal sludge (septage) management, regulation of the floodplain.