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LAST YEAR SAW WILDFIRES IN CALIFORNIA & GREECE, DROUGHT IN SOUTH AFRICA, FLOODS IN KERALA

# UN: 2018 was fourth hottest year on record, outlook sizzling

ALISTER DOYLE  
OSLO, FEBRUARY 6

LAST YEAR was the fourth warmest on record and the outlook is for more sizzling heat approaching levels that most governments view as dangerous for the Earth, a UN report showed on Wednesday.

Weather extremes in 2018 included wildfires in California and Greece, drought in South Africa and floods in Kerala. Record levels of man-made greenhouse gas emissions, mainly from burning fossil fuels, trap ever more heat.

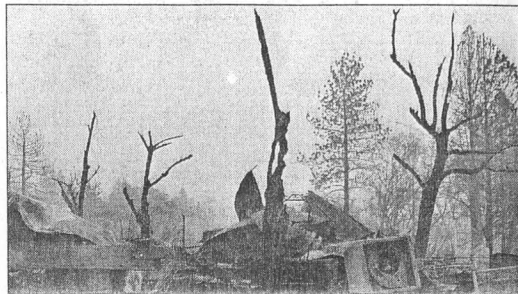
Average global surface temperatures were 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial times in 2018, the UN's World

Meteorological Organisation (WMO) said, based on data from US, British, Japanese and European weather agencies.

"The long-term temperature trend is far more important than the ranking of individual years, and that trend is an upward one," WMO Secretary-General Petteri Taalas said in a statement. "The 20 warmest years on record have been in the past 22 years."

To combat warming, almost 200 governments adopted the Paris climate agreement in 2015 to phase out the use of fossil fuels and limit the rise in temperatures to 2°C above pre-industrial times while "pursuing efforts" for 1.5°C.

"The impacts of long-term global warming are already being felt — in coastal flooding,



A house destroyed by the Camp Fire is seen in Paradise, California, in November. The UN said average global surface temperatures were 1 degree Celsius above pre-industrial times in 2018. Reuters

heat waves, intense precipitation and ecosystem change," said Gavin Schmidt, director of

NASA's Goddard Institute for Space Studies.

Last year, the United States

alone suffered 14 weather and climate disasters with losses exceeding \$1 billion each, led by hurricanes and wildfires, the US National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (NOAA) said. NOAA and NASA contribute data to the WMO.

This year has also started with scorching temperatures, including Australia's warmest January on record. Against the global trend, parts of the United States suffered bone-chilling cold from a blast of Arctic air last week. In WMO records dating back to the 19th century, 2016 was the hottest year, boosted by an El Nino weather event in the Pacific Ocean, ahead of 2015 and 2017 with 2018 in fourth.

The British Met Office, which also contributes data to the WMO,

said temperatures could rise to 1.5°C above pre-industrial times, for instance if a natural El Nino weather event adds a burst of heat.

"Over the next five years there is a one in 10 chance of one of those years breaking the (1.5°C) threshold," Professor Adam Scaife of the Met Office told Reuters of the agency's medium-term forecasts.

"That is not saying the Paris Agreement is done for... but it's a worrying sign," he said. The United Nations defines the 1.5°C Paris temperature target as a 30-year average, not a freak blip in a single year.

The United Nations says the world is now on track for a temperature rise of 3°C or more by 2100. The Paris pact responded to a 1992 UN treaty under

which all governments agreed to avert "dangerous" man-made climate change.

A UN report last year said the world is likely to breach 1.5°C sometime between 2030 and 2052 on current trends, triggering ever more heat waves, powerful storms, droughts, mudslides, extinctions and rising sea levels.

US President Donald Trump, who has cast doubt on mainstream climate science, plans to withdraw the United States from the Paris Agreement. He did not mention climate change in his State of the Union speech Tuesday.

Patrick Verkooijen, head of the Global Centre on Adaptation in the Netherlands, said the WMO report showed "climate change is not a distant phenomenon but is here right now." REUTERS

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## Met predicts rain and wind, fall in mercury

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**New Delhi:** Delhi recorded a significantly warm day on Wednesday with the maximum temperature recording 25.1 degrees Celsius — two notches above normal for this time of the season, while the minimum was 12 — three notches above normal.

Delhi, however, is likely to see immediate relief with light to moderate showers forecast on Wednesday night and Thursday, accompanied by gusty winds. The regional met office in its forecast also said isolated parts could see hailstorm activity.

Delhi's air quality, meanwhile, stayed in the "very poor" category with an AQI of 352, as moisture content remained high. Officials from the regional met office said that the maximum temperature is likely to dip by 3 to 4 degrees, however the minimum could still remain high after the showers. "An active western disturbance is causing rain in parts of northern India and Delhi saw very light rain on Tuesday night. We expect more rain on Wednesday and Thursday, which should provide a cooling effect," said BP Yadav, head of IMD's regional met centre.

According to the regional met office, Safdarjung received 0.8mm of rainfall in the last 24 hours, while Aya Nagar and Lodhi Road received 1.2 and 0.7mm of rain respectively. Delhi's humidity levels have been oscillating between 70 to 100% in the last 24 hours. The warmest location in Delhi was Palam with a maximum temperature of 25.2 degree Celsius, met officials said.

"The air quality over Delhi has not improved significantly as rainfall was not sufficient enough and wind speed was also moderate. The AQI is expected to improve slightly but not significantly. It will remain oscillating between poor and very poor for next two days," said SAFAR's forecast on Wednesday.

According to the Met office, Thursday will see light to moderate rain, accompanied with isolated hailstorm activity and strong surface winds ranging from 25 to 35 km/hr. "The maximum and minimum temperatures could be around 21 and 13 degrees Celsius respectively," said a met official.

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# Water table decline alarming, govt steps go down the drain

Average fall 0.37 m/year; groundwater extraction increases to 165 %

VISHAV BHARTI  
TRIBUNE NEWS SERVICE

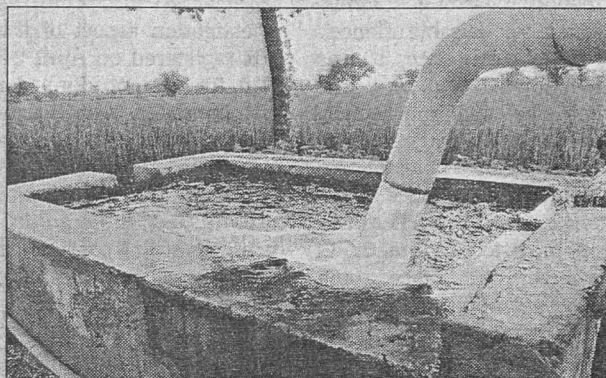
CHANDIGARH, FEBRUARY 6

Various initiatives taken by the state government to stop over exploitation of groundwater resources seems to have gone down the drain as on an average, the water table is going down at the rate of 0.37 metre every year.

A recent report has found that the condition of groundwater resources have deteriorated further in the past five years.

A report 'Groundwater Resources of Punjab' by the Central Ground Water Board and the State's Water Resources and Environment Directorate has found that the over-exploitation of groundwater has increased by 16 per cent in the past six years.

The groundwater extraction has increased from 149 per cent of the total recharge in 2013 to 165 per cent in the present report. The outcome is that about 79 per cent area of the state is over-exploited. Out of 138 blocks, 109 blocks are 'over-exploited' two blocks are 'critical' five are



## Parched Punjab

Manifold increase in tubewells has led to over exploitation of groundwater. In the past 30 years, the state witnessed almost 20 times increase in number of tubewells. Post Green Revolution in mid-60s, the number of tubewells increased from 50,000 in the early 60s to 70,000 in early 80s, and 10.70 lakh in 2001 to 11.80 lakh in 2005-06 and nearly 12 lakh in 2012-13.

## Groundwater quality

- Nearly 50-60% of the groundwater up to 60 metre depth in the state is fresh and fit.
- Nearly 20-30% of the groundwater generally is moderately saline and of marginal quality.
- About 15-25% of the groundwater is saline/alkaline and not fit for even irrigation use.

'semi-critical' and only 22 fall in the safe category.

The number of over-exploited blocks has increased from

105 in 2013 to 109. "There is an urgent need to recharge groundwater in the over-exploited blocks and develop

available shallow groundwater in safe blocks to avoid waterlogging in future," the report observed.

In historical analysis of groundwater, the report noted that the groundwater level fell almost in 85 per cent of the area between 1984 and 2016. While in the remaining about 15 per cent area of the state it has risen during this period. It has been observed that the area, in which groundwater table is more than 10-metre deep, has been continuously increasing. It was 14.9 per cent in June 1989, 20 per cent in June 1992, 28 per cent in June 1997, and 44 per cent in June 2002 and 61 per cent in June 2008, 65 per cent area fell in that category in 2016.

It has been found that the average yearly rate of fall of water level in the past six years was approximately 0.37 metre a year.

However, in badly-hit areas, including Barnala, Bathinda, Fatehgarh Sahib, Hoshiarpur, Jalandhar, Moga, Mohali, Pathankot, Patiala and Sangrur, it was approximately 0.49 metre.

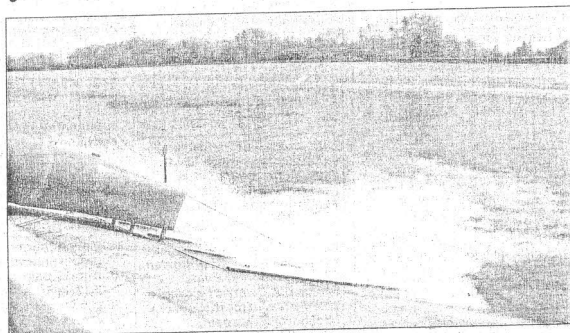
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## Efforts to fast-track irrigation projects yield mixed results



Many of the projects that were fast-tracked for completion in 2016 remained under construction for years due to problems in funding and land acquisition. Archive

AMITABH SINHA  
PUNE, FEBRUARY 6

IN ONE of the strongest push in recent years on increasing irrigation coverage, the government had, in the 2016 budget, made major financial outlays for creating new irrigation infrastructure in the country. It had announced that of the roughly 150 then-on-going irrigation projects under the Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme (AIBP), 99 would be expedited and completed by the end of 2019. Together, these projects, put on the fast-track, were to add about 75 lakh hectares of cultivable land under irrigation network.

Three years down the line, the government effort seems to have yielded only mixed results till now. Government's own figures, available on the AIBP website, show that only six of these projects have been fully completed till now, while another 45 are more than 90 per cent complete. A senior official from the Ministry of Water Resources said latest information from the states, which was yet to be updated on the AIBP website, showed that 31 of these projects had been fully completed.

"Some of these are showing 99 per cent or 98 per cent completion rate on the website. These remaining works in some of the projects are not related to water networks but other small things. The information we have from the states as of today shows 31 of these projects are now ready, and have achieved 100 per cent irrigation potential that these were supposed to create," the official said.

However, many of these projects had completed over 90 per cent of the works last year itself but have still not been able to carry out the remaining works. "Some of these had reached their full irrigation potential, and started distributing water. At some places, the irrigation flow reduces the window period for completing the remaining construction works. Work can be done only when the water is not flowing. This can be one of the reasons why some projects are stuck at 95 or 98 per cent completion for several months," the official said.

With less than a year left in the targeted time period, a lot of work remains to be done. At least 15 projects are not even 60 per cent complete, and a few of them might even be abandoned. The Punpun project in Bihar

could not even take off due to problems in land acquisition and is likely to be dropped from the programme. The same fate is said to await Karapuzha project in Kerala, again because of problems in acquiring land. Some other projects are also facing land acquisition issues.

The renewed push on irrigation, which had come in the 2016 budget, was seen as key to reviving the farm sector. Of the nearly 142 million hectares of land under cultivation in the country, only about 64 million hectares, less than half, had assured access to irrigation facilities till 2016. The rest depended on rainwater. Nearly 60 per cent of irrigated land uses pumped ground water, banking on free or highly-subsidised power provided to farmers in most states, thereby putting further pressure on a fast-depleting critical resource.

Many of the projects that were fast-tracked for completion in 2016 had remained under-construction for several years, some even for a couple of decades, due to problems in funding and land acquisition. The delays had led to major cost-overruns and in many cases the budgetary allocations were barely enough to cover for these escalation in costs.

A recently concluded performance audit of the AIBP programme, submitted to Parliament last month, makes a stinging criticism of the implementation. The AIBP programme was kicked off in 1996 to speed up ongoing major and medium irrigation projects that were getting delayed due to fund crunch. The AIBP programme was subsumed in the wider Prime Minister Krishi Sinchai Yojana (PMKSY) launched in 2015.

The CAG audited the performance of AIBP programme in the 2008-2017 period and found "violation of programme guidelines", "irregular release of funds", "deficiencies in preparation and processing of detailed project reports", "incorrect calculation of benefit cost ratio" and several other problems in the implementation.

It had also pointed to "financial irregularities such as diversion of funds amounting to Rs 1,578.55 crore, parking of funds amounting to Rs 1,112.56 crore and fictitious and fraudulent expenditure amounting to Rs 758 crore".

"Implementation of projects under AIBP was tardy, with delays in completion of projects ranging from one to 18 years," the CAG report noted.



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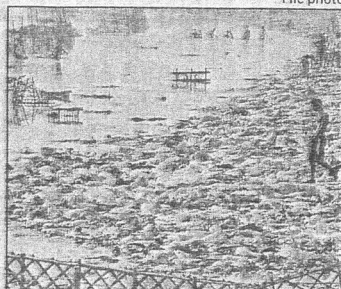
# Yamuna mess: NGT asks why ₹500 not collected from Delhiites every month

Ritam.Halder@timesgroup.com

**New Delhi:** Delhi was supposed to pay for polluting the Yamuna. But not even a single penny was collected as authorities are yet to initiate the collection process.

A green court-appointed monitoring committee has termed it as a "dereliction of duty" and "wilful defiance of NGT orders". In 2015, holding every Delhi resident responsible for polluting the Yamuna, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had ordered every household to pay a certain amount each month as environment compensation (EC) ranging between Rs 100 and Rs 500.

"The tribunal had given clear directions on levying EC for sewage



File photo

**COST OF POLLUTION:** In 2015, NGT had ordered every household to pay a monthly compensation of ₹100-500

generated both by authorised and unauthorised colonies. This was not being done and for more than three years the matter had been de-

flected by the DJB. The CEO of DJB had written to the principal secretary (UD) asking him to re-look at the matter of levying EC as ordered by NGT pursuant to cabinet decision of 07.08.2015. It is clear that the government had taken a decision to levy sewage charges on each household but this was not being implemented," the committee said in its report to the green court.

NGT chairperson Justice AK Goel had set up the committee in July to monitor the cleaning of the river. The committee includes former Delhi chief secretary Shailaja Chandra and retired expert member BS Sajwan.

Even as the judgment imposing EC under polluter pays principle

(PPP) for payment of sewage charges was stayed by Supreme Court on 30.10.2015, the court on 18.01.2016 clarified that the stay operated only in respect of TPDDL, the committee. "It was only the mode of realisation that was stayed in respect of TPDDL and not the levy of EC. The Delhi Jal Board was, therefore, free to realise the EC through the other two power distribution companies, namely, BSES (Yamuna) and BSES (Rajdhani). In any case, it is for the DJB to find ways and means of realising EC under PPP if the same cannot be realised through the power distribution companies," it said.

The monitoring committee has requested the Delhi chief secretary to look into the matter.

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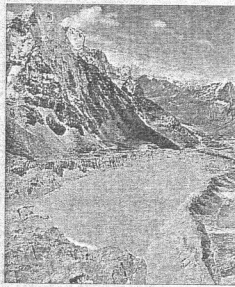
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# नवभारत टाइम्स

नवभारत टाइम्स | नई दिल्ली | गुरुवार, 7 फरवरी 2019

## कब तक बचेगी गंगा

भारत की जीवन रेखा कहलाने वाली नदी गंगा के अस्तित्व पर गंभीर खतरा मंडरा रहा है। जी नहीं, इस खतरे का संबंध नमामि गंगे और गंगा ऐक्शन प्लान जैसी सरकारी योजनाओं की विफलता से नहीं है। यह मैदानों के प्रदूषण से नहीं, ठेठ गंगा की जड़ गोमुख ग्लेशियर से आ रहा है और अकेली गंगा नहीं, दक्षिण और दक्षिण-पूर्वी एशिया की बहुतेरी नदियां इस खतरे की जद में हैं। 'हिंदूकुश-हिमालय असेसमेंट'



पिघल रहे हैं ग्लेशियर

नामक अध्ययन में बताया गया है कि इन दोनों पर्वतमालाओं से निकलने वाले ग्लेशियर (हिमनद) लगातार पिघल रहे हैं और इनमें से दो-तिहाई इस सदी के अंत तक खत्म हो सकते हैं। 210 वैज्ञानिकों द्वारा तैयार यह रिपोर्ट काठमांडू में स्थित 'इंटरनेशनल सेंटर फॉर इंटीग्रेटेड माउंटेन डिवेलपमेंट' द्वारा जारी की गई है। स्टडी के अनुसार इस सदी के अंत तक दुनिया का तापमान पेरिस जलवायु समझौते

के मुताबिक 1.5 डिग्री सेल्सियस ही बढ़ने दिया जाए, तो भी इलाके के एक-तिहाई ग्लेशियर नहीं बचेगे और बड़ोतरी अगर 2 डिग्री सेल्सियस होती है, जिसकी आशंका ज्यादा है, तो दो-तिहाई ग्लेशियर नहीं रहेंगे। दरअसल पूरी दुनिया में हिमनदों के पिघलने का सिलसिला 1970 से ही तेज हो चुका है। इसके एक सीमा पार करते ही नदियों की दिशा व बहाव में बदलाव आ सकता है। बर्फ पिघलने से यांगत्सी, मीकांग, ब्रह्मपुत्र, गंगा और सिंधु के प्रवाह पर फर्क पड़ेगा और इनमें से कुछ बरसाती नदी बनकर रह जाएंगी। इन नदियों पर बड़ी संख्या में किसान निर्भर करते हैं। 25 करोड़ पर्वतीय और 165 करोड़ मैदानी लोगों का जीवन इन पर टिका है। नदी के प्रवाह में बदलाव से फसलों की पैदावार के साथ ही बिजली उत्पादन पर भी फर्क पड़ेगा। वैकल्पिक नजरिये से देखें तो ब्रिटिश वैज्ञानिक वूटर ब्यूटार्ट इस रिपोर्ट के निष्कर्षों से पूरी तरह इत्तेफाक नहीं रखते। उनका कहना है कि इस मामले में अभी और ज्यादा रिसर्च की जरूरत है क्योंकि ग्लेशियर पिघलने के बाद भी नदियों की और जगहों से पानी मिल जाता है। जो भी हो, ग्लेशियर खत्म होने की बात को अब गंभीरता से लेना हमारी मजबूरी है। ग्लोबल वार्मिंग रोकने के लिए चला विश्वव्यापी अभियान भी पिछले कुछ समय से ठिठका हुआ सा लग रहा है। सारे देश एक-दूसरे को नसीहत ही देते हैं। खुद अपने यहां कार्बन उत्सर्जन घटाने के लिए कोई ठोस कदम नहीं उठाते, क्योंकि इससे उनकी अर्थव्यवस्था पर उलटा असर पड़ सकता है। उद्योग-धंधे लगाने में पर्यावरणीय शक्तों की अनदेखी अभी हमारे यहां ही आम बात हो चली है, जबकि हिमालय का संकट सबसे ज्यादा नुकसान हमें ही पहुंचाने वाला है। एक तो हमारी बहुत बड़ी आबादी हिमालय पर निर्भर है, दूसरे गंगा के बिना भारतीय सभ्यता की कल्पना भला कौन कर सकता है? अच्छा हो कि हम इस संकट के बारे में और ठोस जानकारी जुटाएं और इससे निपटने

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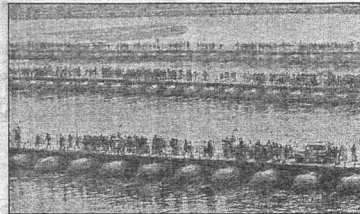
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# गंगा के तरीके से यमुना भी हो सकेगी साफ ?

प्रयागराज में अपनाए गए तरीके दिल्ली में यमुना को दे सकते हैं 'जीवन'

■ गुलशन राय खत्री, नई दिल्ली : कुंभ से ठीक पहले गंगा को साफ करने के लिए जो तरीके प्रयागराज में अपनाए गए हैं, वे दिल्ली में यमुना की सफाई के लिए भी मददगार हो सकते हैं। दरसअल, प्रयागराज में बड़े नालों को गंगा में जाने से रोकने के लिए तो सीवेज ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट बनाए गए थे, लेकिन छोटे नालों के लिए जो अनुठी पहल की गई, उससे गंगा को निर्मल करने में बड़ी मदद मिली है। गंगा में गिरने वाले 82 में से 36 नालों के लिए सीवेज ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट की जगह दूसरे रास्ते अपनाए गए। ये सस्ते और कम वक्त में पूरे होने वाले हैं।

स्थानीय अफसरों के मुताबिक, इनमें एक 'इन सीटू' प्लान है। इसमें आश्रमों से सीधे आने वाले नालों को साफ करने के लिए कृत्रिम ऑक्सिजन का



उपयोग किया गया और नालों में कुछ खास तरह के पौधे इस तरह से लगाए गए कि कचरा गंगा में जाने से पहले ही रुक जाए। इस तरह नदी में जाने वाले पानी में गंदगी नहीं होती है साथ में पर्याप्त ऑक्सिजन भी होती है। इसी तरह दूसरी तकनीक 'जिओ सिंथेटिक ट्यूब' तकनीक है। यह प्राइवेट कंपनी की मदद से

लाई गई है। इसमें एक दोजिंग यूनिट है और दूसरी सिंथेटिक ट्यूब। नालों का पानी इन दोनों रास्तों से निकाला जाता है और सारी गंदगी पंटून पुल में इस्तेमाल होने वाले बड़े ड्रम साइज की ट्यूब में। पूरा कचरा फिक्स किया जाता है और खास तरह से पानी इतना साफ किया जाता है कि उसे नदी में छोड़ दिया जा सके। अफसरों का कहना है कि ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट के लिए 20 एकड़ जमीन लगती है और निर्माण में ढाई साल। लेकिन इस तकनीक से लगभग 3 हजार गज जमीन पर महज 15 दिन में ये प्लांट चालू हो जाता है। सीवेज साफ करने की लागत भी ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट से 12% तक सस्ती होती है। इस तरह यहां कई प्लांट लगाए गए हैं। अधिकारियों के अनुसार, बड़े नालों के लिए तो सीवेज ट्रीटमेंट प्लांट की ही जरूरत है।