Central Water Commission
WSE Dte.,
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The News Clippings on Water Resources Development and allied subjects are enclosed for perusal of the Chairman, CWC, and Member (WP&P/D&R/RM), Central Water Commission. The soft copies of clippings will be uploaded on the CWC website.

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Deputy Director, WSE Dte. 07/03/2019

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For information to

Chairman CWC, New Delhi

Member (WP&P/D&R/R.M.), CWC and all concerned, uploaded at www.cwc.nic.in

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INFRA TALK

BS-7

River chiefs

An unorthodox chinese solution to managing water

VINAYAK CHATTERJEE

ILLUSTRATION BY BINAY SINHA

Nine dragons managing water" — it's a metaphor that the Chinese have long used to describe how their country manages its water resources. Clearly not a compliment, the metaphor refers to overlapping and unclear responsibilities that different agencies and governments have over the country's aquatic resources. And it is a metaphor that, surprisingly, describes India very well too. In both countries, water management is split across ministries at the central and state level, and between different agencies handling different functions with regard to water management and water pollution.

The results of a complex and unclear system of management, coupled with rapid development and close-to-uncontrolled use of water resources has led to estimates that as much as a third of China's surface water may be unfit to drink (according to a Greenpeace report).

To combat this, China unveiled an unorthodox, yet ambitious "river chiefs" programme across the country last year.

The programme appoints a single government official (a "river chief"), to manage water quality indicators for a given stretch of river or water body in their local area. Their performance and future career paths depend on how well those indicators improve over their tenure. According to a report in the *China Daily* newspaper last year, more than 300,000 river chiefs have been appointed across the country under different tiers of government. A further 7,60,000 have been appointed at village level as well, taking the total number of river chiefs to well over one million.

As China Water Risk, an organisation which promotes water conservation in China notes, the river chiefs programme means that local officials "face lifetime accountability for environmental performance in their jurisdiction." Contact information of the official is posted on a sign next to the river stretch they have responsibility for; and locals can call that official if they spot a person or a company dumping waste in the water, or if a stretch of water is overrun with algae and needs cleaning. The larger and more important the stretch of river, the more senior the official appointed as river chiefs. This ensures that the officer is powerful enough to get different departments to work together.

The river chiefs system was actually first implemented back in 2007 in Jiangsu province by local officials to combat a massive infestation of green algae in a local water body. A Greenpeace official quoted in the *South China Morning Post* newspaper says that the province (roughly equivalent to an Indian state), has seen a sharp turnaround in water quality since the river chiefs system was established across the state following its initial success. The proportion of the state's surface water fit for human use increased from 35 per cent to over 63 per cent.

Would such a system work in India? We too share many of the same problems — massive water pollution problems coupled with different organisations and government departments tasked with responsibility for different aspects of water management. India already has a range of specific legislation to deal with pollution (including water pollution) and Pollution Control Boards at both the state and central level to set pollution standards and enforce them.

The key innovation in the Chinese case, has been the devolution of responsibility right down to the grass roots level and thereby making local officials directly responsible for pollution control with the powers to take action across government departments. Local inhabitants, the ones who have the most to benefit from improving water quality, in theory at least, have 'one throat to choke' to ensure that the water they use is usable. Making environmental improvement an explicit part of officials' targets and assessment, gives them a serious incentive to respond positively. Water quality improvement targets can be clearly set and monitored independently as well.

It is too early to tell what the results have been in China as the programme was implemented nationally just last year. But while water quality has improved in some of the areas where it was introduced earlier, in other areas it has remained unchanged or even worsened. If the river chief does not have the power to penalise industries that discharge effluents into the water body, it matters little that they have been given targets.

Currently, the State Pollution Control Boards in India already have that power. What matters is the political will from the top — more specifically the state governments here, which have a crucial role to play in making any such measure successful. Forcing a local factory, whose owner may be politically well connected, to comply with pollution norms, is something that can only be done if the state government wants it, whether or not river chiefs or their equivalent, exist in India.

But the broader lesson of the river chiefs programme still stands. Perhaps the best chance of ensuring that political pressure exists to penalise polluters, is to make local communities responsible for, and put them in charge of, environment management. India's environmental policy has long had a top down approach with mixed results. A bottom-up approach, where all the pressure for reform comes from those who are most affected, is what is needed.

River chiefs in China is one such approach.

The author is chairman of Feedback Infra

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Namami Gange takes off?

RC ACHARYA

The author is former member, Railway Board

With 1,109 gross polluting industries discharging toxic effluents into the Ganga, it is a long way to go

FEBRUARY 17, 2019, was a red letter day for Bihar, with PM Narendra Modi announcing the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)'s multi-crore initiatives second time in less than a year. Getting into a high gear towards its avowed objective of keeping the river Ganga clean, NMCG or Namami Gange plans to spend ₹452.24 to prevent flow of 670 mld (million litres per day) of sewage into Ganga, while ₹243.27 is earmarked for improving the Patna riverfront involving construction of new ghats, promenade, community-cum-cultural centre, etc.

Efforts to clean up Ganga had started as early as in 1979, when the Central Board for the Prevention and Control of Water Pollution was directed to undertake a comprehensive survey, and its report ultimately formed the basis for setting up of the Central Ganga Authority (CGA) in February 1985.

The Ganga Project Directorate (GPD) was established as a wing of the Department of Environment, with a budget of ₹350 crore to administer the cleaning up of Ganga and to restore it to pristine condition, with the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) launched on June 14, 1986, by Rajiv Gandhi in Varanasi.

From 1993 onwards, GAP-1 was extended as GAP-2 to cover four major tributaries of Ganga—the Yamuna, Gomati, Damodar and Mahananda—and further broad-based in 1995 with the inclusion of other rivers and renamed as the National River Conservation Plan (NRCP). Also, 34 other rivers were taken up for cleaning with the same model of GAP.

However, while GAP has managed to spend less than ₹4,000 crore in three decades, the reconstituted body (NMCG) has already spent ₹5,650 crore, and for year ending March 31, 2019, projects worth ₹2,295 crore are expected to be completed. With an outlay of ₹20,000 crores for the period 2015-20, NMCG is aiming big with 267 projects sanctioned so far costing ₹26,360 crore, of which 82 have been completed.

> The latest Namami Gange initiative centring Patna, we hope, will not merely be a pre-poll bonanza for Bihar, but show positive results

A significant modification of earlier approach was made in 2016 vide a GoI gazette notification of October 7. Para 6 for prevention, control and abatement of environmental pollution in river Ganga and its tributaries vide sub para 1 required that "no person shall discharge, directly or indirectly, any untreated or treated sewage or sewage sludge into the river Ganga or its tributaries or its banks." Further, under sub para 2 it is required that "no person shall discharge, directly or indirectly, any untreated or treated trade effluent and industrial waste, biomedical waste, or other hazardous substance into the river Ganga or its tributaries or on their banks."

With all flow into the Ganga being blocked, a way was to be found to reuse treated water. A MoU with power ministry now requires thermal plants located within 50-km of an STP (sewage treatment plant) to draw their requirements of water from it. Another MoU with the Railways requires it to draw water for its coach-washing plants from nearby STPs. Similarly, an agreement with Indian Oil refinery's requirement (in Mathura) of 20 mld is met by a trans-Yamuna STP.

About 80% of the pollution is contributed by municipality sewage, while industries located along the Ganga account for 20%. However, industrial effluents are the major cause for toxicity and health hazard. Over 400 tanneries in and around Kanpur, which discharge tonnes of toxic effluent into the Ganga, shall soon have a central effluent treatment plant of 20 mld capacity costing ₹620 crore.

A major initiative taken has been to involve the polluting tanneries as stakeholders, in forming a SPV for keeping the Ganga clean. With a contract for a period of 15 years for operation & maintenance, funds should no longer prove to be a constraint. Also, a policy of 'one city, one operator' would ensure accountability and efficient functioning of these multi-crore facilities.

With 1,109 gross polluting industries discharging toxic effluents into the Ganga, it is a long way to go. Hopefully, the latest initiative centring Patna will not just remain a pre-poll bonanza for Bihar, but show positive results a few years down the line.

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Maharashtra dams have only 33% water stock left

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA
Mumbai, March 6

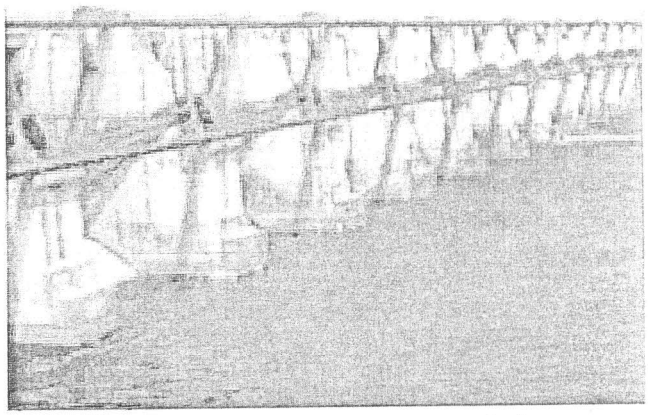
DAMS IN MAHARASHTRA have only 32.88% water stock of their total storage capacity as of now, almost 14% less compared to last year, according to a report of the state water resources department.

The situation is particularly worrisome in Aurangabad division (falling under the arid Marathwada region) where, currently, the water stock is just 7% against 42.67% around the same time last year, the report said.

The state has 3,267 dams and there was 47.74% water stock in them last year around this time. The state government has so far deployed 2,636 tankers to meet the demand of drinking water in rural and semi-rural areas, public works department minister Chandrakant Patil said on Tuesday.

There was less storage in dams after last year's monsoon due to erratic showers in the first couple of months of the rainy season followed by long dry spells, an official from the water resources department said.

He said as of now, the Konkan division has 55.06% water stock against 61.20% last year, while Pune division has 46.67% stock as compared to 60.26% in 2018.



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"The water stock in these two regions is comparatively better," he said.

Besides, the Nashik division has 29.79% water stock as compared to 49.91% in 2018 while in Amravati division it is 31.48% against 24.84% last year, the report said.

The Nagpur division has 16.74% stock left against 24.84% last year, it added.

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