



After cleaner ghats, Ganga at Varanasi to be pollution-free too

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All who have been enjoying cleaner ghats at Varanasi would also soon bask in the pollution-free waters of the Ganges flowing by the spiritual city. Under Namami Gange programme, an all-encompassing approach has been employed to arrest pollution flowing into the river and ensure clean ghats. From sewage treatment plants to ghat improvement to river surface cleaning, several steps in a time-bound manner are being taken in Varanasi by National Mission for Clean Ganga to rid the city of river pollution.

On the sewage management front, Varanasi town currently generates an estimated 300 MLD of sewage, which is expected to increase to 390 MLD by 2030. From the current capacity of three existing sewage treatment plants - Dinapur, Bhagwanpur and DLW, only 102 MLD of sewage is being treated while the remaining flows directly into river Ganga through Varuna and Assi rivers. To bridge this gap, a 140 MLD STP at Dinapur and a 120 MLD STP at Goitha are being constructed under Japan International co-operation Agency (JICA) assisted project and JNNURM scheme respectively. These projects are at advanced stage of construction and will be commissioned before March 2018. Apart from this, a 50 MLD STP at Ramana has also been awarded under Hybrid Annuity based PPP model to exclusively address the sewage treatment requirements of Assi BHU area. Concession agreement for this project has already been signed. Together, these STPs will create sewage treatment capacity of 412 MLD, adequate to meet the sewage treatment demands of the town till 2035.

In addition, the works on interceptor sewers for rivers Varuna and Assi, development of three pumping stations at Chauka ghat, Phulwaria and Saraiya, rehabilitation of old trunk sewers and rehabilitation of ghat pumping stations and existing STPs are also underway to improve the entire sewage management infrastructure in Varanasi. Evidently, no stone is being left unturned.

To address the concerns of floating waste on the river, a trash skimmer is operational in Varanasi since April 2017 under river surface cleaning component.

A cleaner Ganga would be incomplete without equally cleaner surroundings. Acknowledging this, the Government of India last year initiated cleaning works at 84 iconic and heritage ghats of Varanasi under Namami Gange programme which has shown positive results.

Besides, works for construction of 153 community toilet complexes at an estimated cost of Rs 20.07 crore have been awarded out of which the works for 109 toilets have already been completed and they are being used by 15,000 to 20,000 people every day. Also, ghat improvement works at 26 locations have been taken up in addition to repairing works at as many identified locations. In a bid to arrest the pollution from cloth washing activities on ghats, four dhobi ghats - Pandeypur, Nadesar, Bhavania Pokhran and Konia - have already been renovated while construction of three other at Bazardiha, Machodari Slaughter House and Bhawania Pokhri (extension) is underway. Whereas several users of the dhobi community have shifted to the new ghats, many more are being pursued for the same.

In a nutshell, a focused and output-driven approach to make river Ganga pure in Varanasi has yielded results. The objective of *Nirmal* Ganga will now not remain just a dream for Varanasi city.

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