GOVERNMENT OF INDIA

MINISTRY OF JAL SHAKTI,

DEPARTMENT OF WATER RESOURCES, RIVER DEVELOPMENT & GANGA REJUVENATION

RAJYA SABHA

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1698

ANSWERED ON 01.08.2022

DECLINING WATER LEVEL IN RIVERS

1698 SHRI K.R.N. RAJESHKUMAR

Will the Minister of JAL SHAKTI be pleased to state:

(a) whether there is a huge decline in water level and water quality in the rivers of the country during the last few years;

(b) if so, the details thereof and the remedial steps taken by Government in this regard;

(c) whether the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has given any instruction in this regard, if so, the details thereof and the reaction of Government thereto; and

(d) the steps taken/proposed to be taken by Government to ensure smooth flow of small and major rivers in the country alongwith the progress made in this regard so far?

ANSWER

THE MINISTER OF STATE FOR JAL SHAKTI

(SHRI BISHWESWAR TUDU**)**

(a) to (d) There are two types of rivers in the country; (i) perennial rivers and (ii) non-perennial/ephemeral rivers. In perennial rivers, water remains available throughout the year while non-perennial/ephemeral rivers are rain fed rivers in which water flows only during the rainfall period. The flow in the rivers is dynamic and depends on many parameters such as rainfall, its distribution pattern and intensity in the catchment, catchment characteristics and quantum of withdrawals / utilizations of water. Central Water Commission (CWC) carries out hydrological observation on important rivers in the country. As per information available in CWC, considering annual average flows of last 20 years of terminal sites of important rivers, no increasing or decreasing trend in water availability was found in important rivers in the country.

The Central Government has notified under Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986 the "Primary Water Quality Criteria for Bathing Water" (i.e. pH, DO, BOD, *Faecal Coliform* and *Faecal Streptococci*) as well as COD and other recalcitrant toxic pollutants as prescribed under "Guidelines on Water Quality Monitoring – 2017", issued by MoEF&CC. The Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), in collaboration with the State Pollution Control Boards (SPCB) / Pollution Control Committees (PCCs), regularly monitor the water quality of rivers & other water bodies in the country through a network of monitoring stations. As per CPCB report of September 2018, 351 polluted river stretches have been identified on 323 rivers based monitoring results in terms of Bio-chemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) levels, an indicator of organic pollution.

The Hon'ble NGT has issued directions, inter alia, for ensuring the maintenance of the water quality and e-flows in the rivers vide order/judgment dated 10.12.2015 and dated 13.07.2017 in O. A. No. 200 of 2014 and also vide order dated 20.09.2018 in O. A. No. 673/2018. State Governments implement Action Plans drawn by State River Rejuvenation Committees for restoration of water quality of the identified polluted river stretches. The implementation is monitored at State level by Chief Secretary of the

respective State/UT and at Central level by the Central Monitoring Committee under the chairmanship of Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti.

Sewage and trade effluents are required to be discharged in the rivers after proper treatment as per the provisions of the Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The trade/industrial effluent must conform to the stipulated effluent standards before being discharged into the streams/rivers/drains. The requisite steps are impressed upon by the statutory authorities viz SPCBs/CPCB and other authorities vested with the responsibilities are mandated to ensure installation of proper treatment systems (STPs/ETPs/CETP) by the municipal authorities /industries wherever necessary and to ensure the compliance of the effluent standards. The periodical reports are submitted by the concerned State Governments/UTs Administrations before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) in compliance of the orders/directions NGT.

Cleaning of river Ganga is a continuous process. Under the Namami Gange Programme, several initiatives have been taken by Government of India which include abatement and control of pollution at the source of pollution generation by adopting activities such as establishment / upgradation of wastewater treatment plants for the towns located on Ganga main stem and its tributaries, river front development, construction of ghats and crematoria, surface cleaning activities and solid waste management. Further, it is seen that there is improvement observed in the water quality of river Ganga in recent years. As per CPCB's data for 2021, the observed water quality of river Ganga indicates that Dissolved Oxygen, which is an indicator of river health, has been found to be within acceptable limits of notified primary bathing water quality criteria and satisfactory to support the ecosystem of river across all seasons and also for almost entire stretch of river Ganga. As a result of multi-sectoral interventions, as per comparison of median data of water quality parameters viz., Dissolved Oxygen (DO), Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) and Faecal Coliform (FC) of years 2014 and 2021, Dissolved Oxygen level has improved at 34 locations and there is reduction in BOD & FC levels at 44 locations and 25 locations, respectively.

Financial assistance is also provided to States for setting up of sewage infrastructure and other pollution abatement activities under Namami Gange and National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) of Ministry of Jal Shakti as well as AMRUT & Smart Cities Mission of Ministry of Housing & Urban Affairs. Works under NRCP includes setting up of sewage treatment plants, interception and diversion, river front/bathing ghats, afforestation, low cost sanitation, crematoria etc. NRCP has so far covered polluted stretches on 35 rivers in 78 towns spread over 16 States in the country with the project sanctioned cost of Rs. 6,142 crore, and inter alia, a sewage treatment capacity of 2,745 million litre per day (mld) has been created, resulting in reduction in pollution load being discharged in to the various rivers. An amount of Rs. 2,799 crore has been released to various States/UTs Governments as Central share for implementation of various pollution abatement schemes under NRCP.

Regulation of industrial pollution is implemented through various provisions of Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 under Consent mechanism by the respective State Pollution Control Board (SPCBs) and Pollution Control Committees (PCC). Inventorisation of Grossly Polluting Industries (GPIs) along river Ganga with annual inspection of all GPIs is carried out. Stringent action is taken by CPCB/SPCBs against the GPIs discharging into main stem of Ganga River & its tributaries which are non-compliant with respect to the prescribed norms.

The Central Government has issued a notification vide SO 5195 (E) dated 09.10.2018 and amended vide Notification No SO 3286 (E) dated 14.09.2019 to maintain the minimum e-flows in the identified river stretches by the project authorities. This is to be ensured by the concerned State Governments. With a view to ensure the uninterrupted flow in rivers, the State Governments/UTs Administrations take requisite measures including surveillance on diversion of water affecting e-flows, over-drawal/abstraction of rivers surface water/ground water, identify encroachments and removal of the same from flood plain zones, to maintain minimum e-flows.