

Minutes of 41st meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) held on 29th December, 2021 at NMCG Office, Delhi

The 41st meeting of the Executive Committee (EC) of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) was held on 29th December, 2021 at 03.00 PM through Video Conferencing under the Chairmanship of Director General (DG), NMCG.

Director General, NMCG welcomed the members of EC to the meeting. While introducing the agenda for the meeting he mentioned that the 41st meeting has been convened not for taking investment decision in respect of infrastructure or non-infrastructure project proposals, but is meant to focus discussions on long term goals of NMCG towards building a network with institutions of eminence so as to support research efforts, more importantly policy driven research initiatives, under Namami Gange Programme for meeting the larger goal of rejuvenating India's rivers. These efforts would ultimately be directional in supplementing the role of Ganga Knowledge Centre. In this direction, NMCG has been working on proposals from various academic, Policy Institutions on issues relevant to NMCG's interests and mandate. NMCG had earlier signed MoUs as well as took initiatives with various institutes of repute viz., Jamia Milia Islamia, Baba Bhimrao Ambedkar University - both Central Universities; Centre for Policy Research - an ICSSR Institute; IIT Roorkee for advocating and promoting research on issues and challenges critical to the success of Namami Gange Programme. This also included proposals from the Chair Professor for Ministry of Jal Shakti on such critical issues focussing on endurance of investments under the programme and policy advocacy to sustain these efforts. The themes of these initiatives, for instance, varied in the spectrum of science and technology development, policy and governance studies and reorienting education and capacities to support river rejuvenation. The goal is to build capacities of Indian institutions to meet the research, knowledge and capacity needs of the Namami Gange programme and inform the public discourse to mobilize support from stakeholders for its long-term impact.

Thereafter, the agenda proposals were taken up for discussion and guidance of the Executive Committee.

Agenda Item No. 41.1- How Relevant are the European River Rejuvenation Experiences for NGP and Indian Rivers by Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi.

It was briefed to the EC that the proposal is focused on the review of the literature about rejuvenation of European transboundary river rejuvenation to build an India-relevant critical narrative for learning from and to promote future research to inform policy thinking about Namami Gange Programme and rejuvenating India's rivers. It will also

explore and engage with ideas and opportunities for future research and programmatic collaboration to support NGP and its implementation. CPR-NMCG collaborative knowledge exchange programme for implementation will be the part of the project objectives.

After detailed discussions, EC recommended the importance of the project, which can be further examined in respect of its scope and objectives and its financial outlays as well. NMCG can also give inputs to CPR about international experience the mission has at present. The project proposal may thereafter be appropriately considered for decision on its financial outlays and timelines in subsequent meetings of Executive Committee.

Agenda Item No. 41.2- Interstate Cooperation for Namami Gange: Policy and Institutional Challenges and Opportunities by Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi.

It was briefed to the EC that the proposal is focused on carrying out an assessment of interstate relations in the context of Namami Gange, taking into consideration the history of conflicts and cooperation in the basin. The proponent would examine the emerging collective concerns about water quality in the basin to understand the potential for mobilizing collective action. Also gaps and avenues for the Centre to address towards enabling interstate cooperation for Ganga rejuvenation, would be identified.

After detailed discussions, EC recommended the importance of the project, which can be further examined in respect of its scope and objectives and its financial outlays as well. The project proposal may thereafter be appropriately considered for decision on its financial outlays and timelines in subsequent meetings of Executive Committee.

Agenda Item No. 41.3- Master Plan for River-centric Urban Planning: Limits, Potential and Opportunities by Centre for Policy Research (CPR), New Delhi.

It was briefed to the EC that the proposal has following objectives:

- What are the practices of river-centric urban planning using statutory instruments such as the Master Plan - in India and internationally? Critique the practices from the point of how well these practices incorporate the idea of river rejuvenation.

- How is the Master Plan, by its conception, limited in addressing the river rejuvenation concerns? How can one strengthen the instrument towards this end?
- What are the gaps and inadequacies of governance practices that limit the potential of the Master Plan in achieving river-centric and sensitive urban growth? What kind of supplemental and/or complementary policy and institutional interventions that can help the Master Plan realize its potential?
- What are the future directions for the policy and legislative framework in the Ganga basin states to deploy Master Plan effectively to serve the larger goal of Ganga rejuvenation?
- How are the planning practices and institutional cultures positioned to address river rejuvenation agenda? What are the strategic directions to address this challenge?

It was discussed that the study primarily looks into greater policy issues which have hitherto hindered adoption of river centric urban planning largely for keeping them rejuvenated by ULBs and policy tweaking of bye-laws etc required to catalyse them as part and parcel of urban master plans. After detailed discussions, EC observed that NIUA is also working on similar project towards river centric urban planning for Indian cities. Thus, there might be an element of duplicity in the scope which needs to be looked into and CPR may, if needed, coordinate with NIUA in redefining the scope. Accordingly, it was decided that the proposal may not be taken up at this stage.

Agenda Item No. 41.4- Training and capacity building programme in River System-Science and Restoration by Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University

It was briefed to the EC that the proposal has following objectives:

- To establish a research-led Centre of Excellence in River Science within the School of Earth and Environmental Sciences at the Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University, Lucknow.
- The Centre would focus on river system science providing evidence-based scientific advice and services to academia, think tanks, public and private sectors involved in river restoration, integrated ecosystems, and river-related conservation activities.

- It was also informed that a meeting was also convened under the chairmanship of DG, NMCG wherein Prof. V. Dutta from Babasaheb Bhimrao Ambedkar University made a detailed presentation.

After detailed discussions, EC appreciated the idea of establishment of Chair Professor and Centre for looking at capacity building requirements at district levels in fields of river science with relevance to river geomorphology, fluvial morphology and others. However, it was recommended that University through its School of Earth and Environmental Sciences may consider introducing few elective disciplines in its regular curriculum as a first step in this direction. Further, a few pilot projects for restoration of lower order degraded river system (read tributaries) can be conceptualized involving capacity building of DGCs also. The concept proposal may also include implementation of few such initiatives through involvement of DGCs. Implementation of pilot proposal may accordingly provide mature ground for conceiving a Center for River Science.

Agenda Item No. 41.5- New Forms of 21st Century Civic Infrastructure for the Ganga Basin by Prof. Anthony Acciavatti, Yale University, United State of America.

It was briefed to the EC that the proposal has following objectives:

- To develop new and innovative methods of mapping environmental change along naalas throughout the Ganga River Basin.
- To categorize different kinds of naalas based on environmental matrix like land use, soil composition, and particle analysis.
- To identify five prototypical naalas within the Ganga River Basin as sites for pilot projects.

Also, it was briefed to the EC that the proposal has been shared with cGanga for observations.

The EC endorsed the project proposal. EC recommended that the proposal can be further examined in respect of its scope and objectives and its financial outlays as well. The project proposal may thereafter be appropriately considered for decision in subsequent meetings of Executive Committee.

Agenda Item No. 41.6- Economic Valuation of Ecosystem Services Across Geographical Regions of The Ganga River Basin-Analysis of Selected Interventions by World Resources Institute (WRI).

Implementing Agency

World Resources Institute India

Completion time

One Year

Recommendation:

A presentation was given by Dr. Madhu Verma, Chief Economist, World Resources Institute before the committee. The presentation proposed a study to work on the economic value of interventions made to river Ganga. Dr. Verma mentioned how economic and mapping tools will be used to identify, study, and capture the various interventions undertaken across different landscapes of the river. Different geographies that will be part of this study were mentioned and explained why these regions were shortlisted. The presentation also briefed on how this study can be tapped on to scale further across different cities. Dr. Verma highlighted how this study will not only help in evaluating the local economic activity of the region but also, it's impact at the national level.

The committee was keen on the concept idea and mentioned how it is an important study to assess the impact of agroforestry and organic farming on social indicators and livelihoods. The team was also asked to establish verifiable indicators to understand impact of said interventions in the study. Dr. Verma was part of a TEEB project with the ministry which is along similar lines and that was brought up in discussions. The methodology and plan used in the TEEB project are parallel to the ones proposed in this study.

There was a query as to why only agroforestry and organic farming were included which are part of the rural sector as part of this study and no urban intervention has been incorporated. Dr. Verma responded stating that this is still a pilot study and it will later be scaled and or replicated to accommodate other sectors, interventions and services to give a more holistic reading. Since agriculture connects directly with the livelihoods of farmers, it was primarily selected for this study. The team was then asked to mention these points in the scope of the proposal and also specify that agriculture is only a subset of various interventions in the region. The proposal should mention various other ecosystem services and interventions and how this study can be used to evaluate those ecosystem services as well. Agriculture has only been used a niche in this study but can be replicated to incorporate other services as well. This form showcases the big picture while also highlighting the specific intervention that this project will entail.

The EC endorsed the project proposal and recommended that the proposal can be further examined in respect of its scope and objectives and its financial outlays as well. The project proposal may thereafter be appropriately considered for decision in subsequent meetings of Executive Committee.

Agenda Item No. 41.7- INTERNSHIP SCHEME FOR NMCG

The Executive Committee, in its 40th meeting decided that NMCG should prepare the provisions of inviting interns from across the country for carrying out internships in NMCG, ranging from 3 months to a year. Appropriate remuneration, and number of internships at a time, may be formulized and put up in upcoming EC for approval.

The policy draft was discussed in the meeting and it was observed by the EC members that the policy has been prepared comprehensively. However, it may need more consultations towards its value addition. For instance, the members suggested that the interns may also be accepted for a shorter period ranging from 4 weeks onwards for undergraduates and longer duration for post graduates. Provision for documentation of delivery by interns can also be structured. Further, a calendar for the internship programme in advance can be notified for structuring the entire programme. There might, as well, be the need for identifying intern programmes on different identified subject areas. The interns can be suitably encouraged to be associated with NMCG partnering institutions. Suitable financial incentives for internships in form of monthly remuneration was largely supported.

Prof. Vinod Tare, Founding Head cGanga appreciated the idea of internship in NMCG.

After detailed discussions, EC recommended the internship scheme alongwith concept of providing financial incentives in form of monthly remuneration and advised that the proposal may be further examined in NMCG. It was also recommended to firm-up the financial requirements for the internship scheme. The project proposal may thereafter be appropriately considered for decision in subsequent meetings of Executive Committee.

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Other discussions:

Prof. Vinod Tare, Founding Head cGanga appreciated and supported all the agenda points. He opinioned that the Centres being proposed may not be called Centre of Excellence but may be suitably named as

Specialized Cell etc. A mechanism needs to be created to establish these Specialized Cells/ Centres which inter-alia includes financial component. Also, there is a need to develop synergy amongst the various schemes such as MNREGA etc. and entire financial support may not be required from NMCG alone. Prof. Tare also appreciated the project proposal of Yale University and shared that cGanga is in tune with this and will give comments shortly. However, it is not possible for cGanga to do everything. The work needs to be distributed among different Centres, Departments, Partner Institutions etc. NMCG can play the role of coordinators to avoid duplicity, if any and to ensure application of best of scientific tools and techniques. It is important to give ownership and involvement to as many stakeholders, as possible. He added that cGanga being the knowledge partner of NMCG is ready to take-up its part of responsibility.

EC was in agreement that institutional building and development through partnership building and promoting sustained research efforts and knowledge production on issues of river rejuvenation is the essential mandate of NMCG and these needs must be pursued aggressively. The endeavors for building this partnership must go beyond existing stakeholders viz., cGanga, WII, World Bank or GIZ for instance. The efforts must be widened and broad-based to address the new and emerging needs and diverse concerns of Namami Gange and NMCG. An emerging key interest is also to improve the quality of public discourse about river rejuvenation and mobilize support from stakeholders. Building on NMCG's experiences and developing a repository of institutional memory is central for Namami Gange's effective implementation and scaling up of its experiences to inform the larger goal of rejuvenating India's rivers. This conceptualization has been at core while pursuing EFC for continuation of Namami Gange programme during the XVth Finance Commission cycle for next five-years which has been considered by appropriate authority in M/o Expenditure wherein sizeable component for institutional strengthening, which inter-alia involves building expert

institutional linkages for the stated objectives under the programme exists. EC accordingly advised that proposals being received from various Institutions, formulated in consultation with NMCG, may be processed in accordance to this spirit and in time bound manner ensuring minimal delays.

The meeting ended with vote of thanks to the chair.