

Returning pristine water to the rivers and lakes of Gujarat

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Ahmedabad: Gujarat's rivers are decaying, with large stretches contaminated by toxic waste and sewage. They now require a wide-ranging clean-up plan without any further delay. It is with this intention that multiple stakeholders ranging from senior government policy makers, scientists, public health experts, NGOs and farmers have agreed to participate for the TOI and IIT-Gandhinagar-Asia Pacific Network (APN) roundtable. The roundtable brings 25 representative members at the IIT-Gandhinagar campus at Palaj in the backdrop of the 20th National Symposium on environment organised by IIT-Gn and BARC.

Today, our rivers are laced with contaminants ranging from antibiotics resistant superbugs, microplastics to pesticides and petroleum. Our state's lakes, rivers, streams, and groundwater are often a chemical cocktail. And then beyond this synthetic pollution, our freshwater sources are also the endpoint for sewage waste, animal excrement, and rainwater runoff peppered with fertilizers and pesticides from yards and farms. In Gujarat almost 4,119 million litres per day (MLD) of sewage is generated but against it we have a treatment capacity of 3,062 MLD.

On September 20, the National Green Tribunal (NGT) had directed Gujarat to take immediate note of the deteriorating condition of 20 rivers, of which five were classified under priority 1. Under this category, the rivers had some of the highest values of biological oxygen demand (BOD), which measures

ON THE TOI-IIT-GN ROUNDTABLE

Senior govt representatives	Industry representatives
▶ Mona Kandhar (IAS), rural development commissioner	▶ Shailesh Patwari, past president, GCCI
▶ D Thara, vice-chairman and MD, GIDC	Water conservation and public health policy experts
▶ Vijay Nehra (IAS), municipal commissioner, Ahmedabad	▶ Umesh Desai, chief technical officer, Aga Khan Rural Support Programme (India)
▶ K C Mistry, member secretary, GPCB	▶ Nisarg Panchal, member, Paryavaran Mitra
Other experts	
▶ Prof Manish Kumar (IIT-Gn)	▶ Manvita Baradi, director, Urban Management Center
▶ Prof Vikrant Jain (IIT-Gn)	▶ S N Dave, UNICEF, Water, Sanitation and Hygiene (WASH) specialist, Gandhinagar
▶ Prof C N Pandey (IIT-Gn)	▶ Prof Dileep Mavalankar, director, Indian Institute of Public Health (IIPH)
▶ Prof Amit Prashant (IIT-Gn)	▶ Dr Shyam Pingle, Senior occupational health specialist
▶ Dr Soumya Haldar, principal scientist, CSIR-CSMCRI, Bhavnagar	▶ Dr Veena Iyer, associate professor, IIPH
▶ Dr Anil Kumar M, CSIR-CSMCRI, Bhavnagar	
▶ Prof Absar Ahmad Kazmi (NGT committee member)	Farmers' representatives
International experts	▶ Salim Patel, Prakruti Suraksha Mandal, Ankleshwar
▶ Prof Prosun Bhattacharya (KTH, Sweden)	▶ Jatin Sheth, convener, Nagrik Sashaktikaran Manch
▶ Dr Julian Ijumulana (KTH, Sweden)	

the amount of decaying organic matter in our rivers. Bhadar river in Rajkot, between Jetpur and Saran villages, with the BOD level of 426 mg/L, is the third most polluted stretch in the country. The Khari river between Lail and Kashipura villages with the BOD level of 235 mg/L is the sixth worst polluted stretch. The NGT order says that river water is considered to be fit for bathing when it meets the criterion of bearing a BOD value of less than 3 milligram per litre (mg/L).

Symposium on environment

The 20th National Symposium on Environment started at IIT-Gandhinagar campus on December 13. SA Bharadwaj, chairman of Atomic Energy Regulation Board, was the chief guest at the inaugural ceremony. "What science and technology has done to the environment, science and technology has to undo," he mentioned in his inaugural address. The symposium focuses on theme of 'Challenges in Energy Resource Management and Climate Change'. TNN



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