

International conference on “Incessant Ganga” held on 25-26 February 2017 at Hotel Maurya, Patna

Outcome of The Conference

(PATNA DECLARATION on “Incessant Ganga” 26, February 2017)

Scientists, researchers, academicians, policy makers, social activists, NGOs and representatives of populations affecting and affected by the Ganga River System met at the international conference “Incessant Ganga” hosted by the Water Resources Department of the Government of Bihar. The discussions proceeded relevant to the river Ganga, her tributaries, the vast range and variation of catchment regions, the mighty Himalayas, the increasingly erratic monsoons and the disturbed global and continental climatic conditions. The concern for evolving a conclusive approach to robustly and effectively address the issues being discussed was of highest priority.

The primary concerns presented and shared were:

- The issue of bringing back the incessant flow of the Ganga in all her sections, including her tributaries, because in absence of an incessant flow the maintaining of the life-sustaining ecological purity of the river water is not possible.
- The issue of clarity in accepting the inter-national and inter-state presence of the Ganga River System without which a comprehensively inclusive approach to bring back our collective mutually enriching relationship of heart and life with the Ganga will be impossible.
- The issue of evolving from top-to-down government intervention approaches & bottom-to-top public-pressure approaches into a mission-mode approach that is inclusively conceived and comprehensively evolved with equitable participation of
 - Governments
 - stakeholders competing to establish increasing title to the Ganga resources
 - NGOs and Experts (individuals and institutions) who have evolving visions of Ganga River in a range of professional, scientific and technological disciplines as diagnostic models as well as ongoing field-project experiences
 - the people – given that their relationship with the Ganga is heard and respected and given that there are accelerated efforts to bring the total Ganga Rejuvenation Mission motivation and significance to their daily living
- The issue of initiating the Ganga River Rejuvenation Mission as an overall declaration and a resounding call to inclusive cohesiveness of approach in a proposed first phase of working together within an evolving mission. Within this, the selection of generic initiatives which can securely link all component studies and component projects AND the lives of the river basin population and the bio-diversity therein within a long term Vision as an Integrative-Framework for the Ganga River Rejuvenation Mission was recognized as a priority.

In the light of the above a lead was taken by the people of Bihar represented by the Government of Bihar in bringing all these experts together. While respecting all issues related to the River the issue

of understanding silt and sediment flows in every section of the Ganga River has been emphasized and permanently highlighted for study and inclusion within the Ganga River Rejuvenation Mission policy and implementation.

The Following points emerged as action points which were resolved in PATNA DECLARATION on “Incessant Ganga” 26, February 2017

1. That a Ganga River and Basin Rejuvenation Council should be formed as an interim steering committee consisting of various renowned experts from different disciplines, including NGO's.
2. That the first project declared and undertaken under Ganga River Rejuvenation Mission is of undertaking the most all-inclusive and comprehensive STUDY of the Ganga River, Ganga Tributaries, Ganga River System in the light of issues of a wide range – from resolving people's issues at the grassroots to aligning the population and the government to the globally evolving response to Climate Change.
3. That a time-bound comprehensive study be undertaken concerning silting due to Farakka Barrage and all issues of socioeconomic loss resulting from the barrage and how to resolve these issues conclusively.
4. Farakka Barrage must be reviewed to assess the benefits, costs & future scenario in view of U/S siltation & D/S erosion. The review must consider (a) Alternatives like converting gates to undersluices; (b) Decommissioning Farakka and making a new barrage with undersluices to revive Bhagirathi; and (c) Hydrological revival of Bhagirathi by increasing flow western tributaries like the Damodar.
5. That a compiling of all initiatives of professional, scientific and technological diagnosis of the health of the Ganga River System shall be done.
6. Sewage Treatment Plants should be paid on basis of amount of water treated & treated water should be used for agriculture and not discharged in the river.
7. Dredging for National Waterways – 1 is increasing erosion in Bihar. The project should be put on hold until a scientific study of impact of dredging on erosion is done.
8. That while we all continue our regional engagement in issues which are components of the Ganga River Rejuvenation Mission taking shape, we all pledge to align ourselves and our teams and works to empower the Ganga River Rejuvenation Mission to become a vishwaguru example of inclusively and comprehensively approaching and mentoring the implementing of a River Basin Civilizational Reform.
9. Bihar and Bengal should get their fair share of original water of the Ganga basin originating from Gomukh and Badrinath. It should be a joint responsibility of the Ganga Basin States to provide water to the Ganga to meet India's obligation to Bangladesh.
10. Ganga cannot be revived without reducing demand for water for irrigation. Production of water intensive crops for exports must stop. Organic farming in the entire Ganga Basin must be adopted.
11. All dams & barrages u/s Bihar should release e-flows of 50% until site specific scientific assessment of e-flows is done. This applies to: (a) All hydropower projects like Tehri & Vishnu Prayag in Uttarakhand; (b) Irrigation barrages like Hathinikund, Bhimgoda & Narore in Haryana, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh, and (c) For dams on Sone, Kosi, Chambal and Damodar Rivers.

12. Immediate Measures:-

- **Open up gates and under sluices of FB during monsoon.**
- **This needs to start immediately in next monsoon.**
- **GoB needs to demand that preparations should start for this on war footing immediately. Impact assessment of this action also needs to be launched immediately.**
- **GoB needs to have a role in the operation of FB on day to day basis immediately.**
- **People across Bihar need to be mobilised for this immediately.**

This being the centenary year of Champaran Satyagrah, this possibly a very good time to launch “FARAKKA KHOL DO, Bihar ko badh vibhisika se bachao” movement in which people across needs to be mobilized.

“Human Civilization was born on the banks of the river. Human Civilization will be Sustained and will Flourish when we learn to situate the Rivers in our hearts and daily actions in order to align our Civilizations with the Overall Health of the RELATIONSHIP between Humankind and River Systems and the RELATIONSHIP between Humankind and all our fellow species dependent on the River Systems”