KANPUR SEWAGE SYSTEM PROJECT

Ganga bears the brunt of tardy progress

Sewage Treatment Plants at Jajmau in Kanpur

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Dirty flows the river Ganga with the state government still grappling to put this industrial town's sewage system in order. The result — domestic as well as industrial waste is being directly discharged in the river without treatment.

"The problem is much more than what meets the eyes. Construction of the government's proposed sewage treatment plants (STPs) is running behind schedule. Moreover, the capacities of these STPs are too inadequate to treat the sewage generated by this vast city having a population close to 30 lakh," says Suresh Chandra, convener of Environment Group's Kanpur chapter.

The government officials agree that the pollution level of the Ganga here is high. But they pass the blame on tanneries and rains. "The tanneries are directly releasing their effluents to the Common Effluent Treatment Plant (CETP) without primary treatment. This is violation of the agreement reached with the tannery management," says Uttar Pradesh Jal Nigam's project manager Sushil Kumar Verma. The CETP has a capacity to treat 36 MLD of sewage. Of this, 30 MLD is domestic waste and the rest industrial waste. Officials vouch that instead of the allotted 6 MLD, the tanneries generally pump up 9-10 MLD discharge, choking the CETP. Jal Nigam is the nodal agency for implementation of the sewage project under the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission (JNNURM). The project aims at checking the pollution of Ganga by open drains that directly discharge sewage into the river.

According to Verma, a complaint has been lodged with the state government and the Pollution Control Board about the violation of terms of agreement by the tanneries. "We are still waiting for the government's reaction (to the complaint)," he says.

Sewer system was introduced in Kanpur for the first time in 1904 in the Civil Lines area. Later, it was extended to the adjoining areas in 1948. With the implementation of the Ganga Action Plan in 1985, interception and diversion works were executed. The same year, STPs of 130 MLD and 5 MLD were set up. Simultaneously, a CETP of 36 MLD was set up to treat domestic and industrial wastes together. With the introduction of the JNNURM project, Kanpur was divided into four districts for treatment of the entire sewage and effluent generated by this mega city. About Rs 500 crore have been earmarked for the sewage system alone. But the project is progressing at a snail's pace. In the core city area, where 69 km-long sewer line is to be laid, only 38 km has been laid so far.

Besides, work is still in progress to construct a 15 MLD and a 43 MLD STP. The work is proposed to be completed by March 31, 2011.

"It is not possible to complete the work in the stipulated period. Due to rain, work for laying sewer pipes has been stopped on the orders of the District Magistrate. We have lost almost three months' precious time," Verma points out.

Jal Nigam is yet to float the tender for the 210 MLD STP when this project is proposed to be completed by December 31, 2011. The JNNURM projects have been drawn keeping the city's needs in 2025 in mind when its population is expected to reach 56 lakh. But against the total demand for treatment of 943 MLD sewage, the city would have a capacity to treat only 653 MLD.

"We are aware of the problem. Therefore, the state government has proposed 126 MLD, 15 MLD and 111 MLD STPs and has sought help from the World Bank. If these STPs are set up, Kanpur's sewage problem will be solved," says Verma.

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