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Gujarat has highest number of 'highly polluted' river stretches in India

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AHMEDABAD: The Union ministry of environment, forests and climate change (MoEFCC) has revealed that Gujarat has the highest number of highly polluted river stretches (PRS) in India. Six stretches in Gujarat were classified under Priority-I i.e. critically polluted for four years from 2018 to 2022. This is the highest for a single state in India, along with Uttar Pradesh. The data has been compiled by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB).

Sabarmati, Amlakhadi, Bhadar and Khari have remained under Priority-I for the past four years. Three of these rivers - Sabarmati (292mg/L); Bhadar (258.6 mg/L) and Khari (195 mg/L) - have among the highest biological oxygen demand (BOD) levels against permissible level of 3mg/L.

Besides heavy industrialization, poor wastewater treatment is cited as one of the key reasons for rising river pollution.

The revelation comes at a time when a stinging water scarcity has already left many villages and towns of Gujarat parched way before the onset of summer. Far from being lifelines for people in nearby areas for drinking or utilities, these rivers are instead heavily polluted.

The specific stretch of Sabarmati includes the one between Raysan in Gandhinagar and Vautha in Dholka. Out of 46 polluted river stretches identified in Priority-I in 18 States/ UTs, the highest number of PRS are identified in Gujarat and Uttar Pradesh (six each) followed by Himachal Pradesh, Maharashtra and Tamil Nadu (four each); Karnataka and Punjab (three each); Haryana, Madhya Pradesh, Meghalaya, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand (two each) and one each in Telangana, Andhra Pradesh, Assam, Delhi, West Bengal and Odisha.

"The pollution in rivers and other water bodies is increasing in urban centres mainly due to rapid increase in population and resultant wastewater generation. The development of wastewater treatment facilities is not commensurate with the increasing wastewater generation in urban centres, and lean flow in rivers for a large part of the year after a short span of monsoon," states the response by the ministry.

Interestingly, even the National Green Tribunal (NGT) issued an order earlier this week and directed the government of Gujarat to credit Rs 2,100 crore to separate a ring-fenced account within a month for solid waste management. The NGT has directed immediate efforts be made to ensure connectivity with the sewage treatment plants (STPs) having treatment capacity of 4,754 MLD.