

Neeri to help state government in project to clean up Bhimariver

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Nagpur: On the lines of Prime Minister's ambitious NamamiGange project, the state government has planned similar rejuvenation for the holyBhimaRiver under project Namami Chandrabhaga. City-based National Environmental Engineering and Research Institute (Neeri), which was also involved in the Ganga rejuvenation project, will provide technical guidance to the state.

The river, which originates near Bhimashankar temple in Pune district, takes the name 'Chandrabhaga' when it reaches Pandharpur as it looks like a crescent moon. It then flows South-East, eventually joining Krishna near Deosugur on Karnataka-Telangana border. Namami Chandrabhaga is the brainchild of state forest and finance minister SudhirMungantiwar who allocated Rs20 crore to the project in this year's state budget. Mungantiwar then wrote to Union minister of science and technology and earth sciences Dr Harsh Vardhan on May 24 seeking support for the project.

On June 1, a meeting with experts from all over India was also held at Pandharpur in Solapur district, to discuss details of the project. On July 16, the Centre replied stating the project was forwarded to director general, Council for Scientific and Industrial Research (CSIR), for necessary action. Following this, NEERI has been appointed 'nodal technical expert agency' to provide technical guidance on the project.

Mungantiwar said the government aimed to make Holy River pollution-free by 2022. "A tribunal has been set up with state chief minister [DevendraFadnavis](#) as chairman and I as the vice-chairman. We aim to cleanse the holy river and also spread public awareness about the same," the minister told TOI.

Neeri has prepared a technical and financial proposal for the project which would be shortly submitted to the state government. "The main focus will be on improving the ambient water quality of the river. A technical study will be done on sewerage and sanitation, industrial pollution and solid and liquid waste management," informed Neeri officials.

As natural drains carrying sewage are one of the main polluting source of the river and its tributaries, sewage treatment plants (STPs) will also be set-up on the river banks to ensure no untreated effluents are discharged into it, the officials added. Government sources informed the river was highly polluted at Pandharpur, the abode of 'Lord Vitthal', visited by lakhs of devotees every year.

"Pilgrims throw plastic and other waste in the river. Thus a mass awareness campaign will also be initiated to make people aware of the religious, social and economic importance of the river," sources said. They added that many 'ghats' (designated bathing areas) at different places along the river will be renovated and developed as tourist spots for pilgrims.