

GUJARAT'S DEEP-SEA PIPELINE SCHEME REMAINS NON-STARTER

Relevant for: Indian Economy | Topic: Infrastructure: Energy incl. Renewable & Non-renewable

The Sabarmati river has become critically polluted from unabated discharge of industrial effluents. File photo

Billed as an innovative solution to the perennial problem of river pollution in Gujarat, the State government's ambitious Rs. 2,300-crore sub-sea effluent disposal pipeline project remains a non-starter even as the pollution in the rivers has gone beyond critical level due to increasing industrialisation.

The State government, after floating the tender in 2020, has not moved on the project and is now apparently considering re-working it.

In 2020, the government, after the delay of several years, came out with a mega plan to lay the pipeline network to carry industrial effluents directly into the deep sea to save the Sabarmati, Mahisagar, Vishwamitra and Bhadar, which have become critically polluted due to unabated discharge of industrial effluents into them.

The industries had welcomed the government's initiative to build a 300-km effluent discharge infrastructure on a public private partnership (PPP) basis. Of the cost of Rs. 2,275 crore, the government contribution was around Rs. 1,660 crore while industries had committed Rs. 615 crore as their share.

In Ahmedabad, the Sabarmati river remains perennially polluted because more than 1,500 industrial units, mostly textiles and dyes, chemicals and pharmaceuticals, located in Ahmedabad city and outskirts dump their effluents, often untreated, directly into the river killing its ecosystem.

Similarly, industries in Vadodara dump their effluents into the Mahisagar and Vishwamitra and the textiles hub Jetpur in Rajkot district into Bhadar, Saurashtra region's main river.

Under the project, treated effluent from 11 common effluent treatment plants (CETP) of Ahmedabad and one each from Kheda, Vadodara and Jetpur will be discharged into sea through pipelines that would be laid several kilometres in sub-sea.

Accordingly, three pipeline routes were finalised: from Ahmedabad to the Gulf of Cambay of 350 million litre a day (MLD) capacity at Rs. 1,480 crore, Jetpur to Porbandar of 80 MLD capacity at Rs. 665 crore and Vadodara to the Gulf of Cambay of 60 MLD capacity at Rs. 130 crore.

The government had said it would be beneficial for nearly 4,500 industrial units in Ahmedabad, Vadodara, Kheda and Rajkot.

However, the State government has recently informed the High Court, which is hearing a *suo motu* public interest litigation (PIL) plea about pollution in the Sabarmati river, that it is "reworking the deep-sea pipeline project after the High Court bench sought to know the status of the project".

Stumbling blocks

According to sources, the project has run into several stumbling blocks. The local fishermen have objected to the Jetpur-Porbandar pipeline on the ground that the effluents would pollute the sea and kill fishes and marine ecology that would affect their livelihood.

“We have strongly objected to any such move to pollute the sea and kill our livelihood,” said Jivan Jungi, a fisherman and activist in Porbandar.

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