Degradation of Yamuna Floodplains

Why in news?

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The National Green Tribunal (NGT) held the Art of Living Foundation responsible for degradation to the Yamuna floodplains.

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What is the reason behind NGT's decision?

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- World Culture Festival was organised by the the Art of Living Foundation in the Yamuna Floodplains in March 2016.
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- NGT earlier imposed Rs.5 crore as interim environment compensation on the Art of Living Foundation for the event's impact on the environment.
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- An expert committee, in its report, said that due to the event, the floodplains lost "almost all its natural vegetation" like trees, shrubs, tall grasses, aquatic vegetation.
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- It includes loss of water hyacinth that provides habitat to a large number of animals, insects and mud-dwelling organisms.
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- Now, NGT again held the organisation responsible for causing damage and environmental degradation.
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- It also added that if restoration costs exceeded earlier fine of Rs.5 crore, DDA could recover the balance from the Art of Living Foundation.
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- The decision was based on polluter pays principle.
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What is polluter pays principle?

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- It is an universally acknowledged in environmental jurisprudence.
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- According to this, those who pollute the environment must be made to pay not just for the costs of remedial action, but also for compensating victims of environmental damage.
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- The principle’s origin can be traced back to the Stockholm Declaration made at the UN Conference on the Human Environment in 1972.
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- The Declaration asked signatory countries to develop international laws “regarding liability and compensation for the victims of pollution and other environmental damage”.
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- After this World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), was established in 1983 emphasised polluter’s pay principle.
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- The 1987 WCED report greatly influenced the Rio Earth Summit of 1992, which, for the first time, explicitly enshrined the Polluter Pays Principle.
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Source: The Indian Express

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