Relook at ‘Namami Gange’

What is the issue?

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- Prime Minister Narendra Modi recently inaugurated India’s first multi-modal terminal on the Ganga river at Varanasi.
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- In this context, the government's approach in ‘Namami Gange’ (National Mission for Clean Ganga) raises serious environmental concerns.
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What are the concerns?

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- Lack of proper impact assessment due to development activities in the Ganga basin has resulted in deterioration of river Ganga.
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- Reports and statements from various official sources including the CAG and NGT suggest the deteriorating nature of Ganga river.
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- The government is, in fact, doing a lot that adversely affects the river.
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- These include the
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i. continued onslaught of hydropower projects
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ii. inter-linking of rivers, waterways, dredging, river front development
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iii. Char Dham Highway
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iv. even Swachh Bharat Abhiyan
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- Unsustainable sand mining, river encroachments and extraction of groundwater and other resources are continuing at increasing rates.
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What should be done?

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- Government has to come up with a credible road map, and set up pilots.
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- It should ensure that existing sewage and industrial effluent treatment plants work as per design, and also set up decentralised STPs (sewage treatment plant).
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- Eco-friendly treatment options should be opted.
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- The government should also take steps to reduce sugarcane cultivation and promote water-saving and yield-enhancing cultivation methods.
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- These efforts, if taken, could have helped improve the state of flow in the Ganga river.
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- Above all, the government must make river governance democratic, with clearly defined norms of transparency, participation and accountability.
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Source: BusinessLine

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