

SC froze the rivers' status of "legal persons"

Why in news?

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The Supreme Court froze the status of "legal persons" accorded to rivers Ganga and Yamuna by the Uttarakhand High Court in March 2017.

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What was the earlier judgment of HC?

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- The High Court had invoked its jurisdiction as the *parens patriae* of the rivers i.e parent of the nation.

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- High Court held that the rights of the two major rivers Ganga and Yamuna, including the glaciers Gangotri and Yamunotri, rivers, streams, rivulets, lakes, air, meadows, dales, jungles, forests wetlands, grasslands, springs and waterfalls, shall be equivalent to the rights of human beings.

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- It also stated that any harm caused to these bodies shall be treated as harm caused to the human beings.

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- This move was made to preserve and conserve these rivers.

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- The High Court had ordered the Director, Namami Gange project, for cleaning and rejuvenating the river.

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- It ordered the Chief Secretary and the Advocate General of Uttarakhand to act as "legal parents" of these rivers.

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- Earlier to this New Zealand government accorded legal status to Whanganui River.

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What is the current order of SC?

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- The state government immediately appealed against the judgement, saying that the ruling would make the state solely accountable for its upkeep and preservation when the rivers passed through several states.

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- It stated that the central government should then be charged with the task.

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- The current stay came on a petition over mining and stone crushing along the banks of the Ganga.

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Source: The Hindu

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