The Yamuna Story

Why in News?

Yamuna River, vital for Delhi's drinking water supply and ecological balance is under threat.

What are the Primary concerns related to the Yamuna and its significance in Delhi's water supply?

- **Drinking Water Supply -** It is a key source of drinking water for Delhi. Most of this water comes from Haryana, particularly from the Wazirabad Barrage.
- During lean seasons the availability of water is highly uncertain. This creates anxiety for Delhi's residents, as the drinking water supply depends on Haryana's releases.
- There is often a lack of transparency in water sharing agreements. Delhi regularly faces water shortages because of limited releases from Haryana.
- **Pollution of the Yamuna -** Primary pollutants include untreated sewage, industrial effluents, and solid waste.
- The discharge of untreated water into the river comes from both Delhi and upstream states.
- Certain drains, such as the Najafgarh and Shahdara drains, are major contributors to pollution in Delhi.
- **National Green Tribunal's (NGT) Role** - NGT had set up a Yamuna Monitoring Committee to check pollution levels.
- However, there has been limited success due to inadequate action by stakeholders.
- **Environmental Flow -** Means ensuring the river has enough water to sustain its ecosystem.
- This is critical for maintaining the ecological health of the river and the well-being of communities that depend on it.
- **National Institute of Hydrology** - emphasized the need for better regulation of upstream water releases and stricter pollution control measures.

What are Challenges in Restoring Yamuna River Health?

- The challenges in improving the condition of the Yamuna River are both specific to the region and general to water management and pollution control efforts.
- **Inter-State Disputes - Water Sharing Conflicts-** States like Haryana and Delhi often clash over the allocation and release of water, especially during lean seasons.
- **Political Blame Game**- Instead of addressing the root causes, political parties use the issue for electoral gains, delaying effective solutions.
- **Inadequate Pollution Control - Untreated Sewage**- A significant portion of untreated sewage from Delhi and upstream areas flows directly into the river.
- **Industrial Waste** - Factories and industries discharge toxic chemicals and heavy

metals into the Yamuna without proper treatment.

- **Solid Waste Dumping** - Plastic and other non-biodegradable waste accumulate in the river, choking its flow and harming aquatic life.
- **Lack of Environmental Flow** - The River often runs dry in several stretches due to excessive withdrawal of water for drinking and irrigation.
- Low water levels reduce the river's ability to dilute pollutants, exacerbating its pollution levels.
- **Urbanization and Encroachments -** Rapid urban growth along the Yamuna floodplains has led to encroachments, shrinking the river's natural course.
- River Flow gets obstructed and rise in pollution levels due Construction activities and illegal settlements.
- **Institutional Inefficiencies - Fragmented Governance** - Multiple agencies, such as municipal corporations, state governments, and central authorities, fail to coordinate effectively.
- **Weak Implementation** - Even when pollution control measures are mandated, they are poorly implemented due to lack of resources or political will.
- **Legal and Bureaucratic Hurdles - Prolonged court cases and disputes -** delay the implementation of effective measures.
- **Overlapping jurisdictions** - of agencies like the NGT, the Delhi Jal Board, and Haryana's water authorities create confusion.
- **Lack of Public Awareness -** Citizens contribute to pollution by dumping waste into the river or using it as a sewer.
- There is insufficient awareness about the ecological importance of the Yamuna and how individual actions affect its health.

What steps to be taken?

- **Building Consensus** -The issue requires collaboration between states and agencies, instead of political blame games.
- **Clear Accountability** - Transparent systems should be put in place to ensure fair water sharing and pollution management.
- **Strengthening Monitoring Systems** - Independent mechanisms, like those suggested by the Yamuna Monitoring Committee, need to be empowered to enforce strict pollution control measures.
- **Reducing Pollution** - Ensuring that untreated sewage and industrial effluents are processed before being discharged into the river.

What Lies ahead?

- The well-being of the Yamuna River is essential for Delhi's water security and ecological equilibrium.
- Addressing water distribution, pollution, and environmental flow demands collaborative solutions, as piecemeal strategies will fall short.
- Restoring the river's health necessitates commitment from governments, industries, and local communities.

Reference

[Indian Express | Yamuna river]