UPPCB Order on Kanpur Tanneries - Pollution in Ganga

Why in news?

The Uttar Pradesh Pollution Control Board (UPPCB) has ordered tanneries in Kanpur to shut down.

What is the order?

- In August 2019, UPPCB had permitted 126 tanneries to run at 50% capacity, provided they fulfilled the pollution norms.
- But, a report of the Ganga monitoring wing of the National Green Tribunal found the shortcomings in this.
- It said that effluents from tanneries, located in Kanpur's Jajmau industrial area, were being released into the river.
- As a result, tanneries have now been ordered to remain closed.

What are the concerns with the order?

- The estimated size of Kanpur's leather industry is Rs 12,000 crore, 50% of which is exported.
- It provides direct and indirect employment to about a million people.
- Notably, it is the state agency Jal Nigam, which is mandated to run the effluent treatment plant, not the tanneries.
- The Jal Nigam has not fulfilled its commitment and has asked for more time to set things right.
- But, it is the tanneries that are left to suffer.

What are the larger issues to be addressed?

- The issue highlights the several economic and governance challenges in India's attempt to deal with rapidly increasing urbanisation.
- However, the issue of externality is not new and, in the Kanpur tanneries case, pollution of the Ganga has wider consequences.
- Despite all the efforts made by the government, a large amount of sewage water is still being released into the Ganga in Uttar Pradesh.

What should be done?

- India needs to tackle negative externalities of industrial development and

rapid urbanisation at various levels.

- Imposing taxes may not always work in containing pollution and damage to the environment.
- India needs to build the state capacity to deal with such issues.
- Notably, tanneries in Kanpur have been closed because a state agency could not handle the project properly.
- Engagement of local institutions is necessary, as the one-size-fits-all solutions may not work in a country like India.
- Dealing with pollution thus requires empowering the institutions of local governance.
- Besides this, it increasingly requires better coordination among different agencies.
- Essentially, the state should be in a position to make the necessary investment.
- It should also monitor the adherence to environment regulations at the local level.
- Attracting private investment in waste management in a big way will help bring innovation and minimise costs over time.
- In all, the government will have to work at multiple levels to ensure that growth and development are sustainable.

Source: Business Standard

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