

## Policy of Zero Discharge into our River Mothers 25 June 2020

### Point No.3

The almost 10 decades old profoundly Rural-friendly and people-friendly East Kolkata Wetlands, a notified Ramsar Site, constitute an ideal example of a system of natural bio-treatment of urban waste water through 'Pond System and Plant Based Waste Management of Sewage Treatment', and recycling & utilising the treated waste water for fish-culture & agriculture. It provides about 13000 tones of fish per year from its about 300 waste water fed ponds, 150 tons of fresh vegetables per day from the small scale horticulture plots irrigated with the treated waste water, water for irrigating paddy cultivation & livelihoods for about 50 thousand common people, and also serves as a natural sponge for absorbing excess rainfall. Some 35000 tons of municipally waste and 680 million litres of raw sewage enter the wetland system everyday. Still, only 30% of the total waste water is used for aquaculture or irrigation, while the remaining 70% flows directly to the Bay of Bengal, which pollutes the estuaries region and subsequently reduces aquatic biodiversity and cause large scale death of fish seeds. The problem could be mitigated by taking necessary steps for 100% use of the total waste water for aquaculture and irrigation.

The East Kolkata Wetlands system could be developed as an ideal example of low-cost urban waste management & recycling for fish culture and organic farming and sanitation technology, especially for developing countries. To the best of my knowledge, it is the only such profoundly valuable existing sewage treatment project in the world which has survived for such a long-time. It was constructed by a British engineer about 10 decades ago. Originally it was spread over about 14 thousand hectares land. Unfortunately and deplorably its size has been greatly reduced now. Its greatest enemy is construction lobby. Members of our Ganga Satyagraha Retired NEERI Scientists Dr TK Ghosh, Dr AK Biswas and experts from IIT Kharagpur can give us knowledge about the present condition of the East Kolkata Wetlands.

We must know that wetlands are local biodiversity friendly and provide many valuable ecosystem services: the control flooding, recharge groundwater, provide livelihoods for local people, store and sequester carbon etc.

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Save Ganga Movement