

RIVER CITIES ALLIANCE

Updates about the alliance activities

“Rivers have always occupied a central place in India’s heritage and ethos, and have traditionally been sources of spiritual inspiration, cleansing and penance... We are striving to introduce a new thinking on river cities. The establishment of ‘River Cities Alliance’ (RCA) connecting river cities across the country is one such step in this direction” - Shri Narendra Modi, Hon’ble Prime Minister of India

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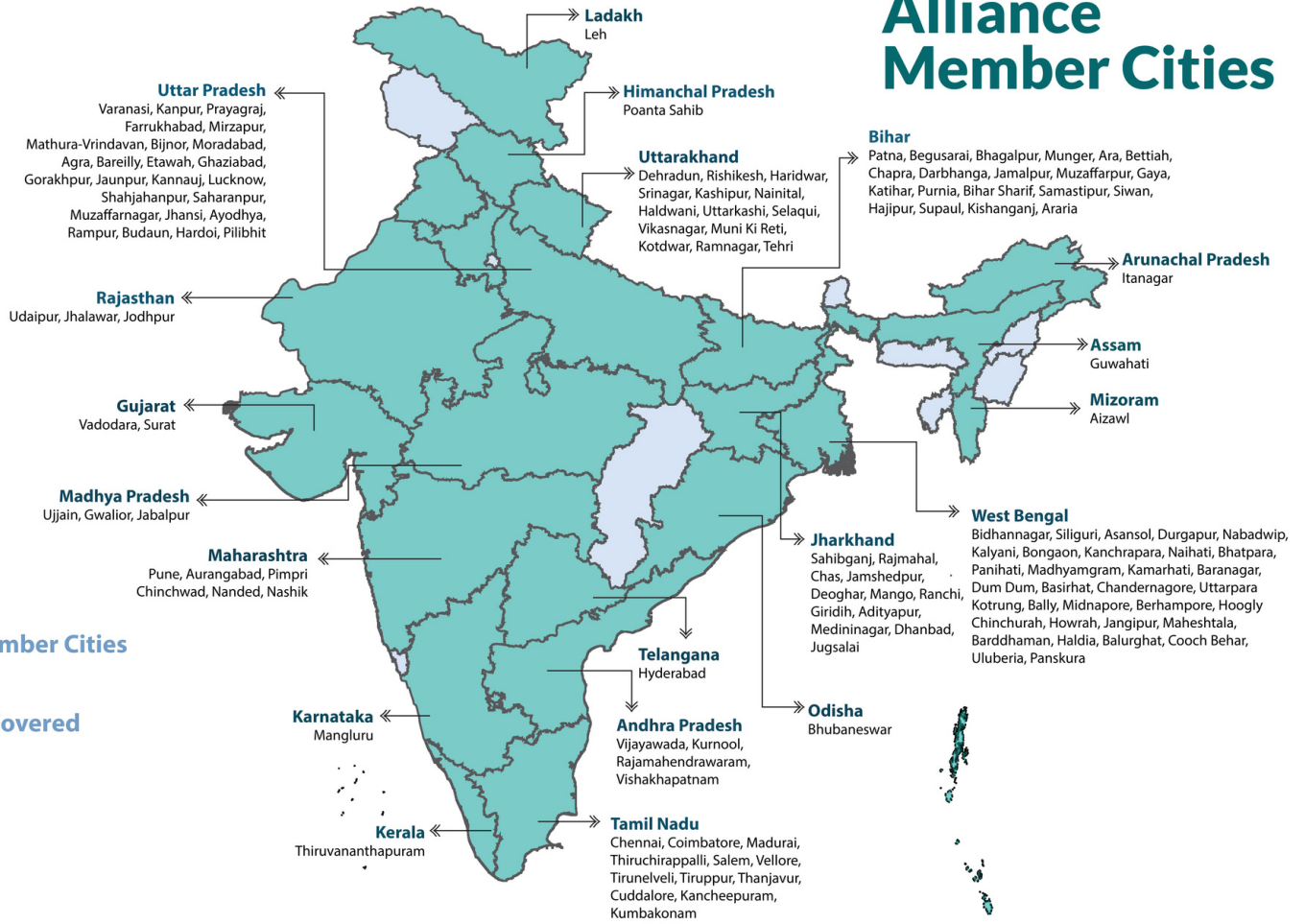
Student Thesis Competition Season 4 Luanch



RCA CITIES SNAPSHOT



Alliance Member Cities



RCA Member Cities
142
States Covered
20

States
20

SMART Cities
31 Smart City

AMRUT Cities
96 AMRUT 2.0
1st Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation

Ganga Basin Cities
86

River Basins
28

Rivers
78

LAUNCH OF GLOBAL RIVER CITIES ALLIANCE (GRCA)

At COP28, a significant milestone was reached as India, the Netherlands, Cambodia, Japan, Bhutan, Australia and Ghana collectively signed the declaration to pursue river-centric development in their respective cities. The Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) is modelled on the lines of the River Cities Alliance (RCA) established by the National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and Namami Gange. The alliance currently has 142 river cities in India and serves as a dedicated platform for members to have concerted discussions on aspects related to enhancing the state of urban rivers within their administrative boundaries. The GRCA is India's endeavour to scale up the concept of collaborative knowledge sharing to facilitate the transfer of good experiences from one part of the world to another.

The event saw the presence of three central level national ministers for water resources namely Hani Swilam (the Minister of Water Resources and Irrigation, Egypt), Mark Harbers (the Minister of Infrastructure and Water Management, the Netherlands) and a virtual address by Gajendra Singh Shekhawat (Union Minister for Jal Shakti, India). Sh. G. Asok Kumar (Director General, NMCG) convened the session. He quoted "The launch of the GRCA with the support of member countries is a testament to the fact that river management is a matter of global interest. India is happy to lead the efforts in this direction". The world renowned spiritual leader Sadhguru also graced the event with a special address to the audience. He expressed his passion for rivers while iterating their importance through examples and personal anecdotes such as the Kaveri River.

At COP28, a **Memorandum of Common Purpose (MoCP) was signed between the River Cities Alliance and the Mississippi River Cities & Towns Initiative**. This partnership is a crucial step towards the official launch of the Global River Cities Alliance (GRCA) on 10th December 2023. The GRCA aims to foster collaboration among cities worldwide, sharing knowledge, best practices, and technology to enhance urban river management. As we go global, the RCA is now positioned to bridge the gap between developed and developing nations, fostering a united commitment to sustainable urban river management





Glimpse of the launch event of GRCA at COP28

SUPPORT TO JHANSI MUNICIPAL CORPORATION IN WATER BODY DIAGNOSIS

One of the mandates of the River Cities Alliance is to offer technical advice to the member cities on different aspects of river management. Jhansi Municipal Corporation as a part of RCA has requested for technical advice in preparing a water body (lakes and ponds) management plan for the city. A team from NIUA had visited the city of Jhansi for the same on October 9th -10th 2023. They visited 4 water bodies and collected all the relevant data for the assessment. They diagnosed the present day condition of the water bodies in the city and have generated a score using the Urban Water Body Diagnostic Tool developed by NIUA-NMCG, and UNESCO. Based on this assessment and scoring, the team is in process of developing a roadmap for sustainable management of its water bodies



TRAINING PROGRAMME ON PRACTICAL REUSE OF TREATED USED WATER

National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and Namami Gange in collaboration with Council on Energy, Environment and Water (CEEW) as the knowledge partner organized a 3-day training programme for the RCA cities officials on 'Practical Reuse of Treated Used Water' from 19th – 21st October 2023. Aim of the programme was to equip city officials with the skills to develop a city-wide treated used water reuse plan that will help them reach their reuse goal.

The training programme saw a good number of participants from the RCA member cities. It included a mix of senior decision-makers such as the Deputy Municipal Commissioner, Chief Engineers, Jal Kal officials, executive engineers and other sector experts. In all, there were more than 45 participants from 17 RCA cities, and 9 institutes. These include the cities of Dehradun, Haridwar, Lucknow, Bareilly, Gorakhpur, Sahibganj, Pimpri-Chinchwad, Nashik, Jhansi, Vadodara, Mathura, Vrindavan, Coimbatore, Surat, Bhubaneswar, Bengaluru, Visakhapatnam and Chennai. The three-day training programme began with the setting the context for the training program. Shri G Asok Kumar, Director General, NMCG and Shri Hitesh Vaidya, Former Director, NIUA motivated the participants by referring to the RCA member cities as 'pioneers' of Urban River Management in India. They shed light on the valuable insights and expertise on the critical subject of TUW reuse and set the tone for an enriching programme ahead. The event also saw a special address by Smt. D. Thara, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Housing and Urban Affairs. She highlighted the need for focusing on the reuse and treatment infrastructure and motivated officials to take all necessary actions and make water 'right' under their jurisdiction.

On Day 1 of the programme, we delved into the crucial link between reusing treated used water and enhancing urban water security. We explored fit-for-purpose applications of treated used water, including understanding statutory discharge norms. We rounded off the day with practical case studies from city representatives from Chennai, Surat, Ahmedabad, Visakhapatnam and Bengaluru, who showcased their success stories.

Day 2 at the Training Programme was all about understanding the economic value of treated used water. We explored different business models that can make reusing treated water a lucrative endeavour for Urban Local Bodies (ULBs). Participants were introduced to a one-of-a-kind toolkit developed by National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) and Namami Gange that simplifies the process of creating city-wide plans for reuse of treated used water. They rolled up their sleeves for hands-on exercises, applying the framework to prepare treated used water reuse action plans for their own cities.

The final day of the Training Programme was dedicated for an insightful site visit to the Delhi Metro Rail Corporation Ltd. Sites. Participants observed first-hand how Delhi Metro is championing the reuse of treated used water.





Glimpse of the 3-day training program on Reuse of Treated Used Water

SESSION ON RIVER CITIES ALLIANCE IN MUNICIPALIKA

National Institute of Urban Affairs (NIUA) exhibit at Municipalika2023 saw heavy footfall on inaugural day. Urban policymakers, experts, state & city officials and students visited to know more about our innovative urban solutions. NIUA conducted an exciting session on River Cities Alliance (RCA). Nikita Madan, Sr. Environment Specialist introduced Urban River Management Plans and set the background to the session on "Case study presentations: Urban River Management". Moderated by Rahul Sachdeva, Sr. Program Specialist, the panel celebrated initiatives that transcend conventional approaches to urban development. This was reinforced by presentations from Vineet Pathak showcasing the revival of several historic water bodies and wetlands in Ayodhya, Shishir Shrivastava elaborating on Baijaa Taal rejuvenation through treated wastewater in Gwalior, and Anand Malligavad – Lakeman of India showcasing initiatives in different cities towards restoring and celebrating the water ecosystems.

Recognising the growing role of riverfront developments in nudging holistic river management, Keshav Verma presented on the Sabarmati Riverfront, Ahmedabad and Saumya Warriar on the Mangalore Riverfront development, emphasizing the ecological, economic and social potential that riverfronts hold.

With RCA set to become 'Global RCA', India will act as a 'Global Bridge' between developed and developing nations in the realm of urban river management. The interactive discussion on "River Management in the Urban Development Landscape" moderated by Ishleen Kaur, Sr. Environment Specialist, NIUA reflected on this. Panelists Vishwanath S. from Biome Environmental Solutions Pvt. India; Steven Morton, Director of H2orizons, Australia and Sahana Goswami from World Resources Institute, India dwelled on the multifaceted roles urban rivers play in the broader development landscape (with larger commitments towards Net Zero, Water Security and Climate Resilience) and innovative ways and mechanisms to foster long-term commitment to the sustainable management of urban rivers.

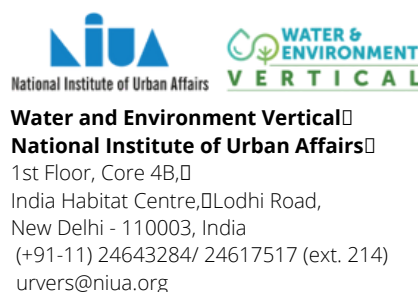
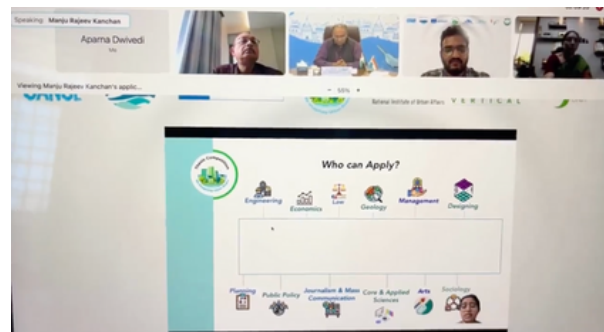


STUDENT THESIS COMPETITION - RE-IMAGINING URBAN RIVERS

The open call for Season 4 of the Student Thesis Competition was initiated in this quarter. Social media was primarily used to reach out to the students. An attempt to reach out to a wider pool of youth was made through a public address to the youth at Prajatantra 2023 Finale at Bal Bhawan on 30th November 2023 as well.

Similarly in order to encourage international participation for STC 4 while also harnessing the power of youth towards water sustainability, NIUA conducted an online training programme for students on 'Diagnosis of Urban Water Bodies.' The event saw a participation of over 300 students including students from China, East Africa, Thailand, Ireland, the Philippines, Sri Lanka and South Africa. All the participants also received hands-on training from a team of 20 trainers on how to use the 'Urban Water Body Diagnostic Tool,' – a tool co-developed by NIUA and UNESCO New Delhi to assess the health of urban water bodies in Indian cities. It was successfully conducted on 3rd November 2023 with seamless technical support from Jamia Millia Islamia University.

The top 20 finalists were announced straight from COP28, Dubai out of which one of the finalists is an international entrant from United Nations University, Bonn, Germany. The topics range from traditional systems rejuvenation, assessing socioeconomic impacts of dams, reviving cultural heritage of rivers, to the application of big data and artificial intelligence for biodiversity assessment, coral conservation, and several other exciting areas. The students will now commence work on their theses with expert advice from NIUA, NMCG, and their professors to arrive at unique solutions for some of the most pressing challenges faced by urban rivers over the forthcoming months.



National Mission for Clean Ganga
Ministry of Jal Shakti, Government of India
1st Floor, Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium,
India Gate, New Delhi - 110002, India
(+91-11) 23072900-9011
admn.nmcg@nic.in