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News: In Varanasi, turtles help clean the Ganga

- Under the Namami Gange Programme, large scale human efforts have been undertaken since 2014 to clean the Ganga and rejuvenate the nearly 2,600 km river network.
- In this, marine life, especially turtles, has been playing a key role as well.
- In 2014, the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) and the Ministry of Forest joined hands with the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), the agency implementing the Namami Gange Programme.
- Since 2017, they have been running the turtle breeding and rehabilitation centre in Uttar Pradesh's Varanasi.
- About a dozen of the 29 turtle species in India, both herbivorous and carnivorous, help by clearing rotten or half burnt human bodies as well as flowers dumped into the river here.

National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

- The National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG) implements Namami Gange Programme.
- Namami Gange is an umbrella program which integrates all activities undertaken to clean Ganga.
- Pillars of Namami Gange Programme are Sewerage Treatment Infrastructure, River-Surface Cleaning, Afforestation, Industrial Effluent Monitoring, River-Front Development, Bio-Diversity, Public Awareness and Ganga Gram.
- Recently, NMCG issued a directive which seeks to impose a fine of 50000/- to those people who immerse idols in Ganga River or its tributaries during festivals.
- World Bank recently approved a loan of 3000 crore (\$400 million) to develop and improve infrastructure projects to abate pollution in the river basin.
- Species like Ganges River Dolphin, Smooth-coated Otter, Small-Clawed Otter, Eurasian Otter, Black bellied Tern, Sarus Crane, Indian Skimmer, River Tern, River Lapwing, Marsh Crocodile, Salt-water Crocodile, Gharial, Red-crowned Roofed Turtle, River Terrapin, Narrow-headed softshell turtle, Three-striped roofed turtle, Ganges soft-shell turtle, Peacock soft-shell, Black Spotted Turtle, Indian Tent Turtle, Cascade Frog, Marbled Frog, Jerdon's Bullfrog, Indian

Bullfrog, Annandale's Paa Frog, Himalaya Paa Frog, Dudhwa Reed Frog, Tytler's Pond Frog, Nepal Paa Frog, Wallago, Golden Mahseer, Spotted barb, Bronze featherback and Bata are protected under the category Priority Species of Ganga as part of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG).

- Recently, **Chacha Chaudhary** was declared as the mascot of the **Namami Gange Programme**.
- Chacha Chaudhary is an **Indian comic book character**, created by cartoonist Pran Kumar Sharma.
- The comic comes in ten Indian languages including Hindi and English and has sold over ten million copies.
- It has also been made into a television series with Raghubir Yadav playing the role of Chacha Chaudhary.