

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:1002

ANSWERED ON:28.11.2011

POLLUTION IN RIVERS

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Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether any action plan has been drawn up for cleaning the polluted stretches of National Rivers;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has identified the reasons responsible for polluting National Rivers;
- (d) if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether despite spending huge amount of money under Ganga Action Plan I & II there has not been any considerable improvement in the water quality of the river Ganga;
- (f) if so, the details thereof;
- (g) whether flowing of untreated sewage and sewerage, open drains and industrial effluents into the rivers are still continuing on a large-scale and sewage treatment plants are not working to their optimum capacity; and
- (h) if so, the details of measures taken to ensure that the flow of the river Ganga is maintained on the level of flow that was 10 or 20 years ago?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a) to (h) Pollution load on rivers has increased over the years due to rapid urbanization and industrialization. Abstraction of water for irrigation, drinking, industrial use, power etc. compounds the challenge. Discharge of untreated wastewater from towns along the rivers constitutes the major source of pollution load in rivers.

According to a recent report of the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB), against an estimated sewage generation of about 38254 million litres per day (mld) from the Class I cities & Class II towns of the country, the available treatment capacity is for 11787 mld. Additional sewage treatment capacity for 26467 mld needs to be created to bridge the gap.

Conservation of rivers is a collective effort of Central and State Governments and the Central Government is supplementing the efforts of the State Governments in river conservation through the Central Plans. Creation of infrastructure for sewage management and disposal is also being undertaken through other Central schemes, such as Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission and Urban Infrastructure Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns, as well as under state schemes.

The river conservation programme was initiated with the Ganga Action Plan (GAP) in the year 1985. The Plan was expanded to include other major rivers under National River Conservation Plan (NRCP) which presently covers 39 rivers in 190 towns spread over 20 states. Pollution abatement schemes undertaken include interception, diversion and treatment of sewage; low cost sanitation works on river banks; electric/improved wood crematoria etc. An expenditure of Rs.4434.49 crore has been incurred and Sewage treatment capacity of 4418 million litres per day (mld) has been created so far under the Plan.

An expenditure of Rs.1045 crore has been incurred towards implementation of various pollution abatement works in river Ganga and sewage treatment capacity of 1091 million litres per day has been created. With the pollution abatement works completed so far, despite significant increase in urbanization, industrialization and growth in population in cities along the banks of river Ganga, the water quality in terms of BOD (Bio-chemical Oxygen Demand) values is reported to have improved as compared to the pre-GAP water quality on major monitoring locations. However, the levels of bacterial contamination in terms of fecal coliform are reported to be exceeding the maximum permissible limit at a number of locations.

Operation and Maintenance (O&M) of assets like sewage treatment plants created under the Plans is the responsibility of the State Governments/ Urban Local Bodies concerned. The Government has taken remedial measures to improve implementation and performance which include requirement of submission of a detailed O&M Plan by the State Governments before sanction of projects, signing of Tripartite Memorandum of Agreements (MoAs) with the State Governments/Urban Local Bodies etc.

The Central Government has set up the 'National Ganga River Basin Authority' (NGRBA) on 20.2.2009 as an empowered planning, financing, monitoring and coordinating authority to ensure effective abatement of pollution and conservation of the river Ganga by adopting a holistic approach with the river basin as the unit of planning. A consortium of Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) have been entrusted with the work of preparation of a comprehensive Ganga River Basin Management Plan in July, 2010. The Plan covers, interalia; assessment of environmental flows in river Ganga.