

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

UNSTARRED QUESTION NO:3320

ANSWERED ON:18.03.2013

POLLUTION IN GANGOTRI YAMUNOTRI AND BADRINATH DHAMS

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

(a) whether in addition to the environmental changes and pollution, tourists activities have also caused ecological degradation to the famous Gangotri, Yamunotri and Badrinath dhams;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the steps taken by the Government to save the ecology of the region?

Answer

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

(a)&(b) Ministry is not aware of any such scientific reports relating to ecological degradation in the famous Gangotri, Yamunotri and Badrinath dhams due to environmental change and pollution. Only the water quality of Yamuna and Bhagirathi River at Yamunotri and Gangotri respectively had been monitored by Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) from the year 2009 to 2011. The water quality at both the studied locations met the required criteria of Class 'B' i.e. water fit for organized outdoor bathing except in the year 2009 when the presence of total coliforms in the water exceeded the prescribed limit.

This could be due to rains leading to surface runoff or due to high number of pilgrims at the studied locations. The changes are also reported in the form of glacier retreat in the region and growing pilgrimage without adequate infrastructure support for waste disposal is imposing pressure on these areas. The Government is aware of the incidence of melting of Himalayan glaciers. Discussion paper prepared by Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF), Government of India, on Himalayan Glaciers provides the review of information regarding the glacier retreat in the region, including Gangotri Glacier. Further, G.B. Pant Institute of Himalayan Environment & Development (GBPIHED) has undertaken studies on Gangotri glacier retreat, silt load in the glacial melt and water quality of river Bhagirathi originating from Gangotri glacier. A pilot study conducted by GBPIHED for MoEF entitled "Environmental and social impacts of hydropower projects in river Ganga basin (between Dharasu and Gangotri) in Uttarakhand" has indicated that the water quality parameters are within the permissible limit of the Bureau of Indian Standards.

(c) Considering the ecological sensitivity of the region, several initiatives are taken to protect the ecology of Indian Himalayan Region by the Govt. of India and Himalayan states through the Mission on Sustaining Himalayan Ecosystem under National Action Plan on Climate Change and Himalayan Sustainable Development Forum (HSDF) under the Shimla Declaration adopted during the Himalayan Chief Ministers' Conclave held at Shimla on Oct 29-30, 2009. Uttarakhand Forest Department undertakes Plantation activities in forest areas around the said Dhams.