

# 'Need strict norms to control river pollution'

**ACADEMIC MEET** Govt says water quality of river Yamuna has not improved owing to lack of fresh water; state of Ganga is no better

**HT Correspondent**

■htreporters@hindustantimes.com

**NEW DELHI:** Huge spending to control pollution in the Ganga and Yamuna with no tangible results is proving to be a huge worry, triggering a debate on the need for stringent norms at an academic meet on Tuesday.

"The water quality of the Yamuna has not shown the desired improvement owing to a large gap between the demand and sewage treatment capacity and the lack of fresh water in the river," the government said in the Rajya Sabha on Tuesday.

"(For Ganga) Levels of bacterial contamination in terms of fecal coliform are reported to be exceeding the maximum permissible limit at a number of locations. Also the water quality in terms of BOD (bio-chemical oxygen demand) values is reported to have improved compared to the pre-Ganga Action Plan water quality at major monitoring locations," Jayanti Natarajan, the environment minister, said.

The cost of the ongoing Yamuna Action Plan III is ₹1,656 crore in Delhi and ₹217.87 crore in Haryana. Her ministry had earlier claimed that ₹1,436 crore



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had been spent on the Ganga Action Plan phase I and II and the National Ganga River Basin Authority till 2012.

At the 2nd Anil Agarwal dialogue titled 'Excreta Does Matter' organised by the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), a presentation by RM Bhardwaj from Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) confirmed, "Fecal coliform levels in Ganga have risen by alarming levels since 2007 till 2011."

The biological oxygen demand saw a spike in the range of more than 10 mg/litre in the area near the Uttar Pradesh-Bihar border while the dis-

solved oxygen level has shown a decreasing trend along the downstream locations on the Ganga banks.

Asked why the CPCB has not laid more stringent norms, Bhardwaj said it is a long drawn process with continuous development. However, CSE's Sunita Narain said, "We don't need stringent norms as it requires more technology. The need is to first ensure more flow in the rivers."

Manu Bhatnagar, environmentalist, countered: "Let them first implement the existing norms and then gradually keep raising the bar."