

# Pollution down in Yamuna, but still 1,220 times higher than acceptable standards

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**New Delhi:** The Yamuna's water quality saw a slight improvement in April compared with March, according to a report by Delhi Pollution Control Committee. However, the pollution level through faecal coliform or untreated sewage was still 1,220 times higher than the desired standard.

The analysis showed components like dissolved oxygen (DO), biochemical oxygen demand (BOD) and faecal coliform were within permissible limits when the river entered the city. But by the time it approached the exit point, a high level of effluents left it more polluted.

Faecal coliform is found in excreta that contaminates water through untreated sewage. The higher its level, the greater is the presence of disease-causing pathogens in the wa-

ter. DO indicates the presence of life in the water while BOD is the minimum oxygen required by the river to break and manage organic matter.

According to the report, faecal coliform levels in the river were 1,200 MPN (most probable number)/100ml at entry. At the Asgarpur exit, after the confluence of Shahdara and Tughlaqabad drains, the levels stood at 6,10,000 MPN/100ml — 244 times higher than the maximum permissible limit of 2,500 MPN/100ml and 1,220 times higher than the desired limit of 500 MPN/100ml. The exit levels were worse in the previous two months — they stood at 8,40,000 MPN/100 ml in March and 7,90,000 MPN/100 ml in February.

In April, the BOD levels, which should not exceed 3 mg/l, worsened slightly com-

## A DROP IN THE OCEAN

- ▶ The total stretch of the river in Delhi is about 48 km from Palla to Okhla barrage
- ▶ 22km-long urban stretch from Wazirabad barrage to Okhla barrage is most polluted
- ▶ BOD is the minimum oxygen required to treat or break the biological/organic pollutants in the water
- ▶ High BOD also depicts that untreated sewage is present



Station	DO (min 5 mg/l)	BOD (max 3 mg/l)	Fecal coliform Max 2,500 Desired 500 MPN/100ml
Palla (in)	8.1	2.5	1,200
Wazirabad	5.0	9	26,000
ISBT bridge	Nil	50	2,60,000
Azgarpur (out)	Nil	75	6,10,000

pared to March, ranging between 2.5 mg/l and 75 mg/l against 2-70 mg/l the previous month.

While the BOD levels were normal at Palla, where the river enters Delhi, they increased expo-

nentially between Wazirabad and ISBT bridge and worsened thereafter. Similarly, the DO level was within the safe limit (8ml/l) at entry point, but deteriorated (close to nil) by the time the river left the city.

A DPCC analysis in March showed most sewage treatment plants didn't meet prescribed standards. Out of 26 STPs inspected, only eight catering to 120 MGD (million gallons per day) of sewage met the standards on COD, BOD and total suspended solids.

"The quality of the river fluctuates with the flow of water, but the pollution sources are consistent. At Signature Bridge, the Yamuna enters the city but the flow is blocked and diverted, after which sewage from Najafgarh and 28 other drains seeps into it, thereby polluting it," said a Delhi Jal Board official.