

Delhi's Clean Yamuna Issue

Executive Summary

1. The Yamuna River, responsible for more than 70% of Delhi's water supply, is heavily polluted due to industrial effluents, untreated sewage wastes, and urban runoff.
2. The river's condition has provoked various political debates, public outrage, and health issues.
3. The AAP government has claimed to focus on cleaning the river, but their efforts have largely been insufficient.
4. Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has advocated for coordinated regional efforts to address the issue, calling for a multi-state approach involving Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, and Delhi. However, political dynamics have always hindered collaborative efforts.

I. Background

- A. The Yamuna River originates from the Himalayas and enters Delhi at Wazirabad. It flows through a 22 km stretch in Delhi, carrying untreated waste, before exiting at Okhla.
- B. The river also passes through Haryana and Uttar Pradesh, making it an inter-state issue.
- C. The AAP government, after coming to power in 2015, promised to clean the Yamuna within five years. However, the lack of implementation has worsened the situation.
- D. During BJP's tenure at the center, they have called for more regional cooperation between Delhi, Haryana, and Uttar Pradesh to combat the crisis.
- E. Political differences between parties have created barriers to concrete solutions.
- F. Recently the froth formation on the river's surface has further highlighted the issue.
- G. Delhi's drinking water supply has been severely impacted, with contamination levels reaching hazardous levels.
- H. This has adversely affected the lives of millions of people.
- I. The AAP government has focused on sectors like education and transport but has largely ignored sewage management in Delhi.
- J. The city's sewage treatment plants (STPs) still use outdated technologies that do not meet the latest environmental standards.
- K. These older systems are less efficient in treating sewage waste to the required environmental levels.

II. Political Importance

Connection with Purvanchali Voters & Chhath Puja

- a) Purvanchalis (migrants from Eastern UP & Bihar) form a significant voter base in Delhi.
- b) Chhath Puja is their major festival, which involves offering prayers at riverbanks, particularly the Yamuna.
- c) The excess froth on the Yamuna River directly affects their religious observance, making it a sensitive issue for elections.

- d) BJP catered to Purvanchali religious beliefs by creating artificial ponds and significantly attracting votes and political support.

III. Cleaning Yamuna- The Delhi Government's responsibility

- A. Mr Arvind Kejriwal has questioned if the Yamuna is part of the Ganga Basin, then the Centre should clean the river under the Namami Gange initiative.
- B. **Legally** the river cleaning within a state is the **responsibility of the state government**, unless it is explicitly taken up as a national project.
- C. The Delhi Government through the Delhi Jal Board (DJB) is responsible for treating sewage and preventing pollutants from entering the Yamuna.

IV. Centre V/S State's efforts

Year	Initiative	Central Government's Efforts	AAP's Actions/Failure
2015	AAP's Promise to Clean Yamuna	The central government allocated funds and supported sewage treatment initiatives.	AAP failed to deliver on the 5-year clean-up promise, citing a lack of funds and coordination.
2017	Jal Jeevan Mission	Launched a nationwide mission to improve water treatment and sewage management, including for Yamuna.	AAP's local implementation was slow, with limited impact on the river's cleanliness.
2019	Yamuna Action Plan (YAP) Expansion	The central government expanded the plan, providing financial support for better treatment technology.	AAP failed to utilize central funding efficiently, with poor infrastructure development.

V. The Multiple Party Stances

Party	State	Stance
AAP	Delhi	Claims that the pollution crisis is due to poor sewage treatment and lack of political will in BJP-led Haryana and Uttar Pradesh. Accuses BJP-led central government of not providing enough financial support. Alleges, Haryana misuses water for irrigation, leading to insufficient water in Delhi.
BJP	Haryana & Uttar Pradesh	Argues that AAP has failed to clean the Yamuna despite promises. Claims AAP's last-minute efforts are politically motivated.
BJP	Central	Criticizes AAP for shifting blame instead of taking responsibility for poor local management, inadequate governance, and delayed decision-making

VI. Key Demands

- A. **Inter-State Cooperation:** The Yamuna River shares its water with the neighboring states of Haryana and Uttar Pradesh along with Delhi, making it a shared responsibility. The governments of Haryana, Uttar

Pradesh, and Delhi must work together to create a coordinated plan for sewage treatment and waste management.

- B. **Investment in Infrastructure:** The Delhi High Court has also raised concerns over the effectiveness of these Sewage Treatment plants. Therefore, the maintenance of old STPs, the installation of new STPs, and waste management systems need to be done along the Yamuna by the AAP government in Delhi.
- C. **Proper fund management:** The AAP government must ensure proper management and fund allocation for the construction and maintenance of STPs, better drainage systems, and modern waste segregation. Periodic upgrades to these systems are essential to comply with environmental standards and ensure long-term sustainability.

The cleaning of the Yamuna is not just an environmental issue; it has deep political, economic, and social ramifications. Despite its promises to clean the Yamuna, AAP's inability to resolve inter-state conflicts over water allocation is seen as a failure of leadership, it has become a point of attack for the BJP. The river's pollution is causing harm to sectors reliant on clean water, such as agriculture and tourism. The unavailability of clean water also imposes health risks on tourists.

VII. Key Takeaways

- A. The current situation of the Yamuna River results from years of political neglect, mismanagement, and lack of decision-making by the AAP government. Greater accountability is needed at local levels to ensure progress.
- B. The AAP has used the Yamuna crisis as a political battleground, instead of finding significant measures to collaborate with Haryana and Uttar Pradesh governments to counter this crisis.
- C. The current sewage treatment and waste management systems are inadequate. Scaling up infrastructure investments, particularly in sewage treatment plants is critical to address the issue at its root.