

# Rain not washing away Yamuna toxins

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**New Delhi:** Yamuna water is toxic, to say the least. But what is worse is that there seems to be a continuous discharge of industrial effluents into the Delhi stretches of Yamuna so that there is no improvement in post-monsoon months either when pollution is supposed to be far more diluted.

A recently concluded study by Toxics Link, an environmental NGO, found heavy metals like lead, chromium, arsenic and mercury to be several times the safe standard and, in some cases, even several hundred times the bathing water quality standard set by Central Pollution Control Board in pre- and post-monsoon months.

A team of researchers collected water samples from seven locations starting with Jagatpur village where the water appears to be marginally cleaner. The researchers travelled by boat to be able to collect water in bottles and buckets from near Najafgarh drain, Wazirabad, Majnu Ka Tila, near Vidhan Sabha drain, ISBT and Yamuna Bazar.



POISON WATERS						*Detected only at two places
	Lead	Chromium	Cadmium	Mercury	Arsenic	
Pre-monsoon	7.1-23.9 16.2 (avg)	7.2-90.2 40.3	0.2-0.4 0.3	0.8-1 0.9	1.2-4.9 3.3	Source: Toxics Link
Post monsoon	15.4-55.7 23.9 (avg)	28.9-796.7 207.3	Below detectable levels	3.2* & 4.7* 3.9	5.3-11.4 7.7	
Standard	0.1	0.5	0.01	0.001	0.2	

The water samples were analysed for the most toxic heavy metals. Chromium levels were the highest with a maximum concentration of about 796.99 parts per million when the standard is 0.5ppm. The maximum level for lead was 55.7ppm when the standard is 0.1ppm.

"We couldn't find a uniform trend in pre- and post-monsoon levels which show

that industries are constantly discharging these heavy metals leading to high toxicity levels throughout. We are also assessing whether the high chromium levels are due to tanneries discharging untreated effluents. But it's clear that a lot of industrial waste is polluting Yamuna," said Prashant Rajankar, programme coordinator, Toxics Link. High chromium levels

are often linked to skin rashes, ulcers, weakening of the immune system, kidney and liver damage and many other health impacts.

The study was also used as an introduction for the ongoing India Rivers Week where about 125 academics, scientists, activists from all states thrashed out the definition of a "healthy river" and what is ailing Indian riv-

ers on Monday. The reason for organizing such a conference is also the current government's agenda of inter-linking rivers.

The 125 experts will work in four groups to arrive at a consensus on certain crucial issues related to rivers and controversial or 'environmentally unsound' projects like interlinking or rivers, massive hydropower pro-

**Heavy metals like lead, chromium, arsenic and mercury were found to be several times the safe standard set by CPCB in both before and after monsoon months**

jects, dams and others. At the end of four days, experts will prepare an India rivers charter articulating the vision for saving rivers.

At IRW, experts also drew attention to a recent appraisal by Yamuna Jiye Abhiyan that has found there is no river in any of the top 50 cities (based on population) in India that is not sick or dying with river Yamuna in Delhi-Mathura-Agra and Ganga in Kanpur-Varanasi-Patna leading the list.