

Dirty flows your drinking water

WHAT ARE YOU DRINKING? Apart from inequitable supply, quality is a major problem in many areas, mostly in colonies dependent on contaminated ground water

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NEW DELHI: For vast swathes of Delhi, getting little or no water is a major issue. And for those who get the precious resource, the quality of water becomes a talking point.

Shubham Gupta, 22, a resident of New Ashok Nagar in east Delhi, had to change his house overnight because the water that he had been receiving was so contaminated that it became difficult to even bear its smell.

"I hadn't taken bath for a week but one day I got a call from a friend who was planning a visit to my house. I felt it would be embarrassing if he sees my condition. I changed my house overnight."

Contaminated water is a major cause of health-related problems, especially in unplanned colonies. While some spend a

chunk of their income on buying bottled drinking water, the mounting medical bills dent the monthly budget of others.

Be it urban slum sprawls like Sangam Vihar or the upper middle-class areas of Lajpat Nagar or government colonies like RK Puram, stinking and dirty water is a common thread that binds them all.

In places like Sangam Vihar, it is a double whammy – filthy water unfit for drinking once in 20 days is all they get.

"We don't have any option but to store water. But the quality is so bad that it starts smelling in a day," Khurshida Banu, 49, who lives in Sangam Vihar, said.

Delhi Jal Board CEO SS Yadav claimed there was no problem with

the water supplied by the water utility. "The water we supply meets prescribed BIS standards. DJB has a fully established and independent water quality wing headed by a director. More than 5,000 water samples are tested by this wing every month and the percentage of samples not meeting the prescribed standards remain within the permissible limit of 5%," Yadav said.

Then there are vast areas out of the piped water network where water is illegally drawn from the ground; where water is contaminated because of various reasons such as polluting industries — areas where people are at a high risk of contamination and poisoning.

"In areas where there is no piped water supply from the DJB, people tend to draw ground water with the help of hand pumps from upper shallow aquifers. The DJB surveys such areas and paint hand pumps in red where water is not found to be fit for use. DJB installs tube wells at places where ground water is fit for drinking purposes," the DJB CEO said.

The 1,000-odd water bodies — including village ponds, marshes, lakes and step wells — that have the capacity to recharge groundwater are being encroachment upon and getting contaminated, say activists.

"With heavy pollution, construction in catchment areas and encroachment, most water bodies that were part of Delhiites' lives till the 1990s are now history," activist Vinod Kumar Jain, who has filed a petition in the National Green Tribunal against encroachment around water bodies.

The health of its water bodies is crucial for Delhi — a water-scarce city dependent on supply from nearby states.



Many areas out of the DJB's piped network, mostly unauthorised colonies like the one above, depend on ground water that gets contaminated by industrial effluents that flow into open drains. ARUN SHARMA/HT PHOTO