

Water in half of Indian rivers not drinkable: CPCB

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NEW DELHI: Water — lifeline of a living being — is getting polluted at an alarming rate with contamination increasing in more than half of the Indian rivers between 1995 and 2011.

Around half of the Indian rivers do not have water fit for direct human consumption, says a study by Central Pollution Control Board — India's pollution watchdog. The study was based on analysis of water samples from 445 rivers across India. Water in one-fourth of the 1,275 river monitoring stations was not even found fit for bathing, an indication that it cannot support aquatic life.

The quality of river water has fallen dramatically between 1995 and 2011, the report says, while blaming increasing discharge of untreated human waste from Indian cities directly into rivers.

As per the government estimate, around 38,000 million litres per day (mld) of waste water from homes and industry was generated by India's urban centers having population of more than 50,000 people in 2011—

double of the waste flow in 1995.

Less than one-third of this was treated before being discharged into the rivers.

Situation would become worse in the coming years as government has not invested adequately for treating waste water. The report said that the projected waste water from urban centres may cross 1,00,000 mld by 2050, and rural India will generate another 50,000 mld.

Around 40% of India's population lives in the Ganga river basin, comprising of Ganga, Yamuna and about 64 other tributaries. The report says the water quality in these rivers in plains of the basin does not meet water quality criteria.

Unscientific disposal of garbage in Indian cities and high use of chemical fertilizer in the agriculture sectors are also responsible for increasing contamination of underground water — a drinking water source for around 60% of the population.

World Health Organisation statistics indicate that half of India's morbidity is water related as most of the upcoming cities don't have sufficient water treatment facilities. And people, knowingly and unknowingly, consume polluted water whose implications become visible only later.