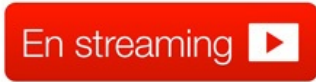




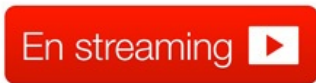
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Hema appeals for clean Yamuna in Lok Sabha

TNN | Dec 3, 2014, 10.06PM IST

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Mathura: **BJP** MP Hema Malini highlighted the sad state of the Yamuna river at the Lok Sabha recently and also called for urgent action to tackle the problem of water scarcity plaguing the temple towns of Mathura and Vrindavan.

Raising the issue, the 66-year-old actor-turned-politician compared the Yamuna with a "vast sewage canal". She demanded that the two gates of the Hathini Kund barrage be opened immediately to release water for the downstream cities.

"Yamuna river is worshipped and revered by millions of Sri Krishna bhakts. But they are pained to see the river in such a sad state," she said.

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Hema told TOI, "I placed all the facts before the House and voiced the frustration and concern of the Brajwasis, who for long have been trying to save the Yamuna. The industries in Haryana and Delhi have been polluting the river, reducing it to a vast sewage canal."

She also spoke about how lead present in the river water has been affecting the locals. "The only solution is to release water on a continuous basis for the downstream cities and divert the waste and sewer through a parallel drain to the Agra Canal."

She said she would continue to demand more water for the area. "Pilgrims who come to Mathura and Vrindavan are not only angry but disappointed to see the river reduced to a dirty and sickly drain. I am sure Prime Minister Narendra Modi will listen to our pleas. Talks are under way to bring water from Sharda river in Nepal to Yamuna."

The presence of upstream industrial clusters in Delhi and Haryana has left the river in the Braj region choking with toxic pollutants. In Mathura, untreated effluents from hundreds of sari-dyeing units discharged in the river have only compounded the problem. After the construction of the Gokul Barrage, the river has distanced itself from the historical Gokul ghats. This obviously causes deep resentment and angry outbursts among the locals.

"The water is not fit for a holy dip (known as 'aachman'). Those who dare to enter the Yamuna downstream of Gokul Barrage return with complaints of itching and burning sensation," said a panda of Mahavan, Radhey Guru, who like many other in the town lament the current plight of the river.

Meanwhile, district magistrate Rajesh Kumar said steps would be taken to stop the main Masani drain, which has been discharging effluents and sewer waste into the river. Speaking to TOI, the DM said of the five pumps installed to pump waste water to the sewage treatment plant (STP), three were not working in the past few days. "We have now decided to purchase two new pumps and get the whole drain dredged to scoop out silt which has choked the outlet. Other drains too would be similarly cleaned and waste water diverted to STPs."

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