

**A unique initiative ahead of Lok Sabha polls**  
**AGRA YOUTH CLEAN DIRTY YAMUNA GHATS**  
**TO DRAW ATTENTION OF CANDIDATES TO RIVER POLLUTION**

**AGRA APRIL 5, 2009:**

Ahead of the Lok Sabha polls, hundreds of students of several schools along with senior citizens cleaned up Poiya Ghat Sunday morning, picking up rags and used polythene bags, to focus attention on river pollution which candidates of various political parties have chosen to ignore.

Brij Khandelwal, programme convener of the Yamuna Foundation and Rivers of the World Foundation, said apart from students involved in the My Clean Agra initiative, a large number of other voluntary groups and organisations were involved in Sunday's programme which specifically targeted the politicians for failing to clean up the cities and the rivers of India.

"No political party has bothered to say a word about how they would save a dying river and rejuvenate it or restore its original glory," said Subhash Jha and Haridutt Sharma of the Yamuna Foundation for Blue Water.

Today's programme also coincided with an international initiative of Rivers of the World Foundation, informed Rajvir Singh. "Volunteers in Vrindavan, Delhi and also in the US are involved in similar river cleaning drives. Both the Yamuna and the Potomac in the US rivers flow through the capitals of their respective countries," Roller Singh, a volunteer of the Rivers of the World Foundation said.

Braj Mandal Heritage Conservation Society president Surendra Sharma said "we have so long neglected the city's life line. Our politicians have no plans to contain pollution. It is sad and unfortunate that even after spending thousand crores the river Yamuna continues to remain dirty and polluted."

Ravi Singh, an environmentalist said the Yamuna water had become totally unfit for human consumption. "Even animals were reluctant to drink the water because of the stink and the effluents flowing down from industries in Delhi, Haryana and Noida."

Dr Ajay Babu, head of the Eco-Club of St Peter's College said "we have brought our boys here to sensitise them to the problem and to draw up a programme to



make people aware of their role and duties. The way people were disposing household waste and polythene bags into the river is criminal. They have no concern for a community water resource which sustains life of millions of people in this region."

Dr Ravi Taneja, head of the Chemistry department of the Agra University, said voluntary groups and volunteers should be involved in a big way to save the river from pollution.

Social activist and president of the Braj Kranti Dal, Surekha Yadav said government agencies had failed to "stop colonisers and builders from encroaching on the river bed, the flood plains were under human encroachment and new structures were coming up at the banks of the river."

Rajeev Saxena, a senior media person, said political parties should include river cleaning programmes in their manifestoes. "All over India rivers were in danger of dying as a result of human encroachments and pollution. This problem can no longer be postponed or shelved. The time to take action now has come," Saxena said.

Students from St Peter's College, St Paul's Church College, St Anthony's, voluntary groups and political workers joined today's campaign for river cleaning.



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