

EXPERT TAKE

Dangers of Dumping Debris in Rivers

The frequent dumping of construction material and other waste in Pune's rivers will not only choke them but also pose a serious threat of flooding during the monsoon. Furthermore, the killing of thousands of trees in the name of 'river rejuvenation' will inflict irreparable damage to the ecosystem.

There are two lines on Pune's riverbank - blue and red. The blue line is indicative of Pune's 25-year flood levels. It simply means that when the river is in spate, its banks overrun. The blue line marker is indicative of the highest point where the water reaches. The red line is indicative of the maximum water level in the last 100 years. Generally, these markers are accepted as sacrosanct. They are the riverbank boundaries and any construction activity is not permitted within these lines. It's foolhardy to do so. Who would want to drown? Climate events are becoming more frequent. During monsoons, water levels reach very close to these markers.

The city is bounded by hills and dams. The dams are built to ensure a year-long water supply. They have limited capacities. Once full, there's no choice but to discharge surplus water. The waters thus from five rivers eventually

The incessant dumping in the Mula-Mutha rivers is sure to strike back at citizens. Their lives will be at risk when floods during the monsoon get uncontrolled

drain through only one river basin - Mula-Mutha. Pune is situated on its banks. These two rivers, Mula and Mutha, along with the Pawana, merge in the surroundings of Pune. Pawana merges into the Mula at Bopodi and both merge into the Mutha at Shivajinagar. This then becomes the Mula-Mutha and flows through Pune. Some of Pune's most affluent neighbourhoods are on its banks. Koregaon Park and Kalyani Nagar border it on either side.

Unfortunately, these days there's a total disregard for these blue and red markers. Irresponsible people are dump-

ing into the river. They've been dumping construction waste here for the longest time. Old concrete, brick waste, excavated material, rocks, asphalt... everything cleared finds its way here.

The fact is the Pune Municipal Corporation charges you money at construction sites for removing debris. It's called 'Rada Roda' charges. All the Rada Roda finds its way to the riverbanks. It has been PMC's long-time dumping ground. Rich riparian forests once existed here. Now, dumping has gathered momentum. This isn't new. It's an old tactic to move quickly before citizens' movements catch up. It's because they are reclaiming 1.545 acres of land along the river. This they want for the development of the prime riverside real estate. They are spending Rs 5,000 crore on this. Back-of-the-envelope calculations suggest terrible consequences. Some say all of Pune's broken-down structures find their way here. Thousands of trees are being buried alive.

How much debris will be necessary? Some estimates suggest 50 million tons. That's about 5 crore tons, 28 lakh truckloads. Imagine that volume of water being displaced. Water will have to find its way someplace. Floodwater is expected to breach the markers and break these riverbanks. It's expected to raise water levels by over 5 ft.

Entire football fields worth of forests have been cleared and dumped upon. This could mean a blowback across several 1,000 sq km of Pune's metropolitan region. It also would mean certain inundation of river bank settlements. Is Pune prepared for these terrible consequences?

Pune's powers-that-be insist that flooding lasts only for a few days. How bad can things get? Some estimates indicate the pouring of 2.6 crore tons of concrete along the banks. Making it gentrified. Water will flow away too... at high speed, just like temperatures are rising at great speed. Do we deserve this happening to us? Reflect...

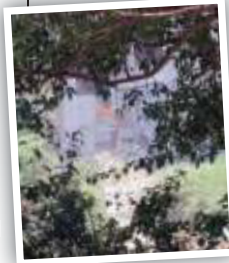
— Ameet Singh

(The writer is an economist)

FEEDBACK

Choked Ramnadi

I would like to draw attention towards rampant dumping of construction material and waste by Goel Ganga builders from their township Ganga Legend in Bavdhan.



Now the monsoon will start in a month or two. It's been happening for quite a long time. You can observe from the photograph that the JCB machine is pushing debris in the Ramnadi.

Thank you for being the

Voice of Purneri Manoos.

— Milind Kadam

Kudos to Pune Mirror

This is with reference to the page 1 article of May 20, on the construction of Blue Scapes violating the blue line norms of the irrigation department.



With the rainfall set to increase by about 37 percent and the intensity predicted to be more than normal at certain times, it is more than likely that such buildings would be subjected to the fury of flood waters.

Kudos to Pune Times Mirror for having highlighted the issue. However, it would be prudent to make efforts to get the irrigation department/ authorities concerned to publish in the local newspapers the extent of the blue lines all along the length of the rivers/ tributaries having a history of flooding in order for the general public to be aware of the impending threat and not invest in such risky projects.

— Col Manoj Nair (Retd)



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TOP NOTCH CLUB

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