

Praying for a river's revival

Restricted Budget, Unchecked Sewage Affecting Public Health

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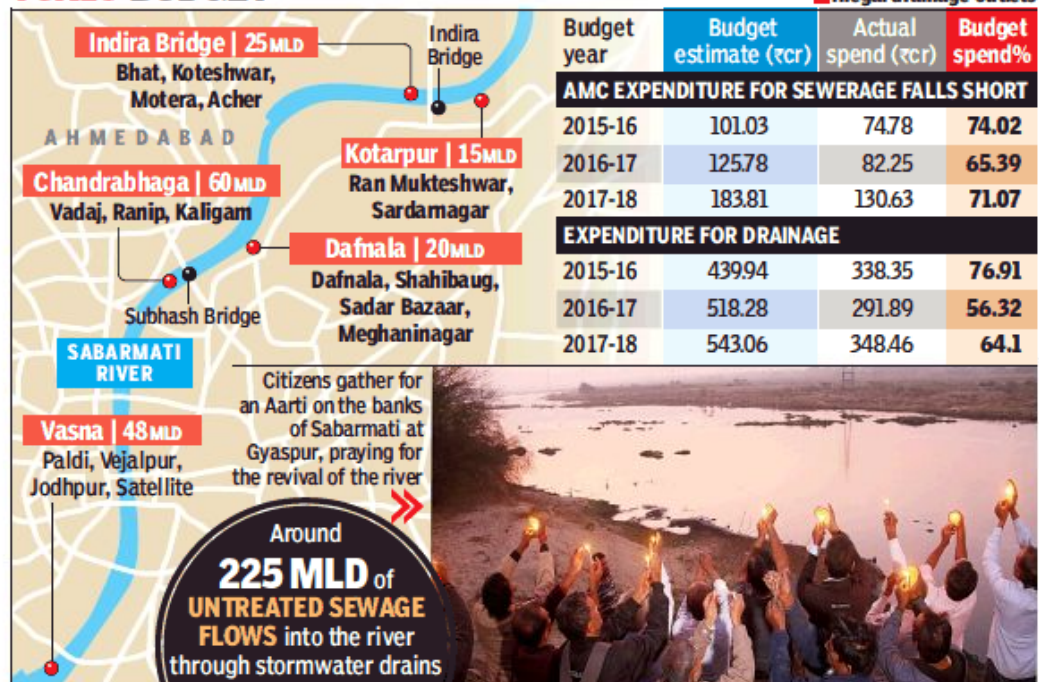
Ahmedabad: On Tuesday evening, a group of concerned Amdavadis gathered for an 'aarti' on banks of the Sabarmati near Gyaspur praying for the river's revival. In one voice, the youngsters, children and the elderly raised concerns over the state of the Sabarmati and close to 225 million litres per day (MLD) of untreated faecal sludge and chemical effluent that is pumped into the river. They also expressed concern over some 82MLD of sewage being illegally dumped into storm water drains.

Today, this neglect has manifested to become one of our gravest public health threats. And now a research by IIT-Gandhinagar this year has found the highest concentration of highly antibiotic resistant E.coli bacteria, microplastics and toxic heavy metals in the river water. Each year crores are allocated in budget by the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) in the name of strengthening sewage treatment facility but not all of its get spend.

A three-year study of the municipal budget by Patheya Budget Centre shows us how the expenditure for treatment of sewerage has been less than the budget estimates. "In

2015-16, the actual expenditure for sewerage treatment was Rs 74.78 crore against the budget estimates of Rs 101.03 crore, similarly, the actual expenditure in 2016-17 was Rs 82.25 crore against the budget esti-

TOXIC BUDGET



mates of Rs 125.78 crore," says the report

Delays in implementation of STP upgradations, slower pace in laying more sewage networks have led to this state. It was only in 2018 that the importance of decentralised sewage treatment plants was realised — plans of which are now fast-tracked by incumbent municipal commissioner Vijay Nehra.

"Sewage system and effluent treatment plans is an essential component of public health. The faecal sludge laced with untreated toxic effluents from neighbouring industrial zones is used by 43 villages downstream of Sabarmati to

Times View

The Sabarmati is stinking and black as tar is just 500m downstream of the Vasna barrage. The reason for the city's nauseating expulsions is evident — sluggish policy implementation, misplaced priorities and lack of political will to act against those who violate environmental laws. In the coming budget, the AMC should get its priorities right as the Sabarmati in its polluted form affects the health of thousands of people who live along the river and those whose lives depend on it.

grow vegetables. We are not only putting farmers' lives at risk but the veggies they grow come back into our homes. By polluting the river, we poison ourselves," says river activist Jatin Sheth

Recently, a detailed investigation carried out by AMC had noticed six major and 10 minor outlets in the city that circumvent our city's sewage treatment facilities. After

Chandrabhaga, the next highest untreated sewage is injected into the Sabarmati from AMC's Vasna treatment plant, 48MLD. At Dafnala, the AMC found drainage outlets that spewed 20MLD of untreated sewage into the river. In each of these areas like Koteswar, Motera and Acher, the AMC measured 5MLD of untreated sewage being let out in the Sabarmati.

BUDGET POSTMORTEM
POLLUTED SABARMATI

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