

Gorakhpur City : 2031 Sanitation



Clean Up or Perish



SCARY UNSANITATION IN GORAKHPUR

Dogs competing with huge rats in a stinking morass of human excreta, filth, polybags, knee deep sewage and garbage, contaminated drinking water and the people afflicted with every possible water and vector borne disease is what Gorakhpur city is set to become in 2031 unless we act urgently now.

This is no empty doomsday prediction but based on analyses of present day trends. Today only one out of every five people has access to proper sanitation facilities. The present population of 622701 (2001 census) is projected to rise to 11,50000 by 2031. The city has grown from 36 sq. km in 1982 to 136 sq.km now and will certainly spread further in the future.

Today only 22 percent of the city, that is just 30 sq.km, has a 55 km underground sewer network that is overloaded and the drains are choked with silt. The five decade old pipes have broken down in many places, contaminating the drinking water. The Gorakhpur Development Authority (GDA) is responsible for planning and regulation of the plans and it has to ensure that underground sewer systems are constructed in the newly developing colonies. It is the GDA's job to develop all the civic amenities in these colonies before handing them over to the GMC.

The city's six pumping stations dispose the untreated

sewage into the drains and subsequently into the Ramgarh Lake and the Rapti River, killing these water bodies. There is no sewage treatment plant in Gorakhpur. The mosquitoes that take over the city every evening will increase by millions by 2031, partly because of an understaffed, under-equipped and inept Gorakhpur Municipal Corporation (GMC). Going by the GMC's own norms, 28 sanitary workers are required for every 10,000 of the population. There were 23 workers per 10,000 of the population, taking the 2001 census figure of 6,22701 persons. This reduces to 18 per thousand presently (2010, estimated population 700,000), a situation that compounding the citizen's woes. The situation is expected to change with the GMC soon executing a Rs 156.30 million project under the Urban Integrated Development Scheme for Small and Medium Towns scheme.

It is too early to say whether this amount will be sufficient given the enormity of the tasks involved. Certainly many more such projects might be needed in the future. The citizens of Gorakhpur will have to play an active role by not only generating less waste but also paying their dues to the GMC regularly and on time.

THE POOR SUFFER THE MOST

Climatic changes due to global warming, it is predicted, will see higher rainfall but over a lesser number of rainy days. This higher intensity of rain will be much more than the carrying capacity of the city's civic infrastructure. Inundation and water logging will increase, so will the incidence and intensity of water borne and vector borne diseases. Safe drinking water will be scarce over the next two decades.

The worst affected will be the urban poor. Presently a third of the city's population (200,000), they are the most vulnerable and least prepared to meet the adverse effects of climate change.

But this need not be the case if we all act together: citizens and the GMC. The citizens have to be more responsible and the GMC more accountable.

Facts

- Just one out of five citizens have access to underground sewerage facilities. The others depend on private septic tanks and soak pits or defecate in the open.
- 13.2 tonnes of drain silt is generated daily.
- 229 open drains carry liquid waste to the Rapti and the Ramgarh Tal. Due to lack of solid waste management, clogging by polythene and waste dumps leads to formation of stagnant pools of water almost everywhere in the city.
- Lack of accountability, inefficiency and poor vision of the local administration exacerbates the grave situation and makes the city more vulnerable and susceptible.
- The continuous discharging of waste water into water bodies and stagnation of water is contaminating the ground water, the only source of the city's drinking water. Health risks are high and will only grow in the future.



YES WE CAN SAVE OUR CITY

We need to act and act now. We have to act together. Concerted action by all, citizens and the GMC can save the situation. Gorakhpur's citizens will need to

- Generate less solid waste and recycle as much as possible
- Segregate the bio-degradable and non-degradable wastes
- Stop using polythene bags
- Pay their taxes regularly and on time.
- Ask the GMC to be more accountable.
- Take to task their elected representatives for not ensuring proper sanitation. They should also ensure that the representative do not interfere in the smooth functioning of the GMC



The GDA and the GMC will have to work in a coordinated manner and set up the necessary execution cells with duties and responsibilities clearly demarcated. Continuous third party independent monitoring mechanisms may be instituted. The two will have to

- Ensure that sewer lines are laid before house construction begins in an area
- Develop a rational sewerage plan
- Regulate the city as per the Master/Zonal Plans

FURTHER, THE GMC WILL HAVE TO

- Get installed sewage treatment plants so that untreated sewage is not dumped into the Rapti and the Ramgarh Tal
- Improve tax collection and spend amounts allotted within the year for sanitation
- Work to ban polythene bags
- Disallow encroachments on the drains & covers.



Asian Cities Climate Change Resilience
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