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CHOKING RIVER

Nandini river pollution raises health concerns

NASHIK: The unchecked discharge of sewage into the Nandini river has severely polluted its waters, spreading a persistent foul odor across the stretch from Mumbai Naka to Bajrangwadi. This pollution has become a major concern for residents living along the riverbanks, as well as for daily commuters passing through the area. The deteriorating condition of the river has left Nashikites questioning whether it still deserves to be called a river or if it has merely become an open drain. Many believe that the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) is responsible for this crisis, as it continues to spend crores of rupees on grand events like the Simhastha Kumbh Mela while neglecting fundamental environmental issues that impact the city's well-being.

The Nandini river, once a natural waterway flowing through the heart of Nashik, is now overwhelmed with untreated sewage, industrial waste, and commercial effluents. This indiscriminate pollution has not only diminished the river's original form but has also led to serious environmental hazards. The water has turned murky with a thick layer of filth floating



on its surface. The air around the river carries a strong stench, making it difficult for local residents to breathe. The continued contamination of the river is turning it into a breeding ground for bacteria and disease, posing a direct threat to public health.

Despite numerous complaints and memorandums submitted by concerned citizens, the municipal administration has taken no meaningful action to address the crisis. Time and again, locals have raised their voices, demanding immediate intervention, but their pleas have been met with mere assurances and no real steps toward a solution. Nashikites believe that the authorities are ignoring the issue, allowing the situation to worsen with each passing day. While

other major projects and events continue to receive funding and attention, the Nandini river remains in a neglected and deteriorating state.

The worsening condition of the river has left residents frustrated and disheartened. People residing near the riverbanks have to deal with the sight and smell of untreated sewage flowing through what was once a freshwater source. The lack of a proper waste management system has led to unchecked disposal of waste from industrial units, households, and commercial establishments directly into the river. In many areas, open drainage lines empty their contents straight into the water, worsening the contamination. The absence of strict monitoring and regulations has allowed polluters

to continue dumping waste without any consequences, leading to the river's rapid degradation.

Local residents have repeatedly urged the municipal administration to take serious and immediate steps to clean the river. They emphasize the need for modern water purification systems to filter out the toxic elements from the river water and prevent further contamination. Many believe that the implementation of a strict monitoring system is essential to regulate industrial and household waste disposal. Additionally, residents insist that regular inspections should be carried out to ensure compliance with pollution control norms. Stringent action, including heavy fines and legal consequences, should be imposed on those found guilty of polluting the river. The introduction of proper sewage treatment plants has been proposed as a long-term solution to prevent untreated wastewater from entering the river.

Citizens are also advocating for increased public awareness regarding the impact of river pollution. They believe that unless people understand the severity of the issue, efforts to restore the river will not gain momentum.

Indian railways ensures smooth travel for pilgrims

BHUSAWAL: Amid the ongoing Mahakumbh 2025, Indian Railways is operating on a war footing to manage the heavy rush of devotees, ensuring seamless transportation. Over 330 trains from eight different stations were operated on Sunday, while 201 trains ran by Monday 3 pm, effectively managing the continuous inflow and outflow of pilgrims.

Prayagraj Junction remains fully operational, and train services continue without disruption. All other Mahakumbh Mela area stations, including Prayagraj Chheoki, Naini, Subedarganj, Prayag, Phaphamau, Prayagraj Rambagh, and Jhansi, are functioning smoothly, with both regular and special trains operating as per scheduled. Even as rush is not coming down, Indian Railways by running one train each from these stations in just above 4 minutes is making sure that devotees don't have to wait after

their holy bathing.

To further streamline operations, CCTV monitoring is being conducted at the divisional, regional, zonal, and railway board levels, complemented by a dedicated war room facility for real-time surveillance and coordination.

Divisional Railway Manager, Bhusawal, stated: "Prayagraj Junction and other key stations in the Mahakumbh area are fully operational, with both regular and special trains running as planned. Indian Railways is working tirelessly to ensure seamless travel for pilgrims during Mahakumbh 2025."

"Bhusawal division is committed to supporting train operations, with 28 Mahakumbh special trains passing through the division. To strengthen connectivity and facilitate seamless operations, the division has provided five rakes of 12-car MEMU trains and one rake of an 8-car MEMU train. Additionally, a dedicated workforce

is actively contributing, including 36 staff members from the commercial department, 14 from the mechanical department, 15 RPF personnel (including ASC Bhusawal), and 10 staff members from the operations department, all working tirelessly to manage passenger traffic at Prayagraj." With an investment of over Rs. 5000 crore, Indian Railways has transformed railway stations into modern, comfortable, and accessible hubs for Mahakumbh 2025. Key enhancements include sleeping pods and executive lounges for enhanced comfort, Color-coded waiting lounges for better navigation, expanded station capacity and new shelters, Wheelchair services and Divyangjan-friendly infrastructure for inclusivity.

Indian Railways continues to ensure smooth, safe, and efficient services for millions of pilgrims, reaffirming its commitment to passenger welfare and operational excellence.

Encroachments & parking woes in New Nashik

NASHIK: The CIDCO housing schemes in Nashik, built to provide affordable housing, are now facing increasing issues due to rising population and encroachments, leading to severe parking problems and traffic congestion in several areas.

In the New Nashik division, key locations such as Trimurti Chowk, Pawan Nagar, Shivaji Chowk Shopping Centre, Dutt Chowk, Manik Nagar, and Mauli Lawns have witnessed the rise of both legal and illegal vegetable markets. While CIDCO has provided designated commercial spaces (galas) for vendors at Trimurti Chowk, over time, various businesses have expanded beyond their allocated spaces, turning the area into a high-traffic zone. The absence of proper parking facilities has exacerbated the issue, with vehicles parked haphazardly, leading to congestion.



Some traders have also set up stalls outside their designated areas, further blocking traffic movement.

At Jijamata vegetable market, fruit and vegetable vendors have occupied the designated parking area, forcing vehicle owners to park on the road, resulting in frequent traffic snarls. A similar situation is observed at Shivaji Chowk Shopping Centre, where vegetable vendors occu-

py both sides of the road leading to Lekhanagar, especially during peak hours in the morning and evening. The congestion worsens on Saturdays and Sundays, making commuting difficult. Although road concretization work is currently in progress, once completed, the likelihood of increased traffic remains high.

Illegal markets under MSEDCL's high-power line in Maniknagar have also added to the congestion.

with a lack of parking forcing consumers to park on the road, particularly in the evenings. Encroachments on spaces meant for parking across New Nashik are a growing concern, prompting residents to demand joint action from the NMC's anti-encroachment department and the city traffic branch.

Apart from traffic issues, illegal banners and hoardings have been erected on electric poles and road dividers at key junctions. While the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) has taken action under the City Defacement Act, enforcement remains inconsistent, particularly against banners put up by political figures. Citizens have expressed dissatisfaction over the municipal administration's selective approach, calling for stricter measures to curb illegal encroachments and hoardings.

Dengue outbreak in city

NASHIK: Nashik city has seen a rise in dengue cases, with 42 patients reported in the first 40 days of this year. In response, the Nashik Municipal Corporation (NMC) has launched an inspection drive to control the spread of the disease. Special teams from the health and malaria departments are working across the city to identify mosquito breeding sites and take necessary action.



In 2023, the city recorded 1,294 dengue cases, which dropped to 1,172 in 2024. However, the increasing number of cases at the beginning of the new year has raised concerns. Dengue and chikungunya are spread by Aedes aegypti mosquitoes, which breed in clean water stored for more than seven days. The Municipal Corporation has urged citizens to take extra precautions, especially with summer approaching, as warm temperatures create ideal conditions for mosquito breeding.

The health department has become active in finding and elimi-

nating dengue breeding sites. Strict measures are being taken, and those found negligent will face a fine of Rs. 5,000.

The municipal administration has advised people to empty, clean, and dry water storage containers like tanks, barrels, and overhead reservoirs at least once a week. Water found in drains should not be released into sewers but poured onto the ground to dry. The Corporation has also suggested that households

refrigerator trays, air coolers, flowerpots, and other domestic water storage items. Drinking water containers for birds and animals should be cleaned and dried daily. Water tanks should be covered with lids or cloth to prevent mosquito access. Proper waste management is also essential, and people must ensure that wet and dry waste is separated and disposed of in garbage collection vans.

The Municipal Corporation has appealed to citizens to remain alert and prevent the accumulation of stagnant water in their surroundings. They have also encouraged people to report any mosquito breeding sites

As summer has started, citizens should not allow water to accumulate in places like refrigerator trays and air coolers. Regular inspections and preventive actions are being carried out by the municipal health and malaria department to control the spread of dengue.

- Dr. Nitin Raote, Malaria dept head, NMC

observe one day each week as a 'dry day' to eliminate mosquito breeding grounds.

Residents have been asked to ensure that water does not collect in

to the health department. The NMC continues to take preventive action, but public cooperation is essential in controlling the spread of dengue in the city.

Sanskrit language conservation workshop at KTHM College



NASHIK: "Sanskrit language plays a vital role in shaping a civilized society while also offering deep insights into ancient Indian culture.

Therefore, youth should be encouraged to learn Sanskrit," emphasized Professor K. D. Shinde at the inaugural session of the district-level Sanskrit language conservation

workshop held at KTHM College yesterday.

The programme was presided over by the college principal Dr. S. S. Kale. Professor K. D. Shinde and Dr. Leena Hunnargirikar were the main guides. The workshop was approved by the Student Development Board of Savitribai Phule Pune University.

During the second session, Dr. Hunnargirikar engaged students with discussions on ancient Sanskrit texts and highlighted the relevance of Sanskrit in modern times.

In his presidential address, principal Dr. S. S. Kale shared details about various student-centric initiatives at KTHM College and encouraged students to explore Sanskrit with a professional perspective.

Student development officer Dr. Tushar Patil compered the workshop and proposed the vote of thanks. Dr. Tushar Patil and Dr. Savita Tidme played key roles in organizing the workshop, which saw participation from a large number of students from colleges across the district.

Management Mania 2025 begins

NASHIK: The annual sports and cultural festival, Management Mania 2025, began at Samajshree Prashantdada Hiray College of Management and Technology, Panchavati, with an enthusiastic inauguration by principal Dr. Dilip Shinde and vice principal Dr. Ganesh Teltumbde.

Organized to promote the all-round development of students, the festival is being held under the guidance of Dr. Apurva Hiray, senate member of Savitribai Phule Pune University and coordinator of Mahatma Gandhi Vidyamandir Sanstha, along with Dr. Santosh Tambe, head of the college development committee.

The inaugural ceremony was graced by Dr. B. S. Yadav, chief executive officer of the institution, and Dr. Deepthi Bhutada from the academic department, who attended as the chief guest.

Sports director Omkar Pardeshi introduced the sports competitions and encouraged students to actively participate, while cultural department head Priyanka Thakur provided insights into the festival's planning and added vibrancy to the event through compering.

AI learning bus to revolutionize education

NASHIK: India's first Artificial Intelligence learning bus, 'AI on Wheels,' under the 'Education on Wheels' initiative has been prepared at Espalier Heritage School. It will be inaugurated on February 15 at 5:30 pm at the school. State School Education Minister Dada Bhuse, international thinker Sandeep Wasekar, and renowned director Praveen Tarde will be present.

This innovative AI learning bus, conceptualized by educationist Sachin Joshi, integrates knowledge, technology, and creativity to bring advanced education to students from municipal and Zilla Parishad schools. The initiative will introduce students to subjects such as artificial intelligence, machine learning, data science, coding, and robotics, providing hands-on learning experiences. Particularly, students from rural and underprivi-

leged areas stand to benefit greatly from this initiative.

The programme will also be attended by deputy commissioner (transport) and safety department Bharat Kalaskar, Divisional Commissioner Praveen Gedam, Municipal Commissioner Manisha Khatri, District Collector Jalaj Sharma, Zilla Parishad CEO Ashima Mittal, Commissioner of tribal development department Nayana Gunde, director of Tribal Corporation Leena Bansod, deputy director of education B. B. Chavan and others.

MIT professor Dr. Ramesh Raskar has commended this initiative, calling it a milestone in digital education in India. Espalier School director Dr. Prajakta Joshi emphasized that the project is a social initiative aimed at transforming education through technology.

A first-of-its-kind experiment

This AI Learning bus is the first of its kind in the country, building upon the success of the 'Education on Wheels' initiative, which has already impacted 19,000 students. Now, with AI-driven education, the initiative aims to further enhance accessibility and modernize learning methods.

Free AI education for Students from ZP, municipal schools

Students in grades 5 to 7, particularly those struggling with fundamental skills like reading, writing, and mathematics, will benefit from this AI-powered learning experience. The bus will offer structured learning programmes, including a two-hour workshop, a 15-day special training session, and a one-month intensive course—all provided free of cost to students from municipal and Zilla Parishad schools.