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'Labyrinth' of Indore's drainage system

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Hindustan Times | By [Padma Shastri](#), Indore

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Consider this. Indore's total water supply is 383 million litres a day. Of this, 75% is turned into waste water generated from households and business establishments. Of the total waste water generated, about 33% flows into natural nullahs running across the city, while the rest flows through underground sewers to the Kabitkhedi sewage treatment plant.

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A system functional till the 1950s took waste water (domestic and toilet) to sewers, while rain water went to the nullahs. Storm water drains that were constructed eight years back to collect rain water are not sufficient to cover the 275 square kilometres within Indore's municipal limits, and rain water now directly seeps through the surface or into underground sewers. [OPEN APP](#)

"When rains are heavy, we open manholes to allow excess rain water to pass. The city will drown if we don't do this," IMC city engineer (water works) Vinod Saraf said.

This, however, has a catastrophic effect on the already stressed sewerage system. Rain water carries mud as it flows through, accumulating in the underground sewers. "This is why sewers and drainage chambers choke during rains," Saraf explained. "Sanitary workers work extra hard to de-silt the chambers."



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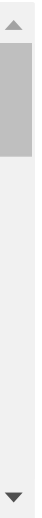
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In most areas, storm water and waste water drains are one and the same, and any damage to the drainage pipes leaks water into the soil, thereby polluting underground water. "This polluted water reaches water bodies, which is dangerous for public health," Balram Verma, MiC member in-charge of water works, said.

Old localities like Ahilyapura, Juna Risala, Jinsi, Kandilpura and Bada Ganpati have open (sur' OPEN APP that either merge with underground sewers or fall into the Piliyakhal nullah, which receives almost 60% of the sewage from these areas. On the other hand, there are many areas that have backlines (sewers laid between two buildings or at the rear) that receive waste water from individual buildings through sanitary pipes. However, about 48% of such backlines have been encroached on by residents.

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"People throw kitchen waste and garbage minutes after sanitation workers clean backlines, which in many areas have been covered with stone slabs. This is our daily experience in Sindhi Colony, Chandan Nagar and Khatiwala Tank area," Harsiddhi zone JCB-operator Ramesh Mourya told HT. "It's difficult to clean them when they get choked."

Indore's growing sanitation worries, compounded by insufficient funds and a general sense of apathy, are seen by many as a mockery of the Central government's much-vaunted Clean Indian campaign. A municipal corporation has three main functions - water supply, sewerage, and sanitation and solid waste management. The IMC's current provisions show the allocation made for the three constituents is less than 35% of the total budget outlay.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



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Padma is a Special Correspondent and looks after Central govt and political parties. She has special interest in local history of Indore and Malwa region, art and architecture.

