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'With rivers turning into nullahs, Pune is in trouble'

Rivers Are Dying, Air Pollution Choking Cities And Forests Are Disappearing, Says Sunita Narain

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

Pune: "Pune is in trouble today as the rivers are turning into nullahs and Puneites are breathing polluted air. The pollutant particulate matter has fine particles and goes inside your body through inhalation and reaches the blood stream. Not only it can cause respiratory problems and asthma, but also heart attacks," said Sunita Narain, director general of the Centre for Science and Environment (CSE), New Delhi on Sunday.

Speaking at the closing ceremony of the 6th Vasundhara International film festival, after receiving the 'Vasundhara Sanman', Narain said rivers are

dying not only in Pune but across the country. The cities are choking with air, the forests are disappearing, despite our efforts on environment. The question is, do we value minerals or growth around it?"

Narain, a political activist as well as a major proponent of the green concept of sustainable development, added: "Mula and Mutha rivers are converting to nullahs. We are unable to take back the sewage. For every drop of water we use, 80% of it is left as sewage. We are unable to link the flush water with rivers. Rather, the sewage water should be reused and recycled."

She said neither the city has good public transport facility, nor



Green activist Sunita Narain (left) with actor Anupam Kher on Sunday

pedestrian walkways nor bicycle tracks. We need to reinvent mobility. "If we can manufacture cars, you can also do the same with buses," said said.

Narain raised the question on how to have growth without pollution? Citing an example, she said Delhi was heavily polluted in 1990s and people were suffering from respiratory problems. After several campaigns and lot of efforts, now the bus fleet and autorickshaws run on CNG. These vehicles have now become cleaner, but the numbers of cars have multiplied. "There are a lot of cars on road which run on diesel. These diesel vehicles are polluting the environment and all our efforts are lost. Where do we go now? We

remain behind the problems every time."

Narain, who has received the World Water Prize for work on rainwater harvesting and is a member of the Prime Minister's Council for Climate Change, said "We are more and more convinced that climate change is real and it beginning to happen. It is linked to the consumption pattern we have in world and the economic growth we have adopted."

She said Pranab Mukherjee is not the finance minister, but the monsoon. The monsoon determines the economic well-being of the country. At present, we are witnessing variation in rainfall and intense rainfall events, which is leading to floods and landslides.