



Ganga Sansad to begin from Garhmukteshwar

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LUCKNOW: Once again Ganga will see a host of political bosses and activists pledging to free it from pollution and encroachment. Part of the much publicised campaign 'Ganga Sansad' will be kicked off from Garhmukteshwar on Sunday in the presence of Union culture minister Chandresh Kumari Katoch, besides officials from various departments.

Interestingly, UP chief minister [Akhilesh Yadav](#) has not given his consent to be a part of the campaign. Speaking to TOI, campaign organiser and [Ramon Magsaysay](#) award winner, Rajendra Singh confirmed that Akhilesh Yadav was the first VVIP to whom the invitation was sent earlier this month. "But we have not received a confirmation as yet," Singh said on Saturday.

This has not gone down well with the river conservationists. "This is strange because Ganga has the maximum coverage in UP. And it is UP, where it gets polluted the most," Singh said, and added, "We have been expecting his views on the subject."

The campaign to create awareness about the river comes nearly a month after the Centre decided to tag Ganga as a C-grade river because of an ever rising pollution load. It was in October when the Centre's inter-ministerial group sought to classify Ganga as a 'C' category (poor) river. The categorisation has been proposed to be done in view of a report submitted by IIT-Roorkee, which found that 84% of the water flow in the river will either be diverted into tunnels or reservoirs because of more than 100 hydro-electric power projects proposed on the river in Uttarakhand.

In a way, only 16% of the river will be left to its original flow once these hydro-electric projects come into existence, the report has observed. Apart from the interrupted water flow in the river, illegal mining and pollution has also pushed the holy river to the brink of being tagged in the embarrassing category. The proposed categorisation has led to alarm bells ringing amongst the environmentalists and left the water and river activists enraged.

Singh said that it is not until people from various walks of life including planners, decision makers, saints and culture experts are brought on a common platform that things would improve for the holy river.

Interestingly, UP government has been dragging its feet on steps to conserve the river. In fact, river conservationists have been seeking help of the former Mayawati government to put the river eco-systems on a requisite track. However, their efforts drew a blank with the state government looking the other way.