

Bar on Yamuna constructions

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Oct. 7: Delhi Lt. Gov. Tejendra Khanna, chairman, Yamuna River Development Authority, has finally announced a moratorium on future construction along the flood plain of the Yamuna.

Mr Khanna announced this decision during the course of a meeting with water activists who are part of the technical advisory group of the Delhi government. While the length of the Yamuna flood plain in Delhi is around 97 sq. km, according to Google Earth, this

will amount to protecting around 78 sq. km.

The construction spree kick-started by the Commonwealth Games Village and the Metro station on the Yamuna flood plains was only the beginning of several other proposals coming in. These, activists pointed out, included the construction of a helipad, golf course, BCCI Academy and a Rs 1,800 development project that was to be jointly sponsored by Delhi Tourism and Teri.

Further construction, Mr Khanna maintained, would have jeopardised the flood plain as this remained the

capital's prime source of ground water.

He had therefore initiated the setting up of a special committee under the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) to study and ascertain the potential of the flood plain. Members of this committee had included

DJB, NEERI, Yamuna Standing Committee, National Institute of Hydrology (Roorkee), Dr P.S. Datta from IARI, Dr A.K. Gosain from IIT, and Dr Vikram Soni from the National Physical Laboratory and Diwan Singh of Natural Heritage First.

The CGWB had submitted

a report to the government confirming that the yield potential of the flood plain is almost 100 MGD (four times its current use). This potential could rise by using an engineering solution such as inundating the flood plain by closing barrages during the monsoon.

Mr Khanna's decision has been welcomed by NGOs and water activists who have been stressing the need to preserve this natural water storage and recharge zone.

The group found the Yamuna river facing two threats — pollution and encroachment.