

“Dredged sea sand dumped into Kosasthalaiyar has toxic metals”

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Dredged sea sand dumped into Kosasthalaiyar has toxic metals

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Chennai: A report released by the Save Ennore Creek campaign on Tuesday said dredged sea sand dumped into Kosasthalaiyar river's backwaters in Ennore allegedly by Tangedco has high levels of toxic metals like Arsenic, cadmium, copper and chromium.

Sand samples were taken in July and tested by the Healthy Energy India Initiative, a public health collective which documents pollution in Chennai, at the Chester Labnet in Oregon, US.

This is a serious environmental issue which affects the livelihood of local fishermen, the collective said. "The level of metals in the sea sand is higher than what it should be and is an indication of historical pollution in the estuary and river due to fly ash and coal handling," said Pooja Kumar, part of the campaign.

A spokesperson for Tangedco said that the electricity minister Senthil Balaji had



MATTER OF CONCERN: Part of the Kosasthalaiyar river in Ennore from where sand samples were collected. The samples were tested by the Healthy Energy India Initiative at the Chester Labnet in Oregon, US

inspected the spot last week and that there were no deviations noted.

The report stated that arsenic levels were at 14.96 milligram per kg, which is more than two times the Interim Sediment Quality Guideline (ISQG) for aquatic life.

Cadmium concentration was 15.23 mg/kg which is 20 times ISQG, copper at 23.54 mg/kg which is 1.25 times

ISQG and chromium at 106.1 mg/kg which is twice the safe levels of ISQG.

ISQG is a Canadian government standard which recommends concentration levels of chemicals to support and maintain aquatic life.

The campaign's contention is that a January 2020 report submitted to the National Green Tribunal by a joint committee had found high concentrations of these same metals in the sea sand dumped in the Ennore creek by the Kamarajar Port.

"The levels of metals found in the latest samples are higher than the high concentrations reported by the joint committee," the report stated.

Another issue also pertains to the livelihood of the fishermen. "Fish is an inexpensive source of protein for the poor. Dumping contaminated sand in this section of the river is like poisoning their food. This is the place where we catch the fish that we sell in the market," said RL Srinivasan, a fisherman from Kattukuppam.

News Item in The Times of India newspaper, Chennai Edition dated 04th August 2021

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