

Before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal

Eastern Zone Bench at Kolkata

MEMORANDUM OF APPLICATION

[Under Section 18(1) read with sections 14 & 15 and under
Section 18 (2) of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010]

25

Original Application No. /2026/EZ

Ankur Sharma

..... Applicant

-Versus-

The State of West Bengal & Ors.

..... Respondents

Compilation – I

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Ankur Sharma

Ankur Sharma
(Applicant)

Mobile No. 9433883322

Email:adv.ankursharma9@gmail.com

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Compilation – II

Sl.	Particulars	Annexure
1.	Some news reports of the fire mishap.	'P-1' (39-52)
2.	Some photographs of the jheel/pond and vicinity of the warehouse.	'P-2' (53-55)
3.	Satellite image of the area showing filled-up wetlands, commercial structures.	'P-3' (56)



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IN THE MATTER OF :

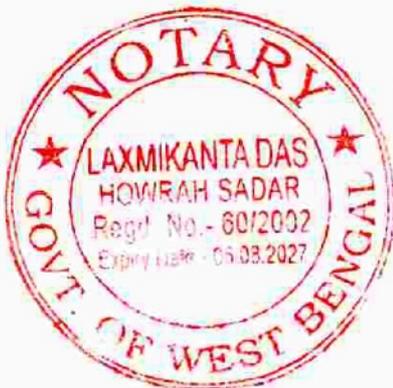
Ankur Sharma son of Shri
Ambooj Sharma, resident of
13/3, Dr. P. K. Banerjee Road,
P.O., P.S. & District – Howrah,
West Bengal, PIN – 711101.

.....Applicant

-VERSUS –

1. The State of West Bengal
service through the Chief
Secretary, Government of
West Bengal having office at
NABANNA (13th Floor), 325,
Sarat Chatterjee Road,
Shibpur, Howrah - 711102.
Email : cs-westbengal@nic.in

2. Ministry of Environment,
Forest and Climate Change,
Government of India service
through its Secretary having



office at Paryabaran Bhawan,
Jorbagh Road, New Delhi, PIN
-110003

Email: secy-moef@nic.in

3. Department of Environment,
Government of West Bengal
through its Principal Secretary,
having office at
PRANISAMPAD BHAWAN,
Block (5th Floor), LB-II, Salt
Lake, Sector-III, Bidhannagar,
Kolkata – 700 106.

Email : acsenvwb@gmail.com

4. West Bengal Pollution
Control Board through its
Member Secretary having
office at PARIBESH
BHAVAN, 10A, Block - L.A.,
Sector - III, Salt Lake City,
Kolkata - 700106. Email :
ms.wbpcb-wb@bangla.gov.in

5. The East Kolkata Wetlands
Management Authority service
through its Chief Technical
Officer having office at
PRANISAMPAD BHAVAN,



5th Floor, LB-2, Sector-III,
Salt Lake, Kolkata – 700106.

Email : ctoekwma@gmail.com

6. The District Magistrate,
South 24 Parganas having
office at New Treasury
Building, (8th & 9th floor),
Alipore, Kolkata – 700027.

Email : dm-ali@nic.in

7. The Inspector General of
Registration and
Commissioner of Stamp
Revenue, West Bengal having
office at FORTUNA TOWER,
23A N.S. Road, 9th floor,
Kolkata – 700001.

Email : igresr-wb@nic.in

8. West Bengal State
Electricity Distribution
Company Limited service
through its Chairman &
Managing Director having
office at BIDYUT BHAVAN,
Block - DJ, Sector – II,
Bidhannagar, West Bengal,
PIN – 700091. Email :
wbsedcl.compsec@gmail.com



9. Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat service through its Pradhan having office at Kheyadaha, Dargatala, Deara, West Bengal – 700150.

10. The Superintendent of Police, Baruipur District Police having office at Commercial Complex, Zilla Parishad Bhaban, Baruipur Kulpi Road, P.O. & P.S. - Baruipur, Kolkata - 700144. Email : baruipurpolice@gmail.com

11. The Inspector-in-Charge Narendrapur Police Station having office at Sonarpur Station Road, Kolkata, West Bengal - 700103. Email : narendrapurps@gmail.com

12. Wow Momo Foods Private Limited through one of its Directors Mr. Sagar Jagdish Daryani having office at 29A/2E/1, Raja Subodh Chandra Mullick Road, Ground Floor (24 Shyama Pally), Kolkata, West Bengal,



India - 700032. Email :
sagardaryani@wowmomo.co.in

13. Shri Gangadhar Das owner
of Pushpanjali Decorators
having office at Nazirabad,
Karimpur, P.S – Narendrapur,
South 24 Parganas, PIN -
700150.

14. Jyote Motors (Bengal)
Private Limited through one of
its Directors Mr. Devjyoti
Patnaik having office at 462
Goutam Nagar, Bhubaneswar,
Orissa, PIN – 751002 Email :
accounts.bbsr@jyotemotors.com

.....Respondents

TO

THE HON'BLE CHAIRMAN AND HIS COMPANION
MEMBERS OF THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL.

Synopsis

HUMBLE APPLICATION SUBMITTED BY THE
APPLICANT ABOVE NAMED

The Applicant is an Advocate by profession and has been
working amongst others, for the protection of the environment
and water bodies in the state of West Bengal.

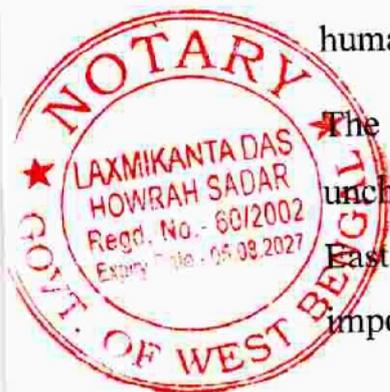


The present Original Application is being filed against the illegal filling, conversion and commercial exploitation of wetlands situated at Karimpur Mouza, Nazirabad under Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat, South 24 Parganas forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands in gross violation of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006.

The instant application has been necessitated in the aftermath of the catastrophic fire incident dated 26.01.2026 at warehouses operating in the said mouza including one used by Wow Momo and another operated under the name of "Pushpanjali Decorators," wherein about 27 persons tragically lost their lives. The said warehouses as publicly reported and locally admitted were constructed upon filled-up wetland areas (bheris) in gross violation of environmental norms and laws and without approval from the Wetland Authority.

The said incident is not merely a fire accident but a direct consequence of systematic illegal encroachment, land filling and unauthorised commercial development over ecologically sensitive wetland areas. The conversion of natural wetlands into commercial warehouses storing flammable materials has caused not only irreversible ecological degradation but also grave loss of human life.

The situation is alarming to the extent that continued and unchecked encroachments threaten the ecological character of the East Kolkata Wetlands - a Ramsar site of international importance. Persistent illegal development within the notified



wetland zone jeopardises India's obligations under the Ramsar Convention and risk degradation of the ecological integrity of the site.

It is submitted that in and around Karimpur Mouza land sharks and commercial operators in collusion with local authorities and regulatory bodies, have filled up and converted wetlands, raised permanent commercial warehouse structures, constructed access roads over wetland areas, obtained or facilitated electricity connections through West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited, operate large-scale commercial storage facilities without lawful sanction, wetland clearance, or fire safety compliance.

The role of the local administration including Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat, revenue authorities, electricity distribution authorities, and the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority is highly questionable as no preventive or restorative measures are being taken despite visible large-scale commercial construction on wetlands.

The failure of the regulatory authorities to prevent illegal land filling and commercial development has resulted in destruction of wetland ecology, obstruction of natural drainage and hydrology, loss of biodiversity and fishery ecosystem (bheri system), severe environmental hazard culminating in a fatal industrial fire.

Despite public reports, complaints and the magnitude of the incident, no comprehensive environmental damage assessment, wetland restoration action or demolition proceedings have been initiated to the knowledge of the Applicant.



The Applicant states that unless immediate directions are passed by this Hon'ble Tribunal further illegal constructions will continue, evidence of wetland filling may be erased, ecological damage may become irreversible, the integrity of the Ramsar site will be further compromised thereby posing threat to the very existence of East Kolkata Wetlands.

In these circumstances, the Applicant seeks urgent intervention of this Hon'ble Tribunal for immediate joint inspection of the site, determination whether the warehouses stand on EKW area, demolition of illegal constructions, environmental compensation, restoration of the wetland to its original character, fixing accountability of erring authorities.

The Applicant has no personal interest in the matter and has approached this Hon'ble Tribunal hurriedly purely in the interest of environmental protection and enforcement of statutory safeguards finding no alternative the Applicant was compelled to approach this Hon'ble Tribunal for justice.

List of Dates

26/01/ 2026	Fire mishap took place in warehouses of Wow Momo and Pushpanjali Decorators.
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FACTS IN BRIEF

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHEWETH :

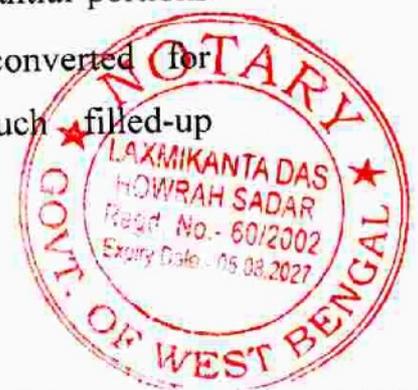
1. That the Applicant is an Advocate by profession. The Applicant is working for the protection of the environment and water bodies and protection of the right to a clean environment for every citizen guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, 1950, and in discharge of his duty under Article 51A he raised his voice in past against many other illegalities throughout State of West Bengal, particularly against the conversion of the cities in to concrete jungles. The Applicant is filing the instant Application under Section 14 and 15 read with section 18 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 as the present matter involves substantial questions relating to the environment arising out of the implementation of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006 and other environmental statutes.

2. That Respondent No. 1 herein is the head of all other State Respondents. The Respondent no. 2 is the representative of the Government of India which is a party of the Ramsar Convention and has been impleaded by the Applicant for their intervention in the acts of devastation by the state authorities and for conducting impartial inspection. The Respondent no. 3 herein is responsible for preservation of environment and ecology in State. The Respondent no. 4 herein is the regulatory authority for implementation of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 and



the Rules under these Acts. The Respondent no. 5 herein is responsible for conservation and management of the East Kolkata Wetlands. The Respondent no. 6 is responsible for total administration of its District including revenue matters. The Respondent no. 7 is the head of all registry offices under which wetlands comprised in East Kolkata Wetlands are being illegally transferred even by falsely incorporating the word "Bastu" (residential) land. The Respondent no. 8 is a public company engaged in distribution of electricity within its licensed area, including in the vicinity of East Kolkata Wetlands. The Respondent no. 9 is the local civic body surrounding the impugned wetlands. The Respondent no. 10 is the head of the law enforcing authority of the surrounding area wherein the wetlands are situated. The Respondent no. 11 is the local police station. The Respondent nos. 12 to 14 are the private respondents who have been indulging in filling up parts of the impugned wetlands. Your Applicant was only able to identify some of the flouters of environmental laws out of many others.

3. That the Applicant is filing this Application against illegal filling, conversion and commercial exploitation of wetlands situated at Karimpur Mouza, Nazirabad area under Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat, South 24 Parganas forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands which is an internationally recognized Ramsar site. The impugned land parcels as news reports and local information were originally wetlands/bheris/water bodies and constituted part of the natural wetland ecosystem. However, substantial portions thereof have been illegally filled up and converted for commercial warehouse construction. Upon such



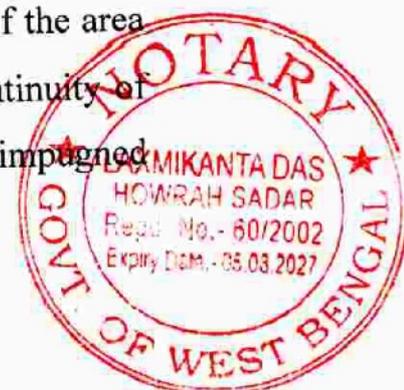
wetlands, permanent warehouse structures have been raised and being used for storage of commercial goods, including materials of highly combustible nature. One such warehouse was operated under the name “Pushpanjali Decorators” and another was used by Wow Momo. On 26.01.2026 a catastrophic fire broke out at the said warehouses resulting in tragic loss of multiple human lives and extensive destruction. The said incident has exposed grave environmental violations and unlawful conversion of protected wetland areas into hazardous commercial establishments. The Applicant respectfully submits that due to the urgency of the situation, the magnitude of the tragedy and the continuing risk of further environmental damage and erasure of evidence of wetland filling, the present Application is being filed in haste to secure immediate intervention of this Hon’ble Tribunal. At present, the Applicant does not have access to the precise L.R. Dag and R.S. Dag numbers of the impugned plots on which the said warehouses stand. The Applicant therefore seeks liberty for direction upon the District Magistrate and the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority to conduct immediate inspection, demarcation and produce the exact land classification details (both L.R. and R.S.) before this Hon’ble Tribunal. The Applicant submits that absence of specific dag particulars at this stage does not dilute the substantial environmental question involved particularly when the location of the warehouses are situated within area of East Kolkata Wetlands.

4. That the East Kolkata Wetlands is an internationally recognised Ramsar site (Site No. 1208) protected under the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006 as well as



the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 framed under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The East Kolkata Wetlands constitute the world's largest sewage-fed aquaculture system and form a unique ecological infrastructure for the city of Kolkata. The said wetland system is under continuous threat due to illegal filling, conversion and unauthorised commercial exploitation by private parties in collusion with or due to inaction of statutory authorities including the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority.

5. That the East Kolkata Wetlands was designated as a Ramsar site in the year 2002 and recognised as wetlands of international importance under the Ramsar Convention on Wetlands to which India is a signatory. The wetlands are often described as the "Kidneys" of Kolkata as they naturally treat and recycle the city's sewage through an integrated fishery ecosystem. The East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006 expressly prohibits reclamation, filling up, conversion, change of character or unauthorised construction within the notified wetland area. The Applicant states that Karimpur Mouza, Nazirabad area under Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat forms part of the East Kolkata Wetlands, and the impugned constructions have been raised upon land originally constituting wetlands/fishery (bheri) areas.
6. That large portions of wetlands within Karimpur Mouza have been filled up and converted for commercial purposes including for construction of warehouses. The natural character of the area has been substantially altered and the hydrological continuity of the wetland ecosystem has been disrupted. The impugned



warehouse structures, including those operated under the name “Pushpanjali Decorators” and used by Pushpanjali Decorators and Wow Momo have been raised upon such filled-up wetlands. Various news reports published in the aftermath of the fire mishap clearly indicate that the subject warehouses have been constructed illegally on wetlands forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands.

Some news reports are annexed herewith and collectively marked by the letter and figure ‘P-1’.

7. That the situation is extremely grave. Continuous encroachment, land filling and commercial conversion within the East Kolkata Wetlands areas not only destroy fragile ecology but also jeopardise India’s international commitments under the Ramsar Convention. Rampant and unchecked encroachments will ultimately affect the ecological character of the Ramsar site and undermine its protected status. The present incident demonstrates how illegal environmental degradation is not merely an ecological issue but has direct and tragic human consequences.
8. That on 26.01.2026, a catastrophic fire broke out at the warehouse structures located in Karimpur Mouza including the warehouse used by Wow Momo and the adjoining warehouse operating under the name “Pushpanjali Decorators”. The fire resulted in tragic loss of about 27 human lives and extensive destruction of property. The said incident has exposed the illegal conversion of wetlands into hazardous commercial establishments storing combustible materials without lawful sanction permission by East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority or due compliance with statutory safeguards. The



Applicant submits that the environmental illegality and regulatory failure culminating in the said fire require urgent investigation and intervention by this Hon'ble Tribunal.

9. That despite the ecological sensitivity of the area and visible large-scale construction, the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, District Administration and other regulatory authorities failed to prevent illegal filling and construction activities. The Applicant states that it is evident from publicly available information that no comprehensive environmental scrutiny or restoration proceedings were initiated in respect of the impugned constructions prior or even after the occurrence of the tragic fire. The inaction and/or failure of the statutory authorities has enabled illegal wetland conversion and commercial exploitation in violation of the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006 and the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.
10. That the Applicant states that the large-scale commercial warehouse structures standing at Karimpur Mouza could not have been erected overnight and must have been constructed over a period of time with visible land filling, structural development, approach road construction and installation of utility infrastructure. The very existence and operation of such substantial commercial warehouses indicate that the concerned statutory authorities either failed to conduct due inspection or failed to take preventive steps despite the ecological sensitivity of the area falling within or adjacent to the East Kolkata Wetlands region.



11. That the fire incident dated 26.01.2026 has exposed the systemic regulatory failure in permitting and/or overlooking construction and operation of hazardous commercial establishments upon land that was originally wetland/fishery in nature. The Applicant states that if timely action had been taken by the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, district administration and other statutory bodies the illegal filling and commercial conversion could have been prevented and the tragic loss of human lives may have been avoided.
12. That the wetlands in and around Karimpur Mouza are being progressively dried, filled up and converted for commercial and industrial purposes. Infrastructure such as electricity supply, access roads and other civic amenities are being extended to such converted wetlands thereby facilitating illegal commercial exploitation of wetland areas. Electric connections have reportedly been provided through West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited and approach roads have been constructed or improved by the local body namely Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat enabling full-fledged commercial operation of warehouses, commercial and industrial units. The Applicant respectfully submits that provision of such infrastructure amounts to indirect legitimisation of illegal conversion of wetlands.
13. That the applicant had filed O.A. No. 01 of 2024/EZ against filling of 88.52 acres of wetlands forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands in Mouza – Atghara under the same Gram Panchayet i.e. Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat. The matter is pending before this Hon'ble Tribunal for consideration. Yes,

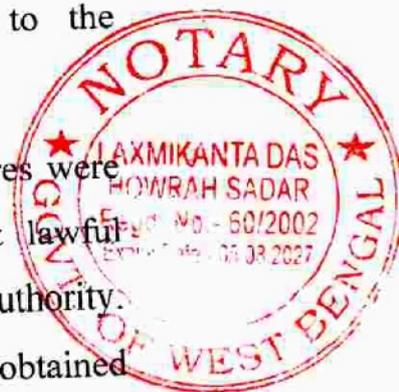


wetlands continue to be encroached rampantly within jurisdiction of the same Gram panchayet.

14. That registry authorities under the Inspector General of Registration & Commissioner of Stamp Revenue, West Bengal, have in several instances permitted registration of lands originally recorded as wetland by describing them as "bastu" or non-agricultural land thereby enabling unlawful change of land use. Such practices, coupled with inaction by environmental authorities have contributed to systematic degradation of the wetland ecosystem.

15. That due to illegal acts of private respondents and other private persons, extension of infrastructure by public authorities and failure of statutory bodies empowered to protect the East Kolkata Wetlands, wetlands are rapidly disappearing. The present case is a glaring example of how unlawful wetland conversion, regulatory inaction and hazardous commercial use can culminate in both environmental destruction and grave human tragedy. The cause of action is continuing in nature as (i) the filled-up wetlands remains unrecovered, (ii) illegal constructions though damaged by fire, continue to stand, (iii) no environmental restoration plan has been initiated, (iv) no comprehensive wetland demarcation exercise has been conducted to the knowledge of the Applicant.

16. That it is evident that the impugned warehouse structures were constructed illegally upon filled-up wetlands without lawful permission by East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority. Consequently, the said establishments could not have obtained valid Consent to Establish (CTE) or Consent to Operate (CTO)



under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 from the State Pollution Control Board.

17. In the absence of lawful land use conversion and wetland clearance, no valid industrial consent could have been granted. The operation of such commercial storage facilities without mandatory consent under environmental statutes constitutes a continuing statutory violation.
18. That the Applicant visited the area at Karimpur Mouza on 30.01.2026 immediately after the fire incident. During the said visit the Applicant observed that the impugned warehouse premises have been sealed by the authorities and entry was restricted. The Applicant was not permitted to enter the premises. However, from external inspection and interaction with local residents, it was observed that numerous commercial establishments including car repair workshops, food processing units, warehouses and other small-scale industrial units were operating within the surrounding areas which appears to have been originally wetland/fishery land. The presence of multiple commercial units within the wetland ecosystem indicates systematic and large-scale conversion of environmentally sensitive land for industrial and commercial purposes. The Applicant noticed that one car repair workshop of the Private Respondent no. 14 was in operation along with several other warehouses of Zepto, Swiggy Instamart etc.

That the Applicant conducted a search regarding the environmental compliance status of one of the car repair workshop units operating in the vicinity of the impugned site,



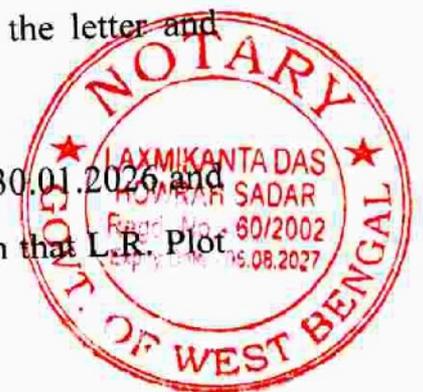
being the Private Respondent No. 14 by examining publicly available records of the West Bengal Pollution Control Board. It was found that the application for Consent to Establish / Consent to Operate of the said unit had been rejected. However, despite such rejection, the said unit continues to operate at the site.

The Applicant submits that this instance is illustrative of a broader pattern of non-compliance in the area where multiple commercial and industrial units appear to be functioning without valid Consent under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981. Operation of such units despite rejection of statutory consent demonstrates regulatory failure and continuing environmental illegality in the area.

19. That during the said visit, the Applicant also noticed a nearby jheel/pond situated in close proximity to the impugned warehouse structures. The embankment of the said water body was found to be dumped with solid waste and debris. Such dumping upon the embankment of a water body not only violates environmental norms but also obstructs natural drainage and contributes to degradation of the wetland ecosystem. The dumping of waste near or upon wetland water bodies is in clear violation of the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

Some photographs of the jheel/pond and vicinity of the warehouse are annexed herewith and marked by the letter and figure 'P-2'.

20. That the Applicant, during his visit to the area on 30.01.2026, and upon interaction with local residents came to learn that L.R. Plot



No. 65 of Mouza – Karimpur situated only a few meters away from the impugned warehouse premises was originally a large pond/wetland forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands. It was observed that substantial portions of the said plot appear to have been filled up, and commercial activities including operation of car workshops, food processing units, warehouses and other storage units are presently being carried out thereat. The close physical proximity of the said plot to the sealed warehouse site indicates that the environmental degradation is not isolated but forms part of a contiguous pattern of illegal conversion of wetlands in the area. The Applicant respectfully submits that such rapid transformation of a water body into commercial and industrial usages without visible lawful sanction, land-use conversion, Consent by the WBPCB or permission by East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority demonstrates prima facie violation of environmental statutes.

21. That the Applicant submits that illegal filling of wetlands, absence of consent, proliferation of unregulated industrial activities and lack of statutory oversight collectively created a hazardous situation culminating in the tragic fire incident dated 26.01.2026. The said incident is not an isolated industrial accident but a manifestation of systemic environmental non-compliance and regulatory failure within a protected Ramsar wetland zone.

22. That the cause of action is continuing in nature inasmuch as (i) filled-up wetlands remains unrecovered, (ii) illegal constructions, though sealed, continue to stand, (iii) adjacent wetlands/water bodies are being degraded by dumping of waste, (iv) Commercial



and industrial units continue to operate in the area, (v) no comprehensive environmental restoration or demarcation exercise has been undertaken to the knowledge of the Applicant. Unless immediate intervention is made by this Hon'ble Tribunal, further ecological degradation of the East Kolkata Wetlands region is imminent.

23. That major portions of wetlands in and around Karimpur Mouza have already been filled up and permanent as well as semi-permanent structures including warehouse buildings, boundary walls and ancillary constructions have been raised upon such filled-up land. It is evident that the said constructions were preceded by large-scale wetland filling and reclamation which is expressly prohibited under the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006 and the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017. The West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited has erected electric poles and provided electricity supply to structures standing upon the said converted land thereby facilitating and enabling unlawful commercial use of wetland areas.

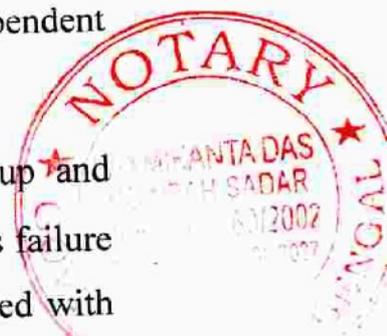
24. That during the Applicant's visit to the area on 30.01.2026 it was observed that the impugned warehouse premises had been sealed by the authorities following the fire incident. The Applicant was not permitted to enter the premises. However, from visual inspection of the surrounding area it was noticed that multiple commercial establishments including car repair workshops, food processing units, storage warehouses and other small industrial units are operating within the vicinity suggesting widespread commercialisation of what was originally wetland/fishery land.



Electric poles erected within the converted areas, boundary walls demarcating filled-up plots and structural development clearly demonstrate systematic alteration of the natural wetland character.

Satellite image of the area showing filled-up wetlands, commercial structures is annexed and marked as annexure 'P-3'.

25. That the scale of conversion indicates that the impugned constructions are not isolated or recent but forms part of an ongoing pattern of wetland reclamation within the East Kolkata Wetlands region. Despite the ecological sensitivity of the area and its Ramsar status, the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, district administration and other regulatory authorities failed to take timely preventive action. The sealing of the warehouse after the fire incident cannot cure the foundational illegality of wetland filling and unlawful construction.
26. That it is submitted that had the statutory authorities exercised due diligence, conducted periodic inspections and enforced wetland protection laws effectively such large scale commercial conversion would not have occurred. The Applicant respectfully submits that the continued existence of such illegal constructions within the East Kolkata Wetlands reflects serious regulatory lapses. The Applicant refrains from making personal allegations but submits that the pattern of inaction warrants independent scrutiny by this Hon'ble Tribunal.
27. That the manner in which wetlands are being filled up and converted for industrial and commercial use demonstrates failure in performance of statutory duties by authorities entrusted with wetland protection. Such failure not only violates statutory



mandates but also undermines the Public Trust Doctrine under which natural resources such as wetlands are held in trust by the State for the benefit of present and future generations.

28. That the Applicant has been able to identify some entities operating from the impugned site, however, the complete details of land ownership, mutation history, land classification and registration records can only be ascertained through coordinated action by (i) the District Magistrate, South 24 Parganas, (ii) the office of the Inspector General of Registration & Commissioner of Stamp Revenue, West Bengal, (iii) the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority. The Applicant therefore seeks direction for a comprehensive joint demarcation and compliance audit of the impugned site and surrounding area.

29. That the ecology of the East Kolkata Wetlands is being systematically degraded due to illegal filling, draining and conversion of wetlands in and around Karimpur Mouza. Continuous draining of water, dumping of soil and construction debris, erection of boundary walls and electric poles upon wetlands, and establishment of commercial units have severely altered the natural hydrology and ecological character of the area. Such acts are in direct contravention of the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006 and the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017.

30. That a plain examination of ground conditions reveals progressive reclamation of water bodies. The common modus operandi observed in the area appears to be (i) draining out water from wetlands, (ii) allowing marsh vegetation to grow temporarily, (iii) dumping soil, debris and solid waste to raise

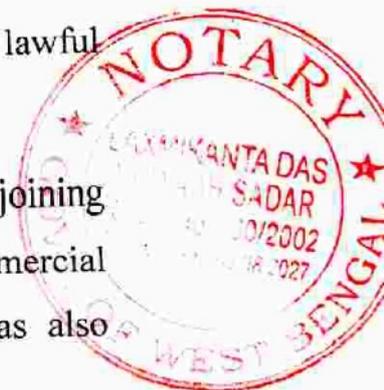


land level, (iv) constructing embankments and boundary walls, (v) facilitating access roads and electricity supply, and (vi) thereafter raising commercial or industrial structures. The establishment of warehouses, car repair workshops, food processing units and other commercial entities in the vicinity indicates systematic illegal land use conversion within an ecologically sensitive zone.

31. That statutory authorities entrusted with protection of wetlands are under a continuing obligation to monitor, inspect and prevent illegal filling and conversion. In the present case, the scale of commercial development, absence of lawful sanction, absence of valid Consent to Establish/Operate from the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, and the subsequent tragic fire incident clearly demonstrate serious lapses in enforcement. The Applicant submits that the failure to enforce wetland protection norms has enabled irreversible environmental damage and culminated in a hazardous situation.

32. That filling, reclamation and conversion of wetlands is expressly barred under applicable environmental laws. The Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 prohibit reclamation, setting up of industries, storage of hazardous substances and any construction within notified wetlands except in accordance with law. Conversion of wetland into solid land for construction of warehouses or industrial units without lawful sanction is grossly illegal.

33. That not only the impugned warehouse sites but also adjoining wetland areas are being progressively converted for commercial use. During the Applicant's visit on 30.01.2026 it was also



observed that a nearby jheel/pond had waste and debris dumped upon its embankment, indicating further ecological degradation. The cumulative impact of such activities is not confined to a single plot but affects the ecological integrity of the entire East Kolkata Wetlands area. Unless urgent remedial and restorative directions are issued by this Hon'ble Tribunal continued degradation of this Ramsar wetland is inevitable.

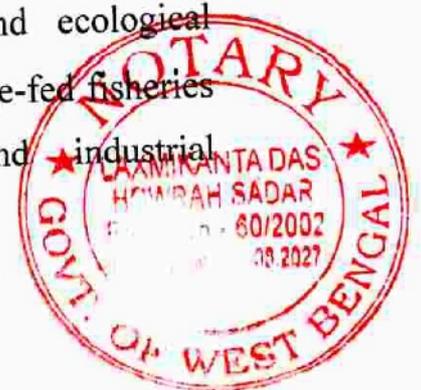
34. That the concerned statutory authorities, including the district administration, the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, and the West Bengal Pollution Control Board are under a continuing obligation to remain vigilant and to prevent any breach of environmental and wetland protection laws. In an ecologically sensitive Ramsar site region, proactive monitoring and preventive enforcement are mandatory. Failure to detect and stop large-scale wetland filling and commercial construction reflects serious regulatory lapses.

35. That the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India has consistently expanded the scope of Article 21 of the Constitution of India to include the right to a wholesome and pollution-free environment as part of the fundamental right to life. The constitutional framework under Articles 21 and 51A(g) obligates both the State and citizens to protect and preserve forests, rivers, wetlands and water bodies. Natural resources such as wetlands are held by the State in trust for the people under the Public Trust Doctrine and cannot be permitted to be degraded for private commercial gain. The degradation of the East Kolkata Wetlands, an internationally recognized Ramsar site is therefore not merely a statutory violation but a constitutional concern.



36. That appropriate and stringent directions are required to be passed by this Hon'ble Tribunal to (i) direct immediate joint inspection and demarcation of the impugned site at Karimpur Mouza, (ii) ascertain whether the warehouse structures were constructed upon notified wetlands, (iii) determine whether requisite wetland permission and consents were obtained, (iv) assess environmental damage caused by filling and dumping of waste upon wetlands, (v) direct restoration of the wetlands in Karimpur Mouza and adjacent jheel/pond to their original ecological condition, (vi) impose environmental compensation upon the violators in accordance with the "Polluter Pays" principle, (vii) fix accountability of erring officials, if any, who failed to discharge statutory duties. The Applicant respectfully submits that independent inspection by a committee comprising representatives of the West Bengal Pollution Control Board, District Administration, East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority and, if deemed appropriate, an independent environmental expert body, is necessary to ensure transparency and effective enforcement. Unless urgent intervention is made, continued ecological degradation of the East Kolkata Wetlands region is imminent.

37. That a significant portion of the State of West Bengal comprises eco-sensitive and hydrologically fragile areas, particularly those falling within or adjacent to the East Kolkata Wetlands. Indiscriminate and unauthorised construction by filling wetlands is inherently opposed to the geographical and ecological characteristics of such areas. Conversion of sewage-fed fisheries and natural wetlands into commercial and industrial



establishments disrupts natural drainage, destroys biodiversity, impairs water purification functions and increases environmental vulnerability. Such activities are contrary to the principle of “Sustainable Development” which has statutory recognition under Section 20 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. Development, if any, must be consistent with ecological limitations and environmental carrying capacity. Wetlands in and around Kolkata provide critical ecosystem services including sewage treatment, flood moderation, groundwater recharge and livelihood support. Their destruction for short-term commercial gain undermines long-term environmental security of the region.

38. That the conduct and inaction of the Respondent Authorities are contrary to established environmental principles including Sustainable Development, Precautionary Principle, Polluter Pays Principle, Public Trust Doctrine etc. Despite visible large-scale illegal conversion of wetlands and commercial use, and despite the catastrophic fire incident which exposed regulatory failures, the concerned authorities failed to take timely and effective action to prevent environmental degradation. The Applicant submits that where statutory authorities fail to discharge their environmental protection duties, this Hon’ble Tribunal is empowered and obligated to intervene in exercise of its jurisdiction under Sections 14, 15 and 20 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010.

39. That rapid urban expansion and increasing commercialisation in and around Kolkata have resulted in severe pressure upon wetlands particularly those forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands. Excessive construction activities by filling wetlands,



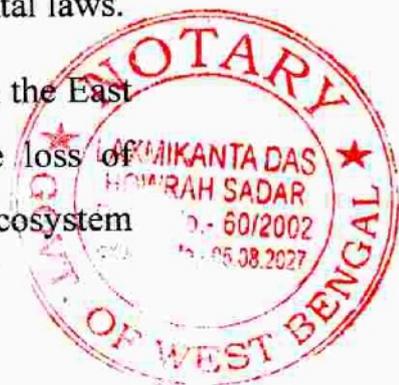
especially in areas recognised internationally for their ecological importance cause irreversible environmental damage, disturb natural drainage systems and impair ecosystem services critical to urban sustainability.

40. That the continued and progressive disappearance of wetlands in the region is a matter of grave environmental concern. Loss of wetlands directly impacts flood resilience, biodiversity conservation and public health. The present case demonstrates how environmental degradation, if left unchecked, may also result in hazardous consequences including industrial and fire-related disasters.

41. That the Respondent Authorities despite being statutorily empowered and obligated to prevent conversion of wetlands failed to exercise effective oversight in respect of the impugned constructions at Karimpur Mouza. The existence of large commercial warehouse structures, proliferation of industrial units and visible land reclamation indicate prolonged regulatory inaction.

42. That despite public reports of the tragic fire incident dated 26.01.2026 and visible evidence of illegal filling of wetlands and commercial use, no comprehensive wetland demarcation, restoration or environmental damage assessment has been initiated to the knowledge of the Applicant. The failure to undertake immediate ecological assessment and remedial action reflects serious deficiency in enforcement of environmental laws.

43. That the detrimental effects of filling of wetlands within the East Kolkata Wetlands region are self-evident and include loss of sewage treatment capacity, destruction of fishery ecosystem



(bheri system), increased vulnerability to flooding, soil instability and fire hazards and degradation of adjacent water bodies including jheel/ponds. Such degradation is contrary to statutory mandates and constitutional environmental protections.

44. That the Respondents are in violation of multiple environmental enactments including, inter alia, the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974. Operation of commercial warehouse establishments without lawful sanction and mandatory Pollution Control Board's Consent constitutes continuing environmental illegalities.

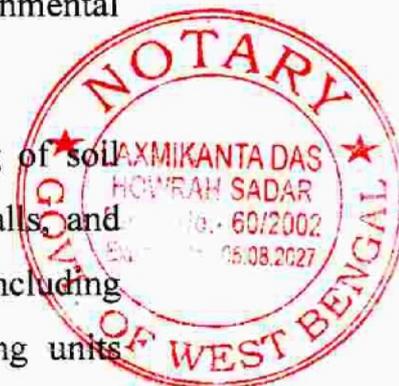
45. That the Applicant being deeply concerned with protection of the environment and ecological integrity of wetlands forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands and in view of the tragic fire incident exposing serious regulatory failure is constrained to approach this Hon'ble Tribunal by way of the present Original Application and respectfully moves the same on the following, amongst other:

GROUND

A. For that the present matter raises a substantial question relating to the environment within the meaning of Section 14 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 involving illegal filling and commercial exploitation of wetlands situated at Karimpur Mouza under Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat forming part of the East Kolkata Wetlands - an internationally recognised Ramsar site.



- B. For that the numerous individuals/persons including Private Respondents have unlawfully filled and converted wetlands for construction and operation of commercial establishments including the impugned warehouses which were sealed following the catastrophic fire incident dated 26.01.2026. Such reclamation and construction are expressly prohibited under the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017 and the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006.
- C. For that establishment and operation of commercial warehouses upon filled-up wetlands without lawful sanction, permission from EKWMA and without obtaining mandatory Consent to Establish and Consent to Operate under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981 constitute continuing statutory violations.
- D. For that the West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited has facilitated and enabled unlawful commercial use of wetlands by erecting electric poles and providing electricity connections to structures raised upon such converted wetlands. Provision of infrastructure to illegal constructions within a protected wetland region amounts to indirect encouragement of environmental illegality.
- E. For that large-scale filling of wetlands, dumping of soil and construction debris, erection of boundary walls, and proliferation of commercial establishments including warehouses, car repair units and food processing units



have severely altered the hydrological and ecological character of the area.

- F. For that during the Applicant's site visit dated 30.01.2026, a nearby jheel/pond was found with waste and debris dumped upon its embankment indicating further ecological degradation and violation of environmental norms.
- G. For that the Respondent Authorities including the East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority are under a continuing statutory obligation to monitor, prevent and remove illegal wetland encroachments and their failure to act constitutes breach of statutory duty.
- H. For that the impugned activities are contrary to the principle of Sustainable Development recognised under Section 20 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010. Development cannot be permitted in violation of ecological carrying capacity or statutory wetland protections.
- I. For that the Precautionary Principle mandates preventive action where there is risk of serious environmental harm. The tragic fire incident dated 26.01.2026 demonstrates the hazardous consequences of unregulated commercial activities within ecologically sensitive wetland areas.
- J. For that under the Polluter Pays Principle persons responsible for illegal wetland filling and environmental degradation are liable to bear the cost of restoration and environmental compensation.



- K. For that natural resources including wetlands are held by the State in trust for the benefit of present and future generations under the Doctrine of Public Trust. Permitting conversion of Ramsar site – East Kolkata Wetlands area for private commercial use is contrary to this doctrine.
- L. For that the Respondent Authorities are duty-bound to maintain the ecological integrity of wetlands in their original nature, form and character and to restore any illegally filled or converted wetland.
- M. For that the continued existence of illegal constructions (even if presently sealed) and degradation of adjacent water bodies constitute a continuing cause of action.
- N. For that the failure of the Respondents amounts to violation of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, the Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Rules, 2017, the East Kolkata Wetlands (Conservation and Management) Act, 2006, the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.
- O. For that section 18 (1) read with section 14 & 15 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 this Hon'ble Tribunal has ample jurisdiction to adjudicate this matter.
- P. For that under section 18 (2) of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 your applicant is competent to file this application before the Hon'ble Tribunal.

LIMITATION:

The Applicant declares that as per the National Green Tribunal Act 2010 this application is well within the prescribed time.



INTERIM RELIEF :

Pending disposal of the Application, the Applicants pray that this Hon'ble Tribunal be pleased to :

- A. Constitute a Joint Committee comprising representatives of (i) Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India, (ii) East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority, (iii) West Bengal Pollution Control Board, (iv) District Magistrate, South 24 Parganas to immediately inspect the site at Karimpur Mouza under Kheyadaha-II Gram Panchayat, including the sealed warehouse premises, L.R. Plot no. 65 of Karimpur Mouza and surrounding areas, and submit a factual and action taken report before this Hon'ble Tribunal within a time-bound period ;
- B. Direct the Respondent Authorities, particularly the District Magistrate, South 24 Parganas to file a detailed affidavit before this Hon'ble Tribunal disclosing (i) the complete particulars of all plots within Karimpur Mouza that have been filled up, reclaimed or converted, (ii) the names and details of recorded owners, transferees and persons presently in possession of such plots, (iii) details of any mutation, land-use conversion or change of classification carried out in respect thereof, so that the necessary private parties may be impleaded in the present proceedings and appropriate action may be taken in accordance with law ;



- C. Direct maintenance of complete status quo with respect to the impugned site and surrounding wetland areas, including restraint on any further filling or reclamation, any construction activity, any dumping of soil, debris or waste and any alteration of land character ;
- D. Direct West Bengal Pollution Control Board to place on record whether any Consent to Establish or Consent to Operate was granted to the warehouse units operating at the impugned site ;
- E. Direct immediate removal of waste and debris dumped upon the nearby jheel/pond and protection of its embankment from further degradation ;
- F. Direct the Respondent Authorities not to permit any change in nature and character of the land in official records pending disposal of this Application ;
- G. Direct submission of a preliminary restoration proposal by the competent authorities indicating steps required to restore any illegally filled wetlands ;
- H. And pass any such further order or orders as this Hon'ble Tribunal may deem fit proper and necessary up on considering the facts and circumstances of the case.

PRAYER

For the reasons stated above, it is humbly prayed that this Hon'ble Tribunal may be pleased to :

- A. Admit the Application and issue notice upon the Respondents ;



- B. Direct the Respondent Authorities to safeguard the wetlands from any encroachment, contamination or pollution ;
- C. Direct the Respondents to immediately stop construction and filling activities at part of East Kolkata Wetlands comprised in Mouza – Karimpur, J.L. No. 02, P.S. Narendrapur, South 24 Parganas ;
- D. Direct demolition and removal of illegal constructions raised upon the wetlands subject to findings of the Joint Committee and demarcation/identification exercise ;
- E. Direct assessment and imposition of Environmental Compensation upon responsible private respondents in accordance with the “Polluter Pays” principle ;
- F. Direct the Respondent Authorities to undertake time-bound ecological restoration of the filled-up wetlands and the affected jheel/pond, including removal of debris and revival of natural hydrology ;
- G. Direct fixation of responsibility upon erring officials, if found negligent in discharge of statutory duties, in accordance with law and direct investigation by any investigating agency upon acts of collusion of East Kolkata Wetlands Management Authority officials, West Bengal State Electricity Distribution Company Limited, Local body with land sharks in facilitating filling and sale of the wetlands ;
- H. Direct the West Bengal Pollution Control Board to take appropriate statutory action against units found operating



without valid consent and lawful sanction/permission by the EKWMA ;

- I. Direct the offices under the Inspector General of Registration & Commissioner of Stamp Revenue, West Bengal not to allow registration of any document in connection with any property comprised within Karimpur Mouza without permission of committee set up by the East Kolkata Wetlands ;
- J. Issue an order to constitute a high level committee to monitor the restoration of the wetlands comprised in Mouza – Karimpur, J.L. No. 02, P.S. Narendrapur, South 24 Parganas and submit periodical reports to this Hon'ble Tribunal ;

And pass any such further order or orders as this Hon'ble Tribunal may deem fit proper and necessary upon considering the facts and circumstances of the case.



VERIFICATION

I, Ankur Sharma, son of Shri Ambooj Sharma, aged about 28 years residing at 13/3, Dr. P. K. Banerjee Road, P.S. & District – Howrah, West Bengal - 711101 state that I am the Applicant in the present Original Application. I verify that the contents of paragraphs 1 to 24 are true and correct to my knowledge and belief, and that the contents of the remaining paragraphs are based on information derived from records and documents believed to be true and correct, and are my humble prayers before your Lordship and I have not suppressed any material facts herein.

Date: 02/02/2026

Ankur Sharma

Place : Howrah

Applicant

SL. NO. ~~K/ Feb / 2025 / 26~~

AFFIDAVIT

BEFORE THE NOTARY PUBLIC
HOWRAH

I, Ankur Sharma son of Shri Ambooj Sharma, aged about 28 years residing at 13/3, Dr. P. K. Banerjee Road, P.S. & District – Howrah, West Bengal - 711101 state that I am the Applicant of this Application and I am well conversant with the facts and circumstances of the instant Original Application and I am competent to swear and affirm this Affidavit. I verify that the contents of paragraphs 1 to 24 are true and correct to my knowledge and belief, and that the contents of the remaining paragraphs are based on information derived from records and documents believed to be true and correct, and are my humble prayers before your Lordship and I have not suppressed any material facts herein.

Date : 02/02/2026

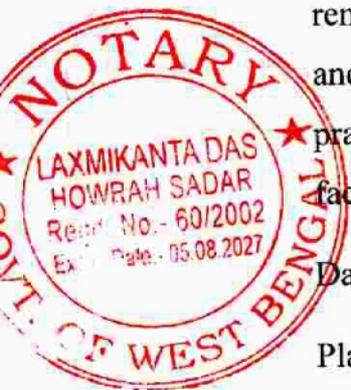
Ankur Sharma

Place: Howrah

Applicant

SOLEMNLY AFFIRMED & DECLARED
BEFORE ME BY THE DEponent ON
IDENTIFICATION OF ADVOCATEIdentified by
Ayushi Kakarania
F/498/371/2021Place Judges' Court
Kalyani - 741235
W.B. India02.02.26
LAXMIKANTA DAS
NOTARY HOWRAH
Govt. of West Bengal

02 FEB 2026



Fire exposes EKW fill-up, both godowns came up on bheri

Jan 28, 2026, 01:27 AM IST

RAMSAR SITE AT RISK



The 8-bigha plot used to be a fish farm till a decade ago

- > Around 620-odd unauthorised units that were functioning in EKW, showed a survey in 2023
- > The max encroachments have happened in Jagatipota, Mukundapur, Atghara and Takdaha Kapatasi



East Kolkata Wetlands

Ward boundary

Dhapa

Karimpur

Jagatipota

Mukundapur

Basanti Highway

EM Bypass

KMC area within Ramsar boundary

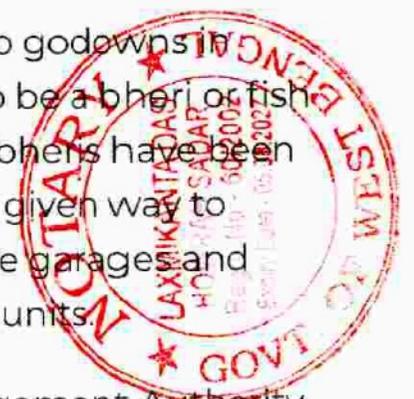
Map not to scale

N

Nazrabad is in Karimpur mouja

- > Scores of bheris have given way to warehouses of e-commerce firms, automobile garages and hundreds of plastic recycling and processing units
- > Till date, EKWMA has lodged over 500 FIRs against illegal fill-up of bheris

Kolkata: The massive fire that burnt down two godowns in Nazirabad are on an 8-bigha plot that used to be a bheri or fish farm till a decade ago. Not just this, scores of bheris have been filled up in the belt over the past decade and given way to warehouses of e-commerce firms, automobile garages and hundreds of plastic recycling and processing units.



An official of the East Kolkata Wetland Management Authority acknowledged the two godowns in Karimpur mouja under Kheyada 2 gram panchayat were situated in the wetland that is internationally recognised and listed as a Ramsar site.

"Any plot that lies beyond the Urbana housing complex is in the wetland. Since encroachments were taking place, the EKW boundary was demarcated here in 2022. But encroachment continues unabated," the official said, adding that EKWMA had till date lodged over 500 FIRs against illegal fill-up of bheris.

"The waterbody was filled up about a decade ago. Both godowns have been operating for about seven-eight years. Plots of many houses or apartments that have come up in this area are wetlands," a local said. Samir Raha, who runs a shop about 100 metres away from the fire site, recounted that once the water bodies were filled,

factories, godowns and houses mushroomed in this area. "Over the years, the population of this area has also increased," he said.

These two godowns were among 620-odd unauthorised units that were functioning in EKW when the Society for Creative Opportunities and Participatory Ecosystems (SCOPE) conducted a survey in 2023. "Since then, we estimate at least 200 more units have sprung up," said SCOPE project director Dhruba Das Gupta.

The development of three roads in the past decade has accelerated the encroachment in other parts of EKW. The first road starts next to Urbana and ends at Basanti Highway. "Almost all the bheris that were there in this area have shrunk or disappeared," said Das Gupta. The second road is from Bantala to Sonarpur station via Jalpath, Kheyada High School and Tolly Nullah. There is a third road that runs along the Tolly Nullah that was widened after the canal's dredging in 2017. The maximum encroachments have happened in Jagatipota, Mukundapur, Atghara and Takdaha Kapatasi. Other areas where encroachment has taken place include Hatgachha mouza under Bamanghata gram panchayat. SCOPE did a Census in 2021-22 and found 1,662 households. Locals say that number may have doubled by now.

Dhapa Manpur mouza, which came under Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation, has seen a huge urbanisation and loss of productive land. This is the biggest mouza within EKW and houses the biggest bheris in EKW.



Kolkata warehouse fire result of TMC's corruption, Shah

Feb 1, 2026, 03.30 AM IST



Kolkata/Siliguri: Union home minister Amit Shah alleged on Saturday the eastern Kolkata warehouse fire that killed 27 was not an accident but the result of Trinamool Congress's corruption and claimed CM Mamata Banerjee "needs a cataract operation" because she is blinded by affection for her nephew Abhishek Banerjee.

Addressing BJP workers in Barrackpore on Kolkata's outskirts, Shah said Trinamool govt failed victims because of corruption and votebank politics. He claimed Banerjee would have reacted differently had "if the victims been infiltrators", adding police beat BJP workers who tried to protest. "She should be ashamed," Shah said.

Later, at a public meeting in Siliguri in north Bengal, Shah alleged that Trinamool's men were involved in the blaze that gutted two warehouses - owned by Pushpanjali Decorators and partly leased to pan-India fast-food chain Wow! Momo.

Shah said the warehouses lacked environmental clearance and were built on wetlands. "Had anyone closed the gate when people were shouting inside? After a BJP govt is formed here in April, we will find the culprits and put them behind bars," he said, referring to the assembly elections.



Questioning alleged Trinamool links to the momo factory operating inside the warehouse, Shah demanded a "proper investigation" into why safety norms were ignored. "Why did this happen? Who had invested in the momo factory?" he asked.

Raising the issue of dynasty politics, Shah said Banerjee was shielding her nephew - TMC national general secretary Abhishek Banerjee, often referred to as "bhaipo" in Bengal politics. "Mamata didi needs a cataract operation because she can't see properly. She is blinded by her affection for her nephew," he said.



Reeling off names of 23 Trinamool politicians facing corruption allegations, Shah challenged the CM to field them as candidates in the upcoming elections. "She cannot do that because she is afraid they will turn witnesses against bhaipo," he said.

Shah promised that if BJP is elected to office in Bengal, all corruption cases would be probed under Supreme Court supervision.

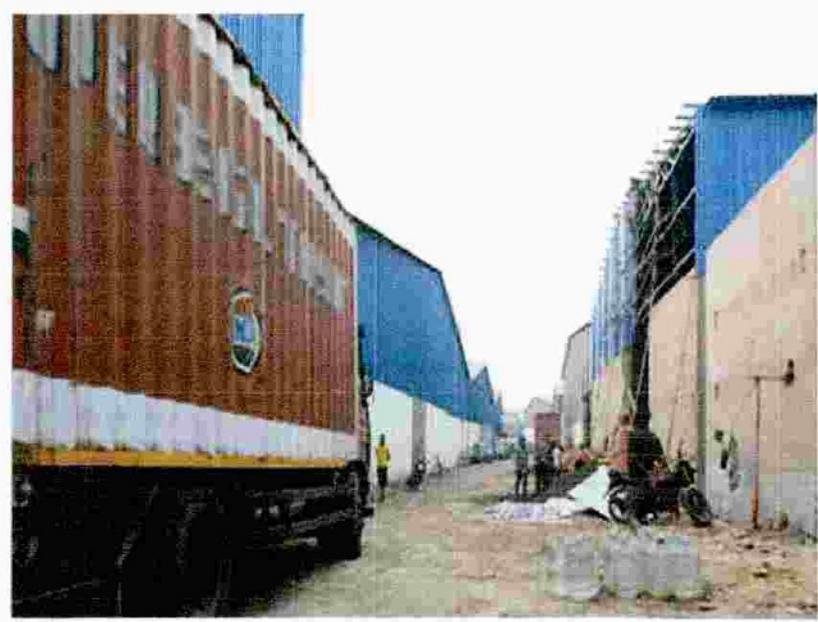
The minister claimed BJP would cross 50% vote share in the 2026 polls. "In 2019 we had 41%, in 2021 we had 38%, in 2024 we got 39%. It is time to go past 45%," he told party workers, saying the change in govt will be a "fitting tribute" to Syama Prasad Mukherjee.

On border security, Shah alleged the Bengal govt had not provided land to BSF to build a proposed fence along India-Bangladesh border.

Seeking to reassure Matua and Namashudra communities amid EC's SIR exercise, Shah alleged that they were being intimidated.

E-comm warehouses gobble up wetlands

Jan 29, 2026, 11:51 PM IST



Kolkata: Around 50 m from the site of the warehouse tragedy in Karimpur, which lies in the shadow of the towering Urbana condominium complex, two giant sheds are humming with activity. These sheds house three e-commerce facilities that cater to customers, all located to the west of the godowns. To the east lie wetlands that are barely visible from the ground. It requires a bird's-eye view to spot the water bodies at a distance. Such a vantage point also reveals the rapidly expanding tentacles of large steel sheds that are fast gobbling up these water bodies.

A 1.5 sq km area behind Urbana, in what is officially still a part of East Kolkata Wetlands but, in reality, just east Kolkata with wetlands buried under tonnes of earth, functions 24x7. The sheds have warehouses of all e-commerce firms that operate in the city: Amazon, Flipkart, Big Basket, Blinkit, Swiggy Instamart, and more. During the day, hundreds of delivery partners ride into the zone to pick up orders and head westward to housing complexes and apartment blocks to deliver them. Some of them function at night, too.

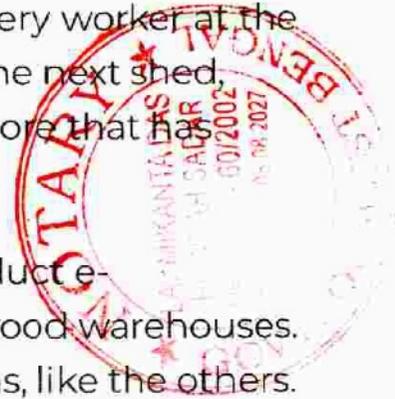
Early on Monday, when the Wow! Momo and the adjoining Pushpanjali Decorators godowns went up in flames, a couple of gig workers at the Flipkart 'dark store' attempted to venture near, but the intense wave of heat made them back away. Although those who worked there later heard about the recovery of nearly two dozen charred

bodies from the sheds, which were very much like the ones they operated in, the gig workers had no time to reflect on the tragedy.

"We work nine hours a day and are continuously on the move. Some of us saw the fire. Nearly all of us inhaled the acrid smoke that persisted for a day. The deaths are unfortunate but life must go on," said a delivery worker at the Flipkart dark store next-door operating for 1.5 years. Another store of the brand is coming up in the next shed, which housed a Big Basket dark store for four months. A little further up is a Swiggy Instamart store that has been operating for 1.5 years. The oldest is a Zepto store that came up three years ago.

There are scores of such godowns near Meghnad Saha Institute of Technology. While some conduct e-commerce, there are over a dozen that house vehicle service units. Further on, are scores of plywood warehouses. Barely 1 km from the site of the fire, two new sheds are under construction on bheris or fish farms, like the others. Next to them is a recently reclaimed plot, the site of the next warehouse.

"This entire area had bheris and farms till five years ago. Then the pandemic happened. With no monitoring of the wetlands, deals were struck and bheris were filled up. E-commerce, fuelled by the pandemic, provided a ready market, and warehouses came up. Now, the growth is taking monstrous proportions, threatening to devour EKW," said a local fisherman who became unemployed after the bheri he worked in disappeared. His son now does gig work in the warehouse that sprang up on the plot.

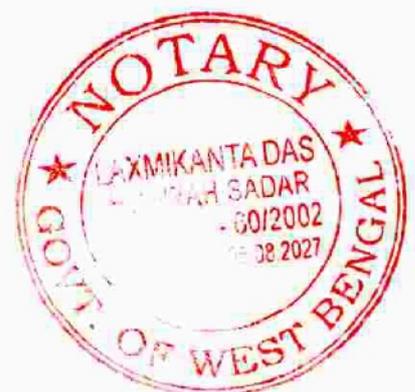


Warehouses gutted in Bengal's Nazirabad fire were illegally built on wetlands: Panchayat official

A fire official on Monday said the two warehouses did not have fire safety clearance and were functioning without any approval.

Updated on: Jan 31, 2026 6:55 AM IST

By [Joydeep Thakur](#)



Kolkata: The two warehouses in West Bengal's Nazirabad area, where at least 27 people are feared dead after a massive fire earlier this week, were built illegally on the protected East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW), Sonarpur panchayat samiti secretary (karmadakshya) Prasanta Biswas said on Friday.



With the fire accident, the issue of illegal filling up of wetlands and construction of unauthorised buildings in the area has taken a political turn. (PTI)

Advertisement



“The Karimpur mouza under the Kheadaha-II village panchayat is entirely under the East Kolkata Wetlands (EKW). No construction is allowed here. Be rest assured that the panchayat didn’t give any permission to the two warehouses. They have come up illegally,” Biswas said.

The police have arrested three persons including Gangadhar Das, the owner of the decorator's firm who also owned the two warehouses. On Friday two officials of Wow! Momo, the manager and deputy manager of the warehouse, were arrested.

A massive fire on January 26 gutted two warehouses near Kolkata, where the toll remains unknown even as police said they have recovered 21 body parts from the site. It has now been revealed that these warehouses, along with multiple others, were allegedly built in violation of Ramsar Convention, an international treaty.

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According to officials involved in rescue and search operations, while in one of the warehouses items such as thermocol, foam-sheets, cloth and wooden planks belonging to a decorator were stored, the other was being used by a Kolkata-based fast food restaurant chain Wow Momos. The decorator's firm was the owner of both the warehouses.

"Wow! Momo took the warehouse on rent from Pushpanjali Decorators in 2023. We have submitted all the documents to the police. It was a dry warehouse where daily items needed in our stores, such as tissues, cold drinks and bottled water, were stored," said an official of Wow! Momo, who was willing to be quoted.

Advertisement



Unauthorised constructions in East Kolkata Wetland area

A fire official on Monday said the two warehouses did not have fire safety clearance and were functioning without any approval.

Roshini Sen, member secretary of the East Kolkata Wetland Management Authority (EKWMA), said they were constantly taking action against unauthorised constructions in the EKW area, but new structures continued to come up. "We are doing whatever is within our

disconnected,” Sen said.

Data available with the EKWMA reveals that between July 2007 and February 2021, at least 358 cases were registered across eight police stations in and around Kolkata in connection with unauthorised constructions, filling up of water bodies, and even attacks on government officials during field surveys in the wetlands.

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NGOs working on the East Kolkata Wetlands, however, said the number of cases is just the tip of the iceberg and that violations on the ground are far more widespread.

Also Read: [14 samples of human remains sent for forensic analysis after Nazirabad fire in Bengal](#)

“Till 2024, at least 493 cases have been registered against unauthorised constructions and illegal filling up of water bodies in the East Kolkata Wetlands. Even the two warehouses that were gutted were built on a wetland in Karimpur mouza. But till date there has been no conviction in the cases registered. The illegal constructions are demolished and electricity is disconnected only on paper,” said

Spreading over 12,500 hectares, the EKW is often referred to as the natural kidney of Kolkata as it has the capacity to treat millions of gallons of the city's sewage. It was designated a Ramsar site in 2002. But this vast landscape on the eastern edge of the city has, over the years, remained a target of land sharks who illegally fill up wetlands and construct buildings.

A visit to the area off the EM Bypass in Kolkata revealed that multiple warehouses have come up there. There were buildings, some standing three storeys tall. Local residents and a section of panchayat officials said these were all illegal. 'Hogla', a perennial aquatic plant that usually grows in wetland ecosystems, could be seen almost everywhere.

Advertisement



Political turn after the Sonarpur fire

With the fire accident, the issue of illegal filling up of wetlands and construction of unauthorised buildings in the area has taken a political turn.

The Prime Minister's Office (PMO) announced a compensation of ₹2 lakh for the next of kin of each deceased person and ₹50,000 for the injured from the PMNRF.

"The recent fire mishap in Anandapur, West Bengal, is very tragic and saddening. My condolences to those who have lost their loved ones. I pray that those injured recover at the earliest," the PMO wrote on X.

Suwendu Adhikari, Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) legislator and Leader of the Opposition in the state legislative assembly, held a rally in Kolkata on Friday demanding the arrest of the owners of Wow! Momo and the resignation of state fire minister Sujit Bose.

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"The state fire minister should resign. The owner of the momo company had accompanied the chief minister on a foreign trip. He

job,” Adhikari said.

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He also slammed the state government for rampant illegal filling up of wetlands and unauthorised constructions in the East Kolkata Wetlands, a Ramsar site.

“Who gave the permission to fill up the wetlands? On whose order were the buildings constructed? Who gave them the NOC and PUC? We won’t leave this,” Adhikari said while addressing the protest rally.

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The BJP is also likely to move the Calcutta High Court next week over the issue of filling up of wetlands and illegal constructions in the EKW.

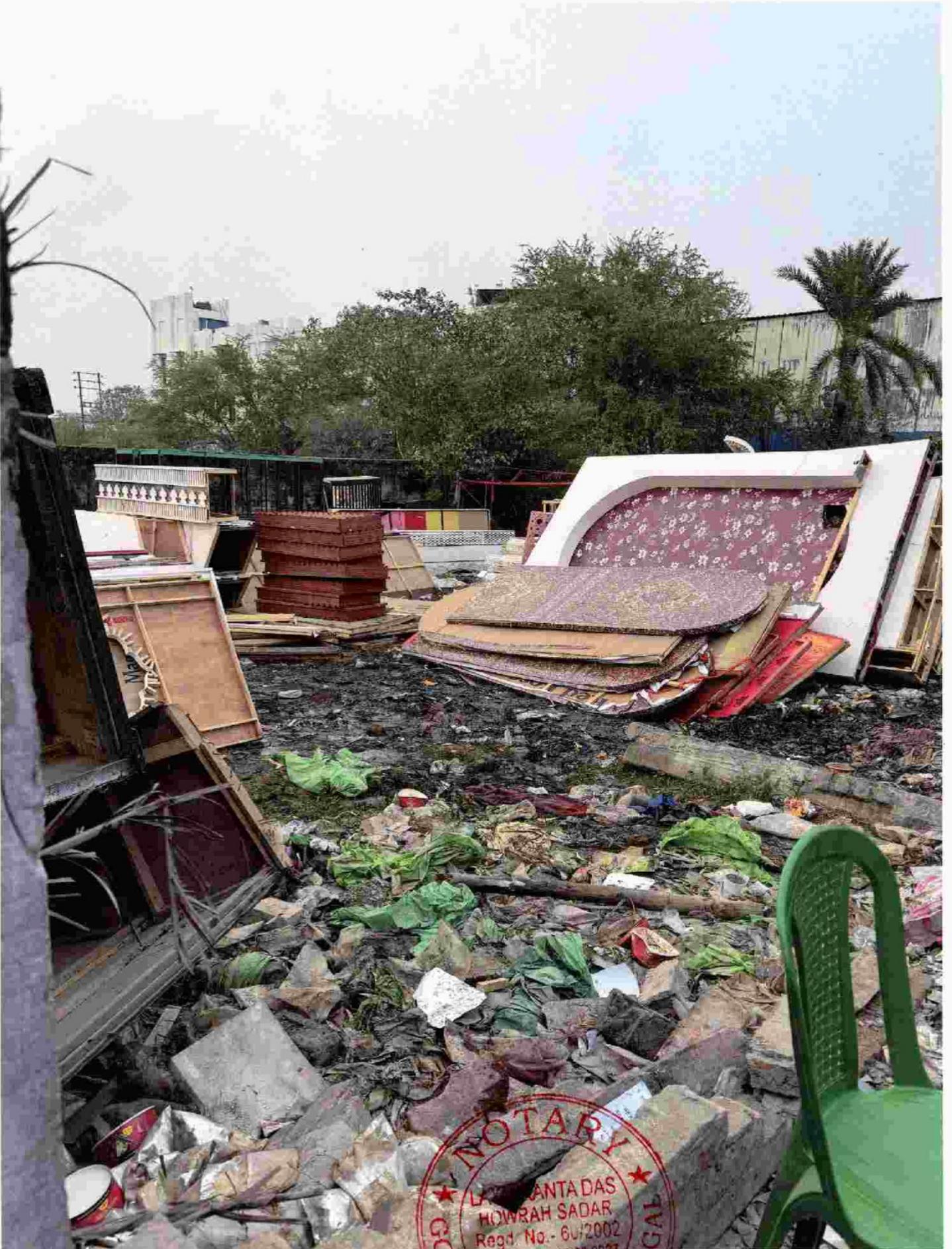
The state government had earlier announced a compensation of ₹10 lakh for the next of kin of each deceased person.

State environment minister Chandrima Bhattacharya said, “Investigation is going on. If anyone thinks that unauthorised buildings have been constructed on the wetlands, he should lodge a complaint.



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