

“Muttukadu encroached by pvt entities”

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NGT Panel Visited Five Sites Near Waterbody

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Chennai: Private entities have encroached around 183 acres of government land near Muttukadu backwaters in Chennai, an inspection report submitted before the National Green Tribunal (NGT) has revealed.

The report further confirmed that untreated sewage released from these encroachments, private tankers and other residents or establishments had polluted the waterbody.



ECOLOGICAL DISASTER

NGT Southern Zone, which took suo moto cognizance of encroachments and pollution near Muttukadu last year, constituted a joint-committee to study the problem and recommend relief measures.

The committee that visited the five sites – Navalur, Padur, Kazhipattur, Egattur and Muttukadu Boat House – confirmed encroachments in three locations.

At Egattur, Hiranandani Realtors Private Limited encroached on a piece of Public Works Department

(PWD) land by laying a nine-metre wide bituminous road with streetlights, the committee said in its report. Chettinad Morimura Semiconductor Material Private Limited and a prawn hatchery have encroached on poramboke land in Kazhipattur and Padur villages.

In August, the committee informed the tribunal that the PWD and revenue officials were taking steps to initiate action against the violators. But there was no update during the recent hearing on November 26, when the water quality test reports were submitted.

Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB), which analysed water samples collected from the five locations, told the tribunal that the Biochemical Oxygen Demand (BOD) levels ranged from 11 to 17 mg per litre. This confirmed the release of sewage into the waterbody from nearby areas.

What makes things worse is that the state government has no plan to revive the waterbody under its flagship Chennai River Restoration Programme (CRRP). It is up to the local bodies or revenue officials to protect the environment here.

They claim to have seized some trucks, which illegally dumped sewage into Buckingham Canal and have installed CCTV cameras, gates and height barriers to prevent such incidents or further encroachments in the future.

TNPCB, however, has directed village panchayats of Muttukadu, Navalur and Padur to pay ₹16 lakh each as compensation for not following Solid Waste Management Rules, 2016 and causing damage to the environment.

The case will be heard again on December 23.

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