

**BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL SOUTHERN ZONE
BENCH AT CHENNAI**

OA No 256 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF:

**NEWS ITEM TITLED RAPID URBANIZATION TAKES TOLL ON MANGROVE IN
VIAG APPEARING IN THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS DATED 25 06 2024**

..... Applicant

Vs

**MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE THROUGH ITS
REGIONAL OFFICE & OTHERS**

.... Respondents

REPORT FILED BY THE DISTRICT COLLECTOR – R6

DATE - 26.11.2024



**M/s MADHURI DONTI REDDY
ADVOCATE**

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A.P. POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD

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Report in compliance with the Hon'ble NGT, Principal Beach, New Delhi vide Order dated 23.07.2024 in Original Application No. 881 of 2024(PB) on the News Item titled "Rapid urbanization takes toll on Mangroves in Vizag" which appeared in The New Indian Express dated 25.06.2024.

It is to submit that the Hon'ble NGT, Principal Beach, New Delhi registered *suo-motu case* based on the News Item titled ""**Rapid urbanization takes toll on Mangroves in Vizag**" which appeared in The New Indian Express dated 25.06.2024. Copy of the news item published in The New Indian Express dated 25.06.2024 is submitted as Annexure-I.

The matter relates to significant reduction in the Mangrove stretches in Vishakhapatnam in Andhra Pradesh due to rapid urbanization and industrialization. As per the article, these vital ecosystems have been reduced to a few small patches and are now threatened by ongoing development. The article highlights the crucial role mangroves play in protecting shorelines from erosion and providing habitat for diverse wildlife.

The article alleges that historically extensive, these mangroves now exist in small, endangered patches. The Meghadri Gedda, a rain-fed drain flowing into the Bay of Bengal near Visakhapatnam harbour which once supported a vibrant mangrove ecosystem, has been particularly affected, with construction debris posing a significant threat. Furthermore, it is stated that in the 1990s, mangroves stretched from the Naval Dockyard Bridge to areas like Sheela Nagar and Gnanapuram, reaching heights up to 5 metres. However, due to construction and infrastructure development, their size has drastically reduced. By 2008, their height had diminished to 3 metres, and the canopy also shrank.

The article further alleges that the mangrove patch near the Gosthani river mouth in Bheemili is also diminished and awaits replantation approval. A 2023 study by the Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education-Coastal Ecosystem Centre (ICFRE-CEC) identified approximately 220 hectares of mangrove patches in the Visakhapatnam district, but these were not included in the Forest Survey of India report. It is stated that the decline in mangrove habitats has also impacted bird species. Near-threatened species like the Eurasian curlew, Oriental darter, and black-headed ibis have seen

significant declines. The fishing community, which relies on the mangrove ecosystem for fish production is also facing economic and livelihood challenges.

The Hon'ble NGT, impleaded following respondents in this matter and requested the southern zone bench for appropriate further action and transferred the OA to southern zone bench, Chennai. Copy of the Hon'ble NGT order dated 23.07.2024 in O.A. No. 881 of 2024 (PB) is submitted as Annexure-II.

- (i) Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Through its Regional Office, Integrated Regional Office (Vijayawada), Vijayawada Green House Complex, Gopalareddy Road, Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh 520010
- (ii) Principal Chief Conservator of Forest, Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhavan, P.V.S.Land Mark, Near APIIC Towers, Mangalagiri, Guntur District, Andhra Pradesh 522503
- (iii) Chief Wildlife Warden, Andhra Pradesh, Aranya Bhawan, K.M. Munshi Road, Nagarampalem, Guntur, Andhra Pradesh 522004
- (iv) National Coastal Zone Management Authority, Through its Chairperson, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jorbagh Road, New Delhi – 110 003
- (v) Andhra Pradesh Coastal Zone Management Authority, Through its Chairman, D.No. 33-26-14 D/2, Near Sunrise Hospital, Chalamavari Street, Kasturibaipet, Vijayawada -520010
- (vi) District Magistrate, Visakhapatnam, National Informatics Centre, Collectorate, Maharanieta, Visakhapatnam-530002

Accordingly, the Collector & District Magistrate, Visakhapatnam district vide proceedings dated 14.08.2024 has constituted a committee with the following members:

1.	District Forest Officer, Forest Department, Visakhapatnam	Chairman
2.	Revenue Divisional Officer, Visakhapatnam	Member
3.	Municipal Commissioner, Greater Visakhapatnam Municipal Corporation, Visakhapatnam	Member
4.	VC & MD, Visakhapatnam Metropolitan Region	Member

	Development Authority, Visakhapatnam	
5.	Joint Director, Fisheries Department, Visakhapatnam	Member
6.	Superintending Engineer, Department of Irrigation, Visakhapatnam.	Member
7.	Environmental Engineer, Regional Office, A.P. Pollution Control Board, Visakhapatnam	Member

Further, the committee was directed to submit detailed report duly mentioning remedial measures/plan of action on the following so as to submit the report to the Hon'ble NGT:

- i. Assessing the impact on the Mangrove stretches in Visakhapatnam due to rapid urbanization / industrialization as alleged in the news article, especially in the following areas a) Meghadrigedda drain & b) Gosthani river mouth near Bheemili.
- ii. Suggesting remedial measures / plan of action to revive the coastal mangroves in the identified stretches.

Copy of the Collector & District Magistrate, Visakhapatnam district vide proceedings dated 14.08.2024 is submitted as Annexure-III.

The District Forest Officer, IFS requested the committee members vide letter Rc. No. 822/2024-S2 dated 19.08.2024, to attend the joint survey on 23.08.2024 to visit 04 locations viz., 1. Visakhapatnam Port Trust 2. Mulakuddu village, Bheemunipatnam Mandal 3. Meghadrigedda drain flowing into Bay of Bengal and 4. Naval Dockyard bridge to areas like Sheelanagar and Gnanapuram to submit detail report to the Collector & District Magistrate. Copy of the DFO letter dated 19.08.2024 submitted as Annexure-IV.

The Hon'ble NGT, Chennai in its order dated 24.09.2024 in Original Application No. 256/2024 (SZ) [Earlier O.A. No. 881 of 2024 (PB)], stated the following:

"1. The above case has been Suo Motu registered by the Principal Bench of the National Green Tribunal, New Delhi as Original Application No.881 of

2024(PB) based on the news item published in 'The New Indian Express' dated 25.06.2024 titled "Rapid urbanisation takes toll on Mangroves in Vizag" which has been transferred to this Bench and renumbered as Original Application No.256 of 2024(SZ).

2. Let notice be issued to the respondents through the Tribunal.

3. The learned counsel Mr. Madhuri Donti Reddy accepts notice on behalf of Respondents. No.2, 3, 5 and 6.

4. The learned counsels appearing for the appropriate authorities are directed to take the papers from the Registry and file a report before the next date of hearing.

Let the matter be listed on 26.11.2024."

Copy of the Hon'ble NGT order dated 24.09.2024 is submitted as Annexure- V.

As per the proceedings, the committee members along with the VPA representatives inspected the Meghadrigedda drain on 23.08.2024 and Gosthani river mouth near Bheemili on 24.08.2024 and submitted Joint Committee report to the Collector & District Magistrate, Visakhapatnam District on 24.11.2024. Copy of the Joint Committee Report is herewith submitted as Annexure-VI. Further, the Joint Committee suggested the following suggestions and conclusions and to direct the relevant authorities for timely implementation:

Suggestions:

- The practices above mentioned would help rejuvenate the mangroves within VPA limits by providing protection against adverse impacts of tropical cyclones and associated wave surges.
- Will improve the quality of mangroves and enhances the greenery and biodiversity that also supports the marine ecosystem.
- Safeguard the last surviving mangrove patch of the city and provide potential habitats for winter migrants and various endangered bird species.
- Necessary actions would help display commitment of VPA authorities towards sustainable development and strengthen fight against climate change.

- A 2023 study by the ICFRE-CEC identified 220 hectares of mangrove patches in the Visakhapatnam district, but these were not included in the Forest Survey of India report needs to be included in FSI report.

Conclusion:

The committee strongly recommends immediate action to address the degradation of mangrove ecosystems in Visakhapatnam. The proposed measures, if implemented effectively, will not only restore the mangroves but also safeguard the region against future environmental challenges. VPA shall ensure that there is no violation of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986, CRZ Rules 1991 and Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980.

This report is submitted for kind consideration and will abide by all such directions as the Hon'ble Tribunal may deem fit and appropriate.

Place: Visakhapatnam
Dt. 25.11.2024


Collector & District Magistrate,
Visakhapatnam District
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BCE
BPO