

Both Delhi & Ggn responsible for dirty Najafgarh drain: NGT

Asks Them To Clean It Fast; Next Hearing Due On Wednesday

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

New Delhi: The National Green Tribunal has held both Delhi and Gurgaon responsible for pollution in the Najafgarh drain, an old course of the Sahibi river originating in Jaipur, and ordered them to clean it on a war footing.

The NGT's order came after it took suo motu cognizance of a July 5 **TOI** report of a huge number of fish found dead in the drain due to high pollution levels. The tribunal had formed a joint committee to submit an action-taken report. The report submitted by the committee on October 22 put the onus of compliance on environmental norms in industries, sewage treatment plants and common effluent treatment plants in the lake's catchment area on Haryana State Pollution Control Board (HSPCB) and Gurugram Metropolitan Development Authority (GMDA). Later, Haryana State Pollution Control Board acknowledged the discharge of untreated sewage in the catchment area by GMDA.

The joint committee, with its members being the Central Pollution Control Board, Delhi Jal Board, Delhi Pollution Control Committee and others, had earlier stated that untreated waste from Haryana's drains and heavy rain led to depletion of dis-



File photo

NGT's joint committee earlier recommended that an independent monitoring mechanism be established for real-time monitoring of water quality in the Najafgarh drain

solved oxygen, causing the fish to be suffocated. The panel reported fish succumbing between Dhansa Regulator and Ghumanhera bridge on the Najafgarh drain.

The committee recommended that an independent monitoring mechanism be established for real-time monitoring of water quality in the drain and asked HSPCB and GMDA to ensure compliance of environmental norms in its areas.

The report also said that the washout of deposited sewage sludge and other

toxic chemicals in the bottom of the drain during heavy rainfall also affected the water quality of Najafgarh. It recommended a study on source apportionment, including gap analysis study, by Haryana state government departments to identify the pollutant load in the three drains and take steps to check them.

The report also suggested that Delhi government's irrigation & flood control department should ensure cleaning and desilting of the canals before the monsoon season, apart from periodic dredging and de-weeding. It also recommended execution of the environment management plan.

Following this, the tribunal bench headed by NGT chairperson Adarsh Kumar Goel said in a judgment dated November 30 that both Delhi and Haryana were responsible for the pollution in the lake and drain. "From the above, it is seen that pollution is being discharged in Gurgaon as well as in Delhi and remedial action so far taken is inadequate. The problem remains and this has to be remedied on war footing," the bench declared.

NGT said it was also hearing another case, with matter connected to this, and thus disposed of this case to avoid duplication. The next hearing will be held on December 7.

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Story of life (Clockwise from left) Women carrying pots of water home in Rajasthan; visitors at the Thaneer! Thaneer! festival of water at DakshinaChitra Heritage Museum, Chennai; and Sara Ahmed. (GETTY IMAGES, S.R. RAGHUNATHAN AND SPECIAL ARRANGEMENT)



Network of Water Museums endorsed by UNESCO's Intergovernmental Hydrology Programme.

Cut to 2023

There is much planned for the year ahead. The Living Waters of Kolkata, a digital exhibition will be launched in 2023 along the lines of work on urban waterscapes in Mumbai and Pune.

Ahmed will soon launch a digital exhibition, Jal Jharoka, or window on water, developed in collaboration with the Mehrangarh Museum Trust, Jodhpur; artists, designers and researchers will look at water heritage from the days of the royalty around the Mehrangarh Fort to everyday water practices in the old city.

A Himalayan Water Repository through Woodstock School, Mussoorie explore the local water history, community and livelihoods as well as highlight water memories. The project will run over one year from January 2023 and will be linked to the school's curriculum.

See and touch

The global network of water museums has grown from some 30 members in

2017 to about 75-80 now. There are physical water museums in China, France, Germany, the Netherlands, Bangladesh, Spain, Italy, Ecuador, Portugal and Mexico.

Ahmed points out that India, despite its rich water heritage and culture, doesn't have a physical water museum yet (there is an upcoming one in Kilpauk, Chennai). "Physical museums come up around some historical water infrastructures so they convey history and stories, and more. They are tangible and you can see, touch. I do think India needs a physical museum with the kind of rich and diverse water heritage it has."

That said, the virtual museum is fascinating. It seeks to bring in the perspectives of creative and performing arts around water. "I realised that we were not engaging with the community and with those whose work intersects with water, for example conservation architects restoring stepwells. I saw that there are a lot of conversations around water happening in design spaces and architectural spaces, but this small creative community is not visible in mainstream dialogues around water. The museum is an attempt to bridge culture, design, sustainability, creativity and justice, through stories."

Not just climate change

Ahmed also points out that while climate change is an important issue to be addressed, dialogues on other pressing issues around the environment and water need to happen more. "The recent story of the little boy who was beaten to death in a school in Rajasthan for collecting water from an upper-caste teacher's pot; this is not about climate change. We need to work on issues of everyday vulnerabilities that people in India face because of their gender or identity."

Through the Living Waters Museum, Ahmed also hopes to share solutions. "When it comes to water conservation, there are many simple questions like how to set up water harvesting, how to reuse water in toilets, etc. We want to begin to share this information locally. So far, we are only documenting and creating digital archives of our water history. But after a while, people also want to know what they can do. A digital museum can help make water technology options more accessible."

The writer is an independent Chennai-based journalist.

Kavitha Muralidharan

A woman's relationship with water has always been complex. "Today we speak about gender and water, but I don't really think the situation has fundamentally changed in the last few decades. Words like 'gender', 'equity' and 'inclusion' are still very much on the margins of our discourse on water," says Sara Ahmed, founder of the Living Water Museum, a virtual repository on water heritage in India, which she launched in 2017.

There are many examples of men fetching water, especially during periods of water scarcity, but have we ever seen them head-loading water like women, asks Ahmed. The questions of gender and caste inevitably arise when it comes to access to water. "While there are women who have to spend hours fetching water, there are also upper-caste communities that don't allow women to step out of the house to collect water or to join discussions on their local water problems."

An equal music

Ahmed, who was in Chennai recently for a two-day festival of water, Thaneer! Thaneer!, at DakshinaChitra Museum,

Water dialogues

Sara Ahmed, who founded the digital Living Water Museum, is now launching several virtual platforms to make water technology options more accessible

says that providing better access to water for domestic use reduces the time and energy women spend collecting it, which in turn can become income-generating opportunities.

At the festival, Sukrit Sen, art and outreach coordinator of the museum, engaged school students on water conservation and their water footprint, interspersing his interaction with music from water pots. "If I had known the value of water as a child, I wouldn't have wasted so much in toilets and

washbasins. So, I try to make children understand what would happen if one day our water disappeared," says Sen.

The Living Waters Museum seeks to 'engage youth in visualising water heritage and reimagining sustainable, inclusive and equitable water futures' through storytelling, interactive technology and the creative and performing arts (www.livingwatersmuseum.org). The museum is also a founding member of the Global



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T.N. issues first warning as Mullaperiyar water level rises

Tamil Nadu issued the first warning on Saturday evening with the water level in the Mullaperiyar dam reaching 140 ft. The upper rule level was 142 ft till November 30, as per the present rule curve for the dam. The warning was issued by the Tamil Nadu assistant engineer. As per a Supreme Court order, the maximum storage level of the dam is 142 ft. Tamil Nadu has been drawing water at 511 cusecs from the dam, while the average inflow was 2,934 cusecs at 7 p.m. on Saturday. According to sources, Tamil Nadu reduced the release of water from the Mullaperiyar, resulting in an increase in the water level.