

CAMPING BANNED AT RISHIKESH, RAFTING ALLOWED

New Delhi, 10 December:

The National Green Tribunal today banned camping activity in the entire belt of Kaudiyala to Rishikesh on the banks of river Ganga in Uttarakhand till



the regulatory regime comes into force but permitted the adventure sport rafting with immediate effect.

"No camping activity shall be carried out in the entire belt of Kaudilaya to Rishikesh and the government would abide by its statement made before the tribunal on 31 March, 2015, till the regulatory regime in terms of this judgement comes into force and is effectively implemented," a bench headed by NGT chairperson Swatanter Kumar said. The green panel, however, made it clear that rafting per se does not cause any serious pollution of river or environment and said, "We permit rafting activity to be carried on with immediate effect."

The tribunal also imposed complete prohibition on use of any plastic items in the entire belt covered under the judgment. The bench's order came on a plea of an NGO Social Action for Forest and Environment (SAFE) against the "unregulated" operation of rafting camps in Rishikesh and other areas on the banks of river Ganga.

The panel also constituted a committee of officials from both various departments of central government and Uttarakhand government to prepare a regulatory regime which should be submitted to the tribunal within three weeks.

PTI

No plastic from Gomukh to Haridwar

PRESS TRUST OF INDIA

New Delhi, 10 December

There will be a complete ban on use of plastic of any kind from Gomukh to Haridwar along the Ganga with effect from 1 February, the National Green Tribunal directed today while slapping a penalty of Rs 5,000 per day on erring hotels, dharamshalas and ashrams spewing waste into the river.

The Tribunal passed a slew of directions to keep the river pollution-free.

It held that if any hotel, dharamshala or ashram releases their domestic waste and sewage into Ganga or its tributaries then "it shall be liable to pay environmental compensation for causing pollution of the river at the rate of Rs 5,000 per day".

The green panel divided the cleaning work of Ganga into different segments - Gomukh to Haridwar,



Haridwar to Kanpur, Kanpur to border of Uttar Pradesh, border of Uttar Pradesh to border of Jharkhand and border of Jharkhand to Bay of Bengal.

Besides the plastic ban, the Tribunal also prohibited throwing of any municipal waste, construction and demolition wastes into Ganga and its tributaries while announcing that violators will have to pay an environmental compensation at the rate of Rs 5,000 per incident.

CLIMATE CHANGE EFFECTS ON AGRI HIGHLIGHTED IN LS DROUGHT TALKS

New Delhi, 10 December: Members in the Lok Sabha today highlighted the "disastrous effects" of climate change on agriculture and wanted the government to prepare a blueprint in a long term perspective to tackle the menace.

Participating in the resumed special debate on the drought situation prevailing in several parts of the country, members pointed out that the droughts, unseasonal rains and calamitous situations like the recent floods in Tamil Nadu could be due to the climate change the experts had warned of.

They said the government should take steps to reduce the green house gas pollution and mitigate the climate change impact to ensure safety of farming. Members also called for long term plans to produce more 'dals' and pulses within the country. They said regular imports of these essential items would discourage indigenous production.

Mr Tariq Anwar (NCP) who spoke first today was critical of the government for not paying due attention to the farm sector. He said there was no move so far on the part of the government to lift up the economy and living conditions of farmers, and there was no talk of farm sector reforms from the Prime Minister yet. He said the government was ignoring implementation of the Swaminathan Committee report that suggested various steps for the welfare of the farming community. **SNS**

Met predicts heavy snowfall in Dehradun

STATESMAN NEWS SERVICE

Dehradun, 10 December

There is hardly any chance of relief from cold in the next 36 hours in Uttarakhand and nearby areas. The State Meteorological Department has predicted of a heavy snowfall at the higher peaks falling in the districts of Rudraprayag, Pithoragarh, Uttarkashi and Chamoli.

The weather forecast of the State Meteorological Department predicted of exceptionally heavy snowfall at the higher reaches of over 3,000 meters height. Besides rainfall and hailstones could also be experienced in the plain areas of the districts of Nainital, Dehradun, Pauri, Hardwar and U S Nagar. This forecast is for 36 hours from the Thursday evening, said a met department source.

Such a heavy snowfall may also cause valanche at the higher peaks. The government has issued an alert and instructed the district administrations and concerned departments in this regard.

The district magistrates and the disaster management teams have been put on alarm in these districts and instructed to take all necessary steps. They have been asked to appeal people to take precautions.

Green tribunal bans camping near Ganga

Press Trust of India

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NEW DELHI: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday banned camping in a major tourist hotspot in Uttarakhand, clamped a blanket ban on the use of plastic and regulated mining on the Ganga in sweeping measures to end pollution of the river.

The ban will come into force from February 1.

Pushing hard to end pollution of Ganga — in line with Prime Minister Narendra Modi's clean Ganga project — the NGT said "no camping activity shall be carried out in the entire belt of Kaudiyala to Rishikesh and the government would abide by its statement made before the tribunal on March 31, 2015, till the regulatory regime in terms of this judgement comes into force and is effectively implemented."

It, however, permitted the adventure sport rafting with immediate effect.

An NGT bench headed by chairperson Swatanter Kumar, however, made it clear that rafting per se does not cause any serious pollution of river or environment and said, "We permit rafting activity to be carried on with immediate effect."

The bench's order came on a plea of an NGO Social Action for Forest and Environment against



■ Camping tents on the banks of river Ganga near Rishikesh, Uttarakhand.

HT FILE/ TARUN KANT

the "unregulated" operation of rafting camps in Rishikesh and other areas on the banks of Ganga.

The panel also constituted a committee of officials from both various departments of central government and Uttarakhand government to prepare a regulatory regime which should be submitted to the tribunal within three weeks.

Passing a slew of directions the bench said that if any hotel, dharamshala or ashram releases their domestic waste and sewage into Ganga or its tributaries then "it shall be liable to pay environmental compensation for causing pollution of the river at the rate of ₹5,000 per day".

ALMOST 150 GANGA CASES

NEW DELHI: The NGT on Thursday pronounced 56 judgments, disposing 209 cases relating to various environmental issues across the country. The total number of cases listed for judgment, admission and hearing on Thursday was over 300. Of these, over half were related to the cleaning of the Ganga river basin. **HTC**

Ban a blow to water sports in the region

Anupam Trivedi

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RISHIKESH/DEHRADUN: Adventure sports and related business took a hit in Uttarakhand after the National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Thursday banned camping activities in a 36-kilometre stretch between Kaudiyala and Rishikesh.

December is peak business season as sports lovers throng the Ganga beaches in the state, spend holidays and engage in their favourite sport — rafting.

But, this December, the scenario is different. The series of camps which were a common sight at the silvery sandy beaches are no more visible after the NGT cracked the whip on the 'unregulated' camping activities in April this year.

An NGO — Social Action for Forest and Environment had moved the NGT against the government for recklessly issuing camping licenses without considering the carrying capacity of the river.

The PIL highlighted that serious environment issues had cropped up due to camping sites. Following the order, the local camp

operators and Uttarakhand government approached the NGT but they got no relief.

Ratan Singh Aswal at his 'Camp 5 Elements' at the banks of Ganga in Rishikesh blamed the Uttarakhand government for not having any clear policy on camping activities. Aswal and his team of some 10-odd staff had been catering to the adventure sport to visitors since last two decades.

He said, "Rafting and camping go together. The faulty government policies have taken a toll on our business. The local economy revolves around rafting business and my people are without a job."

Rafting enthusiast Dev Raj Agarwal said, "The restrictions (on camping) to me are biased and tourists must be blamed for their behaviour before banning anything blindly."

According to the Indian Association of Professional Rafting Outfitters and Camp (IAPROC), some 5,000 odd people are directly associated with the white water rafting related business. These include cooks, house or store keepers, guest relations, drivers, rafting instructors etc.

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Chennai floods: Centre declares it as calamity of severe nature; Opposition slams Jaya govt

By: PTI | Chennai | Published: December 10, 2015 9:36 pm



Chennai: Residents seeking relief materials from volunteers at Kotturpuram, one of the worst flood-hit localities in Chennai. (Source: PTI)

The Centre on Thursday declared the floods in Tamil Nadu as “calamity of severe nature” even as Opposition questioned ruling AIADMK’s handling of discharge of excess water from a city lake during the heavy downpour.

Chief Minister J Jayalalithaa said that on her plea with Prime Minister [Narendra Modi](#), the Centre had declared the floods as a calamity of severe nature.

She also said that the Parliament Secretariat had issued a circular to MPs stating that they can allot Rs 1 crore worth renovation and rehabilitation efforts in the flood-affected districts from Members of Parliament Local Area Development Scheme (MPLADS).

While the state government would apprise lawmakers of the requirement in the respective districts on this matter, her party (AIADMK) MPs, totalling 49 in both Houses, had already been asked to contribute Rs 1 crore each from MPLADS, she said.

The state government said 347 persons had died and over 3,300 heads of cattle lost so far, but rehabilitation work had been taken up in full swing.

Over 17.64 lakh people were rescued and sheltered in 6,605 relief centres across the state while over 1.28 crore food packets have been distributed, it was officially stated.

An amount of Rs 67.47 crore has been disbursed among over 1.11 lakh families as immediate relief.

The Opposition parties, which had been critical of the Jayalalithaa government over its handling of the northeast monsoon, demanded a probe into the issue of discharge of excess water from Chembarambakkam reservoir here, which flooded Adyar river, resulting in heavy inundation of the embankments.

DMK President M Karunanidhi levelled allegations of red-tapism, citing news reports.

He sought the government’s response on allegations of it not properly handling the issue of discharge of excess water from Chembarambakkam reservoir into the Adyar river.

“Sad-faced people of Tamil Nadu are awaiting a response from the AIADMK government, especially from Chief Minister Jayalalithaa,” he said in a statement.

To ascertain facts behind this issue, a proper probe should be ordered into it, he demanded.

His son and party Treasurer M K Stalin also made similar remarks, but the government shot back saying it had properly executed its responsibilities.

Electricity Minister Natham R Viswanathan said it was due to government's prompt work that people were moved in quick time before the river went in spate, which averted loss of life. However, there was damage to property, he admitted.

CPI(M) state Secretary G Ramakrishnan blamed "official apathy" for the disaster and alleged that red-tapism over discharge of water had resulted in such a damage.

He demanded that an inquiry commission under a sitting High Court Judge be formed with the members, including water management experts, to probe lapses and fix responsibility.

PMK founder S Ramadoss said the problems arising out of the post-rains scenario cannot be solved by writing letters to the Prime Minister, saying "political pressure" must be exerted on the Centre to get results.

An all-party meeting should be convened to discuss the matter after which Jayalalithaa should lead a delegation of members from all political parties to meet the Prime Minister to take up the issue, he urged.

[BJP](#) state President Tamizhisai Sounderrajan said the government should come out with a detailed water management for the future.

Haryana goes back on word, to allow buildings in sensitive green zones

RENEGING? All permissions granted before 2014 valid, forests over 1,000 acres of land in Gurgaon, Faridabad under threat of being axed

Snehil Sinha

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GURGAON: The Haryana government said all permissions granted before August 2014 to construct buildings in natural conservation zones (NCZs) will be considered valid, despite chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar's earlier commitment to protect the green areas until the Centre defines forest criteria.

The town and country planning department's recent letter potentially means that over 1,000 acres of forest land in Gurgaon and Faridabad may be axed to give way for concrete jungles.

This would include 450 acres of forest in Mangar Bani, considered the last remaining virgin forest cover of the national capital region.

"This is a conscious decision by the government after consultation with the Union forest ministry and the National Capital Region Planning Board. The CM's approval has been taken. We are allowing construction as per legal provisions where the competent authorities have already given permission. We cannot go back on the permissions already given," said P Raghvendra Rao, additional chief secretary, town and country planning department.

Last month, the department noted that several authorities concerned had granted permission for constructions in confirmed NCZs or 'status yet to be decided' areas.

"The state government has decided to treat all such permissions...as valid and to honour such permissions to avoid further litigation and legal complications," said the letter, a copy of which is HT.

While pollution levels in Delhi are crossing alarming levels, the seemingly anti-environment move raised concerns among environmentalists.

"For nine long years, the Haryana government slept over the NCZ problem and

NATURAL CONSERVATION ZONES



■ The Mangar Bani forests are considered the last remaining virgin forest cover of the national capital region. HT FILE

■ The Regional Plan 2021 demarcates certain green areas as Natural Conservation Zones where construction is limited only to 0.5% of the area and that too for regional recreational activities such as sanctuaries and regional parks.

■ The Aravalli ranges in Rajasthan and Haryana are among the environmentally sensitive areas

SOME NCZs WHERE CONSTRUCTION WILL BE ALLOWED:

483 acres

Mangar Bani in Faridabad

250 acres

Wazirabad village in Gurgaon

52 acres

Gurgaon-Faridabad Road

issued licences in areas clearly identified as NCZ," said legal activist lieutenant colonel (retd) Sarvadhan Oberoi.

He added that the orders were in violation of the Godavarman and Lafarge judgements to

Both districts (Faridabad and Gurgaon) have the highest urban population in Haryana, low forest cover and rapidly declining groundwater reserves.

CHETAN AGARWAL, environmental analyst

define forest areas.

Further, environmentalists claimed the government was siding with the real estate lobby, instead of cancelling all those licences. "Both districts (Faridabad and Gurgaon) have the highest urban population in Haryana, low forest cover and rapidly declining groundwater reserves. The NCZ identified in the Regional Plan 2021 need to be respected and enforced and these permissions should be all cancelled in light of the NCZ zoning restrictions," said environmental analyst Chetan Agarwal.

The Haryana CM had made the commitment in a meeting of NCR Planning Board earlier this year.

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NGT bans plastic use along Ganga from Gomukh to Haridwar

Seema Sharma,TNN | Dec 10, 2015, 10.40 PM IST

DEHRADUN: There will be a complete ban on use of plastic of any kind from Gomukh to Haridwar along Ganga with effect from February 1, the National Green Tribunal directed on Thursday while slapping a penalty of Rs 5,000 per day on erring hotels, dharamshalas and ashrams spewing waste into the river.

"There shall be complete prohibition on use of plastic, i.e. plastic carry bags/plastic plates, glasses, spoons, packages and allied items in all cities/towns falling in the river Ganga and its tributaries in Segment A Phase-1 (Gomukh to Haridwar).

"Under no circumstances, plastic carry bags of any thickness whatsoever would be permitted. The procurement, storing and sale of such plastic bags, plates, glasses, spoons, etc, are hereby prohibited," a bench headed by NGT chairperson justice Swatanter Kumar said, adding, "these restrictions would become operative with effect from February 1, 2016."

Vinod Singhal, member secretary of Uttarakhand Environment Protection and Pollution Control Board (UEPPCB), told TOI, "The UEPPCB has already enacted a law whereby we have banned use of polythene of 40 microne or below. However, due to lack of proper awareness and enforcement, it was not properly implemented. Now in the pursuance of the NGT order, we will ensure the monitoring of the polythene ban in Haridwar and Rishkesh. However, the execution of the order lies with the municipal corporation or local bodies which is the statutory body in this regard."

The green bench held that all the seriously polluting industries which are operating without consent from UEPPCB shall be closed with immediate effect.

The Tribunal passed a slew of directions to keep the river pollution free.

It held if any hotel, dharamshala or ashram releases its domestic waste and sewage into Ganga or its tributaries then "it shall be liable to pay environmental compensation for causing pollution of the river at the rate of Rs 5,000 per day".

The green panel divided the cleaning work of Ganga into different segments - Gomukh to Haridwar, Haridwar to Kanpur, Kanpur to border of Uttar Pradesh, border of Uttar Pradesh to border of Jharkhand and border of Jharkhand to Bay of Bengal.

Singhal said he had already served notice to Jal Sansthan and Jal Nigam and asked them about what action plan they have prepared to deal with sewage disposal into the river.

Tariq Zaidi, NGT commissioner in Haridwar, said, "It was due to weak political will in the state that the works related to Ganga cleanliness were not being effectively carried out. This is the reason why the required funds are not being released and, the officials are seen passing the buck to each other and not owing up their responsibilities on this issue."

Besides the plastic ban, the tribunal also prohibited throwing of any municipal waste, construction and demolition wastes into Ganga and its tributaries while announcing that violators will have to pay an environmental compensation at the rate of Rs 5,000 per incident.

According to Mallika Bhanot, member of NGO Ganga Ahwan, "Ravi Chopra committee set up by the Supreme Court to review the impact of hydro-power projects in flash flood disaster in 2013 specified in its report that muck disposal by hydro-power project companies in the Bhagirathi and Alaknanda rivers had aggravated the devastation. In Srinagar, all the disaster was attributed to the muck disposal only, as the river carrying muck flooded and destroyed the region."

Bhanot also pointed out that the phenomenon of muck disposal in the state rivers was being followed across the state, harming the biodiversity.

The tribunal, which did not pass any order with regard to nine hydro-power projects in Uttarakhand as the matter is pending in the Supreme Court, said that all the projects would build their own sewage treatment plants (STPs) and make them operational within three months.

On the issue of mining on the river bed, the tribunal said it shall be carried on in a highly regulated manner and under strict supervision.

"No mechanised river bed mining would be permitted. No JCBs (mechanical excavator) would be permitted to operate on the river bed," it said.

Swami Shivanand, founder of Matr Sadan which has been fighting against mining on Ganges for many years said, "The MoEF team report has clarified that no boulders is flown from the higher reaches and they are part of the bed of the Ganga. This shows that miners have been excessively damaging the river as well its bio-system by extracting boulders from the river. I demand that a study should be conducted about the extent of damage done to the river so far, for which the miners should be adequately penalized."

Vikrant Kumar Tongad, the president of environment-based organization SAFE, too, told that his application raised the issue of large-scale illegal mining going on the river banks of Ganga and its tributaries in Haridwar. "The illegal mining of sand and boulders is being carried out in villages of Bishanpur, Goghpur, Sajjanpur Pili village, and Kandabhagamal on the bank of river Ganga. Mining should soon be controlled on the Ganga before it becomes impossible to reverse it," he said.

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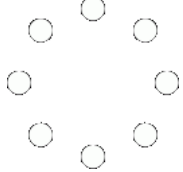
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Rafting on Ganga okay but no camping: NGT

Seema Sharma | TNN | Dec 11, 2015, 04.22 AM IST



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DEHRADUN: In a big blow to [Ganga beach camp owners who were hoping for a reprieve, the National Green Tribunal \(NGT\) on Thursday upheld its ban on beach camping near the river from Kaudiyala to Rishikesh in Uttarakhand](#), an order which it had passed in March.

The tribunal, which had in August cancelled fresh permission for beach camps, also asked the state forest department to constitute a committee to frame policy and furnish a report on capacity building in the area and the spots suitable for camping sites in future.

READ ALSO: [Ban on river rafting robs Delhi of weekend getaway](#)

The committee has been given three weeks to submit its report to the environment ministry. The ministry, in turn, has to take a decision on the issue in three weeks after the report is submitted.

Vikram Tongad, founder president of NGO Social Action for Forest and Environment (SAFE), which filed the original plea with the NGT, said, "We are somewhat satisfied with the NGT's decision as we wanted regulations and guidelines to be put in place for these beach camps which have mushroomed in the stretch from Rishikesh to Kaudiyala flouting all environmental norms."

Camp owners reacted with dismay to the latest NGT order. Yusuf, rafting and beach camp operator, said, "There is no point in doing capacity-building and other related impact studies when the beach camps are not in operation. The delay in giving permission to beach camps has put livelihood of all those connected with this activity in jeopardy."

READ ALSO: [Rafting camps began with five people in the early 80s](#)

The bench has further noted that the state government cannot shirk from its responsibility to protect the environment, forest and rivers on the plea of earning revenue.

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Keep Ganga free of pollution for our future generation before it turns into a Toxic waste. Ravishankar Bhujanga

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The tribunal has, however, allowed rafting with immediate effect and said that it does not cause any serious pollution of river or environment. It has given further directions to form a committee of officers not below the rank of joint secretary of the MoEF, secretary of forest department of Uttarakhand, member secretary of

Central Pollution Control Board, chief conservator of the forest of the concerned area, director of Wildlife Institute of India or his nominee of a very senior rank to suggest curative and preventive measures for least disturbance to wildlife and least impact on environment and ecology.

READ ALSO: [Curbs on rafting to cost Rs 50-70 crore, say operators](#)

The committee shall ensure that it not only identifies the sites which can be appropriately used for camping activity but also the manner and methodology in which such sites should carry such activities.

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Chennai: Apocalypse now

12 11

Acts of a handful of the rich, punishment for thousands of the poor

S SUBRAMANIAN

THIS Chennai-based correspondent has never been so far behind as on this occasion in meeting his deadline for The Tribune column: this is perhaps understandable, given that over the last few days he has been cut off without any of the trappings of modern civilization — electricity, telephone connection, water supply (!), mobile connectivity, and the Internet. But it would be churlish to complain in the face of the apocalyptic tragedy that has visited upon thousands of people in the city and in other parts of the State. Even as people try to recover from their colossal losses of life, health, shelter, possessions and livelihood, they are beaten back again and again by the relentless force of Nature intent, in the implacable cycle of cause and effect, on avenging the abuse to which she has been subjected by — yes — modern civilization.

I really do not think neo-classical economic theory deserves the criticism it has received from various quarters for stressing the theme of the profit motive in explaining what actuates human behaviour. It is a different matter, though, to maintain that there is an invisible hand that guides the quest for personal profit to the best of all possible worlds: there can, after all, be little doubt that the devastations caused by El Nino can and must be traced back to the profit motive as it has unfolded in a modern industrial society. And how it has unfolded has been in its most naked form, informed unfailingly and entirely by personal interest, collective myopia, avarice, selfishness, and hubris; and shorn of every conceivable veneer of civility which it might be reasonable to expect a civilization to possess.

It is shocking and distasteful that even now, in the face of the dreadful calamities that have been unleashed in various parts of the world by climate change, there are powerful lobbies which argue that industrial pollution and carbon emission and the destruction of the ozone layer are the motivated manufacturings of unscientific minds conspiring against progress and profit. Against this background, it is too much to hope, even at this juncture and in the midst of the Chennai catastrophe, that the great powers of the world who have gathered together to discuss the matter in Paris will cease and desist from vulgar haggling on who is to



blame and how much, and what reparation, if any, must be made by whom for the destruction of this planet.

If Tamil Nadu today stands testimony to the whirlwind that must be reaped for the sowing of the wind, it is also a witness to the State's vulnerability to the harvest from pursuing the path of what economist Frank Hahn has called 'private greed and private rationality'. Historically, the State has been home to an

Chennai is a witness to the State's vulnerability to the harvest from pursuing the path of 'private greed and private rationality'

extraordinarily complex, subtle and carefully planned system of agrarian craftsmanship and engineering, as constituted by its system of tank irrigation. The story of this region's inability to deal with the consequences of extreme climate is in good part a story also of the sadly neglected status of its network of over 40,000 tanks.

For the tank system to serve the purpose of a reservoir for irrigation, the tank's catchment must be preserved. What instead has happened is the destruction of vast tracts of catchment area through de-forestation, the illegal felling of timber for commercial purposes. Water that must be retained for irrigation has, over time, been lost in floods and landslides to feed the greed of timber-barons acting in cohort with corrupt State officials. The secular loss of forest cover in the Palni Hills over the

last 35 or so years is a good, that is to say nasty, example of this phenomenon.

For tanks to be effective reservoirs and feeders of water, they need to be maintained. In particular, the carrying capacity of the tank must be preserved. This required systematic desilting of the tank. Under an erstwhile *zamindari* regime of tenurial structure, 'communal' maintenance of tanks was carried out though the *kundimarammathu* system (which,

shorn of niceties, was essentially a system entailing the press-ganging of labour in the cause of cleaning out the tank). With the abolition of *zamindari* and *ryotwari*, *kundimarammathu* also fell out of practice: the tank, being commonly owned asset — and therefore, an asset under no one's individual ownership — became a classic site of an 'agency problem': a resource subjected to 'free-riding'.

The State has performed a poor function in terms of compensating for the lack of coordination of private action. For years the prescribed wisdom of desilting of tanks as an asset-creating public works programme has fallen on unresponsive official ears. The compulsions of forced and poorly planned public spending in the short interval of time available between the sanctioning of funds and the closing of accounts for the financial year have systematically con-

flicted with the possibility of providing wages to labour in quest of employment during the agricultural off-season. The result has been the long-run silting-up of reservoirs in villages and cities, drastic reductions in their carrying capacity, and the proneness to swift overflows and flooding from rain.

Badly constructed roads under a corrupt system of contractual outsourcing have done little to further the cause of rainwater drainage on the streets. The problem has been seriously compounded by the failure to engage in the regular cleaning up of storm-water drains. Neglect is only the passive part of the State and societal vice. There is an even more outrageously active part to it. The submergence of large parts of the city of Chennai is directly attributable to the indiscriminate use of waterways, flood outlets and tank-beds for construction activity — the building of roads, high-rise structures, residential flats and hotels. If Chennai is drowning today, with more of it set to follow under the ravages of El Nino and related cataclysms in the time to come, it will have been in no small measure because of the collusive and depredatory activities of the land mafia in conjunction with a pliable State whose politicians and bureaucrats have been happy to issue certificates authorising the illegal construction of buildings for a suitable consideration.

What is happening to Chennai today is a story of somewhat biblical proportions, the story of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, a tale of sin and punishment. But it is also a tale with that special bitter twist that is imparted to these accounts by the modern neo-liberal world we now inhabit. The sins are the acts of a handful of the rich and the powerful, and the punishment has to be borne by thousands upon thousands of the poor and the dispossessed. Retribution for the crimes perpetrated by the guilty has visited upon the victims of the crimes. This, in the contemporary world order, is as much the story of 'natural' disasters as of the rules of the international trade and finance, as of the patterns of the global and national distributions of income and wealth.

Only, to say so would be regarded as impolite in a world which arranges its manner in such a way as to refuse to see the underlying facts as being grotesquely obscene.

— The writer is a retired Professor of Economics

गंगा में प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर रोक

वार्ता/नई दिल्ली

राष्ट्रीय हरित न्यायाधिकरण (एनजीटी) ने गंगा के उद्गम स्थल गौमुख से हरिद्वार तक प्लास्टिक के इस्तेमाल पर अगले साल एक फरवरी से पूरी तरह से रोक लगा दी है और उत्तराखंड में गंगा नदी के किनारे कौडियाला से ऋषिकेश तक के समूचे क्षेत्र में कैम्पिंग गतिविधियों पर नियामक इकाई के प्रभाव में आने तक रोक रहेगी मगर एडवेंचर स्पोर्ट राफ्टिंग को तत्काल प्रभाव से अनुमति दे दी है।

न्यायाधीश स्वतंत्र कुमार की अध्यक्षता वाली खंडपीठ ने अपने आदेश में कहा कि नदी में किसी भी रूप में प्लास्टिक का कचरा नहीं

एनजीटी का फैसला

एक फरवरी से गौमुख से हरिद्वार तक गंगा में किसी प्रकार का प्लास्टिक नहीं फेंका जाएगा : आदेश के उल्लंघन पर होगा 5000 रुपए जुर्माना

डाला जायेगा और नदी के तट के आसपास के इलाकों में प्लास्टिक की थैलियों का भी इस्तेमाल नहीं किया जायेगा। खंडपीठ ने अपने आदेश में यह भी कहा कि

► शेष पृष्ठ 11 पर

गंगा में प्लास्टिक

औद्योगिक इकाइयां अगर गंगा को प्रदूषित करने के लिए जिम्मेदार पायी गयीं तो ऐसी इकाइयों को बंद कर दिया जायेगा। न्यायाधिकरण के आदेश का उल्लंघन करने वालों पर 5000 रुपए के दंड का भी प्रावधान रखा गया है। इससे पहले एनजीटी ने गंगा की सहायक नदी रामगंगा के उद्गम स्थल और संगम स्थल से पानी के नमूने लेने का आदेश दिया था। एनजीटी ने रामगंगा में प्रदूषण के लिए उत्तर प्रदेश और उत्तराखंड सरकार को भी फटकार लगायी थी। एनजीटी के समक्ष अनिल कुमार द्वारा दायर याचिका पर सुनवायी के दौरान यह आदेश दिया था। श्री कुमार ने अपनी याचिका में कहा था कि फैक्ट्रियों का दूषित पानी सीधे गंगा में डाले जाने के कारण इस जीवनदायिनी नदी का पानी जहर में बदल गया है। याचिकाकर्ता ने बताया कि पीतल की फैक्ट्रियों से निकलने वाला प्रदूषित पानी सीधे ही रामगंगा नदी में डाल दिया जाता है, जो गंगा की एक प्रमुख सहायक नदी है। खंडपीठ ने कहा कि गंगा की तलहटी में मशीनों के जरिए होने वाले किसी भी प्रकार के खनन की भी इजाजत नहीं दी गयी है।

न्यायाधीश कुमार ने उत्तराखंड और उत्तर प्रदेश की सरकारों को गौमुख से हरिद्वार के बीच गंगा के किनारे बने आश्रमों, राफ्टिंग शिविरों और धर्मशालाओं पर एक कार्ययोजना तैयार करने का आदेश दिया है। आदेश के लागू होने के बाद संबंधित आपरेटरों को कचरा गंगा नदी में डालने पर पर्यावरण जुर्माना देना होगा। खंडपीठ ने ऋषिकेश में गंगा के किनारे किसी तरह के स्थायी और अस्थायी निर्माण पर रोक लगाने का आदेश दिया है साथ ही कैम्पिंग की इजाजत केवल चिह्नित इलाकों में ही दी जायेगी।

खंडपीठ ने इस फैसले के संदर्भ में नियामक इकाई के प्रभाव में आने और प्रभावी ढंग से क्रियान्वित होने तक कौडियाला से लेकर ऋषिकेश तक समूचे क्षेत्र में कोई कैम्पिंग गतिविधि नहीं होगी और सरकार अधिकरण के समक्ष 31 मार्च, 2015 को दिए अपने बयान से बंधी होगी।" हरित अधिकरण ने हालांकि यह स्पष्ट किया कि राफ्टिंग से नदी या वातावरण में कोई गंभीर प्रदूषण