

CITY

DMK has never antagonised its allies: Karunanidhi

The DMK has never antagonised voluntarily any of its allies, particularly Communist parties with whom its policies converge, party president and Chief Minister M. Karunanidhi said on Monday: Page 4



Regional-level soc

A regional-level soc organised at Kendri Grounds, at 9 a.m.

"Stop dumping waste into Adyar"

Experts discuss ways and means to restore the river and the estuary

Priscilla Jebaraj

CHENNAI: The dumping of untreated waste — whether from industries, sewage lines, or stormwater drains illegally carrying sewage — into the Adyar must stop immediately in order to restore the river and estuary.

This was the consensus reached after two hours of wrangling at the experts' consultation on the eco-restoration master plan hosted by the Adyar Poonga Trust here on Monday. How is this ban on waste dumping to be implemented on the ground? On Friday, the consultation with government agencies will determine what responsibility they will each assume in implementation.

"Stop all outfalls now... Without that, all this talk is a farce," summed S. Janakaram of the Madras Institute of Development Studies. However, as a number of scientists and activists pointed out, the responsibility of stopping waste dumping has been a blame game for decades.

While the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board is responsible for monitoring industrial waste and Chennai Metrowater is responsible for the sewage system, it is the Chennai Corporation that maintains the stormwater drains, which have become a de-facto sewage system as well. "The right hand of the government doesn't know what the left hand is doing," said J.T. Rex Vaz of Pitchandikulam Forest Consultants.



In fact, Metrowater itself is responsible for 93 per cent of the sewage pollution in the city's waterways, according to a government-commissioned study, which was quoted by Exnora's T.K. Ramkumar. He said a lot of untreated sewage was let into the rivers directly from pumping stations; since the treatment plants were inadequate, they also spew untreated waste into the water.

The Buckingham Canal is another contributor to the filth in the Adyar. Reputed institutions all along the Marina dump waste into the canal, and the MRTS itself is the biggest encroacher on the canal, complained Mr. Ramkumar.

Such a situation reflects the need for a central water authority, said S. Krishnan, joint director of the southern station of the Zoological Sur-

vey of India.

In fact, the entire planning process for the eco-restoration project needs to be incorporated into the CMDA's city master plan exercise, said Tara Murali, trustee of the Civic, Consumer and Civic Action Group (CAG), indicating that developmental activity could not happen in isolation.

K. Phanindra Reddy, mem-

ber secretary of the Adyar Poonga Trust, assured participants that all government agencies would cooperate to implement the recommendations of the plan.

While the discussion over improving water quality through controlling wastewater discharge hijacked the lion's share of the session, other issues discussed included the steps for eco-recovery and the need to restore the channel integrity of the river through the removal of encroachments and reverse sedimentation. A technical study for solutions on this issue was recommended.

IL&FS Ecosmart, the advisory firm preparing the conceptual master plan for the project also presented several draft ideas to enhance public interaction with the estuary area (see map), including landscaping, walkways and cycle tracks, boardwalks across ecologically rich areas and boat trips. These activities could also be tapped for educational and revenue generation potential, according to Ecosmart's Vijay Joshi.

Uninvited guest

A group of women from the slums along the Adyar gate-crashed the session after hearing of the consultation, and expressed their fear that the project would lead to the displacement of settlements along the river.

Mr. Reddy assured the women that the session was not proposing the displacement of any section.