

The Hindu 03.04.2013

Green Tribunal grants interim stay on STP works at Nanjundapuram

Tamil Nadu Bureau

The stay prevents civic body from carrying out works till April 30.

The National Green Tribunal, Southern Bench, on Tuesday granted an interim injunction restraining the Coimbatore Corporation from proceeding with the construction or other activities of a proposed Open Sewage Treatment Plant (STP) in Uppilipalayam village, Nanjundapuram, which is situated within the immediate vicinity of a residential colony.

Originally, Mayflower Sakthi Garden Owners' Association had filed two writ petitions in 2011 before the Madras High Court against the action of the Corporation. The matter was transferred to the National Green Tribunal and the Association also filed another petition seeking an interim relief.

The Bench comprising its judicial member Justice M. Chockalingam and expert member Prof. R. Nagendran admitted the matter and ordered notices to the authorities including the Secretary, Municipal Administration and Water Supplies department, Commissioner of Coimbatore Corporation and District Collector.

Sathish Parasaran, senior counsel for the applicant, submitted that the location of the STP also falls short of the siting criteria laid down by the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board itself.

The STP site should be 500 metres away from the residential area.

While matter stood thus, the site has been located within 10 metres. Hence, he sought an interim injunction restraining the Corporation from proceeding with construction activities.

STP siting criteria

The Tribunal noted that the case was filed in 2011, none from the respondent side filed any counter and apart from the same, as per the STP siting criteria – Guidelines, it should be 500 metres away from the residential area.

Under the facts of circumstances of the Tribunal was satisfied that the applicant had made out a prima facie case for granting interim injunction from proceeding with any construction activity in the STP until further orders.

In the application, the Association said during the last week of March 2009, they were shocked to know that the Corporation was constructing a large open sewage tank to collect the sewage of the quantity in the order of 45.29 Million Litres per Day (MLD), coming from Zones 3 and 7.

Petitions were submitted to the local MLA, Mayor and Commissioner of the Corporation, pointing out that the proposed sewage treatment plant was wholly ill-conceived and its hasty implementation was being made even without any notification, consultation or concurrence of the residents or the general public.

Relocation

The Association requested for relocation of the sewage treatment plant as well as the existing pumping station from the vicinity of the residential apartment. Under such situation, they approached the Madras High Court seeking various reliefs.

Meanwhile, the interim stay has come in as a temporary relief for the residents of the area.

The stay prevented the Coimbatore Corporation from carrying out any work relating to the STP till April 30, 2013.

Red category

G. Premanand, an activist against the project pointed out that STPs are classified under Red category and cannot come up in residential areas. Citing technology, the norms laid down for setting up an STP were diluted, he lamented.

“It was not only a wrong choice of land and location for the STP, the civic body even failed to respond to any of the legal notices served on it in the last two-years”.

The STP was wrongly put up in an area classified as mixed residential use zone, said Rukmangathan, president of Mayflower Sakthi Gardens Owners’ Association.

Additional cost

Secretary of the association C.G. Kumar pointed out that relocation would incur only additional cost for the civic body but the present location would displace over 3,500 families.