

2 dyeing units pollute river in Bhiwandi, get closure notice

MPCB TAKES ACTION Residents complained about units releasing effluents into Kamwari river

Ankita G Menon

ankita.gopakumar@htlive.com

THANE: After repeated complaints from residents and activists, the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB) has issued closure notice to two dyeing units located in Shelar village in Bhiwandi.

Residents had complained to the Bhiwandi Nizampur City Municipal Corporation (BNCMC) and posted on the social media about the effluents released by the units into Kamwari river.

Sanjay Bhuskute, public relations officer, MPCB, said, "Officials in our Kalyan department looked into the complaints of the locals and conducted an inspection. Based on their survey, there was no provision to treat wastewater in these dyeing units. So, we have given them closure notice."

Action will be taken against other factories, too, if necessary, the MPCB said.

Despite repeated attempts, representatives of the dyeing units were unavailable for comment at the time of going to press.

MPCB officials said both the units are situated adjacent to each other.

"Often, there is red water on the roads adjacent to the dyeing units; they are supposed to treat the water before releasing it into the river," said Govind Sharma, founder of Samvad Foundation, an NGO.

"However, most of the factories do not follow the rules and all type of waste is released into the Kamwari river. We have made repeated complaints to the BNCMC and MPCB but to no avail," he said.

Sharma said that they have been following up with the authorities for the past two weeks.

"If stringent action is not taken, we will be compelled to file a first information report against the officer concerned. A public interest litigation (PIL) will also be filed in the court," added Sharma.

RIVER WAS ONCE USED TO TRANSPORT CARGO

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF KAMWARI RIVER

The river, which has been in existence since the 16th century, is a tributary of the Ulhas river. It was initially used for trading purposes. Till around 70 years ago, cargo used to be transported through the river but the solid waste pollutants from the textile and dyeing industry that mushroomed along the banks of the river led to its destruction. In the last two decades the river has dried up and water scarcity has become an issue.

RECENT INCIDENT

Following the floods in the past two months, a video of a pick-up truck dumping waste into the flooding Kamwari river went viral. Despite repeated pleas by the resident recording the video to stop, the staff continued to dump a truckload of waste even as the flood waters increased. The Shelar gram panchayat reportedly issued a notice to one of the sanitation workers concerned. The worker was asked by the gram panchayat to explain his action.



■ Kamwari river in Bhiwandi is polluted by effluents from textile and dyeing industries.

HTFILE

YOUTH HELP CREATE AWARENESS

Shree Halari Visa Oswal College in Bhiwandi has been at the forefront to highlight the depleting water bodies in Bhiwandi. The college has been taking various efforts to increase the water levels in the city. It has done social mapping of the river and conducted workshops, which were attended by officers from the local corporation as well as district-level officers.

Most of these factories...release all types of waste into Kamwari river. We have made repeated complaints to the BNCMC and MPCB but to no avail.

GOVIND SHARMA, founder of Samvad Foundation, an NGO

There have been umpteen complaints by various bodies and efforts taken by locals to create awareness about the issue but authorities turn a blind eye to these problems.

ASHOK MAHADEO, resident of Shelar village

Residents of Shelar village said they often have to walk through the coloured water that is released from these units.

"Our village is situated adjacent to the river. Many factories and dyeing units have set up their units in its vicinity. There have been umpteen complaints by various organisations. Residents are also taking steps to create awareness about the issue but the authorities turn a blind eye to these problems," Ashok Mahadeo, 42, a resident.

"The polluted river has led to flooding in Bhiwandi during

heavy rain in the past two months," said Snehal Dhonde, principal, Shree Halari Visa Oswal College, Bhiwandi. Dhonde is also part of the Jal Shakti ministry established by the Central government.

After the recent floods, many youngsters took to social media to raise their voice against the authorities.

"Many industries in Narpoli are releasing effluents into the road that leads to the river. Some also release them into the drainage system. This can pose a serious health threat to the residents

staying in the vicinity. It is evident the authorities are being bribed for ignoring the complaints," said Manju Ramesh, 26, a resident of Narpoli.

Meanwhile, the officials at the BNCMC have been ordered by the district collector to remove all encroachments on the banks of Kamwari river.

"Our ward officer and encroachment department is doing a survey, after which we will take action against the encroachments which have come up along the river," said Milind Palsule, PRO, BNCMC.

Officials looked into the complaints and conducted an inspection. Based on their survey, there was no provision to treat waste water released from these units and hence they have been given closure notice.

SANJAY BHUSKUTE, PRO, MPCB