

Sewage sullies Kotturpuram 'forest', ecosystem threatened

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CHENNAI: An open feeder channel in Kotturpuram, which is linked to a major storm drain flowing into the Adyar River, is now full of illegally discharged sewage. The feeder channel flows via Kotturpuram Urban Forest, formerly called the Tree Park, on River View Road.

“Sewage has been constantly flowing into the open feeder channel for almost a month. We complained to Metrowater officials to take action two weeks ago and we are still awaiting action,” said T D Babu, trustee of Nizhal, an NGO trustee.

The urban forest, maintained by Nizhal under a public-private partnership with Greater Chennai Corporation, was set up in 2006 and currently has more than 1,000 trees.

In July, chief secretary Shiv Das Meena had appreciated the maintenance of the urban forest during an inspection.

On Sunday, when TOI visited the urban forest, a foul smell from the four-ft wide polluted channel running for 400-500 meters assailed the senses. “There has been illegal sewage discharge into the drain via the connecting storm water drains. Officials must find the spots and take action immediately,” said Babu.

Birds like water fowl and egrets used to visit the forest until sewage began to pollute the fresh water in the channel. People who visit the park are also complaining about the stench.

“Now, we hardly see the birds. If the smell persists, it will reduce oxygen levels in the water and the fish population will dwindle. Also, the bird nesting patterns will be affected. Butterfly populations will reduce,” said Babu, who is also a marine biologist. The ecosystem in the forest, vital for the area, will be affected if the sewage discharge is not plugged.

When contacted, a senior Metrowater official said that they had intercepted a sewage outfall into the Adyar river and diverted it to the treatment plant in Kotturpuram and that the treated effluents were entering the river. “We will look into the issue and sort it,” he said.