

Coimbatore: Madras High Court stalls works on Singanallur lake

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CHENNAI: Madras High Court has stalled the attempt of Coimbatore Corporation to develop Singanallur lake, which is classified as a bio-diversity zone under the Smart City programme. Passing an interim order prohibiting commercial fishing in the lake, the court made it clear that no native plants should be removed from the waterbody. The court passed the order based on a Forest Department report that no developmental activities can be carried out in the lake.

The petitioner, Raman Kodhandapani, a nature conservationist and researcher, had submitted that despite several orders and ban on commercial fishing in Singanallur lake, fishing activities continued. Aggrieved over the inaction by the authorities, he approached the court seeking a direction to stay all the operations.

The two-member bench of justices M Sathyanarayanan and R Hemalatha passed the interim direction that the Coimbatore Corporation, in coordination with the Commissioner of Police, shall ensure that no more fishing activity take place in the said lake and it is made clear that if any infraction is noted, cost and consequences would follow, including contempt of court proceedings.

During the hearing, the principal chief conservator of forests filed a detailed report explaining the biodiversity of the lake and its surroundings. The officer made it clear that the lake and its surroundings cannot be developed as a park, instead steps must be taken to conserve it. Recording the submissions, the bench observed, "No doubt, the smart city programme is a welcome one.

But, at the same time, it requires periodical monitoring with an in-house checking mechanism. It appears that the same has not been done properly and effectively, and as a result, the life cycle of seasonal migratory birds is being affected, which affects the ecology and environment." The court then suo motu impleaded the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board and the Secretary to the Government of India, looking after the smart city programme. The court adjourned the hearing to February 26 for the Corporation to file a status report.

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