

Blame game begins in Taloja chemical hub over NGT order to deposit Rs 5 crore

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NAVI MUMBAI: A blame game has started in the Taloja chemical hub after the National green tribunal (NGT) ordered its central effluent treatment plant (CETP) co-operative society to deposit Rs 5 crore for causing environmental damage over the years.

Taloja industry association president Satish Shetty blamed the mess on the Maharashtra Pollution Control Board (MPCB), the CETP Co-operative Society and the units that did not process the toxic waste at their effluent treatment plants. Taloja has 987 units of which around 50% are chemical units.

ERRANT UNITS UNDER A CLOUD

➤ Of the 987 units, around 60 are allegedly not properly treating wastes at their effluent treatment plants

➤ It's not difficult to identify them if MPCB and CETP wanted to

➤ Simple task is to check the outlet points of discharge from units to CETP pipeline



➤ Taloja industry association president Satish Shetty says CETP saving money on power bill at the cost of treatment of effluent

➤ "The CETP paid power bill of just ₹17 lakh recently. It's far less than around ₹65 lakh to be paid if the 22.5 MLD treatment capacity of the plant is utilised," he said

He also questioned the work done till now by the CETP Co-operative Society administrator who was appointed in December after the board dissolved while waiting for the takeover by MIDC. The MIDC has pointed out the delay in selecting an operator for upgrade of the CETP and the hurdles the tendering process had to overcome.

B D Ahire, the CETP administrator who said he took over in January, told TOI on Tuesday: "I am most likely to challenge the order before the Supreme Court. The CETP does not have funds... I will have to ask the industry association for the funding."

A meeting of the administrator and the industry units on Thursday is likely to be stormy. Shetty said, "Yes, the issue of funding the Rs 5 crore the CETP cooperative society Ltd has to deposit with the district magistrate will be discussed. Why should not the administrator be held accountable as he has been in office for some months now?"

On Thursday, the MPCB has to submit an affidavit to NGT on the action taken regarding the discharge from the CETP. MPCB member secretary P Anbalagan held both the CETP and the MIDC responsible for the situation. “We have already issued instructions on what was required to be done by the CETP. We had asked the MIDC long back to take over the CETP too, which is still not done,” he told TOI.

While there’s an issue of manpower and the MPCB has asked for more staff for the entire state, the regulatory body noted that “suspected largescale units are checked regularly, but it is difficult to check each and every small unit on a daily basis.” The MPCB has time and again taken action against units by issuing closure notice for not complying with green norms at their effluent treatment plants. “Both the MPCB and the CETP are responsible for not checking the functioning of ETPs. And the CETP has the powers to cut off connection of faulty units, but that doesn’t happen either. The MPCB also needs more staff,” observed Shetty.