

Dyeing Industry Identified as Primary Polluter of Buddha Nullah



The textile dyeing industry stands accused as the primary contributor to the severe contamination of Buddha Nullah, a critical waterway flowing through Ludhiana and merging with the Sutlej River. Reports and assessments, including those from the National Green Tribunal (NGT) and various environmental groups, consistently point to the discharge of untreated or inadequately treated effluents from dyeing units as the main culprit behind the nullah's alarming pollution levels. This industrial pollution poses significant environmental and public health risks to the region.

The Buddha Nullah, once a vibrant stream, has steadily deteriorated into a toxic drain, particularly since the 1980s, with the proliferation of dyeing units in Ludhiana, often dubbed the "Manchester of India" due to its robust textile industry. The dyeing process heavily relies on various chemicals, including heavy metals like copper, arsenic, lead, and chromium, as well as synthetic dyes and other toxic substances. When discharged without proper treatment, these pollutants seep into the soil and water bodies, leading to severe contamination and causing health issues such as skin and respiratory disorders, and even cancer, in affected communities.

Despite the existence of Common Effluent Treatment Plants (CETPs) designed to process industrial waste, many dyeing units have been found flouting norms. Recent findings by the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) revealed that the three CETPs in Ludhiana are not complying with environmental standards, prompting directives to cease their discharge into the Buddha Nullah. Environmental activists, including the Public Action Committee (PAC), have consistently accused the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) of insufficient enforcement, with allegations of turning a blind eye to violations and even colluding with industries. The PPCB

has, however, imposed environmental compensation (EC) on non-compliant CETPs, with significant fines levied on the facilities at Tajpur Road and Bahadur Ke Road.

Industry representatives, such as Bobby Jindal from the Punjab Dyers Association, highlight the sector's substantial contribution to the state exchequer through Goods and Services Tax (GST) and its role in domestic and international markets. However, the environmental cost remains a pressing concern. Strict enforcement of environmental regulations is urgently required, with emphasis on individual dyeing units establishing and operating their own effective effluent treatment plants or ensuring the proper functioning of CETPs.

The ongoing legal battles and a multi-crore rejuvenation project underscore the scale of the challenge. Moving forward, the focus remains on robust regulatory oversight and the implementation of effective waste management solutions to ensure that industrial growth does not come at the expense of vital natural resources and public well-being.