

Villagers oppose new PVC plant at SIPCOT estate in Cuddalore

Villagers write to Union Environment Ministry, say the new unit will cause further ecological harm to region heavily affected by pollution

NIRUPA SAMPATH @Cuddalore

THE SIPCOT villagers, along with the members of SIPCOT Area Community Environment Monitoring (SACEM) team, on Tuesday, wrote to the Environment Appraisal Committee (EAC) of the Union Environment Ministry, to bar environmental clearance to Chemplast Sanmar Limited, on its newly proposed project of Poly Vinyl Chloride (PVC) paste resin plant. The locals claimed that the industry had already caused heavy damages and that they

had written to the Ministry to prevent further harm to environment and villagers in Cuddalore SIPCOT region.

As per sources, the proposed plant of 70,000 TPA at SIPCOT phase-2 by Chemplast Sanmar Limited, located at Semankuppam village, is in close proximity to many large chemical industries in the red category. Hence the villagers insisted on conducting comprehensive cumulative impact studies of the area at the earliest before allowing such new projects. Speaking to *Express*, a SACEM

member said, "Chemplast is located about 55 metre from the Uppanar river and requires CRZ clearance under the CRZ notification, 2011. The proposed site of Chemplast is surrounded by industries that are explosive and setting up of this PVC paste resin plant could add to the combined impact. The proposed site has Nochikadu village to its north, which is accessed by the villagers frequently."

He added, "PVC is a poisonous plastic, whose production, usage and distribution would

lead to release of pollutants such as hydrocarbons, dioxins, vinyl chloride, phthalates, and heavy metals. Hazardous by-products are formed through the PVC lifecycle. We urge the government to form a committee to inspect the project site and conduct a detailed study to assess the cumulative social

and environmental impacts caused by every singly industry in SIPCOT Cuddalore."

Several red category chemicals, pesticides, formulations, bulk drug pharma, and textile dyeing industries have caused irreplaceable damages to the region.

Incidentally, as per sources, in 2010, MoEF imposed a temporary moratorium on new projects in 43 industrial clusters across India, including Cuddalore. In February 2011, the moratorium was lifted on condition that a time-bound ac-

tion plan for improvement of air and water quality would be executed by Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TNPCB) and an obligation to bring down the pollution level to 54.69 per cent.

However, no such action plan has been prepared or enforced. Furthermore, as per the report by Nagpur-based National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) in 2007, Cuddalore residents are at least 2,000 times more likely to be affected by cancer in their lifetime due to exposure to high

levels of toxic gases from chemical industries in the region.

S Pugalendhi, a fisherman from Sangolikuppam said, "Before the company came, water and air quality and the livelihood of people were fine. However, after the industry was set up, water, air, and land started getting contaminated. As the water turned saline, agriculture is also severely affected. Women started having fertility issues and several cases of cancer were also reported. We oppose the new project for the sake of our own lives."



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A SACEM member