



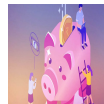
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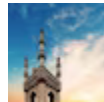
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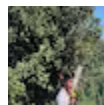
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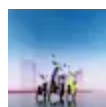
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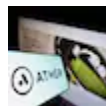
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Stained books, burning eyes, itchy hands: Oil spill in Ennore, triggered by 'Michaung', worsens | Explained

Ennore Oil Spill: Considering oil leak or oil spill is among the worst ecological disasters, there are various stern measures that authorities can take, which includes hefty penalty to jail term.



By News18.com

Dec 15, 2023 1:28:13 PM IST (Published)

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Ennore, a city 25 km from Tamil Nadu's Chennai, and its near-by villages have been dealing with a new problem post Cyclone Michaung. The flood water reportedly entered a near-by refinery, which led to oil spill — now spread to about 20 square kilometers.

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While the spill happened from the refinery of Chennai Petroleum Corporation Ltd (CPCL) over a week ago, reports say that the damage to Chennai's eco sensitive Ennore creek is only getting worse.

According to a report in NDTV, oil is floating all over river Kosasthalaiyar. Tar balls and thick layers of oil are seen in several pockets along the coastline. A trail of oil deposits can also be seen on the shores and the fishing boats.



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by Taboola

India Today accessed satellite images from the Copernicus Sentinel Program that showed the oil spill in large swathes floating through the Ennore Creek into the Bay of Bengal.

Damages caused by oil spill in Ennore

- According to a report in Deccan Herald, people have been spending days together cleaning the oil stains from their homes besides losing electronic appliances and documents.
- Thousands of fishermen have not been able to venture into fishing even after rains have stopped as fish catch smells of oil, the report stated.
- Vehicles parked in the area have also been affected with oil stains visible on them even as streets still bearing the traces of oil, despite flood water receding.
- Hundreds of fish, prawns, and crabs have been found dead in the Kosasthalaiyar

River due to the impact of oil mixing with flood water on December 4 and 5 when extremely heavy rains drenched Chennai, the publication stated.

Ennore oil spill: Health effects and environmental damages

Deccan Herald further stated that residents of Ernavur, Adi Dravidar Colony, Thiruveethiamman Kovil, and fishing villages complain that they have been encountering several health issues since the oil spill last week, besides feeling suffocated due to the odour of the oil.

According to the report, the residents have alleged that the culprit is the Chennai Petroleum Corporation Limited (CPCL) refinery in near-by Manali which, according to them, released oil into the flood water.

From burning sensation in the eyes to itching in hands and legs to giddiness, their problems have only increased even as they struggle to rebuild their lives battered by the cyclone, DH stated.

What led to Ennore oil spill

A report in NDTV stated that Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board identified inadequate stormwater management at CPCL, which led to overflowing of oil mixed water amid floods triggered by cyclone Michaung.

However, a report in The Week stated that while representing the case in the National Green Tribunal (NGT), the CPCL on Tuesday blamed the TNPCB for coming out with an incomplete report.

CPCL has reportedly engaged fishermen to clean up the oil. "Due to the incessant rains caused by cyclone Michaung there was unprecedented flooding inside the CPCL refinery in Manali. Presently water levels have receded. There was no pipeline leak from the refinery. We are investigating the matter," CPCL was quoted as saying.

With no protective gear the fishermen were seen cleaning the oil using mugs, The Week stated.

On the other hand, environmental activists are of the opinion that both the pollution control board and the oil company are at fault.

"The regulatory authority underplayed the situation. Underplaying the system only increases the risk. CPCL says there is no pipeline leak, while TNPCCB says there are oil traces. It is a huge environmental problem," environmental activist Nithyanand Jeyaraman was quoted by The Week.

He added that the government should now ensure that the oil spread is contained, and take measures for safe disposal of the oil.

What's the punishment for oil spills

Considering oil leak or oil spill is among the worst ecological disasters, there are various stern measures that authorities can take, which includes hefty penalty to jail term.

In 2020, the National Green Tribunal had imposed an interim penalty of Rs 25 crore on PSU major Oil India over its failure to stop fire in Assam's Baghjan oil well resulting in damage to the environment.

There are various international laws too for merchant ships that may spill oil due to negligence. Many countries have their own stringent law too in this regard.

Section 356J of the Merchant shipping Act, 1958, describes the power to give a notice to the owner, etc, of polluting ship when the central government is satisfied the ship is not as per the prescribed rules.

Section 356K of the same Act states that if a person, after being served the notice under section 356J, fails to comply, the central government can convict the person of an offense.

Ennore saw oil spill in 2017 too

The oil spill took place outside the Kamarajar Port in Ennore on 27 January, 2017, when an outbound empty tanker BW Maple collided with an inbound loaded oil tanker Dawn Kanchipuram at 4 am, which was unexpected.

In the morning of January 27, the Kamarajar port authority released a press statement that there is no damage to the environment and no casualty or injury to persons. However, by afternoon, oil spill sheen was visible with dead turtles being washed ashore and residents of nearby coastal areas reporting a strong smell of oil.

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