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Title: Regarding bio-diversity protection and conservation project for Pallikaranai Marshland, Tamil Nadu - Laid

DR. T. SUMATHY (A) THAMIZHACHI THANGAPANDIAN (CHENNAI SOUTH): Chennai is a thriving metropolis which is also known for its diverse ecosystem. The Pallikaranai marshland covering a geographical area of 80 square kilometres is one of the most significant wetland ecosystems which plays an important role in the natural drainage systems in South India. The topography of this marshland is such that it retains water perennially, creating an aquatic ecosystem which is home to several rare, vulnerable and endangered flora and fauna. It is also a breeding ground for many migratory birds making it environmentally very important to local and global ecosystem. Unfortunately, mindless damages have been done to its environment, making its very existence uncertain in future.

The Pallikaranai marshland is vulnerable to encroachment and degradation. The marsh has come under serious threat from the developmental programmes adopted by the government. Major problem faced by the marsh is the dumping of municipal wastes. The Corporation of Chennai is dumping about 2200 tonnes of garbage in landfills right over the Marsh. Besides a sewage treatment plant that is located in this region is discharging 32 million litres of untreated sewage into the marsh on a daily basis.

“If you mess with nature, it messes with you”. This suits best for Pallikaranai marshland.

At present the chromium content in the land and groundwater is hazardously high and the Air quality too deteriorated, exceeding the healthy limits by many-fold.

Wetlands provide innumerable valuable services to the society at large such as recharging ground water, recycling nutrients, attenuating floods and as natural habitat supporting biodiversity. Due to rapid urbanization and industrialization the Pallikaranai marshland has been reduced to one-tenth of its original extent.

If the landfills are closed and sewage treatment plants relocated, the damage can be curtailed. The Madras High Court in one of its recent verdicts has ruled for the protection and preservation of 1716 acres of marshland.

Therefore, I urge the Union Government to initiate immediately a comprehensive bio-diversity protection and conservation project under the National Wetland Conservation Management programme to save the Marshland of Pallikaranai.