

TELEGRAPH

Green panel wants work halt at tallest towers

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✓ "The entire work of South City (Project), should be closed."
 ✓ "Tower III and Tower IV should be demolished."

These are the first two recommendations of the committee set up by the West Bengal Pollution Control Board in April to "examine all the issues in respect of South City Projects".

"I am not aware of the panel's report and hence, cannot make any comment. Besides, the matter is *sub judice*," de-

clared South City CEO Sanjay Choudhury.

The largest residential-cum-commercial project of the city on Prince Anwar Shah Road has been found guilty of flouting environmental norms, as reported in **Metro** on March 1.

The four-member panel, in the report submitted last week (a copy of which is with **Metro**), orders a halt on all work at the estate and restoration of Bikramgarh Jheel, bordering the site, for the following reasons:

■ "...construction work of Tower III and Tower IV have encroached waterbody and also developed by filling up of the waterbody"

■ "South City has failed to show any waterbody area of 1.31 acre for which it obtained permission from the state board for fill up"

■ "South City failed to show any area where 1.41 acre of land will be developed as waterbody as per their commitment against the filling up of the waterbody of 1.31 acre".

South City has been directed to first demolish Tower III (construction of ground floor complete, according to the project's website as on April 21) and Tower IV (foundation complete, again according to the website), and then "prepare full Environment Impact Assessment through government institution or from any reputed university...".

The Rs 500-crore-plus project, spread over 31 acres, is to have around 1,600 flats in four residential towers, along with

a mall with a multiplex, a school, a club and more.

The committee, headed by Prof P.N. Roy, also chairman of the state-level Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) committee, has recommended "proper steps against the persons who issued or accorded permission (to South City) for filling up of the waterbody and issued 'consent to establish' without application of mind and violating the law of the land".

In its findings, the commit-

tee labels "the permission accorded for filling up of the waterbody highly irregular" and the "entire modus operandi of the state board questionable and bad in law".

The committee holds the then chief engineer Biman Basu and present chief engineer Ranjit Kumar Ghosh responsible for the "highly irregular" permission. It also states that "S.K. Sarkar, the then member secretary... violated the law of the land and issued permission for filling up

of the waterbody as per the advice of (the then) principal secretary, department of environment, Asim Burman".

Pollution board chairman Sudip Banerjee said: "We have received the report and are examining it."

In a related development, the Union forest and environment ministry has asked for an action taken report from the state pollution control board (PCB) on the South City matter enclosing the March 1 **Metro** article as "self-explanatory".