Why a dip off the Marina may be bad for your health

SULLIED WATERS

Seawage from Adyar, Cooum rivers flow into the sea.

Chennai: It is that time of the year when visitors flock to the Marina to beat the heat by taking a dip in the waves washing up on the shore. But a study by coastal monitoring experts suggests that even soaking your feet in the waters may do you more harm than good.

Scientists from the National Centre for Coastal Research (NCCR) have found extremely high levels of microbial load – mainly faecal coliforms like E. coli – in five crowded beaches in and around the city during summer with the Marina topping the list.

Continuous, uncontrolled and untreated sewage discharge into the Adyar and Cooum rivers which flow into the sea is the source for the increase in the bacterial load along the coast, with monitoring experts say that the levels of pathogens are on the rise.

The centre, a project director under the ministry of earth sciences, collected 152 samples from five beaches – Marina, Elliot, Thiruvanmiyur, Ennore and Kovalam – during the wet and dry season of the year.

One of the samples collected from Kovalam beach also shows high levels of pathogens. According to the study, the presence of E. coli and coliform organisms in the water is an indicator that beaches are contaminated with faeces. It is a serious public health issue as people can get digestive problems, vomiting, loss of appetite, dehydration and abdominal pain, besides transmitting it to others," he said.

An accident brief

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