

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI**

Original Application No. 735/2023

In re: News item appearing in News Himachal dated 04.12.2023 titled
“Ashwani Khad : The Most Polluted River in Himachal Pradesh”

Date of hearing: 02.01.2024

**CORAM: HON’BLE MR. JUSTICE PRAKASH SHRIVASTAVA, CHAIRPERSON
HON’BLE DR. A. SENTHIL VEL, EXPERT MEMBER**

Respondent: Ms. Navya Nanda, Adv. for Himachal Pradesh PCB (Through VC)

ORDER

1. This original application is registered in *suo-moto* exercise of power on the basis of the news item titled **“Ashwani Khad : The Most Polluted River in Himachal Pradesh”** appearing in News Himachal dated 04.12.2023.

2. The news item reveals that the rivers and streams of Himachal Pradesh are grappling with surge in pollution and Ashwani Khad in Shimla has been found to be the most polluted river in the state. The water quality assessed by the Central Pollution Control Board at 136 locations across 37 rivers in the region reveals disturbing trends. The Biological Oxygen Demand (BOD) parameters at 19 locations in 9 rivers and streams witness failure and Ashwani Khad, Bald of Baddi, Giri of Sirmaur, Markanda of Rampur, Pabbar of Rohru, Ratta of Nalagarh, Shikari Khad of Rohru, Sarsa of Nalagarh and Sukhna Khad of Parwanoo exceeded prescribed pollution standards.

3. The news item reveals that the pollution in Ashwani Khad primarily stems from the discharge of effluents from sewage treatment plants. The

BOD level in Ashwani Khad escalated from 70 mg per liter in 2022 to an alarming 80 mg per liter in the current assessment.

4. As per the news item contamination of rivers in the state can be attributed to unregulated disposal of industrial effluents, untreated sewage and agricultural runoff. As a result of the river water pollution in Himachal Pradesh, public health, agriculture and biodiversity is adversely affected and waterborne diseases are rising, posing a serious threat to residents.

5. Power of the Tribunal to take up the matter in *suo-motu* exercise of power has been recognized by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of "*Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai vs. Ankita Sinha &Ors.*" reported in 2021 SCC Online SC 897.

6. Learned counsel appearing for the Himachal Pradesh Pollution Control Board on advance notice, has informed that action plan for rejuvenation of all the 9 rivers in the state has already been prepared and the consultations are in progress in respect of implementation of the action plans. She submits that the entire process is being reviewed by the Chief Secretary of the State.

7. Hence in the circumstances of the case, we direct the Chief Secretary, State of Himachal Pradesh to file an affidavit within four weeks indicating the timeline for implementation of the action plan.

8. List on 26.02.2024

9. A Copy of this order, along with a copy of the petition, be forwarded to the Chief Secretary, State of Himachal Pradesh by e-mail for compliance.

Prakash Shrivastava, CP

Dr. A. Senthil Vel, EM

January 02, 2024
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AS.