



2026 INSC 316

**REPORTABLE**  
**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA**  
**INHERENT/CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**

**SUO MOTO WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO(S). 8 OF 2025**

**IN RE: 2 MILLION LIVES AT RISK,  
CONTAMINATION IN JOJARI RIVER,  
RAJASTHAN**

**WITH**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 5517-5519 OF 2022**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 8748 OF 2022**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 9057-9058 OF 2022**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 9010-9011 OF 2022**

**ORDER**

**Mehta, J.**

1. This Court, *vide* order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2025<sup>1</sup>, while taking note of the severe degradation and destruction of the Jojari River System, deemed it necessary to modify/clarify the order granting

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<sup>1</sup> ***2 Million Lives at Risk, Contamination in Jojari River, Rajasthan, In re***, 2025 SCC OnLine SC 2518.

interim stay on the directions issued by the National Green Tribunal<sup>2</sup> *vide* final order dated 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2022. The Court held that the stay shall not operate so as to restrain the implementation of substantive remedial and regulatory directions issued by the NGT. However, it was clarified that the interim stay would continue to operate only in respect of the remarks made against Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation<sup>3</sup> and other concerned authorities/corporations, as well as the direction imposing environmental compensation of Rs. 2 Crores upon them. These aspects were kept open for consideration at an appropriate stage, subject to an evaluation of the future conduct, actions and compliance demonstrated by the said authorities/corporations.

**2.** In furtherance thereof, and having regard to the scale of environmental harm, the prolonged inaction and the necessity of a coordinated, scientifically informed and accountable institutional framework, this Court deemed it appropriate to constitute a

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<sup>2</sup> Hereinafter, being referred to as “NGT”.

<sup>3</sup> For short, “RIICO”.

**High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee<sup>4</sup> under the chairmanship of Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sangeet Lodha, Hon'ble (Retd.) Judge of High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan.** The constitution of the said Committee was considered imperative to enable effective oversight of the restoration of the river system and to ensure that remedial measures are implemented in a structured and sustained manner. The Committee was envisaged as a dedicated fact-finding, monitoring and implementation body tasked with identifying systemic deficiencies, supervising measures necessary to arrest further pollution, and formulating long-term strategies for reversal of the environmental damage already caused.

**3.** The mandate of the aforesaid Committee, as delineated by this Court, was wide-ranging and comprehensive. The Committee was entrusted with ensuring the time-bound implementation of the directions issued by the NGT *vide* final order dated 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2022; preparation of a scientific and actionable river restoration and rejuvenation

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<sup>4</sup> Hereinafter, being referred to as the "Committee".

blueprint; identification and mapping of pollution sources; and supervision of compliance by industrial units and municipal bodies. The Committee was further empowered to conduct audits and inspections, assess infrastructure gaps in treatment facilities, recommend augmentation measures, and enforce accountability by identifying erring entities and invoking the “Polluter Pays” principle. Additionally, the Committee was tasked with integrating technical inputs from expert institutions, facilitating real-time monitoring mechanisms, and ensuring community engagement through dissemination of water quality data and incorporation of local feedback.

**4.** The matter was thereafter directed to be listed on 27<sup>th</sup> February, 2026 for the purpose of receiving the first status report of the Committee, so as to enable this Court to assess the progress made and to issue further directions, if necessary.

**5.** In the hearing on 10<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, this Court noted that the Committee, constituted in pursuance of this Court’s order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2025, had submitted a detailed status report. The status report had been systematically compartmentalized under

various heads and, *inter alia*, contained an overview of the Luni River system; details of industries operating in the districts of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra; particulars of the Common Effluent Treatment Plants<sup>5</sup>, including their installed capacities and operational loads; and details of the Sewage Treatment Plants<sup>6</sup> functioning in the region. The status report further incorporated findings of inspections carried out by the Committee across villages, industrial units and other locations situated along the river system, along with photographic material depicting the extent of environmental degradation caused by the effluent-laden river flow. It also set out the directions issued by the Committee from time to time, the steps taken by the concerned authorities pursuant thereto, the proposed course of action in furtherance of this Court's order, the recommendations made in that regard, and the logistical constraints being faced by the Committee in effectively discharging its mandate.

**6.** Taking the status report on record, this Court recorded the submission of Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma,

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<sup>5</sup> For short, "CETP".

<sup>6</sup> For short, "STP".

learned Additional Advocate General appearing for the State of Rajasthan, that the concerns highlighted by the Committee regarding the lack of adequate human resources and official assistance would be duly addressed and resolved by the State Government on or before the next date of hearing. The matter was accordingly directed to be listed on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2026.

**7.** When the matter came up for hearing on 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, this Court recorded the submission of Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, learned Additional Advocate General appearing for the State of Rajasthan, that most of the logistic issues being faced by the Committee had been sorted out and resolved.

**8.** Thereafter, the matter was taken up on 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, and on the said date, an affidavit was placed before this Court, in compliance of the order dated 17<sup>th</sup> March, 2026.

**CONSIDERATION OF THE STATUS REPORT AND CONTINUING ENVIRONMENTAL DEGRADATION**

**9.** At the outset, upon perusal of the status report submitted by the Committee, this Court is of the considered view that the grave environmental degradation noted in its order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November,

2025 stands fully substantiated by the detailed field findings and empirical material now placed on record. The status report discloses that the damage to the river system is not only extensive in scale but also deeply entrenched, indicative of a prolonged and systemic failure on part of all stakeholders in curbing pollution and enforcing environmental safeguards. The magnitude and persistence of the harm, as reflected in the status report, demonstrate a continuing and alarming deterioration of all three riverine ecosystems.

**10.** The material further reveals a disturbing pattern of administrative apathy and regulatory inaction on the part of the State of Rajasthan, its departments, instrumentalities and corporations, as well as the RIICO. Despite repeated inspections, warnings and judicial interventions, the failure to undertake timely and effective remedial measures has allowed the situation to deteriorate to its present critical state. The status report, therefore, not only corroborates the concerns earlier expressed by this Court but also establishes that the environmental catastrophe is widespread and is a direct

consequence of sustained neglect and non-compliance.

**11.** In view of the nature, scope and contents of the status report submitted by the Committee, this Court deems it appropriate to examine the principal issues emerging therefrom in a structured and sequential manner. Accordingly, the major aspects highlighted in the report shall now be considered *in seriatim*, with a view to evaluate the deficiencies identified, the measures undertaken in response thereto, and the further directions required to effectively arrest the ongoing environmental degradation and ensure meaningful restoration of the river system.

**I. Industrial Waste and Treatment Infrastructure**

**12.** Insofar as the issue of industrial waste generation and the adequacy of treatment infrastructure is concerned, the status report reveals a significant concentration of polluting industries across the districts of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra, placing an enormous burden on the existing effluent treatment systems. The material on record indicates that the scale of industrial activity, particularly in the textile sector, far exceeds the capacity and

operational efficiency of the treatment infrastructure, thereby contributing directly to the direct discharge of untreated or inadequately treated effluents into the river system.

**13.** In Jodhpur, the status report indicates the presence of a substantial number of textile and steel industries, with as many as 6 textile units having their own Effluent Treatment Plants, and 312 textile units and 81 steel units connected to CETPs, largely situated within RIICO industrial areas. While CETPs for both textile and steel industries are stated to be operating within their designed capacities, the absence of Zero Liquid Discharge systems and the continued discharge of treated effluent into the RIICO drain, ultimately joining the Jojari River, remain matters of serious concern. The situation is further aggravated by infrastructural deficiencies, including choked effluent conveyance pipelines and the total lack of dedicated reuse mechanisms. In response to these constraints as pointed out by the Committee, the Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board<sup>7</sup> has imposed a Graded Response Roster Plan (GRRP),

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<sup>7</sup> For short, "RSPCB".

w.e.f., 10<sup>th</sup> January, 2026, thereby restricting the inflow of effluents from industrial units to levels commensurate with the actual handling capacity of the CETPs. Simultaneously, an additional effluent conveyance system of approximately 23 km is being executed by RIICO through Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project at a cost of Rs.23.81 crore, with the stated objective of enhancing transportation capacity and reliability, and an anticipated completion date of 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. It is, however, of deep concern that despite RIICO having allotted nearly 42,000 square metres of land at Salawas for the establishment of an additional CETP facility, no tangible progress has been made owing to the lack of response from the concerned Special Purpose Vehicle.

**14.** In Pali, the position appears to be severely alarming. The status report records that out of 518 textile units, a vast majority are connected to CETPs. However, serious operational deficiencies continue to persist. CETP-4 has remained non-operational since November, 2025 owing to technical and operational issues, and it is further noted that, prior to 24<sup>th</sup> November, 2025, tertiary treated wastewater was

being discharged into the Bandi River in clear violation of the conditions of consent to operate issued by the RSPCB. **Approximately 1,500 Metric Tonnes of hazardous waste is reported to be lying stored at the said facility.** CETP-6, though operational, has been functioning at a significantly reduced capacity despite being designed for a higher load. While effluent is primarily conveyed through an underground closed conduit system, effluents from certain industrial areas, including RIICO Industrial Area Phase-I & II and Mahaveer Udyog Nagar, continue to be transported through tankers. Such transportation was originally permitted by the NGT by order dated 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2017 for a limited duration of six months, which has long since expired. Notwithstanding the same, the practice appears to have continued, though the Committee has now resolved to completely prohibit such tanker-based transport by its resolution dated 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026. It is further noted that, owing to sub-optimal operations, discharge from member units has presently been restricted, and treated water is being redistributed for reuse largely through tankers in the absence of a dedicated pipeline network. The facility,

though operating at a Zero Liquid Discharge level, has seen the ZLD plant's handling capacity decline from approximately 4.5-5 MLD until two months ago to about 2-2.5 MLD at present, possibly due to poor operations and maintenance. **The quantity of hazardous waste stored at CETP-6 is reported to be approximately 4,500 Metric Tonnes.** The aforesaid facts, taken cumulatively, reflect serious lapses in compliance, infrastructural inadequacies, and a continuing failure of regulatory oversight.

**15.** In Balotra, which constitutes a major textile hub, the status report highlights the existence of multiple CETPs catering to a large number of industrial units, including facilities at Balotra, Bithuja and Jasol. Although certain CETPs are equipped with Zero Liquid Discharge systems, their operational performance remains inconsistent, with several units functioning below capacity due to issues relating to maintenance, upgradation and monitoring. The absence of Supervisory Control and Data Acquisition (SCADA) connectivity in certain units, reliance on tanker-based reuse systems, and instances of unscientific disposal practices, including the use of storage facilities in a manner inconsistent

with environmental norms, point towards systemic deficiencies in both infrastructure and its management.

**16.** More broadly, the status report brings to fore persistent operational issues affecting CETPs across all three regions. These include chronic under-utilisation of installed capacities, non-compliance with prescribed environmental standards, absence or inadequacy of Zero Liquid Discharge systems, and recurring technical and maintenance failures. The material further discloses that institutional and financial constraints, including disputes between operating agencies and Special Purpose Vehicles, irregular payment mechanisms, and lack of adoption of modern technologies, have severely compromised the efficiency of treatment systems. The cumulative effect of these deficiencies is the continued discharge of inadequately treated effluents into the river system, thereby exacerbating environmental degradation and posing a serious threat to public health and ecological sustainability.

## **II. Sewage Treatment Infrastructure and Municipal Discharge**

**17.** The status report reveals a consistent and significant gap between sewage generation and treatment capacity across all three regions, resulting in the continued discharge of untreated and partially treated sewage into the river systems. The material placed on record indicates that untreated and partially treated sewage continues to be discharged directly into the river systems, thereby compounding the pollution caused by industrial effluents and significantly aggravating the overall environmental degradation.

**18.** In Jodhpur, the status report indicates that the city generates approximately 230 Million Litres per Day<sup>8</sup> of sewage, whereas the existing treatment capacity is limited to about 175 MLD through a combination of four STPs and one oxidation pond. This leaves a substantial treatment gap of approximately 55 MLD. Although two STPs at Uchiyarda and Jhalamand, each with a capacity of 10 MLD, are under construction, and the capacity

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<sup>8</sup> For short, “MLD”.

enhancement and technological upgradation of the Nandi Sewage Treatment Facility up to 30 MLD is underway, the current deficiency remains significant. It is of particular concern that both treated and untreated sewage is being discharged into the Jojari River, thereby contributing to its continued contamination.

**19.** In Pali, the situation similarly reflects inadequate treatment infrastructure. The status report records that against an estimated sewage generation of 32 MLD, the existing treatment capacity is only 22.5 MLD through two functional STPs, resulting in a shortfall of approximately 9.5 MLD. The status report further indicates that both treated and untreated sewage is, in large measure, discharged into the Bandi River, thereby exacerbating the already critical condition of the river system.

**20.** In Balotra, the position is equally disquieting. The municipal sewage generation is estimated at 12.5 MLD, whereas only a single STP with a capacity of 9 MLD is functional, leaving a treatment gap of approximately 3.5 MLD. The status report further records that the said STP has not met prescribed operational benchmarks at any point in time and has

not been granted “Consent to Operate” by RSPCB. It is also noted that prosecution has been initiated against the Commissioner of the concerned municipal authority. Despite this, treated as well as untreated sewage continues to be discharged into the Luni River.

**21.** The aforesaid facts reveal that the deficiencies in sewage treatment infrastructure, coupled with inadequate operation and regulatory enforcement, have resulted in the continuous discharge of untreated municipal waste into the river systems. The failure to bridge the gap between sewage generation and treatment capacity, and the lack of adherence to statutory standards, have materially contributed to the degradation of the riverine ecology and underscore the urgent need for augmentation, modernization and strict monitoring of sewage treatment systems.

### **III. Inspection Findings and On-Ground Impact**

**22.** Pursuant to the directions issued by this Court, the Committee undertook extensive field inspections across the districts of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra, covering river stretches, industrial clusters, affected

villages and downstream impact zones. The inspections, conducted in multiple phases commencing from 20<sup>th</sup> December, 2025, along with follow-up visits, reveal a disturbing and continuing pattern of environmental devastation and administrative apathy. The on-ground findings disclose large-scale mortality of Babul trees along the riverine stretches, which, given the hardy and drought-resistant nature of the species, unmistakably indicates prolonged exposure to toxic wastewater and effluents contaminating surface water, ground water and adjoining soil, thereby serving as a visible ecological marker of sustained pollution. The Committee has further observed that the persistent discharge of treated and untreated sewage and industrial effluents has rendered the river system wholly unfit for agricultural, livestock and ecological use. Polluted water is being utilised for irrigation, vast tracts of agricultural land remain submerged, groundwater stands contaminated, and public infrastructure has suffered extensive damage. The cumulative impact is reflected in degradation of soil quality, destruction of vegetation, adverse effects on livestock health, and serious impairment of the

livelihoods and living conditions of local communities. These inspection findings present a stark and comprehensive account of the continuing environmental injury and its far-reaching consequences on ecology, public health and the rural economy.

### **A. Jodhpur**

**23.** In Jodhpur, the inspections reveal a pervasive and continuous discharge of untreated sewage and industrial effluents into the Jojari River through multiple sources, including direct inflows, submerged/concealed pipelines, stormwater drains and illegal discharge points. The intermingling of sewage and industrial waste was visibly evident at several locations, with RIICO drains effectively functioning as conduits for industrial effluents, alongside instances of illegal textile activities discharging waste into municipal drains. Specific instances underscore the gravity of the situation: at Khokharia, untreated sewage from adjoining areas was found directly entering the river channel and the riverbed was visibly being used for dumping solid waste/garbage; near Uchiyarda, submerged pipelines

were observed discharging untreated effluents with visible foaming downstream; and at Salawas Bridge, stark colour variations in the water clearly indicated the confluence of industrial effluents and sewage from different sources. In residential localities such as Bhadwasiya, Ashok Nagar and Maderna Colony, open drains were found carrying effluents from illegal textile operations, while stormwater infrastructure within RIICO areas was being misused for wastewater disposal, reflecting a complete breakdown of regulatory control over discharge mechanisms.

**24.** The downstream consequences of such unchecked discharge were found to be severe and far-reaching. In Village Doli, an age-old well, stated to be over 400 years old, had become filled with toxic contaminated water and rendered unusable, indicating deep and irreversible groundwater contamination. Similarly, Government School buildings in Villages Melba and Araba were found to have remained submerged for prolonged periods, rendering them non-functional and reflecting the extent to which essential public infrastructure has been incapacitated due to continuous wastewater inundation. Large tracts of agricultural land were

found submerged under effluent-laden water, rendering them unfit for cultivation, while traditional water bodies and groundwater sources stood extensively polluted. The inspections further recorded serious adverse impacts on livestock health, including infertility, disease and decline in cattle population, as well as a marked deterioration in the living conditions of affected populations. The cumulative effect of these findings reflects not merely environmental degradation, but a complete collapse of ecological balance and civic life in the affected areas.

**25.** Furthermore, during a follow-up inspection conducted on 22<sup>nd</sup> January, 2026 at Villages Doli and Araba to assess the impact of the Graded Response Roster Plan (GRRP), it was observed that while water levels had receded in certain areas and land had become visible after prolonged submergence, there was no corresponding improvement in water quality, which continued to fail prescribed standards. Residents also raised serious grievances regarding the inadequate supply of potable water, pointing out that the existing pipeline networks traverse contaminated and submerged areas, thereby posing

a significant risk of further pollution of the supplied water itself. Consequently, reliance had been placed on tanker-based water supply, which was found to be inadequate. These findings indicate that while interim measures may have led to a marginal reduction in visible water accumulation, the underlying contamination persists unabated, continuing to pose serious environmental and public health risks.

### **B. Pali**

**26.** In Pali, the inspections disclose a deeply entrenched pattern of contamination of the Bandi River and its associated water systems, arising from continuous discharge of industrial effluents and sewage. The situation is aggravated by the presence of untreated wastewater in river stretches, drains and adjoining areas, **coupled with visible attempts at concealment** and continued reliance on impermissible modes of disposal. Notably, at the Bandi-Luni confluence, residents reported complete loss of agricultural productivity and severe issues related to health of cattle. At Dhundhara, the public well known as “Mitthia Bera” was found

contaminated and unfit for drinking or irrigation and **at NH-62 (C-8 Bridge), large-scale soil dumping and levelling of the riverbed was observed, allegedly undertaken to conceal effluent discharge.** Further, continuous discharge of wastewater was seen through drains such as the Gandhi Nagar RIICO drain, with visible sludge deposits at discharge points, **while unscientific dumping of hazardous sludge in CETP yards of CETP-4 and CETP-6 and designated sludge yards was also recorded.**

**27.** The downstream and cumulative impact in Pali is of a grave and irreversible nature. At Nehda Dam, which was originally constructed as a freshwater reservoir, the inspections revealed massive accumulation of effluent-laden wastewater and sludge deposits, effectively transforming it into a toxic reservoir. **In areas such as Gadwada-Jaitpur and Chhapariya, more than 1000 *bighas* of agricultural land was found waterlogged with high salinity levels, rendering the land unproductive and instances were reported where crops such as Isabgol showed survival rates as low as 5% due to contaminated irrigation water.** Groundwater

contamination, soil degradation, and long-term agricultural losses were consistently reported by residents, along with adverse impacts on livestock health. The findings further indicate widespread environmental degradation, disruption of rural livelihoods, and a sustained failure of regulatory enforcement mechanisms.

### **C. Balotra**

**28.** In Balotra, the inspections reveal a situation of systemic and large-scale environmental violation, marked by misuse of treatment infrastructure, illegal discharge practices and continued non-compliance with statutory norms. The Luni River and associated drains were found carrying sewage and industrial effluents, with extensive sludge deposition across the riverbed indicating prolonged and repeated contamination. Significant instances include the Ambey Valley HRTS facilities being used not for treatment but for storage of large volumes of effluent-laden wastewater. **At the said location, prominent tyre tracks were observed on the riverbed indicating the movement of heavy vehicles, which, lacking any ecological justification and**

**causing disturbance to the riverbed, are strongly indicative of deliberate human intervention, most likely undertaken to conceal traces of sludge and wastewater.** It was further observed that certain industrial units were operating without valid Consent to Operate and were directly discharging effluents into the river and surrounding areas.

**29.** It is of serious concern that the HRTS facility at Khed Road (Old), in respect of which specific directions had earlier been issued by RSPCB for removal of accumulated wastewater and sludge and for reclamation of the site within a stipulated timeframe, was not shown to the Committee during its inspection on 24<sup>th</sup> and 25<sup>th</sup> December, 2025 and was instead represented as having been abandoned. **However, during the subsequent inspection conducted pursuant to reported instances of discharge of effluent-laden wastewater into the said facility, the site was inspected by the Committee, and during the said inspection it was found that large volumes of contaminated wastewater continued to remain stored in the tanks, which were required to be dismantled years earlier. The subsistence and misuse of these**

**tanks, coupled with continued inflow of effluents and associated environmental violations, including foul odour and landscape degradation, clearly demonstrate non-compliance with prior directions and reinforce concerns of earlier non-disclosure being an attempt to conceal ongoing violations.**

**30.** Furthermore, the proposed construction of RCC storage reservoirs at Ambey Valley, in close proximity to existing HRTS facilities, gives rise to serious environmental concerns. The status report indicates that consent had been granted for 10 tanks of 10 million litres each, ostensibly for emergency storage, though only partial construction was underway. Having regard to the past misuse and breaches of HRTS facilities in the same area, the proposed large-scale storage of wastewater on the riverbank appears wholly disproportionate to the actual operational requirements and poses a significant risk of continued accumulation and potential discharge of untreated effluents. In these circumstances, the Committee has directed that the construction of the said storage tanks be forthwith stopped, and that

existing directions issued by RSPCB in relation to HRTS facilities be strictly enforced.

**31.** The environmental consequences in Balotra are both widespread and alarming. At Mandapura, approximately **800 bighas** of pastureland was found submerged under effluent-laden wastewater. In Jerla and adjoining areas, large-scale submergence of land due to continuous discharge through the Jerla Nalla was observed, indicating continuing inflow of effluent-laden wastewater. Despite claims that industrial units in RIICO Phase-IV were equipped with ETPs, inspections revealed widespread illegal discharge, with only one out of 45 units found compliant, corroborating residents' complaints and the visible extent of contamination and environmental damage affecting Jerla and beyond. Additionally, at Solar Evaporation Ponds, Khed Road (New), overflow between tanks was noticed, indicating improper handling and excess inflow of wastewater. The inspections also revealed ongoing sludge deposition even in newly constructed drainage channels, reflecting continued discharge and ineffective mitigation. The cumulative effect of these findings is the degradation of river ecology,

destruction of agricultural and pasture lands, risk to biodiversity, and sustained exposure of local populations to severe environmental and health hazards.

**32.** The inspection findings, when viewed collectively, reveal a continuous and interconnected pattern of environmental degradation across the Jodhpur-Pali-Balotra regions. The discharge of untreated and inadequately treated sewage and industrial effluents has led to contamination of rivers, accumulation of toxic sludge, destruction of agricultural land, degradation of groundwater, and severe impact on public health, livestock and ecology. The material on record leaves no room for doubt that the damage is widespread, continuing and the result of prolonged systemic failure in enforcement and compliance. The situation, as it emerges from the inspections, calls for immediate, stringent and sustained remedial intervention at all levels.

#### **IV. Directions Issued by the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee**

**33.** In the course of its second meeting held on 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026, upon detailed deliberations on the

data presented, field observations, and the persistent deficiencies in implementation, the Committee noted with concern that the progress achieved thus far falls significantly short of the expected outcomes and that the objectives of environmental restoration remain a distant dream. In these circumstances, and having regard to the urgency of arresting further environmental degradation, the Committee proceeded to issue a slew of directions, unanimously agreed upon, aimed at ensuring strict compliance with environmental norms, strengthening treatment infrastructure, curbing illegal discharges, and expediting the implementation of remedial measures in a time-bound and coordinated manner. Accordingly, the following directions were issued: -

- a. RSPCB must ensure that all CETPs/ETPs/STPs comply with prescribed standards and norms.
- b. RSPCB must ensure that all CETPs are upgraded to Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) within a defined timeline.
- c. Performance audits of CETPs by IIT Jodhpur must be expedited and the reports shall be submitted to the Committee at the earliest.
- d. Inspection and performance audits of all ETP units must be conducted in a time-bound

manner with regular monitoring for zero wastewater discharge.

- e. RSPCB must prepare and submit a complete plan for new CETPs or capacity augmentation of existing CETPs in the three industrial clusters considering present and future needs.
- f. State Government should explore the possibility of inclusion of government officials in CETP governing bodies or similar participation to improve operation and management.
- g. Except permitted conduit lines, all illegal or unused pipelines in industrial clusters (Jodhpur, Pali, Balotra) must be removed in coordination with RIICO and local bodies with cost recovered from violating CETPs/Industrial Units.
- h. Industrial effluents must be transported only through closed conduit pipelines with SCADA-based flow meters. The practice of carrying of effluents by use of Tankers shall be completely banned and violators must be prosecuted.
- i. Sludge stored in CETP yards in all clusters must be scientifically disposed of/removed within 4 weeks.
- j. RSPCB shall furnish complete details of 'Consent to Establish' and 'Consent to Operate' granted to applicants in the districts of Jodhpur, Pali, and Balotra for industries established on agricultural land or land not set apart or duly converted for industrial use; in

the meantime, no 'Consent to Establish' shall be issued unless the land is duly converted for industrial purposes, including for establishment of obnoxious industries such as textile units.

- k. RSPCB shall ensure strict compliance with its order dated 22<sup>nd</sup> February, 2019 regarding HRTS at Khed (Old) within 2 months.
- l. Wastewater transmitted from CETP Balotra to HRTS at Ambey Valley must be returned to CETP for treatment within 3 months, and sludge at HRTS must be disposed of scientifically and as per prescribed norms.
- m. Construction of concrete storage tanks at Ambey Valley by CETP Trust, Balotra must stop immediately.
- n. No Consent to Establish or Consent to Operate shall be issued by RSPCB for hazardous/obnoxious industries near riverbanks, and the prescribed distance norms from high flood areas must be strictly followed.
- o. RSPCB must prepare a plan within 1 month for on-site treatment of effluent collected in Nehda Dam, ponds, and other water resources across various villages.
- p. RIICO/RUIDP must complete the laying of conduit pipes for textile units connected to CETP at Jodhpur within the scheduled timeline.
- q. RSPCB must develop and implement an IoT-based surveillance plan with a specific timeline.

- r. RSPCB must take legal measures to recover environmental compensation imposed on violators.
- s. Local bodies in Jodhpur, Balotra, and Pali must fully utilize the treatment capacity of existing STPs.
- t. Work of under-construction STPs in Jodhpur must be completed within the scheduled timeline.
- u. Local bodies of Jodhpur, Balotra, and Pali must submit time-bound infrastructure plans for establishment of new STPs or capacity augmentation of existing STPs, to cover the gap between total municipal discharge and treatment capacity available within 2 months.
- v. Local bodies of Jodhpur, Balotra, and Pali should explore the possibility of beneficial use of treated water.
- w. Local bodies of Jodhpur, Balotra, and Pali must take measures to ensure that treated water does not mix with untreated sewage/effluents.
- x. Illegal industries operating on agricultural land or residential area must be closed immediately, and land must be restored to its original use.
- y. Local bodies of Jodhpur, Balotra, and Pali must explore the possibility of rehabilitation of small-scale textile artisans.
- z. Stormwater drains in RIICO industrial areas must be cleaned regularly. Sludge taken out from RIICO drains shall not be deposited by the side of the drains and shall be immediately

disposed of appropriately. The said work shall be done either by RIICO independently or in coordination with municipal bodies.

- aa. RIICO, Local Self Government Department, and District Administration must develop solutions regarding sewerage systems and sewage treatment in RIICO industrial areas.

Having considered the directions holistically, we find the same to be completely in sync with the objectives of this *suo moto* writ petition. Accordingly, we accord our full *imprimatur* to the directions issued by the Committee and direct that the same shall operate as interim directions of this Court.

#### **V. Actions Taken Pursuant to the Directions of the Committee**

**34.** Pursuant to the directions issued by the Committee in its second meeting, various authorities, including the RSPCB and the District Task Forces in Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra, have undertaken a series of enforcement, regulatory and remedial measures. The actions reported reflect an intensified effort towards curbing illegal discharge, strengthening compliance mechanisms

and addressing infrastructural and operational deficiencies. The principal steps taken are summarised hereunder: -

**A. Actions Taken by Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board (RSPCB):**

- Imposition of a Graded Response Roster Plan (GRRP) on CETP (Textile), Jodhpur, restricting operational hours from 8 A.M. to 8 P.M. and reducing wastewater discharge by 50%.
- Conduct of 1,632 inspections across industrial units, CETPs and STPs between 1<sup>st</sup> September, 2025 and 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026 in Pali, Balotra & Jodhpur clusters.
- Closure/demolition of 110 illegal textile processing units in coordination with district authorities.
- Closure orders issued against 97 industries and revocation of Consent to Operate of 61 industries for non-compliance.
- Imposition of environmental compensation amounting to Rs.1,33,11,950/- on defaulting industries.

- Forfeiture of bank guarantees of Rs. 20 lakhs (SPV, Pali) and Rs. 2.5 crore (SPV of CETP Jodhpur) for non-compliance of conditions laid down in Consent to Operate, including failure to achieve ZLD.
- Issuance of directions to halt construction of RCC storage tanks at Ambey Valley, Balotra, and to initiate reclamation of HRTS facilities and treatment of accumulated wastewater.

**B. Actions Taken by District Task Force, Jodhpur:**

- A joint enforcement exercise in Jodhpur resulted in action against 66 illegal industrial units, while 26 units under the jurisdiction of the Jodhpur Development Authority were identified, of which 21 were dismantled and 5 sealed, and 40 units under the Municipal Corporation jurisdiction were proceeded against, including demolition of 10 units, seizure of machinery and premises of 17 units, voluntary removal of machinery by 10 units, disconnection of water connections of 6 units, and disconnection of electricity connections of 8 units.

- Issuance of temporary closure notices to multiple industries to prevent overflow of untreated effluents.
- Demolition of 142 illegal washing tanks following drone-based identification in affected areas of Bhandu-Salawas.

**C. Actions Taken by District Task Force, Pali:**

- Survey and mapping of encroachments within the Bandi River area.
- Seizure of unauthorized tanker-based effluent transport and initiation of proceedings under Section 133 of Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973 against violators.
- Construction of motorable pathways of about 7 Kms along riverbanks for monitoring and blocking of unauthorized discharge points.
- 25 units in residential areas were identified for potential discharge of polluted water and placed under surveillance; one operational unit was demolished; and two FIRs were registered for illegal discharge of wastewater and chemical effluents into drains and the Bandi River, with demolition of the associated illegal structures.

- Non-hazardous waste and garbage near the Bandi River adjoining CETP-1 and CETP-2 were removed; notices were issued restricting disposal of waste to designated dumping yards and prohibiting discharge of sewage into RIICO drains; rainwater discharge points into the river were blocked; interconnecting drains were obstructed; and desilting and removal of floating materials from major drains were undertaken.
- Enforcement actions included seizure of cloth by the Municipal Corporation; demolition of illegal washing tanks; and constitution of a multi-departmental task force on 30<sup>th</sup> December, 2025 to ensure continuous monitoring, coordination and review of pollution control measures.

**D. Actions Taken by District Task Force, Balotra:**

- Enforcement action against 83 illegal industrial units, including demolition, seizure and disconnection of electricity.
- Detection of illegal sewer connections by 32 units and forwarding of cases for criminal prosecution.

- Issuance of allotment cancellation notices to 81 defaulting industries.
- Action against tanker-based discharge of wastewater and imposition of penalties.

## **VI. Identification and Mapping of Legal and Illegal Discharge Points**

**35.** The material placed before this Court reveals that the discharge of industrial effluents and sewage, both treated and untreated, is pervasive across the districts of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra, occurring through rivers, stormwater drains, municipal drains, pipelines and even tanker-based disposal. The cumulative impact of such uncontrolled discharge is visible across the river systems, with the devastation originating in Jodhpur extending downstream towards Dhawa and further into Balotra district. In Pali, the proximity of industrial areas to the riverbanks has rendered the Bandi River particularly vulnerable, with severe consequences observed at Nehda Dam and adjoining irrigated areas. In Balotra, the situation is exacerbated by the continuous flow of effluent-laden wastewater through the Jerla Nalla,

resulting in large-scale submergence of land, including pastureland, over vast areas.

**36.** In view of the above, and in compliance with the directions of this Court, the Committee considered it necessary to undertake a comprehensive scientific mapping of all discharge and confluence points to ascertain the ground realities and the pathways through which contamination has spread over the years. Accordingly, joint teams comprising officers from RIICO, RSPCB and the Local Self Government Department were constituted to carry out this exercise. These teams conducted extensive field inspections across Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra to identify all sources of discharge, mixing points within drains and riverbeds, instances of tanker-based disposal, and points of confluence of industrial effluents and sewage.

**37.** The scope of the exercise included identification of all treated and untreated industrial wastewater and sewage discharge points in the rivers; mapping of mixing points within drains, manholes and riverbeds; identification of tanker-based disposal locations; and detection of all points of confluence where industrial effluents and sewage, whether

treated or untreated, intermingle within the drainage network and river systems, including within RIICO stormwater infrastructure. Pursuant to such exercise, detailed district-wise reports have been prepared to provide a complete and accurate assessment of wastewater discharge and its transmission pathways.

**38.** The district-wise findings of the joint teams reveal a widespread and systemic pattern of discharge and mixing of industrial effluents and sewage across all three regions. In Jodhpur, multiple discharge points were identified where untreated sewage and industrial effluents enter the Jojari River through drains, pipelines and stormwater channels, with several locations showing direct inflow and mixing within the riverbed. In Pali, the findings indicate extensive discharge of industrial wastewater into the Bandi River, particularly from industrial areas situated along the riverbank, along with multiple confluence points where treated and untreated effluents mix with sewage, thereby aggravating contamination downstream, including at Nehda Dam. In Balotra, the situation was found to be most critical, with numerous identified points of

tanker-based discharge, illegal disposal through drains such as the Jerla Nalla, and multiple confluence points within the river system, including RIICO stormwater drains, reflecting a continuous and unregulated flow of effluent-laden wastewater. The reports collectively demonstrate that the contamination is not confined to isolated instances but is the result of a network of interconnected discharge points and pathways, leading to large-scale and persistent degradation of the river systems.

## **VII. Recommendations of the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee**

**39.** Upon comprehensive field inspections and review, the Committee has observed that there is a continued and pervasive discharge of industrial effluents and sewage, resulting in widespread environmental degradation and persistent non-compliance with statutory norms. The laboratory analyses further indicate that the sampled water fails to satisfy even the minimum standards prescribed by the Central Pollution Control Board, including the criteria for CPCB “Class E” water, which is designated for irrigation, industrial cooling and controlled waste

disposal. Despite prior statutory directions and regulatory measures, recurring violations and systemic deficiencies continue unabated. Although certain directions were issued by the Committee in its meeting dated 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026, it has been found that additional structured and comprehensive measures are necessary to achieve meaningful environmental restoration. Accordingly, the Committee has made the following recommendations: -

- A.** State Government should strengthen oversight of CETPs by designating a nodal agency to ensure their proper establishment, operation, financial management, and governance so that prescribed environmental standards are consistently achieved.
- B.** RSPCB should replace the existing method of estimating wastewater discharge based on fabric type, process, and production with a machinery-based system for calculating wastewater generation, and implement such system within one month.
- C.** RSPCB should ensure that no Consent to Establish or Consent to Operate is granted for the establishment of hazardous or obnoxious industries along the riverbanks, and the prescribed norms of maintaining distance from high flood area/buffer zone of the river laid

down in the relevant rules/guidelines must be strictly enforced.

- D.** RSPCB shall take strict enforcement measures against violators for the recovery of environmental compensation including the suspension of Consent to Operate, and disconnection of electricity and water supply.
- E.** Illegal industries operating on agricultural or residential land should be immediately closed or seized. The land covered by such illegal industries must be restored to its original use. Proceedings for resumption of *Khatedari* rights should be initiated and concluded expeditiously. The land should be attached during the pendency of the said proceedings. RSPCB shall determine and recover compensation from the violators and prosecution should be undertaken.
- F.** Any CETP or industrial unit operating an Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP) found violating pollution control norms or discharging untreated/partially treated effluents should be immediately closed. Compensation shall be imposed and prosecution shall be initiated against the violators. Operations should resume only after full compliance, and repeat violators should require prior permission of the Supreme Court to restart their operations.
- G.** Tankers transporting industrial effluent illegally should be seized immediately, prosecution should be launched against the violators, and

the concerned District Magistrate should be empowered to confiscate such vehicles.

- H.** The Department of Water Resources, Government of Rajasthan should be directed to restore the natural flow path of the Jojari River to prevent stagnation within the riverbed and spreading of contaminated water in nearby villages, and treated municipal sewage from Jodhpur should not be discharged into Jojari River but diverted for beneficial uses.
- I.** Local bodies of Jodhpur, Pali, and Balotra, along with RIICO and the Department of Industries, should develop within three months a planned and regulated rehabilitation or relocation model with proper infrastructure for artisans engaged in Tie-and-Dye textile work.
- J.** A Multi-Disciplinary Expert Assessment Panel should be constituted to undertake a comprehensive, scientific, and time-bound assessment of the affected areas, considering the multi-dimensional impacts of effluent-laden wastewater and sewage. The assessment shall, *inter alia*, include evaluation of environmental, ecological, and socio-economic impacts, comprising: scientific analysis of groundwater and soil contamination; epidemiological studies on human health; veterinary and livestock health assessments, particularly in relation to productivity, fertility, and disease patterns; ecological and biodiversity impacts, including habitat degradation and wildlife loss;

examination of contaminants, including heavy metals, in foodgrains, vegetables, fodder, and dairy produce; economic valuation of agricultural and livelihood losses; and estimation of remediation and restoration costs. The Panel shall also develop a scientifically reasoned framework for determining compensation payable to affected populations.

- K.** The joint committee earlier constituted by the NGT *vide* final order dated 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2022, for remediation and restoration of environmental damage should be appropriately reconstituted by including the District Collectors of Jodhpur, Pali, and Balotra, the Principal Secretary of the Department of Water Resources, and a subject expert.
- L.** A dedicated environmental restoration and compensation fund should be created, and all compensation amounts already collected by CPCB, RSPCB, and RIICO pursuant to NGT directions should be transferred to this fund for structured environmental restoration and payment of compensation to affected persons.
- M.** All authorities concerned should ensure strict adherence and timely compliance with the directions issued by the Committee in its resolution dated 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026.
- N.** In view of vacant positions namely, Joint Secretary, Local Self-Government Department and Joint Secretary, Urban Development and Housing Department, in the Committee, the

Principal Secretary, Department of Local Self-Government, and Principal Secretary, Department of Urban Development and Housing may replace the Joint Secretaries earlier nominated, and the Chairperson of RSPCB and the Principal Secretary of the Department of Water Resources should be included to strengthen decision-making and coordination.

- . Failure of the State Government to appoint a dedicated Registrar-cum-Nodal Officer and provide essential staff (including a Stenographer and Legal Researcher) is significantly impeding the effective functioning of the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee, as the officer presently holding additional charge is unable to discharge responsibilities efficiently due to other official commitments. A dedicated Registrar-cum-Nodal Officer (RAS officer) along with necessary supporting staff, including a Stenographer (English Language) and legal researcher, should be appointed for the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee to ensure its smooth and effective functioning.

### **ANALYSIS AND CONSIDERATION BY THIS COURT**

**40.** Having examined the status report, the findings of the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee, and the material placed on record, this Court now

proceeds to analyse the issues arising therefrom. The facts, as they emerge, disclose not merely isolated instances of non-compliance environmental standards, but a sustained and systemic failure of regulatory enforcement, institutional accountability and infrastructural adequacy. The scale, continuity and impact of the violations necessitate a deeper judicial scrutiny to assess the adequacy of measures undertaken thus far and to determine the further course of action required to arrest ongoing degradation and secure restoration of the river system in a time-bound and effective manner.

**41.** At the outset, it must be observed that the material placed before this Court paints a deeply disturbing picture of prolonged and inexcusable apathy on the part of the State of Rajasthan, its instrumentalities, including the Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation (RIICO), the Rajasthan Urban Infrastructure Development Project (RUIDP), as well as the municipal corporations and local bodies of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra. Despite repeated judicial interventions, statutory obligations and the availability of technical inputs, there has been a

persistent failure to take effective and timely measures to prevent the discharge of untreated effluents and to protect the riverine ecosystem. The present state of environmental degradation is not the consequence of any sudden or unforeseen development, but is the cumulative result of sustained neglect and administrative indifference. Such a casual and lackadaisical approach to environmental governance, particularly when it has far-reaching implications for public health, livelihoods and ecological balance, cannot be countenanced.

**42.** The facts emerging from the record also reveal a deeply troubling impact of environmental degradation on essential public infrastructure, resulting in direct and continuing hardship to the local population. Instances have been documented where vital community infrastructure has been rendered unusable due to prolonged submergence and contamination caused by effluent discharge. In Villages Melba and Araba, Government School buildings have remained submerged for extended periods, leading to disruption of educational activities and depriving children of access to basic schooling

facilities. Similarly, in Village Doli, an age-old well, stated to be over 400 years old, has been completely contaminated and rendered unfit for any use, reflecting severe and irreversible groundwater contamination. The destruction and impairment of such critical infrastructure not only signify environmental damage but also translates into tangible social consequences, including disruption of essential services, deterioration of living conditions and erosion of basic human dignity. These instances underscore that the environmental crisis has transcended ecological boundaries and has directly undermined the fundamental rights and welfare of the affected communities.

**43.** The status report further reveals circumstances which go beyond mere regulatory lapses, and point towards active and deliberate acts of concealment and cover up of environmental violations. It has been specifically observed that at NH-62 (C-8 Bridge), soil spreading and levelling of the riverbed had been undertaken, with residents asserting that such activity was carried out to conceal industrial wastewater discharge and photographic material on record also indicates that such measures were taken

immediately prior to inspection by the Committee. In the same vein, the presence of freshly created earthen bunds and layers of soil near Jerla Nalla suggests conscious efforts to block and cover contaminated flows, accumulated wastewater and sludge deposits, with local residents stating that such activities were carried out upon prior intimation of the Committee's visit. Further, clear tyre marks on the river bed at Ambey Valley evidencing movement of heavy vehicles without any ecological justification, thereby indicating deliberate human intervention, in all likelihood aimed at concealing traces of sludge and effluent discharge at the time of inspection.

**44.** The aforesaid facts, taken together, disclose a disturbing pattern of conduct intended to obscure the true extent of environmental degradation and to defeat the purpose of regulatory and judicial oversight. Such acts cannot be brushed aside as inadvertent or incidental. Rather, they reflect a conscious attempt to manipulate ground realities and present a sanitised picture before the Committee. Conduct of this nature strikes at the very root of transparency, erodes institutional accountability, and undermines the rule of law, particularly in

matters concerning environmental protection, thereby warranting the gravest concern and strictest scrutiny by this Court.

**45.** This Court is also constrained to note the lack of timely administrative support extended to the Committee. Although an affidavit has since been filed indicating the appointment of requisite staff, including a dedicated Registrar-cum-Nodal Officer and supporting personnel, it is evident that such compliance has come after a delay of nearly three months from the order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2025. In the context of an ongoing environmental crisis requiring urgent and coordinated intervention, such delay reflects a lack of seriousness and urgency on the part of the State Government. The belated response suggests a reactive, rather than proactive approach and raises serious concerns regarding the commitment of the State machinery to effectively discharge its obligations and to assist the Committee in the performance of its mandate. We hope that this situation does not persist any longer.

**46.** The status report also brings to the fore an anomalous and deeply disconcerting situation. On the one hand, the data placed on record indicates

that several CETPs are operating below their installed capacities, suggesting the existence of adequate or even surplus treatment infrastructure. On the other hand, the very same report, supported by field inspections and empirical evidence, unequivocally establishes that large volumes of industrial effluents are being discharged directly into the river system through drains, pipelines, tankers and other unauthorised means, bypassing the treatment facilities altogether. This incongruity cannot be reconciled with any legitimate operational explanation and points towards systemic evasion of regulatory compliance by industrial units, coupled with a failure of monitoring and enforcement by the concerned authorities. The under-utilisation of CETPs, when juxtaposed with the pervasive discharge of untreated or partially treated effluents, reflects not merely inefficiency but a collapse of the regulatory and supervisory mechanisms meant to ensure adherence to environmental standards. Such a situation, where treatment infrastructure exists in form but is effectively circumvented, defeats the very purpose for which such facilities have been created and underscores the urgent need for stringent

oversight, real-time monitoring and strict enforcement of environmental norms.

**47.** It is in this backdrop that the recommendations of the Committee assume considerable significance. The suggestion that the State Government should strengthen oversight of CETPs by designating a dedicated nodal agency to ensure their proper establishment, operation, financial management and governance is aimed at addressing the evident institutional vacuum and lack of accountability that presently characterize the functioning of such facilities. Equally important is the recommendation that RSPCB should move away from the existing, and evidently inadequate, method of estimating wastewater discharge based on variables such as fabric type, process and production, and instead adopt a machinery-based system for accurate determination of wastewater generation within a time-bound framework. The present regime, which relies on notional or estimated parameters, has demonstrably failed to capture the actual extent of discharge and has enabled circumvention by industrial units. A transition to a more precise, technology-driven and verifiable system of

assessment is essential to ensure transparency, real-time monitoring and effective enforcement of environmental standards. These measures, if implemented in their true spirit, have the potential to address the structural deficiencies that have allowed persistent violations to continue unchecked and to bring about a meaningful shift towards compliance and environmental accountability.

**48.** It has been brought to the notice of this Court that RIICO has allotted approximately 42,000 square metres of land at Salawas for establishment of an additional CETP infrastructure. However, despite such allotment, no meaningful progress has been achieved owing to the failure of the concerned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) to take requisite steps for implementation. This is particularly disconcerting in view of the fact that the State proposes to expend a substantial sum of approximately Rs. 75 crores on the said project. The continued inaction in operationalizing such augmentation measures, in the face of an existing deficit in treatment capacity and ongoing environmental degradation, has a cascading and deleterious impact by allowing the discharge of untreated effluents to persist unabated. In such

circumstances, this Court is of the considered opinion that RSPCB must take stringent action against the defaulting member units, including imposition of appropriate penalties in accordance with the “Polluter Pays” principle, so as to ensure accountability, compel compliance and prevent further erosion of environmental safeguards. We direct that a concrete action plan be placed on record by the next date of hearing, failing which, this Court shall be compelled to pass necessary directions against all stakeholders including the State Government, RSPCB, RIICO and the Special Purpose Vehicle.

**49.** The inspection findings also bring to light the extensive submergence of large areas of pasture land and agricultural fields due to the continuous flow of effluent-laden wastewater, leading to severe degradation and, in many instances, near-total loss of soil integrity. In Balotra, approximately **800 bighas** of pasture land at Mandapura were found submerged under contaminated water; in Jerla and adjoining areas, vast stretches of land continue to remain inundated due to the continuous discharge through the Jerla Nalla; and in Pali, areas such as

Gadwada-Jaitpur and Chhapariya were reported to have over **1000 bighas** of agricultural land rendered unproductive owing to prolonged waterlogging and high salinity. Prolonged stagnation of such contaminated water has resulted in salinization, toxicity and erosion of the topsoil, rendering these lands unfit for cultivation and impairing their long-term regenerative capacity. The consequences of such degradation extend beyond agriculture and have had a profound impact on livestock, which forms a critical component of the rural economy. Cattle exposed to contaminated water and fodder grown on polluted land are reported to have suffered serious health complications, including infertility, miscarriages, skin diseases and a decline in overall vitality and productivity. The cumulative effect of these conditions is the disruption of agrarian and pastoral livelihoods, thereby deepening economic distress and threatening the sustainability of communities that are intrinsically dependent on land and livestock for their survival.

**50.** In this context, the recommendation of the Committee regarding a direction to the Department of Water Resources, Government of Rajasthan, to

restore the natural flow path of the Jojari River assumes critical importance. The material on record indicates that the disruption and distortion of the river's natural course has significantly contributed to stagnation of contaminated water and its consequent spread into adjoining agricultural and pasture lands. The further recommendation that treated municipal sewage from Jodhpur ought not to be discharged into the Jojari River, but be diverted for appropriate and beneficial uses, is both necessary and in consonance with settled principles of environmental management. Such measures would also enable the effective implementation of Zero Liquid Discharge (ZLD) principles by ensuring that treated or untreated wastewater does not flow into the river system. Restoration of the original river channel would enable accurate delineation of the natural drainage system and facilitate scientific planning for regulated flow, thereby preventing overflow, waterlogging and lateral spread of effluent-laden water. Accordingly, the aforesaid measures are essential not only for arresting further environmental degradation but also for mitigating the adverse impact on soil, groundwater and livelihoods of the

affected population, and for ensuring long-term recovery and ecological sustainability of the river system.

**51.** The evidence emerging from the status report further discloses that spot testing of water samples has revealed abnormally high pH levels, indicative of acute chemical contamination. The continued mixing of such effluent-laden water with groundwater has resulted in widespread degradation of aquifers, rendering conventional sources of drinking water unsafe and unfit for human consumption. As a consequence, the availability of potable water in the affected regions has become severely constrained, compelling residents of nearby villages to depend almost entirely on tanker-supplied water. Such arrangements, however, have been found to be irregular and insufficient to meet basic requirements, thereby intensifying the hardship faced by the local population. The situation, as it stands, transcends environmental degradation and assumes the character of a grave public health concern, directly impinging upon the fundamental right of the affected communities to access safe and adequate drinking water. This Court in ***State of Karnataka v. State of***

**Andhra Pradesh**<sup>9</sup>, underscored the indispensable role of water in sustaining life, civilization and ecological balance. This exposition reinforces the duty of the State to ensure that water bodies are protected, maintained and restored in furtherance of the right to life as guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India. Recognising water as a prime natural resource and a precious national asset, the Court held as follows: -

**“175. Water is a unique gift of nature which has made the planet earth habitable. Life cannot be sustained without water. In the National Water Policy issued by the Government of India in 1987, it was declared that water is a prime natural resource, a basic human need and a precious national asset. Water, like air, is the essence for human survival.** The history of water availability and its user is tied up with the history of biological evolution in all civilizations. **It will not be wrong to say that not only the life started in water but rather water is life itself. It is essential for mankind, animals, environment, flora and fauna.** There is no denial of the fact that in the ancient times water played an important role in the origin, development and growth of civilization all over the globe. Water is an important factor in the economic development of the countries which ultimately affects the social and human relations between the inhabitants. **Planned development and proper utilization of water resources can serve both as a cause as well as an effect off the prosperity of a nation.** Water on earth is available

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<sup>9</sup> (2000) 9 SCC 572.

in the form of frozen snow, rivers lakes, springs, water ways, waterfalls and aqueducts, etc.”

**[Emphasis supplied]**

**52.** In view of the aforesaid, it is incumbent upon the State to ensure the availability of safe and potable drinking water to the affected population. The right to access clean drinking water is an integral facet of the right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, and cannot be compromised on account of administrative inaction or environmental neglect. The State is, therefore, under a constitutional obligation to take immediate and effective measures to restore contaminated water sources, prevent further pollution of groundwater, and make adequate and sustainable arrangements for the supply of potable water to the affected areas, so as to safeguard public health and uphold the fundamental rights of the residents.

**53.** It has been brought to the notice of this Court that the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Project (HRRL), a Greenfield Refinery-cum-Petrochemical Complex situated at Pachpadra in District Balotra, Rajasthan, is a joint venture between Hindustan Petroleum Corporation Limited (74%) and the Government of

Rajasthan (26%). Having regard to the scale, capacity and resources of the said project, this Court is of the considered view that HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Project can be asked to make utilization of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for creation of appropriate treatment infrastructure in the region. Such measures may include the establishment of facilities for treatment of industrial effluents and sewage, along with development of systems for supply of treated water through pipelines or storage in reservoirs for agricultural and industrial use. The adoption of such initiatives would facilitate reuse of treated water and contribute towards the development of a Zero Liquid Discharge ecosystem, thereby assisting in addressing the grave environmental situation prevailing in the region.

**54.** We are of the firm opinion that the material on record discloses a continuing and deeply entrenched environmental crisis, arising from prolonged apathy, regulatory failures, inadequate enforcement and systemic deficiencies in infrastructure. The magnitude of damage to the river system, groundwater, soil and surrounding ecology, coupled with its serious repercussions on public health and

livelihoods, necessitates immediate and decisive intervention. The initiatives of the Committee have brought to light serious systemic shortcomings in the system and baby steps have been taken to address the situation. The steps taken thus far, though indicative of some movement, fall short of addressing the scale of the problem. It is, therefore, imperative that a comprehensive, coordinated and time-bound framework is put in place to arrest further degradation and to secure meaningful restoration of the affected environment.

**INTERIM DIRECTIONS AND FURTHER COURSE OF ACTION**

**55.** In the aforesaid circumstances, and having regard to the findings recorded herein as well as the recommendations of the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee, this Court deems it necessary to issue the following interim directions to ensure strict compliance with environmental norms, strengthen institutional accountability, and facilitate effective restoration and rejuvenation of the river system: -

- A.** The concerned departments and RIICO shall forthwith and in consultation with the

Committee, take effective and immediate steps for the commencement and expeditious completion of the CETP project at Salawas, for which approximately 42,000 square metres of land already stands allotted. In the event of any delay, obstruction, or lack of cooperation by the concerned Special Purpose Vehicle (SPV) or its constituent units, the RSPCB shall initiate stringent coercive measures, including the imposition of environmental compensation in accordance with the “Polluter Pays” principle. The Committee may also direct RSPCB to take such further action as may be necessary to ensure accountability, compel compliance, and prevent further environmental degradation, and to place on record a concrete, time-bound action plan before this Court by the next date of hearing, failing which appropriate directions shall be passed against all concerned stakeholders.

**B.** The Principal Secretaries of the Departments of Water Resources, Local Self-Government, and Urban Development and Housing of the Government of Rajasthan, along with the

Chairperson, RSPCB, shall henceforth actively participate in the proceedings of the Committee to facilitate effective decision-making, inter-departmental coordination and accountability at the highest level.

**C.** The State Government, RIICO and RUIDP shall ensure that all requisite steps are taken for timely completion of the additional effluent conveyance system of 23 km length, at a project cost of Rs. 23.81 crore, within the stipulated timeline, i.e., by 11<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. Any delay shall be viewed seriously, and responsibility shall be fixed upon the concerned officers.

**D.** A senior officer not below the rank of Director from the HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Project (HRRL) shall be nominated to participate in consultations with the Committee, with a view to meaningfully explore the utilisation of its Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) funds for creation of adequate treatment infrastructure for industrial effluents and sewage in the region. Such engagement shall also extend to examining the feasibility of developing systems for supply of treated water through pipelines or

storage in reservoirs for agricultural and industrial purposes, so as to promote reuse of treated water and contribute towards the establishment of a Zero Liquid Discharge ecosystem.

**E.** The State Government, in consultation with the Committee, shall designate a nodal agency to strengthen institutional oversight of CETPs, ensuring their proper establishment, efficient operation, financial transparency and accountable governance so that prescribed environmental standards are consistently achieved.

**F.** RSPCB shall ensure that no fresh Consent to Establish or Consent to Operate is granted for the establishment or operation of any hazardous or obnoxious industry along the riverbanks. RSPCB shall further ensure strict adherence to the prescribed norms relating to minimum distance from the high flood line and the mandatory buffer zones of the river, as stipulated under the applicable rules and guidelines. Any deviation from such norms shall

be viewed seriously and shall invite appropriate regulatory action in accordance with law.

- G.** The RSPCB, in consultation with the Committee, shall develop and implement a robust, machinery-based and technology-driven system for accurate determination of wastewater generation, replacing the existing estimation-based methodology, within a period of two months, so as to ensure transparency and prevent evasion.
- H.** The concerned departments of the Government of Rajasthan as well as the municipal authorities/local bodies shall take strict and immediate enforcement action against industries engaged in illegal transportation and discharge of industrial effluents through tankers. Such tankers shall be seized without delay, prosecution shall be initiated against violators, and the concerned District Magistrates/empowered authorities shall exercise powers for confiscation of such vehicles in accordance with law.
- I.** The concerned authorities shall adopt stringent enforcement measures against all violators,

including recovery of environmental compensation, suspension or cancellation of Consent to Operate, and disconnection of electricity and water supply. Illegal industries operating on agricultural or residential land shall be immediately closed or seized, and steps shall be taken to restore such land to its original use. Proceedings for resumption of *Khatedari* rights shall be initiated and concluded expeditiously, and appropriate prosecution shall be undertaken.

- J.** Any CETP, along with all units connected thereto, and any individual industrial unit operating its own Effluent Treatment Plant (ETP), if found violating prescribed pollution control norms or discharging untreated or partially treated effluents, shall be forthwith ordered to be closed. RSPCB and/or the concerned authorities shall levy appropriate environmental compensation and initiate prosecution in accordance with law. Such closure shall remain in force until full compliance is established to the satisfaction of the competent authority, and in the event of any

repeat violation, such unit or CETP, along with all connected units, shall not be permitted to resume operations without obtaining prior leave of this Court.

**K.** All discharge points of industrial effluents and sewage into the river systems, whether treated or untreated, including those through drains, pipelines, stormwater channels, tanker-based disposal and points of confluence, as identified in the exercise conducted pursuant to the directions of this Court, shall be forthwith sealed, intercepted or otherwise effectively regulated to ensure that no untreated or non-compliant discharge enters the rivers or drainage network. RSPCB, in coordination with RIICO and the concerned municipal authorities/local bodies, shall take immediate and stringent action against all defaulting units in accordance with law.

**L.** All concerned departments of the State of Rajasthan and municipal authorities/local bodies shall, in consultation with the Committee, in the first instance, undertake a comprehensive and scientific mapping of the

original and existing flow path of the Jojari River, including identification of obstructions, diversions and encroachments, and thereafter take coordinated and time-bound steps for restoration of its natural course. Such restoration shall be carried out in a cohesive manner so as to ensure proper hydrological flow, prevent stagnation, waterlogging and lateral spread of contaminated water, and safeguard adjoining agricultural and pasture lands from further degradation.

**M.** The joint committee constituted pursuant to the final order dated 25<sup>th</sup> February, 2022 passed by the NGT, comprising officials from Central Pollution Control Board, RSPCB and Central Ground Water Agency and the District Magistrates of Barmer and Jodhpur shall be appropriately reconstituted to ensure effective planning and execution of remediation and restoration measures, and in addition to the existing members, shall include the District Collectors of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra; the Principal Secretary, Department of Water Resources, Government of Rajasthan; and a

domain expert to be suggested by the Chairperson of the Committee appointed by this Court. The reconstituted joint committee shall function in coordination with the Committee appointed by this Court and shall proceed to finalise and implement a comprehensive action plan within a stipulated timeframe. Periodic progress reports shall be placed before this Court.

- N.** The local bodies of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra, in coordination with RIICO, Department of Industries and the Committee, shall, within a period of three months, develop a structured and regulated rehabilitation or relocation model, with adequate infrastructure, for artisans engaged in tie-and-dye textile activities.
- O.** The State of Rajasthan, its instrumentalities and all concerned authorities, in consultation with the Committee, shall undertake effective, coordinated and time-bound measures to ensure that all industrial and municipal treatment infrastructure is upgraded, operated and maintained in strict conformity with Zero

Liquid Discharge principles. This shall include adoption of appropriate technologies, strengthening of monitoring mechanisms and ensuring complete reuse or safe disposal of treated effluents, so that no treated or partially treated wastewater is discharged into the river system under any circumstances.

- P.** The State of Rajasthan shall, forthwith and in consultation with the Committee, constitute a Multi-Disciplinary Expert Assessment Panel to undertake a comprehensive, scientific and time-bound assessment of the environmental, ecological and socio-economic impacts arising from the ongoing environmental degradation. The scope of such assessment shall include, *inter alia*, scientific analysis of groundwater and soil contamination; epidemiological studies on human health; veterinary and livestock health assessments, particularly in relation to productivity, fertility, and disease patterns; biodiversity loss, contamination of food and dairy products, as well as agricultural and livelihood losses. The Panel shall also estimate the cost of remediation and formulate a

scientifically sound and legally enforceable framework for compensation to affected populations.

- Q.** The State of Rajasthan, in consultation with the RSPCB and the Committee, shall examine the feasibility of establishing a dedicated environmental restoration and compensation fund, and shall take appropriate steps for transfer of compensation amounts collected by CPCB, RSPCB and RIICO pursuant to earlier directions, for utilisation towards environmental restoration and compensation to affected persons.
- R.** The State Government and RSPCB shall identify and fix responsibility upon erring officers and authorities found to be negligent, complicit or in dereliction of duty in permitting illegal discharge or non-compliance, and shall initiate appropriate disciplinary proceedings in accordance with law against such officials.
- S.** The State Government shall ensure the immediate, adequate and sustainable provision of potable drinking water to all affected villages through reliable and long-term mechanisms.

The State shall, in particular, move away from *ad-hoc* and intermittent tanker-based arrangements and develop durable infrastructure-based solutions to secure uninterrupted access to safe drinking water, so as to effectively safeguard public health, preserve human dignity and uphold the fundamental rights of the affected population.

**T.** The material placed before this Court unequivocally demonstrates that mere issuance of warnings and regulatory directions has failed to yield the desired results, as is evident from the persistent and recurring violations borne out by the empirical data on record. In such circumstances, it is imperative that persons/units/entities responsible for such grave environmental violations are dealt with firmly and effectively in accordance with law, including through prosecution and imposition of appropriate penalties. Having regard to the scale, frequency and continuing nature of such violations, this Court is of the considered view that the establishment of Special Courts in the districts of Jodhpur, Pali and Balotra has

become necessary to ensure expeditious adjudication of cases registered in pursuance of the directions issued by this Court. Accordingly, the Rajasthan High Court is requested to take appropriate steps for constitution of such Special Courts. The State Government shall provide all requisite logistical, infrastructural and administrative support, including augmentation of cadre strength, as may be required in consultation with the High Court, to ensure the effective establishment and functioning of such Special Courts.

**56.** The directions issued hereinabove are of an interim nature and are in continuation of, as well as supplemental to, the directions already issued by this Court *vide* order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2025. These directions are not to be construed as mere regulatory or administrative measures, but as emanating from the constitutional mandate of this Court to secure and enforce the fundamental right to life under Article 21 of the Constitution of India, which includes the right to access clean water, a pollution-free environment and conditions that uphold human

dignity. The continued degradation of the river system, along with its adverse impact on soil, groundwater and public health, constitutes a serious infraction of these constitutionally protected rights. It is, therefore, essential that the directions now issued, together with those contained in the earlier order, are implemented with due seriousness, promptitude and a high degree of institutional accountability. The State of Rajasthan, its instrumentalities and all concerned authorities must act with the urgency and commitment that such constitutional obligations warrant, so as to restore ecological balance and protect the rights and well-being of both present and future generations.

**57.** The High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee shall, on or before the next date of hearing, submit a further status report to this Court indicating the extent of compliance with the directions issued hereinabove, as well as those contained in this Court's order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2025, barring those directions which have already been fully complied with, and the directions issued by the Committee *vide* its resolution dated 31<sup>st</sup> January, 2026. The status report shall specifically delineate

the steps taken by the State of Rajasthan and all concerned authorities, the progress achieved in implementation, the deficiencies, if any, that continue to persist, and the further measures proposed to ensure full and effective compliance. The status report shall be placed on record at least one week in advance so as to enable meaningful consideration by this Court.

**58.** In the event the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee requires any further logistical, administrative or technical support for the effective discharge of its mandate, the same shall be promptly attended to by the State of Rajasthan. The State Government shall ensure that all such requirements are addressed appropriately and expeditiously, without any delay or impediment, so as to facilitate the smooth and efficient functioning of the Committee and to enable it to carry out its responsibilities in furtherance of the directions issued by this Court.

**59.** The Registry shall forward a copy of this order to the Committee at the email address: [hleoc.jojaririver@gov.in](mailto:hleoc.jojaririver@gov.in); Registrar General, High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan; and Mr. Shiv

Mangal Sharma, learned Additional Advocate General for the State of Rajasthan.

**60.** The learned Additional Advocate General for the State of Rajasthan shall, upon receipt, communicate a copy of this order to all the concerned authorities/Corporations as well as to the concerned official/s of HPCL Rajasthan Refinery Project (HRRL) situated at Pachpadra in District Balotra, Rajasthan.

**61.** List on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2026 for receiving the further status report of the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee.

.....**J.**  
**(VIKRAM NATH)**

.....**J.**  
**(SANDEEP MEHTA)**

**NEW DELHI;**  
**MARCH 18, 2026.**