

**Fwd: ORDER passed in Original Application No. 1064/2024**

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To "National Green Tribunal, Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata" <ngtjudicial-kolkata@gov.in>

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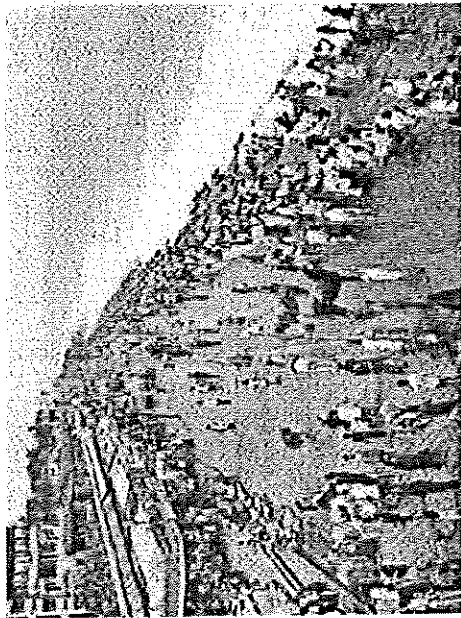
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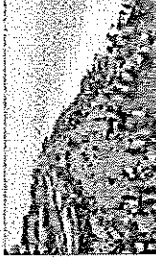
# Microplastic in West Bengal's Digha and Odisha's Puri seawater at alarming levels

TNN | Aug 4, 2024, 06:43 PM IST



**KOLKATA:** The single-use plastic bag that you left on the Digha beach last summer might still be there but in a very different - and much more harmful - form.

## TINY TOXINS POSE GRAVE RISK TO MARINE LIFE, HUMANS



What are microplastics?

- > They plastic particles, impact on Digha & Puri and waste management issues
- > Swimmers, tourists, fishing and waste management issues
- > Effects Contaminates marine life and potentially human health
- > Why it Matters
- > Alarms, Studies, mgmt microplastics, risky

Researchers have found an average of 5.3 microplastic items per litre of water on Digha beach (WB) and 6.4 per litre on Puri beach

health and disrupting ecosystems

- > Contaminated fish could pose risks to humans
- > What Can You Do?
- > Reduce Plastic Use: Opt for reusables
- > Join Clean-Ups: Help clean local beaches
- > Support Better Practices: Advocate for improved waste management

A recent study - funded by the Centre's Science & Engineering Research Board - has found alarming levels of microplastics in the coastal waters and sediments of Digha and Puri, two of eastern India's most popular beach destinations. It highlights serious concerns about the impact of microplastics on marine life and the health of millions of visitors.

Researchers found an average of 5.3 microplastic items per litre of water on the Digha beach and 6.4 microplastic items per litre on the Puri beach. The sediments revealed even more troubling data, with Digha recording 173.4

Microplastic in West Bengal's Digha and Odisha's Puri seawater at alarming levels - Times of India

items per kg and Puri reaching 190.4 items per kg. These numbers suggest that plastic pollution is a growing crisis in these coastal regions, potentially affecting the future of these tourist spots.

"The discovery of such alarmingly high microplastic levels in the waters and sediments of Digha and Puri is a wake-up call," writer Amitav Ghosh, a prominent voice in the discourse on ecology and climate change, said. "This poses a grave threat to the delicate marine ecosystem, with potential consequences for the countless creatures that call these waters home. It also compromises tourists' safety and health as microplastics can enter the food chain. We need urgent action," he added.

Microplastics are tiny plastic particles less than 5mm in size, originating from stuff like polythene bags, bottles, microbeads in personal care products, cigarette filters, synthetic fabrics, vehicle tyres, industrial waste, fishing gear and paints. The study identified polyethylene, a common plastic used in bags and packaging, as the most prevalent type of microplastic. It poses significant risk to marine life because of its abundance and persistence in the environment, say scientists involved with the study.

'Microplastic threat to fish, seabirds, turtles'

Marine creatures often mistake microplastics for food, which can cause physical harm, blockages and exposure to toxic chemicals; fish, sea turtles and seabirds are particularly vulnerable. Microplastics can also carry harmful chemicals absorbed from surrounding water. Tourists and locals in Digha and Puri may also ingest microplastics while having their favourite seafood dish, leading to potential health issues.

"Fisherfolk often catch more plastic than fish in their nets and find plastic inside the fish or dead fish trapped in polythene packets. Microplastics affect fish reproduction, reducing fish populations and impacting consumers and fishermen. Additionally, uncontrolled tourism development from Haldia to Puri and direct release of industrial effluents into rivers contribute to this problem," Dakshinbanga Matsyajibi Forum president Debashis Shyamal said.

"The staggering levels of microplastic pollution in coastal waters and sediments of Digha and Puri are stark reminders of the urgency to reduce our plastic usage," Balram Ambade of NIT Jamshedpur, co-author of the paper, said.

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

Original Application No. 1064/2024

News Item titled "Microplastic in West Bengal's Digha and Odisha's Puri seawater at alarming levels" appearing in the Times of India dated 04.08.2024

Date of hearing: 14.08.2024

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PRAKASH SHRIVASTAVA, CHAIRPERSON  
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE ARUN KUMAR TYAGI, JUDICIAL MEMBER  
HON'BLE DR. A. SENTHIL VEL, EXPERT MEMBER**

**ORDER**

1. This original application is registered *suo-motu* on the basis of the news item titled "Microplastic in West Bengal's Digha and Odisha's Puri seawater at alarming levels" appearing in the Times of India dated 04.08.2024.

2. The matter relates to the alarming levels of microplastics found in the coastal waters and sediments of Digha in West Bengal and Puri in Odisha, two of Eastern India's popular beach destinations. As per the article, a recent study by the Centre's Science & Engineering Research Board has raised serious concerns about the impact of microplastics on marine life and the health of millions of visitors.

3. The news item highlights that the research found an average of 5.3 microplastic items per litre of water on the Digha beach and 6.4 microplastic items per litre on the Puri beach. It states that the sediments revealed even more troubling data, with Digha recording 173.4 items per kg and Puri reaching 190.4 items per kg. It alleges that these numbers suggest that plastic pollution is a growing crisis in these coastal regions, potentially affecting the future of these tourist spots.

4. Furthermore, the news item emphasizes that the presence of microplastics poses a grave threat to the delicate marine ecosystem, with potential consequences for the countless creatures that call these waters home. It also compromises tourists' safety and health as microplastics can enter the food chain.

5. The news item further explains that microplastics are tiny plastic particles less than 5mm in size, originating from stuff like polythene bags, bottles, microbeads in personal care products, cigarette filter tips, synthetic fabrics, vehicle tyres, industrial waste, fishing gear and paints. The study identified polyethylene, a common plastic used in bags and packaging, as the most prevalent type of microplastic. It poses significant risk to marine life because of its abundance and persistence in the environment. Moreover, it is highlighted that marine creatures often mistake microplastics for food, which can cause physical harm, blockages and exposure to toxic chemicals. Fish, sea turtles and seabirds are particularly vulnerable. Microplastics can also carry harmful chemicals absorbed from surrounding water. Tourists and locals in Digha and Puri may also ingest microplastics while having their favourite seafood dish, leading to potential health issues. Microplastics affect fish reproduction, reducing fish populations and impacting consumers and fishermen. Additionally, uncontrolled tourism development from Haldia to Puri and direct release of industrial effluents into rivers contribute to this problem.

6. The Honorable Tribunal has taken up a similar matter in **OA No. 251/2022 (In Re: News item published in The Hindu dated 29.03.2022 titled "Detecting microplastics in human blood")** wherein NGT in its order dated 31.01.2024 held that while studies need to be undertaken expeditiously and completed at the earliest, interventions

need to be immediately introduced. This includes designing and manufacturing of products which are potential threat for generating microplastics like textiles, tyres and products like laundry detergents, road surfaces, and vehicles as well as, manufacture and sale of certain personal care and cosmetic products containing microplastic. The NGT directed the concerned Ministries to consider CPCB report on microplastics and bring about the desired changes at their earliest

7. The above matter indicates violation of the provisions of the provisions of the Plastic Waste Management (Amendment) Rules, 2022, Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Environment Protection Act, 1986.

8. The news item raises substantial issue relating to compliance of the environmental norms and implementation of the provisions of scheduled enactment.

9. Power of the Tribunal to take up the matter *suo-motu* 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.

10. Hence, we implead the following as respondents:

- i. Central Pollution Control Board, Through its Member Secretary  
Parivesh Bhawan, East Arjun Nagar, Delhi-110032
- ii. West Bengal Pollution Control Board, Through its Member  
Secretary  
Paribesh Bhawan, 10A, Block-LA, Sector-III, Bidhannagar,  
Kolkata-700 106
- iii. Odisha State Pollution Control Board

Paribesh Bhawan, A/118, Nilakantha Nagar, Unit – VIII,  
Bhubaneswar – 751012, Odisha

iv. Ministry of Environment and Forest, Through its Regional Office  
at Bhubaneswar

Integrated Regional Office, A/3, Chandersekharpur,  
Bhubaneswar, Odisha, 751023

v. Ministry of Environment and Forest, Through its Regional Office  
at Kolkata

Integrated Regional Office, Kolkata, IB – 198, Sector-III, Salt  
Lake City, Kolkata – 700106

vi. District Magistrate, Puri

Governer House Rd, Puri, Odisha 752002

vii. District Magistrate, Medinipur

Office of the District Magistrate, Collectorate Administrative  
Building, PO: Paschim Medinipur, Paschim Medinipur PIN-  
721101

11. Issue notice to the respondents for filing their response before the appropriate bench of the Tribunal at least one week before the next date of hearing.

12. Since the matter relates to the Eastern Zonal Bench, Kolkata, therefore, OA is transferred to the Eastern Zonal Bench. Therefore, the original record of this OA be transferred to the Eastern Zonal Bench, Kolkata for further action.

13. List before Eastern Zonal Bench at Kolkata on 14.10.2024.

Prakash Shrivastava, CP

Arun Kumar Tyagi, JM

Dr. A. Senthil Vel, EM

August 14, 2024  
O.A. No. No. 1064/2024  
HB