IN THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
EASTERN ZONE BENCH, KOLKATA
ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 149/2024/EZ
(Earlier O.A. No. 318/2024/PB)

IN THE MATTER OF:
Hemant Kumar

... Applicant

Vs.
The State of Bihar & Others

... Respondents

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Filed by
Advocate

BIHAR COURT FEE ₹10 BRECR026C250100071033 22 Jan 2025

BIHAR COURT FEE ₹10 BRECR026C250100071014 22 Jan 2025

BIHAR COURT FEE ₹10 BRECR026C250100071034 22 Jan 2025

BIHAR COURT FEE ₹10 BRECR026C250100071013 22 Jan 2025

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EASTERN ZONE BENCH, KOLKATA

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 149/2024/EZ

(Earlier O.A. No. 318/2024/PB)

IN THE MATTER OF:

Hemant Kumar ... Applicant

Vs.

The State of Bihar & Others ... Respondents

AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF STATE RESPONDENT NO. 2:

(The District Magistrate, Bhagalpur)

I, Sudhir Kumar, Son of Harihar Prasad aged about 50 Years, by faith – Hindu, holding the post of Senior deputy collector at District development section, Bhagalpur do hereby solemnly affirm and state as follows:-

1. I have been authorised on the behalf of the State Respondent No. 2. I am competent and have been duly/authorized by respondent No. 2 to make and affirm this affidavit on behalf of respondent No. 2. I am fully acquainted with the facts and circumstances of the case.

2. That it is respectfully submitted that the present case was initially registered before the Principal Bench of the Hon'ble Tribunal at New Delhi, exercising suo moto jurisdiction under Sections 14 & 15 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010, based on a letter petition dated 07.09.2023 filed by the Applicant, Hemant Kumar, apprehending danger to the aquatic life of Dolphins in the

Ganga River following the collapse of a bridge under construction at Sultanganj. The matter was subsequently transferred to the Eastern Zone Bench of the Hon'ble Tribunal vide Order dated 31.05.2024.

3. That it is further submitted that the Office of the answering District Magistrate, Bhagalpur, had already taken cognizance of the aforesaid disaster and initiated necessary steps in coordination with the concerned authorities.

4. That it is pertinent to mention that the Principal Bench of the Hon'ble Tribunal, vide its Order dated 31.05.2024, deemed it proper to obtain a Factual Report by constituting a Joint Committee comprising of the following members:

- Bihar State Pollution Control Board
- District Magistrate, Bhagalpur
- Representative of National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)
- Principal Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, State of Bihar
- Government of India and Regional Office, MoEF&CC, Patna

A copy of Order dated 31.05.2024 is annexed herewith and marked as Annexure-R/1.

5. That as per the directions of the Hon'ble Tribunal, the said Committee was mandated to visit the site, collect relevant information, and submit a Factual Report.

6. That in compliance with the Order, the Committee visited the site on 08.08.2024 and 09.08.2024; however, due to the high velocity of water flow in the river, the team was unable to enter the river and assess the impact of the incident on the aquatic ecosystem. Additionally, the presence of a large number of devotees due to the

Kanwar Yatra created further challenges in conducting a thorough study.

7. That in light of the above difficulties, the Sub-Divisional Officer, Sadar, Bhagalpur, vide his Letter bearing Memo No. 865 dated 10.08.2024, informed the District Magistrate, Bhagalpur, of the situation and requested an extension of three months for compliance with the Order of the Hon'ble Tribunal.

A copy of the Letter bearing Memo No. 865 dated 10.08.2024, along with the Minutes of the Proceeding, is annexed herewith and marked as Annexure-R/2 & R/3.

8. That after perusing the Report of the Sub-Divisional Officer, Sadar, Bhagalpur, and the Minutes of the Proceeding of the Meeting, the District Magistrate, Bhagalpur, vide Letter bearing Memo No. 81 dated 11.08.2024, apprised the Registrar General, Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, New Delhi, of the above-mentioned difficulties and sought an extension of time for submission of the Factual Report.

A copy of the Letter bearing Memo No. 81 dated 11.08.2024 is annexed herewith and marked as Annexure-R/4.

9. The Sub-Divisional Officer, Sadar, Bhagalpur, vide his Letter bearing Memo No. 1329 dated 23-12-2024 That the inspection was held on 11-12-2024. and a copy of the inspection report is annexed hereto and marked with Annexure R/5.

10. That it is respectfully submitted that the delay in compliance was solely due to practical difficulties beyond the control of the authorities. The answering Respondent remains committed to

fulfilling the directives of the Hon'ble Tribunal and seeks reasonable time for the completion of the mandated report.

11. That the statements made in paragraph nos. 1 to 9 as stated herein above are true to my knowledge and based on records maintained by the Office of the answering Respondent and the rest thereof are my humble submissions before this Hon'ble Tribunal.

DEPONENT

15/2/25

Senior Deputy Collector,
District Development Section,
Bhagalpur.

WELFARE STAMP ₹25 बिहार BIHAR पच्चीस रुपये Rs. Twenty Five 12 Feb 2025 BRECR026C25020037534

VERIFICATION

I, Sudhir Kumar, the Deponent hereinabove, do hereby verify that the contents of paragraphs 1 to 9 of this Affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief, and nothing material has been concealed therefrom.

Verified at Bhagalpur on this 15 day of February, 2025.

Sudhir Kumar
DEPONENT
15/2/25

Senior Deputy Collector,
District Development Section,
Bhagalpur.

Identified by
Bhurley & Adv
15/2/25

Id No- 2938/95

Sl. No. 16 Date. 15.02.25

सुधीर कुमार .....शपथकर्त्ता को श्री [illegible] अधिवक्ता, ने पहचान किया है। इस शपथ पत्र को आज 15-02-2025 को मेरे सामने 1.50PM [illegible] के वेश/वास [illegible] पत्र को शपथ [illegible] प्रतीत हुआ कि [illegible] भिज्ञ है।

शपथ आयुक्त [illegible]
15/2/25

15/2/25 Sudhir Kumar

भारतीय विशिष्ट पहचान प्राधिकरण
UNIQUE IDENTIFICATION AUTHORITY OF INDIA

पता:
आत्मज: हरिहर प्रसाद,
मोहल्ला मिल्की अनाईठ
(बाज़ार समिति मार्ग), पोस्ट
आरा थाना नवादा, मिल्की,
भोजपुर,
बिहार - 802301

Address:
S/O: Harihar Prasad, Mohalla milki anaith (bazar samiti road), post arrah ps nawada, Milki, Bhojpur, Bihar - 802301

7046 1503 8073

MERA AADHAAR, MERI PEHACHAN

Sudhir Kumar

Item No. 5 Court No. 2

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

Original Application No. 318/2024

Hemant Kumar Applicant

Versus

State of Bihar & Ors . Respondent

Date of hearing: 31.05.2024

CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE SUDHIR AGARWAL, JUDICIAL MEMBER
HON'BLE DR. AFROZ AHMAD, EXPERT MEMBER

ORDER

1. This Original Application has been registered in exercise of *suo-moto* jurisdiction under Sections 14 and 15 of National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 (hereinafter referred to as **'NGT Act, 2010'**) on a letter petition dated 07.09.2023 sent by Hemant Kumar complaining that Vikramshila Ganga Dolphin Sanctuary (hereinafter referred to as **'VGDS'**) is the only sanctuary in India for protection of dolphins in Bhagalpur district, State of Bihar and is extend to about 60 Km of River Ganga from Sultanganj to Kahalgoan in district Bhagalpur. A bridge was under construction on river Ganga at Sultanganj, Aguani Ghat which was damaged on 04.06.2024. Reasons for damage are under investigation of different departments. However, said damage has endangered the aquatic life of dolphins in river. Huge quantity of muck fell in river Ganga due to above disaster causing severe damage to lives of dolphin in the river. Therefore,

Sudhir Kumar

a request has been made to look into the matter immediately for removal of muck from river without disturbing or endangering life of dolphins in the area concerned and to take all possible steps for protection of environment and aquatic life of dolphins.

2. In our view, complaint made in the present Original Application gives rise to a substantial question relating to environment arising due to implementation of Scheduled Enactments under NGT Act, 2010 but before taking any further action in the matter, we find it appropriate to obtain a factual Report by constituting a Joint Committee comprising Bihar State Pollution Control Board, District Magistrate, Bhagalpur, representative of NMCG, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, State of Bihar, Government of India and Regional Office, MoEF & CC, Patna.

3. District Magistrate, Bhagalpur shall be the Nodal Agency for compliance and coordination.

4. Committee shall visit the site, collect relevant information and submit a factual Report to Registrar, Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata within two months.

5. Since the matter relates to Eastern Zone Bench of Tribunal at Kolkata, therefore, Registry is directed to transmit record to Eastern Zone Bench, Kolkata for further proceedings.

6. List before Eastern Zone Bench at Kolkata for further consideration on 12.08.2024.

7. A copy of this order be forwarded to Bihar State Pollution Control Board, District Magistrate, Bhagalpur, representative of NMCG, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Jal Shakti, State of Bihar, Government

Sudhir Kumar

of India and Regional Office, MoEF & CC, Patna for information and compliance.

Sudhir Agarwal, JM

Dr. Afroz Ahmad, EM

May 31, 2024
O A No. 318/202
PU

अनुमंडल कार्यालय, सदर, भागलपुर

गोपनीय शाखा

R-T-481
11-8-24

बिहार सरकार

पत्रांक ...../गो0

प्रेषक,

अनुमंडल पदाधिकारी,
सदर भागलपुर।

सेवा में,

जिलाधिकारी,
भागलपुर।

भागलपुर, दिनांक .....अगस्त 2024

विषयः— माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, प्रधान बेंच दिल्ली में दायर O.A No. 318/2024/PB Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors से संबंधित मामले में दिनांक 31.05.2024 को पारित आदेश का अनुपालन हेतु जॉच समिति को जॉच एवं प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने हेतु समय बढ़ाये जाने के संबंध में।

प्रसंगः— जॉच समिति का हस्ताक्षरयुक्त प्राप्त बैठक की कार्यवाही।

महाशय,

निदेशानुसार उपर्युक्त विषय के संबंध में सादर सूचित करते हुए कहना है कि माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, प्रधान बेंच दिल्ली में दायर O.A No. 318/2024/PB Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors से संबंधित मामले में दिनांक 31.05.2024 को पारित आदेश के अनुपालन हेतु भागलपुर जिलान्तर्गत सुलतानगंज में अगुवानी घाट गंगा नदी पर निमार्णाधीन पुल क्षतिग्रस्त होने के कारण Dolphin के जीवन को खतरा होने एवं पर्यावरण से संबंधित बिन्दु पर गठित जॉच समिति को स्थलीय जॉच/ निरीक्षण कर दिनांक 12.08.2024 के पूर्व माननीय अधिकरण को प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने का निदेश प्राप्त है।

उक्त प्राप्त निदेश के आलोक में दिनांक 08.08.24 एवं 09.08.2024 को गठित जॉच समिति द्वारा स्थलीय जॉच/निरीक्षण हेतु स्थल पर पहुँचने के क्रम में पाया गया कि वर्त्तमान में अभी गंगा का जल स्तर काफी उच्च स्तर पर है एवं गंगा के जल स्तर में प्रतिदिन वृद्धि हो रही है, फलतः स्थलीय जॉच में कठिनाई है। जॉच समिति द्वारा बैठक की कार्यवाही के माध्यम से विषयांकित मामले की जॉच एवं प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने हेतु तीन माह का समय बढ़ाये जाने का अनुरोध किया गया है, उक्त तथ्य कार्यवाही में अंकित है।

अतः उक्त के आलोक में बैठक की कार्यवाही इस पत्र के साथ संलग्न करते हुए अनुरोध है कि माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण द्वारा पारित आदेश का अनुपालन हेतु संबंधित मामले में जॉच समिति को जॉच एवं प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने हेतु समय बढ़ाये जाने के संबंध में भवदीय स्तर से अनुरोध किया जा सकता है।

सादर समर्पित।

विश्वासभाजन

अनु0— यथोक्त।

अनुमंडल पदाधिकारी,
सदर, भागलपुर

ज्ञापांक.....865...../गो0 दिनांक.....10/08/24

प्रतिलिपि :— वरीय उपसमाहर्ता, जिला विकास शाखा/विधि शाखा, भागलपुर को सूचनार्थ एवं आवश्यक कार्रवाई हेतु प्रेषित।

10/08/24
अनुमंडल पदाधिकारी
सदर, भागलपुर।

Minutes of meeting and the field visit report of the committee assigned by NGT for the impact assessment of change the ecology of VGDS.

A Meeting was conducted by the Nodal officer nominated by NGT, D.M Bhagalpur, and the Invited nominated member for a site visit to understand the impacts of part of Bridge collapse on the ecology of river Ganga in (VGDS) as per the Direction of the NGT Under the Case No 318/2024 Hemant Kr Vs State of Bihar & Others.

The Following members attended the said visit-

1. Representative of D.M, Bhagalpur
2. Representative of Namami Gange, Ministry of Jal Shakti, New Delhi.
3. Representative of Bihar State Pollution Control Board.

The following members could not attend the visit: -

1. Principal Secretory Ministry of Jalshakti, Govt. of Bihar/representative (Known as Water Resource department Govt. of Bihar)
2. Regional office, Ministry of Environment forest and climate change (MoEF& CC).

A Preliminary meeting was organized and chaired by the representative of District Magistrate, Bhagalpur in the conference hall of circuit house at Bhagalpur dated 08/08/2024 at 10:30 am, to brief the information regarding the part of under construction bridge collapsed on 04/06/2023 over river Ganga in between the district of Bhagalpur & Khagaria name as Agwani Ghat -Sultanganj Bridge, and also mention the steps taken by the District administration after the incident.

Then the members of committee visited the said impacted site.

The Executive Engineer from BRPNNL described in detail regarding the incident occurred and after that the method of removal of debris from the impacted site of river Ganga.

After reaching the site the committee member observed high velocity of flood water passing in the river which prevented the team to enter into the river to study the impacts of the event on the ecology of the river system. Also due to the overcrowding of devotees of the Kanwar yatra.

It is therefore decided to have a detail discussion with involved line department to understand the facts. Discussion was held with the following representatives: -

1. Bihar Rajya Pul Nirman Nigam Limited (BRPNNL Department)
2. S.P. Singla Construction Pvt.Ltd.(Agency)
3. Forest Department, Bhagalpur

Following are the discussion points: -

The BRPNNL informed the reason behind the collapse of part of bridge prima facie due to failure of design as mentioned in the draft report of IIT Roorkee. Final report still awaited from IIT Roorkee, and will be submitted before honourable Court as soon as it is received. They also informed that the fallen part (debris) of bridge has been removed from river bed.

To remove the debris from river Ganga and the hanging segments, an expert agency named as EDIFICE, Engineering /DIVYA Construction was hired by the principal agency of the main work (S.P. Singla Construction Pvt. Ltd.) to remove the same after the event. SOP was also developed to minimize the impacts on the ecology of the riverine system. As per the prescribed SOP all the debris were removed.

Forest department inform that immediate survey were conducted by the expert research institution such as Wildlife Institute of India, Dehradun and Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) to understand the cumulative impacts due to collapse part of the under construction bridge on River Dolphin and other aquatic animals present in the VGDS.

As per the report received by the Forest Department, the population size of the Ganges River Dolphin in June 2023 was estimated to be 172(+/-) 18, which nearly overlap with the annual census conducted in Feb.2023. Therefore, no difference in Dolphin population size can be attributed to the collapse part of the bridge. It is to be noted that Dolphins are also sighted around the bridge regularly.

Way forward -

Due to the flood situation and overcrowding due to Kanwar Yatra the team could not able to enter the river to closely understand the impacts and to provide a factual report of the site visit to the Honourable Court.

Therefore, it is decided to request to the Honourable Court to extend the time of submission of joint committee report by next three months.

However, the committee try to understand the details of the event and the impacts with discussion with concern line departments and review of available reports submitted by the expert organization, who did survey after the event. The report shows no clear differences in the dolphin population size which can be attributed to the collapse of the part of the bridge. Dolphins are also seen regularly around the bridge location.

It was also decided by the committee that the forest department need to have a detailed survey by constituting a team of various ecological expertise to carry out a detail survey of VGDS to understand the long-term impacts of the collapse of a part of bridge in river Ganga and the change in the ecology of the river system, if any.

09/08/24

SDM
Bhagalpur

09/8/2024

Consultant
Namami Gange
Ministry of Jalshakti
Govt. of India

9/8/24

Scientist
Bihar State Pollution
Control Board, Patna

09/08/24

Senior Project Engg.
BRPNNL, Div-Khagariya

Divisional Forest Officer
Bhagalpur Division

भागलपुर समाहरणालय
(जिला विकास शाखा)

बिहार सरकार

पत्रांक–XIX-01/18-24 Part-III 81(50)/वि0, भागलपुर दिनांक 11.08.24

प्रेषक,

डॉ0 नवल किशोर चौधरी, भा0प्र0से0
जिलाधिकारी,
भागलपुर।

सेवा में,

महानिबंधक,
माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण,
नई दिल्ली।

विषयः– **माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, प्रधान बेंच, दिल्ली में दायर O.A. No.-318/2024/PB, Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors. के मामले में दिनांक–31.05.2024 को पारित आदेश के अनुपालन हेतु जाँच समिति को जाँच एवं प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने हेतु समय बढ़ाये जाने के संबंध में।**

प्रसंगः– **सदस्य सचिव, बिहार राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण पर्षद्, पटना का पत्रांक–P/Legal 01-155/ 2024/1664 दिनांक–12.07.2024**

महाशय,

उपर्युक्त विषयक प्रासंगिक पत्र के माध्यम से माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, प्रधान बेंच, दिल्ली में दायर O.A. No.-318/2024/PB, Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors. के मामले में दिनांक–31.05.2024 को पारित आदेश के अनुपालन के संबंध में अनुरोध किया गया है। उक्त के आलोक में अनुमण्डल पदाधिकारी, सदर भागलपुर के ज्ञापांक–865/गो0 दिनांक–10.08.2024 द्वारा प्रतिवेदित किया गया है कि दिनांक–08.08.2024 एवं 09.08.2024 को गठित जाँच समिति द्वारा स्थलीय जाँच/निरीक्षण हेतु स्थल पर पहुँचने के क्रम में पाया गया कि वर्त्तमान में अभी गंगा नदी का जल स्तर काफी उच्च स्तर पर है एवं गंगा नदी के जल स्तर में प्रतिदिन वृद्धि हो रही है, फलतः स्थलीय जाँच में कठिनाई है। जाँच समिति द्वारा बैठक की कार्रवाई के माध्यम से विषयांकित मामले में जाँच एवं प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने हेतु तीन माह का समय बढ़ाये जाने का अनुरोध किया गया है, उक्त तथ्य कार्यवाही में अंकित है।

अतः उक्त के आलोक में बैठक की कार्यवाही इस पत्र के साथ संलग्न करते हुए अनुरोध है कि माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण द्वारा पारित आदेश के अनुपालन हेतु संबंधित मामले में जाँच समिति को जाँच प्रतिवेदन समर्पित किये जाने हेतु समय बढ़ाये जाने की कृपा की जाय।

अनुलग्नक :– यथोपरि।

विश्वासभाजन

वरीय उप समाहर्त्ता, जिला विकास शाखा, भागलपुर।	उप विकास आयुक्त, भागलपुर	जिलाधिकारी, भागलपुर।

ज्ञापांकः– XIX-01/18-24 Part-III- 81(50)/विकास भागलपुर दिनांक 11.08.24

प्रतिलिपिः– Mr.Surendra Kumar Empanelled Advocate Govt. of Bihar (Mob-9433361866) को सूचनार्थ एवं आवश्यक कार्रवाई हेतु प्रेषित।

प्रतिलिपिः– सदस्य सचिव, बिहार राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण पर्षद्, पटना को सूचनार्थ समर्पित।

प्रतिलिपिः– कार्यपालक निदेशक, तकनीकी, एन0एम0सी0जी0, नई दिल्ली को सूचनार्थ समर्पित।

वरीय उप समाहर्त्ता, जिला विकास शाखा, भागलपुर।	उप विकास आयुक्त, भागलपुर	जिलाधिकारी, भागलपुर।

R-T- 06
03/01/25

अनुमंडल कार्यालय, सदर, भागलपुर
गोपनीय शाखा

बिहार सरकार

भागलपुर समाहरणालय
जिला गोपनीय शाखा
प्राप्ति की तिथि 25/12/24
C.R. No. 18144
पृष्ठांकित विभाग
DeV.

पत्रांक 1329 /गो0

प्रेषक,

अनुमंडल पदाधिकारी,
सदर भागलपुर।

सेवा में,

वरीय उप समाहर्त्ता
जिला विकास शाखा
भागलपुर

जिलाधिकारी,
भागलपुर।

भागलपुर, दिनांक 23/12/ 2024

विषयः— **माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, प्रधान बेंच दिल्ली में दायर O.A No. 318/2024/PB Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors से संबंधित मामले में दिनांक 31.05.2024 को पारित आदेश के अनुपालन के आलोक में गठित जॉच समिति द्वारा स्थलीय जॉचोपरांत जॉच प्रतिवेदन का प्रेषण।**

प्रसंगः— वरीय उप समाहर्त्ता, जिला विकास शाखा, भागलपुर के पत्रांक 1782/वि0 दिनांक 22.10.2024 एवं सदस्य सचिव, बिहार राज्य प्रदूषण नियंत्रण पर्षद, पटना का पत्रांक P/Legal/01-155/2024/1664 दिनांक 12.07.2024

महाशय,

निदेशानुसार उपर्युक्त विषयक व प्रासंगिक पत्र के आलोक में कहना है कि माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, प्रधान बेंच दिल्ली में दायर O.A No. 318/2024/PB Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors से संबंधित मामले में दिनांक 31.05.2024 एवं माननीय राष्ट्रीय हरित अधिकरण, कोलकात्ता में दायर O.A No. 149/24/EZ Hemant Kumar V/S The State of Bihar & Ors से संबंधित मामले में पारित आदेश के अनुपालन के आलोक में **दिनांक 11.12.2024** को गठित जॉच समिति द्वारा भागलपुर जिलान्तर्गत सुलतानगंज में अगुवानी घाट गंगा नदी पर निमार्णाधीन पुल क्षतिग्रस्त होने के कारण Dolphin के जीवन को खतरा होने एवं पर्यावरण से संबंधित बिन्दु पर स्थलीय निरीक्षण किया गया। स्थलीय निरीक्षणोपरांत जॉच समिति द्वारा प्रस्तुत प्रतिवेदन में अंकित है कि अल्पकालीन के लिए डॉल्फीन की आबादी पर कोई प्रतिकूल प्रभाव नहीं पड़ा है, जबकि दीर्घकालीन पर्यवेक्षण/आकलन के लिए दीर्घकालीन निगरानी/उपायों के संबंध में जॉच प्रतिवेदन में प्रतिवेदित है।

अतः उपरोक्त परिप्रेक्ष्य के आलोक में निदेशानुसार जॉच समिति का जॉच प्रतिवेदन इस पत्र के साथ मूल में संलग्न कर आवश्यक कार्रवाई हेतु भेजी जाती है।

सादर समर्पित।

अनुलग्नल :— यथोक्त।

विश्वासभाजन
20/12/24
अनुमंडल पदाधिकारी,
सदर, भागलपुर

Field Visit Report of the committee assigned by NGT for the impact assessment of change of the ecology of VGDS on dated 11.12.2024

Background: -

The Ganges River Dolphin population in the Vikramshila Gangetic Dolphin Sanctuary (VGDS) has shown a largely stable trend over the past 25 years, despite some fluctuations. The 25-year dolphin population estimates were based on surveys by TMBU Bhagalpur, ATREE & Wildlife Conservation Trust (WCT) researchers, and are summarized in a report submitted by WCT to Chief Wildlife Warden, Bihar and the DFO, Bhagalpur division in May, 2024.

As per the above said reports, population size was recorded around 200 individuals, with noticeable peaks in 2002, 2012-2013, and 2022-2023. Declines occurred in between 2004-2006 and 2016-2020 which is likely due to human disturbances, fishing, and climatic events.

The latest estimates by WCT in February 2024 recorded 196 ± 8 individuals. The key areas of stability of the dolphin population in VGDS are recorded in Sultanganj, Tintanga-Buddhuchak, Raghopur-Bahatra, and downstream of Kahalgaon. Reductions in dolphin sightings were noted near Mirzapur and Bhagalpur due to river channel changes and island formation

As per the WCT report, no significant decline in the overall dolphin population was recorded. In June 2023 the dolphin population estimated to be 172 ± 18 dolphins (compared to 192 ± 9 in February 2023). However, Changes were noted downstream of the part of under construction bridge collapse site, where no dolphins were sighted in an 8-9 km stretch. This may be linked to altered habitat due to rising water levels and presence of remaining debris.

The report also suggest relatively stable population underscores the effectiveness of VGDS as a sanctuary, but periodic declines highlight vulnerabilities to human activities and environmental changes. Monitoring side-channel inlets and addressing anthropogenic threats and over fishing will be crucial for sustaining the population.

As per the Wildlife Institute of India (WII) report, this area recorded a relatively undisturbed habitat with consistent sightings during previous surveys by the WII.

The report also highlights prior to the collapse, activities like fishing, ferry operations, and minor local disturbances were the primary human influences on the river's ecosystems along with the bridge construction.

Baseline water quality parameters were likely within a range conducive to supporting the dolphins and other aquatic species, as indicated by earlier ecological studies in the region.

The survey conducted by WII after the collapse of the under-construction bridge observed dolphin sightings within 200–500 meters of the collapse site during July

2024. Although their presence indicates some resilience, their behavior and movement patterns may have been affected by the debris and construction activity.

WII report also suggests for continuous monitoring and immediate debris removal which is essential to restore the habitat and mitigate further risks to aquatic species. Local participation and policy interventions will also be crucial to balancing infrastructure development and ecological conservation.

Further the report recommends to carry out regular monitoring by the State Wildlife Department along with subject experts to track recovery and changes in aquatic biodiversity.

Present Field Visit: -

It is to be noted that during last visit of the members of the committee, because of the flood situation and overcrowding due to Kanwar Yatra, the team could not able to enter the river to closely understand the impacts and to provide a factual report of the site visit to the Honourable NGT and permission was taken to extend the time of submission of joint committee report by next three months.

As further directed by the Honurable NGT, present filed visit is planned the committee assigned by NGT to understand the impacts of part of under construction Bridge collapse on the dolphin population of the river Ganga (VGDS) under the Case No 318/2024 Hemant Kr Vs State of Bihar & Others.

The Following members attended the said visit-

1. Representative of Bhagalpur Forest Division, Bhagalpur
2. Representative of Subdivisional office, Bhagalpur Sadar
3. Representative of Namami Gange, Ministry of Jal Shakti, New Delhi.
4. Representative of Bihar State Pollution Control Board.

During field visit, the committee members surveyed in the 5KM upstream and 5KM downstream of part of bridge collapse site. Sighting of dolphins in the said area is tabulated below:

S.No.	Season	Strech	Length (km)	Adult	Calf	Unknown	Total no sightings	Avg. Depth (m)
1	Post Monsoon 2024 11|12|2024	Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge to 5 km upstream	5	9	2	1	12	10.0
2	Post Monsoon 2024 11|12|2024	Aguwani-Sultanganj bridge to 5 km downstream	5	16	5	1	22	6.0

From the above sighting record indicates that there is no short-term impact of the part of under construction bridge collapse on the dolphin population, as regular sightings are observed nearby the impacted site. However, long-term monitoring is required to assess the potential long-term ecological impacts of the collapse. The Forest Department may be requested to strategize for this long-term monitoring/mitigation measures.

Executive Magistrate
Bhagalpur

11/12/2024
Consultant
Namami Gange
Ministry of Jal shakti
Govt. of India

11.12.24
Scientist
Bihar State Pollution
Control Board, Patna

11/12/24
Senior Project Engg.
BRPNNL, Div-Khagariya

Rep. of
Divisional Forest Officer
Bhagalpur Forest Division,
Bhagalpur