

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
(PRINCIPAL BENCH)

O.A. NO. 727/2024

IN THE MATTER OF :

In Re :- News Item titled "Endangered Gangetic Dolphin found in most tributaries of Ganges prompting urgent conservation".

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1.	COUNTER AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE NATIONAL MISSION FOR CLEAN GANGA (NMCG)/ RESPONDENT NO.2	

NEW DELHI
DATE : 23/09/24.

FILED BY :-



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Standing Counsel for Union of India
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BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
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IN THE MATTER OF:

In Re: News Item titled "Endangered Gangetic dolphin found in most tributaries of Ganges prompting urgent conservation"

Counter Affidavit on behalf of the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG)

Most Respectfully Showeth:

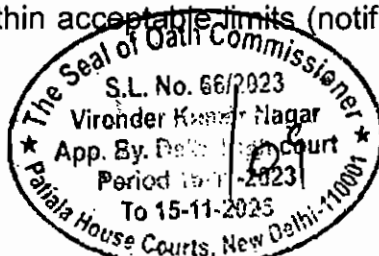
That I Anup Kumar Srivastava aged about 57 years presently working as Executive Director (Tech), in the NMCG, DoWR, RD&GR, Ministry of Jal Shakti, New Delhi do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:

1. That I am Working as Executive Director (Tech), NMCG and am fully conversant with the facts of the case and duly authorized for and on behalf of the NMCG to file the present affidavit. It is submitted that in the aforesaid matter, the Hon'ble Tribunal has taken suo moto cognizance regarding the issue relating to the alleged dwindling numbers of the Gangetic dolphin in the Ganga River.

2. That in the above context, it is submitted that the National Mission for Clean Ganga (NMCG), under the Namami Gange Programme for rejuvenation of river Ganga is also addressing the issue of conservation of the biodiversity among several other activities. In this regard, a 3-tier approach has been adopted which focuses on (i) Infrastructure improvement, (ii) maintaining environmental flow (e-flow), and (iii) conservation of biodiversity for Ganga rejuvenation.

3 The interventions of Namami Ganga for Ganges river dolphin Conservation are as under:

- a) **Infrastructure improvement** is linked to abatement of pollution through varieties of interventions that includes trapping of wastewater flow in to the river Ganga through via establishment of STP and CETP across all major Ganga cities as well as improving sanitation and hygiene through Ghat and river front development initiatives etc. This resulted in notable improvement in river water quality in most of the river dolphin habitats and increase in the numbers of Gangetic Dolphins and other biodiversity indicators recorded. The Dissolve Oxygen (DO) in river Ganga has been found to be within acceptable limits (notified primary bathing water quality



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criteria and satisfactory to support the ecosystem of river) for almost entire stretch of river Ganga.

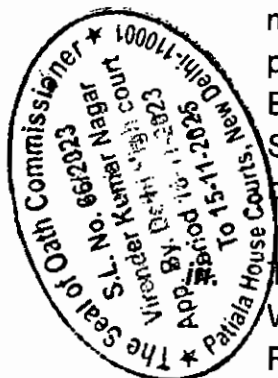
- b) **Maintaining E-flow:** NMCG vide notification dated 9th October 2018 has notified minimum environmental flows to be maintained in river Ganga from its origin to Unnao (Uttar Pradesh) specifically at locations downstream of structures or projects meant for diversion of river flows for purposes like irrigation, hydropower, domestic and industrial and other requirements. The notified environmental flow regime is applicable to all existing, under-construction and future projects. However, mini and micro projects which do not alter the flow characteristics of the river or stream significantly are exempted from these environmental flows.

As per notification, monitoring of e-flows is being carried out by Central Water Commission (CWC) since 1st January, 2019. CWC has identified and is monitoring 11 such structures/ projects meant for diversion of river flows for purposes like irrigation, hydropower, domestic and industrial and other requirements, and is submitting quarterly progress reports to NMCG.

- c) **Biodiversity Conservation:** The Namami Gange Programme has adopted a biodiversity conservation approach, including aquatic biodiversity conservation, afforestation, and wetland conservation, as key components of ecological integrity for river rejuvenation, aiming to restore the ecological integrity of the Ganga River. A strategy adopted focuses on habitat restoration, species conservation, and community involvement for Ganga rejuvenation.

- i. Over 31,494 hectares have been afforested with endemic plant species, enhancing ecological balance and soil conservation. Projects taken up include floodplain wetland conservation, biodiversity parks, fish stock enhancement, and targeted forestry interventions to restore degraded riverbank /floodplain ecosystems.
- ii. Floodplain and wetland conservation efforts are crucial for revitalizing the aquatic ecosystems. Key initiatives include inventory and management planning in 27 Uttar Pradesh districts, focusing on three priority floodplain wetlands. Similar efforts are being conducted in 12 Bihar districts. Sustainable management of Udhwa Lake Bird Sanctuary and establishment of seven biodiversity parks are also being pursued.

The NMCG has partnered with scientific research institutes, such as Wildlife Institute of India (WII, Dehradun), Central Inland Fisheries Research Institute (CIFRI, Barrackpore), State Forest Departments



and other organisations to restore and maintain endemic and endangered species in the river. Till date, Rs. 875.96 crores have been allocated for forestry, biodiversity conservation, and wetland projects, with all initiatives slated for completion by March 2026.

- iv. Regular research, surveys, monitoring and awareness programme resulted in increase in sightings of aquatic animals like dolphin, turtle, gharial etc. The distribution range and population size of iconic species have been mapped.
- v. To improve the prey base of these aquatic animal, regular ranching of IMC and other native species of fish done. Till date, 105 lakh Indian Major Carp fingerlings, 27,000 Mahseer, and 92,700 Hilsa has been ranched.
- vi. Community engagement is a cornerstone of these efforts. A cadre of local volunteers, known as Ganga Praharis (5380 individuals), has been trained to monitor and assist with conservation activities.

4. That the above submissions are placed before the Hon'ble Tribunal for consideration in the matter.

Deponent

I identified the Deponent who has signed with my presence.
W.S. Geory Adv.
Verification:



23 SEP 2024

Verified on this day of 23rd September, 2024 that the contents of the above affidavit are correct to the best of my knowledge; belief and based on the official records and nothing material has been concealed therein

Deponent

Place: New Delhi
Date 23.09.2024

CERTIFIED THAT THE DEPONENT
 Shri/Smt./Kum
 S/o W/o D/o
 R/o
 Identified by Shri
 has solemnly sworn before me at
 Delhi on
 that the content of the affidavit which have
 been read & explained to him are true and
 correct to his knowledge.
 Oath Commissioner, Delhi

23 SEP 2024