

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL, PRINCIPAL
BENCH, NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 1063 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF

“Pollution control board reels in ghost nets” appearing in the Times of India
dated 04.08.2024

INDEX

S.No.	Particular	Page No.
1.	REPLY BY WAY OF AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT NO. 3 DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES (GOVERNMENT OF INDIA), THROUGH ITS SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES, MINISTRY OF FISHERIES	

डॉ. के. कोया
Respondent No.-3
Dr. K. MOHAMMED KOYA
राष्ट्रीय विकास अयुक्त (एफ.डी.सी.)
Fisheries Department of fisheries
मत्स्यपालन, पशुपालन और डेयरी मंत्रालय
Min.of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying
मत्स्यपालन विभाग/Department of Fisheries
(Government of India)
कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली-110001
Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

dt.15-07-2025

Through

Gigi C. George Advocate
Standing Counsel (UOI)
Ch. No. 457, Lawyers Block,
DHC, New Delhi
Gigicgeorge.adv42@yahoo.in
M-9810625315

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL, PRINCIPAL
BENCH, NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 1063 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF

“Pollution control board reels in ghost nets” appearing in the Times of India
dated 04.08.2024

REPLY BY WAY OF AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT NO. 3
DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES (GOVERNMENT OF INDIA),
THROUGH ITS SECRETARY, DEPARTMENT OF FISHERIES,
MINISTRY OF FISHERIES

I, Dr. K. Mohammed Koya, aged about 48 years, S/O Shri Nallakoya M. K working as Fisheries Development Commissioner having Office at Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi, the deponent herein do hereby solemnly affirm and state on oath as under: -

1. That I am competent to swear the present reply by way of affidavit on behalf of Respondent No. 3, i.e. Department of Fisheries (Government of India), Through its Fisheries Development Commissioner, Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, I am aware of the facts and circumstances of the case based on the record.
2. That I have perused the contents of the above captioned O.A. and I am duly authorized to depose by way of the present affidavit.

3. That the instant Original Application No. 1063/ 2024 is registered *suo-motu* on the basis of the news item titled “Pollution control board reels in ghost nets” appearing in the Times of India dated 04.08.2024.’
4. That the matter relates to the collection and recycling of fishnets which otherwise become “ghost nets”. As per the article, these ghost nets are the torn and discarded fishnets that drift underwater, and strangle and kill fish, coral reefs, turtles and other organisms and then they become marine debris.
5. That the matter taken up on 14.08.2024 by the Hon’ble Tribunal and impleaded the Answering Respondent as Respondent No. 3 and issued notice. And Hon’ble Tribunal directed to file response/reply in the form of affidavit.
6. That the answering respondent has submitted its reply by way of an affidavit dated 13.03.2025 before this Hon’ble Tribunal. Subsequently, the Hon’ble Tribunal, by its order dated 19.03.2025, noted that since the National Action Plan was issued in February 2024 and nearly a year has elapsed, it is necessary to place on record the actions taken and the plans prepared pursuant to Clause IV of Annexure II of the National Action Plan, and accordingly directed the filing of the same.
7. That in response to the direction in Para 4 of the Hon’ble Tribunal’s order dated 19.03.2025, answering respondent respectfully submits as under:
 - i. That it is most respectfully submitted that the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry and Dairying, Government of India has initiated actions in pursuance of the National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Litter from Sea-Based Sources (February 2024), particularly under Clause IV of Annexure II, which addresses the management of Abandoned, Lost

or Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and implementation of FAO Voluntary Guidelines on the Marking of Fishing Gear (VGMFG).

- ii. That, a dedicated Technical Committee was constituted by the Department of Fisheries vide order dated 18th December 2024 to develop guidelines on the marking and registration of fishing gear. The objectives of the committee include: (i) preparation of guidelines for marking of fishing gear on a voluntary or mandatory basis, based on FAO's VGMFG 2019 and the 2023 supplement on risk assessment, and (ii) formulation of an implementation strategy for these guidelines.
- iii. That, to facilitate technological solutions for the reporting and monitoring of Abandoned, Lost, or otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG)/ ghost nets, the Department is exploring the integration of a reporting module in the 'Nabhmitra application'. Nabhmitra, developed by the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) and implemented through New Space India Limited (NSIL), is a safety and tracking application for Indian fishing vessels. The proposed module would enable real-time reporting of lost fishing gear by fishers at sea.
- iv. That under the Glolitter Partnership Project, jointly implemented by the International Maritime Organization (IMO) and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), India—being a Lead Partnering Country—has constituted a National Task Force (NTF) in 2021. This task force coordinates efforts for the reduction of marine litter from the fishing and maritime sectors. Various awareness and capacity-building programmes have been organized through the Fisheries Survey of India (FSI), ICAR-CMFRI, ICAR-CIFT, ICAR-CIFE, and State Fisheries

Departments to sensitize fishers and coastal stakeholders on ALDFG and marine plastic pollution.

- v. That it is submitted that the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, through the National Fisheries Development Board (NFDB), Hyderabad, has sanctioned two innovative projects in March 2025, with a total project cost of ₹67.10 lakh for a period of one year. These projects have been awarded to ICAR- Central Institute of Fisheries Technology (ICAR-CIFT), Kochi, and ICAR- Central Institute of Fisheries Education (ICAR-CIFE), Mumbai, respectively. The first project, implemented by the ICAR-CIFT, Kochi, focuses on upcycling Abandoned, Lost, or Otherwise Discarded Fishing Gear (ALDFG) and fiber-reinforced plastic debris into textile and geotextile materials. As part of the project, over 250 trawl operations were conducted off the Kochi coast to recover marine litter and analyze its composition for suitability in upcycling. The second project, titled “Technology-driven Solutions for Combatting Ghost Gear: Tackling Abandoned, Lost, and Discarded Fishing Gear along the Maharashtra Coast”, is being executed by the ICAR-CIFE, Mumbai. The project involves a survey of 300 fishers across the Maharashtra coast and aims to: (i) conduct a detailed assessment of ghost gear distribution, identify hotspot areas, and evaluate its environmental impacts. (ii) Implement strategies for the removal and recycling of ghost gear through collaboration with local fishermen, divers, and other stakeholders.
- vi. It is submitted that, in India, the existing practices for marking of fishing gear are limited and largely unstandardized. While some traditional and small-scale fishers use basic identification methods

such as colored floats, flags, or buoys to distinguish their gear, there is no nationally mandated or uniformly implemented system for gear marking across different fisheries/States. In India, fishing gear marking and vessel identification are not mandatorily linked to fishing licenses under a uniform national framework. However, fishing vessel registration and licensing are required as per the respective State Marine Fisheries Regulation Acts (MFRA). To streamline and digitize this process, the Department of Fisheries, Government of India, has developed 'ReALCraft', a web-enabled application built on open-source technology. ReALCraft delivers comprehensive online services for fishing vessel registration and license issuance.

- vii. That, the FAO voluntary guidelines on the marking of fishing gear (VGMFG) provide a framework for conducting a risk assessment to assist in determining the need for, and requirements of, a system for the marking of fishing gear. It also provides the means for estimating the likelihood of occurrence for the risks identified for different fishing gears. However, their implementation have several challenges like voluntary nature, national adaptation, resource and capacity gaps, collaborative efforts across various stakeholders (fishers, fishing organizations, gear manufacturers, waste management agencies, and civil society organizations), diversity of gear, technical expertise, infrastructure and data management.
- viii. That, the Department of Fisheries, Ministry of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying, Govt. of India is allocated with the matters regarding 'Promotion and development of fishing and fisheries (inland, marine and beyond territorial waters) and its associated activities', under the Government of India (Allocation of Business)

Rules, 1961. The Department of Fisheries, Govt. of India, is responsible for matters relating to the formulation of policies and schemes pertaining to the development of Inland, Marine and Coastal Fisheries and Fishery Institutes, including its four subordinate institutions and one autonomous body, and one regulatory authority. The subject of "Fisheries" falls under Entry 21 of the State List of the Seventh Schedule to the Constitution of India. The Department of Fisheries, Government of India, plays an advisory and coordinating role with the Departments of Fisheries of the states and UTs, including the nine coastal States, namely West Bengal, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Goa, Maharashtra, and Gujarat, and four Union Territories, namely Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu, Andaman and Nicobar Islands, Lakshadweep, and Puducherry, in the formulation and implementation of policies and programmes in the fisheries sector.

8. That it is most respectfully submitted that the department has initiated several actions aligned with the National Action Plan on Marine Plastic Litter, including developing guidelines on fishing gear marking based on FAO voluntary standards and exploring technological solutions like integrating reporting modules into existing vessel tracking applications such as Nabhmitra for real-time reporting of lost gear. Additionally, the department works with international organizations like IMO and FAO, and national agencies like ICAR and Fisheries Survey of India, to conduct projects on recycling marine debris and assessing ghost gear distribution and impact.
9. That it is further submitted that the government has established a dedicated technical committee to formulate gear marking guidelines,

aiming to standardize identification methods and ensure effective monitoring and management. These efforts are part of a broader strategy involving stakeholder engagement, capacity building, and international cooperation to mitigate marine pollution from fishing activities. The department's response also emphasizes ongoing policy development and collaboration with various agencies to implement these measures effectively, aligned with national and international guidelines.

10. That the present Reply by way of affidavit may kindly be taken on record and into consideration, and the Hon'ble Tribunal may pass appropriate order(s), direction(s) as deemed fit and proper under the facts and circumstances of the present case.

11. That the Answering Respondent seeks leave to make additional submissions, if required, during the course of the proceedings as and when directed by this Hon'ble Tribunal.

डॉ. के. मोहम्मद कोया
 Dr. K. MOHAMMED KOYA
 मात्स्यिकी विकास आयुक्त (एफ.डी.सी.)
 Fishries Development Officer (F.D.S.)
 मत्स्यपालन, पशुपालन और डेयरी मंत्रालय
 DEPENDENT
 Min.of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying
 मत्स्यपालन विभाग/Department of Fisheries
 कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली-110001
 Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001

Verification

Verify at New Delhi on 15th July 2025 that the contents of the above reply affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and nothing material has been concealed therefrom.

डॉ. के. मोहम्मद कोया
 Dr. K. MOHAMMED KOYA
 मात्स्यिकी विकास आयुक्त (एफ.डी.सी.)
 Fishries Development Officer (F.D.S.)
 मत्स्यपालन, पशुपालन और डेयरी मंत्रालय
 DEPENDENT
 Min.of Fisheries, Animal Husbandry & Dairying
 मत्स्यपालन विभाग/Department of Fisheries
 कृषि भवन, नई दिल्ली-110001
 Krishi Bhawan, New Delhi-110001