

**Before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal
Principal Bench, New Delhi**

Original Application No. 1070 of 2024

In the case of:- New Item titled "Plastic pollution threat to Kashmir's Great Lakes trek" appearing in the Rising Kashmir dated 09.08.2024

I N D E X

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**Answering Respondents
Through Counsel.**

**(Gautam Singh)
Government Advocate
For UT of J&K, New Delhi**

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In the case of:- New Item titled "Plastic pollution threat to Kashmir's Great Lakes trek" appearing in the Rising Kashmir dated 09.08.2024

In the matter of:- Reply/Response on behalf of District Magistrate, Ganderbal (Respondent No.5) in compliance to Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi order dated 20.08.2024 passed in O.A No. 1070 of 2024 titled New Item titled "Plastic pollution threat to Kashmir's Great Lakes trek" appearing in the Rising Kashmir dated 09.08.2024

May it please your Lordship:-

The Reply/response is mostly respectfully submitted as under;

1. That this Hon'ble Tribunal has been pleased to pass an order dated 20.08.2024 in the instant Original Application wherein the answering respondent has been arrayed as respondent no. 05 with further direction to file reply/response by way of an affidavit.
2. That it is respectfully submitted that the area in question lies in a far-flung region falling within the jurisdiction of Tehsil Gund & Tehsil Kangan. The overall sanitation work in these areas is being supervised by the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat Ganderbal as well as Tourism Development Authority Sonamarg.
3. That in compliance with the directions passed by this Hon'ble Tribunal, the answering respondent took up the matter with the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Ganderbal, and other line Departments including Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority Sonmarg, to furnish a detailed report/Action Taken Report.

4. That, the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat, Ganderbal furnished a detailed report dated 19.07.2025 in the matter which is reproduced as under:-

".....1 **The report submitted by Block Development Officer Gund** stated that "the news item published in the daily newspaper, The Rising Kashmir, regarding "Plastic Pollution poses threat to Kashmir's Great Lakes Trek" has been duly noted. In response, this office initiated prompt measures for removal of plastic waste littering at the starting point of the trek. The concerned Secretary Panchayat along with sanitation workers conducted cleanliness drive, ensuring complete removal of plastic waste from the effected site (falling within jurisdiction of this office). Additionally, local residents and shopkeepers were sensitized on the Solid Waste Management Programme run by this office and about the harmful effects of use of plastic and polythene. Furthermore, it is to submit that the said area is currently closed for trekkers and visitors by the government and no one is allowed to visit there....."

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2. The Block Development Officer Kangan Stated that "the legal notice issued by the Regional Director, Pollution Control Committee, Kashmir (vide No. PCC/ROK/LS /MSW/2024/672-74 dated 14.10.2024), the following is submitted for your kind perusal: Sanitation Coverage up to Naranag: The Block Office Kangan has been regularly conducting sanitation activities up to the starting point of the Great Lakes Trek at Naranag. Cleanliness drives are undertaken from time to time to manage solid waste and maintain environmental hygiene in the area.

Waste Management Arrangements: An agency has been engaged for door-to-door waste collection in various Panchayats of Block Kangan under SBM-G provisions. However, the Naranag zone, being a hilly and high-altitude area with significant tourist pressure during the trekking season, requires enhanced and focused intervention.

Request for Additional Support: In view of the above, it is requested that additional financial support be provided for the engagement of a dedicated agency specifically for the upper belt, including the Naranag-Trek starting zone, in order to ensure sustained and effective sanitation coverage...."

As communicated, the Assistant Commissioner Panchayat Ganderbal has separately taken up the matter with the Director General Sanitation, J&K vide letter dated 24.07.2025 for the release of funds to the extent of Rs5.00 lacs in order to carry out the cleanliness and waste disposal activities along the Naranag starting point and adjoining trek route, so as to uphold the environmental responsibilities.

5. It is respectfully submitted that the Chief Executive Officer, Tourism Development Authority, Sonmarg has outlined key environmental initiatives aimed at preserving the natural beauty and ecological balance of the region, as under:-

- i. **Ban on single-use Plastic:** Multiple public notices and advisories have been issued to all stakeholders, including tourists, hoteliers, vendors, and local residents, strictly prohibiting the use of single-use plastic in the Sonmarg area.
- ii) **Manual Sanitation and Waste Disposal:** All sanitation activities in the Sonamarg estate are carried out manually. Collected waste is scientifically treated and disposed of at the Sarbal Solid Waste Management Plant, which has been fully operational since 2023.
- iii) **Regular Clean-Up Drives and Awareness Campaigns:** Regular clean-up drives and 'No Polythene' campaigns are organized in collaboration with line departments, NGOs, and local volunteers to raise awareness about the harmful impacts of plastic pollution and to promote sustainable tourism.
- iv) **Waste Management at Trekking Routes and Camps:** The Great Lakes namely Vishansar, Kishansar, Gadsar, Gangbal, etc are located in rugged terrain at high altitudes, approximately 7 to 8 hours of trekking distance from tourist destination Sonamarg making daily sanitation practically unfeasible. Despite

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the logistical challenges the Authority in collaboration with the Tourism Department and local volunteers conducts special sanitation drives every year.

- Collected waste from these treks is manually transported back to Sonamarg and then to the Sarbal waste management facility for scientific disposal.
- Waste bins have been installed at key public points, including base camps at Shutkadi, Thajiwas, and Lashpathri routes to facilitate proper waste collection.

The Tourism Development Authority is taking every measure to protect and preserve the environment and natural heritage of the area within their jurisdiction and have taken continuous and effective measures to ensure strict compliance with the Plastic Waste Management Rules, 2016 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986. The staff and field teams of the authority remain vigilant especially during peak tourist seasons to prevent any littering or unauthorized use of plastic.

6. That, it is pertinent to submit here that, a few days ago, the Block Development Officer (BDO), Gund has got conducted a cleanliness drive at Vishansar, Gadsar and other important Lakes from 12.09.2025 to 13.09.2025 under his personal supervision where approximately 80 Kgs of waste were collected and ferried to lower areas for disposal as conveyed vide his letter dated 14.09.2025. Copies of the photographs are annexed at **Annexure-I**.

7. That it is respectfully submitted that in the instant matter, a meeting of various line departments was also convened on 29.07.2025. Minutes of said meeting were issued on the said date whereby concerned departments were impressed upon to take strict cognizance in light of the directions passed by this Hon'ble Tribunal to preserve and protect the environmental and natural heritage of the area within their jurisdiction without any laxity.

Further it is submitted that all the necessary measures are being taken at the district and block levels to address the concerns raised regarding plastic pollution and environmental issues in and



around the Kashmir Great Lakes Trek area. The line departments have been directed to keep sharp vigil on the issue ensuring compliance with environmental norms and directions of this Hon'ble Tribunal besides taking measures in coordination with concerned departments for effective waste management and ecological conservation of the region, intensifying periodic cleanliness drives, sensitization of shopkeepers, residents, and transporters regarding the harmful impacts of single-use plastic and the importance of responsible waste disposal.

8. That efforts are being made to coordinate with the local Tourism and Forest Department to ensure that any movement of trekkers once permitted, is regulated and guided with appropriate waste management instructions.
9. That, in light of the aforementioned submissions, the answering respondent craves leave of this Hon'ble Tribunal to make such other and further submissions as and when the context may so arise and this Hon'ble Tribunal may so directs by amending the present response or by filing additional/supplementary reply/affidavit or this Hon'ble Tribunal may so directs/permits.
10. That the reply/response is supported by duly sworn Affidavit.

In the premises, it is therefore respectfully prayed that the reply/response may kindly be taken on board on behalf of the answering respondent No.5 (District Magistrate, Ganderbal).

**Answering Respondents
Through Counsel.**

**(Gautam Singh)
Government Advocate
For UT of J&K, New Delhi**

Annexure - I



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Annexe - I

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INDIA NON JUDICIAL

Government of Jammu and Kashmir



सत्यमेव जयते

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e-Stamp

Certificate No. : IN-JK81248734848112X
Certificate Issued Date : 20-Sep-2025 02:23 PM
Account Reference : NEWIMPACC (SV)/ jk12538204/ MINI SECRETARIAT/ JK-GB
Unique Doc. Reference : SUBIN-JKJK1253820447701267691628X
Purchased by : DISTRICT MAGISTRATE GANDERBAL
Description of Document : Article 4 Affidavit
Property Description : Not Applicable
Consideration Price (Rs.) : 0
 (Zero)
First Party : DISTRICT MAGISTRATE GANDERBAL
Second Party : Not Applicable
Stamp Duty Paid By : DISTRICT MAGISTRATE GANDERBAL
Stamp Duty Amount(Rs.) : 10
 (Ten only)



₹10



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Statutory Alert:

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2. The onus of checking the legitimacy is on the users of the certificate
3. In case of any discrepancy please inform the Competent Authority.

**Before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal
Principal Bench, New Delhi**

Original Application No. 1070 of 2024

In the case of:- New Item titled "Plastic pollution threat to Kashmir's Great Lakes trek" appearing in the Rising Kashmir dated 09.08.2024

In the matter of:- Affidavit in support of Reply/Response on behalf of District Magistrate, Ganderbal (Respondent No.5) in compliance to Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi order dated 20.08.2024 passed in O.A No. 1070 of 2024 titled above.

I, Jatin Kishore, presently posted as District Magistrate Ganderbal do hereby solemnly affirm and declare on oath as under:-

1. That whatever has been stated above is true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and nothing has been concealed therein.
2. That, I further solemnly affirm that this affidavit is true and no part of this is false and nothing has been concealed therein.



DEPONENT

Verification:-

Verified on /09/2025 at Ganderbal, that the averments made in this affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief and nothing has been concealed thereof.



DEPONENT



Government of Jammu & Kashmir
OFFICE OF THE DISTRICT MAGISTRATE GANDERBAL
(MINI SECRETARIAT, DUDERHAMA)

Sh.Gautam Singh, Advocate
Supreme Court of India,
Chamber No.71, Supreme Court of India,
New Delhi-110201
Ph No.9970179706
Email. mail@gautamsinghh.com

No. DCG/ADC/GBL/PS/ **2644.**

Dated: - **20**- 09-2025

In the matter of:-Reply/Response on behalf of District Magistrate, Ganderbal (Respondent No.5) in compliance to Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, Principal Bench, New Delhi order dated 20.08.2024 passed in O.A No. 1070 of 2024 titled New Item titled "Plastic pollution threat to Kashmir's Great Lakes trek" appearing in the Rising Kashmir dated 09.08.2024

Sir,

Pursuant to the matter titled above, I am directed to enclose herewith the Reply/Response on behalf of District Magistrate, Ganderbal(Respondent No.5) duly signed with a request that the same be filed before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, New Delhi well before the date of hearing viz;23.09.2025 so as to avoid any adverse orders from the Hon'ble Tribunal.

Yours Faithfully

Syed Faheem Bihazi (JKAS)

Additional District Magistrate
Ganderbal

Encl:-A/A

Copy to:-

1. Commissioner/Secretary to Govt. Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment, Civil Secretariat, J&K for favour of information.
2. Secretary to Govt. Department of Law, Justice and Parliamentary Affairs, J&K for favour of information.
3. Member Secretary, JK Pollution Control Committee, Jammu for favour of information.
4. PA to District Magistrate, Ganderbal for information of the District Magistrate.