

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL, NEW DELHI

Original Application no. 728 of 2023

In re: News Item appearing in Hindustan dated 30.11.2023 titled "Arsenic found in groundwater in 25 states, fluoride in 27 states: Government.

Reply of Additional Secretary to Government of Punjab, Department of Science, Technology and Environment on behalf of respondent no.16 i.e. State of Punjab through Chief Secretary.

Respectfully showeth

1. That briefly submitted, the above-mentioned Original Application no.728 of 2023 has been registered by the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal exercising suo moto jurisdiction based on the newspaper report published in Business Standard under the heading "Arsenic found in groundwater in 25 States, fluoride in 27 States: Government". The report says that Arsenic has been detected in ground water in parts of 230 Districts and 25 States and fluoride in 469 Districts and 27 States and statement to this effect was made by Union Minister of State for Jal Shakti and Rajya Sabha. It is also stated that ground water contamination reported by Central Ground Water Board (hereinafter referred to as „CGWB") is mostly geogenic in nature and does not show significant change over the years. The newspaper item states that studies indicate occurrence of arsenic and fluoride in ground water beyond permissible limits set by the Bureau of Indian Standards for human consumption in isolated pockets of various States and Union Territories.
2. That after consideration of the matter, the Hon'ble Tribunal vide order dated 20.12.2023 was pleased to implead all the States including the State of Punjab as respondents in the case. The State



of Punjab has been impleaded as respondent no.16 in the case through Chief Secretary, Punjab. The Hon'ble Tribunal was further pleased to issue notice to all the States including the State of Punjab vide the said order dated 20.12.2023 requiring them to file response.

3. That the undersigned is working as Additional Secretary to Government of Punjab, Department of Science, Technology and Environment and as such is conversant with the facts of the case and is authorized and competent to file the present reply on behalf of the State of Punjab i.e. respondent no.16.
4. That in compliance to order dated 20.12.2023 of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal, it is submitted that the Punjab Pollution Control Board (PPCB) has been carrying out monitoring at 43 groundwater locations under the National Water Monitoring Programme (NWMP) of the Central Pollution Control Board across the State of Punjab covering the districts of Patiala, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Amritsar, Hoshiarpur, Fatehgarh Sahib, Faridkot, Bathinda, Batala (Gurdaspur), SAS Nagar. These locations are subject to biannual monitoring, specifically in April and October.
5. That as per the report submitted by the Central Ground Water Authority before the Hon'ble Tribunal in advance notice, arsenic has been shown to be recorded in 17 districts of the State of Punjab namely Mansa, Amritsar, Bhatinda, Fazilka, Ferozpur, Gurdaspur, Hoshiarpur, Kapurthala, Ropar, Faridkot, Nawashahar, Sangrur, TaranTaran, SAS Nagar, Pathankot, Patiala, Chandigarh.

The ground water monitoring carried out by the Punjab Pollution Control Board across 07 districts of the State of Punjab has not revealed the presence of arsenic. Scrutiny of the data confirms that none of the samples from the 07 districts of Patiala, Hoshiarpur, Ropar, Amritsar, Bathinda, Batala (Gurdaspur), SAS Nagar

breached the permissible limits set by the Bureau of Indian standards (BIS) for arsenic. The monitoring in the remaining 10 districts of Mansa, Fazilka, Ferozepur, Kapurthala, Faridkot, Nawanshahar, Sangrur, Tarn Taran and Pathankot will be carried out as per the frequency of National Water Monitoring Programme (NWMP). It is relevant to mention here that Chandigarh is falling in the area of Union Territory of Chandigarh.

6. That the report of the Central Ground Water Authority further disclosed the occurrence of fluoride in ground water in 19 districts of the State of Punjab namely Amritsar, Barnala, Bhatinda, Fazilka, Faridkot, Fatehgarh Sahib, Firozpur, Gurdaspur, Jalandhar, Ludhiana, Mansa, Moga, Muktsar, Pathankot, Patiala, Ropar, Sangrur, SAS Nagar (Mohali), Tarn-Taran.

The ground water monitoring carried out by the Punjab Pollution Control Board across 10 districts of the State of Punjab has revealed the presence of fluoride in Districts of Bathinda and Muktsar Sahib beyond the permissible limits 1.5mg/l (absence of alternate source drinking water) and the same is due to geogenic reasons. The monitoring in remaining 09 districts of Tarn Taran, Barnala, Fazilka, Faridkot, Ferozepur, Mansa, Moga, Pathankot, Sangrur will be carried out as per the frequency of National Water Monitoring Programme (NWMP).

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7. That it is pertinent to mention here that primarily the Central Ground Water Authority (CGWA) constituted by the Central Government in exercise of the powers conferred under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 is the statutory authority responsible for the regulation, control, management and development of ground water in the country and to issue necessary regulatory directions for the purpose. It is relevant to mention here that the drinking water supply arrangements in the State of Punjab are being regulated and monitored by the Department of Punjab Water Supply and Sanitation Board (PWSSB).

8. That the reply in compliance to order dated 20.12.2023 is submitted on behalf of the State of Punjab for kind perusal and consideration of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal.

Date: 12.2.24

Place: Chandigarh.

slh
Additional Secretary to Government of Punjab
Department of Science, Technology and
Environment

on behalf of respondent no.16
i.e. State of Punjab through Chief Secretary