



**REPORTABLE**  
**IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA**  
**INHERENT/CIVIL APPELLATE JURISDICTION**  
**SUO MOTO WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO(S). 8 OF 2025**

**IN RE: 2 MILLION LIVES AT RISK,  
CONTAMINATION IN JOJARI RIVER,  
RAJASTHAN**

**WITH**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 5517-5519 OF 2022**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 8748 OF 2022**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 9057-9058 OF 2022**

**CIVIL APPEAL NO(S). 9010-9011 OF 2022**

**ORDER**

1. The instant *suo motu* writ petition came to be registered pursuant to the order dated 16<sup>th</sup> September, 2025, whereby this Court took cognizance of the grave and continuing

environmental degradation caused to the Jojari-Bandi-Luni river system in the State of Rajasthan. The material then placed before the Court disclosed an alarming situation marked by unchecked industrial pollution, discharge of untreated municipal sewage, widespread ecological deterioration and prolonged regulatory inaction, resulting in serious adverse consequences for public health, agriculture, livestock, groundwater resources and the overall environmental balance of the region. Considering the magnitude of the alarming environmental crisis and its direct bearing on the constitutional right to life and a clean environment, this Court considered it necessary to assume continuing jurisdiction over the matter so as to ensure effective implementation of remedial and restorative measures.

**2.** Thereafter, upon a comprehensive examination of the reports, affidavits and other material placed on record, as well as the status of compliance with the directions issued by the National Green Tribunal, this Court, *vide* its detailed order dated 21<sup>st</sup> November, 2025, considered it imperative to establish an independent institutional framework

capable of providing sustained oversight and coordinated supervision of the restoration process. Accordingly, a High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee<sup>1</sup> was constituted under the Chairmanship of Mr. Justice Sangeet Lodha, former Judge of the High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan. The Committee was entrusted with a broad mandate to monitor compliance with environmental norms, identify systemic deficiencies in governance and infrastructure, coordinate among the concerned authorities and stakeholders, oversee implementation of remedial measures and periodically report to this Court regarding the progress achieved and the challenges encountered in the process of restoration and rejuvenation of the affected riverine ecosystem.

**3.** Pursuant to the aforesaid orders, the Committee has periodically submitted exhaustive status reports setting out the measures undertaken by various authorities, the deficiencies observed during field inspections, the extent of compliances achieved, and the further interventions considered necessary for

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<sup>1</sup> Hereinafter, being referred to as the “Committee”.

effective environmental restoration. Upon consideration of these reports and the submissions advanced on behalf of the concerned stakeholders, this Court, *vide* order dated 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2026, issued further directions intended to strengthen the regulatory framework, augment treatment and monitoring infrastructure, eliminate continuing sources of pollution and secure accountability of the concerned departments, local bodies and industrial establishments. The proceedings, thus, assumed the character of a continuing mandamus, with this Court retaining seisin of the matter to ensure that the constitutional mandate of environmental protection is translated into tangible and enduring outcomes on the ground level. Having regard to the stage of implementation of the directions issued thus far, and considering the necessity of examining the subsequent developments reported by the Committee and the State authorities, this Court directed that the matter be listed on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2026 for further consideration.

**I. Communication Received from the Committee Regarding Immediate Removal of Sludge Prior to the Monsoon Season**

**4.** In the interregnum, the Committee addressed a communication dated 19<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 to the Registry of this Court enclosing a note highlighting the urgent necessity of undertaking immediate removal and scientific disposal of accumulated sludge from riverbeds, drains, reservoirs and other affected waterbodies within the Jojari-Bandi-Luni river system before the onset of the forthcoming monsoon season. The Committee pointed out that its inspections had revealed extensive deposits of contaminated sludge resulting from prolonged accumulation and continued discharge of untreated and inadequately treated industrial effluents and municipal sewage at multiple locations. According to the Committee, such deposits presently constitute a significant source of continuing environmental degradation and pose a serious threat to agricultural lands, groundwater resources, livestock and public health in the affected regions.

**5.** The Committee further expressed grave concern that with the imminent arrival of the monsoon, the accumulated sludge is liable to be mobilised and carried downstream, thereby dispersing the toxic load over vast stretches of agricultural land, pasture

areas, groundwater recharge zones and connected waterbodies. It was emphasised that once the monsoon commences, removal of the sludge would become substantially more difficult and the contamination, having already spread across a widespread geographical area, may no longer be amenable to effective control. The Committee noted that despite repeated directions, no coordinated or time-bound programme had been placed on record for identification, removal and scientific disposal of the sludge deposits or for treatment of contaminated water accumulated in river stretches, ponds and reservoirs. The Committee, therefore, requested that appropriate directions be issued to the concerned authorities for immediate identification of all sludge accumulation points and for undertaking supervised removal, scientific disposal and remediation measures before the onset of the monsoon season so as to prevent further aggravation of the environmental devastation already suffered by the river ecosystem.

**6.** Thereafter, the matter came up for consideration before this Court on 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. On the said date, having regard to the emergent

issues raised in the note submitted by the Committee and considering the necessity of obtaining the response of the State authorities thereto, this Court deemed it appropriate to grant a short opportunity to the authorities to submit a response. Accordingly, the matter was directed to be listed on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, learned Additional Advocate General appearing for the State of Rajasthan, was granted liberty to obtain necessary instructions from the concerned authorities and place on record an appropriate affidavit indicating the stand of the State and the measures proposed to be undertaken in relation to the concerns highlighted by the Committee.

**II. Communication of the Committee Regarding Detection of a Concealed Illegal Effluent Conduit**

7. At this stage, and before the matter could be considered on the succeeding date of hearing, yet another communication dated 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 came to be received from the Committee, disclosing an issue of an extremely grave and disturbing nature. The communication, based upon inspections conducted by the team constituted by the Committee

on 27<sup>th</sup> and 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 in the vicinity of the Common Effluent Treatment Plant<sup>2</sup> situated at the Sangaria RIICO Growth Centre, brought to the notice of this Court, evidence conclusively establishing the existence and active operation of an extensive hidden underground pipeline network directly conveying untreated treated industrial effluents into the Jojari River. The Committee reported that persistent sounds of flowing water were noticed near the designated junction point setup for discharge of treated water, despite the absence of any visible discharge mechanism, giving rise to a serious suspicion of clandestine flow and disposal of effluent through a hidden subsurface network.

**8.** The Committee further recorded that, upon enquiry, contradictory explanations were furnished by the personnel associated with the CETP and the Regional Officer, Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board<sup>3</sup> present at the site. While it was asserted by certain persons connected with the CETP that an “old conduit” existed in the area and had allegedly been sealed, it was simultaneously stated that pipelines

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<sup>2</sup> For short, “CETP”.

<sup>3</sup> For short, “RSPCB”.

belonging to the Public Health Engineering Department<sup>4</sup> traversed the same location. Subsequently, another manhole-like structure was noticed approximately one kilometre downstream, where CETP personnel disclosed the existence of a separate four-kilometre conduit project running parallel to the stormwater drain of Rajasthan State Industrial Development and Investment Corporation.<sup>5</sup> Significantly, the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB stated that the said project had already been abandoned. The Committee noted with concern that no details regarding such a project had ever been disclosed to it despite numerous inspections, meetings and proceedings undertaken earlier, thereby raising serious doubts regarding the accuracy and authenticity of the information being furnished by the concerned authorities.

**9.** In view of these suspicious circumstances, members of the Committee continued a deeper probe with officials of PHED, who categorically informed the Committee that no PHED pipelines existed at the location in question. Upon a more intensive

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<sup>4</sup> For short, "PHED".

<sup>5</sup> For short, "RIICO".

examination of the area, a concealed conduit carrying liquid in substantial volume was ultimately traced. Immediately thereafter, the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB was asked to reach the site along with a team for collection of samples. The Committee has recorded that reluctance was initially expressed on the ground that the concerned officer was attending a meeting in the office of the District Collector and that the sampling team had already dispersed for the day, it being around 07:00 p.m. Directions were consequently issued through the District Collector, and the Member Secretary, RSPCB was also informed so as to ensure the immediate presence of the concerned officers at the site. Samples were thereafter collected in the presence of officials of RSPCB and the Water Resources Department, and **on-the-spot testing reportedly revealed a pH level of approximately 10, indicating the extremely alkaline and toxic nature of the liquid.** The Committee further recorded that even the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB had no option but to accept that the hidden conduit appeared to be carrying effluent-laden water. The circumstances, according to the Committee,

clearly indicated the existence and active use of an underground conduit network transporting untreated or improperly treated industrial effluents.

**10.** The matter assumed an even more serious dimension when excavation and tracing operations were subsequently undertaken with the assistance of the District Administration. The Committee has further pointed out that the area in question had earlier come under scrutiny during inspections conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 and 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. During the first inspection, officers of the Committee noticed overflowing water from a manhole situated in the vicinity. During the follow-up inspection, a significant instance of leakage was again observed near the same location. The Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB, was informed and directed to ascertain the cause of the leakage. The casual response of the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB was that the incident was merely a routine overflow caused by choking of a conduit and that the issue had been resolved.

**11.** However, the subsequent developments revealed a far more serious state of affairs. **The Committee has reported that, upon excavation,**

**the identified point was found to be a bypass channel facilitating direct discharge of untreated wastewater into the RIICO drain, which eventually discharges into the river system.**

The origin of the illegal conduit, the route through which the effluents were being transported and the point at which it connected with a cemented conduit were also reportedly traced. The Committee has further observed that despite repeated inspections and notwithstanding specific directions requiring identification of all legal and illegal discharge points, neither the officials of the RSPCB, RIICO nor the District Administration had disclosed the existence of any such underground conduit system or even the alleged four-kilometre pipeline project. The Committee has recorded that these facts came to light only upon tracing of the hidden conduit network during the inspection exercise.

**12.** The Committee has further observed that another conduit, which had earlier been represented as abandoned, was found to be actively carrying liquid, thereby casting grave doubts on the veracity of the explanations furnished by the concerned authorities. According to the Committee, these

developments indicate deliberate efforts to conceal an illegal network of underground conduits being utilised as bypass channels for direct discharge of effluent-laden water into the river, in complete derogation of the directions issued by this Court and the regulatory framework governing the operation of the CETP and the connected industrial units. The Committee has gone to the extent of observing that such activities could not have continued in the immediate vicinity of the CETP without a complete failure of vigilance, monitoring and enforcement on the part of the concerned regulatory and administrative authorities.

**13.** For the sake of completeness and to facilitate appreciation of the geographical alignment and extent of the concealed conduit network, a Google Earth image depicting the entire traced route of the illegal conduit, as identified during the inspection and excavation exercise, is reproduced hereinbelow:-



**14.** Having regard to the seriousness of the findings, the Committee has expressed the view that the incident reflects not merely an isolated act of violation but a systemic failure of monitoring and

enforcement mechanisms. The Committee has therefore recommended immediate and stringent action against the CETP, its trustees, and the member industries, as well as against the authorities charged with ensuring compliance with the directions issued by this Court. The Committee has further recommended that the operation of the CETP and all connected industrial units be suspended forthwith, and that no resumption of operations be permitted except with the prior leave of this Court, upon being satisfied that full and effective compliance has been achieved.

**III. Response of the State Government to the Committee's Note on Sludge Removal and Remediation Measures**

**15.** Pursuant to the order dated 26<sup>th</sup> May, 2026, the State of Rajasthan filed an affidavit placing on record its response to the concerns highlighted by the Committee regarding the urgent necessity of removal and scientific disposal of accumulated sludge before the onset of the monsoon season. At the outset, the State has expressed its commitment to extend complete cooperation to this Court and the

Committee and assured that all necessary administrative, logistical and financial support would be provided for implementation of the remedial measures being undertaken under the supervision of the Committee. The affidavit further stated that, considering the immediate urgency of the matter, a conscious administrative decision had been taken to commence sludge removal activities forthwith by engaging agencies already working with the Government and local authorities so as to ensure that the maximum possible work could be completed prior to the commencement of the monsoon.

**16.** The affidavit records that a joint exercise had been undertaken by the concerned departments and authorities for identification of critical stretches where sludge accumulation presently exists and where excavation and removal could be undertaken within the available timeframe. According to the State, priority has been assigned to three critical stretches, namely, the Banar Road-Nandari Sewage Treatment Plant stretch, the area near Basni Benda Sewage Treatment Plant and the stretch adjoining Salawas Bridge. The State has also indicated that discussions are continuing with the Committee

regarding additional remedial measures and that further practically feasible interventions would be undertaken as and when required.

**17.** The State has further disclosed that three major sludge accumulation points have already been identified in the riverbed of Jojari River by a joint team comprising officers of the District Administration, RSPCB, RIICO, Jodhpur Development Authority, Local Self Government Department and the Water Resources Department. Three sites have also been earmarked for interim storage and disposal of the removed sludge, depending upon the nature and classification of the waste. It is further stated that seven agencies, including the Jodhpur Development Authority, RIICO, RSPCB, Water Resources Department and the concerned CETPs, have been identified for execution of the sludge removal exercise. The State has also indicated that chemical analysis of the accumulated sludge has been initiated as a precursor to its scientific disposal and that disposal measures would be undertaken in accordance with the results of such analysis.

**18.** The affidavit additionally records that drain-cleaning operations have already commenced in the industrial areas of Jodhpur and Pali. It has been stated that, in Jodhpur, approximately 57.76 kilometres out of a total drainage network of 64 kilometres had already been cleaned and around 1,500 metric tonnes of sludge had been removed and transported for disposal. Similarly, in Pali, 17 kilometres out of a drainage network of 36.5 kilometres had been cleaned and the removed sludge had been shifted for scientific disposal. With regard to the issue of contaminated water accumulated in reservoirs, ponds and other waterbodies, the State has informed the Court that technical assistance has been sought from Indian Institute Technology, Madras; Indian Institute Technology, Jodhpur and Arid Forest Research Institute, Jodhpur for exploring suitable methods of in-situ treatment and bio-remediation, and that further steps would be undertaken upon receipt of their recommendations. The State has accordingly tried to assure this Court that the entire exercise is being carried out as an intensively coordinated drive and that all possible efforts are being made to ensure timely remediation,

sludge removal and environmental restoration before the commencement of the monsoon season.

**IV. Action Taken Report Filed by the State of Rajasthan in Response to the Committee's Communication Dated 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2026**

**19.** In response to the communication dated 28<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 submitted by the Committee regarding the detection of a concealed conduit network suspected to be carrying untreated industrial effluents into Jojari River, the State of Rajasthan has placed on record an Action Taken Report detailing the measures initiated immediately upon receipt of the Committee's findings. The State asserted in its affidavit that the observations made by the Committee had been treated with utmost seriousness and that a policy of zero tolerance had been adopted in respect of any clandestine discharge of industrial effluents into the river system. It was specifically stated that no attempt had been made by the authorities to dilute, suppress or defer action on the issues highlighted by the Committee.

**20.** The State has reported that immediately after detection of the concealed conduit and bypass system, the concerned CETP and the connected

industrial units were directed to be closed with immediate effect. It was further stated that the CETP itself communicated self-closure of its operations and of the industrial units connected thereto until completion of necessary repairs, rectification of the system and approval by the RSPCB. The closure was accepted and enforced by the RSPCB with specific directions that operations would not be resumed unless duly verified and permitted by the competent authorities. The State has also stated that strict monitoring of the closure directions has been ordered and that any violation thereof would invite immediate coercive action, including sealing of machinery and ancillary proceedings.

**21.** The Action Taken Report further discloses that the RSPCB initiated criminal and statutory proceedings against the trustees and members of the management of the concerned CETP. Directions have reportedly been issued for registration of criminal proceedings under the relevant provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 on account of the alleged discharge of untreated wastewater causing environmental damage, contamination of Jojari-Bandi-Luni river system, health hazards and public

nuisance in the entire affected region. In addition, prosecution proceedings under the provisions of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 were also directed to be initiated against the persons concerned. The State has further stated that departmental and disciplinary proceedings were simultaneously commenced wherever *prima facie* lapses were noticed during the course of inspection and investigation.

**22.** The State has also placed on record the administrative measures undertaken against regulatory officials. It has been stated that two officers, namely the Laboratory In-charge, Jodhpur and an Assistant Executive Engineer posted at the Regional Office, Jodhpur, were placed under suspension by the RSPCB pending enquiry. Further, the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB, was placed under Awaiting Posting Orders (APO) with immediate effect and alternative charge was assigned. According to the State, these measures demonstrate its resolve to adopt the strictest possible approach wherever *prima facie* negligence, concealment, non-compliance or failure of oversight is disclosed. The State has additionally informed the Court that the District

Administration, RSPCB, Water Resources Department, RIICO and Jodhpur Development Authority are jointly undertaking tracing, excavation and mapping of the concealed conduit network and identification of all illegal bypass points through videography and technical documentation.

**23.** The State has further assured this Court that no industrial operation connected with the concerned CETP or its member industries shall be permitted to resume without complete verification, technical satisfaction and express approval of the competent authorities in accordance with the directions of this Court. It has been stated that continuous monitoring, independent sampling, scientific examination and strict enforcement measures shall be undertaken to ensure that no untreated industrial discharge reaches Jojari River in future and that further action, including prosecution, levy of environmental compensation, dismantling of illegal infrastructure and recovery proceedings, shall be pursued in accordance with law.

**V. Proceedings on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 and Response of Senior State Authorities to the Committee's Findings**

**24.** When the matter was taken up on 29<sup>th</sup> May, 2026, this Court considered the grave disclosures emerging from the report of the Committee concerning the existence and operation of a concealed conduit network being utilised for bypassing and the CETP and discharge of untreated industrial effluents into the Jojari River. Having regard to the seriousness of the allegations, the apparent failure of the regulatory mechanism and the urgent need to ascertain the factual position at the highest administrative level, this Court directed Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, learned Additional Advocate General appearing for the State of Rajasthan, to ensure the virtual presence of the Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department; the Director General of Police, Rajasthan; the Additional Chief Secretary, Environment, Forest and Climate Change Department; the Chairperson, RSPCB; and the District Magistrate, Jodhpur. The matter was accordingly directed to be taken up again at 12:45 p.m. on the same day so as to enable this Court to

interact directly with the concerned officers and obtain an immediate response regarding the measures undertaken and required to be taken pursuant to the findings recorded by the Committee.

**25.** The aforesaid officers joined the proceedings through virtual mode. This Court interacted with the Chairperson, RSPCB, who candidly acknowledged the existence of the illegal conduit network and accepted that the material brought on record by the Committee disclosed a serious violation of environmental norms and regulatory safeguards. During the course of hearing, Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, learned Additional Advocate General, submitted that immediate corrective measures had been initiated by the State Government and the RSPCB. It was stated that approximately 300 industrial units connected with the concerned CETP had already been directed to remain closed and that coercive as well as disciplinary proceedings had been initiated against the persons and entities found to be *prima facie* responsible for the persisting situation.

**26.** Mr. Sharma further fairly accepted the recommendation made by the Committee that, having regard to the gravity of the violations detected

and the necessity of restoring confidence in the regulatory process, no industrial unit connected with the concerned CETP should be permitted to resume operations except with the prior leave of this Court. It was submitted that any request for recommencement of operations should be considered only upon this Court being satisfied, on the basis of independent verification and material placed on record, that complete and effective compliance has been achieved and that adequate safeguards have been put in place to ensure that no untreated or inadequately treated effluent is discharged into the Jajari-Bandi-Luni river system in future. He further submitted that the State Government and the RSPCB remain committed to implementing all such measures as may be necessary to secure strict compliance with environmental norms and the directions issued by this Court.

**VI. Consideration of the Material on Record and Analysis of the Issues Arising Therefrom**

**27.** Having given our anxious consideration to the reports submitted by the Committee, the affidavit and the Action Taken Report filed by the State of Rajasthan, and the submissions advanced before this

Court, we are constrained to observe that the facts which have emerged from the recent inspections reveal a state of affairs far more disturbing than a mere instance of regulatory non-compliance. The material presently on record *prima facie* discloses the existence of a concealed and operational underground conduit network facilitating the discharge of untreated or inadequately treated industrial effluents into the Jojari River. The existence of such a clandestine network in the immediate vicinity of the CETP, coupled with the circumstances in which it was ultimately discovered, raises grave concerns regarding the efficacy, credibility and integrity of the regulatory framework entrusted with environmental protection in the region.

**28.** What renders the matter particularly serious is not merely the existence of the illegal conduit network but the sequence of events that preceded its detection. The Committee has recorded that despite repeated inspections, numerous review meetings and continuous monitoring exercises undertaken over several months, the existence of the conduit network was never disclosed by any of the concerned

authorities. On the contrary, explanations furnished by the officials present at the site were found to be mutually inconsistent, self-contradictory and misleading in material particulars. The Committee was initially informed by the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB that the conduit in question was an old structure that had been sealed. It was thereafter suggested that the pipelines belonged to PHED. Subsequently, reference was made to a separate conduit project allegedly abandoned. The patent falsity of each explanation appears to have unravelled upon verification, ultimately leading to the discovery of an active concealed conduit network carrying substantial quantities of effluent-laden water.

**29.** Equally disturbing is the fact that the area in question had already been subjected to multiple inspections on earlier occasions. Overflowing water and leakage from manhole structures had been specifically noticed by the Committee during inspections conducted on 4<sup>th</sup> May, 2026 and 9<sup>th</sup> May, 2026. The Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB was informed and directed to ascertain the cause. The explanation subsequently furnished was that the

incident was attributable to routine choking and overflow which had been rectified. The subsequent excavation and tracing exercise has revealed that the location was, in fact, actively manipulated with an illegal bypass system facilitating discharge of untreated wastewater directly into the RIICO drain outlet connected to the CETP and ultimately into the Jojari River. These circumstances *prima facie* indicate that material facts were withheld from the Committee and that the information furnished by the concerned officials was either grossly false or deliberately misleading.

**30.** The conduct disclosed from the record cannot be viewed lightly. The Committee constituted by this Court is not an ordinary fact-finding body but an independent oversight mechanism established for the specific purpose of ensuring faithful implementation of the orders of this Court and restoration of the river ecosystem which affects lives of more than 2 million people and large areas covering three districts. Any attempt to suppress material information from such a body, to furnish inaccurate explanations, or to divert attention away from ongoing violations strikes at the very foundation of the process instituted by

this Court. The circumstances presently emerging from the record suggest that the Committee was not merely denied complete information but was, on several occasions, actively misled regarding the true state of affairs.

**31.** The Court is also unable to ignore the circumstances surrounding the collection of samples after the concealed conduit was detected. The Committee has recorded that deliberate reluctance was exhibited by the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB in deputing officers and sampling teams to the site despite the seriousness of the discovery. Intervention at multiple administrative levels became necessary before the team of concerned officials reached the location and undertook sampling. Such conduct, viewed in the backdrop of the subsequent discoveries, gives rise to legitimate concerns that obstructions, whether overt or subtle, were being created in the path of the Committee while it sought to discharge the functions entrusted to it by this Court.

**32.** Environmental governance cannot survive on paper compliance. Regulatory authorities such as the RSPCB are entrusted with statutory powers because

they are expected to function as vigilant guardians of the environment and public health. When a concealed conduit network measuring nearly 4 kilometres carrying effluents is found operating in the immediate vicinity of a CETP, and when its existence remains undetected or undisclosed for a prolonged period despite repeated inspections and monitoring exercises, serious questions inevitably arise regarding the discharge of duties by those charged with regulatory oversight. Such a situation reflects not merely an administrative lapse but a profound failure of institutional vigilance, giving rise to a compelling apprehension of tacit connivance with the violators.

**33.** At this stage, this Court refrains from recording any final conclusion regarding individual culpability. Nevertheless, the facts presently available *prima facie* indicates circumstances which cannot be satisfactorily explained merely by inadvertence, oversight or inefficiency. The continued operation of a concealed conduit network, the contradictory explanations furnished by different officials, the failure to disclose material infrastructure during repeated inspections, and the discovery of active flow

even in structures represented as abandoned collectively raise a serious apprehension that certain officials may have acted in concert with, or at the very least facilitated and covered up the vested interests of the violators by failing to discharge their statutory obligations. These aspects require a thorough, independent and time-bound investigation.

**34.** We must also express our deep dissatisfaction with the manner in which the State machinery appears to have functioned until the Committee unearthed the present violations. It is difficult to comprehend how such an elaborate network of illegal discharge could continue to operate without the knowledge and active participation of the concerned authorities, particularly when the area has remained under sustained scrutiny pursuant to the orders of this Court and the National Green Tribunal. If the authorities were genuinely unaware of the existence of the conduit network, it reflects a startling degree of incompetence and regulatory failure. If, however, they were aware and failed to disclose its existence, the matter assumes a far graver complexion involving deliberate suppression and abuse of public trust. Either possibility is deeply troubling.

**35.** This Court is constrained to observe that the conduct emerging from the record has the effect of eroding public confidence in environmental governance and in the ability of State institutions to faithfully enforce the law against polluters constituted by a powerful clutch of textile, steel and similar industries. The constitutional obligation to protect and improve the environment cannot be discharged through perfunctory inspections, selective disclosures and *post-facto* explanations. The State Government must appreciate that environmental regulation is not an exercise in formality but a solemn public duty owed to present and future generations.

**36.** The present episode serves as a stark reminder that environmental degradation of the magnitude witnessed in the Jojari-Bandi-Luni river system is hardly the result of isolated acts of industrial misconduct alone. Such degradation could have been possible only because regulatory institutions failed to act with the vigilance, independence and integrity expected of them. The facts presently disclosed before this Court reveal a disturbing pattern of concealment, regulatory indifference and

administrative failure, warranting the strictest scrutiny and the formulation of robust accountability measures so as to ensure that such incidents are neither repeated nor permitted to undermine the ongoing process of ecological restoration.

**37.** Apart from the issue of illegal discharge of industrial effluents, this Court is equally concerned by the grave environmental consequences arising from the extensive accumulation of contaminated sludge within the riverbeds, drains, reservoirs and connected waterbodies forming part of the Jojari-Bandi-Luni river system. The material placed before the Court leaves little room for doubt that the sludge deposits presently found across the affected region are not a recent phenomenon. Rather, it is the cumulative result of years of continuous discharge of untreated and inadequately treated industrial effluents and municipal sewage, coupled with prolonged inaction and indolence in undertaking systematic desilting, remediation and restoration measures.

**38.** The reports of the Committee indicate that these deposits have, over time, substantially altered the carrying capacity of river channels, drains and

natural flow paths. The accumulation of sludge has not only become a continuing source of contamination but has also materially contributed to obstruction of natural drainage patterns during the monsoon season. The Court is cognizant of the fact that several areas falling within the affected river basin have repeatedly witnessed flooding, waterlogging and widespread inundation during the monsoon season. The presence of large quantities of sludge and contaminated sediments within the flow paths system has undeniably aggravated such conditions and increased the vulnerability of the region to flood-related disasters.

**39.** The consequences of this prolonged neglect are not confined merely to environmental degradation. The material before the Court suggests that over the years substantial tracts of agricultural land, pasturelands, village habitations and even government infrastructure have suffered repeated submergence owing to reduced drainage capacity and obstruction of natural watercourses. The accumulation of sludge within river channels, drains and connected waterbodies has progressively diminished their hydraulic capacity, thereby

impairing the natural movement of stormwater and increasing the frequency and intensity of flooding during the monsoon season. What may initially have appeared to be isolated incidents of waterlogging have, in several areas, assumed the character of recurring environmental disasters affecting entire communities. Critical public infrastructure, including schools, roads and other community assets, has also been adversely affected leading to permanent abandonment. Large stretches of cultivable land have remained submerged, resulting in loss of crops, deterioration of soil quality and serious economic hardship for farming communities. Equally concerning is the impact upon pasturelands, which constitute an essential resource for livestock-dependent households across the region and whose repeated inundation by toxic industrial discharge has adversely affected rural livelihoods.

**40.** The environmental injury caused by the unchecked accumulation of sludge is therefore not merely ecological in nature but has significant social and economic dimensions. The burden of such mismanagement and blatant apathy has fallen disproportionately upon local residents who neither

contributed to nor benefited from the activities responsible for the pollution. Farmers have suffered recurring agricultural losses, livestock owners have faced depletion of grazing resources, and rural communities have been compelled to endure the adverse consequences of environmental degradation in the form of flooding, contamination and disruption of essential public services. There is no doubt in the mind of this Court that consuming anything grown in the areas affected by this toxic industrial discharge would have a deleterious impact on the health of the unknowing consumers and the cattle who feed on the same. In the opinion of this Court, the continued existence of such conditions over an extended period reflects a serious failure of environmental governance and underscores the urgency of undertaking comprehensive remedial measures before the onset of yet another monsoon season.

**41.** While the affidavit filed by the State Government indicates that sludge removal activities have commenced and that certain priority locations have been identified for immediate intervention, this Court is unable to accept that the exercise can be confined to the limited stretches presently identified by the

authorities. The problem, by its very nature, is widespread, cumulative and river-system specific. The locations presently earmarked by the State may constitute an important beginning, but they cannot be treated as an exhaustive identification of all areas requiring urgent intervention. To do so would be to underestimate both the scale and the complexity of the environmental injury which has accumulated over several years.

**42.** The Court is of the considered view that a comprehensive and scientifically informed assessment of sludge accumulation throughout the affected river basin is indispensable. The restoration process cannot be reduced to isolated desilting operations undertaken at a few selected locations instigated by the findings of the Committee. What is required is a basin-wide approach directed towards identifying all critical accumulation zones, choke points, contaminated deposits, vulnerable flood-prone stretches and areas where sludge deposits pose a continuing threat to agriculture, groundwater recharge, public health and ecological stability. Unless such an exercise is undertaken in a systematic manner, there exists a serious risk that

substantial quantities of contaminated sludge may remain undisturbed and continue to generate environmental harm even after the completion of the presently proposed works.

**43.** The urgency of the situation is further heightened by the imminent onset of the monsoon season. As rightly observed by the Committee, once monsoon flows commence, large volumes of accumulated sludge is bound to be mobilised and transported across extensive areas, resulting in contamination of agricultural fields, pasturelands, groundwater recharge zones and connected waterbodies. Such dispersal would not only compound the environmental injury already suffered but would also render subsequent remediation considerably more difficult and resource-intensive. Preventive action at this stage is therefore of far greater value than attempting corrective measures after the contamination has spread across a wider geographical spectrum.

**44.** The material placed before the Court, including the reports periodically submitted by the Committee, the findings recorded during its field inspections and the observations emerging from its continuous

monitoring of the affected river system, indicates that sludge accumulation is widespread across different segments of the affected river basin and that the full extent of the problem is yet to be comprehensively mapped and assessed. The Court is satisfied that limiting remedial measures solely to the locations presently identified may leave substantial areas vulnerable to continued environmental degradation, contamination and flood-related risks.

**45.** The Court is further of the opinion that the Committee, by virtue of its sustained engagement with the restoration process and its firsthand knowledge of ground realities, is best placed to identify additional stretches requiring urgent sludge removal, desilting and other preventive interventions. Such an exercise assumes particular significance in view of the imminent onset of the monsoon season and the material placed on record indicating that persistent sludge accumulation over the years has contributed to flooding, waterlogging and large-scale submergence of agricultural lands, pasturelands, village habitations and critical public infrastructure. In the considered view of this Court, a comprehensive basin-wide assessment of critical sludge

accumulation zones is indispensable if further environmental degradation and potentially disastrous consequences during the forthcoming monsoon are to be effectively avoided.

**46.** The facts which have emerged during the course of the present proceedings, particularly the discovery of the concealed effluent conduit network, the apparent failure of regulatory oversight mechanisms, the continuing accumulation of contaminated sludge across the river basin and the imminent threat posed by the forthcoming monsoon season, leave this Court in no manner of doubt that further intervention is necessary. The developments brought to light by the Committee reveal that notwithstanding the measures undertaken thus far, significant environmental risks continue to persist and require immediate, coordinated and closely monitored remedial action. The Court is, therefore, satisfied that the situation warrants the issuance of further time bound directions so as to secure effective implementation of restoration measures, ensure accountability of the concerned authorities and prevent any further deterioration of the river ecosystem.

**47.** The urgency and gravity of the issues highlighted has made it necessary to supplement the directions already operating in the field with additional measures tailored to address the emergent concerns identified by the Committee and reflected in the material placed before the Court.

## **VII. Directions**

**48.** Accordingly, in exercise of the powers conferred upon this Court under Article 142 of the Constitution of India, and for the purpose of ensuring effective protection, restoration and rejuvenation of the Jojari-Bandi-Luni river system, the following directions are issued: -

### **Directions Relating to the Illegal Conduit and Investigation Thereof**

- A.** The State of Rajasthan shall constitute a Special Investigation Team<sup>6</sup> (SIT) within a period of three days from the date of receipt of this Order.
- B.** The SIT shall be headed by an officer not below the rank of Inspector General of Police and shall comprise, *inter alia*, the Superintendents of Police of Jodhpur, Balotra and Pali as its members.

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<sup>6</sup> For short, "SIT".

**C.** The SIT shall investigate all First Information Reports registered pursuant to the inspections, findings and communications submitted by the Committee in relation to the concealed conduit network, illegal discharge of untreated or inadequately treated industrial effluents, operation of unauthorised bypass mechanisms and all allied environmental violations in all the three districts, i.e., Jodhpur, Balotra and Pali.

**D.** The investigation shall specifically encompass:

- i.** the origin, design, execution and operational history of the entire illegal conduit network and all connected infrastructure;
- ii.** identification of all individuals, entities and industries responsible for the planning, construction, maintenance, utilisation or concealment of the illegal conduit system;
- iii.** the role, if any, of trustees, office-bearers and functionaries of the concerned CETP;
- iv.** the role of officials of the State Government, RSPCB, RIICO, local authorities and any other public authority who may have facilitated, ignored, concealed or failed to

take action against the illegal discharge mechanism; and

- v. any acts of suppression, misrepresentation, obstruction or furnishing of false information to the Committee or to any authority charged with environmental regulation.

**E.** The SIT shall not be constrained by the scope of the FIRs presently registered and shall be at liberty to register or direct registration of additional criminal case/s, and invoke such stringent provisions of law including those under the provisions of the Prevention of Corruption Act, 1988 as may be warranted by the material collected during the course of investigation. In the event the investigation discloses commission of offences other than those presently under consideration, involvement of additional individuals or entities, or the existence of a larger conspiracy relating to the creation, operation, concealment or facilitation of the illegal conduit system and the consequential environmental violations, the SIT shall take all such further steps as may be necessary in accordance with law,

including registration of fresh cases and initiation of appropriate proceedings against all persons found responsible.

- F.** The State of Rajasthan, RSPCB, RIICO, District Administration and all other concerned authorities shall extend full cooperation to the SIT and shall forthwith make available all records, files, electronic data, maps, permissions, inspection reports, correspondence and other material required for the purposes of investigation.
- G.** The State of Rajasthan and its concerned authorities shall ensure preservation of the entire illegal conduit network, connected structures, manholes, discharge points, records, electronic data and all other evidence relevant to the investigation as the same constitute critical evidence of the illegal activities. No part of the conduit system shall be removed, altered or destroyed until its complete mapping, documentation, videography and inspection have been undertaken under the supervision of the SIT.
- H.** The District Administration, RSPCB, RIICO and the concerned departments shall undertake complete tracing, mapping and documentation of

the illegal conduit system and all connected discharge points and shall place the same before the SIT.

- I.** Having regard to the extensive field inspections conducted by the Committee and the material gathered by it during the course of its oversight of the restoration process, the SIT shall be at liberty to seek such information, records, clarifications, technical inputs and guidance from the Committee as may be required for the effective discharge of its mandate. The Committee shall extend all reasonable assistance and cooperation in this regard.
- J.** The SIT shall submit its first status report before the Committee on or before 15<sup>th</sup> July, 2026.
- K.** The State of Rajasthan, all concerned departments and the RSPCB shall, upon completion of the documentation and evidentiary exercise referred to above, undertake immediate measures for the dismantling, removal and permanent closure of the entire illegal conduit network and all associated bypass arrangements, discharge points, manholes, chambers, connections and ancillary infrastructure connected therewith. The

authorities shall ensure that the conduit network is rendered completely incapable of further use and that no alternative or substitute mechanism for unauthorised discharge of industrial effluents remains operational within the affected area.

**L.** The State of Rajasthan and its concerned authorities shall also undertake a verification exercise thereafter to identify and eliminate any other illegal or unauthorised discharge mechanisms, whether on the surface or underground, connected with the concerned CETP or its member industries so as to ensure that no untreated or inadequately treated effluent is discharged into the Jojari River or any connected waterbody in future.

**M.** The RSPCB shall forthwith initiate proceedings, in accordance with law, for assessment and recovery of environmental compensation from the concerned CETP Trust, its trustees, office-bearers and all industrial units connected with the CETP whose operations are found to have contributed, directly or indirectly, to the environmental degradation of the Jojari River and the connected riverine ecosystem. While undertaking such

assessment, the RSPCB shall duly take into consideration, *inter alia*, the operation of the illegal conduit network, the discharge of untreated or inadequately treated industrial effluents, the contamination of surface and groundwater resources, the accumulation of sludge within the river system, the costs of remediation and restoration measures and all other environmental damage attributable to the acts or omissions of the concerned entities. The assessment shall be undertaken expeditiously and in accordance with the principles of 'Polluter Pays', environmental restitution and sustainable development, and appropriate recovery proceedings shall thereafter be initiated against all persons and entities found liable.

- N.** The RSPCB shall also take expeditious steps for initiation of all appropriate proceedings under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and other applicable environmental statutes against the persons and entities found responsible.
- O.** The industrial units directed to remain closed pursuant to the action taken by the State of

Rajasthan and the RSPCB shall not be permitted to resume operations except with the prior leave and express permission of this Court.

- P.** Any application seeking recommencement of operations shall be accompanied by a comprehensive compliance report, independent technical certification and such material as may satisfy this Court that adequate safeguards have been established to prevent any discharge of untreated or inadequately treated effluents into the river system.

**Directions Relating to Sludge Removal and Pre-Monsoon Remediation**

- Q.** The State of Rajasthan shall immediately commence and continue, on a war footing, the work of removal, excavation, transportation and scientific disposal of sludge from the three locations already identified by the State authorities. The concerned departments and agencies shall ensure that adequate funds, manpower, machinery, transportation facilities and other logistical resources are deployed without

delay so that the maximum possible work is completed before the onset of the monsoon season.

**R.** The Committee shall forthwith undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Jojari-Bandi-Luni river basin for identification of additional locations where sludge removal, desilting, remediation or other urgent preventive interventions may be required. While carrying out the said exercise, the Committee shall identify critical sludge accumulation zones, vulnerable flood-prone stretches, obstructed drainage channels, contaminated deposits and such other locations where immediate intervention is considered necessary to prevent further environmental degradation, contamination of agricultural lands and groundwater resources, and the risk of flooding, waterlogging and large-scale inundation during the forthcoming monsoon season.

**S.** The Committee shall, as far as practicable, complete the exercise of identification of such additional locations within a period of ten days from the date of the receipt of this Order and

communicate its recommendations to the State Government and the concerned authorities.

- T.** Upon identification of such locations by the Committee, the State Government and all concerned departments shall immediately commence the work of sludge removal, desilting, transportation and scientific disposal in accordance with the recommendations made by the Committee.
- U.** The State Government shall provide all necessary manpower, machinery, logistical support, transportation facilities, technical expertise and financial resources required for execution of the sludge removal exercise.
- V.** All concerned authorities shall undertake the aforesaid exercise on a war footing and make every endeavour to complete the removal of sludge from the locations identified by the concerned officials/departments as well as those identified by the Committee within a period of six weeks from the date of this Order.
- W.** The State Government shall ensure that the sludge so removed shall be scientifically characterised, classified, handled, transported and disposed of

strictly in accordance with applicable environmental norms and regulatory requirements, and all necessary precautions shall be taken to prevent any secondary contamination of land, waterbodies or groundwater resources during the course of the removal and disposal process.

- X.** The State Government shall place before the Committee fortnightly progress reports indicating the locations covered, quantity of sludge removed, disposal measures adopted and the further work remaining to be undertaken.
- Y.** The Committee shall continue to monitor the implementation of the aforesaid directions and shall be at liberty to issue such recommendations to the concerned authorities as may be necessary for ensuring effective compliance and prevention of environmental harm during the forthcoming monsoon season.
- Z.** As and when the Committee requires the presence of any officer of the State of Rajasthan, the RSPCB or any other concerned authority, including the Chairperson, RSPCB, such officer shall remain personally present before the Committee and shall

participate in its proceedings and extend all necessary assistance, information and cooperation required by the Committee.

**AA.** Having regard to certain disturbing incidents and concerns brought to the notice of this Court by the Committee during the course of these proceedings, the State of Rajasthan, the concerned District Administrations and all competent law enforcement authorities shall ensure that adequate high-level security and logistical support is provided to the Chairperson and Members of the Committee during field inspections, site visits, meetings and all other activities undertaken by the Committee in discharge of the functions entrusted to it by this Court. The State authorities shall take all necessary measures to ensure that the Committee is able to perform its duties without any obstruction, interference, intimidation or impediment from any quarter.

**BB.** This Court notes with concern that the directions contained in **paragraph 55(H) of the order dated 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2026**, requiring strict enforcement action against industries engaged in illegal transportation and discharge of industrial effluents

through tankers, do not appear to have been implemented in their true letter and spirit. The material placed on record indicates that tanker-based transportation and dumping of untreated or inadequately treated industrial effluents continues in various parts of the affected river basin. In view of the above, the State of Rajasthan, the RSPCB, the concerned District Magistrates and all other competent authorities shall, therefore, ensure strict and immediate compliance with the aforesaid direction and take all necessary measures to completely discontinue the practice of transportation and disposal of industrial effluents through tankers. All enforcement measures contemplated by **paragraph 55(H) of the order dated 18<sup>th</sup> March, 2026**, including seizure of vehicles, initiation of prosecution and confiscation proceedings in accordance with law, shall be undertaken forthwith against violators. **A detailed action taken report indicating the steps taken in compliance with this direction shall be placed before the Committee within a period of fifteen days from the date of this Order.**

**49.** This Court is constrained to note that, notwithstanding the grave nature of the violations brought to light during the course of these proceedings, the action taken by the State Government thus far appears to have been confined largely to certain subordinate officials. The material placed on record indicates that while some lower-ranking officers have been placed under suspension, whereas, the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB, who was the regulatory authority directly responsible for monitoring and supervision of the concerned CETP and the industrial units connected therewith, has merely been placed under Awaiting Posting Orders (APO). This Court is unable to appreciate the rationale underlying such differential treatment.

**50.** The reports of the Committee and the circumstances noticed during the inspections, *prima facie* indicates that the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB, was not only responsible for regulatory oversight of the area in question but was also among the officials who furnished explanations regarding the existence of the illegal conduit network which were subsequently found to be incorrect and misleading. Having regard to the serious nature of

the allegations, the apparent failure of regulatory supervision and the necessity of ensuring a fair, independent and credible enquiry into the matter, this Court is of the considered opinion that mere placement of the said officer under Awaiting Posting Orders (APO) is wholly inadequate. Accordingly, the State of Rajasthan and the RSPCB are directed to place the Regional Officer (Jodhpur), RSPCB under immediate suspension and initiate appropriate departmental proceedings against the said officer in accordance with law. The decision taken and further action initiated pursuant to this direction shall be placed before this Court by way of an affidavit before the next date of hearing.

**51.** Before parting, this Court considers it necessary to observe that rivers are not merely channels of water, they are vital ecological systems that sustain human life, agriculture, biodiversity and the collective well-being of entire communities. The degradation of a river is seldom confined to the environment alone, it ultimately manifests in diminished livelihoods, compromised public health and the erosion of the natural resources held in trust for future generations. The facts revealed during the

course of the present proceedings serve as a reminder that environmental protection is not the responsibility of any single institution but a shared constitutional obligation resting upon the State, regulatory authorities, industries and society at large. The directions issued herein are intended to arrest further degradation and facilitate restoration of the affected river ecosystem. It is expected that all concerned authorities shall act with the seriousness, urgency and sense of public duty that the situation demands.

**52.** In the event the Committee requires any additional logistical, administrative or technical support for the effective discharge of its mandate, the same shall be promptly attended to by the State of Rajasthan. The State Government shall ensure that all such requirements are addressed appropriately and expeditiously, without any delay or impediment, so as to facilitate the smooth and efficient functioning of the Committee and to enable it to carry out its responsibilities in furtherance of the directions issued by this Court.

**53.** The Registry shall forward a copy of this order to Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sangeet Lodha, Judge (Retd.),

High Court of Judicature for Rajasthan on his email address: [j.sangeetlodha@gmail.com](mailto:j.sangeetlodha@gmail.com), as well as to Mr. Shiv Mangal Sharma, learned Additional Advocate General for the State of Rajasthan for information and necessary compliance.

**54.** List on 21<sup>st</sup> July, 2026 for receiving the further status report of the High-Level Ecosystem Oversight Committee.

.....**J.**  
**(VIKRAM NATH)**

.....**J.**  
**(SANDEEP MEHTA)**

**NEW DELHI;**  
**MAY 29, 2026**