

Minutes of the State Level meeting chaired by Chief Secretary with the Departments and District Collectors concerned on 21/08/2023 to review the compliance of directions of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal in O.A No.147/2022 (PZ) and 237/2021 (SZ) pertaining to the pollution issues of Ashtamudi & Vembanad wetlands and Koonthupuzha respectively.

The meeting commenced at 03:30 PM. Additional Chief Secretary, Local Self Government Department, Principal Secretary, Revenue Department, Secretary, Environment Department, Principal Director, LSGD, Directors of Environment, LSGD (Rural) & LSGD (Urban), Commissioner, Land Revenue, Managing Director, Kerala Water Authority, District Collectors, Executive Director, Suchitwa Mission, Superintending Engineer, Irrigation, Executive Engineer, PWD, Joint Director, SWAG, Member Secretary, Kerala State Pollution Control Board, Secretaries of local bodies concerned and other officers concerned were present.

ACS LSGD brought to the notice of all District Collectors (DCs) the urgent need for expediting actions on all proposals with regard to waste management in the wake of the new orders issued from the Revenue Department regarding giving permission to utilize public land for waste management. It was also directed that DCs may take up review meetings with respect to discharge of waste through drains leading to pollution of water bodies. The Secretary, Environment Department briefed on the directions of the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal in OA No. 147 of 2022 and enquired the progress made in implementing the action points for addressing the pollution issues of wetlands. The State has to report the progress made in complying with the directions in O.A.No.147/2022 (PZ) before the Tribunal on or before 31/10/2023. Substantial progress is to be achieved in resolving the issues. The presentation on progress made was done by the Member Secretary, Kerala State Pollution Control Board based on the inputs received from various sectors.

The presentation on actions taken to ensure compliance in O.A. No. 237 of 2021 regarding pollution abatement of Koonthupuzha was done by the District Collector Ernakulam.

Following decisions were taken after detailed discussions and deliberations:

General Decisions:

A. Land for Waste Management Projects : In the wake of the orders issued from the Revenue Department for utilization of public land for waste management projects, all District Collectors shall expedite action on proposals of waste management projects received by them or which the LSGIs were holding back, so as to find speedy solutions for setting up and making operational the much needed waste management projects.

Action : All DCs, LSGD

B. Contamination of water bodies : As the judicial forums are reviewing the actions taken for curbing of pollution of water bodies, all DCs shall constantly review the action taken by the LSGIs under their jurisdiction for prevention of waste disposal through drains ultimately leading to water bodies and causing pollution. LSGIs have brought to the notice the requirement of surveillance of Police force to curb such issues. DCs shall take up the matter with the SPs and Commissioners to ensure proper surveillance in this regard. One issue with regard to pollution in Neyyattinkara municipality have to be dealt with seriously for which District Collector, Thiruvananthapuram and KSPCB may jointly take urgent necessary action. Illegal water outlets issue to be dealt with very seriously.

Action : All DCs, LSGD, KSPCB

Specific Decisions on actions required under the Action Plans in the 2 O.A.s before the NGT

Agenda Item I. O.A. No. 147/2022 (PZ)

1. Opening of a new treasury account for ring fencing the amount imposed as Environmental Compensation (EC) and for pooling of fines/penalties collected from the violators:

Director, LSGD conveyed that the proposal is currently under the consideration of the Finance Department and that it is being closely followed up. It was directed that the Departments concerned to take urgent action to get that account opened at the earliest and to transfer the fines/penalties that have been collected so far in this matter to the new account. LSGD shall ensure that the account is opened without further delay and that the required amount is ring fenced in that account. The progress in the matter may be reported to the Environment Department. **(Action: LSGD, Finance Department)**

2. Stay against the EC notices issued by the State PCB:

Member Secretary (MS), Kerala State Pollution Control Board (KSPCB) conveyed that EC notices were issued to the 9 local bodies in the catchment area of the Ashtamudi & Vembanad wetlands for non compliance of various environmental statutes. Also reiterated that three local bodies viz., Kochi Corporation, Aluva municipality, Kalamassery municipality have obtained stay from the Hon'ble High Court against the EC notices issued by the State PCB. JD, SWAG Cell conveyed that the grounds for challenging the EC notices may be that the EC imposed is unreasonable and that improvements are made in the waste management sector by the local bodies concerned. MS, KSPCB conveyed that the local bodies served with EC are also heard by the KSPCB as part of natural justice.

It was directed that clear cut time lines shall be decided for conclusion of proceedings and the details may be presented in the next meeting of the Monitoring Committee and also in the subsequent meetings of the Chief Secretary. **(Action: LSGD, KSPCB)**

3. Pollution issues of wetlands:

MS, KSPCB brought the pollution of the Manichithode to the notice of the meeting. Manichithode is flowing entirely within the limits of Kollam Corporation. The stream is heavily polluted due to illegal septage dumping. Letters were issued in this regard to the District Administration. District Collector, Kollam conveyed that there is a colony adjacent to the Manichithode which lacks STP / septic tanks for waste water disposal. Kollam Corporation is ready to set up facilities there. But there is some dispute between the railways and the Kollam Corporation which needs to be resolved for enabling the Corporation proposal to take off. Further informed that Police is regularly patrolling that area and that it is reported that there has not been a single case reported against illegal septage dumpers in that area in the last 6 months. the DC, Kollam and Kollam Corporation were directed to take steps for prevention of pollution of Manicithodu by resolving the disputes and taking further measures as required.

District Collector, Alappuzha informed that the STP for treating wastewater from houseboats have become defunct. Proposal for revamping a 50 KLD STP has been submitted to the Tourism Department. KSPCB reported that the major chunk of waste generated from the houseboats are not reaching the treatment facility center being operated

by DTTC at Kottayam. The quantity of waste generated and transported to the treatment facility center has to be documented. Deputy Director, Tourism Department informed that there is a proposal for STP, currently under consideration of the working group. Further submitted that there is currently a 90 KLD barge to facilitate collection of wastewater from houseboats.

District Collector, Kottayam told that notices were issued to institutions as part of monitoring. MS, KSPCB informed about the issues prevailing at Kottayam Medical College. Maintenance work of the plant is currently ongoing.

District Collectors concerned should conduct awareness programmes for imparting awareness among houseboat owners regarding the pollution issues of wetlands and the need for ensuring scientific management of wastes. The assistance of authorities concerned may be utilized for sensitizing the matter to the houseboat owners.

(Action: LSGD, Tourism, KSPCB, DC EKM, DC ALPY, DC KTM, DC KLM,)

4. Filing of report in OA No. 147/2022 (PZ) :

The Hon'ble Tribunal has directed the State to file an action taken report on or before 31/10/2023. Execution time lines shall be mentioned against each action point in the action plan and progress so far achieved is to be updated and presented in the ensuing meetings. The authorities concerned must adhere to the timelines for the completion of the projects. The authorities concerned shall forward the detailed status report in implementing the action points to the Environment Department & KSPCB for enabling the State to file an action taken report before the Tribunal. Departments concerned may periodically review the actions taken by the authorities under them.

(Action: LSGD, ENVT, WRD, Tourism, DCs concerned, KSPCB)

Agenda Item II. O.A. No. 237/2017 (SZ):

District Collector, Ernakulam conveyed that the compliance to the directions of the Tribunal are being monitored and that the activities have been grouped under four core areas i.e., eviction of encroachments, desiltation of water body, scientific construction of bridges and waste management.

1. Eviction of encroachment:

District Collector, Ernakulam informed that encroachments identified at Chottanikkara and Amballore panchayats has been evicted. 5, 3 & 10 numbers of encroachments have to be evicted at Udayamperur Panchayat (rehabilitation issue), Mulanthuruthi Panchayat (rehabilitation issue) and Thripunithura Municipality (survey issue) respectively. Survey Director and DC, Ernakulam to take urgent steps to evict the encroachments. **(Action: DC EKM, Survey Director)**

2. Waste Management:

EE, KSPCB conveyed that 13 apartments and 2 service stations, discharging wastewater to the water body have been identified. Notices were issued to these establishments, based on which 1 apartment and 2 service stations have established treatment plants. 12 apartments are yet to establish treatment plants and so closure intention notices have been served. Hearing in these cases will be conducted soon. The Departments/Authorities should take immediate measures to prevent further pollution of the river and to speed up the activities required for rejuvenating Konothupuzha. At district level, DC, Ernakulam have to monitor the activities of Departments/Authorities concerned. The local bodies concerned need to conduct regular inspections on the banks of the river to check violations. The local bodies need to provide adequate infrastructure for solid waste management and LSGD may review the status regularly.

(Action: DC EKM, LSGD, KSPCB, LSGIs)

3. Desiltation of Konothupuzha:

District Collector, Ernakulam conveyed that desiltation is required for rejuvenation of water body and for ensuring free flow. Superintending Engineer, Irrigation Department reported that AS and TS has been received for the project. However, the Chief Technical Examiner directed the Irrigation Department to rework on the quantity of silt that has to be removed (after proper survey), to find a suitable place to store the silt and to revise the project cost including provisions for these aspects. SE, Irrigation Department informed that in the action plan it was decided to deposit the silt on either sides of the river banks further from the geo textile covered edges of the river banks so that there is no chance of the silt being redeposited into the river. DC, Ernakulam conveyed that the objection of the CTE

has to be resolved. The utilisation of the silt will also have to be addressed. The utilisation of clay rich silt for agriculture is being explored and the support of district panchayat is expected. DC, Ernakulam is directed to take up the matter at the earliest with the Secretary, Water Resources Department and to find a way forward.

(Action: DC EKM, WRD)

4. Scientific construction of bridges:

District Collector, Ernakulam informed that the existing bridges are obstructing the free flow of Konothupuzha and hence action is required for providing scientifically designed bridges. Soil investigation work was done through PWD for reconstruction of Karingachira, Kaniyavally and Kandanad bridges and report submitted to PWD design wing. TGD received for Kandanad, Kaniyavally and Karingachira bridges. Two bridges i.e., Kaniyavally and Nedungapuzha reconstruction for regularizing width of river included in the sanctioned rejuvenation work. Estimates have been submitted for both works based on tentative design from IDR. Final designs are yet to be received.

Further informed that Tail end regulator at Poothotta is being constructed with mechanically operated shutters under KIIFB funding. At Irumpanam end proposal for investigation for a mechanically operated regulator is submitted. Irrigation Department to fix the width details and to forward the same to PWD. This is to be further followed up for completing design at PWD end. Secretary, Environment Department noted the progress and directed the Departments concerned to speed up the work. Vide G.O(Rt) No. 74/2022/Envt dated 29/09/2022, the Government has constituted a State Level Committee to prepare an action plan for abatement of pollution in Konothupuzha and to provide necessary assistance if any required for implementation of the same. The Departments/Authorities facing hindrances in implementing the action plan may address the matter to this State Level Committee.

(Action: PWD, WRD, DC KLM)

The meeting came to a close by 04:30 PM

DR VENU V I A S
CHIEF SECRETARY
O/O CHIEF SECRETARY

