

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 1019
TO BE ANSWERED ON 29.07.2024

Discharge of Industrial Effluents into Periyar River

1019. SHRI HIBI EDEN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the recent mass fish kill in Periyar River as well as caged farms in areas Edayar, Eloor, Varappuzha, Kothad, Kadamakudy, Cheranalloor and Kottuvally of Ernakulam in the State of Kerala;
- (b) if so, the details thereof along with the number of incidents of fish kills reported in the Periyar River during the current year 2024;
- (c) whether the Government has identified the main causes for these recurring fish kills, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor;
- (d) whether the Government has taken any steps to monitor and control the release of industrial effluents into the said river;
- (e) whether any penalties or actions have been taken against industries found violating environmental regulations in this area; and
- (f) if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) to (c)

As per the information received from Kerala State Pollution Control Board, a complaint was received from the Eloor ferry side regarding fish dying in the Periyar River on 20.05.2024, around 9 pm. The Kerala Pollution Control Board surveillance team inspected the site and observed various types of dead fish floating in the river. On analysis of water samples, dissolved oxygen (DO) values were found below that required for survival of fish. It was informed that on 20.05.2024 at 3 pm, the Irrigation Department opened 3 shutters of the Pathalam regulator cum bridge due to intensified rainfall. The subsequent release of water with low dissolved oxygen levels from the upper side of the regulator, combined with a significant downstream flow, leads to fish mortality. As per the analysis conducted on 20.05.2024 at Vettukadav, the DO level decreased from 6.8 mg/l to 3.2 mg/l by night due to the above said activity. It has been noted

previously that during prolonged closure of the bund during summer season, organic waste reaches the river upstream causing organic degradation and resulting in depletion of DO near the regulation bridge. Initial investigations suggest that the sudden, continuous, and strong water flow resulting from the opening of the bund also caused a sharp decline in the value of DO at downstream.

(d)

Based on the water quality data of year 2016 and 2017, 351 polluted river stretches (PRS) were identified by CPCB in year 2018. Out of these 351 polluted river stretches, one polluted river stretch of Periyar River (Alwaye-Eloor to Kalamassery) in Kerala having BOD value in the range of (3.2-5.1 mg/L) was identified under Priority class V (BOD between 3.0-6.0 mg/ L).

In year 2022, based on water quality data of year 2019 & 21, 311 polluted river stretches (PRS) were identified by CPCB. Out of these 311 polluted river stretches, one polluted river stretch of Periyar River (Alwaye-Eloor to Kalamassery) in Kerala (same polluted river stretch identified in 2018) having BOD value 3.9 mg/L was identified under Priority class V (BOD between 3.0-6.0 mg/ L).

For rejuvenation of 351 polluted river stretches identified by CPCB during the year 2018, action plans have been prepared by River Rejuvenation Committee (RRC) constituted by the respective State Government/ UT Administration, under the overall supervision and coordination of Principal Secretary, Environment of the concerned State /Union Territory for bringing all the polluted river stretches identified by CPCB fit for bathing purposes (i.e. BOD < 3 mg/L and FC < 500 MPN/100 mL).

Prepared action plans covers aspects such as source control (municipal sewage management, industrial pollution control, waste management), river catchment/basin management (adoption of good irrigation practices, utilization of treated sewage, ground water recharge aspects), flood plain zone protection and its management (setting up of bio-diversity parks, removal of encroachments, rain water harvesting, plantation on both sides of the river), ecological/environmental Flow (E-Flow) and watershed management.

Progress of implementation of action plans is reviewed by the RRC at State Level and Central Monitoring Committee (CMC) constituted at Central Level.

Apart from the above, the measures taken by the government for prevention and control of water pollution are given below-

- Government of India enacted The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and various provisions under The Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 for protection of water bodies. The Central & State Pollution Control Boards are implementing the provisions of both The Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 to prevent and control pollution of aquatic resources.
- SPCBs/PCCs have been directed under Section 18(1) (b) of The Water (Prevention & Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 to direct concerned agencies in the State/UT to develop infrastructure for sewage treatment.

- Government of India stipulated General discharge standards and industry specific effluent discharge standards under Environment (Protection) Rules, 1986 with an aim to prevent pollution in the water bodies.
- 'Indicative Guidelines for restoration of water bodies' have been issued by CPCB as a guidance to the Stakeholders for ensuring restoration/ rejuvenation of water bodies.
- Revised Guidelines on Idol Immersion in Water Bodies are implemented in the country with effect from January 01st, 2021.
- CPCB vide letter dated 17.02.2023 requested all the SPCBs/PCCs to ensure necessary action to prevent, control/abate pollution of stagnant water bodies in respective States/UTs as per provisions of Section 17 (1) (a) of the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974.

(e) & (f)

Five industries have been permitted to discharge treated effluent into the Periyar River. As part of fish kill incident, inspections were conducted and no illegal or untreated sewage discharge was found from these industries in this region. However, signs of effluent discharge were observed from the chicken waste rendering unit, M/s Alliance Marine Products. Consequently, a closure order was issued to the company on 22.05.2024. Inspections are ongoing in industries located in the Eloor and Edyar areas.

During the period from January 2023 to May 2024, 252 industrial units were inspected and notices were issued to 49 industries for the violations observed.
