

RAJASTHAN HIGH COURT
HIGH COURT OF JUDICATURE FOR RAJASTHAN AT
JODHPUR

IN RE:

Protection and Conservation of Lakes and Water Bodies in
Udaipur.



HON'BLE DR. JUSTICE PUSHPENDRA SINGH BHATI
(VACATION JUDGE)

HON'BLE MS. JUSTICE REKHA BORANA
(VACATION JUDGE)

Order

Reportable

05/06/2026

1. The celebrated poet and scholar Shri JaiKrishn Chaudhry 'Habeb', in his celebrated *nazm* "Udaipur", while praising the divine beauty of the city of Udaipur, wrote - "खुशनुमा झीलों में लर्जा जिन का है अक्स-ए-जमील"(the gorgeous reflection of which reflects in the pleasant lakes) and referred to the city as "रश्क-ए-फ़िरदौस-ए-ज़माना" (a place whose beauty could envy even the paradise).

2. The above poetic description is not merely an expression of aesthetic admiration; it reflects the inseparable relationship between Udaipur's identity and its lakes, water channels, embankments and surrounding ecological landscape. The lakes of

Udaipur are not mere water bodies but constitute a living natural and cultural heritage that has shaped the history, economy and collective consciousness of the region for centuries. These water bodies not only form an integral part of the city's environmental and cultural heritage but also perform critical functions relating to groundwater recharge, water security, biodiversity conservation, flood moderation, climate resilience and maintenance of ecological balance. The preservation and protection of these life giving natural resources is hence essential not only for environmental sustainability but also for safeguarding the constitutional right of the present and the future generations, to a clean and healthy environment.



3. Lakes and water bodies constitute vital ecological assets and are indispensable for sustaining environmental equilibrium. They serve as reservoirs for groundwater recharge, support aquatic ecosystems, provide habitat to diverse species of flora and fauna, assist in regulation of local climatic conditions and contribute significantly to urban environmental health. In a region such as southern Rajasthan where water resources assume immense importance, pollution, degradation, or encroachment on such water bodies can have far-reaching ecological, hydrological and social consequences.

4. The protection and preservation of lakes, wetlands and associated ecosystems is firmly embedded within the constitutional framework of India. Article 21 of the Constitution of India, as interpreted by Hon'ble the Supreme Court, encompasses

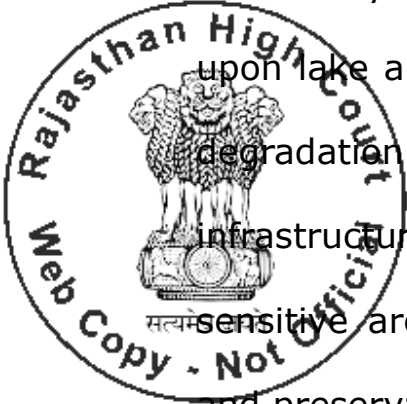
the right to a clean and healthy environment too. Article 48A casts a duty upon the State to protect and improve the environment and to safeguard forests, lakes, rivers and wildlife, while Article 51A(g) recognizes a corresponding duty of every citizen to protect and improve the natural environment. The Public Trust Doctrine mandates that natural resources of vital public importance are held by the State as a trust, for the benefit of the public and the future generations, and cannot be permitted to suffer degradation through inaction or unsustainable use.



5. This Court observes that Udaipur occupies a unique position in the environmental landscape of Rajasthan. The city's identity, economy, tourism potential and ecological stability are substantially dependent upon its interconnected system of lakes, feeder channels, canals, catchment areas and associated water bodies. Disturbance in any one component of this interconnected hydrological system is likely to have cascading effects on the ecological integrity and sustainability of the entire lake network.

6. This Court further observes that increasing urbanization, unregulated development, encroachments, pollution, sewage discharge, alteration of natural drainage channels and inadequate maintenance of water infrastructure have emerged as significant challenges affecting urban water bodies across the country. Such challenges assume greater significance in water-stressed regions where preservation of existing water resources is indispensable for ensuring long-term environmental security and sustainable development.

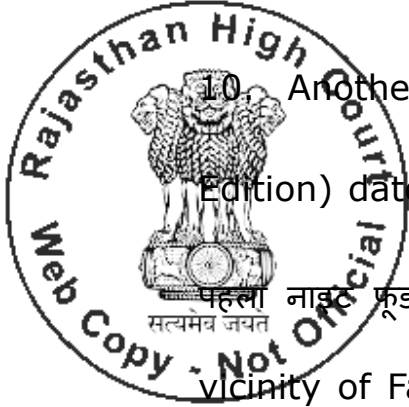
7. It is in the aforesaid backdrop that this Court examined certain newspaper reports published in the Udaipur Edition of Rajasthan Patrika dated 25.05.2026, 29.05.2026 and 31.05.2026 raising a serious concern about the condition of lakes, canals, wetlands and water bodies situated in Udaipur. The reports collectively highlight issues relating to alleged encroachments upon lake areas, unresolved disputes concerning lake boundaries, degradation of water bodies, structural deficiencies in canal infrastructure, developmental activities in proximity to ecologically sensitive areas and concerns regarding the overall management and preservation of urban water resources.



8. Report dated 25.05.2026 published in Rajasthan Patrika (Udaipur Edition) under the headline, "खतरे में तालाब : यूडीए 20 साल बाद भी तय नहीं कर सका रूपसागर का पेटा" highlights concerns regarding Rupsagar Talab and indicates that despite prolonged administrative proceedings, uncertainty continues till date regarding the actual extent and boundaries of the lake area. The report further suggests that continuous construction activities and competing claims concerning the land surrounding the water body, have raised concern regarding preservation of the ecosystem of the lake and its catchment area.

9. A further report published in Rajasthan Patrika (Udaipur Edition) dated 29.05.2026 with the headline, "घटिया मरम्मत ने फिर खोली पोल, मदार नहर दोबारा बनी हादसों की वजह" highlights recurring structural failures in portions of Madar Canal walls despite

repeated "repairs", which poses an imminent threat of flood, accidents, and danger to life during the upcoming monsoon. The report prima facie raises issues relating to maintenance of public water infrastructure, public safety, structural integrity and effective management of canal systems forming part of the broader water resource network of the region.



10. Another report published in Rajasthan Patrika (Udaipur Edition) dated 31.05.2026 with the headline "फतहसागर किनारे बस रहा पहला नाइस फूड हब" refers to development activities proposed in the vicinity of Fatehsagar Lake and highlights concerns regarding the

interface between urban development and ecological preservation. While developmental activities may contribute to economic growth and surge in tourism, they necessarily require thoughtful balancing with environmental safeguards, waste management requirements, ecological carrying capacity and long-term sustainability of the lake ecosystem.

11. The aforesaid newspaper reports, when read conjointly, prima facie disclose that the issues involved are not confined to isolated incidents concerning individual locations, rather, they indicate broader concerns relating to protection of lakes and water bodies, preservation of catchment areas, maintenance of water infrastructure, prevention of encroachments, regulation of developmental activities and conservation of the ecological character of urban water bodies within the city of Udaipur.

12. The over all issues which emerge from the above newspaper reports, can be summarized as under:

(a) Certain lakes and water bodies of ecological and hydrological significance are allegedly facing pressures arising from encroachments, unregulated developmental activities and uncertainty regarding their boundaries and extent.

(b) Certain water bodies, particularly Roop Sagar lake has serious concerns regarding identification, demarcation and protection of lake beds, and its catchment areas.

(c) Continuous developmental and commercial activities in proximity to ecologically sensitive lake areas and the further encroachments, pollution and alteration of natural drainage systems have adversely impacted the ecological character and long-term sustainability of water bodies within the city. The same has further adversely affected the groundwater recharge, water conservation, biodiversity, ecological sustainability and environmental security.

(d) Recurring failures in the maintenance and structural integrity of canal infrastructure forming part of the larger water management system of the region, have occurred which has endangered public safety and environmental management.

13. Keeping into consideration the above issues, the aspects which deserve consideration of this Court, are:

(i) the identification, mapping, demarcation and protection of lakes, water bodies, canals, feeder channels and catchment areas situated within Udaipur;



(ii) the present status, ecological condition and conservation measures pertaining to major lakes and water bodies including Pichola Lake, Fateh Sagar Lake, Swaroop Sagar Lake, Rang Sagar Lake, Roop Sagar Talab, Doodh Talai, Goverdhan Sagar Lake, Badi Lake (Jiyan Sagar), Udai Sagar Lake, Madar Lake, Bada Madar Lake, Chhota Madar Lake, Kumharia Talab and other connected water systems, together with their feeder channels, wetlands and catchment areas;

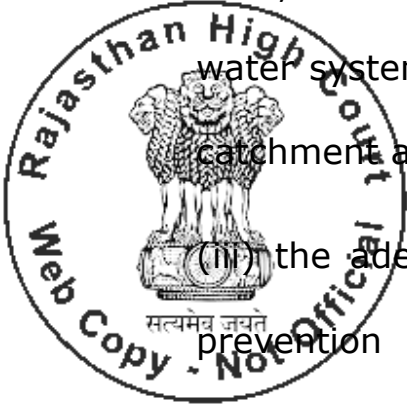
(iii) the adequacy and effectiveness of measures undertaken for prevention of encroachments, illegal constructions, pollution, sewage discharge, waste dumping and other activities adversely affecting lakes and water bodies;

(iv) the legality and environmental implications of developmental and commercial activities undertaken or proposed in proximity to ecologically sensitive lake areas;

(v) the condition, maintenance and structural integrity of canal infrastructure and associated water management systems;

(vi) the impact of degradation of lakes and water bodies upon biodiversity conservation, groundwater recharge, water security, ecological balance and environmental sustainability; and

(vii) the formulation and implementation of short-term, medium-term and long-term measures essential for protection, restoration and sustainable management of lakes and water bodies within Udaipur.



14. This Court is thus of the considered opinion that the above overall issues and aspects, as highlighted in the newspaper reports require immediate attention and a coordinated response from the concerned authorities, particularly with regard to identification and demarcation of lakes and water bodies, prevention of encroachments, protection of catchment areas, regulation of activities having environmental implications, maintenance of canal infrastructure, prevention of pollution and adoption of appropriate measures for conservation and restoration of ecologically significant water resources so as to safeguard their environmental functions and ecological integrity.



15. This Court further observes that the lakes and water bodies situated within Udaipur, including Pichola Lake, Fateh Sagar Lake, Swaroop Sagar Lake, Rang Sagar Lake, Roop Sagar Talab, Doodh Talai, Goverdhan Sagar Lake, Badi Lake (Jiyan Sagar), Udai Sagar Lake, Madar Lake, Bada Madar Lake, Chhota Madar Lake, Kumharia Talab and other connected water bodies, constitute an ecologically significant lake network. The sustainability of these lakes depends upon preservation of their feeder channels, wetlands, natural drainage systems and catchment areas. Any encroachment, pollution, obstruction of natural water flow or degradation of any component of this system is likely to adversely affect the ecological integrity of the larger lake ecosystem and consequently requires a coordinated conservation approach.

16. In view of the aforesaid, and considering the larger issues concerning protection of the environment, conservation of natural

resources, preservation of water bodies and ecological sustainability, this Court is of the considered opinion that the issues disclosed hereinabove warrant immediate judicial scrutiny and coordinated intervention, in larger public interest. Accordingly, this Court deems it appropriate to invoke its suo motu jurisdiction in larger public interest so as to ensure effective protection, preservation and sustainable management of lakes, water bodies, canals and associated ecological systems situated within Udaipur.

Let the matter be registered as a writ petition titled:

SUO MOTU : IN RE:

Protection and Conservation of Lakes and Water Bodies in Udaipur

Versus

1.State of Rajasthan through the Chief Secretary

Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

2.The Principal Secretary

Department of Environment

Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

3.The Principal Secretary

Urban Development & Housing Department

Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

4.The Principal Secretary

Water Resources Department

Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

5.The Principal Secretary

Department of Local Self Government



Government of Rajasthan, Jaipur (Raj.)

6. The Member Secretary

Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board

Jaipur (Raj.)

7. The District Collector, Udaipur (Raj.)

8. The Commissioner

Municipal Corporation, Udaipur (Raj.)

9. The Commissioner

Udaipur Development Authority, Udaipur (Raj.)

10. The Chief Engineer

Water Resources Department, Udaipur (Raj.)

11. The Conservator of Forests (Wildlife)

Udaipur Circle, Udaipur (Raj.)

18. Issue notices to all the respondents.

19. All respondents shall file detailed affidavit/status report indicating the steps taken hitherto and the proposed future course of action, inter alia, covering the following aspects:

- Details of all major lakes, water bodies, canals, feeder channels and associated catchment areas situated within Udaipur district;
- Present status of Pichola Lake, Fateh Sagar Lake, Swaroop Sagar Lake, Rang Sagar Lake, Roop Sagar Talab, Doodh Talai, Goverdhan Sagar Lake, Badi Lake (Jiyan Sagar), Udai Sagar Lake, Madar Lake, Bada Madar Lake, Chhota Madar Lake and Kumharia Talab and other



interconnected lakes and water bodies situated within Udaipur, including their geographical extent, ownership status, ecological condition, water quality status, hydrological connectivity and conservation measures presently in force;

- Details regarding demarcation of lake boundaries, preparation of maps, digital records, GIS mapping and maintenance of revenue records relating to lakes and water bodies;



Status of proceedings, if any, relating to determination of the boundaries and extent of Rupsagar Talab and action taken by the concerned authorities in that regard;

- Details regarding encroachments, illegal constructions, land-use changes and developmental activities affecting lakes, water bodies, canals and catchment areas, together with action taken for removal of encroachments and restoration of affected areas;
- Details regarding discharge of sewage, untreated wastewater, municipal waste, construction debris and other pollutants into lakes, canals and water bodies, together with measures undertaken for prevention of contamination and restoration of ecological health;
- Details regarding environmental safeguards adopted in relation to developmental and commercial activities undertaken or proposed in proximity to Fatehsagar Lake and other ecologically sensitive water bodies;

- Details regarding inspection, maintenance, repairs and structural audits undertaken in respect of Madar Canal and other major canal infrastructure within Udaipur district;
- Details regarding biodiversity assessments, aquatic ecosystems, migratory bird habitats and ecological monitoring undertaken in respect of major lakes and water bodies;
- Details of feeder channels, canals, natural drainage systems, wetlands, catchment areas and hydrological linkages connecting the various lakes and water bodies of Udaipur, together with measures undertaken for their protection, restoration and maintenance;
- Details regarding funds allocated and utilized during the preceding five years for conservation, restoration, maintenance and protection of lakes, water bodies and canal infrastructure;
- Details regarding restoration, rejuvenation and conservation projects undertaken in respect of lakes and water bodies, together with timelines, financial outlays and present status of implementation;
- Details regarding coordination mechanisms between the District Administration, Udaipur Development Authority, Municipal Corporation, Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board, Water Resources Department and other authorities responsible for protection and management of lakes and water bodies; and



- A detail of scientific studies, ecological assessments, hydrological evaluations or environmental impact assessments if any, been undertaken in respect of major lakes and water bodies.
- A comprehensive action plan indicating short-term, medium-term and long-term measures proposed for protection, conservation, restoration and sustainable management of lakes and water bodies within Udaipur.



As an interim measure, the State Government and all concerned authorities shall:

(i) ensure that no further encroachment, reclamation, filling, dumping, construction activity or alteration of the physical boundaries of any identified lake, water body, canal, feeder channel or catchment area is permitted except in accordance with law and after obtaining all requisite permissions from the competent authorities;

(ii) undertake inspection of Pichola Lake, Fateh Sagar Lake, Swaroop Sagar Lake, Rang Sagar Lake, Roop Sagar Talab, Doodh Talai, Goverdhan Sagar Lake, Badi Lake (Jiyan Sagar), Udai Sagar Lake, Madar Lake, Bada Madar Lake, Chhota Madar Lake and Kumharia Talab and other interconnected lakes and water bodies situated within Udaipur and submit reports regarding their present ecological condition, water quality status, catchment condition, encroachment status and conservation requirements;

(iii) ensure that no untreated sewage, municipal waste, industrial effluents, construction debris or other pollutants are discharged into any lake, water body, canal or associated catchment area;

(iv) conduct a detailed examination regarding the existing boundaries, revenue records, demarcation proceedings and present status of Rupsagar Talab and place a comprehensive report before this Court;

(v) undertake water quality assessment and ecological evaluation of major lakes and water bodies facing threats from pollution, sewage discharge or environmental degradation;

(vi) ensure maintenance of status quo with regard to the existing physical extent and character of major lakes and water bodies identified by the competent authorities until further orders of this Court, except where restoration and conservation measures are being undertaken in accordance with law;

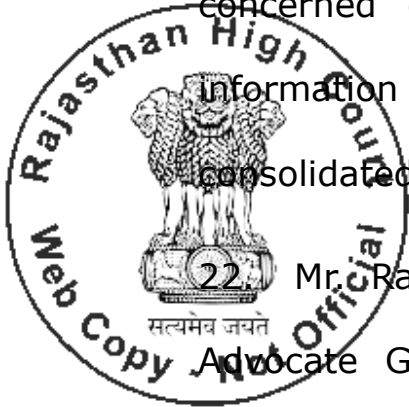
(vii) place before this Court details regarding all ongoing and proposed developmental, commercial or infrastructure projects situated in the immediate vicinity of Fatehsagar Lake, Rupsagar Talab and other major water bodies, together with details of environmental safeguards adopted in respect thereof; and

(viii) The Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board shall conduct water quality assessment of major lakes and water



bodies identified in the reports and submit a comprehensive report before this Court indicating contamination levels, environmental concerns, remedial measures required and action taken against violators, if any.

21. The District Collector, Udaipur shall coordinate with all concerned departments and ensure collection of district-wise information required under the present order and shall place a consolidated status report before this Court.



22. Mr. Rajesh Panwar, learned Senior Advocate & Additional Advocate General assisted by Mr. Ayush Gehlot; Mr. Praveen Khandelwal, learned Additional Advocate General; Mr. N.S. Rajpurohit, learned Additional Advocate General; Mr. Mahaveer Bishnoi, learned Additional Advocate General; Mr. Mahendra Bishnoi, learned counsel for Rajasthan State Pollution Control Board, Mr. Deelip Kawadia learned counsel for Udaipur Development Authority and Mr. P.S. Chundawat learned Government Counsel are directed to obtain instructions on behalf of all the respective respondents and update this Court regarding the immediate measures undertaken by the authorities concerned.

23. Mr. Avin Chhangani (R/1307/2014), Mr Shubham Ojha (R/2958/2020), and Mr. Mudit Nagpal (R/5034/2021), Advocates are appointed as learned Amicus Curiae to assist this Court in the present proceedings.

24. List the matter on **13.07.2026**.

25. The newspaper reports published in Rajasthan Patrika (Udaipur Edition) dated 25.05.2026, 29.05.2026 & 31.05.2026,

together with the photographs accompanying the reports, shall be treated as a part of the record.

26. The Registry is directed to register the present proceedings as a suo motu Public Interest Litigation under Article 226 of the Constitution of India and furnish copies of this order along with the newspaper reports relied upon herein to the learned Amicus Curiae as well as all the respondents for immediate compliance and necessary action.



(REKHA BORANA),VJ

(DR.PUSHPENDRA SINGH BHATI),VJ

Skant/-