

Floods in Punjab not natural calamities but man-made disasters, aggravated by systemic negligence in dam operations of BBMB & Punjab Govt. – PAC moves NGT

08-09-2025: In a Press Conference conducted by Public Action Committee, the members raised fingers at mismanagement of BBMB as well as Punjab Govt., which aggravated floods in Punjab.

Kuldeep Singh Khaira & Er. Kapil Arora informed that despite heavy inflow of 797800 Cusecs in just one day in floods of 1988, the Full Reservoir Level of both the dams has been kept at same level i.e. 1680 Ft for Bhakra & 1390 Ft for Pong Dam. It is pertinent to mention here that Central Water Commission in the report finalised in 2014 had asked BBMB to finalise the new Full Reservoir Level, however the BBMB has rigid to follow the water level as decided in 1990 and has submitted reply in Rajya Sabha that BBMB is strictly adhering to the Rule Curve. It is pertinent to humbly submit here that the PMF safety for dams involves using the Probable Maximum Flood (PMF), the theoretical maximum flood that could occur, to ensure a dam's spillway can handle the most extreme rainfall event and prevent failure.

Jaskirat Singh & Dr. Amandeep Singh Bains informed that BBMB in recent press Conference that they have adopted new Rule Curve, whereas has still fixed same Full Reservoir levels. It is pertinent to mention here that the if the new rule curve has been prepared with PMF flow, it should have allowed discharge of 797800 cusecs without causing floods in the downstream even after filling of dams at full capacity. However, the discharge from Bhakra and Pong Dam before filling upto these values has resulted in major floods in Punjab. So the dam should have been operated with cushion of 800000 cusecs even after filling of dams to their maximum reservoir level. However, the release of water from dams created sudden floods in the downstream even before reaching the safe water level fixed at 1680 and 1390 ft respectively.

Adding further, Jaskirat Singh & Kapil Arora informed that during the floods in 2023, keeping in view of data available on BBMB website, it was evidently clear that the floods were not natural disaster but major human error, so we submitted one representation to Central Ministry as well as State Govt. to conduct enquiry and fix liability but instead of taking any action, the data available in Public Domain (BBMB website) was removed and never made available which construes that our perception was right and BBMB was main culprit behind floods in Punjab. In 2025, we got data from reliable sources and keeping in view of the data and IMD Warnings, it was assessed by us in first week of August that similar situation is going to arise again. So we immediately served demand notice to BBMB to lower the water level to prevent any disaster and also asked them to provide information in Public Domain as per Dam Safety Act. However, BBMB remained rigid on following the rule curve to fill the dams till 18th August and thereafter the consequences of same are known to all.

Dr. Bains & Khaira added further that BBMB is not only responsible for floods of 2023 and 2025 but Punjab Government is equally responsible as it never acted to take precautions to prevent the disaster. The illegal mining being done in and along Rivers, encroachments over land of rivers & other natural water-bodies and failure in strengthening the Bundhs after floods of 2023 has resulted in worsening the situation. It is pertinent to mention here that floods have caused severe damage to Environment in terms of biodiversity, wildlife, natural habitat and tree cover.

Keeping in view of the data available, unscientific way of operation of Dams by BBMB and gross negligence of Punjab Government in illegal mining, encroachments over rivers, failure in cleaning of water-bodies, we have filed petition before Hon'ble NGT with plea of audit of new Rule Curve, working of BBMB and Punjab Government through independent expert Committee headed by Retired High Court judge, member from National Institute of Hydrology and fix the accountability of officials concerned. We have further requested the court to direct the State Govt. & BBMB to pay compensation to affected persons as per directions of Hon'ble Supreme Court given in similar cases.