

GREEN MANIFESTO FOR PUNJAB - GENERAL ELECTION 2024

Punjab needs to become pollution free and clean. The befooling of Punjabis by marketing destruction as progress and promoting a model of development which is polluting and damaging our precious natural resources like air, water and soil is costing us dearly in terms of health. Corona pandemic and lockdowns that followed cleaned up rivers, water bodies and air very quickly to levels never seen in decades. That showed that cleaning environment is very much possible and only needs a strong conviction and organized effort. The befooling of people therefore needs to change now. We invite political parties and candidates of Punjab in General Elections 2024 to express views on aspects of environment of Punjab raised in this 'Green Manifesto'. We invite them to put these issues on their central agenda and take a public stand on these issues through their social media handles and public speeches.

Punjab Pollution Control Board :- PPCB has a reputation of being very corrupt and non effective. It is often found colluding with polluters. In Zira ground water pollution case its officials gave clean chits to Malbros ethanol factory and not just once but twice. It was only after the Central Pollution Control Board and independent committee of experts appointed by the Chief Secretary Punjab tested ground water samples of Malbros borewells that the lies of PPCB were nailed. They continue to give clean chits to industry in Giaspura gas tragedy and in many other cases like Buddha Dariya where there is obvious involvement of the industry. The CM Punjab himself has called it Punjab Pollution Karo Board. PPCB therefore needs a drastic make over. What will you do to improve the functioning of PPCB if elected?

Zira Ground Water Pollution :- A company called Malbros International Pvt Ltd has been found to be polluting ground water by reverse boring and dumping their entire effluents through borewells. Govt of Punjab and PPCB instead of taking on the factory initially filed criminal cases against villagers agitating against the factory. Then the govt quickly deposited 20 crores as compensation to the factory in the high court. Malbros violated environmental laws, their conditions of environment clearance and terms of consent to operate with impunity. Even after they were caught by CPCB and independent experts committee to be polluting ground water the govt is fighting them in courts in a very lackadaisical manner. This is a rare case where a polluter has been caught with such a strong evidence and still its the people of Punjab that are fighting the battles in the courts for the last two years. Lawyers of the Govt of Punjab failed to represent this case in courts effectively ie. in NGT, in Punjab and Haryana High Court and in Ferozepur District Court due to unpreparedness and incompetence. What will you do if elected to ensure that such cases of blatant industrial pollution are dealt with a heavy hand.

Preventing Floods due to Human Error :- Punjab floods 2023 had a very strong data indicators to prove that there was a human error on the part of BBMB which led to floods in Punjab. Despite sharing of that data with Govt of Punjab it took no legal action against BBMB. The Bhakhra Beas Management Board even hid all the live data about inflow, outflow and reservoir levels from its website after a few questions were asked to their officials about this by the media. Such human errors should be prevented in future and govt of Punjab should demand transparency and accountability from BBMB on dam and water management.

Industrial policy to stop red category industries and promote clean ones :- Punjab is left with 15 years of underground water and its surface water is already polluted threatening this vital resource

of the people. Punjab is an agrarian state whose economy also depends on its water. This water needs to be protected from polluted waste water which originates from both industrial and domestic sources. Punjab needs more clean industries which do not damage its water reserves and environment and therefore protect health of its citizens. What will your govt do to improve industrial policy so that we stop bringing more red category polluting industries and encourage clean industries instead.

Mattewara Textile Park / Modern Industrial Park, KoomKalan :- The textile park was rightly cancelled by the Govt of Punjab after a huge public agitation but the land that was acquired for that purpose has been retained by GLADA. This location is not at all appropriate for any industrial, commercial or residential activity being a flood plain of Sutlej River. This land should be returned to agriculture research farms and villages from which it was taken or it should be merged into the Mattewara forest itself as a biodiversity park to ensure future governments do not get lured into more crazy ideas of developing this land as real estate.

Forests :- Punjab has only 3.6% area under forest cover which is lowest in the country and below even that of Rajasthan. Most of this forest area is near Himachal border and there is hardly any forests left in the plains. What will be your forest cover improvement policy and plan?

Forest Maps :- Punjab Govt does not have digitized or even proper paper based maps of the land that belongs to the forest department. It is feared that most of this area is encroached by powerful people and govts are not interested in identifying this area due to fear of letting people know how badly even the tiny forest area of Punjab is encroached. What will you do about the forest maps which are urgently needed for the obvious reasons.

Tree Protection Act :- Many states including Delhi have strong tree protection laws. Punjab does not have any such law and tree killers in Punjab have no fear of any such law. Trees sweep up carbon dioxide which is the major greenhouse gas heating up our earth and provide cooling of the immediate environment reducing need for electric gadgets to cool buildings. They have a direct positive impact on physical and mental health. What will you do to ensure that a robust tree protection law is enacted in Punjab also.

Tree Census :- Tree census should be done to ensure all trees are well documented and counted. This will ensure that any illegal cutting is detected to ensure a protective regime for trees.

Heritage Trees :- Old trees of Punjab should be protected at all costs. They are our collective heritage and must get a protection of the law. Immediate steps should be taken to ensure no such trees are axed any more.

Trees in non forest areas :- Lots of trees are lost every year in the name of development like road expansion projects etc. Lots of trees are cut even for generating revenue by village panchayats and schools to sell timber. There have been demands from many civil society organizations for a complete ban on cutting of trees for atleast 10 years in Punjab eg the "Rukh Bachao Manukh Bachao" campaign by Naroa Punjab Manch. Will your govt implement such a ban on cutting of trees?

Trees on farms :- Over 85% of geographical area of Punjab is farmland. That is where the maximum potential for increasing green cover of the state is. Over the years trees have been reduced in the farms across the state. Do you have any ideas on policy measures to reverse that?

Urban Forests :- What policies would you propose to promote urban forests as a protection against over concretisation of urban areas.

Protection of Trees and Green Belts :- Protecting trees and green belts is extremely important apart from planting more trees. What will you do to protect them.

Vacant lands :- Vacant govt lands like panchayat/municipal/state govt lands should be planted with trees and micro forests of native varieties.

Green Belts in Industries :- There is a provision of 33% green belt area in the environment clearance conditions of the industries. Such conditions are usually not followed. This should be strictly enforced.

Biodiversity :- What will be your plan to protect biodiversity of the state which is so far a completely neglected issue?

Protection of rivers from illegal mining :- What will you do about it?

Flood plains :- Demarcation and protection of flood plains is very important. Govt of Punjab has not done demarcation of river flood plains despite many orders of NGT to do so. River flood plains are very important and their protection is also very important. They are being damaged by illegal mining, illegal construction activity and even ill planned schemes by the govt itself where they are themselves planning concrete jungles on flood plains of Sutlej and other rivers in Punjab. Govt of Punjab has not even followed directions of the NGT to demarcate flood plains of its rivers. What will you do about these flood plains?

Demarcation of Rivers and Drains :- All areas of rivers and drains should be demarcated so that they can be fenced and developed as forest areas. All river banks and drain banks need to have massive tree plantation in successive layers to prevent erosion and act as flood barriers.

Maintaining Ecological Flow of Rivers :- Rivers of Punjab must get a right to exist. This can be ensured only if there is a continuous flow of atleast a minimum quantity of water known as E-Flow. What is your view on that?

Wetlands :- Punjab has historically had wetlands, although their extent has diminished over time due to urbanization, agriculture, and other human activities. Wetlands play a crucial role in maintaining ecological balance by providing habitats for various plants and animals, filtering water, and preventing floods. They are known as kidneys of nature.

Harike Wetland is one of the largest wetlands in northern India. It is formed by the confluence of the Beas and Sutlej rivers and serves as an important habitat for migratory birds, including endangered species. Other important wetlands like Ropar Wetland, Kanjli Wetland, Keshopur Wetland, Nangal Wetland and others face various threats, including pollution, encroachment, and unsustainable land use practices. What will you do to preserve wetlands of Punjab?

Action plans submitted to NGT :- Govt of Punjab has submitted many action plans to NGT in recent years like those for clean river Sutlej, Beas, Ghaggar, Air, Rejuvenation of Ponds, cleaning up of air, solid waste management etc. The performance of various govts on acting on those plans is not upto the mark as can be seen from the massive fines being imposed by NGT on Punjab Pollution Control

Board etc. and adverse remarks by monitoring committees. What will you do to get these action plans implemented?

Sutlej Rejuvenation :- Sutlej is drinking water source of millions and badly polluted by Buddha Nullah and many other sewage drains. It is a direct drinking water source of millions in south Punjab and must not be allowed to be polluted. What will you do to protect Sutlej if elected?

Buddha Dariya Rejuvenation :- The 650 crore Buddha Nullah rejuvenation project is being executed in a non transparent manner which is a recipe for disaster. It has no eminent scientist in the leadership position to ensure that the project delivers on its promise of rejuvenating Buddha Dariya. What will you do to improve that?

Protection of Rivers, drains, canals from pollution :- All rivers, drains and canals of Punjab should be protected from pollution from industrial, domestic, dairy waste water and from solid waste and plastic pollution.

STPs and CETPs :- The STPs of municipal authorities are not functioning properly. There is no way to audit their performance. The ETPs and CETPs of industry are caught functioning far below their expected levels and even hidden pipes are routinely caught that send industrial waste water to public STPs instead of treating it. PPCB is hand in glove with the industries and is not able to solve it. Independent experts who can audit the STPs and CETPs is the need of the hour. What will you do about that?

How will you stop chemical terrorism :- The chemical effluents being dumped into rivers, drains and underground water in various places by red category industries is no less than chemical terrorism. What will you do to stop this and prevent it from happening in future?

Use of Treated Water :- The water treated by STPs and CETPs should be used for industry, agriculture and construction related activities after proper testing. This is important to ensure that clean water is saved wherever possible. Treated water should be prevented from flowing into rivers as far as possible.

Underground water - Quality and water table of underground aquifers are both degrading due to reasons like over extraction and under recharge of underground water. How will you prevent over extraction and how will you ensure better recharge?

Non Wet-Kaddu/ non puddling Paddy Techniques :- What will your govt do to popularize non wet kaddu rice growing techniques that do not need puddling of water to grow rice. This is needed for better rain water harvesting on massive land area of paddy fields (60% area of Punjab) and to promote less water consuming rice growing techniques which PAU has been reluctant to do for many years?

Stubble Management :- Govt support in terms of adequate machinery to tackle stubble has been weak at best. What will you do to ensure that sufficient machinery is available to manage stubble without burning.

Rainwater Harvesting :- What will be your policy for new commercial, industrial and residential buildings with regards to provision for rain water harvesting.

Desertification of Punjab :- Many govt studies have suggested that Punjab is heading towards desertification due to dropping ground water table. What will be your govt's action plan to stop that?

Protection and Rejuvenation of Ponds :- Village ponds are being lost due to encroachment and being filled up. This is leading to more pollution in rivers and reduction in wetlands in villages and reduced rain water recharging. There are many advanced techniques like Prof CR Babu's constructed wetlands technique to treat sewage water of villages to ensure clean water ponds. What will you do to protect and rejuvenate ponds.

Air Quality Issues :- Punjab esp its cities suffer from bad air quality. It includes air pollution from industrial, vehicular and farm sources. What will be your plan to tackle these issues?

Dirty fuels :- Dirty fuels like PET coke should be completely banned in Punjab for industrial fuel or other purposes. Such ban should also be effectively ensured on the ground via checking and monitoring. How will you ensure that industries use only non polluting fuels?

Vehicles :- What will be your policy about vehicles especially polluting vehicles?

Thermal Power vs Clean Power :- Punjab has been dependent mostly on thermal power which burns fossil fuel. This is both polluting and emits green house gases. What will your policy to reduce dependence on coal and reducing pollution from coal fired plants.

Crop diversification :- Over dependence on paddy is not just an agriculture problem its also an environment issue. Over extraction of ground water is reducing water table. Deep underground water also has quality issues. So much production of paddy also causes difficulties in managing so much stubble which leads to stubble burning. What will be your crop diversification plan if elected?

Over use Pesticides and agrochemicals :- What will you do to reduce use of toxic chemicals in farms esp on food crops to produce healthier crops.

Single use plastic:- Govt of Punjab banned plastic carry bags in 2016 along with many other single use plastic items. Despite ban nothing was enforced on the ground and every nook and corner of Punjab has such banned items available. SUP continues to fill and choke land fills and water bodies with toxic microplastics and leachate. How will you ensure that the ban is effective and single use plastic items are removed from usage? What will you do to improve public awareness about this issue so that people stop demanding such items from vendors.

Solid waste management :- Its a huge problem that govts have completely failed to manage across cities and even rural areas. There is no segregation and scientific management of solid waste happening anywhere in Punjab. What will be your plan to improve this? How will you ensure public participation?

Land Fills :- Land fills used for dumping solid waste need a lot of attention. They exist because of mismanaged waste management practices. We need to segregate and reduce garbage that reaches land fills. Secondly many land fills are located near inhabited places where they should not have been located. They often catch fire in summers and release toxic gases and even kill poor people living in the vicinity. What will you do to ensure this problem is managed better in future?

Open garbage burning :- This is a common practice which is banned on paper but like many other bans not followed in practice. How will you tackle this?

Protection of Green Belts :- A lot of green belts are lost due to fraudulent change of land use by land development authorities themselves. Recently Ludhiana Improvement Trust was caught and prevented from doing this on one green belt via NGT by some NGOs. What will your govt do to ensure green belts are protected, developed and nurtured.

Noise Pollution :- This is a serious problem for many and laws remain unimplemented. What will you do about it?

Roof Top Solar :- Roof top solar is a great way of generating clean electricity which must be promoted. The roof top solar policy of the state so far is not very encouraging. The prices of solar panels have crashed in 2024. The state should take advantage and actively promote clean electricity production via roof top solar by removing red tape in net metering policy and encouraging citizens to become self sufficient in clean electricity production. What will you do about it?

Wind and Solar Energy Farms :- State should form a policy about encouraging wind and solar energy farms across the state. What will you do to promote the same?

Climate Change :- Climate change is happening around the world and govts are mostly responding by putting their head in the sand. Do you have something in mind on that?

Transparency and ensuring zero corruption in environment contracts :- Corruption is a way of life in govt projects. Transparency is abhorred by most officials and they hold all documents close to their chest. The documents that should be in public domain are not even shared easily under RTI. Its a well known fact that most officials, bureaucrats and politicians even hold up payments of the contractors engaged in contracts till they get their cut in the payments. This nexus leads to poor quality work and project failures. How will you ensure that environment projects stop getting jeopardized for such reasons. Timely audit of works to ensure quality and also timely payments to contractors after the work is done should be ensured so that no officials are able to hold environment related projects to ransom and lead to their failure. How will you ensure full transparency, proper execution and accountability in environment related project contracts?

Environment Impact Assessment and Public Hearing:- During the Environment Impact Assessment for setting up large factories, the whole exercise is reduced down to paper work. When Punjab Pollution Control Board holds public hearings, it is usually done in a secretive manner with hardly any information to the general public. For example it is proposed to set up a factory by Ambuja Cements Limited on the land of three villages Ranyala, Badhoan and Sardullapur in Hoshiarpur district. According to the residents of the area, when the PPCB held a public hearing in this regard, only eight to ten people from these villages were involved. The remaining 25-30 were brought by the factory management on their own from elsewhere. This public hearing was passed as alright by administration. People of 25-30 villages of the area are now opposing the setting up of the factory. They have written a letter to the Chief Minister of Punjab and other concerned departments demanding that this unit should not be approved as the people of the area already face a lot of pollution due to an existing paper mill in nearby Saila Khurd. What will you do about setting up the red category industries, which are being set up by misleading the people in this way. How will you ensure proper public hearings and environmental impact assessment?

Engagement with environment experts :- So far most govt projects get executed without any involvement of eminent environment experts. Govt believes in doing every thing through politicians and bureaucrats. Eg Buddha Dariya Rejuvenation project. Govt should consider creation of Punjab Environment Board for the purpose.

Environment Education Policy :- Environment is a compulsory subject in college but it is not taken seriously by any one. There are hardly any teachers for this subject in colleges and the exam is without credits. What will your govt do to change this?

Dairy clusters :- Dairy clusters in cities and near rivers or other water bodies should be avoided as per NGT directions. Extreme concentration of cattle in single cluster like in Ludhiana dairy clusters creates problems for sewage network and STPs. How will you ensure an environment friendly policy on this?

Illegal colonies :- Illegal colonies create lots of pressure on sewage systems of legal colonies near them. What will be your policy on solid and liquid waste generated by such colonies?

River Gagghar :- Water of River Gagghar used to be quite clean a few years ago. People used to use it for drinking and bathing. Now it has become a sewage drain. Industrial and domestic waste water is flowing into it most of which is untreated which is even polluting ground water in the nearby areas who are suffering from diseases like jaundice and cancer. Govt has not done much on this front. What will you do about it if you come to power?

Stray dogs and cattle :- What will be your plan to rehabilitate and manage stray dogs and cattle?

Giaspura :- The Giaspura tragedy happened more due to infrastructural deficiencies as S traps or P traps were not installed in sewage pipelines of houses connected to main sewage pipelines which led to hydrogen sulphide leakage inside houses. What will you do to remove such infrastructural deficiencies.

Mixed Land Use Areas :- Mixed land use areas exist due to poor policies of previous governments who failed to create proper separate areas for residential and industrial use. The policy of extending bad policy forever still continues. What will you do to reduce this problem?

Interlocking tiles and over concretization :- With trend of using interlocking tiles any where and every where an over concretization is happening in most urban areas. What will you do to ensure this is not done at the cost of green areas and that minimum area is covered under such tiles. Also what will do to promote perforated tiles where they can be used.

Public Transport :- Some cities of Punjab had started using city bus service etc a few years ago which has almost been stopped. There are very few good public means of transport even in big cities like Ludhiana. What will you do in this regard to reduce private vehicles from roads?

Eco Tourism :- We need sensible ecotourism development which safeguards our rivers and forests and at the same time provides opportunities for ecotourism to those who can practice that in a responsible manner without causing any harm to nature. What are your thoughts about that?

Unplanned Townships :- Unplanned colonies and townships are causing a lot of environmental issues. When they are developed near natural drains that creates problem of flooding. They some

time encroach areas of natural drains also. Zirakpur and new Chandigarh areas have faced such problems in recent years and this is happening in other parts of Punjab as well.

Green Election :- Elections typically take a huge toll on environment due to excessive use of plastics and non biodegradable materials which pollute environment. What will you do to ensure this trend is reversed?

Green Helpline :- A single statewide helpline number where complaints related to illegal cutting of trees, pollution and other environment matters etc can be reported.

Green Police Stations :- Special police stations in big cities like Ludhiana to handle environment related crimes.

Name	Organization/Association
Padam Bhushan Doctor Bibi Inderjit Kaur	Pingalwara
Padmasree Sant Sewa Singh	Khadur Sahib
Singh Sahib Giani Kewal Singh	Former Jathedar Takht Sri Damdama Sahib
Baldev Singh Sirsa	Lok Bhalai Insaaf Welfare Society
Gurpreet Singh Chandbaja Seattle	Bhai Ganhaiya Cancer Roko Seva Society
Hamir Singh	Senior Correspondent
Jaskirat Singh (9815781629)	Narora Punjab Manch
Dr. Gurcharan Singh Noorpur	Writer
Advocate Jaswinder Singh	Akalpurakh Ki Fauj
Indu Arora	Voice of Amritsar
Colonel Jasjit Gill	Buddha Dariya Task Force
Dr Navneet Bhullar	AGAPP
Samita Kaur	We Support Our Farmers
Rajesh Jain	Punjab Eco Friendly Association
Dr. Neelam Sodhi	-
Mittersen Meet	Punjabi Pasar Bhaichara
Amrita Mangat	-
Moonstar Kaur	Parshada
Kuldeep Singh Khaira	Vigilant Citizens Forum
Er. Kapil Arora	Council of Engineers
Dr. Sunny Sandhu	Bhoomitra
Harpreet Soan	Ludhiana Cares

Name	Organization/Association
Mahinder Pal Loomba	Punjab Vatavaran Chetna Lehar
Sukhdeep Singh	Narora Punjab Manch
Bhavjit Singh	-
Adv Parminder Singh Vig	Jalandhar
Ripanjot Kaur Soni Bagga	Writer
Ritu Malhan	Green Thumb
Paramjit Singh Ghazi	Sikh Siyasat
Brijbhushan Goyal	Mahatma Gandhi Peace Mission
Ajaypal Singh Brar	Misl Sutlej
Mohit Saggar	-
Parampal Singh Sabhra	Alliance of Sikh Organizations
Gagnish Singh Khurana	Ludhiana
Tejveer Singh	BKU Shaheed Bhagat Singh
Gurmail Singh Sarpanch	Sanjha Morcha Zira
Parvinder Singh Kittna	Punjab Election Watch
Devinder Singh Sekhon	Misl Sutlej
Prof. Sukhjot Singh	-
Gangveer Singh Rathore	-
Jujhar Singh	Sath
Paramsunil Kaur Ghuman	Batala
Gaurav Deep Singh	Initiators of Change
Gurpreet Singh Plaha	-
Dr. Amandeep Aggarwal	Sangrur
Mandeep Dhardeo	Grameen Vatavarn Bachao Committee
Balwinder Kaur	Khanna
Kuldeep Singh Chunagra	Punjab Vatavaran Chetna Lehar
Dr. AS Mann	Scientific Awareness and Social Welfare Forum
Dr. Amandeep Singh Bains (99145 20099)	RBS Roots

Public Action Committee Sutlej, Buddha Dariya, Mattewara www.pacmattewara.org