J&K and Ladakh High Court bans fuel-powered motorboats and jet skis on Dal Lake to curb pollution

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News

A Division Bench of the High Court of Jammu & Kashmir and Ladakh – Chief Justice Dr Pushpendra Singh Bhati and Justice Rajesh Sekhri – on 14 Oct 2026 barred fuel-powered motorboats, including motorised shikaras and jet skis, from Dal Lake, Srinagar, until further orders; violation will be treated as contempt. Government boats for emergency services, law and order, disaster management and safety are exempt. The Court ordered an expert-backed comprehensive motorboat policy and asked authorities to explore solar/electric boats. Case: Mohammad Rafiq Mir & Ors v UT of J&K; next hearing 30 Oct.

Key facts

Court	High Court of J&K and Ladakh – CJ Pushpendra Singh Bhati, Justice Rajesh Sekhri
Date	14 Oct 2026; next hearing 30 Oct
Banned	Fuel motorboats, motorised shikaras, jet skis
Exempt	Emergency, law-and-order, disaster and safety boats
Enforcement	Lakes Conservation & Management Authority (LCMA), Tourism Dept, Police
Way out	Solar / electric boats

Background

- Dal Lake: Srinagar; about 18 sq km; 'Jewel in the crown of Kashmir'; causeways divide it into Gagribal, Lokut Dal, Bod Dal and Nagin basins. Floating gardens are called 'Rad'; Rup Lank (Char Chinari) island lies in Lokut Dal. The Zabarwan range overlooks it; Shalimar Bagh (Jahangir) is on its shore.
- Geography: the largest lake of J&K is not Dal but Wular (one of India's largest freshwater lakes, Jhelum basin). Dal is fed mainly by the Telbal stream.
- Constitution: the right to a pollution-free environment is part of Article 21 (Subhash Kumar v State of Bihar, 1991). Public Trust Doctrine – lakes, rivers and forests belong to the public, the State is their trustee – adopted by the Supreme Court in M.C. Mehta v Kamal Nath (1996).
- Science: engine fuel and oil leaks, noise and sewage add to eutrophication – weeds multiply and dissolved oxygen falls.

Tamil Nadu link: no direct link. Tamil Nadu's hill-station lakes also face tourism pressure – Ooty Lake was created in 1824 by John Sullivan, Collector of Coimbatore; the star-shaped Kodaikanal Lake was created in 1863.

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