

**BEOFRE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI
ORIGINAL APPLICATION No. 555 of 2024**

IN THE MATTER OF: -

News item titled "India lost 2.33 million hectares of tree cover since 2000 Global Forest Watch" appearing in The Indian Express date 13.04.2024.

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(SAMEER ABHYANKAR)
ADVOCATE FOR RESPONDENT
NO.26(STATE OF SIKKIM
D-247, LGF, DEFENCE COLONY, NEW
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PLACE: NEW DELHI
Dated:11.10.2025

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BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 555 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF:-

NEWS ITEM TITLED "INDIA LOST 2.33 MILLION HECTARES
OF TREE COVER SINCE 2000 GLOBAL FOREST WATCH"
APPEARING IN THE EXPRESS DATE 1.04.2024.

**AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE STATE OF
SIKKIM/RESPONDENT NO. 26 IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE
ORDER DATED 29.01.2025 AND 09.05.2025**

I, Ashwani Kumar Chand, I.P.S., Principal Resident
Commissioner, Government of Sikkim, Sikkim House, 12,
Panchsheel Marg, Chanakyapuri, New Delhi, do hereby
solemnly affirm and most humbly and respectfully submit as
under:

1. That I am authorized to swear the present affidavit on the instructions received from the State Government of Sikkim.
2. That I am the Resident Commissioner of the State Government of Sikkim, and as such am competent to depose to the contents of this affidavit.
3. It is submitted that vide orders dated 29.01.2025 and 09.05.2025, the Ld. Tribunal directed all the States/UTs to file the Responses and Status Report with complete information regarding forest cover, tree cover and related data for the period 2001 to 2021.
4. That in compliance with the aforesaid directions, the present affidavit is being filed on behalf of the State of Sikkim placing



A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be "AJC", located below the notary seal.

on record the status of forest cover dynamics in the State and requisite initiatives taken by the State, based on the data presented by Forest Survey of India (hereinafter referred to as 'FSI').

5. It is submitted that though the present affidavit shows the status report up to the year 2023, thereby providing the most recent and accurate information available.
6. That the forest dynamic as per the FSI Report for the year of 2001, 2021 and 2023 is as follows for the convenience of this Ld. Tribunal:

Year of the FSI Report	Total Forest Cover (sq. km) recorded in the report		% of Geographical Area
	Dense	TOTAL	
	Open		
2001	2391	3,193	45%
	802		
2021	2652.88	3341.03	47.08%
	688.15		
2023	2659	3358.40	47.33%
	699		

7. It is pertinent to note that the percentage of forest cover with respect to the geographical area of the State has improved from 45% in 2000 to 47.33% in 2023.
8. That apart from the usual afforestation activities undertaken by the Forest Department, the Government of Sikkim has been taking proactive steps and initiated several innovative measures for the conservation and preservation of its natural heritage. One of such significant initiatives is '*Mero Rukh Mero Santati (MRMS)*', a mission for restoring mother



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earth which was launched on 02.02.2023. The steps taken in this program is that 108 trees are to be planted for every child born in the State of Sikkim.

- 9. It is humbly submitted that, as of date, thousands of parents have successfully completed plantation activities under the MRMS scheme. This large-scale, community-driven afforestation effort reflects Sikkim's commitment to environmental sustainability and reinforces its positive forest cover trajectory.

The detailed status report containing year-wise forest cover data in the State of Sikkim is annexed hereto and marked as **Annexure A-1 [Pages 4]**

- 10. That the State of Sikkim remains committed to maintaining and further improving its forest cover through sustainable forest management, strict monitoring, and people-participatory initiatives to ensure the preservation of its natural heritage.
- 11. That the present affidavit is true to the best of my knowledge and information received from the Answering Respondent and nothing material has been concealed therefrom.



[Signature]
Ashwani Kumar Chand, IPS
 Principal Resident Commissioner
 Government of Sikkim

Sikkim House, 12, Panchsheel Marg,
 Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110 021

VERIFICATION:

Verified at New Delhi on 11 OCT 2025 day of October, 2025, that the contents of the above said affidavit are true and correct to the best of my knowledge and belief. Nothing material has been concealed therefrom.

Identified by Dependent
12/26/2024
Signed/Put In My Presence

ATTESTED
[Signature]
NOTARY PUBLIC
GOVT. OF INDIA

DEPONENT
Ashwani Kumar Chand, IPS
 Principal Resident Commissioner
 Government of Sikkim

Sikkim House, 12, Panchsheel Marg,
 Chanakyapuri, New Delhi-110 021

11 OCT 2025

Annexure A-1**Status Report of Forest for the State of Sikkim**

Reference Original Application No. 555/2025 (I.A. No.207/2025. I.A. No. 144/2025 News item titled "India lost 2.33 million hectares of tree cover since 2000 Global Forest watch".

FOREST COVER DYNAMICS IN SIKKIM (2000 TO 2023) with Reference to FSI Data:

Forest Cover (2000 vs. 2023):

In FSI Report 2001 (data year 2000), Sikkim had a total forest cover of 3,193 km², consisting of 2,391 km² very dense forest and 802 km² open forest.

By 2023, forest cover increases to 3,358 km², with 2,659 km² very dense forest and 699 km² open forest.

Overall change (2000 to 2023):

Year of the FSI Report	Total Forest Cover (sq. km) recorded in the report	% of Geographical Area
2001	3,193	45 %
2021	3,341.03	47.08 %
2023	3,358.40	47.33 %

- Total forest cover increased by 165 km², indicating a 5.17% rise relative to 2000 baseline.

Other than usual Afforestation activities taken by the Sikkim Forest Department there has been number of initiatives of the Sikkim Government for the Conservation and Preservation of Natural Heritage. One of such initiatives is that the Government of Sikkim has been proactive in enhancing forest cover through community-based plantation schemes is the Mero Rukh Mero Santati (MRMS) a Mission for Restoring Mother Earth, launched on 2nd February 2023. Under this program, for every child born in the state, 108 trees are to be planted.

As of today, thousands of parents have successfully completed plantation activities under Mero Rukh Mero Santati (MRMS) scheme.

This large-scale community-driven afforestation effort reflects Sikkim's commitment to environmental sustainability and reinforces its positive forest cover trajectory.




 Chief Conservator of Forest (T)
 Forest & Environment Department
 Chief Conservator of Forest (HQ)
 Government of Sikkim
 Forest & Environment Department
 Government of Sikkim