

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH AT NEW DELHI**
Original Application No. 20/2025

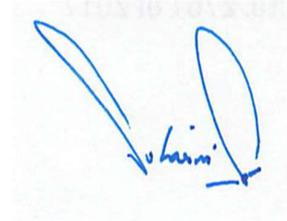
IN THE MATTER OF:

News Item titled “Assam’s forests shrink by 83.92 sq. km. in just two years Report”
appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024

NDOH: 09.05.2025

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THROUGH



**SUHASINI SEN
(COUNSEL FOR MOEF&CC)**
R289B, LGF, GREATER KAILASH I NEW DELHI- 110048
TEL: +91-96500 96066, +91-9953049776,
suhasini@rschambers.net, office@rschambers.net

New Delhi
Date: 08.05.2025

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI**

Original Application No. 20/2025

News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024.

AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST & CLIMATE CHANGE, GOVERNMENT OF INDIA (RESPONDENT NO. 5).

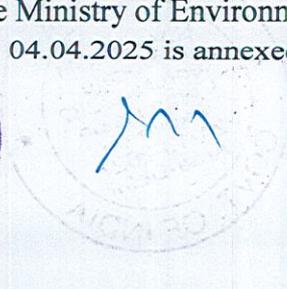
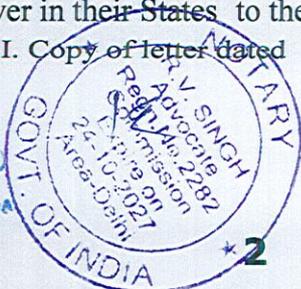
I, Sanjay Kumar Chauhan, S/o A S Chauhan, aged about 41 years, currently working as Assistant Inspector General of Forests, having office at Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, Jorbagh, New Delhi, do hereby solemnly swear and affirm as follows:

1. That in my official capacity as stated above, I am aware of the facts and circumstances of the present case and competent to swear to the contents of the present affidavit. I state that my knowledge in this regard is based on the official records available with the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (hereinafter the 'MoEF&CC').
2. It is submitted that the present affidavit is being filed by the answering Respondent and the Answering Respondent humbly seeks liberty to file an additional affidavit in the present matter if so directed by this Hon'ble Tribunal as and when required.
3. That the present original application is registered Suo Motu based on the news item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024.
4. That in the news item, it has been alleged that the forest cover in Assam is declining by 83.92 square kilometers between 2021 and 2023, as per the India State of Forest Report 2023 (ISFR 2023). The news article further alleges that this decline is part of a broader trend observed across the northeastern states of India, which collectively lost 327.30 square kilometers of forest cover during the same period, with Mizoram experiencing the highest decrease of 178.42 square kilometers.
5. It is humbly submitted that this Tribunal vide Order dated 22.01.2025 impleaded Secretary, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change as Respondent no. 5.



6. In this regard, it is humbly submitted that the MoEFCC deals with policy and regulatory issues at a broader level. The role of the MoEFCC is to frame policy, provide directions and guidance in an advisory capacity, as well as to provide necessary approvals under the provisions of the relevant Central Acts so far as the protection and conservation of forest, wildlife and other environmental resources are concerned.
7. It is further submitted that the 'land' is a subject matter of the State Government. The forest areas and the legal boundaries thereof are determined and maintained by the concerned State Government. That being the repository of land records, the State Government has the primary responsibility to determine the status of any parcel of land, giving due regard to gazette notifications, provisions under State and Central Acts and concerned judgments and directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court.
8. It is humbly submitted that, prior approval of the Central Government under Section 2 of the "Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam", 1980, [earlier known as the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980] (hereinafter referred to as "Van Adhiniyam, 1980") is required for carrying out any non-forest activity on forest land. Any contravention of the above provision would amount to violation of the Van Adhiniyam, 1980 and attract the penal provisions in it.
9. That the Environment Protection Act, 1986 is an act to provide for the protection and improvement of environment and for matters connected therewith. As per the act the term Environment includes " *water, air and land and the inter- relationship which exists among and between water, air and land, and human beings, other living creatures, plants, micro-organism and property;*" whereas " *environmental pollution*" means *the presence in the environment of any environmental pollutant.*
10. That as per Section 3 of the Environment Protection Act, 1986 "*the Central Government, shall have the power to take all such measures as it deems necessary or expedient for the purpose of protecting and improving the quality of the environment and preventing controlling and abating environmental pollution.*" Any failure to comply with or contravention of the provisions of this Act, or the rules made or orders or directions issued thereunder shall be punishable with imprisonment or fine or both.
11. That nonetheless, to ascertain the correct position and the truthfulness of the matter, the answering respondent vide letter dated 17.03.2025 has sought a factual status report from the Forest Survey of India (FSI), Dehradun. Additionally, reminders were also issued on 02.04.2025 which is annexed as **Annexure- R1 and R 2(Colly)**.
12. It is further submitted that in response to the reminder letter dated 02.04.2025, FSI vide email dated 04.04.2025 has requested Northeastern States to communicate the specific reasons for the decline in forest cover in their States to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change along with FSI. Copy of letter dated 04.04.2025 is annexed as **Annexure- R3**

GOVT. OF INDIA, New Delhi
 Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
 Director, Forest Survey of India, Dehradun
 (National Bureau of Aquaculture, Faridkot, Punjab)



13. The answering respondent humbly submits that, till date no information has been received from the State Governments in this regard.
14. That it is pertinent to mention that Forest Survey of India (FSI) is an institution under the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India responsible for assessment of forest and tree cover of the country. FSI carries out wall-to-wall forest cover mapping of the country using remote sensing data from the indigenous LISS III sensor of IRS ResourceSat series of satellites from Indian Space Research Organisation. So far, 18 cycles of forest cover assessment have been completed by FSI from 1987 to 2023 FSI undertakes sampling based National Forest Inventory (NFI) to assess information on tree cover, growing stock in forests and TOF, bamboo resource, carbon stock along with several other parameters. The findings of above exercises are published in India State of Forest Report (ISFR) in a cycle of two years.

15. That the definition used for representation of Forest in ISFR is as follows:

“Forest Cover: All lands, more than 1 hectare in area, with a tree canopy of more than 10% irrespective of ownership and legal status. Such lands may not necessarily be a recorded forest area. It includes Orchards, Bamboo and Palm.”

16. That from the above stated it is evident that the Forest Cover represents the area both inside forest area and outside forest area as per the definition adopted by the FSI for assessment of Forest Cover. The plantation outside the forest area also include Commercial Plantation which is subject to sustainable harvesting by the respective owners, these harvest are accordingly reflected in the cycle of Forest Cover Assessment.
17. That PCCF Assam, PCCF Arunachal Pradesh, PCCF Tripura and PCCF Mizoram are impleaded as Respondent no. 1, 2, 3 and 4 respectively. It is humbly submitted that the actions on the forest land falls within the purview of the concerned States (Assam, Arunachal Pradesh, Tripura and Mizoram) and, therefore they are the concerned authorities to take action in the matter.
18. That the present affidavit may kindly be taken on record so as to assist this Hon'ble Tribunal in passing appropriate orders in the present matter as deemed fit. That it is respectfully submitted the answering respondent undertakes to file an additional affidavit if so directed by this Hon'ble Tribunal.



[Handwritten Signature]
7/1/24
DEPONENT

(संजय कुमार चौहान/Sanjay Kumar Chauhan)
सहायक वन महानिरीक्षक, राष्ट्रीय प्राधिकरण
Asstt. Inspector General of Forest, National Authority
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन विभाग
M/o Environment, Forest and Climate Change
आर्य समाज, नई दिल्ली
Govt. of India, New Delhi

VERIFICATION

Verified at New Delhi on this 08 day of May, 2025 that the contents of this affidavit based on official record(s) maintained and information available in the office are true and correct, no part of it is false and nothing has been concealed there from.

[Handwritten Signature]
7/5/25

DEPONENT

(संजय कुमार चौहान/Sanjay Kumar Chauhan)
सहायक वन महानिरीक्षक, राष्ट्रीय प्राधिकरण
Asstt. Inspector General of Forest, National Authority
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन विभाग
M/o Environment, Forest and Climate Change
भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली
Govt. of India, New Delhi

I identified the deponent/executorant
who has signed in my presence



solemnly affirmed before me, read
over & explained to the deponent.

Notary Public *[Signature]*

8 MAY 2025

URGENT/COURT MATTER

File No. 13/2/2025-SU
 Government of India
 Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
 (Survey and Utilization Division)

Vayu Wing, 2nd Floor,
 Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
 Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
 New Delhi- 110003
 Dated: 17th March, 2025

To,
 The Director General,
 Forest Survey of India,
 Kaulagarh Road,
 P.O. I.P.E Dehradun-248195.

Sub : Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Sir,

This is in apropos with the above stated matter which is pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal and the letter of Forest Survey of India dated 22-15/2025 –FGD dated 28.02.2025.

In this context, the Forest Survey of India is requested to elaborate the reasons for the decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States cited in ISFR 2023

Yours faithfully,


 (Dr. Shobhita Agarwal)
 Assistant Inspector General of Forests
 E-mail: sudiv-moefcc@gov.in

Copy for information to:

1. PPS to IGF (SU), MoEF&CC.
2. Guard File.

REMINDER-IURGENT/COURT MATTER

File No. 13/2/2025-SU
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Survey and Utilization Division)

Agni Wing, 4th Floor,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi- 110003

Dated: 01st April, 2025

To,
The Director General,
Forest Survey of India,
Kaulagarh Road,
P.O, I.P.E Dehradun-248195.

Subject : Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assam tribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Sir,

Please refer to this Ministry's earlier letter of even number dated 17th March 2025 (**copy enclosed**) in connection with the matter currently pending before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (Principal Bench), New Delhi. The case concerns the news article titled "Assam's Forests Shrink by 83.92 sq km in Just Two Years", published on Assam tribune.com on December 22, 2024, as well as the letter from the Forest Survey of India (FSI) (Ref. No. 22-15/2025 – FGD), dated February 28, 2025.

2. In this regard, the Forest Survey of India is once again requested to provide a detailed explanation regarding the decline in forest cover in the Northeastern States, as reported in the India State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023.

3. This may be treated as a matter of priority. This issues with the approval of IGF(SU).

Digitally signed by
Sanjay Kumar Chauhan Yours faithfully,
Date: 01-04-2025
19:45:32

(Sanjay Kumar Chauhan)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests
E-mail: sudiv-moefcc@gov.in

Copy for information to:

1. PPS to IGF (SU), MoEF&CC.
2. Guard File.

**ANNEXURE
R5/3 Colly.**

(भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय)
(Govt. of India, Ministry Of Environment, Forest & Climate Change)
कौलागढ़ मार्ग पो 0 आई०पी०ई०
Kaulagarh Road, P.O. - I.P.E.,
देहरादून - 248195
Dehradun - 248195

No.22-514/2025-FGD-16

Dated: 4 April, 2025

To

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (HoFF)
Mizoram State Forest Department,
Tuikhualang Aizawal-796001 (Mizoram)

Sub: Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Ref: Ministry letter no. 13/2/2025-SU dated 17th March, 2025

Sir,

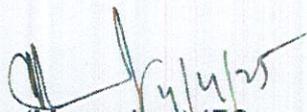
Kind attention is invited to the subject and reference cited above, which is currently pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal. The case pertains to the decline in forest cover in Assam by 83.92 sq. km between 2021 and 2023, as reported in the ISFR 2023.

In this regard, SU Division of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has sought reasons for decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States as reported in the ISFR 2023.

It is therefore requested to communicate the specific reasons for the decline in forest cover in Mizoram to the SU Division of MoEF&CC, with a copy of the same to FSI.

Yours faithfully,

Encl: As above


(Meera Iyer) IFS
Joint Director (FGD)

Copy to:

1. Dr. Shobhita Agarwal, Assistant Inspector General of Forests, SU Division, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, New Delhi.

URGENT/COURT MATTER

File No. 13/2/2025-SU
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Survey and Utilization Division)

Vayu Wing, 2nd Floor,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi- 110003
Dated: 17th March, 2025

To,
The Director General,
Forest Survey of India,
Kaulagarh Road,
P.O, I.P.E Dehradun-248195.

Sub : Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Sir,

This is in apropos with the above stated matter which is pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal and the letter of Forest Survey of India dated 22-15/2025 -FGD dated 28.02.2025.

In this context, the Forest Survey of India is requested to elaborate the reasons for the decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States cited in ISFR 2023

Yours faithfully,


(Dr. Shobhita Agarwal)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests
E-mail: sudiv-moefcc@gov.in

Copy for information to:

1. PPS to IGF (SU), MoEF&CC.
2. Guard File.



(भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय)
(Govt. of India, Ministry Of Environment, Forest & Climate Change)
कौलागढ़ मार्ग पो० ओ० आई०पी०ई०
Kaulagarh Road, P.O. - I.P.E.,
देहरादून - 248195
Dehradun - 248195

No.22-514/2025-FGD-II

Dated: 4 April, 2025

To

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (HoFF)
Aryana Bhawan, Panjabari,
Guwahati-781008 (Assam)

Sub: Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Ref: Ministry letter no. 13/2/2025-SU dated 17th March, 2025

Sir,

Kind attention is invited to the subject and reference cited above, which is currently pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal. The case pertains to the decline in forest cover in Assam by 83.92 sq. km between 2021 and 2023, as reported in the ISFR 2023.

In this regard, SU Division of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has sought reasons for decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States as reported in the ISFR 2023.

It is therefore requested to communicate the specific reasons for the decline in forest cover in Assam to the SU Division of MoEF&CC, with a copy of the same to FSI.

Yours faithfully,

(Meera Iyer) IFS
Joint Director (FGD)

Encl: As above

Copy to:

1. Dr. Shobhita Agarwal, Assistant Inspector General of Forests, SU Division, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, New Delhi.

URGENT/COURT MATTER

File No. 13/2/2025-SU
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Survey and Utilization Division)

Vayu Wing, 2nd Floor,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi- 110003
Dated: 7th March, 2025

To,
The Director General,
Forest Survey of India,
Kaulagarh Road,
P.O, I.P.E Dehradun-248195.

Sub : Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Sir,

This is in apropos with the above stated matter which is pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal and the letter of Forest Survey of India dated 22-15/2025 -FGD dated 28.02.2025.

In this context, the Forest Survey of India is requested to elaborate the reasons for the decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States cited in ISFR 2023

Yours faithfully,


(Dr. Shobhita Agarwal)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests
E-mail: sudiv-moefcc@gov.in

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2. Guard File.



(भारत सरकार, पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय)
(Govt. of India, Ministry Of Environment, Forest & Climate Change)
कौलागढ़ मार्ग पो 0 ओ 0 आई 0 पी 0 ई 0
Kaulagarh Road, P.O. - I.P.E.,
देहरादून - 248195
Dehradun - 248195

No.22-514/2025-FGD-13

Dated: 4 April, 2025

To

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (HoFF)
Tripura State Forest Department,
Aranya Bhawan,
Gorkhabasti, Agartala-797006 (Tripura)

Sub: Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Ref: Ministry letter no. 13/2/2025-SU dated 17th March, 2025

Sir,

Kind attention is invited to the subject and reference cited above, which is currently pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal. The case pertains to the decline in forest cover in Assam by 83.92 sq. km between 2021 and 2023, as reported in the ISFR 2023.

In this regard, SU Division of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has sought reasons for decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States as reported in the ISFR 2023.

It is therefore requested to communicate the specific reasons for the decline in forest cover in Tripura to the SU Division of MoEF&CC, with a copy of the same to FSI.

Yours faithfully,

Encl: As above

(Meera Iyer) IFS
Joint Director (FGD)

Copy to:

1. Dr. Shobhita Agarwal, Assistant Inspector General of Forests, SU Division, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, New Delhi.

URGENT/COURT MATTER

File No. 13/2/2025-SU
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Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Survey and Utilization Division)

Vayu Wing, 2nd Floor,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi- 110003
Dated: 17th March, 2025

To,
The Director General,
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Kaulagarh Road,
P.O, I.P.E Dehradun-248195.

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In this context, the Forest Survey of India is requested to elaborate the reasons for the decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States cited in ISFR 2023

Yours faithfully,


(Dr. Shobhita Agarwal)
Assistant Inspector General of Forests
E-mail: sudiv-moefcc@gov.in

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2. Guard File.



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(Govt. of India, Ministry Of Environment, Forest & Climate Change)
कौलागढ़ मार्ग पो० ओ० आई०पी०ई०
Kaulagarh Road, P.O. - I.P.E.,
देहरादून - 248195
Dehradun - 248195

No.22-514/2025-FGD - 9

Dated: 4 April, 2025

To,

The Principal Chief Conservator of Forests, (HoFF)
Arunachal Pradesh Forest Department,
Zero Point, Itanagar-791111
(Arunachal Pradesh)

Sub: Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Ref: Ministry letter no. 13/2/2025-SU dated 17th March, 2025

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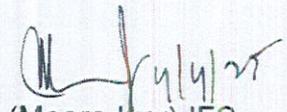
Kind attention is invited to the subject and reference cited above, which is currently pending before the Hon'ble Tribunal. The case pertains to the decline in forest cover in Assam by 83.92 sq. km between 2021 and 2023, as reported in the ISFR 2023.

In this regard, SU Division of Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) has sought reasons for decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States as reported in the ISFR 2023.

It is therefore requested to communicate the specific reasons for the decline in forest cover in Arunachal Pradesh to the SU Division of MoEF&CC, with a copy of the same to FSI.

Yours faithfully,

Encl: As above


(Meera Iyer) IFS
Joint Director (FGD)

Copy to:

1. Dr. Shobhita Agarwal, Assistant Inspector General of Forests, SU Division, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, New Delhi.

URGENT/COURT MATTER

File No. 13/2/2025-SU
Government of India
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change
(Survey and Utilization Division)

Vayu Wing, 2nd Floor,
Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bagh Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi- 110003
Dated: 17th March, 2025

To,
The Director General,
Forest Survey of India,
Kaulagarh Road,
P.O, I.P.E Dehradun-248195.

Sub : Original Application No. 20/2025 Suo moto case in the matter of News Item titled "Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 before NGT (PB) New Delhi.

Sir,

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In this context, the Forest Survey of India is requested to elaborate the reasons for the decline in forest cover in the North Eastern States cited in ISFR 2023

Yours faithfully,


(Dr. Shobhita Agarwal)

Assistant Inspector General of Forests
E-mail: sudiv-moefcc@gov.in

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