



BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

EASTERN ZONE BENCH, KOLKATA,

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 53 OF 2024/EZ

(Under Section 18 read with Sections 14, 15 of National Green Tribunal Act 2010)

IN THE MATTER OF:

Mathew Gonmei

.....Applicant

AND

State of Manipur & Ors

.....Respondents

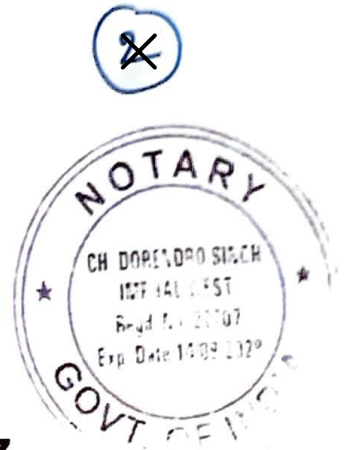
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Paushali Banerjee

Paushali Banerjee
Advocate

7 A Kiron Shankar Roy Road
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AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANTS:

I, Mathew Gonmei, Son of Gongjeng Gonmei, resident of Village- Zeiladjang, Jeilatjang, Tamenglong, Manipur, PIN-795141, aged about 48 years, by occupation- social service, I am the Applicant in this instant Original Application solemnly affirm and say as follows:

I That I am the Applicant herein and I am fully conversant with the facts and circumstances of the case. I am competent to affirm this affidavit.

II A copy of the Affidavit affirmed on 8/8/2025 have been served upon me (hereafter the "said Affidavit"). I have perused the instant OA and understood the contents and purport thereof.

Mathew Gonmei

16-08-25.
CH. DORENDRO SINGH
Advocate & Notary, Govt. of India
Regn. No. 22707
Imphal West, Manipur-795114



1. I have been advised to traverse and/or to deal with only those statements and/or allegations contained in the said Affidavit and to refer to such facts as may be material and/or relevant for the disposal of the same.

2. As such, save what would be borne out by the admitted records or what may be specifically admitted by me hereinafter, all statements and/or allegations contained in the said Affidavit should be deemed to have been denied and disputed by me as if each one has been set out hereunder and denied in seriatim.

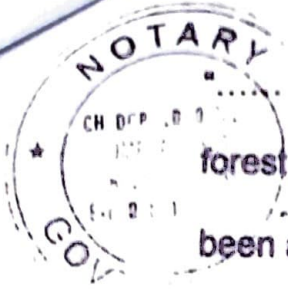
3. Before dealing with the statements and/or allegations contained in the said Affidavit, I beg to place the following facts and contentions on record:-

A. The Indian State of Forest Report 2023, volume 1 published by the Forest survey of India brings forth the state of forest in different states in India, the degradation of forest is clear from page 53 of the report where the change in forest cover in Manipur is minus 62 percent. Copy of the relevant page of the forest report is annexed herewith and marked as annexure A.

B. The tenth 'State of Forest Report' ('SFR') states as follows :

Matthew Gommei

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With this, India completes two decades of systematic and regular forest cover mapping on a biennial basis. Over the years, there have been advancements, both in the field of remote sensing technology and the interpretational techniques. Remote sensing technology has emerged as an important tool for assessing the forest resource rapidly. The satellite provides the best synoptic view of the forest landscape. Through satellite data, it is possible to assess the forest cover broken down to density classes and the other land cover classes accurately. Using multi-date scenes supplemented with ground data, it is also possible to find broad types of forests (deciduous or evergreen). The remote sensing satellite data therefore has become very handy for stratifying the forests into homogenous sections which make the field inventory efficient, accurate and cost effective. Using very high resolution satellite data, it is also possible to discern isolated patches of trees and other tree resources outside forest" Copy of the relevant pages of the State Forest Report 2005 is annexed herewith and marked as Annexure B

A. I say that remote sensing technology is used for decades to map the Forest cover in India. In 2023 also remote sensing satellite data was used to record forest cover in the country.

Matthew Gommer

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- D. I say that the India State of Forest report 2023 clearly show the degradation in forest cover in Manipur State. Large tracts of open forests as well as closed forests have been converted into waste land and these are large encroachments in the Zeland Wildlife Sanctuary. Copies of Picture showing felling of trees are annexed herewith and marked as Annexure C.
- E. I say that India State Forest 2019 also clearly show the degradation in forest cover in Manipur State compared to the status of Forest cover in 2017. Copy of page 164 of India State Forest 2019 is annexed herewith and marked as Annexure D.
- F. The audit report of CAG 2010 states as follows "For ensuring protection of reserved forests, construction and erection of boundary pillars is a necessity. The State has 1038.65 sq km of reserved forests area. For demarcation of these areas, erection of boundary pillars for a length of 1235 km is required. However, as of March 2010 boundary pillars had been erected only along 93.50 km (8 per cent) leaving 1141.50 km without demarcation". The Applicant craves leave to place the report during the time of hearing.
6. Without waiving the aforesaid, but fully relying thereon, I now deal with the statements and/or allegations contained in the said Affidavit as under:

Matthew Gomer

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With reference to the statements and/or allegations contained in paragraphs 1,2, 3 & 4 of the said application, I deny and dispute the same. I say that the Photographs annexed herewith as Annexure C evidently put forth the felling of trees in Zeiland Wildlife Sanctuary and the India State of Forest report 2023 and India State Forest 2019 also state the picture of degradation of forest in the entire state of Manipur.

- ii. With reference to the statements and/or allegations contained in paragraph 5,6,7,8 &9 of the said Affidavit, I deny and dispute the same as if each one has been set out hereunder and denied in seriatim. I say that the contention of the State respondent that there is no destruction of forest is categorically denied. It is admitted by the State respondent in the said Affidavit that settlement of rights needs to be completed to curb destruction of forest.

I say the Maps as stated in the said Affidavit is of FSI Forest cover 2019, 2021 & 2023 are denied. The Applicant states the destruction of the large tracts of open forests as well as closed forests have been converted into waste land and there are encroachments in the Zeiland Wildlife Sanctuary based on the photographs and the Maps of MARSAC dated January 2024 and 27th January 2025 whereas

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the FSI maps annexed as Annexure A-1, Annexure A-2, Annexure A-3 with the said Affidavit are of 2019, 2021 & 2023 respectively, none of the Annexures of the said Affidavit controverts the recent situation of 2025 put forth in the Affidavit of the Applicant affirmed on 3/03/25.

I say that Annexure A-1, Annexure A-2, Annexure A-3 with the said Affidavit show huge area as open forest compared to closed forest, moreover the reports of FSI 2019 and 2023 annexed herewith show total degradation of forest in the entire state of Manipur.

I say that it is denied that forest may appear open forest in the dry season and closed in monsoon season due to leaf flush, even if in dry season the closed cover decreases due to shedding of leaves it cannot amount to more than fifty percent decrease in tree cover converting closed forest to a open forest.

In this connection, I repeat and reiterate the statements made in paragraph 5 above and the various sub-paragraphs thereunder

III. With reference to the statements and/or allegations contained in sub paragraphs paragraph 10,11,12,13,14,15,16,17,18,19 & 20 of the said Affidavit, I deny and dispute the same as if each

Mathew Gomer

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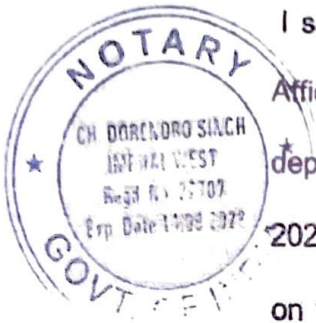
one has been set out hereunder and denied in serialim .
 I say that I say that remote sensing technology is used for
 decades to map the Forest cover in India. In 2023 also remote
 sensing satellite data was used to record forest cover in the
 country. The tenth 'State of Forest Report' ('SFR') states as
 follows :

"..... With this, India completes two decades of systematic and regular forest cover mapping on a biennial basis. Over the years, there have been advancements, both in the field of remote sensing technology and the interpretational techniques. Remote sensing technology has emerged as an important tool for assessing the forest resource rapidly. The satellite provides the best synoptic view of the forest landscape. Through satellite data, it is possible to assess the forest cover broken down to density classes and the other land cover classes accurately. Using multi-date scenes supplemented with ground data, it is also possible to find broad types of forests (deciduous or evergreen). The remote sensing satellite data therefore has become very handy for stratifying the forests into homogenous sections which make the field inventory efficient, accurate and cost effective. Using very high resolution satellite data, it is also possible to discern isolated patches of trees and other tree resources outside forest"

Mathew Gomes

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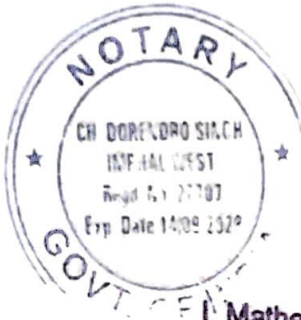


I say that as stated by the State Respondent in paragraph 11 of the said Affidavit 2024 & 2025 satellite imagery is not available with the forest department therefore it is clear that the Maps of MARSAC dated January 2024 and 27th January 2025 annexed with the affidavit of Applicant affirmed on 19/03/25 as Annexure A was not controverted by the State Respondent. It is also clear that the closed forest cover is now only 5.35 percent in 2025 compared to 244.54 percent in 2024.

- IV. I say that That due to felling of trees and reduction in closed forest dense scrub have increased, moreover open forest cover is 719.3 Ha in 2024 have also reduced to 661.29 Ha in January 2025
- V. I say that as admitted by the State Respondent in the said Affidavit until and unless the boundaries of the Zeiland Wildlife Sanctuary are decided there will be continuous destruction of forest, I therefore say that the state respondents can demarcate the boundaries of the Zeiland Wildlife Sanctuary so that the forest can be protected.
- VI. I say that the Environment of Zeiland Wildlife Sanctuary will suffer and the Applicant being the resident of the state of Manipur will suffer irreparable loss and injury unless this Hon'ble Tribunal be pleased to allow the instant OA.

Matthew Gomei

16-08-25
CH. DORENDRO SINGH
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VERIFICATION

I, Mathew Gonmei, Son of Gongjeng Gonmei, resident of Village-Zeiladjang, Jeilatjang, Tamenglong, Manipur, PIN-795141, aged about 48 years, by occupation-social service, do hereby verify that the contents of the paragraphs 1, 2 3 are true to my personal knowledge and belief and/ or based on information and/or derived from sources which I verily believe to be true and the paragraph 4, 5 6 are my humble submissions before this Hon'ble Bench based upon legal advice and I have not suppressed any material facts and circumstances.

Signature of the applicant

Mathew Gonmei

Pausheh Banya
Schaefer

16-08-25.
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Annexure A

Table 2.9 Forest Cover in North Eastern States

State	Geographi- cal Area	Inside RFA/GW				Outside RFA/GW					Total Forest and Tree Cover (A+B)	*Change in Forest Cover w.r.t. ISFR 2021 (Raster based, including Tree Cov- er)	Scrub (In km ²)
		VDF	MDF	OF	Total (A)	VDF	MDF	OF	Tree Cover				
										Total (in- cluding Tree Cov- er) (B)			
Arunachal Pradesh	83,743.22	19,637.05	26,699.94	11,836.97	58,173.96	1,348.27	2,915.15	3,444.19	1,201.63	8,909.24	67,083.20	-52.49	1,058.98
Assam	78,438.00	2,833.31	8,333.78	8,529.64	19,696.73	356.40	1,430.76	6,829.66	2,101.46	10,718.28	30,415.01	-83.92	240.93
Manipur	22,327.00	893.52	5,744.86	8,152.43	14,790.81	10.53	472.69	1,311.43	209.82	2,004.47	16,795.28	-62.20	973.65
Meghalaya	22,429.00	547.93	7,502.05	6,600.87	14,650.85	46.91	1,521.76	747.32	720.56	3,036.55	17,687.40	-84.07	620.41
Mizoram	21,081.00	259.83	8,438.53	8,931.24	17,629.60	1.69	197.23	161.94	567.80	928.66	18,558.26	178.42	314.54
Nagaland	16,579.00	1,156.13	3,168.30	4,195.60	8,520.03	100.25	1,293.51	2,308.68	394.02	4,096.46	12,616.49	-125.22	667.27
Sikkim	7,096.00	831.08	879.76	349.79	2,060.63	272.23	676.13	349.41	48.33	1,346.10	3,406.73	2.88	303.49
Tripura	10,486.00	393.77	3,719.84	1,242.58	5,356.19	220.66	1,210.15	797.77	247.56	2,476.14	7,832.33	-100.70	173.27
Total	2,62,179.22	26,552.62	64,487.06	49,839.12	1,40,878.80	2,356.94	9,717.38	15,950.40	5,491.18	33,515.90	1,74,394.70	-327.30	4,352.54

* Change in Forest Cover has been calculated from the revised figure of ISFR 2021.

Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

This is the tenth 'State of Forest Report' ('SFR') of the country. With this, India completes two decades of systematic and regular forest cover mapping on a biennial basis. Over the years, there have been advancements, both in the field of remote sensing technology and the interpretational techniques.

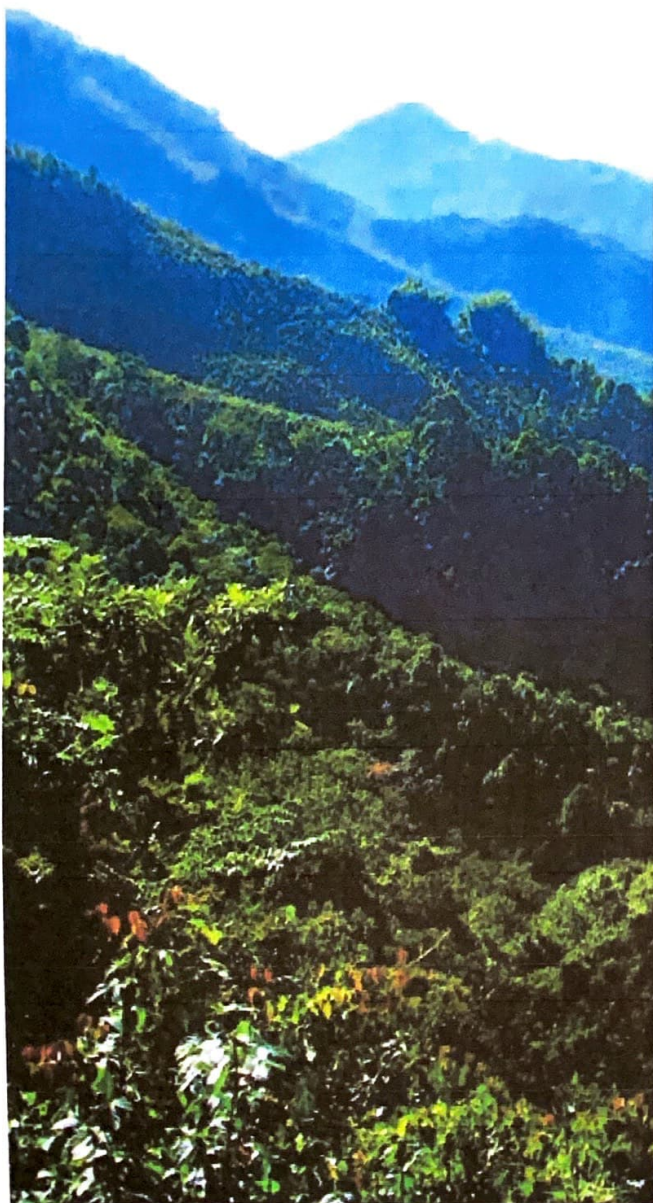
Remote sensing technology has emerged as an important tool for assessing the forest resource rapidly. The satellite provides the best synoptic view of the forest landscape. Through satellite data, it is possible to assess the forest cover broken down to density classes and the other land cover classes accurately. Using multi-date scenes supplemented with ground data, it is also possible to find broad types of forests (deciduous or evergreen). The remote sensing satellite data therefore has become very handy for stratifying the forests into homogenous sections which make the field inventory efficient, accurate and cost effective. Using very high resolution satellite data, it is also possible to discern isolated patches of trees and other tree resources outside forests.

In the first 'SFR' of 1987, the satellite data of Landsat having 80 m resolution was visually interpreted on 1:1 million scale. The minimum mappable area was 400 ha. In the present cycle, the data of Indian Remote Sensing Satellite Resourcesat-I (IRS-P6 sensor LISS-III) having resolution of 23.5 m has been digitally interpreted on 1:50,000 scale where minimum mappable area is 1 ha. This has helped in making the assessment more objective, and the analysis of the changes more accurate. The gaps/blanks in forests having more than 1 ha area which were earlier included in forest cover have been excluded. On the other hand, isolated forested patches of more than 1 ha area which were not captured earlier are included now. Further, maps being in digital form, it has become easy and fast to generate maps on any desired scale, of any specific area, for different users including State/UT Forest Departments (SFDs).

1.1 Two Decades of Forest Cover Assessment

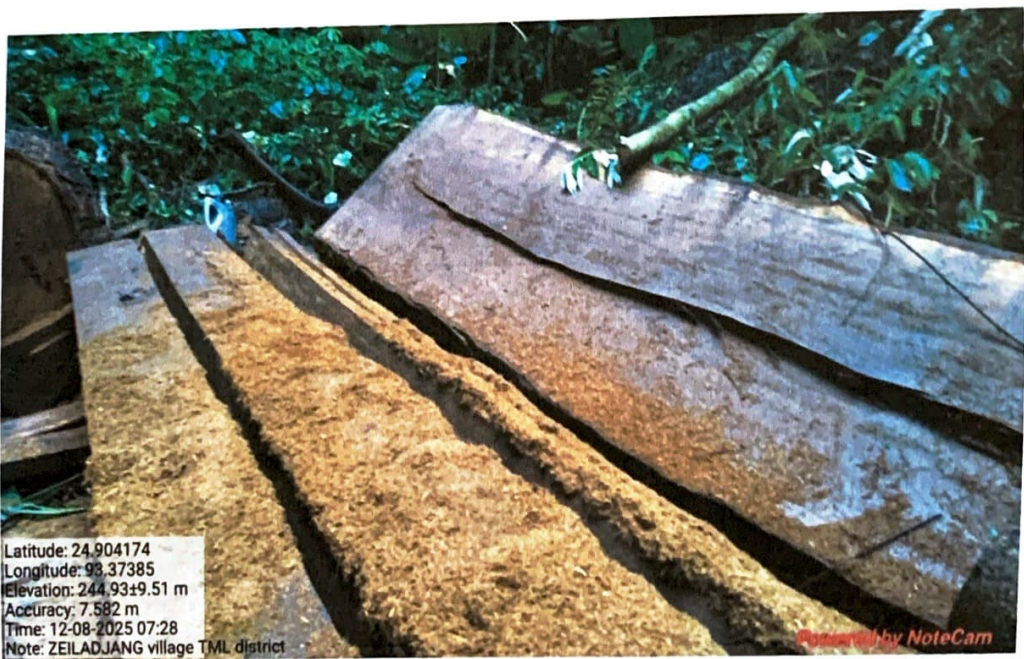
It is to be noted that the actual forest cover of the country could be known for the first time in 1987 when assessment was completed with the satellite imagery and was published in 'SFR 1987.' Since then, Forest Survey of India (FSI) has been regularly assessing the forest cover of the country every two years. India is the first country in the world to start an operational system for monitoring forest cover. Brazil had started the same in the year 1989 for monitoring the forest cover of Amazon region only (50% of Brazil's area). Other countries such as Bolivia, Indonesia & Peru have initiated similar monitoring systems using satellite remote sensing imagery on a project basis.

Developments in the application of remote sensing





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11.17.1.1 A Brief Overview of Forestry Scenario

The State of Manipur is endowed with rich biodiversity with many endemic flora and fauna. As per the Champion & Seth Classification of Forests Types (1968), the forests in Manipur belong to five Forest Type Groups which are further divided into 11 Forest Types. Out of 126 species of bamboos reported in India, 53 species are found in Manipur. Among the trees, Teak, Pine, Oak, Uningthou (*Phoebe* spp.) Leihao (*Michelia* spp.) are the major species. Forests in Manipur are largely under the community and private ownership. Being a predominantly tribal State, lives of rural people residing in hills of the State are dependent on forests in socio-economic and socio-cultural context. Nearly 1,200 species of medicinal plants are reported from the State.

Recorded Forest Area (RFA) in the State is 17,418 sq km of which 1,467 sq km is Reserved Forest, 4,171 sq km is Protected Forest and 11,780 sq km is Unclassified Forests. In Manipur, during the period 1st January 2015 to 5th February 2019, a total of 263.20 hectares of forest land was diverted for non-forestry purposes under the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 (MoEF&CC, 2019). As per the information received from the State during that last two years, 11,346 ha of plantations were raised in the State.

One National Park, two Wildlife Sanctuaries and four Community Reserves constitute the Protected Area network of the State covering 1.01% of its geographical area. Loktak Lake is the largest fresh water lake in Eastern India, and has been declared a Ramsar site. The Keibul Lamjao National Park situated on the southern shore of the Loktak Lake is home to the endangered *Rucervus eldii* (brow-antlered deer or Sangai) also known as the dancing deer. *Lilium mackliniae* or Siroi Lily is a rare species that is only found in Manipur's Siroi hill ranges.

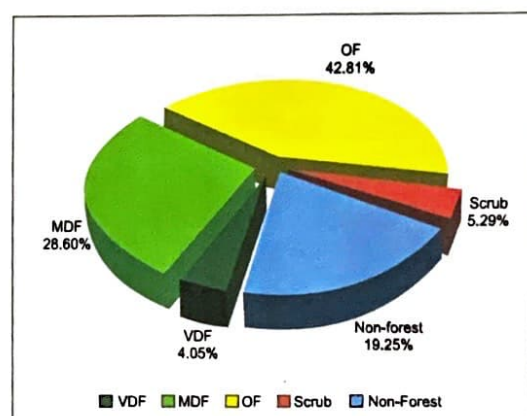
11.17.2 Forest Cover

Based on the interpretation of IRS Resourcesat-2 LISS III satellite data of the period Oct 2017 to Feb 2018, the Forest Cover in the State is 16,846.90 sq km which is 75.46 % of the State's geographical area. In terms of forest canopy density classes, the State has 905.27 sq km under Very Dense Forest (VDF), 6,386.29 sq km under Moderately Dense Forest (MDF) and 9,555.34 sq km under Open Forest (OF). Forest Cover in the State has decreased by 499.10 sq km as compared to the previous assessment reported in ISFR 2017.

TABLE 11.17.2 Forest Cover of Manipur

(in sq. km)		
Class	Area	% of GA
VDF	905.27	4.05
MDF	6,386.29	28.60
OF	9,555.34	42.81
Total	16,846.90	75.46
Scrub	1,181.47	5.29

FIGURE 11.17.1 Forest Cover of Manipur



11.17.2.1 Forest Cover inside and outside Recorded Forest Area (or Green Wash)

The State has reported extent of recorded forest area (RFA) 17,418 sq km which is 78.01% of its geographical area. The reserved, protected and unclassified forests are 8.42%, 23.95% and 67.63% respectively of the recorded forest area in the State. Due to non-availability of digitized boundary of recorded forest areas from the State, the updated Green Wash from Sol toposheets which is 17,542.42 sq km has been used as proxy to the RFA boundary and the analysis of forest cover inside and outside this area is given below.