BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI
IN
Original Application No. 1071/2024

IN THE MATTER OF:

News item titled as "Neelkurinji becomes a threatened species, officially" appearing in the Hindu dated 10.08.2024 before NGT (PB), New Delhi.

INDEX

RESPONDENT NO. 1&3

THROUGH

Shlok Chandra

SHLOK CHANDRA
COUNSEL FOR MOEFCC
A-22, Ground Floor
Block A, Defence Colony, new Delhi
Phone No. 9999670588
Enrolment No. D1056/2009

PLACE: NEW DELHI
DATED:20..01.2026

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

IN

Original Application No. 1071/2024

IN THE MATTER OF:

News item titled as "Neelkurinji becomes a threatened species, officially" appearing in the Hindu dated 10.08.2024 before NGT (PB), New Delhi.

ADDITIONAL COUNTER AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (RESPONDENT NO. 3) AND THE BOTANICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (RESPONDENT NO. 1)

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH:

I, Chiranjib Mridha, son of Krishnapada Mridha, aged about 43 years, currently working as Under Secretary in the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (hereinafter referred to as MoEFCC), do hereby solemnly affirm and state on oath as follows:

1. That the present Additional Counter Affidavit is being filed in compliance with the directions of this Hon'ble Tribunal passed on the last date of hearing, whereby this Respondent was directed to file an additional affidavit detailing the scientific process and methodology proposed to be undertaken for conducting a survey of Neelakurunji (Strobilanthes kunthiana). It was also directed that communication received from Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board and Kerala State Biodiversity Board along with the report based upon the field survey be placed before the Hon'ble Tribunal.

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2. That in obedience to this Hon'ble Tribunal's directions, it is submitted that after the registration of this *sou moto* matter, the respondent no. 3 sought inputs from the National Biodiversity Authority regarding the potential declaration of Neelakurinji (Strobilanthes kunthiana) as a threatened species under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002. The NBA also sought clarification from the Kerala and Tamil Nadu State Biodiversity Boards. NBA forwarded the letters of the State Biodiversity Boards, wherein the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) confirmed that no formal proposal has been submitted to the Ministry for the declaration, though ongoing conservation efforts are in place. The Tamil Nadu State Biodiversity Board (TNSBB) noted that Neelakurinji is already protected under Schedule III of the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 2022, and no further notification is required. Based on the inputs from both State Biodiversity Boards, it appears there is currently no formal proposal to the Ministry regarding the declaration of Neelakurinji as a threatened species under the Biological Diversity Act, 2002. The letters from both Kerala and Tamil Nadu State Biodiversity Boards are annexed as **Annexure 1 & 2** respectively.

2. That in compliance with the aforesaid directions, this Respondent Ministry sought expert inputs from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) i.e Respondent No. 2, a premier scientific organization under this Ministry, mandated to undertake floristic surveys, taxonomic research and assessment of plant diversity in the country.

3. That the Botanical Survey of India has submitted a detailed and comprehensive scientific Plan of Action for reassessment and revalidation of the threat status of Neelakurunji (Strobilanthes kunthiana), strictly in

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accordance with the IUCN Red List Categories and Criteria. The said plan is proposed to be adopted in *toto* without any abridgement or dilution.

4. That the survey on the re-assessment and re-validation on the threat status of (Strobilanthes kunthiana) will be conducted by a team of investigators, the team will be constituted of the following members:-

S.No	Particulars	Designation
1.	Dr. S.S Hameed, Scientist F & Head of Office, Botanical Survey of India, Southern Regional Centre, Coimbatore	Co-ordinator
2.	Dr. Sujana K.A., Scientist E, Botanical Survey of India, Southern Regional Centre, Coimbatore	Principal Investigator (PI)
3.	Dr. Basil Paul, Senior Preservation Assistant, Botanical Survey of India, Southern Regional Centre, Coimbatore	Co-Investigator (Co-PI)

5. That the plan of action submitted by BSI includes, inter alia, the rationale of the study, study area and stratified sampling design across the Western Ghats, documentation of historical and current distribution using herbarium records and GPS-based field surveys, quantitative population assessment through standardized transects and quadrats, detailed taxonomic verification including comparative morphology and micromorphology, grid-based spatial mapping for computation of Extent of Occurrence (EOO) and Area of Occupancy (AOO), threat assessment under IUCN criteria and comprehensive habitat characterization.

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I. Rationale of the Study :-

Strobilanthes kunthiana (Nees) T. Anderson ex Benth., popularly known as *Neelakurinji*, serves as a flagship species for the Shola grasslands of the Western Ghats, a UNESCO World Heritage Site and global biodiversity hotspot. Despite its ecological and symbolic significance, the species was only officially evaluated on a global scale in 2024, resulting in a *Vulnerable* listing on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. Its unique 12-year mass-flowering cycle—while a biological marvel—poses significant challenges for population monitoring and environmental assessment, often delaying critical conservation interventions. The survival of Neelakurinji is currently jeopardized by the systematic fragmentation of the montane grasslands. Habitat loss driven by the expansion of tea and softwood plantations, rapid urbanization, and infrastructure development is exacerbated by unregulated tourism during blooming years. Furthermore, the encroachment of invasive non-native species, such as Eucalyptus and Black Wattle, has severely degraded its native range by outcompeting the taxon for space and resources.

Conservation efforts are further complicated by taxonomic ambiguity within the *Strobilanthes* genus; similar mass-blooming patterns among related species often lead to misidentification, skewing population data. Herewith BSI has proposed for a comprehensive re-evaluation of *S. kunthiana*, supported by rigorous taxonomic, distributional, and population studies. By refining our understanding of this taxon, they are aiming to validate previous assessments and catalyze broader protection for the fragile ecosystems of the Western Ghats.

II. Study Area and Sampling Design:-

The natural habitat of *Strobilanthes kunthiana* (Neelakurinji) is confined to the high-altitude shola–grassland ecosystems of

the Western Ghats, typically ranging from 1,300 to 2,400 meters. Its distribution spans several "sky-island" massifs, including the Anamalai–Eravikulam–High Ranges, Nilgiri, Palani, and Baba Budangiri–Kudremukh, with smaller outliers in the Shevaroy and Sandur hills. To assess these populations effectively, a stratified sampling approach will be employed, utilizing mountain ranges as primary strata. Secondary strata will be defined by elevation bands (1,300–1,600 m, 1,600–1,900 m, and 1,900–2,200 m) and land-use types, such as intact grasslands, shola–grassland edges, and areas fragmented by plantations. By synthesizing historical localities from herbarium records and literature, core grassland patches will be identified and clustered. Within these clusters, representative sites will be selected via random or systematic sampling along accessible ridges and plateaus to ensure data integrity and avoid the bias associated with high-traffic tourist locations.

III. Documentation of Distribution:-

Species distribution will be documented by synthesizing georeferenced data from herbarium records, peer-reviewed literature, and regional distribution notes across Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and Karnataka, including the isolated Eastern Ghats. The study team will conduct field assessments at historical sites within four key landscapes i.e., Anamalai–Eravikulam–High Ranges; Nilgiri and Palani Hills; Baba Budangiri, Kudremukh, and the Biligiri Ranganathaswamy Temple (BRT) hills and Agasthyamala and outlier Eastern Ghats ranges, such as the Shevaroy Hills (Yercaud). Current occurrence, habitat health, and population extent will be mapped along altitudinal transects (1,300–2,400 m) using GPS and high-resolution base maps. During non-bloom years, identification will rely on vegetative

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characteristics and local ecological knowledge. All records will be standardized by coordinates, altitude, date, and source reliability, with uncertain data flagged for subsequent verification to ensure a robust updated assessment.

IV. Quantification of the Species:-

At each selected site, to assess the population, 1,000 m × 10 m belt transects will be laid along slopes or ridges, spanning the gradient from intact grasslands to plantations or degraded edges. Within each transect, 5 m × 5 m quadrats will be established at 50 m intervals to systematically record the presence of *S. kunthiana*, its density, and percentage cover. Furthermore, the assessment will document associated vegetation and evaluate environmental pressures, specifically tracking signs of fire, trampling, and the encroachment of invasive species, with all field data tabulated for subsequent analysis.

V. Identification tools including Micro Morphology:-

To ensure precise species identification, the proposed study will be conducted in two phases focusing on taxonomic verification and comparative analysis:

Taxonomic Verification and Characterization: The research team will begin by reviewing original descriptions and regional revisions of *Strobilanthes* to confirm the accepted nomenclature, basionym, and diagnostic traits of *S. kunthiana*. A comprehensive suite of morphological features will be extracted—including habit, leaf venation, spike structure, and detailed floral anatomy (calyx lobing, stamen insertion, and seed characteristics)—alongside documented flowering cycles. To capture morphological variation across its entire range, researchers will examine type material and authentic specimens

at major herbaria, including CAL (Kolkata), MH (Coimbatore), KFRI, and Kew (K).

Comparative Analysis and Micromorphology: Key diagnostic characters will be recorded on standardized scorecards, complemented by scaled photography of critical structures. To resolve potential misidentifications, *S. kunthiana* will be compared against sympatric or historically confused "kurinji" species using published comparative tables and detailed floral dissections. In cases where gross morphology overlaps with allied taxa, the team will employ advanced techniques, such as Scanning Electron Microscopy (SEM) for pollen and seed coat micromorphology, as well as anatomical sectioning, to provide definitive taxonomic clarity.

VI. Distribution in a grid:-

To establish a robust spatial framework for the assessment, the study will utilize the following Grid-Based Distribution Mapping protocol.

***Spatial Documentation and Replication*:** GPS coordinates will be recorded for every transect and quadrat to ensure precise geo-referencing. To capture ecological variability within each mountain block, the team will conduct 3–5 replicate transects per elevation and land-use stratum. These field data will be integrated with high-resolution satellite imagery to accurately map habitat extent and quantify the degree of fragmentation across the landscape.

Mapping and IUCN Metrics: All sampled sites will be overlaid onto existing occurrence maps to verify comprehensive coverage across major blocks and elevation bands; any unsurveyed clusters of suitable habitat will be flagged for future investigation. This consolidated point layer will serve as the primary dataset for calculating the Extent of Occurrence (EOO) and Area of Occupancy (AOO). These calculations

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will strictly adhere to the IUCN 2×2 km grid approach, ensuring that the sampling spans the species' full natural range for an accurate status re-evaluation.

VII. Threat Assessment by IUCN:-

Field observations will be integrated with land-use change data and supplements from state forest departments to evaluate habitat degradation, invasive species spread, tourism, and plantation encroachment. This data will be analyzed prior to applying the IUCN Categories and Criteria, which require assessing the species against all five criteria (A–E) and assigning the category reflecting the highest level of extinction risk met. These categories range from Vulnerable (VU) to Endangered (EN) and Critically Endangered (CR), above the lower-risk Near Threatened (NT) and Least Concern (LC) levels.

The five criteria include: A: Population reduction (past or projected); B: Restricted geographic range with decline or fluctuation; C: Small population size and decline; D: Very small or restricted population; E: Quantitative extinction risk analysis

Data management will be handled via the Species Information Service (SIS). To support Criterion B and parts of Criterion A, GeoCAT (Geospatial Conservation Assessment Tool) will be used to calculate Extent of Occurrence (EOO) and Area of Occupancy (AOO) from georeferenced points. This tool allows for the filtering of dubious records and the execution of one-click analyses using the IUCN-recommended 2 km grid for AOO. These exported metrics will be cited in the final assessment, which must be reviewed by a Red List Authority (RLA) before publication by the IUCN Red List Unit.

VIII. Habitat Characterization and Niche Description:-

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To characterize the habitat and describe the niche of each confirmed population, the following protocol will be implemented:

Habitat Profiling and Environmental Documentation: A comprehensive habitat profile will be developed for the species across its range by recording associated vegetation types—such as montane grasslands, shola edges, and rocky slopes—alongside soil data, slope orientation, and micro-climatic variables. Additionally, the team will document disturbance indicators at each site to assess environmental health and pressures.

Altitudinal and Climatic Analysis: The study will summarize the species' altitudinal and climatic distributions, focusing on the cool, foggy, high-altitude belts dominated by shola–grassland mosaics. This analysis will define the environmental parameters and habitat requirements critical to the taxon's survival throughout its natural range.

11. That the Botanical Survey of India has proposed a scientifically justified six-month execution plan for completion of the entire exercise during the year 2026. As per the proposed timeline:

(a) Months 1–2: Literature review, herbarium consultation, collation of historical records and finalization of sampling framework;

(b) Months 2–4: Extensive field surveys across identified habitats, including transect and quadrat sampling, GPS mapping and habitat assessment;

(c) Months 4–5: Taxonomic verification, micromorphological studies, SEM analysis wherever required and data compilation;

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(d) Months 5–6: Application of IUCN criteria, computation of EOO and AOO, final threat assessment and preparation of reassessment report for review by competent Red List Authority.

12. That the six-month timeline proposed by BSI is realistic and necessary considering the biological characteristics and mass-flowering cycle of Neelakurunji and the ecological complexity of its habitat.

13. That the Respondent Ministry respectfully submits that the scientific methodology and timeline placed on record fully comply with the directions of this Hon'ble Tribunal and demonstrate the bona fide commitment of the Government of India towards evidence-based conservation.

14. That, the answering respondent reserves the right to file additional information before the Hon'ble Tribunal, if required till *Pendente-lite.*

15. That, in view of the aforementioned facts and circumstances, this Hon'ble Tribunal may kindly be pleased to pass appropriate order(s)/directions as the Hon'ble Tribunal may deem fit and proper in the interest of justice.

16. That this affidavit is filed bona fide and in the interest of justice.

DEPONENT

(चिरंजीव मृधा)
(CHIRANJIB MRIDHA)
अवर सचिव/Under Secretary
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
M/o Environment,Forest and Climate Change
भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली
Govt. of India, New Delhi

NOTARY
R.V. SINGH
Advocate
Regn.No.2282
Commission
Expire on
24-10-2027
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GOVT. OF INDIA

VERIFICATION

I, the above-named deponent, do hereby verify that the contents of paragraphs 1 to 16 are true and correct to my knowledge and belief as per the available record and nothing material has been concealed therefrom. Verified at New Delhi on this ___ day of 19 JAN 2026 2026.

DEPONENT

(चिरंजीव मृधा)
(CHIRANJIB MRIDHA)
अवर सचिव/Under Secretary
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय
M/o Environment,Forest and Climate Change
भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली
Govt. of India, New Delhi

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

NOTARY
R.V. SINGH
Advocate
Regn.No.2282
Commission
Expire on
24-10-2027
Area-Delhi
GOVT. OF INDIA

Solemnly affirmed before me, read over & explained to the deponent

Notary Public. DELHI

19 JAN 2026

Annexure 1

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കേരള സംസ്ഥാന ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ ബോർഡ്

KERALA STATE BIODIVERSITY BOARD

A statutory and autonomous body, Government of Kerala

No.I/38730/2025 Date: 14-10-2025

The Advisor (Law),
National Biodiversity Authority,
TICEL Bio Park, 5th Floor,
CSIR Road, Taramani,
Chennai- 600 113.

Sir

Sub:- Clarification regarding the declaration of the species "Neelakurinji" (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) as a threatened species in the State of Kerala – Reg.

Ref:- Your letter No. NBA/Law Gen/28/45/17/25-26 dated 23.09.2025.

This is in reference to the subject and the referred letter from the National Biodiversity Authority, seeking clarification and inputs from the Kerala State Biodiversity Board (KSBB) in the context of O.A No. 1071/2024 before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal (NGT).

We hereby submit the following point-wise clarification for your consideration:

1. Regarding Proposal to MoEF&CC for *Strobilanthes kunthiana:*

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board clarifies that, as of this date, no standalone formal proposal has been sent by the State Government of Kerala to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) for officially notifying Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) as a threatened species under the relevant provisions of the BD Act.

2. Recognition of Conservation Status:

The Board recognizes and acknowledges the recent (2024) global assessment of Strobilanthes kunthiana as "Vulnerable" on the IUCN Red List of Threatened Species. The Board is fully aware of the threats to the species, including habitat loss, fragmentation, invasive species, and unregulated tourism, as detailed in the attached scientific note.

3. Conservation Measures Undertaken:

The Kerala State Biodiversity Board, in collaboration with the Kerala Forest Department and other agencies, has initiated several conservation measures, including:

- **Activation of Biodiversity Management Committees (BMCs):** BMCs, which are designated as "Environmental Watch Groups" as per G.O. (P) No. 04/13/Envt., dated May 13, 2013, have been directed to monitor and report on the status of Neelakurinji

habitats, particularly outside protected forest areas.

- **Field Investigation:** Following a news report in The Hindu on September 13, 2024, regarding the destruction of Neelakurinji plants in the Chokramudi Hills, Idukki, the KSBB directed the local BMC to investigate. A field visit was conducted by the BMC supported by a technical team on September 23, 2024, and a detailed report (Letter No. A5-1896/2024 dated October 10, 2024) has been submitted.
- **Ongoing Monitoring and Awareness:** Efforts are ongoing to monitor key populations and raise awareness among local communities and stakeholders about the ecological and cultural significance of the species.

4. Systematic Process for Official Notification of Threatened Species:

The Board wishes to highlight a significant, ongoing initiative that directly addresses the core of this matter. KSBB has initiated an action to update the species notified under Section 38 of the Biological Diversity Act. This has been incorporated in KSBB's 2025–26 Plan proposal, for which the State Government has accorded administrative sanction. As part of this sanctioned programme, a CAMP (Conservation Assessment and Management Prioritization) workshop will be conducted during the current year with national and regional experts. Using standardised criteria and Kerala-specific evidence, threatened species of the State will be assessed at local level. Recommendations arising from this CAMP exercise will be compiled and transmitted to MoEF&CC for updating the list of species under Section 38. Importantly, *Strobilanthes kunthiana* will also be taken up in this CAMP assessment for Kerala, and its State-specific status, threats and management recommendations will be finalised within the same workflow, ensuring that any proposal to MoEF&CC is evidence-based and consistent with national procedures.

Yours faithfully,

Signed by
V Balakrishnan
Date: 14-10-2025 19:18:22

Dr. N Anil Kumar

Kailasam, T.C. 24/3219, No. 43, Belhaven Gardens, Kowdiar P.O., Thiruvananthapuram – 695 003,
Phone : 0471- 2724740, Email: keralabiodiversity@gmail.com, kerala.sbb@kerala.gov.in, Website:www.keralabiodiversity.org

ഭാരത സർക്കാർ
മാതൃഭാഷ

TQ TATA PROJECTS QUALITY SERVICES NABCB QM 039 ISO 9001:2015 CERTIFIED

ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമ പഞ്ചായത്ത് ഓഫീസ്

ഐ.എസ്.ഒ 9001:2015 സർട്ടിഫൈഡ്

ഇടുക്കി ജില്ല, പൊട്ടൻകാട്. പിൻ-685565,ഫോൺ:04865 265264, ഇമെയിൽ: pottankadu@gmail.com

നമ്പർ എ5- 1896/2024 തീയതി : 07/10/2024

പ്രേക്ഷിതൻ

സെക്രട്ടറി
ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത്

സ്വീകർത്താവ്

ബഹു. മെമ്പർ സെക്രട്ടറി
കേരള സംസ്ഥാന ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ ബോർഡ്
കവടിയാർ പി ഒ, തിരുവനന്തപുരം

സർ,

വിഷയം :- ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമ പഞ്ചായത്ത് ബയോഡൈവേഴ്സിറ്റി മാനേജ്മെൻറ് കമ്മിറ്റി – ചൊക്രമുടി സന്ദർശനം നടത്തി റിപ്പോർട്ട് ലഭ്യമാക്കുന്നത് സംബന്ധിച്ച്.

സൂചന :- അങ്ങയുടെ 23.09.2024 ലെ KSBB/203/2024- TA(WS) നമ്പർ കത്ത്.

മേൽ വിഷയത്തിലേക്കും സൂചനയിലേക്കും അങ്ങയുടെ ശ്രദ്ധ ക്ഷണിക്കുന്നു. ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തിലെ 5-ാം വാർഡില് ചൊക്രമുടി താഴ്ഭാഗത്ത് നടന്ന നിർമ്മാണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെ ഭാഗമായി നീല കുറിഞ്ഞി വ്യാപകമായി നശിപ്പിക്കുന്നു എന്ന പരാതി ലഭിച്ചതിനെ തുടർന്ന് ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തിലെ ബയോഡൈവേഴ്സിറ്റി മാനേജ്മെൻറ് കമ്മിറ്റിയുടെ യോഗം 05/10/2024 ശനിയാഴ്ച്ച പകൽ 11.00 ന് ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത് കോൺഫറൻസ് ഹാളില് വെച്ച് നടക്കുകയും യോഗത്തിൻറെ തീരുമാനം പ്രകാരം BMC അംഗങ്ങൾ ടി പ്രദേശം സന്ദർശിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തു. പരിശോധനയിൽ ടി പ്രദേശം ജൈവവൈവിധ്യ സമ്പന്നമാണെന്നും നീല കുറിഞ്ഞി ഉൾപ്പെടെയുള്ള സസ്യങ്ങള് ടി പ്രദേശത്ത് സ്ഥിതി ചെയ്യുന്നുണ്ടെന്നും ബോധ്യപ്പെട്ടു. ടി സ്ഥലത്ത് നടന്ന നിർമ്മാണ പ്രവർത്തനങ്ങളുടെ ഭാഗമായി മരങ്ങൾ മുറിച്ച് മാറ്റുകയും നീർച്ചാലിന് കുറുകെ മണ്ണ് നീക്കം ചെയ്ത് കുളം നിർമ്മിക്കുകയും റോഡ് നിർമ്മിക്കുകയും ചെയ്തിട്ടുണ്ട്. ടി സ്ഥലത്ത് പാർപ്പിടാവശ്യത്തിനായി കെട്ടിടം നിർമ്മിക്കുന്നതിന് പെർമിറ്റ് ലഭിക്കുന്നതിനായി ശ്രീ. സിബി ജോസഫ്, കൈപ്പൻപ്ലാക്കൽ, ശ്രീമതി. സിനി സിബി, കൈപ്പൻപ്ലാക്കല് എന്നിവര് ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്തിൽ സമർപ്പിച്ച അപേക്ഷ വില്ലേജ് ഓഫീസർ ബൈസൺവാലിയുടെ മറുപടി കത്ത്, ജില്ലാ ദുരന്ത നിവാരണ അതോറിറ്റി, ഇടുക്കിയുടെ ഉത്തരവ്, മൈനിംങ് ആൻറ് ജിയോളജി വകുപ്പിൻറെ റിപ്പോർട്ട് എന്നിവ പ്രകാരം നിരസിച്ചിട്ടുണ്ട്. മേൽ വിവരം അങ്ങയുടെ അറിവിനും അന്തര നടപടിക്കുമായി സമർപ്പിക്കുന്നു

വിശ്വസ്തതയോടെ

പ്രസിഡൻറ്
ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമ പഞ്ചായത്ത്
പ്രസിഡന്റ്
ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത്
Mob: 9496045016

സെക്രട്ടറി
ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമ പഞ്ചായത്ത്

സെക്രട്ടറി
ബൈസൺവാലി ഗ്രാമപഞ്ചായത്ത്

Bison Valley Gram Panchayat Office
ISO 9001:2015 Certified

Idukki District, Pottankadu, Pin-685565, Phone: 04865 265264, Email: pottankadu@gmail.com

No. A5- 1896/2024 Date : 07/10/2024

Secretary
Bison Valley Grama Panchayat
Recipient

Hon. Member Secretary
Kerala State Biodiversity Board
Kavadiar P.O., Thiruvananthapuram

Sir,

Subject:- Bison Valley Grama Panchayat Biodiversity Management Committee - Regarding the visit to Chokramudi and submission of the report.
Reference:- Your letter No. KSBB/ 203/2024- TA(WS) dated 23.09.2024.

Your attention is drawn to the above subject and indication. Following a complaint that Neela Kurinji is being destroyed extensively as part of the construction work carried out in the lower reaches of Chokramudi in Ward 5 of Bison Valley Grama Panchayat, the meeting of the Biodiversity Management Committee of Bison Valley Grama Panchayat was held on Saturday, 05/10/2024 at 11.00 am at the Bison Valley Grama Panchayat Conference Hall and as per the decision of the meeting, the BMC members visited the T area. During the inspection, it was found that the T area is rich in biodiversity and plants including Neela Kurinji are located in the T area. As part of the construction work carried out at the T area, trees have been cut down, soil has been removed across the watercourse to build a pond and a road has been constructed. In order to obtain a permit for the construction of a building for residential purposes at the T area, Mr. Sibi Joseph, Kaippanplakkal, Mrs. The application submitted by Sini Sibi and Kaipanplakkal to the Bison Valley Gram Panchayat has been rejected as per the reply letter of the Village Officer Bison Valley, the order of the District Disaster Management Authority, Idukki, and the report of the Mining and Geology Department. The above information is submitted for your information and further action.

Faithfully

-sd-
President
Bison Valley Gram Panchayat
Phone: 9496045016

-sd-
Secretary
Bison Valley Gram Panchayat

BISONVALLEY GRAMA PANCHAYAT, POTIANKADU PO, IDUKKI 6855565

(True Translated Copy)

TAMIL NADU BIODIVERSITY BOARD

(A statutory, autonomous & regulatory body of the Government of Tamil Nadu)

Mita Banerjee, IFS,
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & Member Secretary

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Tel: 044-22782730
Email: secy.tnbb@tn.gov.in
Website: http://www.tnbb.tn.gov.in

Ref No. TNBB/847/2025/B1, Dated: 22.10.2025

To,
The Member Secretary,
National Biodiversity Authority,
Chennai -600 113.

Sir,

Sub: TNBB- Seeking clarification in respect of declaring the species "Neelakurinji" as a threatened species officially in the State of Kerala & Tamil Nadu – reg.

Ref: Legal Advisor, NBA Lr. No: NBA/Law Gen/28/45/17/25-26, dated: 23.09.2025

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I wish to inform that, with reference to the letter cited above, wherein it was requested to furnish the inputs of the Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board on the conservation measures undertaken to protect the threatened species Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana*) in Tamil Nadu, the steps taken to notify this species as threatened, and any proposal sent or received, I wish to inform that Neelakurinji species *Strobilanthes kunthiana* is an endemic species with most population in the upper reaches of the Western Ghats maximum being in the Nilgiris district. As per Indian State of Forest Report (ISFR) 2023, 1706.89 km² is forest cover which is 66.55% of Survey of India (SoI). Major parts of areas where the species is largely distributed, falls within Protected Areas in Tamil Nadu such as Mukurthi National Park, Kodaikanal Wildlife Sanctuary, Palani Hills and the Anamalai Tiger Reserve which ensures its protection under the Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972. Therefore, no threat to the species has been reported from Tamil Nadu so far.

2. Further, I wish to inform that no formal proposal has been sent by the Government of Tamil Nadu based on the recommendation of Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) for officially notifying Neelakurinji (*Strobilanthes kunthiana)* as a threatened species under the relevant provision of the BD Act since the 23 species of plants notified under Section 38 of BDA, 2002 are the verge of extinction and no proposal has been received with respect to *S. kunthiana* by Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board in this regard. The species is already listed under Schedule III (specified plants) of the Wildlife (Protection) Amendment Act, 2022.

Yours faithfully,
Sd/- Mita Banerjee,
PCCF & Member Secretary
Tamil Nadu Biodiversity Board

/t.c.b.o/

for Superintendent