

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL  
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI  
IN  
Original Application No. 362/2025**

**IN THE MATTER OF:**

News Item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025

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RESPONDENT NO. 1 & 2

THROUGH



**SHLOK CHANDRA  
COUNSEL FOR MOEFCC**

A-22, Ground Floor  
Block A, Defence Colony, new Delhi  
Phone No. 9999670588  
Enrollment No. 01056/2009

**Place: New Delhi**

**Date: 17.11.2025**

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL  
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI  
IN  
Original Application No. 362/2025

IN THE MATTER OF:

News Item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025

COMMON COUNTER AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (RESPONDENT NO. 1) AND THE BOTANICAL SURVEY OF INDIA (RESPONDENT NO. 2)

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHOWETH:

I, Vibhuti Panjiyar, daughter of Shri. Sachidanand Saha, aged about 46 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:



I have read and understood the contents of the present Affidavit, the contents thereof are true, and no part of it is false, and nothing material has been concealed therefrom.

2. That, the present application is registered suo-motu on the basis of the news item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025.

Vibhuti

3. The matter relates to the increasing risk of extinction faced by the ancient Parijat tree species in Uttar Pradesh. As per the article, scientists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences have raised serious concerns about the survival of these centuries-old trees found in locations like Kintoor (Barabanki), Jhusi (Prayagraj), and Sultanpur. The article states that these trees—estimated to be over 800 years old are under threat due to a combination of climate change, declining rainfall, and overharvesting of their bark, leaves, fruits, and seeds. The article also highlights that researchers have proposed a botanical reclassification. The article mentions that these trees are not only the oldest known African Parijats in India, but also among the most ancient specimens of the species found outside the African continent. The article further highlights that the wood of the Parijat tree naturally holds a high water content up to 79% which helps the trees remain upright. However, as moisture levels decrease, the trees become unstable and vulnerable to collapse. The article further notes that the water content in the Parijat tree at Jhusi has fallen to 45.2%, and in Kintoor to 39.7%, indicating that both trees are currently at serious risk.
4. That at the outset, 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.

5. It is most respectfully submitted that the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) is the apex taxonomic research institution of the country, under that aegis of the Ministry of Environment Forest and Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Government of India. That BSI is mandated to undertake floristic and



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taxonomic studies through survey, exploration and documentation of all wild plant resources (including algae and fungi) of the country. These resources not only serve as scientific references to the taxonomic fraternity, researchers and students but also help the state biodiversity boards and the forest departments in devising management policies relating to the protected areas. That, BSI, through its ex-situ conservation programmes effectively maintains and conserves endangered and economically wild important plants of the country only in its associated experimental and botanical gardens and Orchidarium of the plant resources of the country.

6. This common counter affidavit is being filed to place on record the factual position and technical comments of the BSI regarding the claims made in the aforementioned news report.

7. That it is most humbly submitted that the study co-authored by Dr. Arti Garg a former Scientist of BSI, was carried out independently in her own interest and was never part of the BSI's Annual Research Programme.

8. **Status of *Adansonia digitata* L. (Commonly misidentified as Parijat/Kalpataru)**

- i. The species in question, referred to as the Parijat/Kalpataru in the news report, has been identified as *Adansonia digitata* L., which is commonly known as the African baobab.



**Origin and Introduction:** The native range of *Adansonia digitata* L. is Tropical & South Africa and the Southern Arabian Peninsula. As per the POWO database, the species is introduced in India. Molecular studies conducted by Bell et al. (2015) confirm that the genetic diversity in Indian Baobab populations is consistent with

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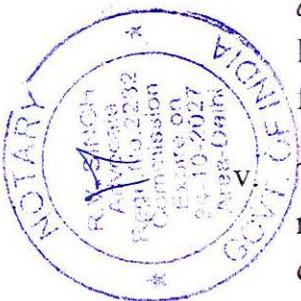
an introduction to the Indian subcontinent, affirming multiple introductions over a history of maximum 1500 years.

- iii. **Extinction Risk and IUCN Status:** The claim in the news report that the "Parijat tree is at increasing risk of extinction seems to be factually incorrect". Globally, *Adansonia digitata* L. is in active trade and its IUCN status is "**Not Evaluated**", meaning the species has not yet been assessed for the IUCN Red List, and therefore, it is not currently included in the Red List. The term '**Extinction**' is used when a species is completely going to disappear from the earth, and the global status does not indicate this.

## 9. Conservation and Protection of Heritage Trees in Uttar Pradesh

- i. That the oldest *Adansonia digitata* L. in the region is found near Ulta Qila in Jhunsi, Prayagraj, and it is already enlisted as a Heritage Tree by the UP Biodiversity Board.
- ii. It is also submitted that the Uttar Pradesh State Government has launched an effort to conserve old and heritage trees, including the Parijat, under the **Heritage Tree Adoption Scheme**, and the local administration is tasked with ensuring its protection and conservation.
- iii. That the BSI, as part of its mandate, conserves *Adansonia digitata* L. in its Botanical Garden maintained by the Central Regional Centre, Prayagraj (two plants, introduced seven years ago).
- iv. The custody and protection of Heritage Trees, including *Adansonia digitata* L., is primarily entrusted with the **UP Biodiversity Board**. The MoEF&CC has sought a detailed factual status report from the State Government, UP, regarding the news item.

That to ascertain the correct position and the truthfulness of the matter, the Ministry vide letter dated 29.07.2025 has sought a detailed factual status report from the State Government, UP and a subsequent reminder(s) has also issued vide letter dated 15.09.2025



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& 29.09.2025. However, till date, no information has been received from the State Government in this regard. A copy of the letter(s) dated 29.07.2025, 15.09.2025 & 29.09.2025 is annexed hereto as **Annexure-1 (colly)**.

#### 10. Claims of Water Content Loss and Reclassification

- i. **Water Content:** The study by Ogburn and Edwards (2010) on Baobabs confirms that in the dry season, stem water reserves are used for new leaf growth and cuticular transpiration, with stomatal opening coinciding only with significant rainfall. The statement in the news report about the water content drop to 45.2% at Jhusi and 39.7% at Kintoor needs to be correlated with the season of collection and the area of the stem sampled.
- ii. **Botanical Reclassification:** The authors proposing the reclassification of the taxa seems to be **misleading and exaggerated**, as reclassification is only suggested when new or better understanding of evolutionary relationship is evident from exhaustive studies. Molecular studies confirming the introduction of the species from Africa were published in 2015 and 2020 overlooking such established research while demanding reclassification through media undermines ongoing research.

#### 11. Identity of the 'Parijat' Tree

- i. **Mythological Identity:** The claim of *Adansonia digitata* L. as 'Parijat' is questioned, as no old texts, Puranas, or mythology describe this introduced African species as Parijat.

- ii. **Authentic Identity:** Reviewing the description from mythology and correlating with taxonomy and phytogeography, the BSI concludes that the **real Parijat** is generally considered to be *Nyctanthes arbor-tristis* L., whose native range is Himalaya to Indo-China.

- iii. **Mistaken Identity:** There is a fair chance that *Adansonia digitata* L. (African Baobab) is a **mistaken identity** for 'Kalpavriksh' and may have been confused with *Bombax ceiba* L. (Silk-cotton tree, or *Salmali* in Sanskrit), which is native to India and possesses similar morphological features and belongs to the same family

Abhuti



(Malvaceae). *Bombax ceiba* is frequently mentioned in ancient Indian texts, including the Mahabharata, unlike *Adansonia digitata* L.

12. In view of the aforementioned facts and circumstances, it is humbly submitted that the claims of 'extinction risk' for *Adansonia digitata* L. and the call for 'botanical reclassification' through media are not supported by the current global scientific and IUCN data. The tree is already a protected Heritage Tree under the UP Biodiversity Board.

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

14. 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.



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

**VERIFICATION**

17 NOV 2025

Verified at \_\_\_\_\_ on this \_\_\_\_\_ Day of November, 2025, that the contents of

this affidavit are true and correct to my knowledge based on the official record maintained in the daily course of its business, no part of this affidavit is false and nothing material has been concealed therefrom.

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

Notary Public DELHI

17 NOV 2025

*(Signature)*

**DEPONENT**

(विभूति पंजियार)  
(VIBHUTI PANJIYAR)  
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

*(Signature)*

**DEPONENT**

(विभूति पंजियार)  
(VIBHUTI PANJIYAR)  
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



भारत सरकार  
Government of India  
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय  
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change  
क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, लखनऊ  
Regional Office, Lucknow



केन्द्रीय भवन, ग्यारवां तल, सेक्टर एच, अलीगंज, लखनऊ-226024

Kendriya Bhawan, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sector H, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024, Phone No : 0522-2326696

Email : foecz.lko-mef@nic.in, goimnecfofko@gmail.com

File No: L-1348/UP/2025/209

Date: 29.07.2025

Court matter/ Email

To,

Additional Chief Secretary,  
Forest & Wildlife Department.  
Government of U.P.  
Lucknow.  
Email: psecforest@nic.in

**Sub:** OA No. 362/2025 in the matter of News Item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025 before NGT (PB), New Delhi-reg

Sir,

I am directed to refer to the above cited subject matter. This original application is registered suo-motu on the basis of the news item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025. 2. The matter relates to the increasing risk of extinction faced by the ancient Parijat tree species in Uttar Pradesh. As per the article, scientists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences have raised serious concerns about the survival of these centuries-old trees found in locations like Kintoor (Barabanki), Jhusi (Prayagraj), and Sultanpur.

The Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to pass the order dated 28.02.2025, the relevant para read as:

".....6. Hence, we implead the following as respondents in the matter:

- i. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Regional Office, Lucknow  
Kendriya Bhawan, 5th Floor, Sector "H" Aliganj, Lucknow - 226020
- ii. Botanical Survey of India CGO Complex, 3rd MSO Building, Block F (5th and 6th Floor), DF Block, Sector I, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700 064
- iii. District Magistrate, Barabanki Collectorate, Barabanki District Magistrate,  
Prayagraj District Magistrate Office, Collectorate, Prayagraj
- ... Uttar Pollution Control Board, Through its Member Secretary TC-12V, Vibhuti

7. Issue notice to the above respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit at least one week before the next date of hearing. If any respondent directly files the reply without routing it through his advocate then the said respondent will remain virtually present to assist the Tribunal.

8. List on 27.10. 2025. "

This office has been arrayed as the respondent no.1 in the present matter and has to file the reply before the Hon'ble Tribunal.

In view of above, you are requested to submit a detailed factual report based on field inspection and other documents/information in the perspective of the case so as to enable this office to file a reply before the Hon'ble Tribunal within the stipulated time period. This may be treated as urgent.

Digitally signed by  
Raja Ram Singh  
Date: 29-07-2025  
13:39:46

Yours Sincerely.

(Raja Ram Singh)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)

**Copy for necessary action:**

1. PCCF (HOFF), Forest Department, Lucknow. U.P. Email: [pccf-up@nic.in](mailto:pccf-up@nic.in)
2. PCCF & Nodal Officer, U.P. Forest Department, Lucknow Email: [ccfnodalup@gmail.com](mailto:ccfnodalup@gmail.com)
3. DFO, Prayagraj. Email: [dfo-ah-up@nic.in](mailto:dfo-ah-up@nic.in) [dfopryagraj@gmail.com](mailto:dfopryagraj@gmail.com)
4. DFO, Barabanki. Email: [dfobb-up@nic.in](mailto:dfobb-up@nic.in) [dfobbk@gmail.com](mailto:dfobbk@gmail.com)

(Raja Ram Singh)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)



भारत सरकार  
Government of India  
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय  
Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change  
क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, लखनऊ  
Regional Office, Lucknow



केन्द्रीय भवन, ग्यारवां तल, सेक्टर एच, अलीगंज, लखनऊ-226024

Kendriya Bhawan, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sector II, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024, Phone No : 0522-2326696

Email : roc.lko-mef@nic.in, goimocfrolko@gmail.com

File No: L-1348/UP/2025 / 104

Date: As per E-sign

**Court matter/ Email**  
**REMINDER I**

To,

Additional Chief Secretary,  
Forest & Wildlife Department.  
Government of U.P.  
Lucknow.  
Email: [psecforest@nic.in](mailto:psecforest@nic.in)

**Sub:** OA No. 362/2025 in the matter of News Item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025 before NGT (PB), New Delhi-reg

**Ref:** Letter No. L-1348/UP/2025/209 dated 09.07.2025

Sir,

I am directed to refer to the above cited subject matter and referred letter (copy enclosed). This original application is registered suo-motu on the basis of the news item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025. 2. The matter relates to the increasing risk of extinction faced by the ancient Parijat tree species in Uttar Pradesh. As per the article, scientists from the Botanical Survey of India (BSI) and the Birbal Sahni Institute of Palaeosciences have raised serious concerns about the survival of these centuries-old trees found in locations like Kintoor (Barabanki), Jhusi (Prayagraj), and Sultanpur.

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- ii. Botanical Survey of India CGO Complex, 3rd MSO Building, Block F (5th and 6th Floor), DF Block, Sector I, Salt Lake City, Kolkata - 700 064

- iii. District Magistrate, Barabanki Collectorate, Barabanki District Magistrate, Prayagraj District Magistrate Office, Collectorate, Prayagraj
- iv. Uttar Pollution Control Board, Through its Member Secretary TC-12V, Vibhuti Khand, Gomti Nagar, Lucknow - 226010

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Digitally signed by  
Raja Ram Singh  
Date: 15-09-2025  
14:20:07

Yours Sincerely,

(Raja Ram Singh)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)

**Copy for necessary action:**

1. PCCF (HOFF), Forest Department, Lucknow. U.P. Email: [pccf-up@nic.in](mailto:pccf-up@nic.in)
2. PCCF & Nodal Officer, U.P. Forest Department, Lucknow Email: [ccfnodalup@gmail.com](mailto:ccfnodalup@gmail.com)
3. DFO, Prayagraj. Email: [dfo-ah-up@nic.in](mailto:dfo-ah-up@nic.in) [dfopryagraj@gmail.com](mailto:dfopryagraj@gmail.com)
4. DFO, Barabanki. Email: [dfobb-up@nic.in](mailto:dfobb-up@nic.in) [dfobbk@gmail.com](mailto:dfobbk@gmail.com)
5. Deputy Secretary, CS-II Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi. Email: [rs.bora@nic.in](mailto:rs.bora@nic.in)

(Raja Ram Singh)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)



**भारत सरकार**  
**Government of India**  
**पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय**  
**Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change**  
**क्षेत्रीय कार्यालय, लखनऊ**  
**Regional Office, Lucknow**



केन्द्रीय भवन, प्यारवां तल, सेक्टर एच, अलीगंज, लखनऊ-226024

Kendriya Bhawan, 11<sup>th</sup> Floor, Sector H, Aliganj, Lucknow-226024, Phone No : 0522-2326696

Email : rocz.lko-mcf@nic.in, goimoeofrolko@gmail.com

File No: L-1348/UP/2025/213

Date: As per E-sign

**Court matter/ Email**  
**REMINDER II**

To,

**Additional Chief Secretary,**  
**Forest & Wildlife Department.**  
**Government of U.P.**  
**Lucknow.**  
**Email: [psecforest@nic.in](mailto:psecforest@nic.in)**

**Sub: OA No. 362/2025 in the matter of News Item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025 before NGT (PB), New Delhi-reg**

**Ref: Letter No. L-1348/UP/2025/209 dated 09.07.2025 & Letter No. L-1348/UP/2025/109 dated 15.09.2025**

Sir,

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In view of above, a factual report has been sought vide referred letter(s) which is still awaited, you are again requested to submit a detailed factual report based on field inspection and other documents/information in the perspective of the case so as to enable this office to file a reply before the Hon'ble Tribunal within the stipulated time period. This may be treated as urgent, please

Yours Sincerely,

(Raja Ram Singh)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)

**Copy for necessary action:**

1. PCCF (HOFF), Forest Department, Lucknow. U.P. Email: [pccf-up@nic.in](mailto:pccf-up@nic.in)
2. PCCF & Nodal Officer, U.P. Forest Department, Lucknow Email: [ccfnodalup@gmail.com](mailto:ccfnodalup@gmail.com)
3. DFO, Prayagraj. Email: [dfo-ah-up@nic.in](mailto:dfo-ah-up@nic.in) [dfopryagraj@gmail.com](mailto:dfopryagraj@gmail.com)
4. DFO, Barabanki. Email: [dfobb-up@nic.in](mailto:dfobb-up@nic.in) [dfobbk@gmail.com](mailto:dfobbk@gmail.com)
5. Deputy Secretary, CS-II Division, MoEF&CC, New Delhi. Email: [rs.bora@nic.in](mailto:rs.bora@nic.in)

(Raja Ram Singh)

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)

Digitally signed by  
Raja Ram Singh  
Date: 29-09-2025  
18:34:53

51  
Government of India  
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change  
Legal Monitoring Cell

13

Date: 23/10/2025

**Subject: Engagement of Panel Counsel**

**Ref.:-Request from division on mail dated 23/10/2025**

**Respected Sir,**

**Shri Shlok Chandra**

**Enrolment No.- D/1056/2009**

**Address:- A22 Defence Colony Ground Floor, ND-110024**

**Mobile No. - 9999670588**

**Email Id - shlokchandra@gmail.com**

You are engaged to appear and conduct the case mentioned below for all purposes on behalf of this Ministry till the disposal of the case or expiry of your term of engagement or until further orders, whichever is earlier.

2. Details of the case are as follows:-

Court: **NGT (PB), New Delhi**

Case No.: **OA No. 362/2025**

Title of the Case: **News Item titled "Parijat trees faces extinction risk scientist suggest botanical reclassification" appearing in the Hindustan Times dated 16.07.2025**

Concerned Division of the Ministry: **CS-II (BSI)**

Name and contact of the Divisional Head: **JS (VPM) (011-2081935)**

Email ID: **mishra.vp@gov.in**

Name and contact of the dealing Consultant (Legal): **Ms. Sneh**

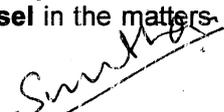
Ph. No. **7011230780**

Email ID: **sneh.legalassociate@gmail.com/sneh.97@govcontractor.in**

Next Date of hearing: **27/10/2025**

3. **This engagement is subject to the following conditions:-**

- i. The engagement is governed by O.M. No. 17(21)/2020-PL/NGT Dated 22.08.2022, 02.03.2023, 21.03.2025 and O.M. No. 17(21)/2017-PL/NGT on dated 01.02.2017, 07/02/2019, 04/05/2020 and 05.05.2025. Policy and Law Division, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Indira Paryavaran Bhawan, New Delhi read with relevant circulars/instructions issued by this Ministry from time to time.
- ii. In case you are unable to attend the case for some reason, sufficient advance intimation should be given to the concerned Division.
- iii. To return the brief on expiry of your term/disposal of the case to the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, or till further orders.
- iv. To intimate the Ministry the progress of the case regularly including obtaining and forwarding certified copy of the Order/Judgement to the concerned Division whenever necessary.
- v. To appear on behalf of this Ministry in person, and **not through a junior counsel** in the matters marked to you.
- vi. The engagement is acknowledged.

  
**(Legal Monitoring Cell)  
MoEF&CC, New Delhi**

स्मिता सातवे/Smita H. Salve  
वरिष्ठ: पारमर्शी (विशेष)  
Senior Consultant (Legal)  
पर्यावरण, वन एवं जलवायु परिवर्तन मंत्रालय  
Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change  
भारत सरकार, नई दिल्ली  
Govt. of India, New Delhi