

# 799

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL  
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION No.555 OF 2024

INTHEMATTEROF:

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

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THROUGH



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Place: New Delhi

Date: **25-05-26**

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BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL PRINCIPAL BENCH,  
NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION No.555 OF 2024

IN THE MATTER OF (Suo-Moto):

News item titled 'India lost 2.33 million hectare of tree cover since 2000,Global Forest Watch' appearing in the Indian Express date 13.04.2024

Versus

Central Pollution Control Board & Ors.

....Respondents

Counter Affidavit On behalf of Respondent No.23 i.e. State of Odisha through  
Secretary of the Department of Forest, Environmental & Climate Change

**MANOJ KUMAR PANDA**  
**NOTARY, BHUBANESWAR**  
**GOVT. OF ODISHA (INDIA)**  
**Regd No.-ON-52-2009**

25 MAY 2026

AFFIDAVIT OF DR. K. MURUGESAN (PRINCIPAL CHIEF CONSERVATOR  
OF FORESTS & HoFF) IN COMPLIANCE WITH THE HON'BLE TRIBUNAL'S  
ORDERS DATED 29.10.2025 AND 29.01.2026.

Murugesan, aged 58 years, S/o Late Paramasivam Kailasam, working as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & HoFF, having office at Aranya Bhawan, Chandrasekharpur, Bhubaneswar, Dist- Khorda, PIN- 751023, do hereby solemnly affirm and state as under:

1. That I am currently posted as Principal Chief Conservator of Forests & HoFF (Odisha) and as such am fully conversant with the facts of the case and competent to swear this affidavit on behalf of Secretary of the Department of Forest, Environment & Climate Change, Kharavel Bhavan Bhubaneswar -751001 Odisha
2. That this Hon'ble Tribunal has registered the present application by taking *suo-moto* cognizance on the basis of a news item titled 'India lost 2.33 million hectares of tree



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MANOJ KUMAR PANDA  
NOTARY, BHUBANESWAR  
GOVT. OF ODISHA (INDIA)  
Regd. No.-ON-52-2009  
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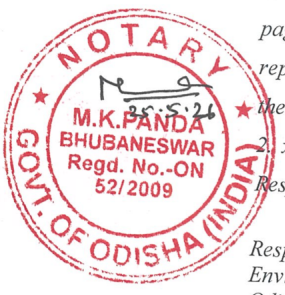
cover since 2000 Global Forest Watch' published in the Indian Expression 13.04.2024 and "Assam's Forest shrink by 83.92 sq.km. in just two years report" appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024.

3. During the course of the hearings on 29.10.2025 and 27.04.2026, this Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to issue certain directions to several States, impleading the mass Respondents in the present matter. With respect to the State of Odisha, it has been arrayed as Respondent No. 23. For the kind perusal of this Hon'ble Tribunal, the relevant directions contained in the Order dated 29.10.2025 and 29.01.2026 are reproduced below.

- 2. xxx In OA No.20/2025 the report of the learned Amicus Curiae start from page-35. It will be opened to all the States/ UTs to download the copies of the report of the Amicus Curiae and Respond to the Suggestions/ Observations made there in within four weeks if they so desired.
- 2. xxx by way of last indulgence further six weeks time is granted to file the Response to the Suggestions/ Observations of the Amicus Curiae:

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Respondent 23-State of Odisha through Secretary of the Department of Forest, Environment & Climate Change, Kharavel Bhavan Bhubaneswar -751001 Odisha.



4. It is submitted that the present application has been registered on the basis of an article published in The Indian Express on 13.04.2024, which, in turn, was based on a report And in Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024 in which data released by the US-based on line plat form "Global Forest Watch."It is pertinent to note that the said report contains details pertaining to several States of India, including the State of Odisha.

**FOREST AND TREE COVER AT A CONCERNING THE STATE OF ODISHA:**

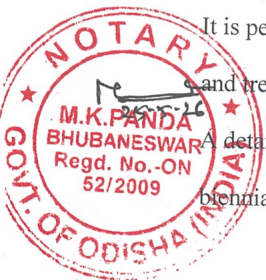
5. It is respectfully submitted that the Forest Survey of India conducts biennial assessments of forest and tree cover at the national level, the results of which are published in the India State of Forest Report("ISFR").A comparative analysis of

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the forest and tree cover data for the State of Odisha, as reported in ISFR 2001 and ISFR 2023, is provided below:

Year	Forest Cover (In Sq Km)	Tree Cover (In Sq Km)	Total Cover (In Sq Km)
IFSR2001	48838	4364	53202
IFSR2023	52433.56	6163.45	58597.01
Total Increase in Cover-5395.01			



It is pertinent to note that an analysis of the data indicates a notable increase in forest and tree cover in the State between 2001 and 2023.

A detailed table containing the data published in the **India State of Forest Report** biennial reports since 2001 is annexed hereto as **ANNEXURE-1**.

**SUGGESTIONS AND OBSERVATIONS OF THE AMICUS CURIAE TO INCREASE FOREST COVER:**

**6. a) FOREST COVER EXPANSION:**

That with regards to the observations relating to enhancement of Forest Cover, it is submitted that the State Government of Odisha is undertaking extensive plantations and afforesting activities under different Schemes such as Increasing Green Cover (IGC), Green Mahanadi Mission (GMM), CAMPA, Green India Mission (GIM), MGNREGS, CSR through OMC, National Bamboo Mission (NBM), MISHT, OMBADC, OFSDP, DMF, Miyawaki etc. A detailed table containing data on year wise afforestation activities taken up by the Forest, Environment & Climate Change department, Odisha is annexed here to as **ANNEXURE-2**

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**b) FOREST FIRE MANAGEMENT:**

That, regarding Forest Fire Management, the State of Odisha has adopted several preventive and mitigation measures through various Schemes i.e. Forest Conservation Development & Regeneration (FCDR), Central Sponsored Scheme (CSS) FPM, CAMPA etc.

**c) FOREST INVENTORY AND MONITORING:**

That, with regard to Forest Inventory and Monitoring the Department is utilizing the Modern technology, such as GIS Mapping, Remote Sensing, GPS enable, Field Monitoring and Digital data Collection System for Forest Management, Monitoring and Planning purposes.

**d) MANGROVE AND WETLAND PROTECTION:**

That with regard to Mangrove and Wetland Protection, Odisha has undertaken extensive Mangrove Plantation and Coastal Shelter Belt Programme in vulnerable Coastal Districts. The State has been implementing Conservation measures for ecologically sensitive, Wetland and Mangrove Eco-systems.

**e) COMMUNITY PARTICIPTIONS:**

That, the State has established and strengthen Joint Forest Management Committee/ Vana Surakhya Samitis involving local communities in Forest protection Regeneration and Sustainable Management.

**f) ORBAN FORESTRY:**

That, in respect of Urban Forestry, Plantation and Green Belt development Activities are being undertaken in urban areas through different Schemes like NAGARA VANA YOJANA etc.

**g) LEGAL POLICY MEASURES:**

That, with regard to Legal and Policy measure it is submitted that State



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Government is implementing the provisions of Odisha Forest Act,1972, Forest Conservation Act,1980, Wildlife Protection Act,1972, Environmental Protection Act,1986 and other applicable laws for prevention of illegal felling, encroachment and environmental degradation.

**h) EDUCATION AND AWARENESS:**

That, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department regularly conducts awareness programmes in Schools, Colleges, Forest Springe and among local communities for promotion of environmental conservation, afforestation and forest protection.

**i) TRANSMISSION LINE MANAGEMENT:**

That, dwarf species are planted within the right-of-way of the transmission line to mitigate environmental impact.

That the deponent undertakes to comply with further directions, to be passed by this Hon'ble Tribunal in the present matter.



**VERIFICATION**

**DEPONENT**  
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests  
Head of Forest Force  
Odisha, Bhubaneswar

I, the above-named deponent, do hereby verify that the contents of Para Nos. 1 \_\_\_\_\_ of this affidavit are true to my personal knowledge, those of Para Nos. 2 to 6 \_\_\_\_\_ This affidavit is based on records, those of Para Nos. \_\_\_\_\_ of this affidavit are as per the legal advice received, and those of Para Nos. \_\_\_\_\_ of this affidavit are as per the information received, all of which I believe are true. That no part of this affidavit is false and no material has been concealed.

**DEPONENT**  
Principal Chief Conservator of Forests  
Head of Forest Force  
Odisha, Bhubaneswar

MANOJ KUMAR PANDA  
NOTARY, BHUBANESWAR  
GOVT. OF ODISHA (INDIA)  
Regd No.-ON-52-2009

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I, Tusar Ray, posted as  
DyCF (P&M) Utilisation, do hereby identify the deponent who  
has produced the records of the case before me and I am satisfied that he is same  
persona as alleged.


  
IDENTIFIER  
Dy. CF (P&M) (Utilisation)  
O/o PCCF & HoFF, Odisha  
Bhubaneswar

  
NOTARY  
M.K. PANDA  
BHUBANESWAR  
Regd. No.-ON  
52/2009  
GOVT. OF ODISHA (INDIA)

Solemnly affirmed before me today, the 25<sup>th</sup> day of May, 2026 at  
11:00 am/pm by the deponent who has been  
identified by the aforesaid person.

I have satisfied myself by examining the deponent that he has understood the contents  
of this affidavit, which have been read over and explained to him.

OATH COMMISSIONER / NOTARY

  
MANOJ KUMAR PANDA  
NOTARY, BHUBANESWAR  
GOVT. OF ODISHA (INDIA)  
Regd No.-ON-52-2009

## FOREST AND TREE COVER DATA FROM 2001 to 2023

## AS PER ISFR, REPORT

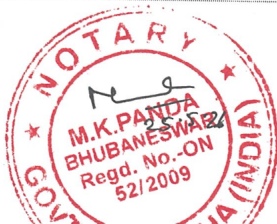
Year	Forest Cover (in Sq Km)	Tree Cover ( in Sq km)	Total Forest and Tree Cover (in Sq Km)
ISFR 2001	48838	4364	53202
ISFR 2003	48366	6381	54747
ISFR 2005	48374	4589	52963
ISFR 2009	48855	4435	53290
ISFR 2011	48903	4301	53204
ISFR 2013	50347	4013	54360
ISFR 2015	50354	3986	54340
ISFR 2017	51345	3993	55338
ISFR 2019	51618.51	4648	56266.51
ISFR 2021	52156	5004	57160
ISFR 2023	52433.56	6163.45	58597.01
Change of Forest & Tree Cover from 2001 to 2023			5395.01



Dy. CF (P&M) (Utilisation)  
O/o PCCF & HoFF, Odisha  
Bhubaneswar

# YEAR WISE AFFORESTATION ACTIVITIES TAKEN UP UNDER DIFFERENT SCHEMES

Year	AR in ha	ANR with Gap Pltn in ha	ANR without Gap Pltn in ha	Total in ha	Avenue Pltn in RKM	Seedlings plnted in lakh	Seedlings distributed in lakh
1999-2000 to 2004-05		4,96,132		4,96,132	-	835.00	
2005-06		9,639		9,639	-	275.00	
2006-07		14,229		14,229	-	390.00	
2007-08		62,614		62,614	-	305.90	39.00
2008-09	21,118	76,510	1,110	98,738	42.00	445.48	-
2009-10	18,070	40,757	33,757	92,584	133.00	415.35	10.00
2010-11	70,842	60,084	1,02,519	2,33,445	241.00	1,086.10	128.34
2011-12	22,950	10,291	1,48,946	1,82,187	769.00	358.92	195.92
2012-13	18,603	20,230	68,454	1,07,287	3,107.00	321.66	211.92
2013-14	25,086	38,050	54,532	1,17,668	4,506.00	467.67	304.14
2014-15	24,600	60,253	1,14,038	1,98,891	4,755.00	692.67	553.90
2015-16	16,576	98,540	2,41,975	3,57,091	4,607.00	487.98	460.96
2016-17	15,322	1,28,009	2,58,121	4,01,452	5,838.00	499.79	376.57
2017-18	5,776	20,367	3,56,221	3,82,364	3,235.00	166.86	145.14
2018-19	6,224	1,08,747	1,33,561	2,48,532	3,686.00	338.74	142.46
2019-20	13,055	55,303	71,698	1,40,056	3,558.00	339.26	212.48
2020-21	12,486	94,837	0	1,07,323	4,165.00	392.47	465.77
2021-22	11,225	99,143	0	1,10,368	4,167.00	382.91	230.46
2022-23	11,856.30	76,341.67	0	88,198.0	4,069.30	351.59	211.74
2023-24	5,877.49	37,513.60		43,391.1	3,111.87	254.42	408.57
2024-25	4,073.68	26,676.66	170.80	30,921	2,003.70	197.78	251.07
2025-26	2,926.15	23,678.69	408.13	27,012.98	1,819.90	227.16	186.33
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,86,354.47</b>	<b>10,51,652.93</b>	<b>15,85,102.80</b>	<b>35,23,110.06</b>	<b>53,813.770</b>	<b>9,232.710</b>	<b>4,534.770</b>



**Dy. CF (P&SM) (Utilisation)**  
**O/o PCCF & HoFF, Odisha**  
**Bhubaneswar**

**Dy. CF (P&SM) (Utilisation)**  
**O/o PCCF & HoFF, Odisha**  
**Bhubaneswar**