

BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL

PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI

Original Application No. 314/2025

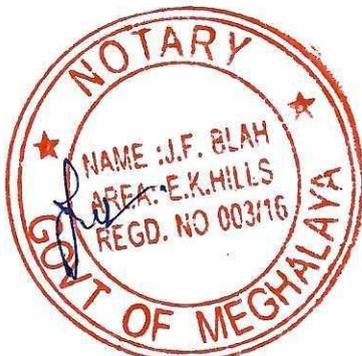
IN THE MATTER OF:

News Item titled "Satellite Data shows Manipur Lost 52000 Acres of Forest In 4 Years : Study " appearing in the NDTV dated 06.06.2025.

REPLY AFFIDAVIT ON BEHALF OF THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE (RESPONDENT NO. 2)

I, Ms. Laetitia Jean Syiemiong, daughter of (L) Andrew Rane, aged about 51 years, presently working as Deputy Inspector General of Forests in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Regional Office, Shillong, do hereby solemnly affirm and state as follows:-

1. That I am holding the post of Deputy Inspector General of Forests, in the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Regional Office, Shillong, (for short MoEF & CC) and I have made myself acquainted with the facts and circumstances of this case as well as the official records placed before me. I have been duly authorized and empowered by the Respondent No.2 to

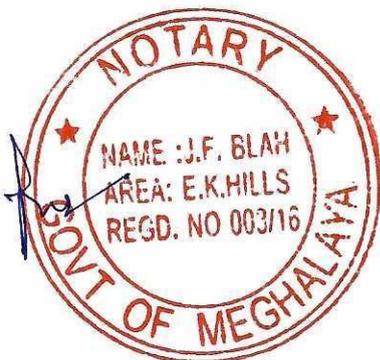



 Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)
 Govt. of India Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
 North Eastern Regional Office, Shillong

SI/Instrument No. 46
Date: 28/10/25

make and swear this affidavit for and on behalf of MoEF & CC and I am competent to do so.

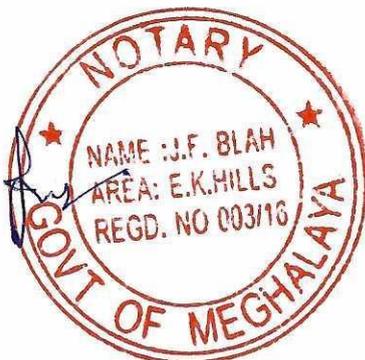
2. That I have gone through the Original Application (*Suo-Motu*) and I have understood the contents / allegations / averments / statements and / or tenor made thereof in the said Original Application. I deny all the averments in the Original Application (*Suo-Motu*) except those that are specifically admitted herein.
3. That this instant matter was taken *Suo-Motu* by this Hon'ble Tribunal vide Order dated 04.07.2025 based on the news item titled "*Satellite Data Shows Manipur Lost 52,000 Acres of Forest In 4 Years: Study*" appearing in the NDTV dated 06.06.2025. Vide the said order; this Hon'ble Court was pleased to implead the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Regional Office, Shillong as *Suo-Motu* Respondent No. 2 in the instant *Suo-Motu* proceedings.
4. That the Respondent No. 2 humbly submits that the MoEF&CC, Government of India deals with the policy and regulatory issues at a broad level relating to the protection and conservation of forest, environment and wildlife. The Forest Survey of India, is a premier national organization under the Ministry of




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Environment, Forest and Climate Change is responsible for assessment and monitoring of the forest resources of the country biennially since year 1987.

5. That the MoEF &CC is neither aware of the study conducted by Suhora wherein it has reported loss of 52,000 acres of forest cover between 2021 and 2025 nor about the methodology used for assessing the forest cover by Suhora.
6. That the responsibility for day-to-day function of protection, management and conservation of forests lies with the respective State Governments / Union Territory (UT) Administrations. The State Governments / Union Territory (UT) Administrations are required to take appropriate action as per the extant Acts and Rules to protect forests and biodiversity in the respective States /UTs.
7. That the forest areas and the legal boundaries thereof are determined and maintained by the concerned State Government. That being the repository of land records, State Government has the primary responsibility to determine status of any parcel of land, giving due regards to gazette notifications, provisions under State and Central Acts and concerned Judgments and directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court of India.




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8. That the ISFR 2021 was based on the analysis of LISS III satellite data (spatial resolution of 23.5 meters) which was acquired between October 2019 and January 2020. Similarly, ISFR 2023 was analysed based on the LISS III satellite data (spatial resolution of 23.5 meter) which was acquired between October 2021 and January 2022. The changes in forest cover recorded between ISFR 2021 and ISFR 2023 in the State of Manipur is as follows:

all figures in sq. km.

Forest Cover Category	ISFR 2021	ISFR 2023	Change
Very Dense Forest	904.55	904.05	-0.50
Moderately Dense Forest	6,260.51	6,217.55	-42.96
Open Forest	9,475.23	9,463.86	-11.37
Total Forest Cover	16,640.29	16,585.46	-54.83

Thus, a net decrease of 54.83 sq. km in forest cover has been recorded in the state during the period between ISFR 2021 and ISFR 2023.

9. It is humbly submitted that as per the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Adhiniyam, 1980, as amended by the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Act, 2023, Section 2 (1) (ii) provides that;

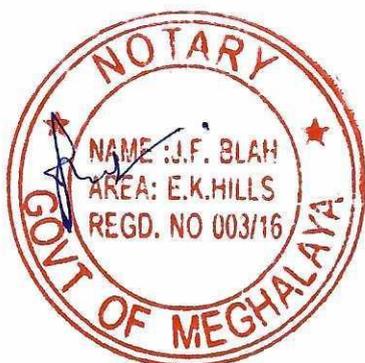



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“Notwithstanding anything contained in any other law for the time being in force in a State, no State Government or other authority shall make, except with the prior approval of the Central Government, any order directing-

- i. *that any reserved forest (within the meaning of the expression “reserved forest” in any law for the time being in force in that State) or any portion thereof, shall cease to be reserved;*
- ii. *that any forest land or any portion thereof may be used for any non-forest purpose;*
- iii. *that any forest land or any portion thereof may be assigned by way of lease or otherwise to any private person or to any authority, corporation, agency or any other organization not owned managed or controlled by Government;*
- iv. *that any forest land or any portion thereof may be cleared of trees which have grown naturally in that land or portion, for the purpose of using it for re-forestation.”*

10. That, the Answering Respondent No. 2 craves liberty to rely on the present affidavit and thereafter reserves its right to file additional information before the Hon'ble Court, if required, till Pendente-Lite.




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11. That, in view of the foregoing submissions, this Hon'ble Court may be pleased to pass such or further orders as it may deem fit in the given circumstances of the case.

Identified by:

Awa

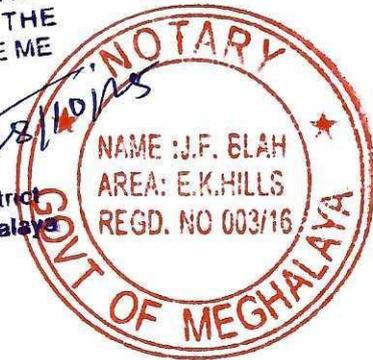
(Miss Ana A Sangma)
 Advocate, Shillong
 Enrollment No. 0529 of 2018

[Signature]
DEPONENT

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)
 Govt. of India Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
 North Eastern Regional Office, Shillong

SOLEMNLY AFFIRMED BEFORE ME THIS DAY
 ON 28/10/18 THE DEPONENT IS IDENTIFIED BY A.A. Sangma
 I CERTIFY THAT THE CONTENTS OF THE AFFIDAVIT
 ARE READ ORDER AND EXPLAINED TO THE
 DEPONENT WHO VERIFIED THE SAME BEFORE ME

[Signature]
 J. F. BLAH
 NOTARY
 East Khasi Hills District
 Government of Meghalaya



VERIFICATION

I, the above named deponent do hereby verify that the contents of the above affidavit are true and correct to my knowledge and area based on official records and nothing material is concealed therein.

Verified at Shillong on this 28 day of October, 2025.


DEPONENT

Deputy Inspector General of Forests (Central)
Govt. of India Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change
North Eastern Regional Office, Shillong

