

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

O.A. NO. 20/2026

IN THE MATTER OF:

APPLICANT:

News Item Titled 'Madhya Pradesh
Mein Is Saal 15 Lakhs Pedh
Katenge' Appearing in Danik
Bhaskar Dated 08/01/2026

//VERSUS//

RESPONDENTS:

Director General of Forest, MoEF & Ors

REPLY ON BEHALF OF RESPONDENT NO. 4

The answering respondent no. 4 most respectfully submits as follows:-

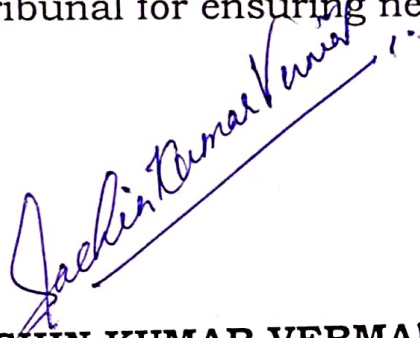
1. The Hon'ble Tribunal vide its order dated 13/01/2026 based upon the news item published in the daily newspaper Dainik Bhaskar on 08/01/2026 pertaining to the cutting of trees in District Bhopal, Indore, Gwalior and other places including District Singrauli thereby leading to rise of the AQI Level has impleaded the answering respondent as a party in the matter.
2. That answering respondent no. 4 is a statutory authority constituted under the Environment Protection Act, 1986 and the applicable EIA framework, and it exercises such powers and follows such procedures as are prescribed under the relevant notification and its role is to appraise and decide proposals falling within its jurisdiction on the basis of recommendations of SEAC, Madhya Pradesh.

3. It is pertinent to mention over here that the answering respondent no. 4 while granting environmental clearances specifically incorporates the plantation-related clause/condition, compulsory afforestation wherein the project proponent is mandatorily required to carry out plantation within the mining lease/project area or elsewhere as specified in the EC, thick plantation / green belt development to be maintained as per the approved EC conditions and the half yearly compliance alongwith the Geo Tagging of trees are also required to be submitted thereby the project proponent is duty bound to submit the periodic compliance reports with photographs of the plantation work to the MPPCB as well as to the regional office of MoEF & CC.
4. The EC granted by the answering respondent no. 4 typically mandates developing a 33% green belt around the mining site, using native species , ensuring plant survival and submitting six monthly compliance reports to the competent regional office, it is noteworthy to mention over here that a project proponent is duty bound by EC clauses to maintain minimum survival rate of 80% for all the planted saplings . Furthermore, in pursuance of India's Flagship tree plantation drive i.e. Ek Ped Maa Ka Naam is a campaign launched by the Hon'ble Prime Minister these plantations conditions have become more stringent and necessary action is taken against the project proponent in case of Non - compliance.
5. Any cutting/removal of trees, where permissible, is ordinarily undertaken by the project proponent and/or executing agency

only after compliance with all applicable statutory requirements, including forest, wildlife, municipal, road, and other permissions as may be required. The alleged figure of "15 lakh trees" appears to include multiple projects of different categories, different locations, and different executing agencies.

6. The answering Respondent no. 4 is bound to ensure compliance with the conditions of clearance and can recommend or initiate action in accordance with law where violations are brought to its notice. The answering Respondent no. 4 has never intended to support any violation of environmental norms. The answering Respondent no. 4 is committed to strict compliance with law, sustainable development, compensatory plantation norms, and environmental safeguards.
7. That if any project proponent or executing agency has commenced tree felling without obtaining requisite permissions, or in excess of approved permissions, the same would be actionable under the applicable law, and the responsible authority should be proceeded against it in accordance with law after due inquiry.
8. The Answering Respondent No. 4 submits at the outset that the allegations contained in the news report / petition regarding cutting of approximately 15 lakh trees across Madhya Pradesh are broad, generalized and not project-specific and also without any fact finding at ground level. The answering Respondent No. 4 denies any illegal, arbitrary, or unregulated clearance on its part, and no adverse inference may be drawn against the answering respondent no. 4 in the absence of particularized project-wise facts, approvals, and site-specific particulars.

9. In view of the judicial and factual matrix of the matter the answering respondent no. 4 shall abide by any further lawful directions issued by this Hon'ble Tribunal for ensuring necessary compliance.

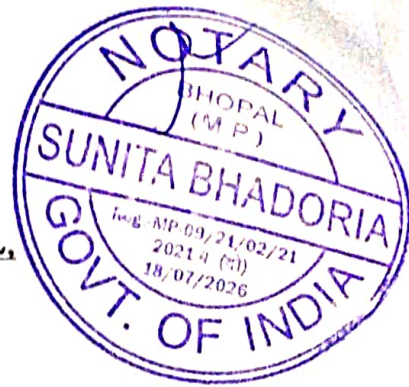


BHOPAL (M.P.)

(SACHIN KUMAR VERMA)

DATE 25/05/2026

COUNSEL FOR RESPONDENT NO. 4



BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL,

PRINCIPAL ZONAL BENCH AT NEW DELHI

ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 20/2026

IN THE MATTER OF:

APPLICANT:-

News Item Titled 'Madhya Pradesh Mein Is Saal 15 Lakhs Pedh Katenge' Appearing in Danik Bhaskar Dated 08/01/2026

501/2026
25/05/2026

//VERSUS//

RESPONDENTS:-

Director General of Forest, MoEF & Ors
AFFIDAVIT

I, Sanjay Pandey, Aged about 58 years S/o, B.D Pandey posted as Executive Engineer, EPCO, Bhopal R/o E-5 Paryawaran Parisar, Arera Colony Bhopal (M.P.) do hereby state on oath and solemnly affirm as under:-

1. I am the OIC on behalf of Respondent no. 4 MPSEIAA in the present matter and as such I am well conversant with the facts of the case and therefore, competent to swear this affidavit.

The accompanying reply has been drafted by my counsel as per my instructions and also explained to me in Hindi and I have understood the same.

3. The contents of para 1 to end of accompanying reply are true to my knowledge based upon official records and the legal averments made therein are true on the legal advice received and believed to be true.

DEPONENT

VERIFICATION

I, above-described deponent do hereby verify that the content of para 1 to 3 of the affidavit are true to my personal knowledge and belief. Verified and signed on this day of 25th day of May 2026 at Bhopal (M.P.).

DEPONENT

IDENTIFIED BY ME

Harshita Tewari

Chamber No- 608,

SOLEMNLY AFFIRMED BEFORE
ME BY THE WITHIN NAME

SUNITA BHADORIA
NOTARY
BHOPAL (M.P.) INDIA