

In the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal-Principal Bench,
New Delhi

Original Application No. 555/2024

In the matter of: Original Application No. 555/2024 titled 'News item titled 'India Lost 2.33 Million hectares of Tree Cover since 2000 Global Forest Watch' appearing in The Indian Express date 13.04.2024" with Original Application No. 20/2025 titled 'News item titled 'Assam's forests shrink by 83.92 sq km in just two years Report' appearing in the Assamtribune.com dated 22.12.2024".

Response on behalf of the Government of Jammu & Kashmir in compliance with the order 29.01.2025 passed by the Hon'ble Tribunal in OA No. 555/2024 titled 'News item titled 'India Lost 2.33 Million hectares of Tree Cover since 2000 Global Forest Watch' appearing in The Indian Express date 13.04.2024".

May it please Your Lordships,

The answering respondent most humbly submits as under: -

1. That the OA came to be listed on 29.01.2025 and this Hon'ble Tribunal was pleased to pass an order on the aforesaid date, operative part whereof reads as under:-

"1.Since O.A No. 555/2024 and O.A No. 20/2025 are interconnected as O.A No.555/2024 involves the issue of decrease of forest cover in entire India while O.A No. 20/2025 involves the issue or decrease of forest cover in the State of Assam, both the OAs are taken up together.

2.Reply dated 28.01.2025 has been filed by respondent No. 31- State of Uttarakhand in O.A No. 555/2024.

3.None has appeared for respondents no. 5,6,7,8,9,11,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27, 28,29,30,32,37,38 and 40 in O.A No. 555/2024 and respondents no. 1 to 4 in O.A No. 20/2025.

4.States/UTs and their instrumentalists are under constitutional obligation to protect and improve environment and in view thereof States/UTs and their instrumentalists cannot absent from adjudication of substantial environmental questions on any ground and are constitutionally bound to cooperate and participate in the same.

5. Even though the National Green Tribunal (Practices and Procedure) Rules, 2011 provides for taking of ex-parte proceedings against the absentee respondents but we consider that in cases involving substantial environmental questions concerned respondents cannot be allowed to suffer themselves to be proceeded against ex-parte as any order passed ex-parte is also likely to adversely impact environment for lack of information which could be provided by such respondents.

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Under Secretary to Govt
Forest, Ecology & Env
Deptt

6. In the present case, respondents no. 5,6,7,8,9,11,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26,27, 28,29,30,32,37,38 and 40 in O.A No. 555/2024 and respondents no. 1 to 4 in O.A No. 20/2025 have not appeared before this Tribunal and filed their replies/reports in response to the notices served on them. In the interest of justice and protection and improvement of environment, we are giving one more opportunity to the absenting respondents to appear and file their replies/reports and also to ensure their representation through their authorized officers/counsels before this Tribunal. In the absence thereof not only exemplary costs may be imposed on absenting respondents on further dates of hearing but also their presence may be secured through coercive methods for being examined as witnesses in the case.

7. Further the matter of no-appearance of respondents No.5,6,7,8,9,11,13,14,15,16,17,18,19,20,21,22,23,24,25,26, 27,28,29,30,32,37,38 and 40 in O.A No. 555/2024 and respondentsno. 1 to 4 in O.A No. 20/2025 and not filing of replies/reports by them in response to the notices served on them be brought to the notice of the respective Chief Secretary and Advocate General of the absenting States/UTs for issuance of appropriate instructions for compliance with notices issued by this Tribunal and filing of replies/reports by the absenting States/UTs and their instrumentalists and also their representation before this Tribunal through their authorized officer/counsel, as may be required.

8. Response/reports by the remaining respondents with complete information regarding Forest Cover, Tree Cover etc. for the period from the year 2001 to 2021 may be filed atleast one week before the date of hearing fixed.”

2. In this regard, the data regarding decadal changes of various forest parameters of J&K UT, as per the India State of Forests Reports 2013 and 2023 (Copy enclosed as Annexure 'I') is as under:

S.No.	Parameters	ISFR 2013	ISFR 2023	Change	Change %
1.	Forest Cover (in sq km)	20,948	21346.39	396.12	1.90
2.	Growing Stock in Recorded Forest Area (in Million Cubic Metre)	232.181	376.508	144.327	62.16

3. The chapter pertaining to the Jammu and Kashmir from the India State of Forest Report 2023 clarifies that:

- Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is having the highest level of growing stock volume in its forests which is estimated to be 296.22 cubic meter/Ha.
- Among the UTs, the highest growing stock in Agri-Forestry is observed in Jammu and Kashmir (29.59 Cubic Meter/Ha).
- Jammu and Kashmir is contributing the highest carbon stock per Hactre and estimated to be 174.10 Ton/Ha.

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Under Secretary to Govt
Forest, Ecology & Env
Deptt

4. Also, the Government of Jammu and Kashmir had engaged the Himalayan Forest Research Institute for estimation of trees outside the forests (TOF). The important parameters or forests from these reports viz. Trees outside Forests 2011, TOF Report 2023 is presented below:

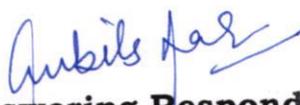
Report	No. of Trees (in millions)	Volume (in million Cubic Meter)
TOF Report, 2011	86.48	30.21
TOF Report, 2023	151.8	40.7

5. Year wise details of the number of trees planted and areacovered in outside the designated forest, by the Social Forestry wing of the Department for the period from 2001-02 to 2020-21 (**Copy attached as Annexure 'II'**) are as follows:

S.No.	Year	Area Covered (in Ha.)	Plants Planted (In lacs)	Plants Distribution Out of Col. (4)
1	2	3	4	5
1.	2001-2002	634.00	16.310	4.820
2.	2002-2003	643.00	13.490	2.000
3.	2003-2004	2479.20	21.200	3.089
4.	2004-2005	2379.00	21.160	3.736
5.	2005-2006	2403.20	30.096	5.011
6.	2006-2007	1580.50	20.402	5.667
7.	2007-2008	1440.25	21.031	4.729
8.	2008-2009	1715.47	22.662	6.042
9.	2009-2010	1714.96	22.511	4.880
10.	2010-2011	1708.28	22.864	5.134
11.	2011-2012	1611.92	24.542	7.798
12.	2012-2013	1790.64	23.616	5.591
13.	2013-2014	1171.75	19.005	8.311
14.	2014-2015	1015.03	14.114	4.935
15.	2015-2016	1205.84	16.496	6.123
16.	2016-2017	1003.00	16.337	7.418
17.	2017-2018	1054.60	10.701	2.966
18.	2018-2019	1005.68	8.923	0.960
19.	2019-2020	997.88	9.607	2.003
20.	2020-2021	298.67	5.067	1.497
	Total	27852.87	360.134	92.71

6. That the aforementioned information pertaining to forestry parameters of the UT of J&K, states an upward trend from 2001 to 2021.

In the premises stated above, it is, respectfully prayed that theaforesaid report may kindlybe placed before the Hon'ble Tribunal, for its kind consideration.


Answering Respondent
 Under Secretary to Govt
 Forest, Ecology & Env
 Deptt.

Copy (with enclosures) to the:

Sh. G.M.Kawoosa, Additional Standing Counsel for Government of J&K UT, in the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal-Principal Bench, New Delhi, for information and necessary action.

Office Address

Stranagar Office : Forest Complex, Shlekh Bagh, Phone: 0194-2483337
 Lal Chowk, Sgr-190001
 Jammu Office : Forest Resource Mgmt. Centre, Phone: 0191-3511909
 Marwal Jammu-180008

URL Address: www.jkforest.gov.inE-mail: pccfjkforest@gmail.com

Jammu & Kashmir Forest Department
Office of the Pr. Chief Conservator of Forests & HoFF
Government of Jammu & Kashmir



Commissioner Secretary to Government
Department of Forest, Ecology & Environment
Civil Secretariat, Jammu

No. PCCF/ET/Nov/648

Dated 29 03-2025

Sub: - O.A. No. 555/2024 (IA No. 144/2025) News item titled "India Lost 2.33 Million hectares of Tree Cover since 200 Global Forest Watch" Appearing in the Indian Express Dated 13-04-2024.

Ref: - Administrative Department (Forests) communication No. FST-Lit/74/2025 (7628744) dated 25-03-2025.

Madam,

I am directed to convey that as per the India State of Forests Reports 2013 and 2023 the decadal change of various forests parameters pertaining to J&K UT^{vs} presented as below:-

S.No.	Parameters	ISFR 2013	ISFR 2023	Change	Change %
1.	Forest Cover (in Km ²)	20,948.27	21,346.39	396.12	1.90
2.	Growing Stock in Recorded Forest Area (in Million Cubic Metre)	232.181	376.508	144.327	62.16

Also, Government of Jammu and Kashmir had engaged the Himalayan Forest Research Institute for estimation of trees outside the forests (TOF). The important parameters of forests from these reports viz, Trees outside Forests 2011, TOF Report, 2023 is presented below:-

Report	No. of trees (in millions)	Volume (in Million Cubic Metre)
TOF Report, 2011	86.48	30.21
TOF Report, 2023	151.8	40.7

The chapter pertaining to the Jammu and Kashmir from the India State of Forest Report 2023 is annexed. Perusal of the report clarifies that:

- I. Union Territory of Jammu and Kashmir is having the highest level of growing stock volume in its Forests which is estimated to be 296.22 cubic meter/Ha.
- II. Among the UTs, the highest growing stock in Agro-Forestry is observed in Jammu and Kashmir (29.59 Cubic Meter/Ha).
- III. Jammu & Kashmir is contributing the highest carbon stock per/Ha and estimated to be 174.10 Ton/Ha.

I am directed to submit that the forestry parameters pertaining to UT is on the highest level, unlike it is portrayed in the Article.

Yours faithfully,

 29/3/25
(Dr. K. Anandh) IFS
Chief Conservator of Forests,
& Nodal Officer (FCA)

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Annexure II



Office Address
Opp. Nitco lane Talab Tillo, Jammu-180002
Sheikh ul Alam Complex, Rajbagh, Srinagar-1900

**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL FORESTRY**

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EMAIL: info@jksocialforestry.nic.in
URL: www.jksocialforestry.nic.in

The Under Secretary to Government,
Department of Forest Ecology and Environment,
Civil Secretariat,
J&K, Jammu.

No: DIR/DSF/Plg/2024-25/615-16

Dated: 26-03-2025.

Sub: O.A. No. 555/2024 (IA No. 144/2025) News item titled "India Lost 2.33 Million hectares of Tree Cover Since 200 Global Forest Watch" Appearing in the Indian Express dated: 13.04.2024.

Ref: Administrative Department's letter No: FST-Lit/74/2025 dated: 25.03.2025.

Madam,

With reference to above cited letter on the subject matter, I am directed to submit the details of plantation/ tree cover undertaken by the Department of Social Forestry, J&K for the period from 2001-02 to 2020-21 at Annexure - A for favour of information and necessary action at your end please.

Yours faithfully,

(Bilal Ahmad),
Dy. Director, (Plg),
Department of Social Forestry,
Jammu & Kashmir.

Copy to PS to the APCCF/ Director for kind information of the Director.



Office Address
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**GOVERNMENT OF JAMMU AND KASHMIR
DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL FORESTRY**

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Annexure - A

Sr. No.	Year	Area Covered (In Ha.)	Plants Planted (In Lacs)	Plants Distribution Out of Col. (4)
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