



HIGH COURT OF MEGHALAYA
AT SHILLONG

PIL No.1/2026

Date of order: 17.04.2026

Shri Pynskhemlang Sohtun

..... Petitioner

Vs.

1. State of Meghalaya, through the Chief Secretary, Shillong.
2. Deputy Commissioner, Ri-Bhoi District, Meghalaya.
3. General Manager (Projects), NHIDCL, Shillong.
4. Union of India, through Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, New Delhi.
5. Union of India, through Ministry of Road Transport & Highways

Coram:

Hon'ble Mrs. Justice Revati Mohite Dere, Chief Justice
Hon'ble Mr. Justice W. Diengdoh, Judge

For the Petitioner : Ms. P. Bhattacharjee, Adv with
Mr. F. Bareh, Adv

For the Respondents : Mr. A. Kumar, Advocate General with
Mr. N.D. Chullai, AAG
Mr. A.H. Kharwanlang, Addl.Sr.GA
Dr. N. Mozika, DSGI with
Ms. K. Gurung, Adv

i) Whether approved for reporting in Law journals etc.: Yes/No

ii) Whether approved for publication in press: Yes/No



JUDGMENT: (per the Hon’ble, the Chief Justice) (Oral)

Heard learned counsel for the respective parties.

2. By this petition, the petitioner seeks the following reliefs:
 - (a) a direction to the respondents to halt all acquisition, survey and preparatory activities in Ri-Bhoi District;
 - (b) direct disclosure of EIA, SIA Hydrological and alternative alignment studies;
 - (c) direct meaningful public consultation in compliance with Forest Rights Act and Sixth Schedule;
 - (d) Direct examination of less destructive alternatives; and
 - (e) Constitute an independent expert committee.

3. The grievance of the petitioner in the aforesaid PIL is with respect to the proposed construction of 166.8 km Greenfield/High-Speed Highway Corridor of which approximately 144.8 km lies within Meghalaya, primarily Ri-Bhoi District. According to the learned counsel for the petitioner, Ri-Bhoi District forms part of a fragile and undulating hill ecosystem which is highly susceptible to landslides, soil erosion,



deforestation and depletion of groundwater resources. The petitioner has alleged in the said PIL that past experience with the National Highways and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (hereinafter referred to as “NHIDCL”) projects, particularly the Shillong-Dawki Highway demonstrates severe hill cutting, ecological destabilisation, recurring landslides, prolonged delays and loss of human lives, thereby giving rise to legitimate public apprehension regarding environmental and public safety. It is further alleged by the petitioner that the proposed alignment passes through agricultural lands, community owned tribal lands, forests, water catchment areas and culturally sensitive landscapes governed under the Sixth Schedule. It is further stated in the PIL that Ri-Bhoi District forms part of a fragile hill ecosystem prone to landslides and ecological instability. According to the petitioner, the alignment passes through the close vicinity of Lum Sohpetbneng, revered by the Khasi community as a sacred site of immense spiritual, religious, historical and cultural significance, traditionally regarded as the origin point of humanity.



4. This Court vide order dated 19th February, 2026 had issued notice to the respondents. This Court had also directed the respondents to file their respective responses with respect to what was stated in the PIL. Pursuant thereto, Mr. Mahavir Singh Rawat, General Manager (LA & Coord.), National Highway and Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited, Regional Office, Shillong has filed his affidavit on behalf of respondent Nos.3 and 5 dated 9th April, 2026. In the said affidavit, the affiant has stated that the NHIDCL under the Ministry of Road, Transport and Highways (MoRTH), Government of India has been given a mandate to develop/improve the National highways and other related road infrastructure projects in the State of Meghalaya for accelerated development of North-East Region of India. It is further stated that the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs (CCEA) on 23rd May, 2025 has approved the investment for development of Greenfield High-Speed Corridor (HSC) of 166.80 km (NH-06) from Mawlyngkhung (near Shillong) in Meghalaya to Panchgram (near Silchar) in Assam on Hybrid Annuity Mode (HAM), at a total capital cost of ₹22,864,00 crores. In the affidavit, the importance and key benefits of the Greenfield High-Speed



Corridor project is stated i.e., it will serve as the key economic corridor being the most critical link of the network; that it would boost the connectivity in the North-East Region; that it would ensure efficient and faster movement of goods, thereby improvement in logistic efficiency in the North-East; that it would be of significant strategic and defence importance for the North-Eastern Region of India which has borders with neighbouring countries like China, Bangladesh and Myanmar; that it would help reduction in carbon emission as positive environment impact, etc.

5. It is further stated that the said project is located within 100 km of the international border and as such is exempt from the requirement of prior environmental clearance but is subject to compliance with other applicable environmental standards. To the affidavit are annexed copies of the notification dated 14th July, 2022 and Office Memorandum dated 6th February, 2023. It is further stated by the affiant in the affidavit that the DPR incorporates a comprehensive environment management plan addressing baseline environment assessment, identification of environmentally sensitive receptors, impact prediction and



mitigation measures and that adequate design provisions have been incorporated to ensure that natural drainage patterns and environment safeguards are maintained. The key provisions include, 599 culverts; 79 minor bridges; 13 major bridges and 171 viaducts. It is further stated that additional measures including, longitudinal drains, catch water drains, chute drains with energy dissipation arrangements, sediment control measures such as silt fencing could be done to prevent discharge of construction waste into natural waterbodies. It is further stated that wherever forest land is involved, the same has been identified during DPR preparation through alignment surveys and field verification. It is further stated that approvals under the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 including, Stage-I and Stage-II clearances, will be obtained from the competent authority prior to commencement of construction in stretches involving forest land and that compensatory afforestation will be undertaken in accordance with existing MoEF&CC guidelines; that necessary financial provisions have been included in the DPR; and that compliances with respect to the Scheduled Tribes and Other



Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, will be followed as per statutory provisions.

6. It is further stated in the affidavit that the DPR incorporates detailed hydrological analysis to ensure that natural drainage patterns are preserved and that no obstruction is caused to existing water bodies or natural streams; that hydrological design has been undertaken in accordance with Indian Roads Congress guidelines to ensure uninterrupted natural flow regimes; and that additional environmental safeguards which include, erosion control measures, slope stabilization works, sediment control structures, drainage management system etc. would be complied with. It is stated that the total financial allocation for drainage and hydrological protection measures exceeds ₹6,900.00 crores (as per PPPAC) under the project provisions.

7. It is further stated that the alignment has been reviewed during DPR preparation stage to avoid direct impact on culturally significant locations and that based on available alignment records and mapping, the core sacred area of Lum Sohpetbneng



is kept outside the proposed land acquisition and is outside the direct impact area of the project. It is further stated that wherever culturally sensitive areas fall within the broader influence zone of the corridor, mitigation measures such as alignment optimization, controlled slope cutting and slope stabilization measures have been incorporated and that stakeholder consultations were undertaken during the planning stage with local authorities and other stakeholders to consider cultural sensitivities. It is further stated in the affidavit that design measures include, flexible Right-of-Way planning, retaining structures, toe walls, controlled earthwork operations in sensitive stretches.

8. It is further stated that environmental sensitivity and ecological considerations have been adequately incorporated into the DPR design and wherever applicable, the project provides mitigation measures such as wildlife crossings through culverts and underpass structures, viaduct sections to facilitate cross movement of animals, minimizing disturbance to natural terrain and environment safeguards to reduce noise and light impacts. It is further stated that bio-engineering techniques and slope stabilization measures have also been proposed to minimize



ecological disturbance. According to the affidavit, the DPR prescribes environment safeguards to be implemented during construction stage and includes, designated construction camps with sanitation and waste management systems; regulation of construction material sourcing; prohibition of unauthorised quarrying and tree cutting; environmentally safe muck disposal locations; and erosion protection through turfing, geotextiles, retaining walls, specialised slope stabilization measures etc.

9. It also appears from the affidavit that the DPR includes, detailed mapping of existing utilities to ensure controlled construction practices so as to avoid environmental damages. The utility crossings identified are electrical transmission lines; water pipelines (all crossings); and gas pipelines. It is stated that utility shifting plans have been prepared to ensure safe relocation without disruption to environmental or public infrastructure.

10. It is further stated in the affidavit that the DPR incorporates comprehensive environment, ecological and cultural safeguards for protection of natural waterbodies, wildlife habitats and culturally sites and the same have been integrated into the



planning and engineering designing of the said corridor. In the affidavit it is categorically stated that all statutory requirements relating to environment clearance exemption, forest clearance, environmental safeguards and protection of cultural heritage will be strictly adhered to and complied with in accordance with applicable laws and guidelines.

11. The Office Memorandum, which the authorities are required to follow is dated 6th February, 2023, which is annexed to the affidavit as Annexure-2. The said Office Memorandum reads thus:

“F. No. IA3-22/40/2022-IA.III [E198668]

Government of India

**Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change
(IA-III Section)**

Indira Paryavaran Bhawan,
Jor Bag Road, Aliganj,
New Delhi – 110003

Dated: 6th February, 2023

OFFICE MEMORANDUM

Subject: **Standard Operating Procedure (SoP) for Environmental safeguards to be followed while constructing and operation of all Highway projects which are exempted up to 100 km from line of control or border – reg.**



The Ministry has issued a Notification vide S.O. 3194(E) dated 14th July 2022 exempting the requirement of EC for All Highway projects are exempted up to 100 km from line of control or border subject to compliance of Standard Operating Procedure notified in this regard from time to time. The Guidelines are to be followed for all roads/highway projects falling within 100 Km from the International Border/Line of Control (LOC) for sustainable environmental safeguards.

2. Further, the exemption of prior EC for all Highway projects up to 100 km from line of control or border does not exempt it from approvals/consent/permissions etc., required to be obtained under any other Act/Rule/Regulation/Bye-laws/Notification etc.

3. The Ministry hereby directs that the following environmental safeguards shall be followed while constructing and operation of all Highway projects which are exempted up to 100 km from line of control or border.

A. Risk assessment, Landslide management plan and Disaster Management Plan

- i. Risk assessment shall be carried out and based on the assessment, Disaster Management Plan as per the Disaster Management Act shall be got approved from Competent Authority and implemented.
- ii. If the proposed route is passing through any hilly area, comprehensive study on vulnerability for the landslide, slope stability, vulnerability of the project area from the point of view of seismic activity taking into account the seismic zone in which it is located, eco-fragility study of the area shall be carried out through reputed Technical Institute on the basis of which environmental friendly and safe construction methodology shall be adopted.
- iii. Landslide management plan shall be prepared and all remedial, precautionary measures before, during and post construction shall be undertaken to ensure that all



environmental safeguards are mandatorily implemented under the supervision of subject matter experts before undertaking construction. In case of cutting or embankment, control of soil erosion from embankment, landslide, rock fall protection measures, etc. shall be carried out.

B. Tunneling and Horizontal Directional Drilling

- i. If the proposed route involves tunneling and/ or horizontal directional drilling, a detailed study on tunneling and locations of tunneling with geological structural fraction and its possible impact on the existing structures in its vicinity, flora, fauna, terrain, etc. should be carried out so as to ensure that there is no damage to life, property and environment in its vicinity.
- ii. Quarry areas shall be barricaded during quarrying operations. Adequate environmental safeguards should be put in place to ensure that environment protection is not compromised. The abandoned quarry shall be rehabilitated/reclaimed as water reservoirs with proper fencing around quarry area as practically possible.

C. Soil conservation measures and muck dumping plan

- i. Construction waste including bituminous material and other hazardous materials must not be allowed to contaminate water courses and the dump sites for such materials must be secured so that they shall not leach into the ground water. The non-usable bitumen waste/ spoils shall be disposed of in an environmentally sound manner by digging deep trench and providing clay lining at the bottom and filled with soil at the top (for at least 0.5m).

**D. Noise management**

- i. Base line ambient noise level survey shall be carried out prior to start of construction as per the CPCB guidelines. The ambient noise levels should conform to the standards prescribed under Noise Pollution (Regulation and Control) Rules, 2000.
- ii. Noise reduction measures and traffic management strategies to be deployed for reducing the adverse impact if any.

E. Air Pollution Control

- i. The baseline ambient air quality monitoring shall be carried out as per the notification issued on 16th November, 2009. Appropriate Air Pollution control measures shall be in place during transportation of the construction materials.

F. Water management

- i. A comprehensive assessment of water catchment, hydrology and drainage pattern within 10km of the alignment shall be carried out. No diversion of the natural course of the river/creek shall be made. All the major, minor bridges and culverts should not affect the drainage systems. Flood plains of the rivers/ drainage systems are not to be disturbed. Rain water harvesting structures to be constructed at the either sides of the road.
- ii. In case the road passes through a flood plain of a river, the detail assessment of micro drainage, flood passages and information on flood periodicity should be carried out and a management plan shall be prepared and implemented.



- iii. Appropriate measures must be taken while undertaking digging activities to avoid any likely degradation of water quality.

G. Traffic management

- i. The proponent shall carry out a detailed traffic study to assess inflow of traffic from adjoining areas like airport/urban cities. The detailed traffic planning studies shall include complete design, drawings and traffic circulation plans (taking into consideration integration with proposed alignment and other state roads etc.). Wherever required adequate connectivity in terms of VUP (vehicle underpass)/ PUP (Pedestrian underpass) needs to be included.
- ii. Traffic Control Devices/Road Safety Devices/ including various types of cautionary, informatory, regulatory as mandatory signboards, road markers, studs, etc. shall be provided at appropriate locations all along the project stretch in accordance with the specifications laid down in Manual of Specifications and Standards for Expressways (IRC: SP:99-2013) and IRC:8, IRC:25, IRC:26, IRC:35, IRC:67, IRC:79, IRC:103 and Section 800 of MORTH Specifications.

H. Avenue plantation/Green Belt

- i. Necessary green belt shall be provided on both sides of the highway with proper central verge and cost provision should be made for regular maintenance. Green belt shall be developed with a native tree species in accordance with CPCB guidelines.
- ii. Old, large and heritage value trees should be retained based on girth and age regulations as may be prescribed



by the Forest Department. Where the trees need to be cut/transplanted with prior permission from the concerned local Authority, compensatory plantation for the forest land in the ratio of 1:10 (i.e. planting of 10 trees for every 1 tree that is cut/non-survival of any transplanted tree) shall be done and maintained as per the extant norms of State Govt./Central Govt. Plantations to be ensured species (cut) to species (planted).

- iii. The plantation activity be geo-tagged, before and after pictures be taken with geo tags and having date and time stamps to ensure maximum survival of the planted species. Periodical monitoring be carried out and survival percentage of the plantation should form the basis of making payments for such plantation.

I. Budgetary provisions

- i. Requisite funds shall be earmarked towards capital cost and recurring cost/annum for environment pollution control measures. An implementation schedule shall be prepared and implemented as per the timeline.
- ii. Adequate provision for infrastructural facilities including water supply, fuel and sanitation shall be ensured for construction workers during the construction phase of the project in order to avoid any damage to the environment.

J. Monitoring Provision

- i. The State Pollution Control Board/Pollution Control Committees shall obtain the relevant EIA/EMP study carried out by the Project Proponent through any NABET accredited Consultant in accordance with the instant SOP and shall upload the same on their website at the time of grant of CTE (Consent to Establish).



- ii. The concerned State Pollution Control Boards/Pollution Control Committees shall carry out periodic monitoring before, during, and after construction to ensure that the necessary environmental safeguards have been put in place as per the aforesaid EIA/EMP study.
- iii. Besides above, the Project Proponent shall also upload the information regarding the progress of construction on company's website in the format prescribed by the State Pollution Control Board so as to ensure that the necessary general and specific conditions related to construction and prevention as well as mitigation of environmental pollution as prescribed by the Institute of Repute are being complied with.

Besides above, the Project Authority shall obtain other statutory clearances, wherever applicable. The following are list of some requisite clearances for guidance, but not limited to, which may be applicable to such road projects:

- i. Indian Road Congress (IRC) guidelines.
- ii. Forest clearance under Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and CRZ clearance as per CRZ Notification 2011/ 2019.
- iii. If the project is passing through/located within the notified ecologically sensitive zone (ESZ) around a notified National Park/Wildlife Sanctuary or in the absence of notified ESZ, within 10 km from the boundary of notified National Park/ Wildlife Sanctuary, the project proponent may simultaneously apply for the clearance from the standing committee of NBWL.
- iv. Provisions for management of construction and demolition activities related thereto as contained in Construction and Demolition Waste Management Rules, 2016.
- v. The project affected people shall be rehabilitated in accordance with the Resettlement & Rehabilitation plans approved by the concerned competent authority.



vi. This is issued with the approval of the Competent Authority.

Sd/-
(Sundar Ramanathan)
Scientist 'E' ”

12. The affiant has denied the statements and averments made in paragraphs 11 and 13 of the writ petition that the acquisition of land for the project is being carried out under the provisions of National Highways Act, 1956. It is stated that the competent authority for the land acquisition under the Act is the Collector/Deputy Commissioner of the respective district and that the District Collector/competent authority Ri-Bhoi District has carried out extensive public consultation meeting with village headmen of the affected areas on 11th December 2024; that in the public consultation meeting, certain issues were raised by the village headmen and stakeholders, especially with regard to the proposed alignment in certain areas as the proposed alignment passed through village water sources, paddy fields and agricultural lands. It is stated that the issues and objections raised by the stakeholders were given proper consideration and the alignment was shifted ensuring the village water sources are not affected and paddy fields are minimally affected. Further



according to the affiant, another public consultation meeting was held with all the headmen of the affected villages on 25th February, 2025 on the modified alignment in which the village headmen and other stakeholders expressed their satisfaction for the proposed Greenfield High-Speed Corridor. To the affidavit, is annexed the minutes of the meeting held on 25th February, 2025.

13. The relevant part of the minutes of the meeting dated 25th February, 2025, which is at Annexure-3 at page 26, reads thus:

“The Chairman highlighted the agenda of the meeting and informed the members present that after due consideration in addressing the concern raised by the Headmen of sense villages on the 11 December, 2024 for shifting the alignment from major water source and paddy field, the National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL) has prepared the final alignment (Greenfield Project Alignment)

The Chairman then handed over the time to the representative from NHIDCL for the presentation of the alignment.

1. The representative from NHIDCL presented the alignment through power point village wise keeping in view of the changes made through request and site inspection in considering for shifting of the alignment on critical locations like water source, churches, cemetery, paddy field etc. It was informed that reservations of villagers as expressed in earlier public consultation meeting, the alignment had been revised and paddy fields, water sources have been avoided from coming under PRoW of the alignment of the proposed High-Speed Corridor.



2. Representatives of NHIDCL further informed that due care will be taken during construction to ensure damage to natural water sources and suitable directions will be issued to Contractor once appointed.
3. During the presentation, some changes have been made to the alignment at certain critical locations.

In view of the above deliberations held, the village headmen and village committee representatives expressed their satisfaction for the new proposed Greenfield alignment High Speed Corridor

The representative from NHIDCI informed the Chairman that they will be conducting the Geotechnical survey at certain location along the new proposed alignment for the construction of bridges and request the Chairman to kindly instruct the village headmen to cooperate and allow the team in conducting the survey.”

14. In paragraph 7 of the affidavit, the affiant has denied the averments made in paragraphs 12 and 14 of the petition and has stated that the High-Speed Corridor project and the Shillong-Dawki project are two different projects in different districts with different and distinct terrain and topography; that the DPR of the High-Speed Corridor has taken into account adequate measures for fragile hill ecosystem prone to landslides and ecological concerns based on expert advice of National Institute of Rock Mechanics (NIRM), Bengaluru, were being engaged as expert in High-Speed Corridor project for this specific purpose. Further, it



is categorically stated in paragraph 8 of the affidavit that all aspects of the project have been studied and considered in the DPR.

15. It is further categorically stated in paragraph 15 that based on available alignment, records and mapping, the core sacred area of Lum Sohpetbneng falls outside the proposed land acquisition and also outside the direct impact area of the project and that the stakeholder consultations were also undertaken during the planning stage with local authorities and stakeholders to consider cultural sensitivities.

16. In paragraph 19, the affiant has denied the averments made in paragraphs 20(G) and 20(H) of the petition and stated that the study to compare the available alternatives and deciding on the best and optimal option with minimum social, environment and financial impact is part of the DPR process and that the said study has been carried out by the DPR consultant with presentations given to the State Government officials and after conducting public consultations organised by the district administration.



17. Dr. N. Mozika, learned DSGI on instruction states that the Office Memorandum and whatever is stated in the affidavit will be followed in right earnest without any infraction. Statement accepted.

18. He further states that as per the SOP dated 6th February, 2023, in particular **A** i.e. risk assessment, landslide management plan and disaster management plan, **(i)** and **(ii)**, will be strictly complied along with other SOPs. Statement accepted.

19. On behalf of the respondent Nos.1 and 2 i.e., State of Meghalaya, an affidavit has been filed by Shri Abhilash Baranwal, IAS, Deputy Commissioner, Ri-Bhoi District, Government of Meghalaya. The affiant in the said affidavit has stated that the proposed project is a centrally approved infrastructure project which envisages the construction of a four-lane highway corridor running through 18 villages in Ri-Bhoi district i.e., from Pyllun village to Lumsophoh village. The proposed project aims to enhance the connectivity between Shillong, Guwahati and Silchar and reduce travel time between the same, thereby boosting trade, tourism and economic integration.



20. In paragraph 15 of the affidavit, the affiant has stated that the State has duly consulted with the village headmen and Dorbar Shnongs to allay and address the concerns raised by them; and that joint measurement surveys were being conducted and village headman as well as village committee representatives have been included as key participants for the purpose of verification, demarcation and recording of land boundaries. It is further stated that the Dorbar Shnongs are duly consulted for the purpose of greater community acceptance, reinforcing the legitimacy of the survey outcomes (to the affidavit is annexed the minutes of the meeting dated 25th February, 2025).

21. In paragraphs 16 of the affidavit, the affiant has further stated that preliminary steps such as surveys and alignments finalisation are standard preparatory activities undertaken by the government towards demarcation of the boundary of land under the National Highways Act, 1956; and that these preliminary steps do not constitute final land acquisition or diversion, towards which due process as laid down in the statute are being followed and that all the stakeholders are being given the



opportunity to raise their objections. It is further stated that the objections raised by the stakeholders are resolved by the competent authority by giving opportunity of hearing and making such further inquiry as required under Section 3C of the National Highways Act, 1956. It is further in paragraph 16 stated as under:

“16. That it is submitted that preliminary steps such as surveys and alignment finalization are standard preparatory activities undertaken by the government towards demarcation of the boundary of land under National Highways Act, 1956. It is submitted that these preliminary steps do not constitute final land acquisition or diversion, towards which due processes as laid down in the statute are being followed and all the stakeholders are being given the opportunity to raise their objections. It is submitted that the objections raised by the stakeholders are resolved by the competent authority through due process of giving opportunity of hearing and making such further inquiry as required under Section 3C of the National Highways Act, 1956.”

22. It is categorically stated in paragraph 17 of the said affidavit that as far as the issue of proximity of proposal project with the sacred sites (Lum Sohpetbneng) is concerned, no portion of the traditionally recognised sacred sites is affected by the proposal project and the proposed alignment for the High-Speed Corridor is approximately 500 meters away from the sacred sites.



It is further stated that such proximity has been evaluated during detailed surveys. It is further stated that the project has been undertaken with due consultation with the village headmen and Dorbar Shnongs so as to address the concerns raised by them.

23. As far as environmental safeguards are concerned, in paragraph 18 of the said affidavit, it is stated as under:

“18. That it is submitted that in view of the fragile hill ecosystem of the State of Meghalaya, particularly Ri-Bhoi district, measures relating to biodiversity safeguards and mitigation measures are proposed to be adopted through alignment optimization to avoid sensitive catchment areas. Further, extensive tunnelling and bridging are proposed to be undertaken wherever needed in order to minimize hill cutting and ecological disruption.”

24. As far as statutory compliances are concerned, the relevant paragraphs 19 to 23 of the said affidavit are reproduced hereinbelow:

“19. That as part of the due process towards receiving environmental clearances, the proposed project shall be placed before a “Project Screening Committee” under Rule 9 (7) of the Van (Sanrakshan Evam Samvardhan) Rules, 2023, which shall examine the completeness, correctness and feasibility of the proposed project and ensure that deficiencies, if any, are identified and addressed. Thereafter, the project shall be taken up for further



processing towards grant of Forest Clearance in accordance with various statutory requirements.

20. That in this regard, it is submitted that the proposed project comprises four packages, and submission of proposals for diversion of forest land for non-forest use in respect of the remaining three packages is under process from the end of user agency i.e., National Highways & Infrastructure Development Corporation Limited (NHIDCL).

21. That it is to be noted that the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change, Government of India (MoEF&CC), vide notification No. S.O. 3194 (E) dated 14.07.2022, amended the Environmental Impact Assessment Notification No. S.O.1533(E) dated 14.09.2006 issued by (MoEF&CC). It is submitted that by way of the aforesaid amendment, a new clause was inserted:

“(ii) All Highway projects are exempted upto 100 km from line of control or border subject to compliance of Standard Operating Procedure notified in this regard from time to time.”

22. That it is submitted that the Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) referred to in the aforesaid amendment was issued vide Office Memorandum No. F. No. IA3-22/40/2022-IA.III[E198668] dated 06.02.2023, providing guidelines to be followed for all the road/highway projects which are exempted from environmental clearance, on account of their location falling within 100 km from the international border/Line of Control.

23. That it is most respectfully submitted that the proposed project of Greenfield High-Speed Highway Corridor is at the preliminary stages and all statutory compliances, including forest diversion approval and other regulatory permissions, are under active consideration in accordance with law. The apprehensions raised in the petition are, therefore, premature and speculative.”



25. Considering what is stated in both the affidavits and the statement made across the Bar by Dr. Mozika, learned DSGI on behalf of the concerned respondent, we do not find any merit in the aforesaid PIL, having regard to the fact, that the authorities have accepted and agreed to follow the SOP as reproduced hereinabove and all statutory obligations cast on them scrupulously. From the affidavits filed, we find that the concerns raised by the petitioner have been answered as of today, i.e., the authorities have assured to scrupulously follow all what is stated in the affidavits, by taking steps to protect the environment, natural streams, cultural sites, etc.; that permissions will be sought of all authorities before commencement of the project, as required and that no rules/regulations/permissions will be flouted.

26. Needless to state, that the petitioner is at liberty to file a fresh petition, if a fresh cause of action so arises in future.



27. Petition stands disposed of accordingly.

(W. Diengdoh)
Judge

(Revati Mohite Dere)
Chief Justice

Meghalaya
17.04.2026
"*Lam* DR-PS"