

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI**

Original Application No. 258/2026

News Item Titled "Study Flags Overlooked Danger Posed By Hanging Glaciers On Mountain Slopes in Central Himalaya" Appearing in the Hindu Dated 20.04.2026

Date of hearing: 24.04.2026

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PRAKASH SHRIVASTAVA, CHAIRPERSON
HON'BLE DR. AFROZ AHMAD, EXPERT MEMBER**

ORDER

1. This original application is registered *suo motu* on the basis of the news item titled "Study flags overlooked danger posed by hanging glaciers on mountain slopes in central Himalaya" appearing in the Hindu dated 20.04.2026.

2. The news item relates to danger posed by hanging glaciers on mountain slopes in Central Himalaya. Unstable hanging glaciers on steep mountain slopes could trigger devastating avalanches and downstream disasters, a new study focused on a sensitive section of the Central Himalaya has warned. Four researchers from the Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Bengaluru, the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT), Bhubaneswar, and the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Chandigarh, assessed such glaciers in the Alaknanda basin of Uttarakhand, a key headstream region of the Ganga. Their findings revealed the scale of the growing but largely overlooked danger, and a sharp rise in human exposure, driven by rapid development in high-altitude areas. The newspaper states that "Such retreat has led to the detachment of tributary glaciers from trunk glaciers and has destabilised mountain glaciers (glaciers located on mountain sides) that were previously stable.

These instabilities are often compensated by mass shedding in the form of snow and/or ice avalanches, a process characteristic of hanging glaciers,” it read. The natural process, however, becomes hazardous when it occurs near settlements or infrastructures in the basin, which is also characterised by high seismicity, it stated. Using satellite imagery, elevation models, and avalanche simulations, the researchers assessed the farthest potential ice avalanches could travel and their likely impact. They deduced that in a worst-case scenario, modelled flows could reach major settlements, including Mana, Badrinath, and Hanuman Chatti. The newspaper states that according to the researchers, the rapid increase in exposure makes the current situation more alarming. The study estimated that built-up areas within vulnerable zones have expanded dramatically, from about 8,000 square metres in 2000 to over 150,000 square metres projected by 2030. The Badrinath-Mana stretch showed the most striking growth, with both population and infrastructure expanding toward steep glacier slopes. The researchers argued that adopting targeted monitoring in high-risk Himalayan locations could significantly reduce future risks. While full-scale systems may be difficult to implement across such vast terrain, they said that identifying the most perilous glaciers and focusing resources would be a practical first step

3. The above news item indicates violation of the provisions of the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986.

4. The news item raises substantial issues relating to compliance of the environmental norms and implementation of the provisions of scheduled enactment.

5. Power of the Tribunal to take up the matter suo-motu has been recognized by the Hon’ble Supreme Court in the matter of “*Municipal*

Corporation of Greater Mumbai vs. Ankita Sinha & Ors.” reported in 2021 SCC Online SC 897.

6. Hence, we implead the following as respondents in the matter:

1. Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Dehradun, 25, Subhash Road, Dehradun – 248001;
2. Central Pollution Control Board, Through its Member Secretary, Parivesh Bhawan, East Arjun Nagar, Delhi-110032;
3. Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Uttarakhand Tourism Development Board, Pt. Deendayal Upadhaya Paryatan Bhawan Near ONGC Helipad, Garhi Cantt, Dehradun, Uttarakhand 248001;
4. National Mission for Clean Ganga, Through it's Director General, 1st Floor, Major Dhyan Chand National Stadium India Gate, New Delhi – 110002;
5. Department of Urban Development, Uttarakhand, 31/62 Rajpur Road, Dehradun, Uttarakhand-248001.
6. National Institute of Hydrology through the Director, Roorkee - 247667 (Uttarakhand), India.

7. Issue notice to the above respondents for filing their response/reply by way of affidavit before the Tribunal at least one week before the next hearing date. If any respondent directly files the reply without routing it through his advocate, then the said respondent will remain virtually present to assist the Tribunal.

8. List alongwith OA No. 525/2025 on 06.08.2026.

Prakash Shrivastava, CP

Dr. Afroz Ahmad, EM

April 24, 2026
Original Application No. 258/2026
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