

S U P R E M E C O U R T O F I N D I A
RECORD OF PROCEEDINGSSUO MOTO WRIT PETITION(CIVIL) No(s). 10/2025

IN RE: DEFINITION OF ARAVALLI HILLS AND RANGES AND ANCILLARY ISSUES

LD. ATTORNEY GENERAL OF INDIA, THE SOLICITOR GENERAL OF INDIA AND MR. K. PARAMESHWAR, LD. SENIOR ADVOCATE AND AMICUS CURIAE TO ASSIST THIS COURT ALONG WITH THE CENTRAL EMPOWERED COMMITTEE CEC VIDE ORDER DATED 29.12.2025, MR. JAYCHEEMA, LD. AMICUS CURIAE - VIDE ORDER DATED 26.02.2026.

IA No. 57310/2026 - APPLICATION FOR PERMISSION, IA No. 63795/2026 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS, IA No. 123763/2026 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS, IA No. 20032/2026 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS, IA No. 19957/2026 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/DIRECTIONS, IA No. 81312/2026 - APPROPRIATE ORDERS/ DIRECTIONS, IA No. 20206/2026 - CLARIFICATION/DIRECTION, IA No. 92194/2026 - CLARIFICATION/DIRECTION, IA No. 123764/2026 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T., IA No. 62472/2026 - EXEMPTION FROM FILING O.T., IA No. 19640/2026 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION, IA No. 81310/2026 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION, IA No. 11734/2026 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION, IA No. 20892/2026 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION, IA No. 92110/2026 - INTERVENTION APPLICATION, IA No. 39829/2026 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 63797/2026 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 122577/2026 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 20029/2026 - INTERVENTION/ IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 57309/2026 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 92175/2026 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 19892/2026 - INTERVENTION/IMPLEADMENT, IA No. 31492/2026 - MODIFICATION OF COURT ORDER, IA No. 39833/2026 - PERMISSION TO APPEAR AND ARGUE IN PERSON
IA No. 57308/2026 - PERMISSION TO FILE APPLICATION FOR DIRECTION

Date : 25-05-2026 This matter was called on for hearing today.

CORAM : HON'BLE THE CHIEF JUSTICE
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE JOYMALYA BAGCHI
HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE VIPUL M. PANCHOLI

Mr. Jatinder Jay Cheema, Amicus Curiae
Ms. Shreya Gulati, Adv.

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UPON hearing the counsel the Court made the following

O R D E R

1. In the present matter concerning the definition of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges, this Court, *vide* its successive orders dated 29.12.2025 and 26.02.2026, underscored the necessity of constituting a High-Powered Committee comprising domain experts for the purpose of undertaking a comprehensive evaluation of the Report dated 03.10.2025. For context, the said Report had been submitted by a Committee constituted pursuant to the order of this Court dated 09.05.2024 and formed the basis for the issuance of extensive directions concerning the definition and demarcation of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges.
2. Accordingly, with a view to obtaining greater clarity and facilitating a more informed consideration of the issues involved, this Court, in its order dated 29.12.2025, made the following observations:

"9. We therefore deem it appropriate that prior to the implementation of the Committee's Report, or the execution of the directions contained in Paragraph 50 of this Court's judgment dated 20.11.2025, a fair, impartial, independent expert opinion must be obtained and considered, after

associating all requisite stakeholders. Such a step is essential to resolve critical ambiguities and to provide definitive guidance on issues such as:

(i) Whether the definition of the 'Aravalli Hills and Ranges', restricted exclusively to the 500-meter area between two or more Aravalli Hills, creates a structural paradox wherein the geographical scope of protected territory is significantly narrowed.

(ii) Consequently, it should be determined whether this restrictive demarcation has inversely broadened the scope of 'non-Aravalli' areas, thereby facilitating the continuation of unregulated mining and other disruptive activities in terrains that are ecologically contiguous but technically excluded by this definition?

(iii) Whether the Aravalli Hills, characterized by an elevation of 100 meters and above, constitute a contiguous ecological formation even when the intervening distance exceeds the stipulated 500-meter threshold. Furthermore, in such instances, it must be clarified whether regulated mining would be permissible in these gaps. If so, what precise spatial parameters or lateral width would be utilized to define the extent of the 'Aravalli Range' to ensure that ecological continuity is not compromised?

(iv) Whether the widely publicized criticism asserting that only 1,048 hills out of 12,081 in Rajasthan meet the 100-meter elevation threshold, thereby stripping the remaining lower ranges of environmental protection, is factually and scientifically accurate. In the event this assessment correctly identifies a significant regulatory lacuna, it must be determined whether an exhaustive scientific and geological investigation is necessitated. Such an inquiry would involve the precise measurement of all hill and hillock elevations to facilitate a more nuanced and 'measured' assessment of the criteria required to maintain the structural and ecological integrity of the entire range.

(v) Whether there exist any supplementary issues or systemic vulnerabilities that may emerge during the course of these proceedings that necessitate this Court's intervention.

10. Accordingly, we propose to constitute a High-Powered Expert Committee comprising domain experts to undertake a comprehensive assessment of the Report submitted by the Committee. This study shall constitute an exhaustive and holistic examination of the questions formulated above, and amongst others, the following parameters:

(i) A definitive enumeration of the specific regions that fall within the scope of the recommended definition;

(ii) A detailed identification of the territories that would be excluded from protection under the proposed criteria;

(iii) An analysis of whether 'sustainable mining' or 'regulated mining' within the newly demarcated Aravalli areas, notwithstanding regulatory oversight, would result in any adverse ecological consequences;

(iv) An assessment of the areas no longer covered by the definition, specifically whether such exclusion risks their eventual erasure or degradation, thereby compromising the overall ecological integrity of the Aravalli range; and

(v) A multi-temporal evaluation of the short-term and long-term environmental impacts resulting from the implementation of the recommended definition and its associated directions."

3. Pursuant thereto, by our order dated 26.02.2026, we called upon the learned Amicus Curiae and the learned Senior Counsel/counsel appearing on behalf of the Union of India, the concerned States, and other stakeholders to place on

record comprehensive notes, along with proposed questions that may require consideration in the course of these proceedings. We further requested the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC) to suggest the names of domain experts for constituting the proposed High-Powered Committee.

4. In furtherance of the aforesaid exercise, suggestions regarding experts to be considered for inclusion in the proposed High Powered Committee were received from the learned *Amicus Curiae*, the Aravali Bachao Citizens Movement, Dr. R.P. Balwan, IFS (Retd.), People for Aravallis, and the Mining Engineers' Association of India. The MoEFCC, through a short affidavit filed on its behalf, stated that it had no objection to this Court considering the names suggested by the learned *Amicus Curiae* for the constitution of the proposed Committee. It was further submitted that the Ministry did not have any additional names to propose for inclusion in the Committee.

5. At this stage, it is imperative to reiterate the necessity of constituting the proposed High-Powered Committee. The objective underlying its constitution is to ensure that

the issues arising from the parameters delineated in paragraphs 9 and 10 of our order dated 29.12.2025 are examined by subject-matter experts possessing the requisite technical knowledge and expertise, particularly in light of the fragile ecosystem and rich biodiversity of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges.

6. It must be emphasized that decisions of such far-reaching consequence ought not to be taken without the benefit of expert evaluation. The proposed Committee would be expected to objectively assess the implications of the measures contemplated and assist this Court in determining whether their implementation may give rise to ecological, environmental, or other consequences that may subsequently prove difficult, if not impossible, to reverse. Such an exercise is essential to ensure that any course of action adopted is informed, scientifically sound, and consistent with the principles of environmental protection and sustainable development.

7. It is important, and indeed imperative, that the proposed Committee comprise experts possessing diverse and

multidisciplinary expertise across a broad spectrum of relevant fields. Such a composition is essential to ensure that every aspect bearing upon the issue is comprehensively examined, including, *inter alia*, the geological and soil characteristics of the region, its biodiversity, flora and fauna, mineral wealth and natural resources, as well as the scientific and accurate geo-mapping of the Aravalli Hills and Ranges.

8. A holistic assessment of these interconnected factors is thus indispensable for arriving at an informed and balanced determination. Above all, such an exercise is necessary to ensure that any decision ultimately taken does not inadvertently occasion further degradation of the Aravalli ecosystem and that appropriate measures are devised to safeguard these ancient mountain ranges and the ecological systems that they sustain.

9. Having considered the suggestions received from various stakeholders, we are of the view that the constitution of a five-member High Powered Committee is warranted. Accordingly, we direct that the Committee shall comprise

the following individuals:

- a. Director General, Indian Council of Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE) - *ex officio* Chairperson;
 - b. Dr. Subhash Ashutosh, Ex-Director General, Forest Survey of India - Member;
 - c. Dr. Rajendra Kumar Sharma, Director (Retd.), Geological Survey of India - Member;
 - d. Mr. Brij Mohan Singh Rathore, Former Joint Secretary, MoEFCC - Member;
 - e. Prof. Ashok K. Bhatnagar, Former Professor and Head of Botany at Delhi University - Member of the Committee;
10. Following shall be the Special Invitees, who shall also be associated from time to time by the Chairperson of the Committee:
- a. Professor Jagdish Krishnaswamy, Dean, School of Environment and Sustainability, Indian Institute for Human Settlements;

b. Professor (Dr.) Laxmikant Sharma, Professor, Central University of Haryana.

11. In addition to the persons mentioned above, an officer of the rank of Director in the MoEFCC shall be nominated by the Government of India to serve as the Member Secretary. Further, the High-Powered Committee so constituted shall be at liberty to associate any other domain expert(s) as may be required for the effective discharge of its functions

12. We consider it necessary to clarify that the parameters delineated in paragraphs 9 and 10 of this Court's order dated 29.12.2025 are merely indicative and not exhaustive. They are intended to serve as broad guiding considerations and shall not be construed so as to confine or fetter the scope of the Committee's inquiry in any manner.

13. Should the High-Powered Committee, upon due consideration, find it necessary to examine additional issues or factors

bearing upon the subject matter of its mandate, it shall be at liberty to expand the scope of its assessment accordingly.

14. We are also conscious of the fact that the issues arising in the present proceedings have generated considerable interest amongst a wide range of stakeholders, including the States of NCT of Delhi, Rajasthan, Haryana, or any other such State(s); environmentalists; conservationists; not for profit organisations; mining lease holders; project proponents; villagers especially farmers; mine workers, and local communities whose livelihoods and well-being may be intrinsically linked to the ecosystem and biodiversity of the region.

15. It is, therefore, essential that the High-Powered Committee remains mindful of these varied and often competing considerations while undertaking its assessment, so as to ensure a comprehensive, balanced, and informed evaluation of the issues falling within its remit. Accordingly, we direct the High-Powered Committee to actively invite and consider suggestions from all relevant

stakeholders. For this purpose, the Committee shall issue an appropriate public notice inviting representations, suggestions, and inputs from interested persons and entities who may be affected by, or have a legitimate interest in, the issues under consideration.

16. The High-Powered Committee is directed to submit its comprehensive report before 31.08.2026.

17. Ordered accordingly. List on 07.09.2026.

(NITIN TALREJA)
ASTT. REGISTRAR-cum-PS

(PREETHI DILEEP KUMAR)
ASSISTANT REGISTRAR