



ECO-ZO VS UNION OF PRAKRITH

1. The Union of Prakrith is quasi-federal, democratic, sovereign, secular and socialist nation. It is one of the fastest developing economies in the world. It is also currently the most populated country in the world. Prakrith was under the rule of the Great British Empire for over 200 years. It established independence from the British Empire in 1947. The initial years after independence saw the country struggle economically. There was wide spread poverty and discord in the country.
2. Over the last 70 years Prakrith managed to achieve tremendous progress in raising growth, income levels and standards of living. This has been possible due to the aggressive efforts taken by the various governments of Prakrith towards development. A lot of the development has been credited to the Prakrith National Development Party (PND), which has been in power in the Central Government since 2014. The PND party is known for its religious nationalistic ideologies, favoring Tolkien, the majority religion in Prakrith. This has been a cause for criticism against the party.
3. Prakrith is also the 7th largest country in the world. Its geographical layout is vast with desert in the west, alpine tundra and glaciers in the north, and humid tropical regions supporting rainforests in the southwest and the island territories. The country's climate mirrors its geographical diversity, with the majority of the country experiencing a tropical climate. The northern extent of the country is flanked by the mighty Himalayan range. Over 13 northern and eastern states are bound by the snow-capped Himalayan mountains.
4. Zobhan is one of the northern states in Prakrith through which the Himalayas run. The state is covered by hilly terrain. The climate here is extremely cold and frigid during



winters and mild to moderately cold through the rest of the year. Zobhan is a picturesque land of considerable natural beauty. The northern part of the state of Zobhan is shrouded by Himalayan ranges and glaciers, whereas the lower parts of the state are thickly forested. The Himalayan ecosystem plays host to a large number of animals, plants and rare herbs. The area is also categorised as a seismic zone five, bound by two regional thrusts, thus making it more prone to earthquakes and landslides.

5. Zobhan has religious significance to the Tolkiens living in Prakrith. It is considered to be a holy land due to the various pilgrimages and sites of religious importance present in the state. Zobhan is also a very scenic tourist spot. It attracts crores of tourists in a year who come to the state to visit hill stations, under take trekking expeditions and visit various pilgrim sites. The hilly terrain and the roads connecting these locations were always plagued with traffic concerns and accidents. Sometimes the traffic jams could run for hours during peak seasons. During monsoon and winter, the area was plagued by landslides and snow. The traffic and small roads made it difficult for rescue vehicles to reach the location quickly to provide assistance.
6. Prakrith shares its northern border and north western border with its neighboring countries of Suvidha and Avasa. Prakrith and Suvidha have always had an amicable relationship. On the other hand, Avasa and Prakrith have always been at loggerheads. In 1962 a major border dispute escalated into a war like situation between the countries. The issue was with regard to a spot of great military and strategic importance to both countries. Both the countries claimed it as a part of their border and this resulted in tensions between them. There have been constant skirmishes in the border between the two countries.



7. In 2015, a military standoff occurred between Prakrith and Avasa when the latter brought heavy road building equipment began constructing a road in the disputed area. Prakrith objected to the construction of the road as it could hamper its national security. Despite this, Avasa continued constructing the road. Immediately, the Government of Prakrith decided to commence a counter project named 'Four Pilgrimage Project' (FPP). This project was considered to be the pet project of the ruling government as it was projected to increase connectivity to four religiously important pilgrimage sites of the Tolkiens. The FPP proposed to increase the width of the roads in the Zobhan from 5.5 meters to 10 meters. The project was flagged off by the Prime Minister of Prakrith in 2016.
8. The project began with massive deforestation which immediately attracted the locals' attention. The project cut through an eco-sensitive zone, which if disturbed could destabilize the environment. Once the project commenced, the locals claimed many ill effects such as the debris generated from the project was not being disposed properly and was resulting in landslides. It was also alleged that the project had gone through no environment, social or disaster potential assessments, no public consultations as required by law.
9. The Government maintained that all requisite legal compliances were met by the project. It affirmed that the 900 km long road has been split into 52 different projects and each project was considered based on its geographic nature. Hence, there was no requirement to get an Environment Impact Assessment done. The matter was challenged before the National Green Tribunal in 2018. An order was passed in favor of the Government, directing them to constitute an 'Oversight Committee' to monitor



the environmental safeguards for the execution of the Project. This order was challenged before the Supreme Court of Prakrith in 2019. A two-judge bench suggested that a High-Power Committee must be formed to monitor and consider the cumulative impact of the FPP and ensure that it is executed in a sustainable manner.

10. In 2021, severe flash floods and landslides occurred in the state of Zobhan, resulting in the death and displacement of over 100 people. The aftermath of this disaster led to cracks developing in houses situated in various districts of Zobhan. Research found that some of the cities in Zobhan have started sinking. A report finding by the Prakrith Space Research Organisation attributed the sinking to the geographical conditions of the region, accelerated by the construction work done for the FPP and the construction of a hydro-electric project in the same locality. The finding was ignored and the construction work continued in these areas. By July 2022, over 60 percent of the project was completed and many routes were open to access by public. This increased the tourism and thereby revenue and income of the locals also increased many folds.
11. Meanwhile, situation between Avasa-Prakrith deteriorated over the past years. Over the period from 2020 to 2023 multiple skirmishes escalated in the Avasa-Prakrith border leading to death of over 100 soldiers from each side. Prakrith was able to employ efficient defense mechanisms to counter the aggressions of Avasa, due to the roads built through the FPP. The roads aided in mobilizing military resources and combat vehicles in a quicker manner to respond efficiently to the threats. Thus, the national security of Prakrith was protected in multiple locations due to the FPP roads.



12. In September 2023, 40 laborers were trapped in the tunnel when a part of the under-construction tunnel connecting two crucial locations in the FPP collapsed. This incident shook the nation and the government took active steps to rescue the trapped workers. Multiple efforts were thwarted due to the climatic and geographical conditions of the region. It was feared that the workers would be dead by the time they were rescued. Eventually, the government had to resort to relying on rat miners to rescue by drilling holes in the collapsed tunnels. The workers were rescued after a period of two weeks during which time they survived with minimal food, water and sunlight.
13. This incident shook the entire nation. The locals and residents of Zobhan who formed the majority of the workers in FPP refused to return to work as a sign of protest against the danger that they were put through. Mr. Sarvam, the son of one of the workers trapped inside the tunnel, works with an NGO named ECO-ZO which focuses on restoring the unique ecosystem of Zobhan. While his father was trapped in the tunnel, Mr Sarvam took the initiative to start a series on Eco-Zo's social media page interviewing locals about the issues faced by them due to the FPP to gain solidarity and support. Owing to the complexity of the rescue mission #SaveZo became trending at the national and international level. It brought a lot of publicity to Eco-Zo and the people of Zobhan.
14. The Government of Prakrith appointed an Expert Committee to look into the cause of the incident and the rescue process. The Expert Committee submitted its report on the 2nd of January 2024 with the findings that the tunnel collapse was not due to any human error or triggered by construction work, but an accident that was caused due to the geographical condition of the locality. The report also highlighted that the efforts taken



by the Government had ensured that all 40 workers without any injury or issue to them. It also pointed out that the workers were able to survive for two weeks inside the tunnel due to the availability of light, oxygen and food supply that was planned and provided to them by the Government agencies. It lauded the efforts taken by the Government and pointed out that the FPP was executed in such a meticulously planned and thought-out manner.

15. Aggrieved by the report, Eco-Zo filed a Public Interest Litigation before the Supreme Court of Zobhan asking the Court to direct the authorities to stop the construction work at FPP. The PIL alleged that the State had failed to protect the environment, life and livelihood of the people of Zobhan. The following questions have been posted before the Hon'ble Court.

- i. Whether Eco-Zo has sufficient locus Standi to file this case before the Supreme Court of Prakrith?
- ii. Whether the State has failed to protect the fragile ecosystem of Zobhan?
- iii. Whether the State is vicariously responsible for the collapse of the tunnel in Zobhan?
- iv. Whether the State has violated the fundamental rights of the workers and people of Zobhan by continuing with the construction work on FPP?

NOTE: The laws and decisions in Prakrith are *in pari materia* with the laws and decisions of Union of India.