

HIGH COURT OF MEGHALAYA
AT SHILLONG

PIL No. 4 of 2021

Date of order: 14.03.2022

Registrar General, High
Court of Meghalaya

Vs.

State of Meghalaya & Ors.

Coram:

Hon'ble Mr. Justice Sanjib Banerjee, Chief Justice

Hon'ble Mr. Justice W. Diengdoh, Judge

Appearance:

For the Petitioner/Appellant(s) : Ms. B. Ramsiej, Adv.
Vice Mr. P. Yobin, Amicus Curiae

For the Respondent(s) : Mr. A. Kumar, AG with
Mr. S. Sengupta, Addl.Sr.GA
Dr. N. Mozika, Sr. Adv.
Mr. H.L. Shangreiso, Sr. Adv.

The latest affidavit filed by the Airports Authority of India (AAI) is not optimistic about the feasibility of the extended runways at the Umroi Airport or the extent to which it may be possible to extend the runways. What the AAI hints at is for the State to identify one or more areas for a greenfield airport project for a cost-benefit analysis and a feasibility report being prepared in such regard by experts.

The State appears to be keen that bigger aircraft are able to land either at Umroi Airport or any other place closer to Shillong than the Lokpriya Gopinath Bordoloi Airport at Guwahati. The present airport at Umroi is about 35 km from Shillong proper, whereas the Guwahati Airport is about 120 km from Shillong. However, the cost involved, whether in expanding Umroi Airport or in setting up a new greenfield airport, will depend on the projected use, both on the basis of AAI expert's understanding in such regard and the extent to which the State Government intends to give a fillip to tourism and make Meghalaya or the area around Shillong a lucrative tourist destination.

In fact, the idea of a bigger airport is intricately connected with the vision of the State over the next 40 to 50 years, how it intends to attract the kind of industry that may be sustainable here or develop tourism without compromising with the pristine nature that the State is endowed with. The overall picture has to be in place, including development of roads, creation of

employment opportunities, setting up of educational institutions, augmentation of healthcare facilities and the like; and, the airport project can be used as central to the overall scheme of development in the State. It may well be beyond the five-year horizon of thinking that is the fashion of the day, for projects of such kind have long gestation periods and pay back after decades.

Since the State appears to be keen to have an airport that would cater to the needs of the residents in the State and others intending to visit the State without having to endure the present three-hour ordeal of travelling from Guwahati Airport to Shillong proper, it is hoped that something concrete regarding the development of the State is planned, with a greenfield airport project or an expanded Umroi Airport as its centre being a harbinger or catalyst for the overall development of the State that would create employment opportunities and add to the wellbeing and happiness quotient of the residents here.

Let the matter appear eight weeks hence for a preliminary report to be filed by the State. It is hoped that the eight-week period will be used productively rather than a last-minute report being stitched together just before the matter appears next.

While on this subject, the State may also consider the revival or augmentation of the facilities at the now almost abandoned airport at Tura.

List on May 10, 2022.

(W. Diengdoh)
Judge

(Sanjib Banerjee)
Chief Justice

Meghalaya
14.03.2022
"Sylvana PS"