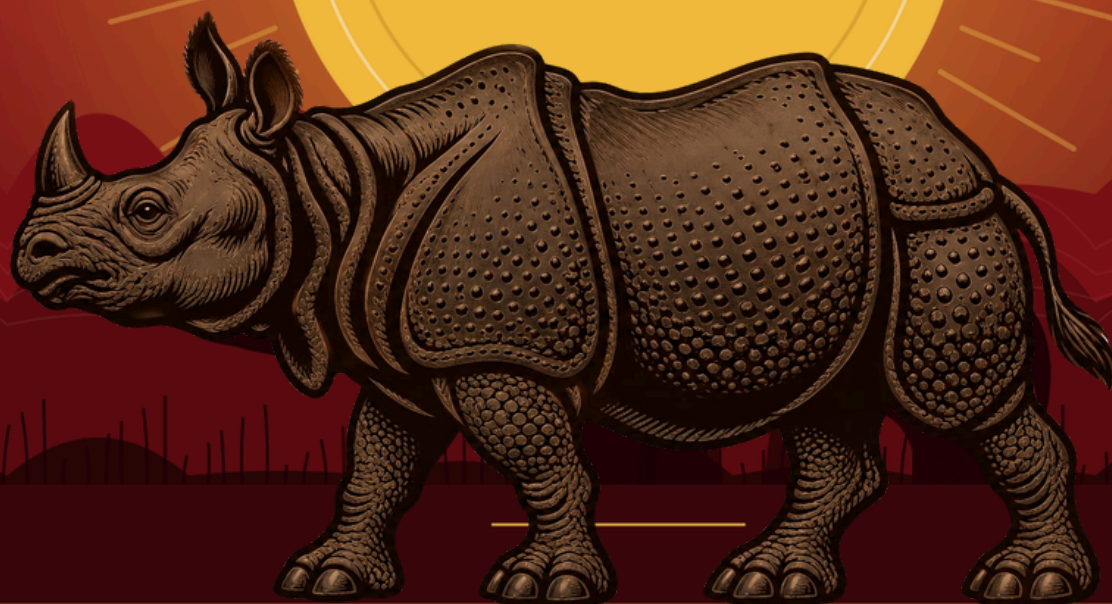




— THE 1ST —

# ASSAM UNIVERSITY, SILCHAR NATIONAL MOOT COURT COMPETITION

27<sup>th</sup> – 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2026





## MOOT PROPOSITION

1. The State of Avalom, in Indica, is home to the *Porcula salvinia*, commonly known as the pygmy hog, one of the world's smallest and rarest wild pigs. Pygmy hog is critically endangered and has been listed in CITES Annexure I, and protected under Wildlife Protection. The species is closely associated with the tall alluvial grasslands of the Manar landscape. Manar is a UNESCO World Heritage Site and supports several threatened species, including the pygmy hog.
2. The State has, for several decades, undertaken conservation measures involving habitat restoration, population monitoring including fitting with non-invasive identification tags, anti-poaching operations and community participation. Conservation programmes have historically included captive breeding and reintroduction efforts for pygmy hogs. Occasionally, Avalom and the Government of Indica have partnered with countries of Bhutal and Nilava in these conservation efforts.
3. Between 2021 and 2025, the Avalom Forest Department recorded a significant decline in the pygmy hog population in the Greater Manar Landscape. In early 2025, the Avalom Forest Department recorded a series of disappearances and suspected poaching activities. The first incident was reported in February 2025. While undertaking a routine monitoring exercise, forest personnel noticed that two pygmy hogs fitted tags were missing. The hogs are known to wander within the same grassland patch. A subsequent search of the area revealed disturbed vegetation and several shallow depressions in the ground indicating trapping activity. No carcasses or remains of the hogs were found.
4. The Department treated the disappearance as an isolated incident. Nevertheless, patrolling and surveillance was increased and field staff was instructed to report any evidence of snares, traps or unusual human movement. However, in April 2025, forest personnel discovered the carcass of a female pygmy hog, approximately three kilometres from the location at which the two tagged animals had last been recorded.

The Department treated the disappearance as an isolated incident. Nevertheless, patrolling and surveillance was increased and field staff was instructed to report any evidence of snares, traps or unusual human movement. However, in April 2025, forest personnel discovered the carcass of a female pygmy hog, approximately three kilometres from the location at which the two tagged animals had last been recorded. The carcass bore injuries that were inconsistent with ordinary predation. A wire loop and a section of rope were found about forty metres from the carcass. The forensic examination could not conclusively establish whether the wire loop and rope were related to the animal's death. Notably, the carcass was located within a designated pygmy-hog breeding habitat in which general public access was prohibited during the breeding season. The Department's preliminary investigation did not identify any unauthorised person within the restricted habitat during the period relevant to the death. However, the area was surrounded by a network of roads, footpaths and river crossings that remained accessible to residents of neighbouring villages and were routinely used for grazing livestock, accessing agricultural land, collecting forest produce and travelling between settlements. Forest personnel subsequently discovered signs of human movement along several of these adjoining routes during the preceding weeks. The Department could not determine whether these movements had any connection with the death of the animal.

5. In May 2025, during a routine early-morning patrol, forest officials discovered that nearly two hectares of grassland was arsoned. The burning was not authorised and had also spread into an active pygmy-hog habitat. From the arsoned territory, forest officials discovered remnants of two makeshift traps, though the possibility of additional traps could not be ruled out. Investigators also observed tyre marks on an access track leading towards the affected grassland.
6. A week later, a pygmy hog's monitoring tag transmitted a location signal from an area six kilometres outside the animal's previously recorded range. The technical team of the Forest Department confirmed that the last transmission was consistent with the tag having been removed, damaged or rendered incapable of transmitting. The signal ceases about fourteen hours later. The technical team of the Forest Department confirmed that the last transmission was consistent with the tag having been removed, damaged or otherwise, rendered incapable of transmitting. Despite searching for several days, the officials were neither able to spot the animal, its tag or the carcass.
7. Around the same period, the Forest Department received information from an informant alleging that pygmy hogs were being captured and transported through a network of villages situated along the routes to avoid formal checkpoints. The information could not initially be independently verified.

8. In July 2025, forest officials intercepted a vehicle near one of the roads adjoining the protected landscape following information that the vehicle was being used to transport wildlife. The authorities did recover several cages, lengths of wire, sacks and other equipment that could potentially be used for trapping animals, though no protected wildlife was recovered. The occupants of the vehicle claimed that the equipment was intended for agricultural use and denied any involvement in wildlife trafficking. No prosecution was initiated.
9. A subsequent review of the incidents revealed that the locations associated with the episodes, were situated near routes regularly used by residents of neighbouring villages. The Forest Department's field records showed substantial movement of people and vehicles through these areas each week. Such movement was not, in itself, unlawful: the routes remained important for grazing livestock, accessing agricultural land, collecting forest produce, travelling between settlements and undertaking other livelihood-related activities.
10. The Department therefore found it increasingly difficult to distinguish between legitimate movement by forest-dependent communities from movements that may be associated with wildlife trafficking. The Department, deemed it fit, to constitute a special investigation team to look into the events. After reviewing the existing evidence, the SIT concluded that there was a possibility that the incidents were not isolated acts of individual poaching but formed part of an organised network involving the illegal capture, movement and possible trafficking of pygmy hogs. The report also noted that conventional patrols and physical surveillance covered only a limited portion of the Greater Manar Landscape and required substantial human and financial resources, and recommended that the Department sought the assistance of state-of-the-art technological measures capable of monitoring larger areas continuously and identifying broader patterns of movement.
11. In September 2025, the Government of Avalom, pursuant to an executive notification, accordingly introduced the "Pygmy Hog Conservation and Protection Programme", popularly referred to as HOPWATCH. The stated objective of the programme was to improve the monitoring of pygmy hog populations, prevent illegal capture and trafficking, detect threats to protected grassland habitats and assist enforcement authorities in responding to wildlife offences. The operational guidelines and mechanisms were to be developed by the Forest Department.

12. Under Project HOPWATCH, an extensive network of AI-enabled camera system was installed across the designated conservation zones within the Greater Manar Landscape. Cameras were also placed at designated forest entrances, roads adjoining the conservation area, river crossings and certain community pathways historically used by residents of villages situated around the protected landscape. These cameras were capable of identifying pygmy hogs, detecting human movement, distinguishing between animals and human beings, recognising individual human faces, matching facial images captured at different locations, identifying vehicles and generating movement patterns based upon repeated entries into designated areas. The system was also capable of assigning a risk score to individuals on the basis of specified variables, including frequency of entry, location of movement, time of entry and proximity to locations associated with suspected wildlife offences.
13. The Forest Department maintained that facial recognition was not the principal purpose of Project HOPWATCH but constituted a necessary, ancillary technological component of an integrated wildlife-protection system. The Department further maintained that the system did not itself determine criminal liability and that any enforcement action based upon information generated by the system would remain subject to human verification and applicable law.
14. During the first six months of the operation of Project HOPWATCH, the system generated a number of alerts concerning repeated human movement in and around areas associated with suspected wildlife offences. The Forest Department stated that most of these alerts were found, upon verification, to relate to persons engaged in legitimate activities, including grazing, agricultural work, transportation and forest-related livelihoods. The Department nevertheless maintained that the system had assisted investigators in identifying patterns of movement that would have been difficult to detect through conventional patrols.
15. The initial architecture of HOPWATCH provided for the retention of facial images and associated biometric information for a period of thirty days. Within six months of the programme's implementation, however, the Forest Department concluded that historical movement patterns could assist investigators in identifying links between suspected wildlife offences occurring at different locations and points in time. The Department consequently altered the data-retention policy and extended the period of retention of facial-recognition and associated movement data to five years. The extension was effected administratively and without the enactment of a separate legislative measure specifically authorising the revised retention period.

16. Over time, access to information generated by HOPWATCH was expanded to investigations involving illegal timber extraction, other wildlife trafficking, alleged trespass and unauthorised forest fires. The State police, on multiple instances, sought the assistance of the Forest Department and requested access to the camera recordings to further their investigation of criminal offences unrelated to wildlife or forest conservation. The Forest Department reviewed these requests on a case-on-case basis. While access to the recordings were granted in some cases, they were denied in others. Subsequently, with the view of ensuring uniformity, the Government of Avalom issued an administrative notification permitting the sharing and use of information collected under Project HOPWATCH with other state and central agencies, where such information was considered relevant to public safety or the prevention and detection of crime.
17. The expansion of the programme raised concern among the communities residing in the adjacent villages. A collective known as the “Manar Forest Communities Collective”, representing residents of these villages situated approached the High Court of Avalom. MFCC did not challenge the State's objective of protecting the pygmy hog but contended that the implementation of HOPWATCH that enabled the systematic identification and tracking of ordinary citizens. They contended that the State was collecting facial images and biometric information without obtaining consent and without any past record of wrongdoing. They further challenged the creation of individual movement profiles, the five-year retention period, the use of algorithmic risk scores, the sharing of information with the police and the subsequent use of conservation-generated data for investigations unrelated to wildlife protection. They also challenged the absence of an independent authorisation mechanism governing access to the database and the absence of an effective procedure through which an individual could challenge an erroneous identification or risk classification. The Hon'ble High Court, however, refused an interim injunction.
18. During the pendency of the proceedings, in April 2026, one resident, Nihir, was identified by the HOPWATCH as having entered a restricted grassland zone on four occasions during the preceding three months. Three of those entries occurred within periods in which the Forest Department had recorded other suspicious activity in the surrounding area. The system consequently assigned Nihir a "high risk score".
19. The Forest Department subsequently reviewed the underlying footage and found that Nihir had been present near, but not within, the restricted conservation zone on each of the four occasions. The Department also established that the routes used by Nihir were ordinarily accessible to residents of the neighbouring villages.

Nevertheless, investigators considered the frequency and timing of his movements sufficiently unusual to warrant further inquiry. Nihir was subsequently detained and questioned. He denied any involvement in the capture, killing or trafficking of pygmy hogs.

20. No prosecution was initiated against Nihir at that stage. However, following Nihir's detention, a member of MFCC filed an RTI and sought information from the Forest Department concerning the operation of Project HOPWATCH. They requested, among other things, information regarding the categories of data collected by the system, the period for which such data was retained, the criteria used to generate individual risk scores and the circumstances in which information collected through the programme could be shared with other government authorities.
21. The response disclosed certain operational guidelines relating to HOPWATCH. It revealed that the system was capable of linking facial images captured at different locations and generating individual movement profiles based upon repeated appearances across the camera network. The guidelines further permitted authorised HOPWATCH system to classify individuals according to different levels of "conservation risk" based upon specified indicators. The response refused disclosure of the precise location of cameras, technical parameters, risk-scoring criteria and access protocols as it could enable persons involved in wildlife trafficking to circumvent the surveillance system.
22. Meanwhile, a global newspaper report of the country of Malaya claimed that their public surveillance camera system, which worked on the same hardware and software technology as HOPWATCH, recorded an overall false-positive rate of approximately 11.7% risk. It further indicated that the accuracy of the system varied across demographic groups. The government of Malaya did not deny the report.
23. MFCC amended their original petition before the High Court. They, additionally, contended that the a persistent biometric and movement profiling and risk classification was unconstitutional and that the significant possibility of error ruled out any possibility of acceptable uses for the technology. The State maintained that the risk score was merely preliminary and was always followed by human verification.

The Department further states that the system was designed to reduce the burden on field personnel by enabling them to identify patterns that could not reasonably be detected through conventional patrols. The State further submitted that no adverse action is taken solely on the basis of an automated match and that all alerts are required to undergo human verification before enforcement action is considered.

24. The Petitioners also challenge the absence of an independent mechanism authorising access to the HOPWATCH database. The State maintains that additional authorisation requirements would impede rapid responses to wildlife offences and that internal access controls, audit logs and departmental supervision provide adequate safeguards against misuse.

25. The High Court has admitted the petition and posted the case for hearing on **27-28 November 2026** to determine the following:

**I-** Whether the collection and processing of facial images and biometric information of persons entering or passing through designated areas violates the right to privacy.

**II-** Whether the deployment of AI-enabled facial recognition, movement profiling and risk-scoring technology by the State pursuant to an executive notification is permissible and in consonance with the Constitution of India.

**III-** Whether the sharing and use of facial-recognition and movement data collected for wildlife conservation with other government agencies for use in investigations unrelated to wildlife offences is permissible.

**IV-** Whether reliance upon an AI-generated risk score and facial-recognition match, particularly where the system has a demonstrable error rate and differential accuracy across demographic groups, violates the constitutional guarantees of equality, non-arbitrariness and procedural fairness.

# Rules & Regulation

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR MEMORIAL

| S.NO. | Marking Criteria                                           | Maximum Marks |
|-------|------------------------------------------------------------|---------------|
| 1     | Identification and Articulation of Issues and Jurisdiction | [10]          |
| 2     | Knowledge of Laws and Facts                                | [10]          |
| 3     | Interpretation and Application of Laws to Facts            | [10]          |
| 4     | Use of Authorities                                         | [10]          |
| 5     | Authoritativeness and Persuasiveness                       | [10]          |
| 6     | Organization of Arguments                                  | [10]          |
| 7     | Clarity of Thought                                         | [10]          |
| 8     | Originality and Innovation                                 | [10]          |
| 9     | Presentation Style and General Impression                  | [10]          |
| 10    | Grammar and style of presentation                          | [10]          |
|       | <b>Total</b>                                               | <b>100</b>    |

## STRUCTURE OF THE MEMORIAL

### A) GENERAL GUIDELINES:

- Each team participating in the event must prepare memorials for both sides i.e, on behalf of the Petitioner / Appellant / Applicant / Plaintiff and Respondent / Opposite Party / Defendant.
- The cover page of the memorials shall be blue colour in the case of Petitioner / Appellant /Applicant / Plaintiff and red colour in the case of Respondent / Opposite Party / Defendant memorial.
- Team code shall be printed in the Top Right corner of the cover page.
- The soft copy of the memorials in PDF format shall be submitted/uploaded to the official website from participant portal. The Soft copy and the Hard copy of the memorial submitted shall be the same and identical in all aspects. If any change is found, then the memorial shall be rejected and no marks shall be awarded.

**v) Memorial shall consist of the following mandatory heads:**

- Cover Page
- Table of Contents
- List of Abbreviations
- Index of Authorities
- Statement of Facts (not exceeding 2 pages)
- Statement of Issues
- Summary of Arguments (not exceeding 3 pages)
- Arguments Advanced
- Prayer (not exceeding 1 page)
- Memorial on a whole should not exceed the page limit of 30 pages including the cover page

**b) The Cover Page of a Memorial must contain the following information:**

- (i) The Team Code in the upper right-hand corner in accordance with the Rules of the Competition
- (ii) The name and year of the Competition
- (iii) The name of the case

**c) Footnotes and Citations**

- (i) All citations in the memorial must strictly adhere to the Bluebook ( 21st Edition) style of citation
- (ii) Footnotes shall be limited only to citations. Font size 10, single line spacing (1.0), and justified alignment.
- d) The Memorial shall not contain any annexure, photograph, diagrams, or other representation of like nature.

e) The Memorial (including the preliminary pages and excluding the cover page) shall adhere to the following mandatory specifications:

1. Page size: A4
2. Font type: Times New Roman
3. Font size: 12
4. Line spacing: 1.5
5. Body of text: Justified
6. Margin: 1 inch on all sides

f) The hard copies of the Memorials must be exactly the same as the soft copies of the Memorials sent by the Team on or before 31st of October, 2026 at 11:59 P.M.

g) Any violation of this rule shall attract penalty as determined by the organizing committee. The decision of the Organizing Committee in this regard shall be final and not subject to challenge.

# Rules & Regulation

## EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR ORAL SUBMISSION

| S.NO | Marking Criteria                                | Marks      |
|------|-------------------------------------------------|------------|
| 1    | Knowledge of Law                                | 15         |
| 2    | Knowledge of Facts                              | 15         |
| 3    | Interpretation and Application of Law           | 15         |
| 4    | Argumentative Skills, Creativity and Innovation | 15         |
| 5    | Use of Authorities                              | 10         |
| 6    | Response to Questions                           | 10         |
| 7    | Court Etiquette                                 | 10         |
| 8    | Time Management                                 | 10         |
|      | <b>Total</b>                                    | <b>100</b> |

## STRUCTURE OF THE COMPETITION

The Competition shall be conducted on Friday and Saturday, **27<sup>th</sup> - 28<sup>th</sup> November, 2026** from 9.00 AM to 5.30 PM. The draw of Lots shall be intimated in due course.

**The Competition shall consist of the following Rounds:**

- (i) Memorial Round
- (ii) Octa & Quarter Final
- (iii) Semi-Final Rounds
- (iv) The Final Round

## **A) MEMORIAL ROUND**

1) A maximum of thirty-two registered teams shall be admitted to the Memorial Evaluation Round upon timely submission of their written submissions. All submitted memorials shall undergo double-blind assessment by an expert evaluation panel constituted by the Organizing Committee, ensuring complete anonymity and neutrality.

2) Each memorial will be evaluated out of a maximum of 100 points, judged on the depth of legal research, logical articulation, clarity of arguments, citation precision, and strict adherence to formatting guidelines. Following cumulative evaluation across all prescribed criteria, only the sixteen highest-scoring teams shall qualify to advance to the Oral Pleadings. In the event of a tie for the sixteenth qualifying position, the team securing higher marks in the substantive arguments and legal reasoning criteria shall advance. The scores and selection determinations made by the Memorial Evaluation Panel and the Organizing Committee shall be final, conclusive, and binding on all participating teams.

## **B) OCTA FINAL ROUNDS**

1) The sixteen teams qualifying from the Memorial Evaluation Round shall contest the Octa-Final Rounds, where sides of pleading and court fixtures shall be determined through a formal draw of lots. Each team will be allotted a total pleading time of 20 minutes to argue from their allotted side, inclusive of a maximum reservation of 3 minutes for Rebuttal or Sur-rebuttal.

2) Any reservation of time must be formally notified to the court officers prior to the commencement of the oral pleadings. Time extensions may be granted solely at the discretion of the bench. Advancement to the Quarter-Finals shall not be determined on a knock-out basis; instead, all sixteen teams will be ranked cumulatively based on the evaluation of their oral presentation and advocacy marks.

3) The eight highest-scoring teams across the round will qualify directly for the Quarter-Final Rounds.

## **C) QUARTER FINAL ROUNDS**

1) The eight qualifying teams shall contest the Quarter-Final Rounds, which shall operate strictly on a knock-out basis where fixtures and sides of pleading are determined through a draw of lots. Each team will be allotted a total pleading time of 20 minutes, ordinarily divided equally into 10 minutes per speaker; however, teams may adjust the individual speaker allocations and reserve time for Rebuttal or Sur-rebuttal at their discretion, subject to prior notice and the express permission of the judges.

2) Any team that loses its fixture or incurs disqualification under the rules shall be eliminated from the competition immediately. The four winning teams emerging from each respective courtroom fixture will advance directly to the Semi-Final Rounds.

## **D) SEMI FINAL**

1) The four teams advancing from the Quarter-Finals shall contest the Semi-Final Rounds, which shall operate strictly on a knock-out basis, with pairings and sides of pleading determined through a formal draw of lots and fixtures.

2) Each team will be allotted a total pleading time of 30 minutes, structured ordinarily into 15 minutes per speaker; however, teams may adjust the internal distribution of speaking time and allocate time for Rebuttal or Sur-rebuttal at their discretion, subject to prior notification to court officers and the express permission of the bench.

3) Time extensions up to a maximum of 3 minutes may be granted solely at the discretion of the judges. In the event of a tie between two contesting teams in a courtroom fixture, their respective memorial scores shall be taken into consideration to determine the outcome.

4) The two winning teams emerging from the respective knock-out fixtures shall qualify directly for the Final Round, while the eliminated teams shall exit the competition.

## **FINAL ROUND**

1) The two finalist teams advancing from the Semi-Finals shall contest the Grand Final Round, where courtroom fixtures and pleading sides shall be determined by a formal draw of lots. Each team will be allotted a total pleading time of 40 minutes, distributed equally with 20 minutes allocated to each speaker.

2) The specific time reserved for Rebuttal and Sur-rebuttal must be determined and finalized prior to the commencement of the round and formally communicated to the designated Court Master, who shall apprise the honorable bench accordingly.

3) Any minor adjustments to individual speaking durations or time extensions shall remain strictly at the discretion of the bench.

4) The overall Winner and Runner-Up of the competition shall be determined solely by the honorable judges based on the evaluation and scores of the oral rounds.

## **COMPENDIUM**

1) All relevant case laws and statutory material to be passed on to the Court Officer during the Oral Rounds in the form of a Compendium to the organizing committee during the submission of the hard copies of the memorial.

2) The teams have to keep a hand copy of the compendium for their reference during an argument before the judges. In event the compendium submitted to the Organizing Committee shall not be returned to the teams concerned.

3) Participants shall ensure that anonymity is not violated in the compendium.



## IMPORTANT LINKS

1

BROCHURE

[CLICK HERE](#)

2

MOOT PROPOSITION

3

RULES & REGULATION

[CLICK HERE](#)

4

MASTER LINK

[CLICK HERE](#)



SCAN  
ME!

