

# NGT TO EVALUATE SAND-MINING SCENARIO

Relevant for: Environment | Topic: Environmental Conservation, Sustainable Development, and EIA

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has decided to appoint an eight-member committee to check whether riverbed sand-mining in Kerala is being done in compliance with the sand-mining policy of the Union government and various environmental laws. The Southern Bench of the tribunal recommended the formation of the committee after taking suo motu notice of media reports quoting a study that recommended that nearly 30.3 lakh cubic metres out of the 81.45 lakh cubic metres accumulated sand in the Bharathapuzha river can be mined.

The Bench comprising Justice K. Ramakrishnan and expert member Saibal Dasgupta said that the court lacked clarity on the procedure adopted by the District Collectors while granting permission for mining the excess sand. It is also not known as to whether the district survey reports are prepared in a scientific manner as per the guidelines, it said.

The expert committee to be led by a senior officer of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change has been entrusted with the task of finding out whether any monitoring is done to ascertain the quantity of sand to be mined, besides seeing whether the departments concerned have approved the mining plan. The committee is also directed to provide a status report on sand mining in riverbeds passing through the forests and eco-sensitive zones.

It will probe whether permission is being granted in those buffer areas. The committee is also permitted to co-opt the District Collectors whenever inspection is carried out as part of the field study to find out whether they are following a uniform method as per rules. The committee has to submit its report before the tribunal by March 16.

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