

NGT directs Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh to submit guidelines on forest fire

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) today directed the Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh governments to submit the national forest fire prevention and control guidelines. A bench headed by NGT Chairperson Justice Swatanter Kumar also asked both the state governments to inform it about the total number of forest fires till date starting from 2016.

"We want both the states to inform us how many forest fires have been reported in 2017 as compared to 2016. You also place on record the national guidelines on forest fires," the bench said. The tribunal, which has already reserved its verdict in the matter, has fixed the case for hearing on July 24.

In Himachal Pradesh during 2016-17, there were 1,545 forest fires which affected 13,069-hectare causing loss of Rs 1.53 crore, whereas, in 2015-16, there were 672 fire incidents which caused harm in 5,749.95 hectare area causing loss of Rs 1.34 crore.

The tribunal had earlier directed the states to submit crisis management plan for prevention and control of forest fires to the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). It had taken exception to the fact that that the issue of the management plan was pending since 2010 and directed the MoEF to file the details of states which have not submitted the management plan on forest fires.

Voicing concern over forest fires raging in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh, the tribunal had said it was shocked that everybody was taking the issue "so casually" and issued show cause notices to both the states.

Massive forest fires had engulfed a large part of areas in Uttarakhand and Himachal Pradesh in May last year.

END

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