

# SC HALTS ROAD WORKS THROUGH TIGER RESERVES

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The SC has cited numerous violations of the Forest Conservation Act.AFP

The Supreme Court on Friday ordered an immediate halt to the construction of a road that passes through a corridor between the Rajaji and Corbett Tiger Reserves. “There appears to be numerous violations of the Forest Conservation Act,” it said.

A Vacation Bench of Justices Deepak Gupta and Surya Kant issued notice to the Uttarakhand government, asking it to reply, within three weeks, to a report filed by the court-appointed Central Empowered Committee (CEC).

The road, which traverses a “critical” corridor between the Rajaji Tiger Reserve and the Corbett Tiger Reserve, is being built without the statutory approval of the National Board for Wildlife, the CEC said in its report. “As per the 2014 data of All India Tiger Estimation, the area supports up to four tigers per 100 sq km...,” it said.

The CEC sought an immediate halt to the construction of roads, bridges and culverts in the Rajaji Tiger Reserve between Laldhang and Chillarkhal as it would “adversely impact the habitat and wildlife of the ecologically sensitive area”.

After going through the report, the court said, “It is apparent that the advice of the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA) has not been taken and permission from the standing committee of the National Board for Wildlife has also not been taken”.

The NTCA also informed the CEC that the Uttarakhand government had not responded to its letters of April 20 and May 30 on the road construction.

It also asked for strict action against the officers who had allowed the road to be built.

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