

# NGT puts strict curbs on devpt in pvt forests

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PANAJI: The National Green Tribunal (NGT) has directed the Goa government not to grant permission for any kind of development work in the private forest areas which were identified by the Thomas & Araujo committees, but excluded by the state's second review committee (RC-II). It also said that this exercise of verifying these private forest areas should be completed within three months. The tribunal has also asked the RC-II to complete its work of finalising the remaining private forest areas in Goa within a year.

So far, the Goa government notified 455 hectares as private forests. "Looking at the fact that the procedure which is being adopted by RC-II is quite extensive and time consuming, which

would require huge manpower as well, it is likely that the completion of the work would take some time. We expect that the committee should complete its task within one year," the NGT said.

The Goa Foundation approached the tribunal stating that several survey numbers identified as private forests were now being reviewed and removed from the private forest category in areas like Salvador do Mundo, Dabolim, Chicalim, Sancoale, and Cortalim.

The tribunal has now said that if any area is to be left out as private forest after the review, it has to necessarily be done only after physical verification of the area.

"We are of the view that in order to take extreme precaution that no one suffers on account of errors in identification of the private forest area, the areas which were finally identified as private forest area by the Tho

mas & Araujo committees, if any area out of that is required to be excluded as per review being made by RC-II, the said area should be got verified physically with respect to all three criteria laid down for determination of the private forest cited by us,” the tribunal has said.

The private forest area finalised and demarcated by the Thomas & Araujo committee was 8.64sqkm.

“Till the final decision is taken with respect to whether the area being excluded from the list of being treated as final forest land by the RC-II which was finalised by the Thomas & Araujo committees as private forest, in keeping with our direction, no permission shall be granted by the state government for any kind of development work in the said survey numbers. This exercise shall be completed within three months of uploading this order,” the NGT order states.