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The Goan government plans to cut down parts of forest land for constructing a 4-lane highway in Loutolim. The national green tribunal (NGT) has directed the government to prepare an action plan for compensatory afforestation in non-forest areas.

The special bench of NGT was chaired by Adarsh Kumar Garg and Justice Sudhir Agarwal. The bench has given the government a month to prepare the action plan. This plan needs to be submitted to the forest department, which may announce its decision within a month, pending of which no further approvals will be granted.

The appeal was brought forth challenging the grant of Stage-II forest clearance to the Public works department, Fatorda, by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and climate change (MoEF&CC). The Ministry had permitted the clearance of 5.18ha of forest land in Loutolim to construct a link-4-lane highway without compensatory afforestation. The applicant sought that there must be compensatory afforestation that too at non-forest land.

The NGT bench said that the suitable afforestation must occur at the non-forest area that the Forest Department approves.

The order stated, "Accordingly, the project proponent may prepare an action plan with budgetary support and details of species of trees to be planted and other details within one month to the Forest Department, Goa who may decide thereon within one month thereafter. Till the compliance, as directed is ensured, no further action in terms of approval may be undertaken."



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