

NGT orders probe into Essar's 'illegal' constructions in Gujarat's eco-sensitive zone

Ishan Kukreti

[@ikukreti](#)

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The committee has been tasked to ascertain exact area which is being used by Essar Bulk Terminal (Salaya) Ltd (EBT)



Essar has allegedly encroached upon protected eco-sensitive zone of Salaya Marine National Park. Credit: Benjamin Mackinnon / CSESource

The Pune bench of the National Green Tribunal appointed a three-member Court Commission comprising director of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC), senior scientist of National Environmental Engineering Research Institute (NEERI) and director of Marine National Park and Sanctuary, Jamnagar for local investigation to ascertain exact area which is being used by the Essar Bulk Terminal (Salaya) Ltd (EBT).

The green bench, comprising Justice U D Salvi and Ajay Deshpande, has directed the committee to ascertain the extent of constructions carried out by EBT.

The Salaya Fishermen's Association (SFA) had filed an application for appointment of Court Commissioner/Commission to investigate into illegal construction of soil bunds carried out by the EBT. The application also alleged that the EBT has encroached upon protected Eco-Sensitive Zone (ESZ) of Salaya Marine National Park and Sanctuary. It claimed that the encroachment resulted in the destruction of mangroves and obstruction to inter-tidal water in Salaya Creek.

The EBT, however, has replied that there is no illegal construction made by them. The probe order, which was passed on May 25, was uploaded on June 14 on the tribunal's website.

The SFA counsel Asim Sarode submitted before the NGT that the Notification dated August 22, 2013, declared 326.26 sq km area around Salaya Marine National Park and Marine Sanctuary as ESZ, of which area measuring 208.58 sq km is landward, 105.14 sq km is seaward and 12.54 sq km is covered by rivers.

The committee has to furnish its report before July 26.