

**BEFORE THE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH, NEW DELHI**

Original Application No. 276/2024

News Item titled "sand mafia is taking complete control of illegal river sand mining" appearing in O Heraldo dated 13.02.2024

Date of hearing: 01.04.2024

**CORAM: HON'BLE MR. JUSTICE PRAKASH SHRIVASTAVA, CHAIRPERSON
HON'BLE DR. A. SENTHIL VEL, EXPERT MEMBER**

Respondent: Mr. Pavithran A.V., Adv. for R – 1 (Through VC)
Mr. Raj Kumar, Adv. for R – 2 (Through VC)
Mr. Sumit Arora, Adv. for R – 3 (Through VC)

ORDER

1. This Original Application is registered *suo-motu* on the basis of the news item titled "sand mafia is taking complete control of illegal river sand mining" appearing in O Heraldo dated 13.02.2024. The news item relates to the alleged illegal sand mining across many areas in Goa along the riverbed. The news item reveals that rampant illegal sand mining is taking place in various parts of Goa along the riverbed which is seriously affecting Goa's marine ecosystem. As per the report the sand mining is taking place in the river through the boats and even in the interior forest areas like Mhadei. The report states that ground level investigation was done by a reporter of O Heraldo who went deep and into the forest in Mhadei forest and spent some time with the villagers where he found that there was absolutely no government official present while illegal river sand mining was in progress. As per the news item such illegal sand mining is also in progress in Ponda taluka, Pernem, Chandor and Rachol, near the ferry point. It also states that in last two years not a single bit of revenue has come to the state from even one ton of sand extracted from

Goa rivers, whereas sand is being used in official projects like Atal Setu, Zuari Bridge and in the real estate projects and therefore inference has been drawn that in all these projects illegally mined sand is used.

2. The news item raises substantial issue relating to compliance of the environmental norms.

3. Power of the Tribunal to take up the matter *suo-motu* has been recognized by the Hon'ble Supreme Court in the matter of "*Municipal Corporation of Greater Mumbai vs. Ankita Sinha & Ors.*" reported in 2021 SCC Online SC 897.

4. Hence, we implead the following as respondents in the matter:

- (i) Goa State Pollution Control Board, through its Member Secretary
- (ii) Central Pollution Control Board, through its Member Secretary
- (iii) Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, through Regional Officer (SZ), Goa
- (iv) Collector & District Magistrate, South Goa

5. Respondent No. 1 to 3 are represented through the counsel, who have sought time to file their response.

6. Let notice be issued to Respondent No.4 for filing the response before the appropriate bench of the Tribunal atleast one week before the next date of hearing.

7. Since the matter relates to the Western Zonal Bench, Pune, therefore, OA is transferred to the Western Zonal Bench for appropriate

further action. Office is directed to transfer the original record of the OA to Western Zonal Bench, Pune.

8. List before Western Zonal Bench at Pune on 05.07.2024.

Prakash Shrivastava, CP

Dr. A. Senthil Vel, EM

April 01, 2024
Original Application No. 276/2024
AS.