

# Kerala HC asks state for prompt action to prevent disasters

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Kerala High Court. (File photo)

By Express News Service

KOCHI: The Kerala High Court has initiated a case suo motu to monitor the mechanisms put in place by the state government to manage emergencies during the monsoon season, and otherwise, under the provisions of the Disaster Management Act, 2005.

“Torrential rains in the state cause disaster in many places due to landslides, denudation etc. There is damage to the property of people residing in ‘puramboke’ lands, colonies, slopes, isolated locations, plantation areas etc. The state has to take proper and prompt action for the prevention of disasters. There are instances of flooding in some areas as well,” observed the court.

The decision was taken by a Division Bench on a petition filed by the Foundation for Restoration of National Values, New Delhi, seeking a directive to set up a high-level technical committee to ensure dam safety. The organisation wanted the committee to have three or four eminent engineers with at least the chairman and another member from outside the state. “We are of the view that a suo motu writ petition should be registered to hear the government and any other interested parties/aggrieved and issue appropriate directions,” said the Bench. The court noted that, as of now, there is no Dam Safety Authority in the state, with the matter regarding the constitution of the national authority pending before the SC.

Referring to the ‘Report of Actions Taken in 2022 for Monsoon Preparedness and Disaster Response’, the government pleader submitted that there is a committee to monitor the operations as per the rules curve of all major dams in the state chaired by the additional chief secretary (disaster management). “It also includes the member-secretary, KSDMA, additional chief secretary (water resources), principal secretary (power), chief engineers concerned and the collectors of districts with dams. It has to meet once in 10 days from June to December. It was also stipulated that in case of Orange Alert and Red Alert in districts with dams and/or when the water level of the major reservoirs crosses all alert levels, the frequency of the meeting shall be increased,” the pleader said.

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