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Ockhi jeopardized coastal sediment process, say experts

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Thiruvananthapuram: A city-based NGO into marine life protection has warned that the cyclone Ockhi will have a larger impact on beaches along the coast of Thiruvananthapuram district, including Valiyathura, Shangumukham and Veli, as the cyclone has totally jeopardized coastal sediment process, which helps the beaches retain its original form after suffering huge erosion during Monsoon.

"The public and the government are now concerned about the loss of lives and destruction of properties caused by cyclone Ockhi. But what's being neglected is the inevitable loss of our beaches in the area, unless the government initiates protective measures," said Robert Panipilla, the chief coordinator of Friends of Marine Life (FML).

Coming out with a visual comparison of beaches in November 2016 and after cyclone Ockhi hit them this year, the FML has asserted that the beaches wouldn't be able to recover before next monsoon and would be doomed forever. "Usually, the sediments are transported back to the beaches in south Kerala by the waves from the south mostly during September-November period. There won't be much movement of sand back to the beaches during December-May period, when the seas will be quite calm," he pointed out.

The unexpected cyclone has now led to loss of sand bank five feet deep on a 30 to 50 metre-stretch in these beaches. It is to be seen how much sand these beaches could gather back before the start of next Monsoon, Robert said.

Citing the coastal belt from Panathura to Veli as most affected by the cyclone in the capital district, the FML coordinator said the situation would be worsened if dredging at Vizhinjam continues without any break. "The dredging will obstruct any possible sediment transportation from south to the beaches north of the proposed Vizhinjam Port. Considering the grave situation, the government should freeze the dredging till May," he demanded.