

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

RAJYA SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO.389
TO BE ANSWERED ON 28.11.2024

Mining Surveillance System

389. DR. FAUZIA KHAN:

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE be pleased to state:

- (a) whether through implementation of the Mining Surveillance System (MSS) and the use of technologies such as remote sensing and GIS in monitoring and curbing illegal sand mining activities across the country, Government has begun identifying illegal mining sites;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, if not, by when it will begin;
- (c) whether Government has prepared the list of illegal mining activity sites;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the details of actions taken to stop these illegal mining, and the details of actions taken against illegal miners?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI KIRTI VARDHAN SINGH)

(a) & (b) The Mining Surveillance System (MSS) is operational since its launch in 2016. It is a satellite-based monitoring system which aims to facilitate State Governments in curbing instances of illegal mining for major minerals. State Governments can access the application with the user id and password provided to them for the purpose of verification. Any unusual land use change observed on satellite imagery in a zone upto 500 m outside the boundary of mining lease area is captured and flagged as triggers to the State Governments to check for illegal mining.

As per the information provided by Ministry of Mines, Government of India, since 2016-17, 950 triggers have been generated, 574 triggers have been verified and 80 unauthorised Mining activities have been confirmed by the above triggers. The action taken on triggers are followed-up at various levels like State Department of Mines & Geology (DMG), State Mining Secretary, State Office and Headquarters Office of IBM and Ministry of Mines, Government of India.

Training for adoption of MSS for minor minerals was also given to various mineral rich States. Total 179 Officers from States participated in the training. A user friendly mobile app for

MSS has also been developed. The main advantages of MSS are ensuring participation of general public, bias-free action, quicker response, transparency, and effective follow-up.

The State Government is empowered under section 23C of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation Act) Act (MMDR Act) 1957, to frame rules to prevent illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals.

Geocoordinates of the mine lease area are also mentioned in the Environmental Clearance letters, which can be used by the State Department of Mines and Geology and their officials to locate any instances of illegal mining with the help of GIS based applications.

Further, Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has issued Sustainable Sand Mining Guidelines 2016 and Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining (EMGSM) 2020 to regulate the sand mining in the country from its identification to its final end-use by the consumers. As per EMGSM 2020 to make transportation monitoring effective and useful, all the sand carrying vehicles (tractors/ trucks) should be registered with the department and GPS equipment should be installed in all the sand carrying vehicles. Weighbridges with CCTV should be installed at all the stockyards, active reaches to ascertain the exact quantity of sand being transported in the vehicle. The EMGSM 2020 also contains detailed provisions related to prevention of illegal mining and lays down a monitoring framework comprising inter-alia, fixing of compensation for environmental damage due to illegal mining, monitoring of mining near inter-district or inter-state boundary, prevention of sand mining in certain areas, constitution of District Level Task Force for keeping regular watch over the mining activities and movement of minerals in the District. The State Governments are responsible for enforcing the aforesaid provisions to check illegal mining.

(c) to (e) Section 23C of Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation Act) Act (MMDR Act) 1957, empowers the State Governments to frame rules to prevent illegal mining and the State Governments may, by notification in the Official Gazette, make such rules for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals and for the purposes connected therewith. Accordingly, control of illegal mining falls under the legislative and administrative purview of the State Governments. Beside the above, Ministry of Mines, Government of India has initiated several steps to curb illegal mining under the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) MMDR Act, 1957, and subsequent amendments. These initiatives include amendments in MMDR Act 2015 and 2021 providing for increased penalties, extended imprisonment terms, and clarified the definition of illegal mining and also provision for special courts for ensuring speedy trial of cases related to illegal mining.
