

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTIONNO.4375
TO BE ANSWERED ON 20.03.2020

Illegal Sand Mining in Rivers

4375. SHRI SUNNY DEOL: SHRI BENNY BEHANAN

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the large scale illegal sand mining occurring in the river beds of the country;
- (b) if so, the details thereof, State/UT-wise including Punjab and Kerala;
- (c) whether the Government is aware of the impact of illegal sand mining on the environment and ground water level in the districts of Gurdaspur and Pathankot in Punjab, if so, the details thereof along with the long-term implications of the excessive sand mining of rivers;
- (d) whether the Government has any plans/roadmap for restoration of damages caused to the environment and ground water level, if so, the details thereof;
- (e) whether the Government has any plans to control and take appropriate action against the officials responsible for ongoing illegal sand mining, if so, the details thereof and if not, the reasons therefor; and
- (f) the other steps taken by the Government to regulate sand mining from rivers in the country?

ANSWER

MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE
(SHRI BABUL SUPRIYO)

(a) to (f): Mining of minor minerals is regulated by the State Government and section 23C of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957 empowers State Governments to frame rules to prevent illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals and for purposes connected therewith. Further, Section 15 of the MMDR Act empowers State Governments to make rules for regulating the grant of quarry leases, mining leases or other mineral concessions in respect of minor minerals including sand.

The State Government of Punjab has informed since 01.01.2019, 463 FIR's have been filed and 577 vehicles have been impounded. Till date no effect regarding depletion of ground water table has been observed in District Gurdaspur & Pathankot. To prevent any damage to environment, the mining plans/Environment Management plans are prepared by the government approved experts and approved by the State Government. The mines are permitted only obtaining the prior environment clearance as per EIA notification and Consent from Punjab State Pollution Control Board (PPCB).

The State Government of Kerala reported few instances of illegal river sand mining. Legal sand mining is permitted only after ensuring that environmental clearance and approved mining plan is in place. The State of Kerala has framed “The Kerala protection of river banks and regulation of removal of Sand Act 2001” for sustainable river sand mining to ensure riverine ecosystem. As per the prevailing rules of the State of Kerala the revenue department is to take action against illegal sand mining activities from rivers.

The State Government of Assam reported that an amount equal to 10% of the Royalty paid to the State is charged from the Mineral Concession holder for restoration and rehabilitation works. No instance of involvement of officers in illegal sand mining has been reported in the State. Rule 39 of the Assam Minor Mineral Concession Rule, 2013 stipulates special conditions for Mineral Concession granted for extraction of Minor Minerals from river beds. Besides all mining activities in the state are allowed only after obtaining prior environmental clearance.

The Ministry has taken several steps to ensure environmental safeguards due to mining of minerals, inter-alia, include mandating the requirement of prior environmental clearance under the provisions of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006, as amended from time to time; laying stringent conditions while granting the environmental clearances with due consideration of various aspects related to flora, fauna, air, water, land, environmental health etc.; issuance of Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines 2016; and Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining 2020 wherein the use of IT Technology, night surveillance through UAV/Drone etc. has been proposed to control illegal mining. Further, in pursuant to S.O. 804 (E) dated 14.03.2017, damage assessment and remediation plan and natural and community resource augmentation plan corresponding to the ecological damage assessed and economic benefits derived due to violation is also required to be carried in case of violation of EIA Notification, 2006.
