

GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
MINISTRY OF ENVIRONMENT, FOREST AND CLIMATE CHANGE

LOK SABHA
UNSTARRED QUESTION NO. 3651
TO BE ANSWERED ON 10.08.2026

Environmental Degradation due to Illegal Sand Mining

3651. DR. PRASHANT YADAORAO PADOLE:

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

- (a) whether the Government is aware of the reported large-scale illegal sand mining at several sand ghats in Bhandara district, Maharashtra, involving the use of prohibited heavy machinery and causing damage to river ecosystems and the environment;
- (b) if so, whether the Government has sought any report from the State Government of Maharashtra regarding the environmental impact of such illegal sand mining and the action taken to prevent it, if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government proposes to issue directions or advisories to the State Government to strengthen enforcement against illegal sand mining and ensure protection of river ecosystems; and
- (d) whether the Government proposes to promote the use of technologies such as drone surveillance, remote sensing, GPS tracking and real-time monitoring to prevent illegal sand mining and improve environmental compliance, if so, the details thereof?

ANSWER

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

(a) to (d): The Section 23C of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) (MMDR) Act, 1957 empowers the State Government to frame rules to prevent illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals and for purposes connected therewith. Therefore, the control of illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals and purposes connected therewith is the primary responsibility of the State Government.

As per the information received from the District Mining Officer, Bhandara, Government of Maharashtra, complaints regarding illegal sand mining have been reported. In this regard, the State Government of Maharashtra has directed all Sub-Divisional Officers to inspect the sand ghats in Bhandara District for taking appropriate action. In addition to this, joint squads have been constituted at the District, Sub-Divisional and Taluka levels comprising of officials of the Revenue, Police and Regional Transport Office (RTO) to strengthen enforcement against illegal sand mining and transportation.

As per the information provided by the State Government, during the year 2025-26, action was taken in 672 cases of illegal activity and fines amounting to ₹585.17 lakh were imposed, out of which ₹282.57 lakh has been recovered, and criminal cases were registered against 106 persons. During 2026-27 (till date), action has been taken in 93 cases and fines amounting to

₹86.76 lakh have been imposed, ₹50.65 lakh has been recovered, and criminal cases have been registered against 54 persons.

Further, the Government of Maharashtra has made GPS-based tracking mandatory for vehicles transporting sand , periodic survey of sand ghats by Maharashtra Remote Sensing Application Centre (MRSAC) and usage of 'Mahakhanij' software platform for monitoring sand extraction and transportation.

The Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change has also issued the Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining, 2020, supplementary to the Sustainable Sand Mining Management Guidelines, 2016, which provide a framework for scientific and sustainable sand mining through the use of remote sensing, GIS, GPS, drones and other IT-enabled technologies for effective monitoring, enforcement and prevention of illegal sand mining.
