

Officials order closure of 10 companies near Bannerghatta after illegal mining exposed

The Mines and Geology Dept found that the companies had not adhered to the rules set forth for mining near Eco Sensitive Zones.

- [Theja Ram](#)
- Tuesday, June 12, 2018 - 17:52



Following the exposure of rampant illegal mining and destruction of the elephant corridor at Bengaluru's Bannerghatta Biological Park, the state government has finally issued closure notices to 10 more mining companies.

The Mines and Geology Department began cracking down on these irregularities occurring in Thammanaikanahalli, located in the Eco Sensitive Zone, and issued notices to 10 companies on

Monday, asking them to shut down by Tuesday evening. These companies are even being slapped with penalties up to Rs 80 crores.

According to the Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change, no mining activity can be allowed within the 10 kilometre boundary of a national park, tiger reserve, or wildlife sanctuary. However, these companies had been carrying out mining activities within the 10 km radius of the Eco Sensitive Zone (ESZ).

Earlier in April, the Department of Mines and Geology had issued closure notices to five other companies located in Shivanahalli, though the department has not yet determined the penalties to be levied on the companies, said Prasanna Kumar, Director of Mines and Geology Department.

In May, after environmental activists raised the issue of illegal mining being carried out in Thammanaikanahalli, the department commissioned a Joint Survey Report separately for the violations at both Shivanahalli and Thammanaikanahalli.

The Joint Survey and spot inspection was done by the Mines and Geology Department, the Survey Department and Forest Departments.

The surveys aimed to check three major aspects - to check whether the companies had indulged in excessive mining within the ESZ, to determine the amount of minerals plundered, and the environmental violations.

Blatant violation of norms

According to the Joint Survey Report conducted for violations in Thammanaikanahalli, the 10 companies had not maintained boundary stones and was quarrying stones with the ESZ.

Further, the companies had not adhered to the norms of the limit of stones which could be mined.

“There is only a certain amount of stones which can be mined. The limit which was set was 1 lakh tonnes however, they have plundered 20 lakh tonnes. They have violated the cut volume norms also,” Prasanna Kumar added.

Kumar says that the companies’ activities have also resulted in increased levels of air pollution.

“The Karnataka State Pollution Control Board has set certain norms which cannot be violated by those involved in mining activities. For instance, these companies have not paid heed to the amount of dust generated while mining. They have also not taken any safety measures to prevent health problems caused by polluting surrounding water bodies. They have been asked to shut down by the end of the day,” he added.

Creation of roads in Elephant corridor

According to a senior officer with the Forest Department, the inspection for the joint survey revealed that roads were built in the Elephant corridor and garbage was also being dumped within the ESZ.

Expressing satisfaction with the outcome of the survey, Vijay Nishanth, urban conservationist said, "Our reiteration that the mining companies have thrown all norms to the dustbin has been vindicated. The offenders need to be prosecuted for quarrying indiscriminately for so many years now. They have not only destroyed the elephant corridor but have also not taken any mitigation measures to safeguard the health of the people in the 47 villages."

The Forest Department stated in May that mining activity was taking place outside the 10 km radius of Bannerghatta Biological Park and that no such violations were taking place in the Eco Sensitive Zone.

"This is an extremely good move on behalf of the Department of Mines and Geology. However, what is of concern is the amount of time it will take to restore the damage done," added Vijay Nishanth.

Speaking to TNM, Dr TV Ramachandra of the Indian Institute of Science, who had submitted the report on the ecological damage caused by these companies, said that the mining activities had caused severe fragmentation in the animal habitat in the park.

"The ESZ is demarcated because these are biologically and hydrologically sensitive zones. It is not just mining activity that we found on spot inspection but also that a BDA-approved housing layout is coming up on Bukka Sagara area, which is located in the ESZ. With mining on one side and house on the other, it creates bottlenecks for animals. They can't move around in their natural habitat and results in man-animal conflict. This zone is for animals alone," Dr Ramachandra added.