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## Bengaluru: RTI query reveals rampant quarrying at Bannerghatta park

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*The national park is the closest and the biggest forest area from Bengaluru.*



📷 A file photo of the mining activity around Bannerghatta National Park

Though the forest department in March denied about the rampant violations committed by the quarry owners in the eco-sensitive zone (ESZ) of the Bannerghatta National Park, a response to Right to Information (RTI) has revealed widespread violations.

The RTI was filed by Namma Bengaluru Foundation (NBF) to Deputy Conservator of Forest and it revealed that quarrying and mining operations were going on within 1 km of the safe zone of the national park and 10 km buffer zone.

The Mines and Geology department shut down over 10 mining operations, after which the matter went to the High Court, but the director of the department, N. Prasanna Kumar, admitted to glaring violations of pollution and environmental norms.

### **'Govt was lying'**

Tree Doctor Vijay Nishanth said, "The government has always been lying to us by stating that no quarrying was taking place in the Bannerghatta ESZ. However, we have evidence that there was illegal mining happening in this area. The national park is the

closest and the biggest forest area from Bengaluru. Not only forests, even the river has been contaminated due to illegal mining. We request Central Government to form a committee and send them to this location for inspection.” He demanded that Deputy Chief Minister G. Parameshwar should visit the ecological disaster that had happened under the nose of previous government.

### **Ecosystem hit**

In the Joint Survey by the Forest Department and Mines and Geology department it was also found that quarry debris were dumped at the water body near the park, the only source of drinking water for the wildlife. Veteran freedom fighter H.S. Doreswamy said, “The illegal mining is not only destabilizing the ecosystem of Bannerghatta National Park, but affecting the health of the people living nearby.” After the shutting down of the mining operations in the park vicinity, elephants were seen after a long interval. An Indian Institute of Science report by scientist Dr T.V. Ramachandra said that the Cauvery retention area got affected due to the mining operations.

### **Mining norms violated**

Suresh N.R., Convener, United Bengaluru said, “The greed of few people is destroying the forest and animals living there are forced to move away. The mining companies operating in the ESZ have not followed any guidelines to get environmental clearance. The situation is such that the villagers living around the ESZ are threatened by the

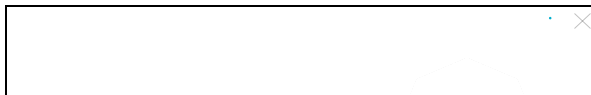
mining mafias for protesting. We now request the Central Government to intervene and protect Bengaluru's only green cover."

### Penalise mining companies

The activists have also demanded that the government should not agree to one-time settlement (OTS) option as proposed by the mining companies under which the government can waive off the penalty.

**Tags:** forest department, eco-sensitive zone, bannerghatta national park

**Location:** India, Karnataka, Bengaluru



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