

Stringent steps sought to curb granite quarrying

BMRDA Commissioner terms the situation alarming

T S Ranganna

BANGALORE: Commissioner of Bangalore Metropolitan Region Development Authority (BMRDA) Sudhir Krishna has sought stringent steps to curb granite quarrying and sand mining, apart from the new "venture" of sale of sand separated from the soil, following growing complaints of environmental degradation and ecological imbalance in the region.

Mr Krishna, who recently inspected the areas connected with sand mining, said that the activity should be stopped forthwith.

"It is an alarming situation. The huge demand for building material has resulted in over exploitation of natural resources."

At a high-level meeting of BMRDA held here recently, Mr. Krishna warned that the activity would damage the en-

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vironment and have an adverse effect on the agricultural productivity.

The meeting felt that the two universities of agriculture and the departments of Agriculture and Revenue should carry out a study on the impact of sand mining and stone quarrying.

He said sand and stone mining should be banned at least 200 metres from the road shoulder as against the present distance of 50 metres.

There should be a restriction on quarry owners not to take up blasting in the adjoining areas as well.

Mr. Krishna told the officers at the meeting that

though sand could be removed from the riverbed, it could not be continued in the Arkavathy riverbed in Kanakapura taluk following shrinkage of the embankment due to excessive mining. It had also damaged the agricultural land and surrounding gardens near the riverbed.

He said the Department of Forests, Ecology and Environment had directed the Department of Mines and Geology to refrain from granting fresh lease and not to renew the leases in the catchment area covering 1,459 sq km.

The lease was in operation in 431 cases as on November

18, 2003 and 65 of them had expired.

Applications had been received from 317 persons for stone quarrying, but they had been rejected.

He alleged that officials of the Karnataka Pollution Control Board had been allowing the crushing of stones by renewing licences and requested them to stop them.

Mr. Krishna suggested that it was better to cancel all existing licences in the area in order to prevent any damage to the Tippagondanahalli Reservoir catchment area.

Asked about the illegal sand separation from agricultural land by farmers, agricultural activist and Janata Dal (S) leader C Narasimhappa, who has been educating farmers about the long-term impact of it on the rural economy vis-a-vis agriculture, said that it was time the Government stopped it.