

Mining approval in Uttarakhand

†1662. SHRI MAHENDRA SINGH MAHRA: Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Ministry has given approval for mining products like sand, stone etc. from rivers in Uttarakhand;

(b) if so, whether the Ministry is aware that due to excessive and improper mining there is a danger looming on the very existence of forest and agricultural land in the State; and

(c) if so, the steps proposed to be taken to check such indiscriminate mining?

THE MINISTER OF ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRI M. VEERAPPA MOILY): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) and (c) Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF) had constituted a Group under the Chairmanship of the then Secretary (E&F) to look into the environmental aspects associated with mining of minor minerals in 2009 and to evolve guidelines for sustainable mining of Minor Minerals. The report of the Group was sent to all States in June, 2010 with the request for incorporating in the Mineral Concessions Rules for mining of minor minerals u/s 15 of the Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957, the recommendations contained in the report which *inter-alia* include—minimum size of mine lease should be 5 ha.; minimum period of mine lease should be 5 years; mine plans should be made mandatory for minor minerals; for river bed mining, leases should be granted stretch-wise, depth may be restricted to 3m/water level, whichever is less and safety zones should be worked out, etc.

MoEF has notified Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) Notification, 2006 under the Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 which deals with the process to grant Environment Clearances. The projects of mining of minerals as stated in the schedule require prior environment clearance under this notification. Category 'A' Projects are being handled in the MoEF and Category 'B' projects are being handled in the respective State Environment Impact Assessment Authorities (SEIAAs) notified by MoEF and following the procedure prescribed under the EIA Notification, 2006. Based on the recommendations of the Expert Appraisal Committee, the environmental clearance is accorded subject to various conditions and environmental safeguards to be implemented by the project proponent. The implementation of the stipulated conditions is monitored through the Regional Offices of MoEF to ensure satisfactory compliance of environmental safeguards by mining projects.

†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.