

BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL**PRINCIPAL BENCH AT NEW DELHI****ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 362 OF 2022****IN THE MATTER OF:**

ARAVALLI BACHAO CITIZENS MOVEMENT

...APPLICANT

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA & ORS.

...RESPONDENTS

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Through



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**REPLY TO THE AFFIDAVIT DATED 14.08.2023 OF DIRECTOR,
MINES AND GEOLOGY DEPARTMENT, AFFIDAVIT DATED NIL OF
DEPUTY COMMISSIONER, GURUGRAM AND AFFIDAVIT DATED
NIL OF DISTRICT COMMISSIONER, NUH DATED NIL**

MOST RESPECTFULLY SHWETH:

1. That the above-titled Application was filed under Section 14 and Section 15 of the National Green Tribunal Act, 2010 highlighting ongoing illegal sand and stone mining taking place in the Aravalli range in the districts of Faridabad, Gurugram and Nuh in the State of Haryana. This mining is taking place in violation of the Order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***M. C. Mehta v. Union of India [(2009) 6 SCC 142]***, Notification dated 07.05.1992 of Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change (MoEF&CC), Environmental Impact Assessment Notification, 2006, Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974, Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, Punjab Land Preservation Act, 1900 and provisions of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980 and the verdict of Hon'ble Supreme Court in ***T.N. Godavarman Tirumalpad Vs Union of India [W.P No. 202 of 1996]***.

2. That vide Order dated 28.04.2023, the Hon'ble Tribunal had directed the authorities to file Action Taken Reports/ Affidavits regarding the following compliances:

i. The Director, Mines and Geology Department of Haryana-

- To take steps for filing of complaints in all pending cases where FIR has been registered in respect of offence punishable under Section 21 of the MMDR Act along with or immediately/shortly after filing of the report under Section 173 (2) of the Cr.P.C. by the Police and file Action Taken Report in this regard before this Hon'ble Tribunal. (Para 20)
- Take appropriate steps for making the email ID and web-portal of Control Room functional (Para 50).

ii. The Director General of Police Haryana-

- Directed to take steps for compliance regarding analyzing causes of acquittal in illegal mining cases and illegal transportation of minor minerals, taking action against erring Investigating Officers and remedying the defects in cases pending for investigation or trial (Para 21).
- Issue appropriate directions to the SHOs to register FIR on the basis of all complaints out of 44 complaints made by the Mining Department as disclose commission of cognizable offence punishable under Section 379 of the IPC and/or Section 21 of the MMDR Act and also issue instructions to the SHOs of all Police Stations to register FIR immediately on receipt of complaint regarding illegal mining and illegal transportation of mined material disclosing commission of cognizable offence (Para 25).

iii. The PCCF (HoFF), Government of Haryana- Issue appropriate

instructions that in all cases of illegal mining and illegal transportation constituting offence punishable under Section 379 of the IPC and/or Section 21 of the MMDR Act reference is made to the police for registration of FIR and investigation by the Police (Para 27).

iv. Haryana Pollution Control Board-

- Initiate proceedings for imposition and realization of environmental damage compensation from all persons involved in illegal mining throughout the State of Haryana including Aravalli (para 39).
- Action Plan for utilization of environmental compensation and also submit a response to the suggestions given by the Applicant with respect to usage of alternative building materials and a proposed ecological restoration plan by the Applicant (Para 57).

v. The Chief Secretary, Government of Haryana-

- Clarify whether any steps have been taken to relook at the Mining Rules 2012 for carrying out necessary amendments as observed by Hon'ble High Court of Punjab and Haryana in K.C. Stone Crushing Co. Case (Para 46).
- Details of the proposal to set-up Aravalli Rejuvenation Board and copy of the notification with regard to the constitution and mandate of the Board (Para 53).

vi. The Director Mining and Geology, Haryana and the District Magistrates, Faridabad, Gurugram and Nuh-

- Information on number of stone crushers/ screening plants operating in District, Faridabad, Gurugram and Nuh (Para 55);
- Information on mechanism evolved regarding monitoring of procurement/purchase of minor minerals by the stone crushers/screening plants (Para 55);
- Number of nakas in District, Faridabad, Gurugram and Nuh for checking of vehicles carrying minor minerals or supply to the stone crushers/screening plants in the area (Para 55);
- Whether entry of vehicles carrying minor mineral is made and whether any record is kept regarding vehicles entering in District Faridabad, Gurugram and Nuh with minor minerals with all requisite details as to the number of the vehicle, name of the owner, weight of the minor mineral carried, number, date and other details of the transportation permit and name of the supplier from

whom/mine from which the material has been brought;
(Para 55);

- Whether the vehicles carrying such minor minerals are required to be equipped with GPS (Para 55).

3. That the Director, Mines and Geology Department of Haryana and the Deputy Commissioner Gurugram and District Commissioner of Nuh filed Affidavits in compliance with the directions of the Hon'ble Tribunal only providing information with respect to the number of nakas that have been set-up (para 55), number of stone crushers (para 55), mechanism for monitoring (para 55) and constitution of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board (para 53). The other authorities have not provided information in compliance with any other direction of this Hon'ble Tribunal.
4. That the Applicant reserves the right to file a response to such information, as and when received.

SUBMISSION ON BEHALF OF THE APPLICANT:

Illegal mining is still continuing in the Aravallis in violation of the directions of the Hon'ble Supreme Court

5. At the outset, the Applicant submits that illegal mining is still continuing in the Aravalli, in violation of the order of the Hon'ble Supreme Court and this Hon'ble Court.
6. That members of the Applicant organisation visited the sites of illegal mining from November 2022 to October 2023 and found that illegal mining is still ongoing in these locations:

S. No.	Location	Date of visit by the member	Geographical coordinates
1.	In forest near Kadarpur Village, Sector 63, Gurugram	31.12.2022	Lat: 28.390518, Long: 77.109595
		31.12.2022	Lat: 28.391124, Long: 77.109027
		08.10.2023	

		08.10.2023	Lat: 28.390259, Long: 77.109281 Lat: 28.387363, Long: 77.106266
2.	Near Damdama Lake	27.08.2023	Lat: 28.296566, Long: 77.132959
3.	Near Lost Lake, Gurugram	09.09.2023	Lat: 28.361283, Long: 77.128410
4.	Near Baliawas Village, Gurugram Aravallis	27.11.2022 08.10.2023	Lat: 28.425655, Long: 77.122073 Lat: 28.425026 Long: 77.12381
5.	In Pandala Hills near Gairatpur Bas Village, Gurugram	25.11.2022	Lat: 28.343683, Long: 77.00282
6.	In Hassanpur, Tauru, Nuh District	06.11.2022	Lat: 28.30511, Long: 77.001166 Lat: 28.301066, Long: 77.002306 Lat: 28.301378, Long: 77.003105.
7.	In Nuh District, near Rajasthan border	23.03.2023	Lat: 27.746922 Long: 77.022429
8.	In Nizamnagar, Pinangwa road, Nuh District	23.03.2023	Lat: 27.764242 Long: 77.049463
9.	In Bewan, Nuh District	23.03.2023	Lat: 27.752702 Long: 77.045639

			Lati:27.74022 Long:77.057411
10	Chhapra – Biwan road, Nuh District	23.03.2023	Lat: 27.742673 Long: 77.041374

Copy of photographs showing illegal mining at the abovementioned locations is annexed herewith as **ANNEXURE A-1**.

7. That with respect to illegal mining, the Applicant organisation sent email dated 09.10.2023 to the Anti Mining Task Force Committees bringing the status on ground to their notice.

Copy of the email dated 09.10.2023 sent to the Anti Mining Task Force Committees is annexed herewith as **ANNEXURE A-2**.

8. That in an article reported in The Hindustan Times on 19.07.2023 titled, "A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis" notes that mining is still undergoing at Bisar village in Manesar and Raisina, Gairatpur Baas, Sohna, Kadarpur and Ghamroj in Gurugram district and Jhimrawat, Tigaon, Silkho, Dhilamki, Noorpur Silkho, Chila, Malaka and Pipaka village, Tauru in Nuh district. Relevant excerpt from the article is reproduced below for reference:

"None of the 51 forest check posts set up in the Aravallis zone of Gurugram and Sohna in 2016 exist anymore, an investigation by HT has found, underlining the vulnerability of the eco-sensitive region which has suffered irreversible damage over the years due to the plunder by the mining mafia.

Mohan Rathee, 55, a resident of Gairatpur Baas, said forest officials visit the area only once a week. "Daily, at least 20 tractor trolleys carry away illegally mined stones from the area. No one bothers to check the hillocks," he said.

Mange Ram, 38, a resident of Raisina village, said, "Forest officials visit once in a while to mark their attendance. There is no fear among illegal miners. They know that there is no surveillance," he said.

HT also spotted fresh truck tyre marks in Raisina, Gairatpur Baas, Sohna, Kadarpur and Ghamroj in

Gurugram pointing to the movement of heavy vehicles in these parts to transport stones.

...

*But move deeper into Haryana, away from the eyes of the authorities, and the ground reality changes. In Jhimrawat, a village in Nuh, about 75 km from Gurugram, the time of the day doesn't matter, as long as outsiders are not around. The din of the tractors being loaded with stones rend the air through the day, and labourers keep chipping away till they tire. **Occasionally, when an outsider's vehicle approaches, the village's information network kicks in and the miners scatter; the tractors go silent.***

...

The mining site outside Silkho borders two other villages, Dhilamki and Noorpur and the entire site spans a little over 1.5km with roots jutting out from impacted trees.

...

At one of the mining sites near Pipaka village in Tauru, the quarry resembles a ravine over 300 metres long, nearly 40 metres deep, and 40 metres wide at some points. The site is accessed by a narrow tar road. The quarries wear a weathered look, the naked stones are dark-brown, with vegetation between the broken rocks with blunt edges.

...

Miners said they use bulldozers and earth movers to create multiple rough and bumpy paths so as make sites accessible only to dumper trucks and tractors.

Large tyre marks were visible on many such paths in mining sites in Silkho, Chila and Malaka, made by trucks arriving to collect the leftover stones."

(Emphasis supplied)

Copy of the article titled, "A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis" dated 19.07.2023 published in The Hindustan Times is annexed herewith as **ANNEXURE A-3**.

Constitution of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board is in violation of the Order of this Hon'ble Tribunal and will not serve the required purpose

9. That the Affidavits state that 3 Aravalli Rejuvenation Boards will be set-up separately at the district level in only these 3 districts, namely Nuh, Faridabad and Gurugram and will consist of the following members:

- i. Deputy Commissioner of district concerned;
- ii. DRO of district concerned;
- iii. CEO Zila Parishad of district concerned;
- iv. RO HSPCB of district concerned;
- v. MO/ AME of district concerned;
- vi. DFO of district concerned;
- vii. Member to be appointed by the District Commissioner, as they may deem fit.

10. It is the submission of the Applicant that setting up of Aravalli Rejuvenation Board at the district level for the three districts is in violation of the Order dated 10.10.2022 of this Hon'ble Tribunal, which required that the autonomous statutory authority be set-up for the entire State of Haryana:

*"21... The **Government of Haryana** may also consider the desirability of setting up an autonomous statutory authority "Aravallis Environment Management & Sustainable Development" for integrated environment management and sustainable development of the Aravalli range **in the State of Haryana.**"*

11. That the need to set-up the authority at the State level for all districts of Haryana was reiterated in the Order dated 28.04.2023, wherein it was stated that:

*"51. Vide order dated order dated 10.10.2022 this Tribunal recommended that the Government of Haryana may also consider the desirability of setting up an autonomous statutory authority "Aravallis Environment Management & Sustainable Development" for integrated environment management and sustainable development of the Aravalli range **in the State of Haryana and the Chief Secretary to Government Haryana was directed to file affidavit in this regard.**"*

(Emphasis supplied)

12. That for the Board to be truly effective, it must be an autonomous statutory authority set up at the Haryana state level for all the 7 Aravalli districts, and not just for the Districts Nuh, Faridabad and Gurugram. There is illegal mining, encroachments and deforestation taking place in other Aravalli districts in the state of Haryana too.
13. That the Applicant submits that 50 percent of the capacity of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board should be independent rewilders & eco restoration experts, ecologists, wildlife experts, water experts, geologists, climate scientists and other members from civil society groups working on the Aravallis and from grass root rural communities living in the Aravalli foothills.
14. That currently, only government officials have been made part of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board, without any representation from experts or the civil society.
15. That in the past, the Hon'ble Supreme Court has set-up committees with the task of monitoring and checking compliances. It is submitted that the constitution of such Committees was made such that there was adequate representation from the civil society as well as the scientific community.
16. That in the case of M. C. Mehta v. Union of India, while considering the issue of mining in the Aravallis, the Hon'ble Supreme Court constituted a Monitoring Committee consisting of representatives from the State Pollution Control Board, Forest Department, Mining Department etc. and also included Mr. Bhure Lal, a civil society representative and Mr. Valmiki Thapar, a naturalist, conservationist and a writer.
17. That similarly, in the case of M. C. Mehta v. Union of India (Writ Petition (Civil) No. 13029 of 1985 (Delhi vehicular pollution case), vide Order dated 14.03.1991, the Hon'ble Supreme Court constituted a Committee to monitor the issue of vehicular pollution in Delhi and for devising methods for solutions to the issue. This Committee consisted of a retired

Judge of Hon'ble Supreme Court along with the petitioner (M. C. Mehta) himself and a representative of the Association of Indian Automobile Manufacturers.

18. Therefore, there have been many instances where Committees have been set up consisting of experts and representatives of the civil society, which should be taken as a precedent in the present Application.
19. That the Applicant submits that the following persons who are experts in the field of conservation, ecology and eco-restoration are willing and should be made part of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board:

- i. **Vijay Dhasmana** is a rewilder and eco-restoration practitioner who has helped transform an abandoned mining site in Gurugram into a lush Aravali forest called the Aravali Biodiversity Park - the first OECM site in India. He has been working on several ecological restoration projects in Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. His projects in Haryana Aravallis are in collaboration with several government agencies such as Forest Department, GMDA and MCG and the NGO I am Gurgaon. He has immense knowledge regarding the native flora of the Aravallis and in the practice of eco-restoration and native planting. Vijay is a member of the Hon'ble Supreme Court Oversight Committee on the Delhi-Dehradun Road. He is also a member of the Delhi State Biodiversity Council and has been part of a few Task Forces set up by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Email id: vijay.dhasmana@gmail.com

Mobile number: 9999050664

- ii. **Dr Pia Sethi** is an ecologist, consultant and researcher who has 20 years of experience in ecological and policy-

based research on forests, biodiversity, natural resource management and climate change.

Email id: piasehi77@gmail.com

Mobile number: 9811222321

- iii. **Dr Ankila Hiremath** is an ecologist and researcher who has worked in forests and grasslands for over 20 years, on issues related to biodiversity, natural resource management, invasive species and habitat restoration.

Email id: ankila.hiremath@gmail.com

Mobile: 9871130722

20. That other than the experts mentioned above, people from the civil society should also be made part of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board, in order to make it more effective:

- i. **Ibrahim Khan**, a 70-year-old resident of Bagola village in Ferozepur Jhirka in Nuh district heads the Jal Biradari of Mewat. He has spearheaded water recharge projects under the guidance of Dr Rajendra Singh, Waterman of India in villages in the foothills of the Aravallis in Ferozepur Jhirka. Having grown up in the lap of the Aravalli hills, he feels very passionately about saving the Aravallis.

Mobile number: 9416362790

- ii. **Zeenat Niazi** is a development planner and guides research on public policy development action focused on local, national and global concerns on sustainable consumption and production, green and inclusive circular economy models and building resilience to climate change in rapid growing contexts of the global south. She has been a member of many national and global task forces and steering committees relating to these areas. Zeenat is currently researching reciprocal relationships

between learning systems and nature-based solutions for urban resilience and is registered as a Ph.D. scholar for the same at the TERI School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi India.

Email id: zeeniazi@gmail.com

Mobile number: 9810947009

- iii. **Ritu Rao** is a research scholar at the Teri School of Advanced Studies, New Delhi and Trustee of Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement. Her research interest is sustainability of water bodies. She is working on raising awareness about the significance of conserving and rejuvenating Najafgarh lake and its primary water source Sahibi river. To achieve this, she has collaborated with various civil society organisations, published articles, led walks and delivered talks. She has also interacted with the local community as well as other stakeholders of the lake and the river to understand the problems confronting the water bodies, the causes for these problems, their impacts and possible solutions for their effective rejuvenation and management. The findings of these interactions have been put down in a research paper which could serve as a guide to policy makers.

Email id: raoritu@gmail.com

Mobile number: 9811799743

- iv. **Col Sarvadaman Oberoi** feels very passionately about saving the Aravallis. He has spent the last few years after retiring from the army researching on legal aspects of forest and environment protection and other public interest issues.

Email id: manioberoi@gmail.com

Mobile number: 9818768349

21. That it is stated in the Affidavit of the Deputy Commissioner of Gurugram that a meeting of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board was held on 26.07.2023, however, no information is provided as to the decisions taken by the Board with respect to future course of action. The Applicant filed an Application under RTI on 11.10.2023 seeking information on the Minutes of Meeting of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board, Gurugram district.

Copy of the RTI Application submitted by the Applicant seeking information on the Minutes of Meeting of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board, Gurugram district is annexed herewith as **ANNEXURE A-4**.

22. The Tribunal may direct the Deputy Commissioner of Gurugram District to and place on record the minutes of 1st meeting of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board, Gurugram district dated 26.07.2023.
23. It is further submitted that the Deputy Commissioners of Nuh and Faridabad districts may also be directed to place minutes of meeting of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board in their respective districts.

E-Rawanna Portal available on the website of the Mining Department is not accessible to the Public

24. That the Affidavits state that the e-rawanna issued can be checked/verified on the e-rawanna portal of the Mining Department.
25. That on accessing the e-rawanna portal on the website of the Mining Department, it was found that the portal requires a login ID and password to access. Therefore, the public cannot access the portal without logging in.
26. That in such a scenario, no verification can be done of the e-rawanna issued for transportation of mined material.

Fitting of vehicles carrying minor minerals to be fitted with GPS

27. That the Hon'ble Tribunal vide Order dated 28.04.2023 had directed the following:

“The Director Mining and Geology, Haryana and the District Magistrates, Faridabad, Gurugram and Nuh are directed to file affidavits giving the following information:-

...

(v) Whether all the vehicles carrying such minor mineral for supplying the same to the stone crushers/screening plants in the Aravalli region in the State of Haryana are required to be equipped with GPS.”

28. That the Affidavits filed by the Director, Mining and Geology, Haryana and the District Magistrates, Gurugram and Nuh are silent on the aspect relating to whether “all the vehicles carrying such minor mineral for supplying the same to the stone crushers/screening plants in the Aravalli region in the State of Haryana are required to be equipped with GPS”.
29. The applicant submits that to control illegal mining in the Aravallis, it is important that all vehicles carrying minor minerals in the Aravalli region in the state of Haryana are fitted with GPS and the data is made public on a website for all stakeholders to see.

Use of Drones for Surveillance and Monitoring of Illegal Mining in the Aravallis must be made mandatory

30. That the Affidavit filed by Director, Mines and Geology Department states that the fund required to set-up drones and CCTV cameras will be utilized from the Faridabad Metropolitan Development Authority and Gurgaon Metropolitan Development Authority, however, has failed to provide any other information.
31. That the provisions of Enforcement and Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining, 2020 issued by the Ministry of Environment, Forest & Climate Change with respect to use of drones should be mandatorily followed by the District Level Anti Mining Task Force Committees in all the 3

districts of Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad to survey Aravalli areas for illegal sand and stone mining at night time when dynamite blasting is done to break the hills and early morning from 6 am to 10 am when the illegal tractors operate to pick up the sand and stone. The Guidelines recommend as follows:

- i. Use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as Drones, with advanced cameras to identify illegal sand mining hotspots.
 - ii. Constant monitoring of mining activity using Drones and night surveillance of mining activity to be done using night-vision Drones. Section 5.2.2 of the EMGSM-2020 guidelines (Page 31-32) lays down in detail the instruments and software requirement for such monitoring.
32. That in addition to those, court orders on use of Advanced Drone Technology should be complied with and other tools for monitoring and stopping illegal stone and sand mining and other non-forest activities in all the Aravalli districts should be enforced.
 33. That this Hon'ble Tribunal vide its Order dated 18.01.2022 in Original Application No. 169/2020 (Kuldeep Singh v. State of Haryana & Ors.) had directed that Advance Technological Drones should be provided to the Mining Department to take prompt action against illegal mining activity.
 34. The drone surveillance data of the Aravalli hills and forests must be done at regular intervals and be put up on a public website for concerned citizens, independent experts and media to monitor the footage.

Suggestions with respect to toll free number set up by Mining Department

35. That the incidents of illegal mining mentioned in Para 6 of this Reply and other areas of illegal mining were reported by the members of the

Applicant organisation from April 2023 to October 2023 on the toll free number set-up by the Mining Department. Copy of Illegal mining locations in the Aravallis in Gurugram and Nuh Districts reported to Control Room set up by Haryana State Mining Department by different members of the applicant organisation from April to October 2023 is annexed herewith as **ANNEXURE A-5**.

36. That mining department managing the call centre never provided the complainant with any complaint or reference number for the complaint made about the illegal mining. Recently in October 2023, after making repeated requests, the complaint number was provided as 123, 124, 125, 127 and 128 for the complaints made by 5 members of the applicant organisation. However, there is no information on any action taken on the complaints made on the toll free number. In some cases, the person manning the toll free number said that someone from the mining department would call and take the exact coordinates from the members of applicant organisation making the complaints but the call from mining department never came even after a few days. Then the members concerned called the toll free number again and insisted that the person manning the toll free number takes down the coordinates of illegal mining locations to forward to the concerned mining officer.
37. That the Mining and Geology Department may be directed to give information regarding the number of complaint calls received in total by all citizens and organisations since the Control room has been set up till date and action taken on each of the complaints made.
38. That below are certain suggestions by the Applicant aimed at increasing the efficacy of Toll-Free number and Control Room that has been set up for citizens to report on illegal mining in the Aravallis:
 - i. The system of complaints needs to be made accountable. The person receiving the call regarding illegal mining on the toll-free number must give a formal complaint / reference number to all the citizens and / or civil society

- organisations calling regarding the complaint on illegal mining for follow up in the future.
- ii. Feedback must be given by the people manning the toll-free number or the mining officer to the citizens on complaints made regarding illegal mining.
 - iii. Correct information regarding when the toll-free number is manned and days must be given to the public, which is not the case currently. When the helpline number was launched, it was stated that the toll free number would be a 24 hour helpline number. Members of the applicant organisation have called this number post 7 pm and early morning before 9 am and on Sundays and their calls have not been picked up.
 - iv. Mining guards going on location to check out the coordinates of illegal mining must be trained to investigate properly and be told that the latitude – longitude coordinates are of the nearest tower and not precise of the illegal mining location. The mining guard needs to walk around the forest area close to the coordinates to check out where the illegal mining is taking place. The illegal mining normally takes place outside the village where the Aravalli hills and forests are located and usually at night time or between 6 am and 10 am. When members of the applicant organisation have called and reported on illegal mining locations to the control room, often the mining guards have called these members saying that they cannot find any illegal mining going on. In one instance, one member of the applicant organisation living in Gurugram who had called the Toll-Free number and given the coordinates of illegal mining near Palla village in Nuh district received a call from a mining guard who visited Palla village. The mining guard instead of going to the end of the village where the Aravalli hills are situated, called the member saying there are houses where the latitude and longitude coordinates are given and that the Gurugram citizen should come to Palla village to show him the exact location. Many times, the local villagers who do not want to be identified inform the applicant organisation that illegal mining activity is going on near their village and send the GPS image. So,

the person making the complaint in the city will not know the exact precise location of illegal mining.

Suggestions on Email ID provided for citizens to complain regarding illegal mining

39. That the Director, Mines and Geology, Haryana vide its Affidavit dated 11.04.2023 submitted before this Hon'ble Tribunal provided an Email ID which was as follows: aravalibachaoggn@gmail.com. The Applicant had previously submitted before this Hon'ble Tribunal that the email sent by the Applicant organisation on 24.04.2023 to this email address had not delivered due to the email address not being found.
40. That the suggestions given with respect to the toll-free number may also be made applicable on the complaints made through emails.
41. That the Applicant suggests that the control room set up by the mining department must acknowledge emails received and via reply email give a reference / complaint number for the same for the citizens to track the complaints made. The correct email ID for reporting on illegal mining must also be communicated via newspapers and on a web portal being set up.

No response from the Respondents with respect to the use of alternative building materials, utilization of environmental compensation and proposed ecological restoration plan, despite directions of this Hon'ble Tribunal

42. That vide Order dated 28.04.2023, this Hon'ble Tribunal had directed the Respondents to provide their response to the suggestions provided by the Applicant with respect to usage of alternative building material and the proposed ecological restoration plan:

"56. The applicant has made submissions that in response to information sought under Right to Information Act, 2005 the authorities informed that total amount for year wise penalty/environmental compensation from 2010 to 2022 is Rs.

*24,96,04,528/ and that environmental compensation recovered by the Directorate of Mines and Geology should be utilized for ecological restoration. **The applicant has also made suggestions regarding promotion of Alternative Building Materials, Ecological Restoration of Aravalli areas degraded by illegal mining and also given a plan for Ecological Restoration of illegally mined Aravalli areas in Haryana.***

*57. **The HSPCB is directed to submit an Action Plan regarding utilization of environmental compensation for reclamation/rehabilitation of the land illegally mined in the Aravalli region in the State of Haryana and concerned respondents are also directed to submit their response to suggestions given by the applicant.***

(Emphasis supplied)

43. That however, no reply has been provided by the Respondents.
44. That the Applicant is reproducing the suggestions that were proposed with respect to usage of alternative building material and the proposed ecological restoration plan.

No Action Plan submitted by HSPCB regarding utilization of environmental compensation

45. It is submitted that no action plan has been yet submitted by HSPCB regarding utilization of environmental compensation for reclamation/rehabilitation of the land illegally mined in the Aravalli region in the State of Haryana.
46. That the Applicant Organisation sent an email to HSPCB and other Haryana government authorities dated 11.10.2023 regarding a plan suggested by leading ecologists and conservationists for ecological restoration of illegally mined Aravalli areas in Haryana and given contact details of experts in the field of eco restoration, ecology and

conservation to reach out to for taking their further inputs for making this plan.

Copy of the email dated 11.10.2023 sent by the Applicant to HSPCB and other governmental authorities is annexed herewith as **ANNEXURE A -6.**

Ecological Restoration Plan given by 5 leading Conservationists and Ecologists namely Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin, Dr Pia Sethi, Prerna Bindra, Neha Sinha and the Waterman of India Dr Rajendra Singh:

- i. The entire belt of the Aravalli hills and forests in Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad and other districts of Haryana destroyed by illegal mining activities should be restored through a combination of natural regeneration and assisted regeneration i.e. planting of native Aravalli flora, soil and water conservation measures. The endangered/at risk species plants, animals, birds, insects who are the natural inhabitants of Aravallis must be clearly identified and listed and conservation objectives should be specified. It is imperative to understand the wildlife, human interventions, community impact and extent of restoration effort required.
- ii. Haryana has an excellent model of such kind of ecological restoration work done in the Aravali Biodiversity Park on MG road in Gurugram which is a 350+ acres of a previously mined and highly degraded Aravalli area that has been converted into a lush green forest of native Aravalli flora. The Aravali Biodiversity Park which is home to different kinds of native Aravalli flora species like Dhak, Salai etc and many native mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, butterflies and insects, has been given global recognition. The Ecologist Vijay Dhasmana who

was associated with rewilding the Aravali Biodiversity Park should be brought on board as a member of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board to help restore the illegally mined Aravalli areas in Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad and other districts in Haryana.

- iii. Strict guidelines should be developed for water usage and soil conservation. Monitoring of Aravalli aquifers and groundwater tables should be done.
- iv. Implement ecological restoration (through an agency/expert with proven track records such as done in the Aravali Biodiversity Park in Gurugram) in a smaller area i.e. about 10-25% of the total area in phase one. Adapt and sustain to restore ecosystem services and make the model self-sustaining. Then, scale and replicate to the full area.
- v. The entire stretch of the illegally mined Aravalli areas in Gurugram, Nuh, Faridabad and other districts in Haryana should be either be declared as a Protected Area. Alternatively, a network of strictly protected zones and community reserves / biodiversity heritage sites can also be considered to conserve the degraded and illegally mined Aravalli forests & hills where local rural communities can hold rights to restricted forest use.
- vi. All Aravalli areas in Haryana from Asola sanctuary in Delhi to Mangar Bani, Damdama lake all the way to Sariska national park in Rajasthan should be declared as a Protected Area (community reserve, conservation reserve, wildlife sanctuary) to create an unfragmented wildlife corridor in the Aravallis spread across Delhi, Haryana and Alwar in Rajasthan. The Protected Area

must provide safe passage for wildlife, with no red or destructive industry or infrastructure within this area.

- vii. Many countries such as Japan, South Korea and Finland have created “healing spaces” by leveraging their forests and natural habitats. Below link gives details on how South Korea has used its natural habitat to create healing forests throughout the country.

Aravallis in Haryana can be used as a range dotted with “healing spaces” and forest immersion experiences where overloaded minds, overworked bodies and overwhelmed souls can come and find mental peace, solace and good health. Creating these “healing spaces” will boost local employment, help sustain biodiversity around the area and benefit the state economy in a sustainable way. This can be done by developing concept of ‘Learning From Nature’:

- Organising healing forest walks, nature meditations and forest art workshops.
 - Organising sessions where elders and locals share forest wisdom.
 - Doing action projects that give back to nature.
 - Setting up forest schools and nature camps for children to learn from the wild.
 - Nature-based tourism and guided bird watching trips.
- viii. A protection plan must be put into place. Sufficient number of forest guards or any such appropriate authority along with community guards should be the primary defence to protect the wildlife of the region. This must be supplemented with Advanced Drone Technology as a monitoring tool to regulate and control illegal encroachments and mining activities in this area.

47. That brief Profile of 4 Independent Experts in the field of Conservation, Ecology and Eco-Restoration who are willing to give their inputs to HSPCB and the Haryana government to design and implement a plan for restoration of illegally mined land in the Aravalli region are mentioned below:

- a) Vijay Dhasmana is a rewilder and eco-restoration practitioner who has helped transform an abandoned mining site in Gurugram into a lush Aravali forest called the Aravali Biodiversity Park - the first OECM site in India.
- b) Dr Pia Sethi is an ecologist, consultant and researcher.
- c) Dr Ankila Hiremath is an ecologist and researcher.

Profiles and contact details of above 3 experts are given above as experts suggested to be on the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board.

- d) Dr Rajendra Singh also known as the 'Waterman of India' is a water conservationist who has decades of experience in reviving dried up rivers, other water bodies and regenerating degraded areas in the Aravallis and other regions across India. He is a recipient of the Magsaysay Award in 2001 and Stockholm Water Prize in 2015 and is currently the Chairman of the People's World Commission on Drought and Flood.

Email id: jalpurushtbs@gmail.com

Mobile number: 82524 35656, 90097 39338

Usage of alternative building materials

48. That increasing urbanisation and real estate construction activities have increased the demand for construction materials, which gets fulfilled by illegal mining. Government should promote the use of alternative materials like fly ash bricks and earth bricks so that our hills are not razed to the ground to feed the neverending construction. Use of construction and demolition waste in construction to replace aggregates from crushed virgin stone is recommended by the National Building Code

and also by the MoEFCC and MoHUA. The use of virgin aggregates must be discouraged in order to ease the pressures on the Aravalli mountain ecosystem and in their place waste from construction debris and industrial by products such as slag from steel and aluminium must be used as is the practice in states like Orissa and Bihar. It is high time that such things are mainstreamed in Haryana and other Aravalli states so we can protect our hills from being razed to the ground.

49. In light of the above facts and circumstances, the Hon'ble Tribunal may consider following:

I. That for the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board to be truly effective, it must be an autonomous statutory authority set up at the Haryana state level for all the 7 Aravalli districts, and not just for Districts Nuh, Faridabad and Gurugram. This should be as has been done in the past, when the Hon'ble Supreme Court set-up committees with the task of monitoring and checking compliances in which the constitution of such Committees was made such that there was adequate representation from the civil society as well as the scientific community.

II. That 50 percent of the capacity of the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board should be independent rewilders & eco restoration experts, ecologists, wildlife experts, water experts, geologists, climate scientists and other members from civil society groups working on the Aravallis and from grass root rural communities living in the Aravalli foothills. Names of experts in the field of eco restoration, ecology and conservation and eminent citizens given in this document should be considered to be part of the Haryana state level Aravalli Rejuvenation Board.

- III. Deputy Commissioners of the three districts i.e. Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad must provide details on the actions taken by the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board till now.
- IV. All vehicles carrying minor minerals in the Aravalli region in the state of Haryana should be fitted with GPS and the data is made public on a website for all stakeholders to see.
- V. Direct the Anti Mining Task Force Committees of all districts of Haryana to make the use of 'Advanced Drone Technology' early morning from 6 am to 10 am when illegal mining activity usually takes place and at night when dynamite blasting is done to break the hills, and other latest tools mandatory as part of the Standard Operating Procedures to monitor illegal mining in the Aravallis and to identify the exact locations for monitoring illegal sand and stone mining in the Aravallis to bridge gaps in the current surveillance and monitoring system and to prevent and apprehend the perpetrators of illegal felling of trees, mining, encroachments and other non-forest activities.
- VI. Direct the District Level Anti Mining Force Committees to put the drone surveillance data on a public website for NGT, citizens, independent experts and media to monitor the footage.
- VII. Ecological Restoration Plan given by leading Conservationists and Ecologists of India mentioned in this submission document be considered while drawing out action plan for restoration of the illegally mined areas in the Aravallis in Haryana.
- VIII. HSPCB and Haryana government be directed to take inputs from Independent Experts in the field of Eco-Restoration, Conservation, Ecology (whose profiles and contact details are given in this submission document) who are willing to

give their inputs to design and implement a plan for restoration of illegally mined land in the Aravalli region.

- IX. Government should formulate and implement policy to promote the use of alternative materials like fly ash bricks and earth bricks so that the Aravalli hills are not razed to the ground to feed the never ending construction.
- X. Mining Department should provide information on the total number of complaints received on the toll free number till now, and action taken on each of them.
- XI. Mining department should make system of complaints transparent and accountable. The person receiving the call regarding illegal mining on the toll-free number must give a formal complaint / reference number to all the citizens and / or civil society organisations calling regarding the complaint on illegal mining for follow up in the future.
- XII. Feedback must be given by the people manning the toll-free number or the mining officer to the citizens on complaints made regarding illegal mining.
50. That therefore, the Hon'ble Tribunal, in the interest of justice may consider the above submissions on behalf of the Applicant for further adjudication of the matter.



APPLICANT

THROUGH



**RITWICK DUTTA RAHUL CHUDHARY
ADVOCATE
COUNSEL FOR THE APPLICANT**



**BEFORE THE HON'BLE NATIONAL GREEN TRIBUNAL
PRINCIPAL BENCH AT NEW DELHI
ORIGINAL APPLICATION NO. 362 OF 2022**

IN THE MATTER OF:

ARAVALLI BACHAO CITIZENS MOVEMENT ...APPLICANT

VERSUS

UNION OF INDIA & ORS. ...RESPONDENTS

AFFIDAVIT

I, Neelam Ahluwalia Nakra, authorized representative of the Applicant organization, aged about 51 years, D/O Late Shri Narinder Paul Ahluwalia, R/O W1B-155, Wellington Estate, Club Drive, DLF Phase 5, Gurugram- 122009 do hereby solemnly affirm and declare as under:

1. That I am the authorized representative of the Applicant organization in the above titled Application, and hence well conversant with the facts and circumstances described in the present case and as such competent to swear this Affidavit.
2. That the contents of the accompanying **ATTESTED 9899422266** are true and correct and nothing material has been concealed therefrom.

PUBLIC APPOINTED BY
GOVT. OF INDIA
G S KHARRANDA
Notary Reg. No. 785
17 OCT 2023
ADVOCATE ENL. No. D.297181

Neelam Ahluwalia
DEPONENT

VERIFICATION

Verified on this 17th day of October, 2023 that the contents of the present Affidavit are true and correct to my knowledge and belief and nothing material is concealed therefrom.

NOTARY PUBLIC APPOINTED BY
GOVT. OF INDIA
G S KHARRANDA
Notary Reg. No. 785
17 OCT 2023
ADVOCATE ENL. No. D.297181
ATTESTED 9899422266

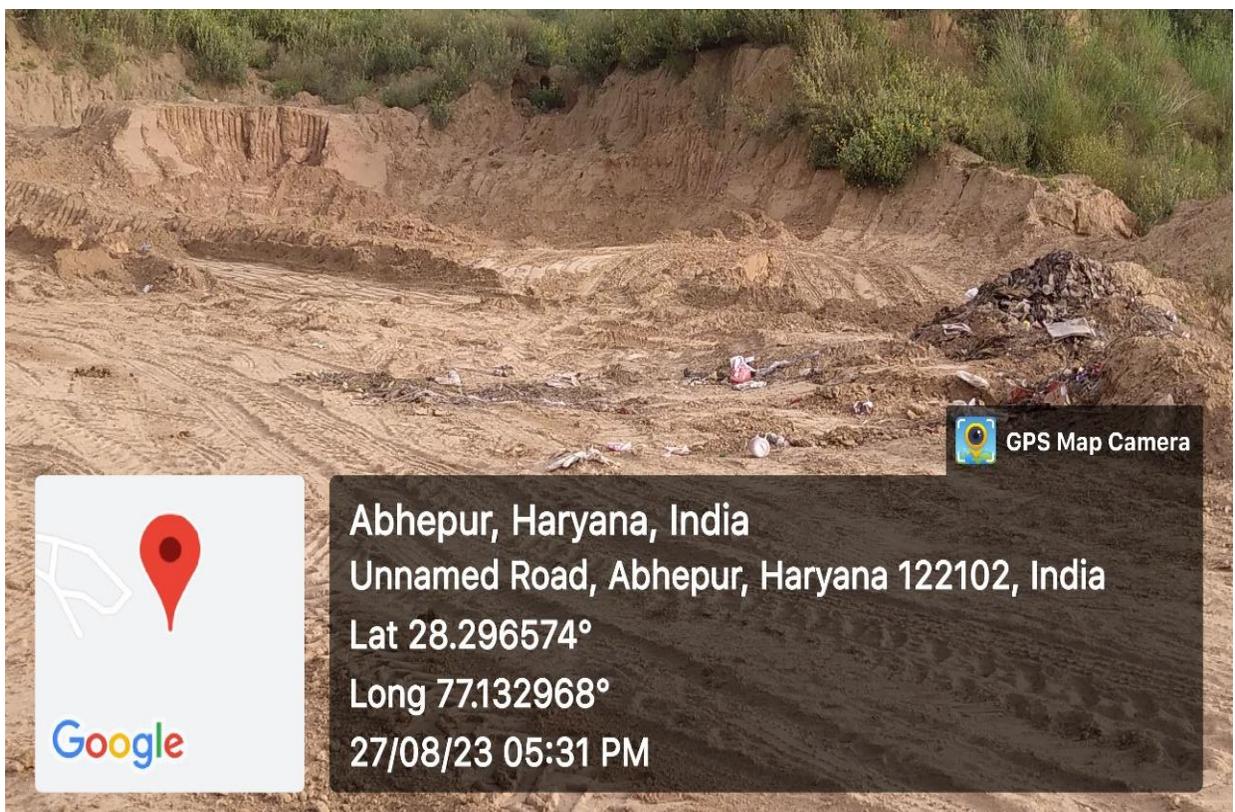
Neelam Ahluwalia
DEPONENT

**I, IDENTIFIED THE
DEPONENT WHO HAS
SIGNED IN MY PRESENCE**

ATTESTED
[Signature]
NOTARY PUBLIC

ANNEXURE A-1

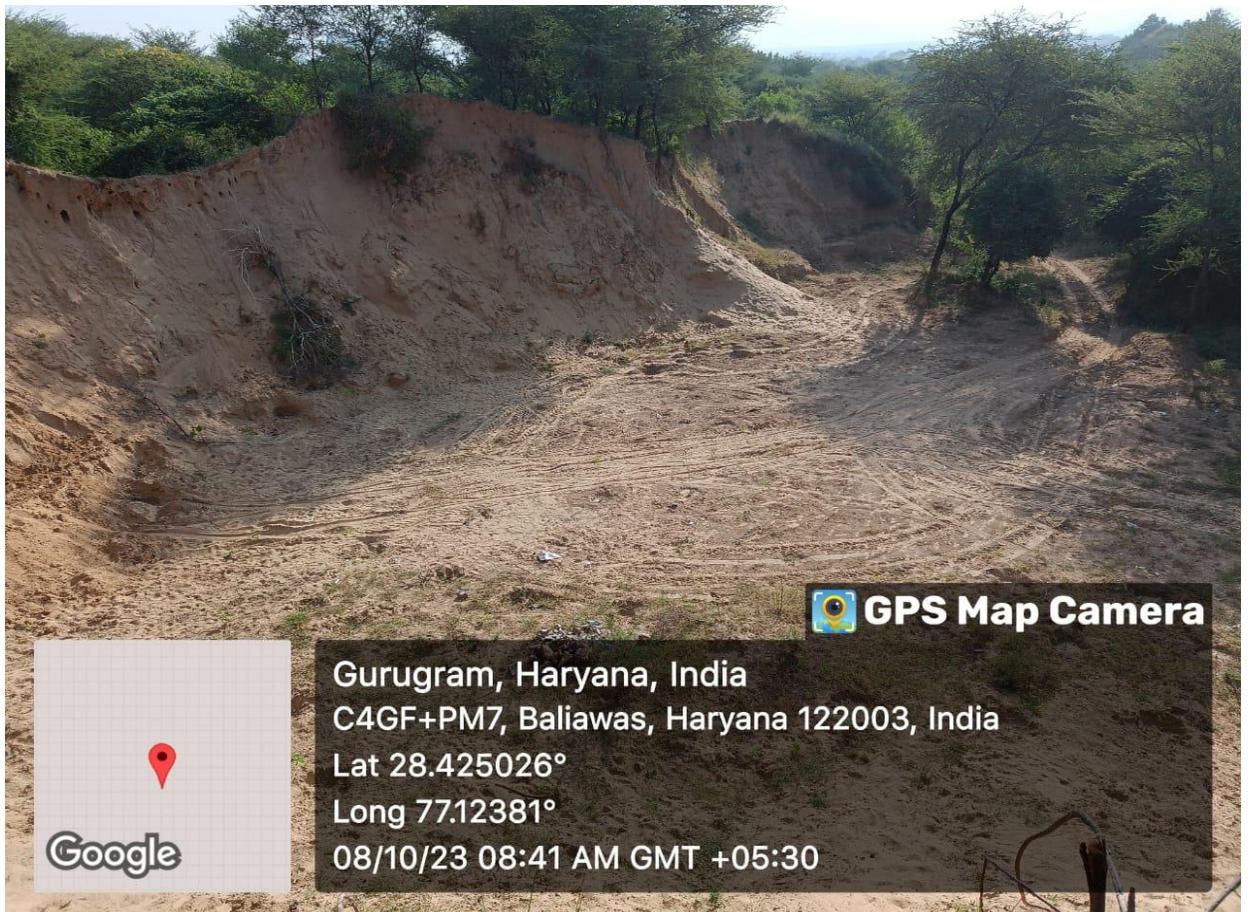
Geo tagged photographs showing illegal mining in different locations in Gurugram and Nuh Aravallis.

Sand mining in Kadarpur Village, Section 63, Gurugram**Sand mining near Damdama Lake**

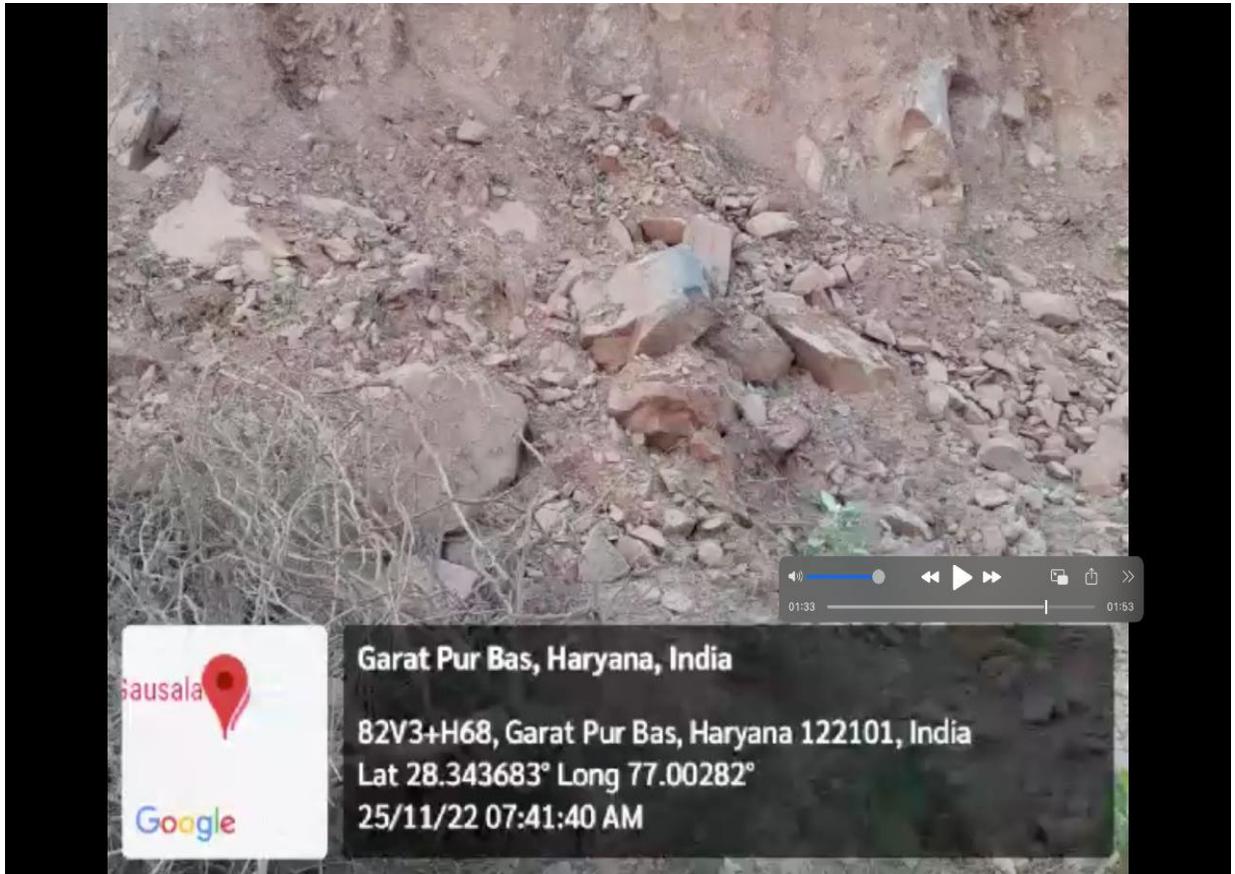
Sand mining near Lost Lake, Gurugram



Sand mining near Baliawas village, Gurugram Aravallis



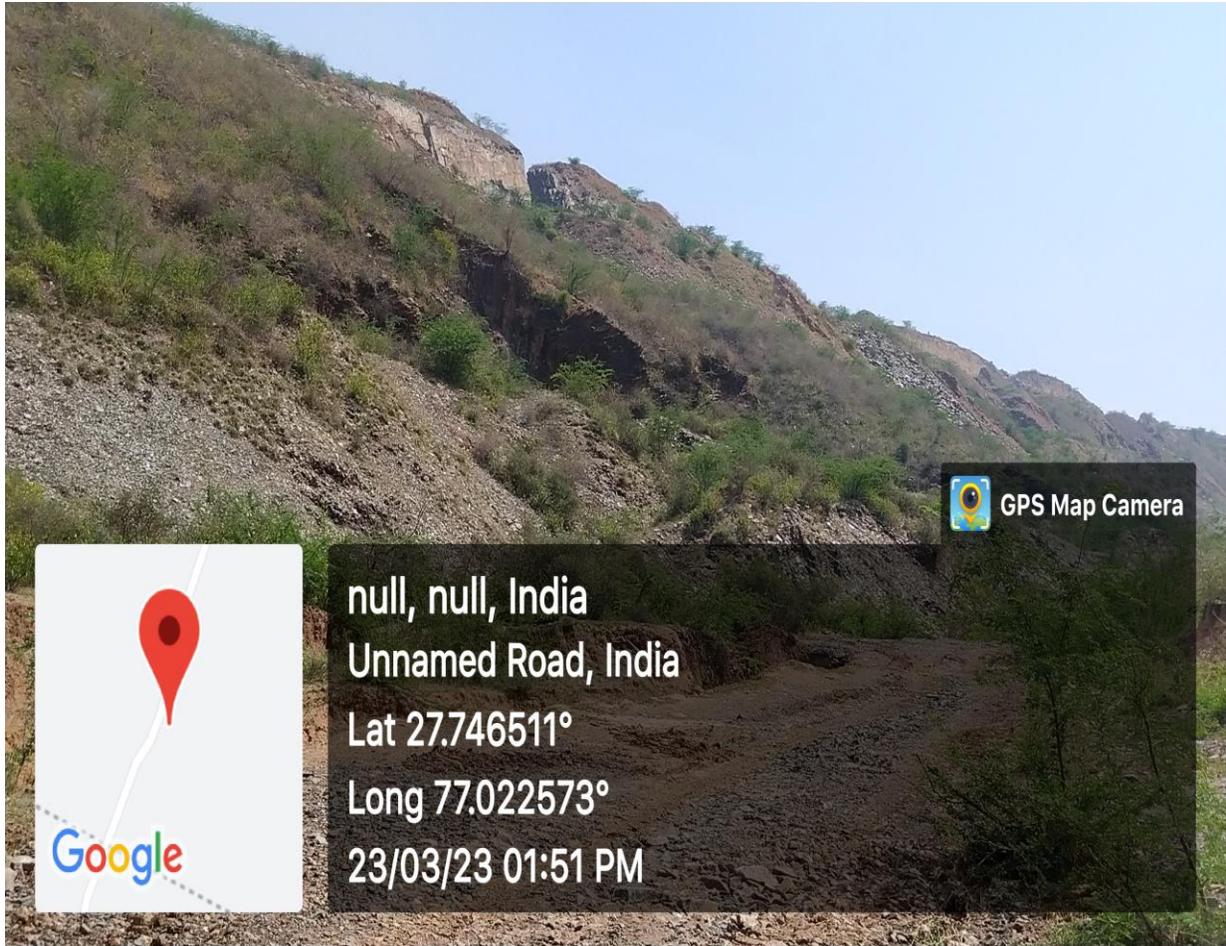
Sand mining in Pandala Hills near Gairatpur Bas Village, Gurugram



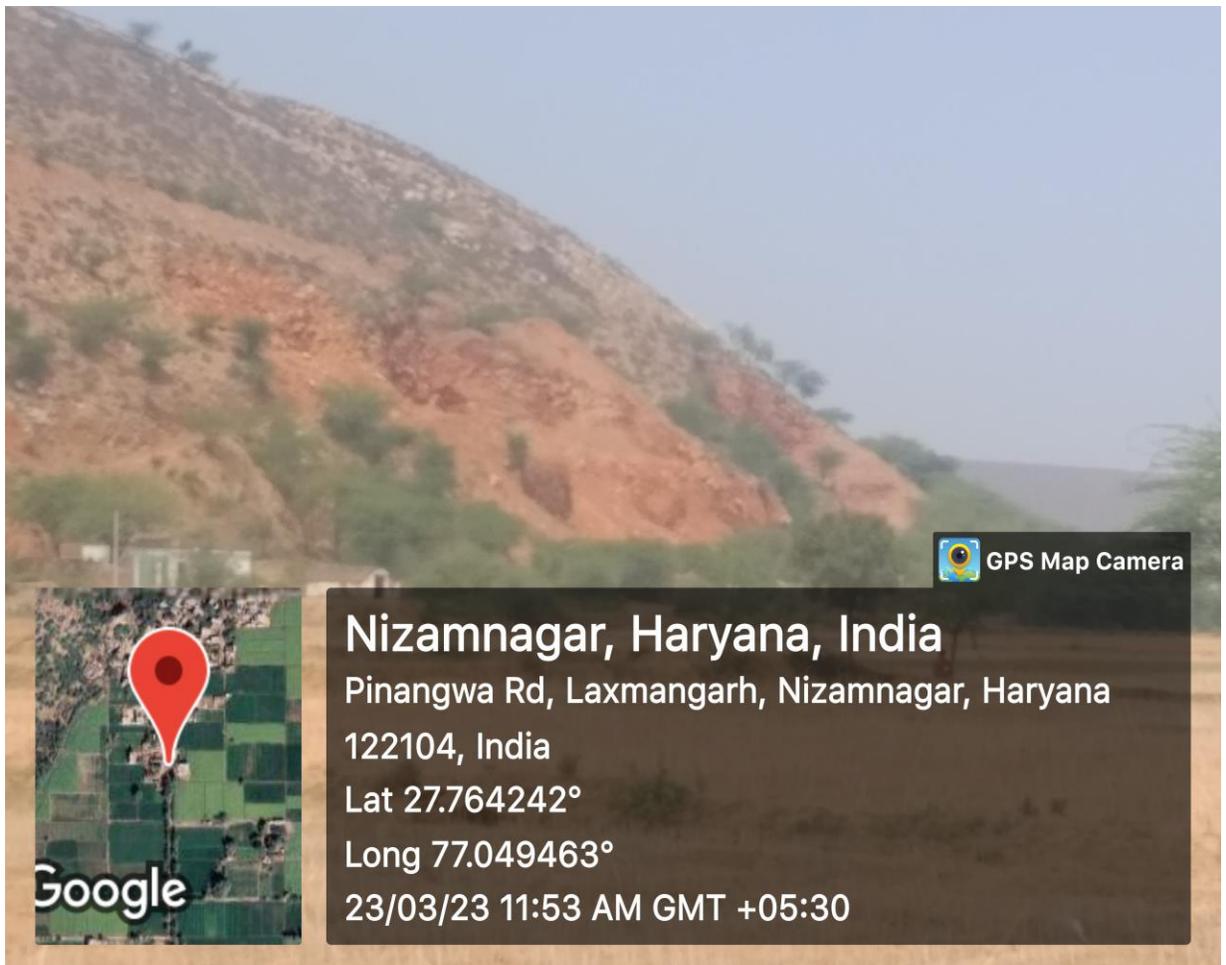
Illegal mining in Hassanpur, Tauru, Nuh district



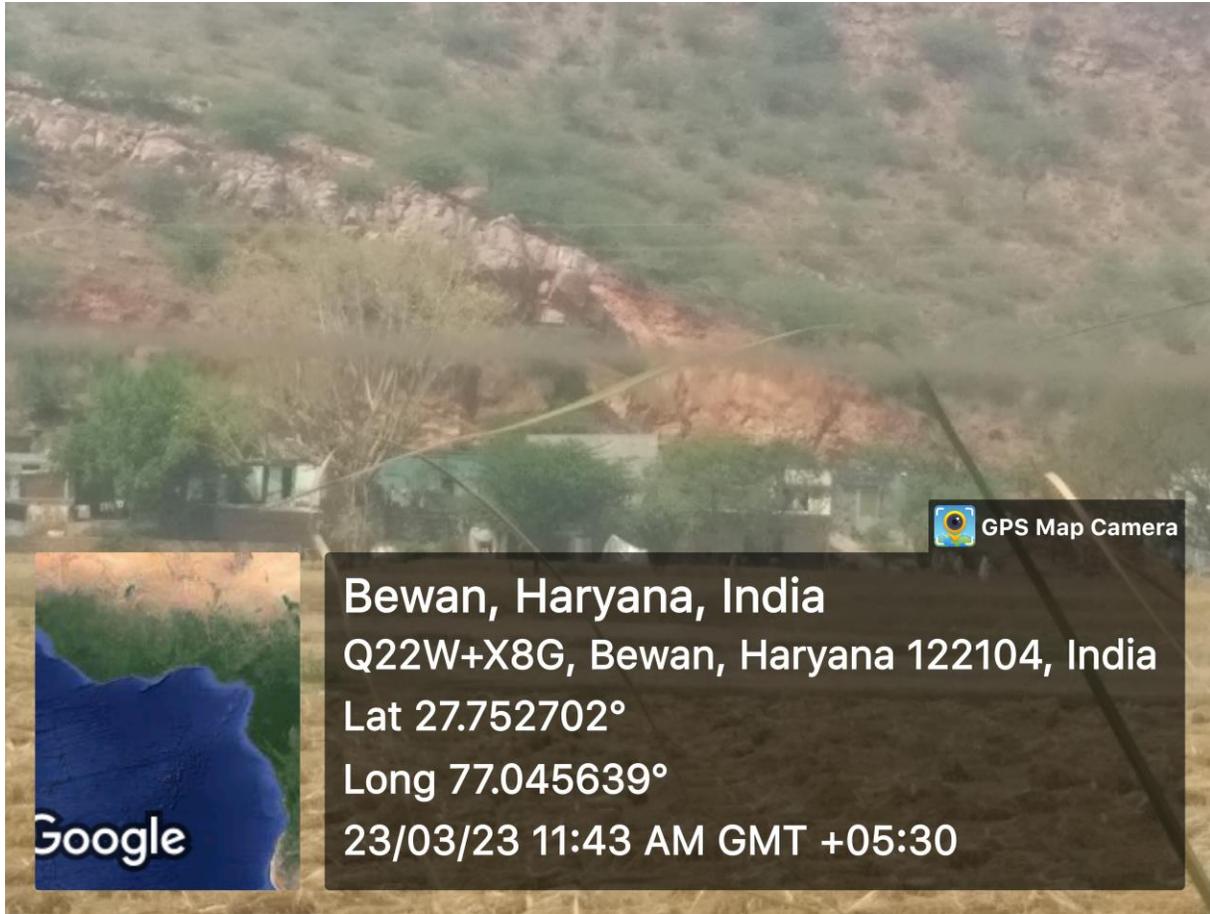
Illegal Mining in Nuh near Rajasthan border



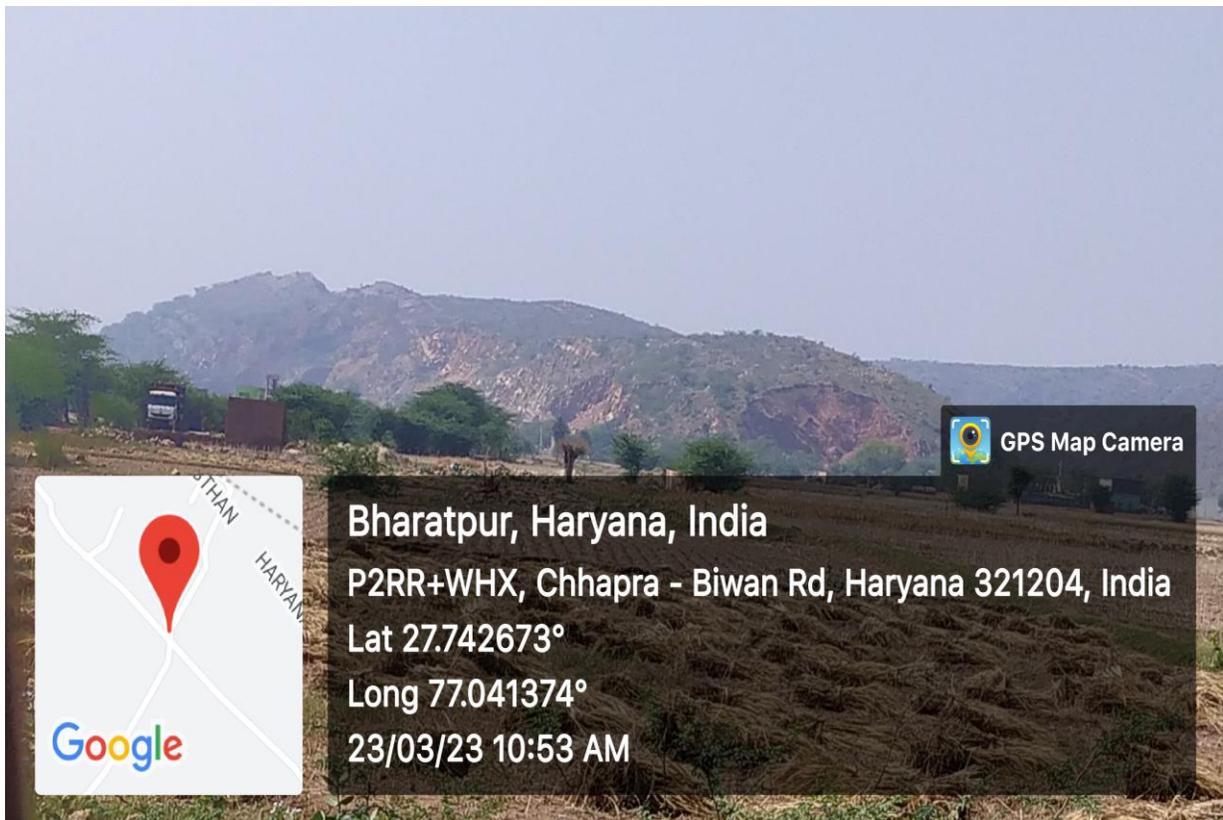
Illegal mining in Nizamnagar, Pinangwa road, Laxmangarh, Nuh district



Illegal Mining in Bewan, Nuh district



Illegal Mining, Chhapra – Biwan road, Nuh district





LIFE Office <litigation.life@gmail.com>

Annexure A-2 in Aravalli Bachao submission doc

1 message

Shreepurna Dasgupta <shreepurnadasgupta@proton.me>
To: "litigation.life" <litigation.life@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 17, 2023 at 3:49 PM

From: **Aravalli Bachao** <aravallibachao.team@gmail.com>

Date: Mon, Oct 9, 2023 at 5:05 PM

Subject: Complaint regarding illegal mining continuing in Gurugram & Nuh Aravallis & suggestions to improve surveillance

To: T.L. Satyaprakash, IAS <dcgrg@hry.nic.in>, <dcgrgsm@gmail.com>, <dcnuh@hry.nic.in>, Deputy Commissioner <dcfbd@hry.nic.in>

Cc: <cf.gurgaon@gmail.com>, DFO T Gurugram <dfogurgaon1@gmail.com>, Gurgaon North Region Hspcb <hspcbrogrn@gmail.com>, <cp.ggn@hry.nic.in>, <jtcp.ggn@hry.nic.in>, <dcp.southggn@hry.nic.in>, <dcp.hqggn@hry.nic.in>, <adcnuh@hry.nic.in>, <spmwt@hry.nic.in>

Dear DCs,

Greetings from the Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement, a non-partisan group of citizens from the National Capital Region and across India working to save what is left of our precious Aravallis.

We are glad to hear that the Anti-Mining Task Force committees to stop illegal mining in the Aravallis in Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad districts have been formed and are working under your able leadership in all the 3 districts.

In this email, we are bringing new locations of illegal stone and sand mining in the Aravallis in Gurugram and Nuh districts to your attention and that of some of the members of the Anti-Mining Task Force committees and giving some critical feedback and suggestions to improve the monitoring and surveillance system to check illegal mining.

Below drive has images and document giving GPS coordinates of illegal sand and stone mining locations in Gurugram and Nuh districts from (March 2023 to October 2023) and a few from the end of 2022 as well.

https://drive.google.com/drive/folders/1O_K6nyzKcvLqKZfF8Ji_Xxo-yBYpJU9_?usp=sharing

Please do read the below relevant excerpts from a 19 July 2023 Hindustan Times article titled "A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis" to get an idea of other locations where illegal mining is going on and what local villagers in these areas have to say:

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/delhi-news/a-year-after-dsp-s-murder-illegal-mining-down-but-not-out-in-aravallis-101689706190613.html>

Sites of illegal mining activity in Gurugram district according to HT article: Bisar village in Manesar and Raisina, Gairatpur Baas, Sohna, Kadarapur and Ghamroj in Gurugram district.

Sites of illegal mining activity in Nuh district according to HT article: Jhimrawat, Tigaon, Silkho, Dhilamki, Noorpur Silkho, Chila, Malaka, Pipaka village in Tauru.

"None of the 51 forest check posts set up in the Aravallis zone of Gurugram and Sohna in 2016 exist anymore, an investigation by HT has found, underlining the vulnerability of the eco-sensitive region which has suffered irreversible damage over the years due to the plunder by the mining mafia.

Mohan Rathee, 55, a resident of Gairatpur Baas, said forest officials visit the area only once a week.

"Daily, at least 20 tractor trolleys carry away illegally mined stones from the area. No one bothers to check the hillocks," he said.

Mange Ram, 38, a resident of Raisina village, said, "Forest officials visit once in a while to mark their attendance. There is no fear among illegal miners. They know that there is no surveillance," he said.

HT also spotted fresh truck tyre marks in Raisina, Gairatpur Baas, Sohna, Kadarapur and Ghamroj in Gurugram pointing to the movement of heavy vehicles in these parts to transport stones.

In Jhimrawat, a village in Nuh, about 75 km from Gurugram, the time of the day doesn't matter, as long as outsiders are not around. The din of the tractors being loaded with stones rend the air through the day, and labourers keep chipping away till they tire.

Occasionally, when an outsider's vehicle approaches, the village's information network kicks in and the miners scatter; the tractors go silent.

The mining site outside Silkho borders two other villages, Dhilamki and Noorpur and the entire site spans a little over 1.5km with roots jutting out from impacted trees.

At one of the mining sites near Pipaka village in Tauru, the quarry resembles a ravine over 300 metres long, nearly 40 metres deep, and 40 metres wide at some points. The site is accessed by a narrow tar road. The quarries wear a weathered look, the naked stones are dark-brown, with vegetation between the broken rocks with blunt edges.

Miners said they use bulldozers and earth movers to create multiple rough and bumpy paths so as make sites accessible only to dumper trucks and tractors.

Large tyre marks were visible on many such paths in mining sites in Silkho, Chila and Malaka, made by trucks arriving to collect the leftover stones."

CITIZENS ASKS

A) USE OF DRONES FOR SURVEILLANCE AND MONITORING OF ILLEGAL MINING IN THE ARAVALLIS MUST BE MADE MANDATORY

District Level Anti Mining Task Force Committees in all the 3 districts of Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad must follow the EMGSM-2020 guidelines and various court orders and use Advanced Drone Technology and other tools for monitoring and stopping illegal stone and sand mining and other non-forest activities in all the Aravalli districts.

a) Ministry of Forest, Environment and Climate Change (MoEF&CC) formulated its recent guidelines i.e Enforcement & Monitoring Guidelines for Sand Mining (EMGSM) 2020 which recommend:

- Use of unmanned aerial vehicles (UAVs), also known as Drones, with advanced cameras to identify illegal sand mining hotspots.
- Constant monitoring of mining activity using Drones and night surveillance of mining activity to be done using night-vision Drones. Section 5.2.2 of the EMGSM-2020 guidelines (Page 31-32) lays down in detail the instruments and software requirement for such monitoring.

b) The 18 January 2022 NGT Court Order in OA 169/2020 Kuldeep Singh Versus State of Haryana & Others states that Advance Technological Drones should be provided to the Mining Department to take prompt action against illegal mining activity.

In light of the above, **Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement requests for the following with regard to use of Drone Technology:**

1) Use of 'Advanced Drone Technology' be made mandatory as part of the Standard Operating Procedures to monitor illegal mining in the Aravallis and to identify the exact locations for monitoring illegal sand and stone mining in the Aravallis to bridge gaps in the current surveillance and monitoring system and to prevent and apprehend the perpetrators of illegal felling of trees, mining, encroachments and other non-forest activities.

2) The District Level Anti Mining Force committees must use Drones early morning from 6 am to 10 am when illegal mining activity takes place and at night when dynamite blasting is done to break the hills on a weekly basis.

3) The Drone surveillance data must be put up on a public website for citizens, independent experts and media to monitor the footage.

B) FEEDBACK ON TOLL FREE NUMBER SET UP BY MINING DEPARTMENT FOR CITIZENS TO REPORT ON ILLEGAL MINING IN THE ARAVALLIS

Members of our group have been calling this toll free number since April 2023 to inform about different locations of illegal mining that we are highlighting in this mail as well.

Suggestions by Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement to increase efficacy of Toll-Free number and Control Room that has been set up for citizens to report on illegal mining in the Aravallis:

1) The system of complaints needs to be made accountable. The person receiving the call regarding illegal mining on the toll-free number must give a formal complaint / reference number to the citizen calling regarding the complaint on illegal mining for follow up in the future.

2) Feedback must be given by the people manning the toll-free number or the mining officer to the citizens on complaints made regarding illegal mining.

3) Correct information regarding timings when the toll-free number is manned and days must be given to the public, which is not the case currently. This toll free number is not operational 24 by 7 as claimed. Members of our group have called post 8 pm on different days and the calls have gone unanswered.

4) Mining / forest guards going on location to check out the coordinates of illegal mining must be trained to investigate properly and be told that the latitude – longitude coordinates are of the nearest tower. The guards needs to walk around to check out where the illegal mining is taking place. The illegal mining normally takes place outside the village where the Aravalli hills and forests are located. One member of our group living in Gurugram who had called the Toll-Free number and given the coordinates of illegal mining near Palla village in Nuh district received a call from a mining guard who visited Palla village. The mining guard instead of going to the end of the village where the Aravalli hills are situated, called the member saying there are houses where the latitude and longitude coordinates are given and that the Gurugram citizen should come to Palla village to show him the exact location. It is not possible for citizens who are mostly working professionals to be showing the officials where exactly the illegal mining is taking place. Many times, the local villagers inform our group members that illegal mining activity is going on near their village and send the geo tagged image. So, the person making the complaint in the city will not necessarily know the exact location of illegal mining. This is the job of the field staff to figure out after we have provided the GPS coordinates.

Feedback and Suggestions on Email Id provided for citizens to complain regarding illegal mining:

In the 11th April 2023 affidavit of the Director Mines and Geology, Haryana submitted to NGT, the Email id provided is as follows: aravalibachaoggn@gmail.com

Email sent by the Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement on 24 April 2023 on this above email id bounced back stating that this mail address is not found.

Email id provided by a person manning the toll-free number set up by the Mining Department of Haryana to a member of the Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement on 24 April 2023 is as follows: aravalibachaofgn@gmail.com

Our suggestion is that the control room set up by the mining department must acknowledge emails received and via reply email give a reference / complaint number for the same for the citizens to track the complaints made. **The correct email id for reporting on illegal mining must be communicated via newspapers and on a web portal being set up for this.**

Please let us know this correct email id.

Please do let us know actions taken to stop illegal mining in these locations in Gurugram and Nuh districts on the basis of this complaint email.

Best,

Neelam Ahluwalia

Managing Trustee,

Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement

News / Cities / Delhi News / A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis

A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis

By [Leena Dhankhar](#), Gurugram/sohna/nuh

Jul 19, 2023 12:19 AM IST

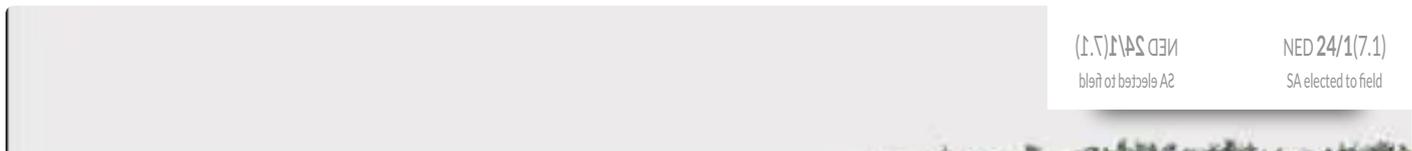
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A year after a senior cop was murdered by the mining mafia in Nuh, HT takes stock of measures taken to combat the menace in the Aravallis

Story continues below advertisement

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A year ago, when deputy superintendent of police (DSP) Surinder Singh was run over and killed by a dump truck allegedly driven by illegal stone miners in Nuh's Panchgaon, the gruesome murder prodded the government into launching a series of measures to curb illegal mining, which was taking place for decades in the hillocks of the Aravallis in Nuh and Gurugram districts.





The plundered remains of a hillock, in Pachgavan in Nuh district. (Parveen Kumar/HT Photo)

Story continues below advertisement

Much was said, and done, to bring down the mining mafia that was slowly eating into the protected mountain ranges. The initiatives included marking the hillocks, night patrolling, setting up of check posts, launching a toll-free helpline number for reporting mining related complaints, a dedicated police station, digging trenches on forest roads, trucks, drone surveillance and random surprise checks. While all these measures have significantly reduced illegal mining, they have not fully eliminated it.

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Haryana Forest minister Moolchand Sharma said cases of illegal mining has drastically declined in Nuh after all the measures taken by them. "All vehicles carrying illegally mined stones are auctioned and penalties are huge -- equal to the value of formed committees in each district which hold weekly meetings to There is no commercial illegal mining taking place; locals are collected construction of their houses. Police, forest and mining department have worked very hard

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Check posts in Aravallis

None of the 51 forest check posts set up in the Aravallis zone of Gurugram and Sohna in 2016 exist anymore, an investigation by HT has found, underlining the vulnerability of the eco-sensitive region which has suffered irreversible damage over the years due to the plunder by the mining mafia.

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HT could find no check posts on Monday, even in areas from where the police receive regular complaints of illegal mining.

Mohan Rathee, 55, a resident of Gairatpur Baas, said forest officials visit the area only once a week. "Daily, at least 20 tractor trolleys carry away illegally mined stones from the area. No one bothers to check the hillocks," he said.

Mange Ram, 38, a resident of Raisina village, said, "Forest officials v mark their attendance. There is no fear among illegal miners. They surveillance," he said.

Advertisement for NED vs SA cricket match, including match details and a LIVE indicator.

Story continues below advertisement



HT on Tuesday also spotted fresh truck tyre marks in Raisina, Gairatpur Baas, Sohna, Kadarapur and Ghamroj in Gurugram pointing to the movement of heavy vehicles in these parts to transport stones.



The mountain spot in Pachgavan where DSP Surinder Singh was killed allegedly by illegal stone miners on July 19, 2022. (Parveen Kumar/HT Photo)

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Forest officials said they had hired locals for manning check posts, but they quit after remaining unpaid. "We are short-staffed and cannot spare our personnel. Even the last remaining six posts have shut," said Karambir Malik, Gurugram forest range officer.

Story continues below advertisement

LIVE	LIVE
A2 vs DEN	NED vs SA
(1.1)1 VAS	NED 24/1(7.1)
blst ot betctels A2	SA elected to field

Launch of helpline number

On March 10, on the orders of the National Green Tribunal (NGT), Haryana's mining department launched a toll-free number -- 1800-180-5530 -- for the public to report illegal mining activities 24/7. Although 14 complaints have been received on the helpline so far, only eight were found to be correct, said Anil Kumar, Gurugram and Nuh mining officer.

He said a majority of the calls turned out to be fake. "Also, night patrolling teams are constantly at risk as miners always carry weapons with them," he said.

On June 14, an eight-member squad headed by Kumar was allegedly attacked by a dozen men carrying sticks when they went to Sancholi village in Sohna to check illegal sand mining.

Story continues below advertisement

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Police said the mining officer suffered a fracture to his hand. Although all suspects were arrested two days later, the incident once again highlighted the grave risk to personnel who go patrolling.

Jyoti Raghavan, managing trustee, Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement said, "When officials go on raids and patrols, they must go with adequate police miners cannot be allowed to get away with beating up or murdering happened last year in Nuh."

LIVE	LIVE
A2 vs DEN	NED vs SA
(1.7)1 NED SA (1.1)	NED 24/1(7.1)
blst ot betctels A2	SA elected to field

Data from mining department shows that between January 1 and July 12 this year

impounded. In Gurugram, ₹49 lakh was recovered in penalties and 51 vehicles were

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HT spot checks 16 sites

From the Kundli-Manesar-Palwal Expressway flyover, the Aravalli hills stand 4km away on the outskirts of Malhaka village in Nuh district. A cursory glance at the hillocks, covered in lush monsoon green, is enough to spot the ugly brown patches created by decades of battering by miners.

It is only when one moves closer to the hills – about 500 metres further from the last brick stone house in the village located about 37km from Gurugram -- that it becomes obvious that the battering never ceased.

The saving grace in Malhaka village is the absence of mining activity in broad daylight, thanks primarily to the region’s proximity to the National Capital Region. “Someone or the other has been constantly visiting the quarries since the incident (DCP’s murder. Khan, a cattle grazer, said, referring to police, mining officials and the media.

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Story continues below advertisement

LIVE	LIVE
A2 vs DEN	NED vs SA
(1.7.1) NED	NED 24/1(7.1)
2 selected to field	SA elected to field

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...sary, changed in Jhimrawat, a village in Nuh, about 60 km from Saranagar, the time of the day doesn't matter, as long as outsiders are not around. The din of the tractors being loaded with stones rend the air through the day, and labourers keep chipping away till they tire.

Occasionally, when an outsider's vehicle approaches, the village's information network kicks in and the miners scatter; the tractors go silent.

Night patrolling

According to reports by the Nuh's mining and pollution department, the two villages -- Jhimrawat and Tigaon-- are home to at least 16 sites where illegal mining has continued over recent years.

HT visited these 16 sites on July 16 (Sunday) where mining was taking place at a commercial scale until the murder of the DSP last year. Since then, the scale has reduced to domestic use.

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Labourers at mining sites in Jhimrawat say the police team visits only once a day. In the wake of the DSP's murder, they used to visit twice a day but after a few months, the visits dwindled. Unsurprisingly, the police appeared unaware of the mining...

Local police claim that there are hardly any case of illegal mining. Till now, only a few of locals gathering stones for personal use.

lot of vehicles were seized. The Nuh police followed it up by marking illegal mining sites

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Singla said they have registered nine cases this year between January and June 30 and arrested 32 persons but none of the cases was actually of illegal mining on the spot. "Most cases registered are of panchayat dispute where they had removed soil from one area while constructing road and, in another case, while constructing a mosque. We have not found a single person illegally mining stone this past year," he said.

Jawahar Yadav, officer on special duty (OSD) to Haryana chief minister Manohar Lal Khattar, said illegal mining has reduced. "The stones are majorly brought from Rajasthan now. During surprise checks, we found that vehicles carrying stones are not from Nuh. Only a few areas are still resorting to illegal mining and we are in the process of reviving check posts. We are also undertaking drone surveillance to keep a check on the activities," he said.

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LIVE	LIVE
A2 vs DEN	NED vs SA
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2 selected to field	SA elected to field

New spots emerge

Police said miners have moved away from spots which were legally mined until 2002 to “secret spots” just 100-200 metres away.

“These alternative sites have allowed them to camouflage their activities,” said Sayed Khan, a villager from Tauru.

One such site is in Pachgavan village where DSP Singh was killed on July 19 while responding to a tipoff about illegal mining. The illegal miners abandoned the old quarries in favour of a site nestled in the hillocks.

But in the year since the DSP’s murder, mining activity has stopped completely at the Pachgavan site. The route leading to the quarries has been blocked by large stones that fell off the dumper which killed DSP Singh. Grass has taken over the path, a visible indicator that the area remains untouched.

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“If there is one place where illegal mining won’t resume in Haryana, it is Pachgaon,” said villager Mohammas Ismail.

At some other spots, locals continue to chip away at the old quarrie their houses and boundary walls.

“We take what we need, but not for selling. These are our natural resources over which

LIVE	LIVE
A2 vs DEN	NED vs SA
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SA elected to field	SA elected to field

of which mining has continued rampantly even after it was banned in 2002

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Small and large stones, enough to fill at least six trucks. remained abandoned at several spots in these quarries. Illegal miners said these stones were abandoned in the wake of the DSP's murder. "Now, we are collecting them in small loads at night," said Sahil Khan, a villager.

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Miners said they use bulldozers and earth movers to create multiple rough and bumpy paths so as make sites accessible only to dumper trucks and tractors.

"To make access difficult for vehicles belonging to authorities, miners deliberately put stones and boulders on the path," said mining officer Kumar.

Large tyre marks were visible on many such paths in mining sites in Silkho, Chila Malaka , made by trucks arriving to collect the leftover stones.



Mining at the three sites ceased after the DSP's death, said Kumar.

At one of the mining sites near Pipaka village in Tauru, the quarry resembles a ravine over 300 metres long, nearly 40 metres deep, and 40 metres wide at some points. The site is accessed by a narrow tar road. The quarries wear a weathered look, the naked stones are dark-brown, with vegetation between the broken rocks with blunt

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It has been six years since mining ceased here," a cattle grazer said, possibly in a bid to prevent any further exploration.

There are chalk marks on the hillocks, made by the mining department, to ensure no one takes a pick axe to the hills. But illegal miners have their ways.

A clear off-road trail, possibly left behind by plying vehicles, lead to the deep ravine a few hundred metres away. "The mine is several kilometres long," Nasir Khan, a grazer wielding a seemingly expensive phone, said, in an effort to dissuade any further exploration.

Officials said grazers in these regions are often used as informers. "In exchange for a fancy smartphone and monthly recharges, they alert the miners of any government or police movement," said a former mining officer.

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Miners find a way around trenches

At least 30 trenches -- 2.5 metres wide and 4 metres deep --were d prevent illegal miners from accessing the Aravalli hills on July 22, th DSP's murder.

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2 selected to field	SA elected to field

barricades were put up on the path outside Chaijpur village

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over again by morning to fool the authorities. Now we have deployed a team to keep guard round the clock. For the past many months, the trenches have remained untouched and illegal mining has reduced drastically," said Vijender Singh, district forest officer (DFO), Nuh .

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Singh said earlier, they used to send over 100 cases annually to the special environmental court in Faridabad but now that has reduced to 24 annually.

"It took us a while to identify the trick with the trenches. Since August last year, our teams are keeping a close watch and night patrolling has been stepped up to keep the criminals away.The routes now have greenery all over it," said a senior forest officer, asking not to be named.

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Patrolling, video recording by sleuths

Nuh district administration had formed a six-member team in August last year to carry out night patrolling in 15 villages of Tauru. "Our prime concern is prevention and we have planned several strategies to curb the menace. The locals mine stones for domestic use and then they get involved in the illegal trade," said a senior district administration official, asking not to be named.

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Officials said they have stepped up security in mining sites and villages are under the police scanner. They also keep a check on 95 operational crusher units, and 41 others that have been shut but are still operating illegally.

But the biggest worry for officials has been the strong information networks disrupting their efforts. Tractor drivers in Jhimrawat keep their earphones plugged in for phone calls from informers. "The police hardly come our way, but if an outsider is spotted, we are prepared to handle it," said Mohammad Javed, another villager.

Police are countering this with their own network of informers. "We have activated our informers who are keeping a close watch on the hillocks and people involved in extracting stones and transporting them. They are visiting all villages and meeting village chiefs to spread awareness," said Nuh SP Singla.

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Also, drone are being used for taking high definition videos of the mining affected areas and for regular monitoring. "The government machinery needs a pat their best to curb illegal mining. When you compare the vast expan mining could happen, it's commendable that we were able to stop it no criminal nexus nor organised mining anywhere in our district to my knowledge," he

nothing was done to stop the miners.

Story continues below advertisement

“The locals are involved in illegal mining and they are making a temporary route to the hillocks so that they can easily transport the mined stones,” he said.

Vaishali Chandra Rana, a city-based environmentalist, said what was needed was a dedicated Aravallis task force and drone monitoring of the entire Aravallis falling within the districts. “We have been demanding this since 2018, but nothing has happened. It is very strange that all enforcement agencies are patrolling the hillocks and conducting regular raids and yet, they have never found any illegal mining, but others have,” she said.

In the last order passed by the National Green Tribunal on April 28, 2023, in the ongoing case of Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement against illegal mining in Gurugram, Faridabad, the bench had directed the Haryana government to give its response on now they are incorporating suggestions given by the Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement to stop illegal mining.

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LIVE	LIVE
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SA elected to field	SA elected to field

Suggestions put forward by Aravalli Bachao include use of drones to monitor the Aravalli hills on a weekly basis and putting up the data on a public website; having 50% independent experts in the Aravalli Rejuvenation Board being set up by Haryana as a result of the legal case; and use of alternative building materials such as fly ash bricks and materials made from construction waste in building activities. The group have also submitted an ecological restoration plan given by leading conservationists and ecologists for reclamation of illegally mined Aravalli areas.

Jyoti Raghavan, managing trustee, Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement, said, "Many from our group have reported on locations of active illegal mining in Gurugram and Nuh. But when we call on the toll-free number, we are not given a complaint or reference number. So it is very difficult for citizens to track the complaints. We have highlighted this before the NGT as well," she said.

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Leena Dhankhar

Follow

Leena Dhankhar has worked with Hindustan Times for five years. She has covered ci
She now reports on civic issues and grievances of residents.

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CENTRAL GOVERNMENT'S RIGHT TO INFORMATION- 2005, SEE RULE 3
PRESCRIBED FORM TO GET INFORMATION

To,
State Public Information Officer,
Office of Conservator of Forest, South Circle, Haryana,
Civil Lines, Gurugram – 122001, Haryana.

2023/10/11 20:56

- 1] **Name of the Applicant:** Neelam Ahluwalia Nakra

- 2] **Address & Contact Details:** W1B-155, Wellington Estate, Club Drive
DLF-Phase 5, Gurugram - 122009
Mobile: 9910133281
Email: nahluwalia72@gmail.com

- 3] **Details of the Information Required:**

Affidavit of Deputy Commissioner Gurugram filed before the Hon'ble National Green Tribunal Principal Bench, New Delhi (copy attached with this RTI) in compliance of NGT Order dated 28.04.2023 in the matter of: Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement Union of India & Ors (OA No. 362/2022) states that a board named "Aravalli Rejuvenation Board" has been formed comprising of 7 members including the DFO of the Gurugram district and that a meeting of Aravalli Rejuvenation Board was held on 26.07.2023 at 10:30 am at Deputy Commissioner Office, Gurugram under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram.

Please provide copy of the Minutes of Meeting of the "Aravalli Rejuvenation Board" and any directions issued to all government departments including Forest Department Gurugram as a result of this meeting held on 26.07.2023 at 10:30 am at Deputy Commissioner Office, Gurugram under the Chairmanship of Deputy Commissioner, Gurugram.

- i] **Subject of Information:** Details with respect to Aravalli Rejuvenation Board meeting held at DC office.

- ii] **Period of Information:** July to October 2023

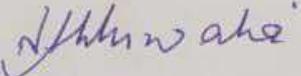
- iii] **Details of Information:** As mentioned above

- 4] Information needed by post or hand delivery etc. (Postage will be added in additional charges) By registered post and email
- 5] In case of Postage (General, Registered or Urgent): Registered post
- 6] Purpose to get the Information: Protection of Aravalli Forest land in Haryana

Note: Attached herewith is copy of my Adhaar card as ID proof and postal order bearing number 57F 584295.

Place: Gurugram

Date: 11 / 10 / 2023

Signature of RTI Applicant: 

ANNEXURE A-5

ILLEGAL MINING LOCATIONS IN THE ARAVALLIS, GURUGRAM DISTRICT REPORTED TO CONTROL ROOM SET UP BY HARYANA STATE MINING DEPARTMENT BY DIFFERENT MEMBERS OF THE APPLICANT ORGANISATION FROM APRIL TO OCTOBER 2023

LOCATION 1: Illegal Mining near Kadarpur Village, Gurugram District

1st Location of illegal sand mining and waste dumping in the forest, Kadarpur village, close to Sector 63, Gurugram:

Latitude: 28.390518

Longitude: 77.109595

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 31/12/2022

2nd location of illegal sand mining in the forest, Kadarpur village:

Latitude: 28.391124

Longitude: 77.109027

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 31/12/2022

3rd location of illegal sand mining in the forest, Kadarpur village:

Latitude: 28.390259

Longitude: 77.109281

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 08/10/2023

4th location of illegal sand mining in the forest, Kadarpur village:

Latitude: 28.387363

Longitude: 77.106266

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 08/10/2023

LOCATION 2: Illegal Mining near Damdama Lake

Abhepur, Latitude: 28.296566

Longitude: 77.132959

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 27/08/2023

LOCATION 3: Illegal Mining near Lost Lake, Gurugram

Latitude: 28.361283

Longitude: 77.128410

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 09/09/2023

LOCATION 4: Illegal Mining near Baliawas Village, Gurugram Aravallis

1st location:

Latitude 28.425655 and Longitude 77.122073

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 27/11/2022

2nd location:

Latitude: 28.425026 and Longitude: 77.12381

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 08/10/2023

LOCATION 5: Illegal Mining in Pandala Hills near Gairatpur Bas Village, Gurugram

Location coordinates of illegal mining near Rathee Café are as follows:

Latitude: 28.343683, Longitude: 77.00282

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 25/11/2022

BELOW ARE LOCATIONS OF ILLEGAL MINING HOTSPOTS in GURUGRAM

Location coordinates of illegal mining in Aravalli hills behind Rathee & Jungle café in Pandala hills, Gairatpur Bas Village, Gurugram are as follows:

Latitude: 28.404198

Longitude: 77.173108

Location coordinates of illegal mining in Pandala hills, Gairatpur Bas Village, Gurugram:

a) Latitude: 28.332487 Longitude: 76.984989

b) Latitude: 28.387575 Longitude: 76.944681

LOCATION 6: Illegal Mining near Aravali Pathways School / Ansal Retreat Area / Tikli Village, Gurugram

a) Latitude: 28.309635 Longitude: 77.000553

b) Latitude: 28.309623 Longitude: 77.000607

LOCATION 7: Illegal Sand Mining Location

Latitude: 28.33309

Longitude: 76.974744

Sites of illegal mining activity in Gurugram district according to July 2023 HT article also reported to control room:

Bisar village in Manesar and Raisina, Gairatpur Baas, Sohna, Kadarapur and Ghamroj in Gurugram district.

19 July 2023 Hindustan Times article titled "A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis".

<https://www.hindustantimes.com/cities/delhi-news/a-year-after-dsp-s-murder-illegal-mining-down-but-not-out-in-aravallis-101689706190613.html>

ILLEGAL MINING LOCATIONS IN THE ARAVALLIS, NUH DISTRICT REPORTED TO CONTROL ROOM SET UP BY HARYANA STATE MINING DEPARTMENT

LOCATION 1: Illegal Mining in Aravallis near Kharak and Jalalpur Sohna Villages are hotspots of illegal mining in the Aravallis.

LOCATION 2: Illegal Mining in Hassanpur Tauru

Location coordinates are as follows:

(a) Lat: 28.30511, Long: 77.001166

(b) Lat: 28.301066, Long: 77.002306

(c) Lat: 28.301378, Long: 77.003105.

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 06/11/2022

LOCATION 3: Illegal Mining near Rajasthan border

Latitude: 27.746922

Longitude: 77.022429

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 23/03/2023

LOCATION 4: Illegal Mining in Nizamnagar, Pinangwa road, Laxmangarh

Latitude: 27.764242

Longitude: 77.049463

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 23/03/2023

LOCATION 5: Illegal Mining in Bewan

a) Latitude: 27.752702 Longitude: 77.045639

b) Latitude: 27.74022 Longitude: 77.057411

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 23/03/2023

LOCATION 6: Illegal Mining, Chhapra – Biwan road

Latitude: 27.742673

Longitude: 77.041374

Date on which illegal mining was seen: 23/03/2023

BELOW ARE LOCATIONS OF ILLEGAL MINING HOTSPOTS in NUH DISTRICT**LOCATION 7: Illegal mining in Palla village, Nuh**

a) Stone mining location: Latitude: 28.119195 Longitude: 76.990408

b) Sand mining location: Latitude: 28.119815 Longitude: 76.978168

LOCATION 8: Illegal mining near Kota Khandewla village

Stone mining location:

a) Latitude: 28.326132 Longitude: 76.973253

Sand mining location:

Latitude: 28.326116 Longitude: 76.973234

LOCATION 9: Illegal mining near Tauru police station

Latitude: 28.218806 Longitude: 76.995616

LOCATION 10: Illegal mining in Bissar Akbarpur village

Latitude: 28.303038 Longitude: 76.912626

Sites of illegal mining activity in Nuh district according to July 2023 HT article reported to control room:**Jhimrawat, Tigaon, Silkho, Dhilamki, Noorpur Silkho, Chila, Malaka, Pipaka village in Tauru.**

19 July 2023 Hindustan Times article titled "A year after DSP's murder, illegal mining down but not out in Aravallis".



Annexure A-6 for Aravalli Bachao submission doc

1 message

Shreepurna Dasgupta <shreepurnadasgupta@proton.me>
To: "litigation.life" <litigation.life@gmail.com>

Tue, Oct 17, 2023 at 3:38 PM

From: **Aravalli Bachao** <aravallibachao.team@gmail.com>

Date: Wed, Oct 11, 2023 at 1:49 PM

Subject: Action Plan to be submitted by HSPCB for rehabilitation of illegally mined land in Haryana Aravallis

To: <hspcb.ms@gmail.com>

Cc: <cs@hry.nic.in>, <secy-moef@nic.in>, <mscb.cpcb@nic.in>, <ccb.cpcb@nic.in>, pccf-hry@nic.in <pccf-hry@nic.in>,, Pspccf@gmail.com <Pspccf@gmail.com>,, papccf@gmail.com <papccf@gmail.com>,, pccfwlhry@gmail.com <pccf-hry@nic.in>, <cf.gurgaon@gmail.com>, T.L. Satyaprakash, IAS <dcgrg@hry.nic.in>, Deputy Commissioner <dcfbd@hry.nic.in>, <dcnuh@hry.nic.in>, <dcnrl@hry.nic.in>, <ceo.gmda@gov.in>, <dfo.gmda@gov.in>, Gurgaon North Region Hspcb <hspcbrogrn@gmail.com>, DFO T Gurugram <dfogurgaon1@gmail.com>

Dear Member Secretary,

Greetings from the Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement.

The NGT Order dated 28.04.2023 in the matter of: Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement Union of India & Ors (OA No. 362/2022) states:

"56. The applicant has made submissions that in response to information sought under Right to Information Act, 2005 the authorities informed that total amount for year wise penalty/environmental compensation from 2010 to 2022 is Rs. 24,96,04,528/ and that environmental compensation recovered by the Directorate of Mines and Geology should be utilized for ecological restoration. The applicant has also made suggestions regarding promotion of Alternative Building Materials, Ecological Restoration of Aravalli areas degraded by illegal mining and also given a plan for Ecological Restoration of illegally mined Aravalli areas in Haryana.

57. The HSPCB is directed to submit an Action Plan regarding utilization of environmental compensation for reclamation/rehabilitation of the land illegally mined in the Aravalli region in the State of Haryana and concerned respondents are also directed to submit their response to suggestions given by the applicant."

Since no action plan has been submitted by HSPCB yet regarding utilization of environmental compensation for reclamation/rehabilitation of the land illegally mined in the Aravalli region in the State of Haryana; we would like to take this opportunity to share a plan suggested by leading ecologists and conservationists of India for ecological restoration of illegally mined Aravalli areas in Haryana. In this mail, we are also sharing profiles and contact details of experts that can be invited by HSPCB and the Haryana government for taking their inputs for making and implementing this critical plan for the restoration of the Aravallis.

ECOLOGICAL RESTORATION PLAN GIVEN BY LEADING CONSERVATIONISTS AND ECOLOGISTS:

Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement has consulted with experts in the field of conservation and ecology namely Dr. Ghazala Shahabuddin, Neha Sinha, Dr Pia Sethi, Dr Rajendra Singh and Purna Bindra regarding the steps that should be taken for ecological restoration and conservation of the illegally mined and severely degraded Aravalli areas. Here are their inputs:

1) The entire belt of the Aravalli hills and forests in Gurugram, Nuh and Faridabad and other districts of Haryana destroyed by illegal mining activities should be restored through a combination of natural regeneration and assisted regeneration i.e. planting of native Aravalli flora, soil and water conservation measures. The endangered/at risk species plants, animals, birds, insects who are the natural inhabitants of Aravallis must be clearly identified and listed and conservation objectives should be specified. It is imperative to understand the wildlife, human interventions, community impact and extent of restoration effort required.

Haryana has an excellent model of such kind of ecological restoration work done in the Aravali Biodiversity Park on MG road in Gurugram which is a 350+ acres of a previously mined and highly degraded Aravalli area that has been converted into a lush green forest of native Aravalli flora. The Aravali Biodiversity Park which is home to different kinds of native Aravalli flora species like Dhak, Salai etc and many native mammals, reptiles, amphibians, birds, butterflies and insects, has been given global recognition.

2) Strict guidelines should be developed for water usage and soil conservation. Monitoring of Aravalli aquifers and groundwater tables should be done.

3) Implement ecological restoration (through an agency/expert with proven track records such as done in the Aravali Biodiversity Park in Gurugram) in a smaller area i.e. about 10-25% of the total area in phase one. Adapt and sustain to restore ecosystem services and make the model self-sustaining. Then, scale and replicate to the full area.

4) The entire stretch of the illegally mined Aravalli areas in Gurugram, Nuh, Faridabad and other districts in Haryana should either be declared as a Protected Area. Alternatively, a network of strictly protected zones and community reserves / biodiversity heritage sites can also be considered to conserve the degraded and illegally mined Aravalli forests & hills where local rural communities can hold rights to restricted forest use.

All Aravalli areas in Haryana from Asola sanctuary in Delhi to Mangar Bani, Damdama lake all the way to Sariska national park in Rajasthan should be declared as a Protected Area (community reserve, conservation reserve, wildlife sanctuary) to create an unfragmented wildlife corridor in the Aravallis spread across Delhi, Haryana and Alwar in Rajasthan. The Protected Area must provide safe passage for wildlife, with no red or destructive industry or infrastructure within this area.

5) Many countries such as Japan, South Korea and Finland have created "healing spaces" by leveraging their forests and natural habitats. Below link gives details on how South Korea has used its natural habitat to create healing forests throughout the country.

<https://healingforest.org/2020/10/21/forest-bathing-secrets/>

Aravallis in Haryana can be used as a range dotted with "healing spaces" and forest immersion experiences where overloaded minds, overworked bodies and overwhelmed souls can come and find mental peace, solace and good health. Creating these "healing spaces" will boost local employment, help sustain biodiversity around the area and benefit the state economy in a sustainable way. This can be done by developing concept of 'Learning From Nature':

- Organising healing forest walks, nature meditations and forest art workshops.
- Organising sessions where elders and locals share forest wisdom.
- Doing action projects that give back to nature.
- Setting up forest schools and nature camps for children to learn from the wild.
- Nature-based tourism and guided bird watching trips.

6) A protection plan must be put into place. Sufficient number of forest guards or any such appropriate authority along with community guards should be the primary defence to protect the wildlife of the region. This must be supplemented with Advanced Drone Technology as a monitoring tool to regulate and control illegal encroachments and mining activities in this area.

Please note that the above points have also been mentioned as part of our submission document to NGT dated 28.11.2022 which is attached with this mail.

BRIEF PROFILE OF INDEPENDENT EXPERTS IN THE FIELD OF ECO-RESTORATION WHO ARE WILLING TO GIVE THEIR INPUTS TO HSPCB AND THE HARYANA GOVERNMENT TO DESIGN AND IMPLEMENT A PLAN FOR RESTORATION OF ILLEGALLY MINED LAND IN THE ARAVALLI REGION:

1) **Vijay Dhasmana is a rewilder and eco-restoration practitioner** who has helped transform an abandoned mining site in Gurugram into a lush Aravali forest called the Aravali Biodiversity Park - the first OECM site in India. He has been working on several ecological restoration projects in Haryana, Rajasthan and Uttarakhand. His projects in Haryana Aravallis are in collaboration with several government agencies such as Forest Department, GMDA and MCG and the NGO I am Gurgaon. He has immense knowledge regarding the native flora of the Aravallis and in the practice of eco-restoration and native planting. Vijay is a member of the Hon'ble Supreme Court Oversight Committee on the Delhi-Dehradun Road. He is also a member of the Delhi State Biodiversity Council

and has been part of a few Task Forces set up by the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change.

Email id: vijay.dhasmana@gmail.com

Mobile number: 99990 50664

2) Dr Pia Sethi is an ecologist, consultant and researcher who has 20 years of experience in ecological and policy-based research on forests, biodiversity, natural resource management and climate change.

Email id: piasethi77@gmail.com

Mobile number: 98112 22321

3) Dr Ankila Hiremath is an ecologist and researcher who has worked in forests and grasslands for over 20 years, on issues related to biodiversity, natural resource management, invasive species and habitat restoration.

Email id: ankila.hiremath@gmail.com

Mobile: 98711 30722

4) Dr Rajendra Singh also known as the 'Waterman of India' is a water conservationist who has decades of experience in reviving dried up rivers, other water bodies and regenerating degraded areas in the Aravallis and other regions across India. He is a recipient of the Magsaysay Award in 2001 and Stockholm Water Prize in 2015 and is currently the Chairman of the People's World Commission on Drought and Flood.

Email id: jalpurushstbs@gmail.com

Mobile number: 82524 35656, 90097 39338

5) Prerna Bindra is one of India's leading conservationists and has served on the National Board for Wildlife and as part of its Core Standing Committee between 2010 and 2013. She was also a member of the Uttarakhand State Board for Wildlife. She has worked with governments at the local, regional and federal levels, to conserve India's wildlife and wild habitats through policy and legal reform, promotion of education and awareness and by supporting effective action on the ground. Her efforts have contributed to the creation of 'Protected Areas'. She is also a writer and has authored the critically acclaimed "The Vanishing: India's Wildlife Crisis".

Email id: Bindra.prerna@gmail.com

We hope that HSPCB and the Haryana government will invite these above experts to help design and implement the eco restoration plan for the land degraded by illegal mining in the Aravallis spread across all districts in the entire state of Haryana.

Sincerely,

Neelam Ahluwalia

Managing Trustee,

Aravalli Bachao Citizens Movement