

Topic: SAND MINING & MAFIA IN INDIA

The **Indian Mafia** is an organized criminal organisation active in many parts of the world. The mafia is involved in many criminal activities based in India and international as well. The Mafia may also refer to those powerful families that have criminal aspects to it. **Sand Mafia** is like an open secret, with it being rampant everywhere in India, unlike other mafia, whose presence depends on the availability of natural resources.

The “mafia,” as are after this natural resource, one of the most sought-after commodities of the 21st century: *sand*.

Recent cases:

- IAS officer DK Ravi, posted as Joint Commissioner, Commercial Tax Department, on 06.04.15 ended his life by allegedly committing suicide. Ravi was known for taking on land and sand mafia while working as Deputy Commissioner for Kolar District. Family suspects foul play. (2015)
- A 40-year-old police constable, Dharmendra, died after he was run over while trying to stop a dumper carrying illegally mined sand on Sunday morning. (2015)
- Paleram Chauhan was killed over sand as he was campaigning to get local authorities to shut down a powerful gang of criminals headquartered in Raipur. (2013)
- Durga Shakti Nagpal, a 2010 batch IAS officer, was first transferred, and then suspended in her crackdown on illegal sand mining in Noida.

Sand mining is a practice that is used to extract sand, mainly through an open pit. However, sand is also mined from beaches, inland dunes and dredged from ocean beds and river beds. It is often used in manufacturing as an abrasive, for example, and it is used to make concrete

Sand mining is a direct cause of erosion, and also impacts the local wildlife. For example, sea turtles depend on sandy beaches for their nesting, and sand mining has led to the near extinction of gharials (a species of crocodiles) in India. Disturbance of underwater and coastal sand causes turbidity in the water, which is harmful for such organisms as corals that need sunlight. It also destroys fisheries, causing problems for people who rely on fishing for their livelihoods.

Removal of physical coastal barriers such as dunes leads to flooding of beachside communities, and the destruction of picturesque beaches causes tourism to dissipate.

- Sand mining in the Jhelum was blamed for weakening its banks and causing the devastating Srinagar flood in September 2014.
- Illegal roads for sand mining led college students to their deaths after a dam released water on the Beas River in Himachal Pradesh in June 2014.

- Sand mining is so rampant on the Ganga that it has even forced the river to change its path in Bihar.

Where other forms, of mining, are limited by the existence of the specific natural resources, sand mining proceeds profitably in all major and many minor rivers across the country. As a consequence, like murder, theft and corruption, there is no state that does not suffer from the ill effects of rampant illegal sand mining.

The illegal industry is fuelled by India's astonishing construction boom. The country is expected to add 11.5 million homes each year over the next decade, industry experts' estimate, in addition to undertaking numerous infrastructure projects. New buildings need large quantities of concrete, which is a mixture of cement and sand. Instances of sand mining near capital cities close to rivers seem more frequent than in other places.

It is difficult and expensive to import sand from far away, especially if the imported sand is already illegal, as is the case in Karnataka and Kerala.

International snippet on Sand use:

Sand mining has erased two dozen Indonesian islands since 2005. The stuff of those islands mostly ended up in Singapore, which needs titanic amounts to continue its program of artificially adding territory by reclaiming land from the sea. The city-state has created an extra 130 square kilometres in the past 40 years and is still adding more, making it by far the world's largest sand importer.

For states, illegal sand mining results in an enormous loss of revenues. Nevertheless, states have attempted to frame new laws and policies, to little effect. Andhra Pradesh and Maharashtra have now emerged as models of controlling mining, even if this is not reflected in the situation on the ground.

Legal control:

India's Supreme Court recently warned that riparian sand mining is undermining bridges and disrupting ecosystems all over the country, slaughtering fish and birds.

The National Green Tribunal (NGT) on Monday ordered a nationwide stay on sand mining on river beds without Environment Ministry clearance.

Maharashtra launched a Sand Mining Approval and Tracking System. Instead of bar-coding trucks to ensure they deliver only the agreed amount of sand, trucks now have a messaging system where they get codes via SMS.

But regulations are scant and the will to enforce them even more so, especially in the developing world.

Sand mafia is a very strong nexus, hard to break. At many places, politicians themselves are running the outfits. Moreover at most places, the police are hand in glove with the miners as either the miners are influential people or the profit sharing is very lucrative.

Hence the mafia prospers & others suffer !

Read further:

<http://www.deccanherald.com/content/235260/mafia-raj.html>

<http://scroll.in/article/714703/Backgrounder:-The-legal-fight-against-illegal-sand-mining>

<http://blogs.wsj.com/indiarealtime/2013/08/06/why-india-has-a-sand-mafia/>

<http://www.wired.com/2015/03/illegal-sand-mining/>