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Supreme Court Orders Strict Vigil to Curb Illegal Mining in Chambal

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The Supreme Court of India took suo motu cognisance of rampant illegal sand mining in the Chambal region, which has severely impacted the fragile river ecosystem and endangered wildlife. The issue spans across three states—Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh—highlighting inter-state governance challenges.

Key Directions by Supreme Court:

The Court issued a series of strict measures to curb illegal mining activities:

Installation of high-resolution, Wi-Fi-enabled CCTV cameras in vulnerable areas and transport routes

Introduction of GPS tracking systems in mining vehicles (pilot in Morena and Dholpur)

Deployment of round-the-clock patrolling teams with modern equipment

Use of preventive detention laws and confiscation of assets of mining mafias

Directions for strict prosecution and accountability of officials

The Court warned that failure by states may lead to complete ban on sand mining and even deployment of paramilitary forces

Observations of the Court:

Illegal mining has created an “environmental crisis” and threatens biodiversity

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The Court termed state responses as “shocking unpreparedness”

Emphasised that environmental protection is a constitutional imperative

Ecological Importance of Chambal Region

The National Chambal Sanctuary is a critical habitat for endangered species such as:

Gharial

Gangetic Dolphin

Indian Skimmer

Illegal mining disrupts river flow, destroys breeding grounds, and accelerates ecological degradation.

Key Facts:

Type of Case: Suo motation by Supreme Court

States Involved: Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh

Monitoring Body: Central Empowered Committee (CEC) assists the Court

Legal Tools Suggested:

Preventive detention laws

Seizure & confiscation of property

Possible Action: Ban on mining + deployment of central forces

Additional Value Points:

Illegal sand mining is often linked to organized crime (“sand mafia”)

It impacts river morphology, groundwater levels, and flood risks

Related regulatory bodies:

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change

National Green Tribunal

Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC):

Established as Ministry of Environment & Forests (1985) ? renamed in 2014

Cabinet Minister: Bhupender Yadav

Secretary EF&CC: Tanmay Kumar

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Director General of Forests and Special Secretary: Jitender Kumar

National Green Tribunal (NGT):

Established in 2010 under NGT Act, 2010

Chairperson: Justice Prakash Shrivastava

Specialized environmental court for speedy disposal of cases