

SC Orders Closure Of 23 Stone Quarries & 130 Crushers In Haryana

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As a result of a Supreme Court directive Faridabad district administration has sealed 23 out of 30 stone quarries and nearly 130 crushers. They had, for years, been crushing stones into bajri, rori and stone-dust, in a five km radius of the national capital territory (NCT), Delhi in the Aravalis ridge of the district.

The court orders came as a decision on a public interest litigation (PIL) of environmentalist, MC Mehta. Senior officers of the police and mining departments accompanied by magistrates are patrolling the area round-the-clock, lest some “unscrupulous” elements resume mining and stone-crushing activity.

As per the compliance letter sent to the apex court, the administration has not allowed the lifting of, even the minerals excavated prior to the directive but lying unlifted from the pitheads. Observers apprehend that implementation of the apex court directive would mean loss of jobs for about 80,000 people, mostly migrants from Rajasthan and Bihar.

A mining officer says that the state exchequer may lose at least Rs 150 crore it has been receiving as mining fee, royalty and sales tax. The resource-starved Faridabad Municipal Corporation too will lose around Rs 12 crore it receives as levy from the stone quarry-related activities.

The sudden closure of mines and stone crushers in the vicinity of NCT has come as a boon to the mining and crushing industry in Naurangpur and Sohna areas of Gurgaon district. Overnight they have hiked the rates of stone-dust, bajri and rori by 50 to 75 per cent. The decision is likely to adversely affect the construction activity not only in Faridabad and Gurgaon districts but also in the NCT because almost the entire stone-based building material used in the NCT, including that used in road-building, comes from the two districts.

Construction material dealers also apprehend a cascading effect.

The Bandhua Mukti Morcha (Bonded Labour Front) of Swami Agnivesh which has been striving at all levels to “discipline” the miners and crushers and safeguard the interest of the labour employed in the mining activity, is in a fix. Morcha’s general secretary, Prof Sheotaj Singh is consulting lawyers as to how to salvage the situation, which, among other things, concerns the livelihood of the migrant workers and their families.