

Raj govt gives 40 mine leases near Sariska



CAT-ASTROPHE? The new quarries could pose a serious threat to the tiger reintroduction project in the Sariska reserve

Rachna Singh | TNN

Jaipur: The beauty of the Aravali-flanked Sariska Reserve may soon be a thing of the past, with the Rajasthan government granting 40 new mining leases in the eco-sensitive zone, something that'll leave the area pock-marked with quarries and pose a threat to an ambitious tiger reintroduction project.

The government sanctioned the leases on Tuesday on the plea that the Aravali range, where stone mining had been sanctioned, is less than 100m in height, which is not considered a hill as per state government norms.

Earlier this year, the Supreme Court banned quarrying for stone in the Aravalis

of neighbouring Haryana, holding mining companies guilty of violating zoning laws and not filling up excavated craters. Later it said some mining may be allowed but only when the Haryana government adopts a mining policy based on an SC-appointed panel's guidelines.

While Rajasthan authorities have interpreted norms to their convenience to sanction fresh leases, mining could damage the ecology of the region and jeopardize survival of the big cats. Five tigers have already been relocated to Sariska from Ranthambore and forest officials plan to shift more in the coming months.