

Mining still on in Sariska, SC order notwithstanding

ST
10/3
CM-11
Rachna Singh | TNN

Jaipur: Is it the Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary or a mining complex? Despite several crores being spent in the name of conservation and Project Tiger, illegal mining has once gained momentum in the Tiger protected area in the Sariska Wildlife Sanctuary, despite the Supreme Court notification to stop mining and save the Aravallis.

As a result, despite five tigers being recently relocated to Sariska, the tiger habitat and eco-system in the Wildlife Sanctuary is seen to be fast deteriorating and shrinking. "Rampant mining is going on with rigour at Jaisinghpura, Malana, Goverdhanpura, Palpura and Jambwa Ramgarh. After the SC decision of 1991, ordering the closure of 215 mines at the behest of NGO Tarun Bharat Sangh, these mines were ordered to close. But recently some of them have started activity in the middle of the sanctuary," said Rajender Singh, the waterman of Rajasthan, whose NGO had filed a writ petition in the SC, which resulted in the closure of these mines.

All these villages fall in the protected area and are a rich reservoir of Dolomite. About 30-40 mines have begun operation again, some of them allegedly run by leading names in the industry, he said. According to Rajender Singh, "Mining has picked up in the sanctuary buffer zones that fall under the Tiger Project Area and is causing irreparable havoc in the area. But



LIVING DANGEROUSLY

money and muscle power with the mine owners has made the officials and politicians turn a blind eye to it despite all the money being spent in the name of conservation." He said that he was attacked thrice by the mining mafia goons, once in the presence of MC Jain from Delhi high court who had at the directions of the Supreme Court, come down to Sariska to investigate the matter.

According to Delhi based Tarun Kanti Bose who has done research on mining in Rajasthan, "While the public sector mines still remain closed as per the SC's ruling, many mines in the unorganized sector mining marble in the belt having substantial deposits, have started functioning again." In villages like Tilwad and Tilwadi in Alwar, marble mining operations are taking place right in the middle of the village on purchased private agricultural land.