



Illegal Sand Mining | Rajasthan | 06 Sep 2025

Why in News?

The **Supreme Court** has issued **notices** to the **Centre** and the **Rajasthan government**, asking them to respond to allegations of **large-scale illegal river sand mining** and transportation in the state.

What is Sand Mining?

- **About: Sand mining** is the removal of natural **sand** and **sand resources** (like **mineral sands** and **aggregates**) from the **terrestrial, riverine, coastal, or marine environment** to extract **minerals, metals, crushed stone, sand, and gravel**.
 - **Illegal river sand mining** refers to the **unauthorized and unregulated extraction of sand** from riverbeds, banks, and floodplains.
- **Source of Sand:** In India, the primary sources of **sand** include **river floodplains, coastal sand, palaeo-channel sand, and sand from agricultural fields**.
- **Factors Contributing to Illegal Sand Mining:**
 - **Lack of regulation and weak enforcement** enable unchecked illegal sand mining.
 - **High demand from the construction industry**, driven by **urbanization** and **population growth**, increases pressure on **riverbeds** and **coastal areas**.
 - **Corruption and sand mafia influence**, with **collusion of authorities**, sustain illegal mining practices.
 - **Lack of sustainable alternatives:** Limited use of **manufactured sand (M-sand)** and poor promotion of **eco-friendly options** increase reliance on **riverbed sand**.
- **Consequences of Sand Mining:**
 - **Erosion & Habitat Disruption:** Alters **riverbeds**, causes **erosion**, changes **channel morphology**, destabilizes **stream channels**, and disrupts **aquatic habitats**.
 - **Flooding & Sedimentation:** Sand depletion increases **flooding, sediment loads**, and alters **flow patterns**, harming **aquatic ecosystems**.
 - **Groundwater Depletion:** Formation of **deep pits** lowers **the groundwater table**, affecting **drinking water wells** and causing **water scarcity**.
 - **Biodiversity Loss:** Leads to loss of **aquatic and riparian species**, with impacts extending to **mangrove forests**.
- **Regulations on Sand Mining:**
 - **MMDR Act, 1957:** Sand is classified as a "**minor mineral**" under the **Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulations) Act, 1957 (MMDR Act)**, with **state governments** overseeing its **administration**.
 - **SSMG 2016:** The **Ministry of Environment, Forests, and Climate Change (MoEFCC)** issued the "**Sustainable Sand Mining Management (SSMG) Guidelines 2016**" to promote **scientific and eco-friendly sand mining practices**.
 - **Environment Impact Assessment (EIA):** The **Supreme Court of India** mandated that **all sand mining activities**, even those in areas **smaller than 5 hectares**, require **prior approval**.