

In Re: Illegal Sand Mining in The National Chambal Sanctuary and Threat to Endangered Aquatic Wildlife

Suo Moto Writ Petition (Civil) No. 2 of 2026 · Supreme Court of India · 2026-07-22 · Vikram Nath · Sandeep Mehta · F2J-C-1009

Full judgment text

"In Re: Illegal Sand Mining in The National Chambal Sanctuary and Threat to Endangered Aquatic Wildlife"

[Suo Moto Writ Petition (Civil) No. 2 of 2026]

[T.C.(C) No. 151/2026]

1. This Court, vide a detailed order dated 26th May, 2026, upon consideration of the compliance affidavits filed by the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, the report of the Central Empowered Committee¹, the submissions advanced by the learned Amicus Curiae, and the affidavit placed on record by the National Highways Authority of India², undertook an exhaustive examination of the issues concerning rampant illegal sand mining within and around the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary and its devastating impact on the fragile riverine ecosystem.

Having found that the persistent ecological degradation of the sanctuary, destruction of critical wildlife habitats, deficiencies in the enforcement machinery, operation of unregistered vehicles facilitating organised illegal mining, and the threat posed to vital public infrastructure warranted immediate judicial intervention, this Court issued a comprehensive set of directions aimed at strengthening surveillance mechanisms, enhancing enforcement measures, and ensuring institutional accountability through coordinated action by all concerned authorities of the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh.

2. By the aforesaid order, this Court, inter alia, directed the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh to undertake immediate recruitment of frontline forest personnel; expedite the establishment and operationalisation of CCTV-based surveillance and integrated monitoring systems; initiate stringent enforcement action against vehicles and machinery engaged in illegal mining and transportation activities; ensure effective investigation and prosecution of organised illegal mining networks; and strengthen inter-departmental coordination for the protection and preservation of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary.

This Court also issued consequential directions to the NHAI to install advanced surveillance infrastructure, including high-resolution CCTV cameras, in and around the Morena-Dholpur bridge on National Highway-44 spanning the Chambal River, and to undertake necessary protective and monitoring measures to safeguard the structural integrity of this vital inter-State bridge from the continuing threat posed by illegal excavation and sand mining activities in the vicinity of its foundations and supporting structures.

3. Pursuant to the aforesaid order, the concerned authorities have placed on record their respective compliance affidavits and status reports. The NHAI has filed a comprehensive compliance affidavit detailing the measures undertaken in furtherance of the directions issued by this Court. The States of Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have each filed affidavits through their respective Chief Secretaries setting out the steps taken towards compliance with the directions issued by this Court.

The State of Rajasthan has also filed a separate affidavit on behalf of the Water Resources Department, a reply to the interlocutory application and a status report. The States of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh have likewise placed on record their respective status reports indicating the progress made in the implementation of the directions issued by this Court. The Central Empowered Committee has, in addition, submitted its Third Report dated 20th July, 2026, concerning illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, placing before this Court its further findings, observations, recommendations and assessment of the prevailing ground situation.

4. During the course of submissions, learned Amicus Curiae, Mr. Nikhil Goel, Senior Advocate and Ms. Rupali Samuel, learned Advocate-on-Record, handed over a brief note comprehensively collating the compliance affidavits and status reports filed by the States of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh; the compliance affidavit filed on behalf of the NHAI; the affidavit filed on behalf of the Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change, Government of India³; and the Third Report of the CEC, summarizing the steps taken by the respective authorities pursuant to the directions issued by this Court vide order dated 26th May, 2026.

5. Learned Amicus Curiae, has invited the attention of this Court to the stand taken by the MOEF&CC, in its affidavit. It has been submitted that the Ministry has unequivocally stated that, notwithstanding the recommendations of the Standing Committee of the National Board for Wildlife regarding de-notification of certain areas and inclusion of additional areas within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, no de-notification shall be effected without the prior permission of this Court in view of the order dated 13th November, 2000 passed in Writ Petition (Civil) No. 337 of 1995.

It has further been stated that no new projects, except drinking water projects where no alternative source is available, shall be considered so as to maintain the environmental flow. We place our imprimatur on the aforesaid undertaking given by the MOEF&CC in its affidavit and direct that the same shall be scrupulously adhered to.

6. Our attention has thereafter been drawn by the learned Amicus Curiae to the progress made by the States in establishing surveillance and monitoring infrastructure pursuant to the directions issued by this Court. The State of Madhya Pradesh has identified sixteen strategic locations for installation of CCTV cameras, of which surveillance infrastructure has been established at eight locations. The State has also deployed two drones, twenty body-worn cameras and twelve dash cameras, and has stated that the process of integrating the surveillance network of the Forest Department with the Police Control Room is underway.

The State of Rajasthan has installed fifty CCTV cameras across thirteen locations, forty-nine of which have been integrated with the Abhay Command Centre. It has further identified one hundred additional locations for video surveillance during the current financial year and has proposed installation of High-Range Surveillance Systems at four strategic locations, namely Bhamroli, Moroli, Rajghat and Mohanzu Temple, with the surveillance network at Rajghat to be installed by the NHAI and the remaining three by the State of Rajasthan.

The State of Uttar Pradesh has identified seven strategic locations for installation of surveillance infrastructure, subject to the availability of additional budgetary support. We are, prima facie, satisfied with the progress made by the concerned States except the State of Uttar Pradesh in implementing the surveillance and monitoring framework. However, the timelines stipulated by this Court in its order dated 26th May, 2026 shall be strictly adhered to and the remaining works shall be completed within the time prescribed therein. The State of Uttar Pradesh shall forthwith ensure budgetary allocations to ensure compliance with the directions of this Court.

7. The learned Amicus Curiae has also placed before this Court the status of the enforcement measures undertaken by the three States pursuant to the directions issued by this Court. It has been pointed out that the State of Madhya Pradesh has reported detection of 1,247 cases, registration of 172 FIRs and arrest of 584 persons, besides seizure of 1,144 vehicles, of which only 17 have been confiscated. It has further been stated that the investigation has now been extended to vehicle owners, sand traders and beneficiaries. The State has also informed the CEC that seizure proceedings have been initiated in respect of 384 unregistered vehicles and that 849 vehicles have been notified on the VAHAAN database for non-compliance with the High Security Registration Plate requirements.

Further, five hundred and fifty-one facilitators operating within Morena have been identified and proceeded against under Sections 107 and 116 of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1973. The learned Amicus has, however, pointed out that in the absence of details regarding the extant period, nature of the offences and other material particulars, it is not possible to meaningfully assess the efficacy of the enforcement measures. It has also been brought to our notice that the State of Madhya Pradesh has prepared a Joint Standard Operating Procedure involving the Forest, Revenue and Transport Departments, which has been recommended by the CEC for adoption by the other States.

8. Insofar as the States of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh are concerned, the learned Amicus Curiae has submitted that the State of Rajasthan has furnished data for the preceding eighteen months indicating

seizure of 923 vehicles engaged in illegal transportation of sand. However, the State of Uttar Pradesh has not furnished any comparable data and the CEC has observed that there is an absence of a comprehensive institutional framework for enforcement in the State.

9. While certain measures have undoubtedly been undertaken by the States, we are not fully satisfied with the overall progress in strengthening enforcement against organised illegal sand mining. Significantly, despite the observations made and directions given by this Court in its order dated 17th April, 2026, none of the States appears to have seriously examined or considered the invocation of the preventive detention laws against the kingpins and habitual offenders engaged in organised illegal sand mining. Such illegal mining operations not only destroy wildlife habitats but eventually take a toll on the ecology which directly results into threat to human lives and the earth as a whole. We reiterate that the States shall give due consideration to the aforesaid aspect and take appropriate measures.

10. The learned Amicus Curiae has also apprised this Court of the status regarding establishment of checkposts and recruitment of frontline forest personnel by the three States. It has been submitted that the State of Madhya Pradesh has established, or is in the process of establishing, sixteen permanent checkposts and has operationalised twenty-two temporary Police/Forest checkposts, with the CEC finding the joint patrolling mechanism to be satisfactory.

The State of Rajasthan has established forty-three permanent and twenty-three temporary checkposts at vulnerable locations, though the CEC has recommended periodic reassessment of their locations in view of the constantly changing access routes adopted for illegal mining. In contrast, the State of Uttar Pradesh has not established any permanent or temporary checkposts and has only proposed the establishment of Van Chowkis subject to budgetary allocations.

As regards recruitment, the State of Madhya Pradesh has initiated the recruitment process for 1,111 Forest Guards and, in the interim, has deployed Special Armed Forces personnel and ad hoc watchers, while the CEC has recommended immediate diversion of additional Forest Guards from other Forest Divisions to the Chambal area. Similar recommendations have also been made in respect of the States of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, where the recruitment process is stated to be underway. We expect all the three States to expedite the establishment of the remaining checkposts and to complete the recruitment process within the timelines stipulated by this Court.

11. The learned Amicus Curiae has thereafter pointed out the continued laxity on the part of concerned States in issuing notifications under Section 218(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023, despite the directions contained in the order dated 26th May, 2026. It has been pointed out that while all the three States have stated that the proposal for issuance of such a notification is under consideration in their respective Home Departments, the interactions of the CEC with the frontline Forest Officers and Forest Guards reveal that they continue to feel handicapped and inhibited in the discharge of their duties owing to the apprehension of departmental or police action, even where they act bona fide. The learned Amicus Curiae has, therefore, submitted that the States ought to be directed to take an expeditious decision on the issuance of the notification within a stipulated timeframe.

12. The response of the learned counsel appearing for the respective States was sought on the aforesaid issue during the course of the hearing, upon which, Mr. S.V. Raju, learned Additional Solicitor General, appearing for the State of Madhya Pradesh, fairly and candidly submitted that the issue is likely to consume time at the level of the State Authorities as many administrative hurdles would have to be crossed before a final decision can be taken.

13. Another issue of considerable significance, highlighted by the learned Amicus Curiae on the basis of the Third Report of the CEC, pertains to the classification of substantial portions of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary as revenue lands rather than notified forest areas. It has been pointed out that, from the total area of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, only 10.93 sq. km. out of 435 sq. km. in the State of Madhya Pradesh, 187.44 sq. km. out of 625 sq. km. in the State of Rajasthan and 246.15 sq. km. out of 922.57 sq. km. in the State of Uttar Pradesh comprise notified forest land, while the remaining 424.07 sq. km., 437.56 sq. km. and 676.42 sq. km., respectively, continue to be classified as revenue lands and private lands.

The CEC has observed that this anomaly in the legal status of the land has resulted in serious practical constraints in the exercise of statutory powers by the Forest Department under Section 52 of the Indian Forest Act, 1927, including the seizure of illegally mined sand, vehicles and equipment used in

illegal mining operations, thereby adversely affecting effective enforcement within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary.

14. In view of the aforesaid, the CEC has recommended that the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh initiate appropriate proceedings for notifying all revenue lands falling within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary as Reserved Forests under the applicable forest laws within a stipulated period. According to the CEC, such a measure would bring the entire National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary under a uniform legal enforcement regime, thereby enabling the Forest Department to effectively exercise its statutory powers and substantially strengthen the enforcement framework against illegal sand mining.

15. We have also considered the compliance affidavit filed by the NHAI. The learned Amicus Curiae has submitted that the NHAI has taken substantial steps towards implementation of the directions issued by this Court by finalizing the estimates for installation of high-resolution PTZ cameras, a 45-metre-high surveillance tower equipped with thermal imaging cameras at Rajghat, Dholpur, and other surveillance infrastructure to ensure comprehensive monitoring of the Morena-Dholpur Bridge and its surrounding vulnerable stretches. The NHAI has further undertaken to integrate the surveillance system with the Police and Forest Departments of the States of Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh and has also initiated measures for installation of sound barriers, repair/replacement of protective safety mesh, sealing of vulnerable gaps and strengthening coordination with the concerned authorities.

16. We are broadly satisfied with the steps taken by the NHAI towards compliance with the directions issued by this Court. However, as rightly pointed out by the learned Amicus Curiae, the compliance affidavit does not indicate any definite timeline for completion and operationalisation of the proposed surveillance infrastructure and other protective measures. While the affidavit states that the timeline would be communicated after the necessary approvals are obtained, no concrete schedule has been placed on record. We, therefore, direct the NHAI to place before this Court, before the next date of hearing, a definite timeline indicating the schedule for completion and operationalisation of all the measures proposed in its compliance affidavit.

17. The learned Amicus Curiae has further submitted that, insofar as the welfare measures for frontline personnel are concerned, the affidavits filed by the States merely refer to the general welfare schemes applicable to Government servants and do not disclose any dedicated scheme for Forest Department personnel engaged in the protection of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary and other reserved forests.

It has, therefore, been suggested that the respective States should consider formulating comprehensive welfare schemes specifically for such personnel, providing, inter alia, employment security, insurance coverage, compassionate appointment and other appropriate welfare measures for Forest officials and their families, having regard to the hazardous nature of their duties in combating illegal sand mining and other forest protection activities.

The learned Amicus Curiae has also highlighted that while the State of Madhya Pradesh has taken a positive step by approving 36 M-Sand Manufacturing Units and 12 licensed sand storage depots to ensure the availability of legally sourced construction material, thereby reducing dependence on river sand, similar measures merit consideration by the States of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to augment the availability of alternative sources of sand for construction activities.

18. On the basis of its assessment of the compliance reports, field inspections and the material placed before it, the CEC has made eighteen recommendations. Of these, the first seventeen recommendations pertain to the present proceedings and encompass a comprehensive range of measures, including strengthening of surveillance infrastructure through installation of CCTV cameras, PTZ cameras and AI-enabled thermal cameras; periodic review of surveillance infrastructure and checkpoints; augmentation of frontline enforcement personnel; creation of an integrated digital database of habitual offenders; constitution of District Enforcement and Monitoring Committees; installation of AI-enabled surveillance systems by the NHAI; notification of revenue lands within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary as Protected Forests; formulation of a scientific environmental flow framework; annual scientific monitoring by the Wildlife Institute of India; promotion of alternative livelihood measures and eco-tourism; establishment of M-Sand manufacturing units and licensed sand storage depots; periodic review of compliance by the Chief Secretaries of the concerned States; formulation of a model Standard Operating Procedure for prevention of illegal riverbed mining; issuance of notifications under Section 218(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023;

welfare measures for frontline Forest personnel; and strengthening the statutory powers of Forest Officers. The eighteenth recommendation, however, is of a distinct nature, whereby the CEC has suggested that this Court may consider enlarging the scope of the present suo motu proceedings to evolve a uniform national framework for protection of riverine protected areas against illegal sand mining and allied activities.

19. We have given our anxious consideration to the submissions advanced by Mr. Nikhil Goel, learned Amicus Curiae; Mr. C.P. Goyal, appearing on behalf of the CEC; the learned counsel appearing for the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh, the National Highways Authority of India, as well as the learned counsel appearing for the intervenors. Having regard to the material placed on record, including the Third Report of the CEC, the compliance affidavits filed by the concerned authorities and the issues highlighted during the course of the hearing, as an interim measure and with a view to further strengthen the institutional framework for prevention of illegal sand mining, enhancing administrative accountability and ensuring effective inter-departmental coordination, we are issuing the following directions to the States and the authorities:-

A. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh shall, by the next date of hearing, file comprehensive affidavits through their respective Chief Secretaries placing on record their response to the findings, observations and recommendations contained in the Third Report of the CEC, as also to the specific issues highlighted by this Court in the preceding paragraphs of this order. The affidavits shall indicate the decisions taken, the timelines proposed and the concrete steps contemplated for implementation of the recommendations accepted by the respective States.

B. Having regard to the stand taken by the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh that the proposal for issuance of notifications under Section 218(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 is presently under consideration in their respective Home Departments, it seems unlikely that a decision would be taken anytime in the near future. We are of the considered view that there exists no justification for any further delay on this aspect. The duties discharged by Forest Officers and Forest Guards within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary are not confined merely to protection of forests and wildlife.

These personnel are entrusted with the highly dangerous task of safeguarding ecologically fragile and strategically significant wildlife habitats from organised illegal sand mining, poaching, and other unlawful activities, which have serious ramifications not only for the survival of endangered species and the preservation of the forest and pristine ecosystem, but also for public safety, the integrity of public infrastructure and the maintenance of law and order.

The discharge of such functions is, in our prima facie opinion, intrinsically connected with the maintenance of public order within the meaning of Section 218(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023. In this background, and bearing in mind the increasing attacks, intimidation and obstruction faced by frontline Forest personnel in the bona fide discharge of their official duties, we direct the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh to issue the requisite notifications under Section 218(3) of the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 before the next date of hearing and place the same on record by filing appropriate compliance affidavits.

C. The NHAI shall place on record, by way of an additional affidavit to be filed by the next date of hearing, a definite schedule indicating the timelines for completion and operationalisation of the surveillance infrastructure, including the installation of CCTV cameras, AI-enabled PTZ cameras, thermal imaging surveillance systems, surveillance tower, sound barriers and all other protective measures proposed in its compliance affidavit.

D. The States of Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh shall examine the feasibility of adopting a comprehensive Joint Standard Operating Procedure (SOP) for coordinated enforcement by the Forest, Police, Revenue, Mining and Transport Departments, taking guidance from the Joint Standard Operating Procedure presently in operation in District Morena, Madhya Pradesh, with such modifications as may be necessary having regard to local conditions. The decision taken in this regard shall also be placed before this Court by the next date of hearing.

E. The concerned authorities of the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh shall also positively and proactively examine the recommendations of the CEC concerning the notification of revenue lands within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary as Protected Forests under the applicable forest laws, formulation of dedicated welfare measures for frontline Forest personnel,

establishment of M-Sand manufacturing units and licensed sand storage depots wherever required, strengthening of surveillance infrastructure, and other institutional reforms suggested by the CEC, and indicate their respective stands thereon in the affidavits to be filed pursuant to Direction A above.

F. The Chief Secretaries of the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh shall personally oversee compliance with the directions issued by this Court and ensure effective coordination amongst all concerned departments so that the measures contemplated herein are implemented in a time-bound manner. The District Magistrate (Collector) of every district falling within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary shall be designated as the Nodal Officer responsible for preventing illegal sand mining within the Sanctuary. The District Magistrate shall be personally responsible for ensuring coordination amongst the Forest, Police, Revenue and Mining Departments and for implementation of all directions issued by this Court.

G. The Superintendent of Police of each district falling within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary shall be responsible for dismantling organised illegal mining networks, identifying financiers, transporters and criminal syndicates, and ensuring registration of criminal cases under appropriate provisions of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 (including Section 326); Wildlife (Protection) Act, 1972; Indian Forest Act, 1927; Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Act, 1957; and Prevention of Damage to Public Property Act, 1984 wherever applicable. Failure to take timely and effective preventive measures in respect of identified hotspots, resulting in repeated instances of illegal sand mining, shall entail appropriate administrative accountability and departmental action against the officers concerned, in accordance with law.

H. The concerned Sub-Divisional Magistrates, Tehsildars and Naib Tehsildars having jurisdiction over revenue lands situated within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary shall conduct joint inspections with the concerned Forest Officers at least once every fortnight and submit certified inspection reports to the respective District Magistrates. Failure to report encroachments, illegal sand mining activities or other violations detected during such inspections, or which ought reasonably to have been detected in the discharge of their official duties, shall constitute dereliction of official duty and shall invite appropriate departmental action in accordance with law.

I. The Annual Performance Appraisal Reports (APARs) of District Magistrates, Superintendents of Police, Divisional Forest Officers, Mining Officers and Revenue Officers may be modified to specifically include performance relating to prevention of illegal mining, prosecution of offenders and compliance with the directions issued by this Court.

J. Where illegal sand mining is detected within notified sensitive stretches despite prior intelligence or recurring instances of such activities, administrative accountability shall ordinarily be fixed upon the jurisdictional Forest Officer, Station House Officer, Mining Officer and Revenue Officer, unless the officers concerned are able to demonstrate that they had taken timely, effective and bona fide preventive and enforcement measures to avert such illegal activities.

K. Joint enforcement teams comprising Forest, Police, Revenue and Mining Departments shall conduct surprise enforcement operations at least twice every week in identified vulnerable stretches of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary. Such operations shall be videographed using body-worn cameras and GPS-enabled devices, and the recordings shall be preserved.

L. The Chief Secretaries of the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh shall conduct monthly State-level review meetings, including through video conferencing, with the concerned District Magistrates, Superintendents of Police, Deputy Conservators of Forests and Directors of Mining, to monitor compliance with the directions issued by this Court, review the status of enforcement measures, seizures, prosecutions and conviction rates.

M. Wherever large-scale organised illegal sand mining syndicates are identified, appropriate references may be made to the Enforcement Directorate, the Income Tax Department and the Financial Intelligence Unit for investigation into the financial proceeds and money trail arising from such illegal activities, with a view to dismantling the economic foundations of organised illegal sand mining. Action under preventive detention laws shall also be considered in these situations.

N. Special Public Prosecutors shall be designated for conducting prosecutions arising out of illegal sand mining within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary. Every endeavour shall be made to ensure that investigations are completed expeditiously and chargesheets are ordinarily filed within sixty days and trials may be monitored to ensure expeditious disposal.

O. In addition to initiating criminal prosecution in accordance with law, the States shall take appropriate steps to recover environmental compensation, restoration costs and the value of the illegally extracted minerals from the offenders in accordance with the Polluter Pays' Principle. The States shall also ensure that vehicles, machinery, boats and other equipment repeatedly used for illegal sand mining are confiscated in accordance with the procedure prescribed by law.

P. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh shall establish an Integrated Public Reporting and Grievance Redressal Mechanism to facilitate timely reporting of illegal sand mining and allied activities. The mechanism shall include a QR Code-based digital platform, with QR Codes prominently displayed at all entry points, tourist locations, Forest Check Posts, village Panchayat offices and other conspicuous places within and around the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, enabling local villagers, fishermen, government servants and members of the public to furnish information regarding illegal sand mining, transportation of illegally mined sand, poaching, encroachments and other environmental offences by uploading photographs, videos and geotagged information.

The system shall provide for confidential reporting, generate a unique complaint registration number for every complaint received, ensure prompt transmission of the complaint to the jurisdictional Forest, Police, Mining and Revenue authorities for immediate action, and facilitate digital monitoring of the action taken thereon by the District Magistrate. The States may also institute an appropriate incentive scheme for rewarding information leading to the successful detection, seizure or conviction of offenders, while ensuring the confidentiality and protection of the identity of informants.

Q. An Independent Monitoring Committee comprising representatives of the Wildlife Institute of India, Central Pollution Control Board, Geological Survey of India and an independent technical expert shall be constituted to undertake inspections of the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary at intervals of six months and submit its reports directly to the CEC.

R. High-resolution satellite imagery and drone surveys shall be undertaken every month during the dry season to identify fresh mining pits, newly created access routes and changes in river morphology. Any material discrepancy between the satellite imagery or drone survey reports and the corresponding field reports shall be promptly examined, and, where such discrepancy is found to disclose suppression of facts, dereliction of duty or lapses in enforcement, appropriate departmental inquiry shall be initiated against the officers concerned, in accordance with law.

S. The States shall maintain a publicly accessible online dashboard displaying, inter alia, the number of cases of illegal sand mining detected, vehicles and machinery seized, First Information Reports registered, prosecutions instituted, convictions secured, environmental compensation assessed and recovered, and disciplinary action taken against delinquent public officials. The dashboard shall be updated on a regular basis to ensure transparency, accountability and public access to information relating to enforcement measures undertaken within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary.

T. Repeated failure of any district administration to implement the directions issued by this Court, despite adequate resources having been made available and appropriate opportunities having been afforded for compliance, shall be viewed seriously and may be construed as wilful noncompliance. In such an event, the defaulting officers may be proceeded against in accordance with law.

20. The eighteenth recommendation of the CEC pertains to the enlargement of the scope of the present suo motu proceedings so as to facilitate the evolution of a uniform national framework for the protection of riverine protected areas against illegal sand mining and allied activities. Since the said recommendation raises issues of considerable importance having wider ramifications extending beyond the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, we deem it appropriate to defer our consideration of the same. The question of expanding the scope of the present suo motu proceedings shall be considered on the next date of hearing after the responses of the concerned States, NHAI and MOEF&CC are placed on record.

21. A copy of this order shall forthwith be transmitted to the Chief Secretaries of the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh for ensuring compliance.

22. List the matter on 11th August, 2026 for further consideration.

.....J. (Vikram Nath)

.....J. (Sandeep Mehta)

New Delhi;

July 22, 2026.

1 Hereinafter, being referred to as "CEC".

2 Hereinafter, being referred to as "NHAI".

3 Hereinafter, being referred to as "MOEF&CC".

Source disclosure: Complete sanitized public judgment text retained for research; official-primary replacement remains pending.

Disclaimer: General information only. Verify the current legal position and obtain professional advice before acting.