

IN THE SUPREME COURT OF INDIA
INHERENT JURISDICTION
SUO MOTO WRIT PETITION (CIVIL) NO. 2 OF 2026
**“IN RE: ILLEGAL SAND MINING IN THE NATIONAL
CHAMBAL SANCTUARY AND THREAT TO
ENDANGERED AQUATIC WILDLIFE”**
WITH
TRANSFERRED CASE(C) NO(S). 151 OF 2026

O R D E R

1. This Court *vide* order dated 17th April, 2026, while considering the grave and emergent situation arising out of rampant illegal sand mining within and around the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary, took serious note of the continuing ecological degradation, threats posed to endangered aquatic wildlife, repeated incidents of violence against enforcement officials, and the apparent administrative failure on the part of the concerned States in effectively curbing such unlawful activities. The Court observed that despite repeated judicial and

administrative interventions, illegal mining activities continued unabated, thereby posing a serious threat not only to the fragile riverine ecosystem and protected wildlife habitats, but also to public safety, environmental governance, and the rule of law itself. The Court further recorded its concern regarding the systemic inaction and lack of preparedness displayed by the State authorities in dealing with organized and violent illegal mining operations.

2. This Court *vide* the aforesaid order was compelled to issue a series of comprehensive and time-bound directions to the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh in exercise of powers under Article 142 of the Constitution of India so as to ensure immediate and effective intervention for curbing the menace of illegal sand mining in the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary and the adverse consequences arising therefrom. The Court, *inter alia*, directed the installation of high-resolution CCTV surveillance systems, implementation of GPS tracking mechanisms for the vehicles and machinery involved in mining operations and constitution of dedicated joint patrol teams comprising police and forest officials, establishment of coordinated

monitoring and enforcement frameworks, initiation of seizure and confiscation proceedings against vehicles involved in illegal mining, and recovery of environmental compensation in accordance with the “Polluter Pays” principle. The States were also directed to formulate a uniform inter-State Standard Operating Procedure for tackling illegal sand mining activities. The States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh were further directed to file detailed compliance affidavits before this Court indicating the steps undertaken pursuant to the directions issued *vide* orders dated 2nd April, 2026 and 17th April, 2026, along with timelines and proposed measures for ensuring full and effective compliance, by the next date of hearing, i.e., 11th May, 2026.

3. When the matter was taken up on 11th May, 2026, this Court was apprised that only the States of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh had filed their respective compliance affidavits in purported compliance with the directions issued by this Court *vide* orders dated 2nd April, 2026 and 17th April, 2026. This Court also took cognizance of the fact that despite the grave concerns recorded and the specific

directions issued for immediate and time-bound measures, the State of Rajasthan had failed to place on record any affidavit indicating the steps of compliance undertaken pursuant to the aforesaid orders.

4. We have heard the submissions advanced by the learned *Amicus Curiae*, Shri Nikhil Goel, Senior Advocate, and Ms. Rupali Samuel, Advocate-on-Record; Mr. C.P. Goyal appearing on behalf of the Central Empowered Committee; and the learned counsel appearing for the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh.

5. Upon perusal of the compliance affidavits filed by the States of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, as well as the note submitted by the learned *Amicus Curiae*, we are satisfied that the said States have at least taken initial steps in furtherance of, and towards compliance with, the directions issued by this Court *vide* order 17th April, 2026. The material placed on record indicates that the State of Madhya Pradesh has commenced the process for strengthening surveillance and enforcement mechanisms by invoking tenders for procurement and installation of the requisite infrastructure and

equipment, including high-resolution CCTV surveillance systems and allied technological mechanisms intended to facilitate effective monitoring of vulnerable stretches and routes prone to illegal sand mining activities. The affidavits further indicate that steps have also been undertaken towards inter-departmental coordination, augmentation of enforcement capabilities, and formulation of operational measures aimed at ensuring effective implementation of the directions issued by this Court. However, it is evident that the compliances undertaken thus far remain at a nascent stage and substantial measures are yet to be effectively operationalized at the ground level. Having regard to the seriousness and emergent nature of the issues involved and the continuing concerns relating to illegal sand mining activities, we are of the considered view that further directions would be required to be issued in the matter. However, consideration of the same is deferred till the next date of hearing.

6. In stark contrast to the steps reportedly undertaken by the States of Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh, we are compelled to express our

serious displeasure at the manner in which the State of Rajasthan has conducted itself in the present proceedings. Despite pertinent directions issued by this Court *vide* orders dated 2nd April, 2026 and 17th April, 2026, the State of Rajasthan has failed to file any compliance affidavit till date. The conduct of the State reflects a wholly casual, indifferent, and indolent approach towards the grave issues prevailing in this matter, i.e., rampant illegal mining, irreversible environmental degradation, and destruction of protected wildlife habitats within the National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary. Such persistent inaction, despite the grave concerns recorded and directions issued by this Court, demonstrates a disturbing lack of seriousness and intent on the part of the State machinery in addressing matters directly involving environmental governance, public safety, and the rule of law itself.

7. The report submitted by the Central Empowered Committee further discloses an abysmal state of compliance on the part of the State of Rajasthan and reveals complete lethargy in implementing even the core directions issued by this Court. The material placed before us indicates that despite identification

of as many as 40 vulnerable locations, only a single CCTV camera has been installed; no control room or live monitoring mechanism has been established; the directions for GPS integration and real-time surveillance systems remain non-starters; joint patrol teams are still merely “under consideration”; the inter-State Standard Operating Procedure has not been prepared; and the proposed deployment of Rajasthan Armed Constabulary/Home Guards continues to remain at a preliminary stage. The report further reveals that even out of 24 permanent check-posts reported to have been established, only four are equipped with surveillance facilities. The overall status of compliance by the State of Rajasthan has, thus, rightly been described by the Central Empowered Committee as being “largely at proposal/implementation stage”, which, in our considered view, reflects a shocking degree of administrative apathy and institutional paralysis in the face of continuing illegal mining activities carried out in an organized and brazen manner in protected forest conservation areas, resulting in grave ecological degradation and a complete failure to

uphold the rule of law and the constitutional mandate of environmental protection.

8. The continued inaction and lack of effective response on the part of the State authorities assumes even greater significance in light of the fact that many officials entrusted with enforcement duties themselves have lost their lives or were seriously injured while attempting to curb illegal sand mining activities. The circumstances brought on record disclose a deeply disturbing state of affairs and reflect a serious erosion of the rule of law in the affected regions. It has further been brought to the notice of this Court that, in a large number of criminal cases registered in relation to illegal sand mining activities, the investigating agencies are confining the prosecution only to the drivers of the vehicles involved, while no meaningful investigation appears to be undertaken to identify and prosecute the very figures/masterminds who are orchestrating, financing, and controlling such organized criminal activities. Such a lackadaisical pattern of investigation cannot *prima facie* be viewed as a mere coincidence or inadvertent omission but raises serious concerns regarding deliberate inaction and

possible connivance at various levels of the administrative and enforcement machinery.

9. It has also been brought to the notice of this Court that, during the field inspections conducted by the Central Empowered Committee, a deeply alarming state of affairs continues to persist in the districts of Dholpur, Rajasthan and Morena, Madhya Pradesh, wherein a substantial number of tractors and trolleys allegedly engaged in mining and transportation activities were found plying without number plates or without displaying any registration particulars whatsoever. *Prima facie*, the operation of such unidentified vehicles, without valid registration and without proper display of registration particulars, constitutes a flagrant and continuing violation of the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988, including Sections 39, 41 and 192 thereof, read with Rule 50 of the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, which mandate compulsory registration of motor vehicles and conspicuous display of registration marks in the prescribed manner.

10. Despite the existence of a clear statutory framework, the continued and unchecked movement of such unidentifiable vehicles within and around the

National Chambal Gharial Sanctuary demonstrates a serious failure of enforcement and regulatory oversight on the part of the concerned authorities and has evidently facilitated illegal mining and transportation activities in blatant disregard of law. The inability of the enforcement machinery to identify, trace, or verify the ownership of such vehicles severely impedes effective interception, seizure, investigation, and prosecution, while simultaneously enabling organized illegal mining networks to function with complete impunity and evade legal accountability. In our considered view, the aforesaid issue raises grave and far-reaching concerns touching upon the efficacy and credibility of law enforcement and regulatory supervision in the affected regions. Accordingly, the States of Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Uttar Pradesh shall file detailed replies on the aforesaid issue, specifically indicating the enforcement measures already undertaken as well as those proposed to be implemented to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989, on or before the next date of hearing.

11. Apart from the aforesaid concerns, this Court cannot lose sight of the serious issues relating to the bridge situated on National Highway-44 connecting the States of Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan near the Morena-Dholpur border, in the vicinity whereof, rampant and large-scale illegal sand mining activities have been reported. As already noticed by this Court in its earlier order, extensive excavation activities have been carried out in dangerous proximity to, and even beneath, the pillars and supporting structures of the said bridge, thereby posing a serious threat to its structural integrity and endangering public safety. This illegal excavation and formation of pits have been verified by the Central Empowered Committee during its inspection. The material placed on record indicates that such illegal and indiscriminate mining operations continue unabated in the area surrounding the bridge, which constitutes a vital inter-State connectivity link carrying substantial vehicular traffic on a daily basis. Considering that the said bridge falls within the jurisdiction, control, and maintenance responsibility of the National Highways Authority of India, we are of the considered opinion that the presence and assistance of the National

Highways Authority of India has become necessary for effective adjudication and implementation of appropriate remedial and preventive measures in the present proceedings.

12. In view of the aforesaid state of affairs, and having regard to the grave issues involved, we feel it expedient to pass the following directions: -

A. The Additional Chief Secretary, Home Department; the Principal Secretary, Department of Mining and Geology; the Principal Secretary, Finance Department; the Principal Secretary, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department; and the Principal Secretary, Transport and Road Safety Department, State of Rajasthan, are directed to remain personally present before this Court on the next date of hearing. The aforesaid officers shall also file comprehensive individual compliance affidavits placing on record the steps undertaken in furtherance of the directions issued by this Court *vide* orders dated 2nd April, 2026 and 17th April, 2026, as well as the present order, together with the timelines within which the remaining measures

proposed to be undertaken shall be fully implemented.

B. The Principal Secretary, Transport and Road Safety Department, State of Madhya Pradesh, is also directed to remain personally present before this Court on the next date of hearing along with a detailed affidavit specifically addressing the concerns noted hereinabove in paragraphs 9 and 10 of the present order. The affidavit shall, *inter alia*, disclose the enforcement measures undertaken to identify and prevent the operation of unregistered and unidentified vehicles involved in mining and transportation activities; the steps taken to ensure strict compliance with the provisions of the Motor Vehicles Act, 1988 and the Central Motor Vehicles Rules, 1989; the action initiated against erring officials and violators, if any; and the further corrective and preventive measures proposed to be implemented within a definite timeline.

C. The National Highways Authority of India is directed to be impleaded as a party respondent in the present proceedings. The National

Highways Authority of India shall file a detailed affidavit on or before the next date of hearing specifically indicating the measures undertaken or proposed to be undertaken for safeguarding the structural integrity and security of the afore-mentioned bridge in light of the continuing illegal mining activities in its vicinity. The affidavit shall also indicate as to why this Court should not direct the National Highways Authority of India to install appropriate CCTV surveillance and monitoring mechanisms on and around the said bridge so as to ensure effective real-time monitoring of illegal mining and transportation activities. The National Highways Authority of India having been impleaded as a party in the present proceedings, the Registry is directed to forthwith communicate a copy of this order as well as order dated 17th April, 2026 to the learned Standing Counsel representing the said Authority.

13. List the matter on 20th May, 2026 for further consideration.

.....**J.**
(VIKRAM NATH)

.....**J.**
(SANDEEP MEHTA)

NEW DELHI;
MAY 14, 2026.