

## Need to curb alleged illegal sand mining in northern region of West Bengal

**DR. JAYANTA KUMAR ROY (JALPAIGURI):** The issue of illegal sand mining has been plaguing the northern part of West Bengal. Over the years, this illegal activity has escalated, causing immense suffering and atrocities to the local people and the environment. The perpetrators of this crime are land mafias who encroach upon land, conduct illegal sales, and exploitation of mining activities directly on the banks of rivers. These mafias have established an organized crime racket in Bengal, utilizing forged documents to sell encroached land and bribing local politicians by paying "haftas" to continue their unlawful operations. The extensive illegal mining has altered the course of rivers, leading to devastating floods in nearby tea gardens and agricultural lands. The environmental degradation caused by these activities has far-reaching consequences on the region's ecology and biodiversity. Tragically, the consequences of this rampant illegal mining have even resulted in the loss of lives and their families were not even properly compensated for their tragic loss until the intervention of the National Green Tribunal. I request the Government to take immediate action to curb illegal sand mining in West Bengal's northern region to save the environment, protect the livelihoods of the local people, and prevent further loss of lives.