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Title: Need to stop extraction of sand in Palar River Basin in Tamil Nadu.

SHRI ABDUL RAHMAN (VELLORE): Palar River originates in Nandi Hills in Karnataka and flows through Andhra Pradesh before entering Tamil Nadu. In Tamil Nadu it runs across a distance of about 220 kms. The beneficiary districts are Vellore, Kancheepuram, Thiruvellur and Chennai. Environmentalists and other activists have been raising concerns repeatedly over the ecological impact of the over extraction of sand from Palar river basin, which threatens the very livelihoods of local population. There is exponential rise in demand for river sand due to large scale construction activities in and around Chennai.

Indiscriminate sand mining of Palar river-bed in my constituency Vellore has reached an alarming proportions and if uncontrolled can cause dangerous impact on the ecology and socio-economic life in these districts. Sand is vital for sustenance of rivers. Mining of sand in the river should be such that extraction does not exceed natural replenishment. After the ban on the use of excavators and transportation by lorries, the Public Works Department permits mining by manual methods and transportation by bullock carts only. Though there has been reduced intensity in quarrying, damage had already been done to the river system in many ways.

The river sand is a non-renewable natural resource. Since it is a scarce resource, there should be proper governance. All the existing laws, need to be reviewed and amended suitably. Government is required to formulate appropriate policy for extracting and distribution and should also initiate steps for research in finding a suitable alternative building material to substitute the river sand. Therefore, I urge upon the Government to intervene and stop this continuous extraction of sand in Palar River Basin.

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