

Solapur model to check illegal sand mining in country: Javadekar

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Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar

Union Environment Minister Prakash Javadekar on Sunday said the centre will reconsider the Solapur model to check illegal sand mining across the country. Talking to Indian Express, Javadekar said, “The centre will soon evolve a policy to check the illegal sand mining that was detrimental to the river banks.” He said, “In Solapur the model adopted to monitor and track the vehicles carrying out illegal sand would be considered at centre.”

The illegal sand mining along the river banks is not just confined to Maharashtra but also extends to other north and eastern states of the country. Javdekar said, “The rivers are sacrosanct for the human civilisation. Whether it is illegal sand mining or industrial pollution we will tackle them through stringent policy decision.”

Interestingly, Solapur has installed a control complete with hi-tech equipments that enable the officials to keep a track of the vehicles while loading and transporting the sands from the river banks. The driver who is ferrying the vehicle with sand is provided with a bar code. The barcoded receipts have invoice number that helps to track the driver’s movement along with vehicles. The Solapur model is being extended in other parts of Maharashtra to tackle illegal sand mining.

Speaking about Maharashtra government’s decision to scrap River Regulation Zone (RRZ), Javadekar said, he is planning a meeting with chief minister Devendra Fadnavis. Javadekar said, “We will take the views of all the state government and also environmentalists and organisations to make our rivers pollution free.”

While acknowledging that river pollution is a major issue not just confined to state but across the country, he said, “The centre is taking steps to come out with a policy.” There cannot be any compromise on allowing river pollution, he added.

Maharashtra government had recently scrapped the RRZ to pave the way for setting up industrial units along the river banks. However, chief minister Devendra Fadnavis reiterated that the state government was equally concerned about preserving its rivers. And that state government would strictly adhere to the centre’s guidelines. However, the chief minister asserted that, “The RRZ policy was ultra vires of the Constitution, since it was out of scope and competence of state government.”

The state government argued, “The RRZ was also in contravention to the national policy as it does not mitigate the pollution.” The state government has indicated that the apprehensions raised in some quarters related to administration allowing industries on river banks without ascertaining the industrial waste or hazardous effluents which were dangerous to the environment or rivers was incorrect.