

REPORT ON  
ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION  
DUE TO STONE QUARRYING  
AT HIRANANDANI GARDENS, POWAI, MUMBAI



MAHARAHTRA POLLUTION CONTROL BOARD  
KALPTARU POINT, SION (E),  
MUMBAI- 400 022

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# **REPORT ON ENVIRONMENTAL POLLUTION DUE TO STONE QUARRYING AT HIRANANDANI GARDEN, POWAI, MUMBAI**

## **1. BACKGROUND**

The Powai hills are exploited for the stone for construction activities since a very long time. The area near Powai has experienced rapid residential growth in last few years about 20 years. The quarrying operations and its associated activities like blasting, charge drilling, chiseling and stone crushing etc have caused noise pollution due to impacts of blasting. Soil erosion, siltation. and landslides are seen during the rainy season. Air pollution is caused due to operation of the hot mix plant and stone crushers in the area etc.

Board received complaints from residents regarding environmental pollution in the Hiranandani Gardens. The residents have also complained about the violation of MoEF notification dated 7.7.04, regarding environmental clearance for the new construction projects. They have informed specific cases of construction projects which attract the provisions of this notification.

Considering the gravity of the problems the Member Secretary of the Board formed a committee consisting of Dr. S.B. Katoley, Advisor and Dr. Ajay A. Deshpande, Regional Officer of the Board to investigate the matter thoroughly and suggest actions to control pollution.

## **2. COMPLAINTS**

The committee on review of the complaints and also discussions with some of the office bearers of the housing societies noted that the problems are mainly related to:

- a. Concerns due to quarrying activities i.e. blasts, noise, vibrations, dust, increase in siltation, stone missiles, environmental degradation, land slides, run off etc.

- b. Air pollution problems due to hot mix plant, stone crusher and ready mix plant in the vicinity of housing societies and newly coming up Technology Park.
- c. Violation of MoEF notification dated 7.7.04 due to new construction projects of building.

### **3. OBSERVATIONS**

The committee visited the area along with the representatives of the Housing Societies on 13.9.05. The list of the persons whom the committee held discussions during the visit is enclosed at Annexure I. During the visit, following observations were made:

- a. Stone quarrying activities were observed behind the Avlon building which is presented in Photograph-1 and 2. Few trucks were also plying which were transporting the stone. Intermittent noise of drilling and chiseling operations was also noted. This part of the hill has observed large landslides and segregation of the loose soil. This may further lead to increased siltation rate in the catchments of Powai Lake.
- b. The resident also narrated experience of the stones coming as missiles when the blasting takes place. However, committee could not ascertain these claims as no blasting was observed during the visit.
- c. Residents also showed certain construction activities more specifically shown in the map enclosed as Annexure-II. The residents claimed that these projects are covered under MoEF notification dated 7.7.04 and will need environmental clearance including public hearing. It was reported by the residents that the Developers have not obtained the required environmental clearances. This however could not be ascertained by the visiting team since the developers were not available.



Photograph-1: Stone Quarrying Activities Behind Avon Building



Photograph-2: Stone Quarrying Area Behind Avon Building

- d. A hot mix plant was seen located between Avon building and new software projects. During the visit, it was not in operation. However, the condition of plant indicated that the plant is in operation. The residents complained about the thick black smoke that emanates from the plant resulting in air pollution in the area. It was mentioned by them that the plant is operated by the Developers. During the discussion with the ladies of Avon society, it was gathered that the black smoke is observed some times and the prominent wind direction is generally away from Avon building thus not affecting the entire population of the residents.
  
- e. A stone crusher called Supreme Stone Crusher was seen in operation during the visit. This crusher is located behind the Lake Castle society. The photograph of the crusher is enclosed at photograph 3 and 4. Quarrying activities were also observed in the background with charge drilling operations in progress. Continuous noise from the charge drilling and chiseling activities was noted during the visit thus confirming that quarrying does take place in the hill area behind this housing society. (Photograph- 5).
  
- f. A ready mix concrete plant (RMC) was also seen in operation. The resident complained about the noise pollution from the hammer/ hydraulic press activities in the paver blocks manufacturing, unit particularly at night. However, during the visit neither the unit was in operation nor any such significant noise was heard.



**Photograph-3: M/s Supreme Stone Crusher in operation**



**Photograph-4: M/s Supreme Stone Crusher, another view**



**Photograph-5: Stone Quarrying Behind M/s Supreme Stone Crusher**

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Maharashtra Pollution Control Board is implementing Water (P&P) Act, 1974, Air (P&CP) Act, 1981 and various Rules notified under Environmental (Protection) Act, 1986. However, specific industries like stone crusher, hot mix plant and ready mix concrete plant, which have defined sources of pollution, are covered under the consent mechanism under the above Acts. The stone quarrying activities are regulated by the State Revenue Department under Minor Minerals Act and the District Collector and Mining Officers are responsible for giving the required permissions to operate the quarry. They are also responsible for permitting the use of the explosives used in the quarries. MPCB has no Authority under the above act to grant permissions for the stone quarrying activities.

The stone quarrying activities, on a large scale can have several environmental impacts such as effects of blasts, vibrations, stone missiles, loosening of earth thereby increasing the chances of landslides and siltation rates, aesthetics etc.

The stone crusher behind Lake Castle Society i.e. Supreme Stone Crusher was found in operation even though directions of its closure were issued by Regional Officer, MPCB, Mumbai. It was also noted that power supply to the crusher was not disconnected in spite of legal directions of the Board.

The hot mix plant seems to be in operation without the necessary consent of the Board. The hot mix plant is likely to emit pollutants as adequate air pollution control measures are not provided.

The quarrying activities are not directly within the mandate of the MPCB. However, operations of these stone quarries and also, the associated environmental concerns may be brought to notice of Collector, Mumbai Suburban District who is regulating these activities.

## 5. RECOMMENDATIONS

- a. Directions under 31 (A) of Air (P&CP) Act, 1981 shall be issued to Collector, Mumbai Suburban District to stop stone quarrying activities in this area since these are causing vibrations and noise pollution .
- b. It shall be immediately ensured that the Supreme Stone Crusher stop its activities as per closure directions issued by MPCB. In case of further non-compliance of the directions a criminal case with police and also in court of law shall be filed. The action should also be taken against the power supply company if they further fail to comply MPCB directives to them to disconnect the power supply of this unit.
- c. Directions under section 31 (A) of Air (P&CP) Act, 1981, shall be issued to M/s Hiranandani Builders for immediate closure of the Hot Mix plant operated by them.
- d. Directions under section 31 (A) of Air (P&CP),1981 shall be issued to the Ready Mix Plant restricting its operation time from 10 am to 6 pm and also restricting their production only to the consented capacity.
- e. M/s. Hiranandani Constructions have been issued a stop work notice for reported violations of MoEF Notification dated 07.07.2004. In view of the directions of Hon'ble High Court at Mumbai in writ petition on development of mill lands, MPCB shall take up the matter with MCGM to ensure that violations do not continue in future. If the violations of the provisions of Notification dated 07-07-2004 are confirmed, action under Environment (Protection) Act, 1986 shall be initiated against Hiranandani Constructions accordingly.