

Around 80 illegal quarries identified in Shivamogga

Such quarrying points will be taken over by the govt.: KSE

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The Shivamogga district administration has identified around 80 illegal stone quarrying points in the district. Among them, 45 or so are comparatively big pits while the rest are small, Deputy Commissioner K.B. Shivakumar said at a meeting chaired by Minister for Rural Development and Panchayat Raj K.S. Eshwarappa in Shivamogga on Monday.

The officers have noticed the activities of illegal quarry points in recent days, following the blast at a stone crushing unit at Hunasodu that claimed six lives.

Besides this, there are 76 quarrying points and 97 stone crushing units active in the district. Among the 76 legal quarries, only 23 have permission for blasting.

Mr. Eshwarappa, who is also Minister in-charge of the district, said all the illegal points would be taken over by the government. "I will discuss the issue in the Cabinet so that all the illegal quarrying points are taken over by the State government," he said.

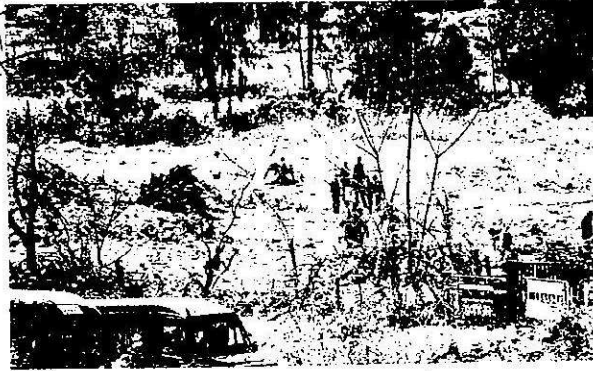
The Minister said all the quarries would have to take permission for blasting. "At present, only 23 units have permission. It would be good for them if they take permission following the set procedure," he said.

Mr. Shivakumar clarified that all 97 crushing units were legal and permitted by the administration. Otherwise, they would not get power supply.

The administration has received applications to open three more crushers. The Minister said the applicants would be granted permission, taking the total number of crushers to 100.

Source of explosive

Meanwhile, the police investigation into the explosive material that went off at Hunasodu has indicated that the material was brought from Anantapur in Andhra



File photo of the blast site at Hunasodu in Shivamogga.

New policy on the anvil

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Stressing the need to allow mining for development projects, Mines and Geology Minister Muruges R. Nirani on Tuesday announced a plan to introduce a policy to regularise unauthorised mining. He, however, clarified that only the unauthorised mining of those who fulfil the criteria under a new policy would be considered for regularisation.

Speaking at Yadgir, he said new legislation would be enacted by amending the current legislation to curb il-

legal mining after soliciting the views from different stakeholders.

The Minister plans to convene meetings with department officials on Wednesday and Thursday to discuss measures to prevent illegal mining and to introduce a policy on regularisation. "The scourge of illegal mining is not restricted to Karnataka; it is rampant across India. We will also study the measures taken by other States to curb illegal mining and will take a final decision after talks with the Chief Minister," Mr. Nirani said.

Pradesh. Three people from Anantapur and three from Bhadravati, who died in the incident, carried it to the site where the explosion happened. S. Ravi, IGP, Eastern Range, said that Praveen of Antaragange in Bhadravati taluk was the agent who used to coordinate with the suppliers of explosives and carried them to the quarry points. "The incident could have happened while the explosives were being distributed. We don't know what exactly happened at the site," he said.

Among the six who died, five have been identified. The police suspect the sixth to be Punith from Bhadravati taluk, who accompanied Praveen and Manjunath to visit the site along with the explosives on January 21.

"However, it has to be examined further to ascertain it was actually Punith. We could gather only some parts of the body. It is difficult to identify the dead," he said.

So far, the police have arrested four people in connection with the blast - D.V. Sudhakar, the leaseholder of the crushing unit, Narasimha, supervisor, Mumtaz Ahmed, manager, and Rashid of Jambaraghatta in Bhadravati. There could be a few more involved, the police suspect.

Mr. Eshwarappa said that those who died in the incident might have acted at the behest of some influential people. "The police will probe the matter and book the culprits," the Minister said.