

Name of Newspaper : Statesman

Place of Publication : Peshawar

Date of Publication : 04/10/2018

Stone crushing, mining wreaking havoc on landscape, public health and pro

PESHAWAR: Stone crushing and mining in the scenic Khanpur Tehsil of Haripur district are badly damaging serenity of the region besides causing public health issues and damage to the property due to heavy blasting.

A visit to Khanpur Tehsil revealed that around 400 families in Perawala locality of Khanpur are experiencing severe mental torture and nuisance due to heavy blasting being carried out by stone crushing plants installed within the vicinity of populated area. The visit also found that blasting for mining is damaging public property by creating cracks in the buildings.

"The bang of the blast is so severe that it causes a tremor of about 5.5 intensity within a radius of around one kilometer area and also results in throwing of heavy stones which fall on ceilings causing damage to houses and other buildings," complained Muhammad Saleem, a dweller of Perawala area of Khanpur.

"When blasting starts

we rush out of our houses in open with the fear that the structure might collapse due to rattling caused by tremor," Salim told newsmen who were taken to Khanpur by Heinrich Boll Stiftung (HBS), a non-governmental organization working for conservation of environment.

The sound of the blast also terrifies dwellers of the area especially children and women, he added.

The dust caused by stone crushing and smoke emitted by heavy dumpers plying in the area to transport crushed material are spreading diseases including asthma and allergies due to emission of huge smoke, Saleem hastened to add.

The stone crushers are installed within proximity of populated area and one is in very close vicinity of a Girls High School where hundreds of students study.

"Once stones flew due to blasting and threw inside the school after which a formal complaint was lodged with Deputy Commissioner Haripur," informed

Sabeena Sheikh, Principal Govt Girls High School Haripur.

After that complaint the crushing units installed near the school started blasting in the afternoon, but still the population and property is

at threat of damage, she told APP.

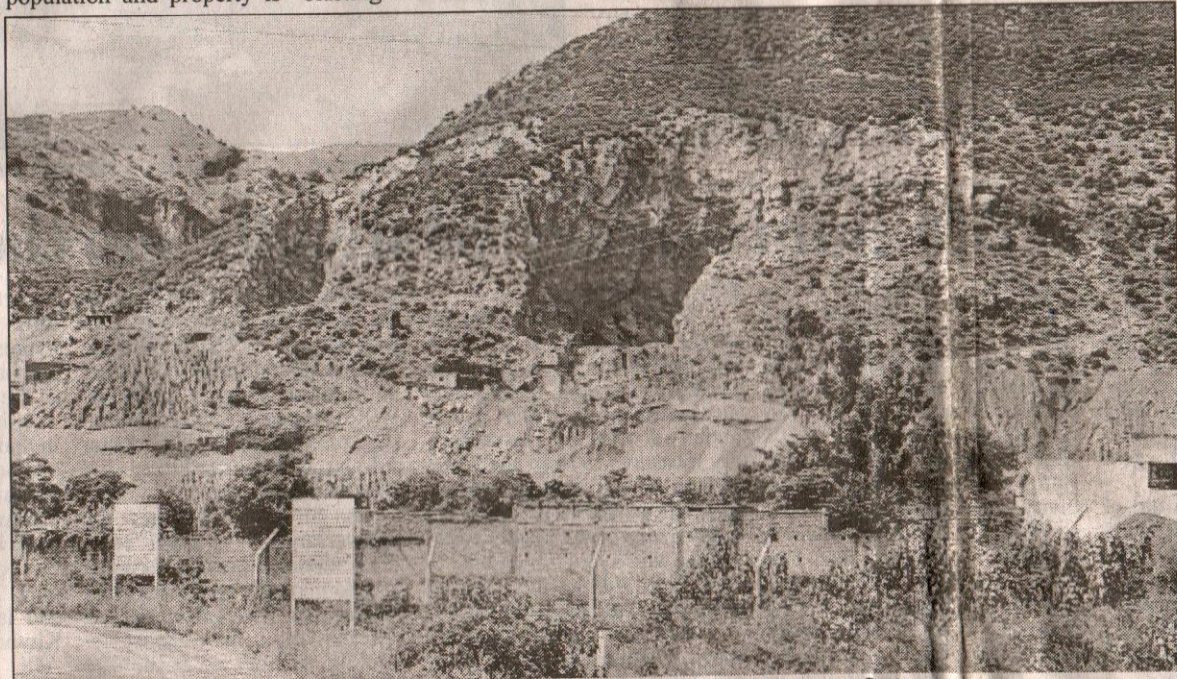
Sabeena apprised newsmen that one of her staff member informed that once a big stone fell on the ceiling of her home due to blasting and caused a hole

in it. Another female employee of the school said she was washing utensils at her home and due to jerk of the blast, the pots flew away from her hands.

The stone crushing mafia is very strong and

they have continued practice despite a stay order from a division bench of Peshawar High Court (PHC), alleges Malik Muhammad Iqbal, General Councilor UC Khanpur.

Talking with newsmen,



A view of damage to landscape due to stone crushing in Khanpur Tehsil of Haripur. - Statesman

Property in scenic Khanpur

ed prac-
y order
ench of
Court
Malik
General
npur.
ewsmen,

Muhammad Iqbal said concerned departments including mining, industry and EPA were contacted for complaints over stone crushing and blasting within populated area, but of no avail.

Once an inquiry was also ordered by Deputy Commissioner Haripur and the committee recommended in its finding that the ongoing mining operation in the vicinity of village Shohal, Khanpur is against the law and may have harmful consequences on the inhabitants.

"The competent authorities be approached for initiating proper action so that the practice be stopped," added report of the inquiry committee headed by Additional Assistant Commissioner, Haripur.

The inquiry committee also mentioned in its report that the distance from the house of one of the complainant from the crush machine is less than 500 feet, which shows a blatant violation of rule 149 of Mining Concession rules 2005.

Director General Envi-

ronment Protection Agency (EPA), Dr. Muhammad Bashir when contacted by APP, showed ignorance about the issue and said that he has not received any complaint in this regard.

DG EPA said in categorical term that no crush machine can operate in vicinity of populated area. The mining rules, he continued, also bar installation of crush machines and mining within 100 meters of populated area, railway line, canal, power line, gas pipeline and other works.

Meanwhile Director General Mining KP, Muntazir Khan also expressed astonishment over practice of blasting in populated area.

Talking with APP, Muntazir Khan stressed upon the affectees to submit a complaint and he will take a prompt action over this illegal practice.

"Public safety is government's top priority and no one will be allowed to endanger public life and property at any cost," Muntazir expressed the resolve. - APP

