

CHAPTER II

System and controls to curb illegal mining activities

Summary

- Comprehensive database of sanctioned quarry leases was not maintained in the format prescribed by the Department.
- Boundary pillars/ marks indicating demarcation shown in the mining plan was found missing in 33 out of the 40 quarry lease sites visited during physical verification. Out of these quarry leases, in nine quarry leases, the buffer zone was not maintained around the lease area, and in 37 leases, no plantation works were carried out by the lessees.
- The usage of minor minerals in Private/ Government construction works was not being monitored and verified by the inspecting authorities as required in the Rules. There were delays in submission of monthly returns of quarry leases by the lessees.
- Out of the nine selected districts, in three districts, no check post was established while in remaining six districts, 18 check posts were without weighbridge facility. In two districts, six storage permits were issued by the Department without ensuring no objection certificate from the Pollution Control Board. There was short levy of penalty of ₹ 10.51 crore in 3,536 cases of illegal extraction and transportation of minerals registered during the year 2015-16 to 2020-21 (up to June 2020).
- In six districts, there was significant shortfall, ranging from 52 to 92 *per cent*, in conducting inspections of mines against the stipulated norms. Meetings of District Task Force were not held regularly and the records of meetings were not maintained.
- Department failed to implement e-permit system and Global Positioning System (GPS) based vehicle tracking system, to control the illegal transportation of minor minerals.

2.1 Mechanism to regulate the mining activities

A systematic extraction of minerals is essential to conserve the minerals, and ensure optimum revenue to the Government. A systemic mechanism to regulate the mining activities from grant of quarry lease, excavation, transportation of minerals to closure/ reclamation of fully exploited quarry area, and to prevent and control illegal mining, is therefore very essential.

Under Section 15 and 23 C of MMDR Act, 1957, the State Government may make rules for regulating the grant of quarry leases, mining leases or other mineral concessions in respect of minor minerals and for preventing illegal mining, transportation and storage of minerals. The Chhattisgarh Minor Mineral Rules, 2015 contains the provisions for grant of

quarry lease, granting authority, process, period and general conditions of quarry lease in respect of minor minerals specified in schedule I and II of the Rules. Chhattisgarh Minerals (Mining, Transportation and Storage) Rules, 2009 prescribes mechanism to prevent storage and transportation of minerals without lawful permit. Compliance of these rules and monitoring mechanism for mining activities instituted by the Department were examined in audit which are discussed in the succeeding paragraphs.

2.1.1 Maintenance of comprehensive database of quarry leases

Under rule 23-A of the CMM Rules 2015, quarry leases were granted by the State Government¹/ Director²/ Collector of the District³ through the process of electronic auction⁴/ tender⁵. As per rule 41 of the CMM Rules, a register of quarry leases shall be maintained by the Mining Officer/ Assistant Mining Officer in Form-XII, which includes information such as date of grant of lease, location and boundaries of the lease granted, date of approval of quarry plan and period, date of Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) clearance and period, date of renewal, actual expiry/ relinquishment, etc. An accurate inventory of all quarry leases, currently working or otherwise, is necessary to identify the sanctioned leases as current, expired, lapsed, cancelled and determined lease.

The leases are categorised as-

- **Current Leases-** whose sanctioned periods are valid and may be Working or Idle.
- **Expired Leases-** whose periods have expired and whose renewal applications are pending. On finalization of renewal applications, such leases become current.
- **Lapsed Leases-** Where mining operation was not commenced within a period of one year or discontinued for a cumulative period of six months.
- **Determined Leases-** which have been cancelled for violation of lease conditions and other environmental factors.

During the period 2015-16 to 2020-21, 132 quarry leases were sanctioned in the selected nine districts through e-tender /application basis. Total of 1,957 quarry leases of minor minerals were sanctioned in the State, as on April 2021, as per the information provided by the Department.

Audit observed that a comprehensive categorized database of quarry leases containing date of lease expiry, details of renewal application filed, status of environmental clearance, location and boundary details i.e. geo-coordinates, etc. was not maintained in the prescribed format by the Department. Only the list of current quarry leases in electronic form was maintained, which did not contain all such information, as mentioned above.

¹ Minerals specified in Part A and Part B of schedule I.

² Minerals specified in Part C of schedule I and Part A of schedule II, where the area applied is more than 10 hectares.

³ Minerals specified in Part C of schedule I and Part A of schedule II, where the area applied is upto 10 hectares.

⁴ Minerals specified in Part A and Part B of schedule I.

⁵ Minerals specified in Part C of schedule I and Part A of schedule II.

The Government stated (April 2022) that the list of quarry leases was prepared each financial year by the District Offices in which complete details of leases were maintained. The District Offices maintain the database of all the quarry leases.

The reply is not acceptable, as the register of quarry leases in the prescribed format was not maintained. Information maintained by the Department does not conform to Form- XII and does not capture the entire data/ information of the quarry sites, and cannot be considered sufficient for effective monitoring of quarry sites as pointed out by Audit.

Recommendation:

1. ***The district offices must be directed to maintain database of quarry leases in the prescribed format.***

2.1.2 Absence of mine boundary pillars/ demarcations

As per the conditions of quarry lease specified under Clause 11 of Rule 51 of CMMR, 2015, the lessee shall, at its own expense, erect, maintain and keep in good repairs boundary marks and boundary pillars necessary to indicate the demarcation shown in the mining plan.

Audit conducted the joint physical verification of 40⁶ quarry leases located in the selected districts with the officials/ staff of Mining Department. During the joint physical verification, it was observed that mine boundaries pillars/ demarcations were not present in 33 out of 40 selected (82.5 *per cent*) minor mineral quarries. It was a violation of the conditions of quarry lease deed (Sl. No. 2 of part VII), which stipulates to maintain/ keep boundary marks in good order and marking of co-ordinates on all the corner pillars. Due to the absence of mine boundaries/ demarcations, *prima-facie* identification of leased area was not possible. Absence of the same leaves scope for illegal excavation outside the leased areas, and it becomes difficult to identify the same.

⁶ In 25 cases (out of selected 40 cases – 62.5 *per cent*) under four districts i.e. Raipur, Balodabazar, Bilaspur and Janjgir-Champa, the Department officials / staff did not sign the joint physical reports.



Figure-2.1: Image showing no physical boundary pillars around the lease area at Mandir Hasaud, Arang, Khasra. No. 678 and 689 (working) (date of image: October 2021).

The Government stated (April 2022) that demarcation of leases was carried out by the revenue officials at the time of grant of lease, but the same gets damaged due to natural activities. At present, the coordinates of the quarry leases were mentioned in the Mining Plans (MP) and excavation outside the lease area was monitored with the help of Chhattisgarh Council of Science and Technology (CGCOST) through satellite images. Further, in all quarry leases, as per the prescribed standard of the Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM), maintaining of boundary pillars has been made mandatory.

The reply is not acceptable as boundary pillars and boundary marks to indicate the demarcations of lease area as prescribed in the rule were not found in most (82.5 per cent) of the minor mineral quarries visited by Audit, despite the fact that maintaining of boundary pillars has been made mandatory by the Government. Further, CGCOST was engaged for mining surveillance system in respect of 120 mines (out of total 1,957 mines) only.

Recommendation:

- 2. The Department should ensure that the boundary pillars with boundary marks are maintained by the lessees to indicate demarcation shown in the mining plan.***

2.1.3 Maintaining buffer zones

Under Rule 42 of CMM Rules, 2015, sanctioning authority shall grant quarry lease after obtaining all consent, approvals, no-objections as may be required under the applicable law for commencement of quarry operation. GoI amended (January 2016) the Environment Impact Assessment (EIA) notification, 2006, wherein prior Environmental Clearance (EC) for mining of minor minerals was made mandatory. Accordingly, the lessees were required to obtain EC before the grant/ renewal of quarry leases. As per the conditions of EC, maintaining of buffer zone/ safety zone boundary of 7.5 meters and

plantation of trees around the lease area was mandatory for quarry leases. Allowance of a buffer zone means reduction in the net mineable area of the lease, and resultant reduction in mineral reserves since excavation of minerals in the buffer zone is prohibited.

There was no uniformity in the size/area of buffer zone/ safety zone boundary in the quarry plans approved by the Department. Physical verification of 40 quarry leases revealed that in nine quarry leases, the buffer zone was not maintained around the lease area and no plantation work was carried out by the lessees in 37 leases (92.5 per cent).

The Government stated (April 2022) that in the case of minor minerals, carrying out mining operations as per the mining plans was mandatory from the year 2015, where safety zone of 7.5 meters around the lease area had to be left out. Most of the quarry leases started the mining operations before 2015, where mining operation had been carried out from the periphery of the approved lease area as there was no provision for carrying out mining operations as per the mining plans approved at the time of grant of lease. In case of these mines, leaving safety/ buffer zone of 7.5 meters as stipulated in EC was not possible. In the new mines, the provision of leaving buffer zone was being complied.

The reply is not acceptable as the Department did not ensure compliance to the environment clearance conditions at the time of renewal of quarry leases sanctioned prior to the commencement of these Rules. Further, the district mining authorities neither surveyed the existing leases nor recorded availability/ allowing of buffer zones less than 7.5 meter in the leased areas.

2.1.4 Monthly returns of quarry leases

As per rule 51 (20) (a) of the CMM Rules 2015, the lessee shall submit by the tenth day of every month, a return in Form XV giving the total quantity of minerals excavated, removed/ consumed in the previous month. It was further stipulated under rule 51(20)(d) that in case the lessee fails to submit the information as prescribed, a penalty of ₹ 500 per month shall be imposed till the information is produced. In the five selected districts, 37 out of 125 quarry lease holders did not submit the monthly returns in time as per rules, and there was delay in submission of returns ranging from 1 to 19 months.

The Government stated (April 2022) that there was provision for imposing penalty on non-production of monthly returns in due time and the same was recovered from the lessees.

Timeliness in submission of monthly return is necessary for correct assessment of royalty by the Department. In the absence of return, the quantity of mineral produced/consumed/removed cannot be cross verified and may result in short assessment of royalty. The existing penalty provisions are not effective in controlling the delay. Therefore, the Government should consider more stringent provision as deterrent for delay.

2.1.5 Usage of minor minerals in private/ Government construction works

As per rule 72 (1) of CMM Rules, every person, company, firm, society/ association engaged in construction of residential building or buildings for sale, shall maintain a true

account of all the minor minerals procured and used in construction in Form XXIII containing details such as date of procurement, name of mineral, vehicle number, name of the quarry, transit pass number and quantity, and shall submit to the officer in-charge of the mining section of the concerned district, a quarterly report of minor minerals procured and consumed in Form XXIV within 30 days after the expiry of every quarter.

The Director, Geology and Mining, instructed (June 2016) the district officials to inspect the Government construction works being carried out in the district to ensure that the minor minerals used in these works are obtained through valid permits or purchased from the sanctioned quarry leases.

Audit observed that in none of the selected districts, the quarterly reports on procurement and usage of minor minerals were submitted by such persons, company, firms etc. to the district mining authorities, as stipulated in the above rule. In the absence of the reports and required details, the source of minor minerals being procured and used in construction by the private entities were not verified by the mining authorities. Audit observed in the selected districts that inspections were not carried out at the sites of Government construction works to verify the source/ quantity of minor minerals used in the construction works.

Therefore, in the absence of verification of validity of source of minor minerals, the chances of usage of illegally excavated minor minerals in the construction activities in the State could not be ruled out. Audit visited some of the private construction sites in Raipur and witnessed rampant usage of *murrum*.



Figure-2.2 (a): Image showing usage of *murrum* at private construction sites (Residential Project, Raipur, month of image: September 2021)



Figure-2.2 (b): Image showing usage of *murrum* at private construction sites (Commercial Project, Raipur, month of image: September 2021).

The Government stated (April 2022) that the Departmental officials inspected the Government/ private construction works from time to time.

The reply is not acceptable as no records related to inspections carried out at the sites of Government construction works or quarterly report submitted to the Department was provided to audit.

2.1.6 Establishment and functioning of check posts

The State Mineral Policy of Chhattisgarh (as amended in 2013) provided that to ensure effective vigilance over illegal transportation of minerals, check posts and weighbridges would be established on main roads in coordination with other Departments. Further, Rule 6 of CMMTS Rules stipulates that the DGM may setup check post(s) with or without weighbridge at any place within the State to check the validity of transit passes and the legality of the grade, quantity of minerals and its beneficiated products to prevent transportation and storage of mineral/ ores without lawful permit. The quantity of minerals mentioned in transit pass shall be checked at the weighbridge established at check post or any other authorized weighbridge. At the check post where there is no weighbridge nearby, the quantity of minerals being transported shall be measured in cubic meter and then converted into tonnes according to the prescribed formula.

Audit observed that no check posts were established in three (Mungeli, Kawardha and Balodabazar) out of the nine selected districts. In Kawardha District, while one check post was operational till 2017-18, but it was closed due to shortage of manpower as informed by the DMO. In remaining six districts,⁷ 18 check posts were established. Further, it was observed that weighbridge facility was not available in any of the 18 check posts

⁷ Janjgir and Kanker – 2 each, Raipur and Bilaspur -3 each, and Ambikapur and Durg – 4 each.

established in six districts. The existing check posts were found to be insufficient considering the geographical distribution of the mines, location of check posts and availability of alternate routes as illustrated in **Figure-2.3**. However, no assessment for evaluating the adequacy of the number of check posts was found in the records of the Department.



Figure-2.3: Google image showing mining areas, alternate routes and check post established.

It may be seen from **Figure-2.3**, that there were many alternate routes for transportation of minerals from Nardaha, Bahnakadi and Dhansuli area, while the check post has been established near Pirda Chowk only. Therefore, vehicle passing through other routes could escape check post.

Further, it was observed that entries in the check post register were being made from the transit passes issued by the Mining authorities without measuring the actual quantity of minerals being transported at the check posts according to the prescribed formula as per the above mentioned rules.

The Government stated (April 2022) that there were 45 temporary check posts operative in the State, out of which weighbridge facilities were available only in four check posts in two districts. At present, on the basis of assessment of usefulness of the check posts, special flying squads have been constituted by the District Mining Officers, in addition to the existing check posts.

The reply of the Government indicates that vigilance of the Department over illegal transportation through check posts was deficient.

Recommendation:

3. *The Government should consider establishing adequate number of check posts in Mungeli, Kawardha and Balodabazar districts within a fixed timeline and should consider installing of CCTV cameras and weighbridge facilities at all the check posts to check illegal transportation and overloading of minerals.*

2.1.7 Issue of storage permits to applicants not complying with norms of Pollution Control Board

Sub-section (4) (iii) of Rule 7 of CMMTS Rules stipulates that No Objection Certificates (NOC) under the Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981, shall be accompanied with the application for issuing permit and its renewal for temporary storage/ beneficiation/ crushing of minerals.

Audit observed in Durg and Kawardha districts that out of 33 selected storage permits, six storage permits were granted for the transportation and temporary storage of materials in the specified site without ensuring NOC from the Pollution Control Board. Thus, the Department failed to ensure compliance to the above mentioned rules and provisions envisaged in Water (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1974 and Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Act, 1981.

The Government stated (April 2022) that the Mineral Resource Department was not competent to take action in the case of non-fulfilment of conditions of EC, NOCs under Water/ Air (Prevention and Control of Pollution) Acts.

The reply is not acceptable as under Rule 7(4) (iii) of CMMTS Rules 2009, the application for storage permit must be accompanied by the NOC from the Pollution Control Board, which was not ensured by the department while issuing permit.

2.1.8 Levy of penalty against illegal mining/ transportation/ storage of minor minerals

Sub-rule 71 (5) of CMM Rules, 2015 stipulates that “The Collector/ Joint Director/ Deputy Director/ Mining Officer or any officer authorised by Zila Panchayat/ Janpad Panchayat/ Gram Panchayats may, either before or after the institution of the prosecution, compound the offence so committed under sub-rule (1) on payment of market value of mineral so extracted or transported and such fine which may extend to double the market value⁸ of mineral so extracted or transported, but in no case it shall be less than five thousand rupees or ten times of royalty of minerals so extracted, whichever is higher”. Further, the aforementioned rule 71 was amended (June 2020) stipulating levy of penalty as per section 21 to 23 (B) of MMDR Act 1957.

Audit noticed that during the year 2015-16 to 2020-21 (upto June 2020) a total of 1,651 cases of illegal extraction and 13,049 cases of illegal transportations were registered by the

⁸ As determined by the District Collector from time to time.

mining authorities in selected districts/ Central Flying Squad (CFS) and penalties amounting to ₹ 23.27 crore were levied. In this regard, it was observed that in 792 cases of illegal extraction, and 2,744 cases of illegal transportation, the amount of penalties were not levied as per the aforementioned rules. This resulted in short levy of penalty amounting to ₹ 10.51 crore (as detailed in **Appendix 2 and 3**) during the period 2015-16 to 2020-21 (upto June 2020)⁹.

The Government stated (April 2022) that the action on the cases of illegal mining/ transportation was taken under the provisions of MMDR, Act 1957 which was notified by the Central Government.

The reply is not acceptable as the amount of penalty was not calculated as prescribed under the Rules, leading to short levy of penalty.

2.1.9 Inspections/ monitoring of mining activities

The DDMA's/ DMOs, AMOs, Mining Inspectors (MIs) and Constables are responsible for inspection of mines and quarries. As per the DGM's order (May 2008¹⁰), DDMA's/ DMOs are required to inspect 50 per cent of major and minor mineral mines in their jurisdiction once in a year, AMOs are required to inspect all major and minor mineral mines in their jurisdiction once a year and MIs are required to inspect all the major and minor mineral mines once every six months and report: (i) whether the sign boards showing lease details were placed, (ii) leased areas were properly demarcated, (iii) identify extraction of minerals outside the leased area, (iv) availability of mineral, quantity excavated and dispatched/ stocked, (v) records being maintained are satisfactory and (vi) compliances to the environment and safety norms, etc.

Audit noticed that there was significant shortfall in inspection activities by the inspecting authorities against the targets during the year 2015-16 to 2019-20 as given in **Table-2.1**.

Table-2.1: Details of shortfall in inspection of mines

Sl. No.	Name of the district	No. of inspections to be conducted		No. of inspections carried out		Shortfall in inspections		Percentage of shortfall	
		DMO/ AMO	MI	DMO/ AMO	MI	DMO/ AMO	MI	DMO/ AMO	MI
1	Durg	1508	2010	16*	NP**	-	-	-	-
2	Mungeli	213	284	16	40	197	244	92	86
3	Kawardha	125	166	237	154	0	12	-	07
4	Raipur	1595	2126	366	343	1229	1783	77	84

⁹ Due to the amendment (June 2020) of Rule 71 of CMM Rules, the penalty was to be levied as per the section 21 to 23-B of MMDR Act. Audit was not able to compare the penalty applicable and penalty levied as the penalty clause stipulated maximum amount up to which fine can be imposed.

¹⁰ No./1675-90/mining-1/F. No. 8/2007, dated 24 May 2008.

5	Balodabazar	1046	1394	82	306	964	1088	92	78
6	Bilaspur	903	1204	74	529	829	675	92	56
7	Janjgir-Champa	1539	2052	353	561	1186	1491	77	73
8	Kanker	218	290	NP	NP	-	-	-	-
9	Ambikapur	977	1302	468	509	509	793	52	61

*DMOs only

** Not Provided

(Source: Compiled from the information furnished by district mining authorities),

It can be seen from the above table that in six districts, there was significant shortfall ranging from 52 to 92 *per cent* in conducting inspections of mines. Further, in two districts (Durg and Kanker), the details of inspection/ related information were not furnished by the respective DMOs. Also, the reports pertaining to inspections actually carried out were not found on records in any of the selected districts.

Further, in the selected districts, audit observed that actual strength of inspecting authorities/ officials¹¹ was significantly less than the sanctioned strength, and the shortfall during the year 2020-21 ranged between 20 and 60 *per cent* across the districts, as detailed in **Table-2.2**. At State level, 67 posts were vacant against the 157 sanctioned posts and the shortfall was 43 *per cent* during the year 2020-21.

Table-2.2: Details of shortage of inspecting officials

Sl. No.	Name of District	Sanctioned strength	Men in position	Percentage of shortage
1	Durg	05	03	40
2	Mungeli	05	04	20
3	Kawardha	05	02	60
4	Raipur	07	03	57
5	Balodabazar	04	03	25
6	Bilaspur	25	15	40
7	Janjgir-Champa	04	03	25
8	Kanker	05	03	40
9	Ambikapur	07	03	57

(Source: Compiled from the information furnished by district mining authorities)

The Government stated (April 2022) that there was shortfall in inspection of mines due to shortage of MIs in the State. The proposal for recruitment of 35 vacant posts of MIs has been forwarded to the Government.

¹¹ DDMA, DMO, AMO, MIs and constables.

Thus, it is evident that there has been a significant shortfall of inspecting officials in the Department. Due to the shortage of manpower for inspection activities, adequate inspection could not be conducted and it affected the overall control and monitoring over the mining activities as onsite inspection is an important tool to curb illegal mining at its origin.

Recommendation:

4. ***The Department should ensure regular inspection of mines as per the prescribed norms by ensuring adequate manpower and maintenance of proper records of inspection.***

2.1.10 District Task Force

General Administration Department, GoCG, constituted (October 2005) District Task Force (DTF) in each district to curb the illegal mining, transportation and storage in the State of Chhattisgarh. DTF comprises District Collector as the chairperson, Superintendent of Police, Divisional Forest Officer, Regional Transport Officer and District Mining Officer as members. DTFs were to hold review meetings on monthly basis to ensure continuous monitoring of illegal mining, transportation and storage, and take necessary action in these cases.

Audit observed that the monthly review meetings of DTFs were not held regularly. As per the records of meetings provided by the district offices, only 17 meetings were held against 432 meetings during the period 2015-16 to 2020-21 in six test checked districts. No records were provided to audit regarding the meetings held in three districts¹². Further, in three districts¹³, the DTFs reviewed 204 registered cases of illegal extraction/ transportation and recovered penalty. The details of monthly review meetings of DTF in the selected districts are detailed in **Table-2.3**.

Table-2.3: Details of meetings of DTF during the period 2015-16 to 2020-21

Sl. No.	Name of the district	No. of meetings to be held	No. of meetings actually held	Percentage of shortfall
1	Durg	72	01	99
2	Mungeli	72	02	97
3	Kawardha	72	01	99
4	Raipur	72	Not provided	-
5	Balodabazar	72	04	94
6	Bilaspur	72	06	92
7	Janjgir-Champa	72	Not provided	-
8	Kanker	72	03	96
9	Ambikapur	72	Not provided	-

(Source: Compiled from the information furnished by district mining authorities)

¹² Raipur, Janjgir- Champa and Ambikapur.

¹³ Durg- 23 cases/ ₹ 4.75 lakh, Bilaspur- 10 cases/ ₹ 10.42 lakh, and Kanker- 171 cases.

Thus, DTFs did not function effectively to curb illegal mining, transportation, and storage of minerals.

The Government stated (April 2022) that instructions had been issued for holding of meetings of DTF in each district.

2.1.11 Central Flying Squad

As per the information furnished by the Department, a Central Flying Squad (CFS) was established at the office of the DGM comprising AMOs, MIs, and Constables to inspect cases of illegal extraction/ transportation/ storage of minerals and deal with the complaints received in the Department. However, no formal order for establishment of CFS was provided to Audit. CFS was conducting surprise checks as per the directions of higher authorities. During the period 2015-16 to 2020-21, CFS registered 14 cases of illegal mining/ storage, and 305 cases of illegal transportation (i.e. approximately 53 cases/ year) and recovered penalty of ₹ 1.34 crore. However, no definite mechanism of functioning of CFS was witnessed at the office of DGM as no records of complaints received and inspections/investigation carried out against the complaints were provided to Audit.

The DGM stated (January 2021) that CFS carried out surprise inspections on receipt of serious complaints at Government/ Department level. The Government stated (April 2022) that Joint Director (Mineral Administration), was assigned the charge of CFS to conduct investigation regarding the complaints received at Government/Directorate level.

The reply is not acceptable as in the absence of structured mechanism for operation of CFS and non-maintenance of records of complaints, the action against each complaint could not be verified in Audit.

2.2 Implementation of other control measures for minor minerals

2.2.1 GPS based vehicles tracking system

Tracking of vehicles carrying minerals is an effective control measure to curb illegal mining and transportation of minerals. This will also help the Department to monitor the movement of minerals without additional deployment of manpower and establishment of a number of check posts.

Audit observed that considering the benefits of Global Positioning System (GPS) for vehicle tracking, GoCG amended (April 2017) the CMMTS Rules 2009 and inserted Rule 17. Rule 17 (3) (ii) stipulated that transporting major minerals/ ore and/or its beneficiated products without installing a GPS based tracker within 180 days from the notification of these amendments shall be prohibited. However, no such provision with respect to transportation of minor minerals was introduced. Thus, the Government has adopted different standards for the control over transportation of major and minor minerals. Adoption of the same provision in the case of transportation of minor minerals will go a long way in improving the monitoring mechanism of the Government.

The Government stated (April 2022) that GPS based tracking system is being developed in 'Khanij-online 2.0'.

2.2.2 E-permit system for transportation of minor minerals

As per the Chhattisgarh state mining policy as amended in February 2012, e-permit system for transportation of minerals was to be implemented in a phased manner.

Audit noticed that the Department had not implemented the e-permit system in respect of minor minerals despite the lapse of more than eight years. In absence of the system generated e-transit passes, Department continues to issue physical transit passes. Thus, the Department failed in improving the system and controlling the possibilities of illegal mining and transportation.

The Government stated (April 2022) that in case of newly notified 31 minor minerals, transit passes are being generated through 'khanij-online'. Instructions have been issued to generate online transit passes in case of remaining minor minerals also.

The reply indicates that after a lapse of eight years, the Department had not fully implemented e-permit system for transportation of minor minerals.

Recommendation:

- 5. The Department should consider implementing GPS based tracking system and e-permit system for minor minerals at the earliest to curb the illegal transportation of minerals.***

2.3 Grievance handling system

A grievance handling system to register, review, initiate action and monitor the complaints is an essential part of Government/ public service offices to ensure the accountability. Such system acts as a tool to bridge the gap between the needs of the general public/ stakeholders and the services being delivered by the Government entities.

Audit observed that five out of nine District Mining Offices¹⁴ were maintaining manual complaint registers for recording complaints of general public related to mining activities. However, in four out of five district offices¹⁵, the status of disposal of the complaints, steps taken to resolve the cases and pendency details, etc. were not being recorded in the respective registers. The status of disposal of complaints was not found on record.

Thus, the system of recording and disposal of complaints, received in physical form, was not proper, indicating poor grievance redressal mechanism.

The Government stated (April 2022) that complaint registers were maintained in each district and action had been taken on the complaints received. Further, the Department has made provision for receiving online complaints in the 'Khanij online' portal.

¹⁴ DMO, Kanker was not maintaining the register while DMOs Balodabazar, Durg and Raipur did not produce the registers before audit for scrutiny.

¹⁵ Except in Janjgir-Champa

The reply is not acceptable as action taken and status of disposal of the complaints received manually were not recorded in the registers.