# SC Order on Goa Mining

## Why in news?

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Supreme Court has recently cancelled the iron ore mining leases of 88 companies in Goa.

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## What led to this?

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- In Goa, the State government has displayed disregard for rules and processes while renewing licences for a second time in 2015.
- It inexplicably chose not to exercise its right to view the licences as fresh leases that require new environmental impact assessments.
- The government in Goa invited a cloud of suspicion by hastily launching the renewal of licences.
- This was just a day after it unveiled a Grant of Mining Leases Policy on November 4, 2014.
- Quite extraordinarily, it issued 31 orders on a single day, January 12, 2015.
- This is apparently to pre-empt the Centre’s Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Ordinance that came into force the same day.
- Besides, the Union Environment Ministry’s Expert Appraisal Committee raised some concerns in 2013.
- It said many of the past leases were issued without approval of the National Board for Wildlife.
- And miners had extracted ore in excess.

- The requirement for clearance from the Central Ground Water Board was ignored.
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- Last year, public protests over contaminated groundwater and fouled air underscored the need for strict environmental controls.
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## What is the significance?

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- The mining operations are to be stopped from March this year till fresh mining leases and environmental clearances are granted.
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- With SC's order, grant of fresh licences and proper accounting of the losses, mining activity in its entirety should begin on a clean slate.
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- Future decisions should be guided solely by the true cost to the environment and to human health.
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- The court order should help restore some balance to the exploitation of iron and manganese ore in ecologically fragile Goa.
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- The order has highlighted the grievous effect of commercial mining activity in absence of clearly laid down and strictly enforced rules.
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- The Supreme Court’s directions provide Goa with an opportunity to change course and become a mainstream tourist State.
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- It can regain its position as a top destination for global visitors and broaden employment in services.
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- Tourist charters need to replace its open cast mines and dust bowls.
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## What is the State government's stance?

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- Goa has argued that the mining industry is crucial to its economy as it brings in foreign exchange.
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- It also provides employment and supports a transport industry.
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- Given that mining has a severe destructive impact on the ecology, resumption of large-scale activity should await a scientific audit.
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**Source: The Hindu**

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