

Environment minister warns against rising illegal sand and gravel mining

Staff Reporter

THE Minister of Environment, Indileni Daniel, has raised alarm over the growing incidence of illegal sand and gravel mining nationwide, warning that unregulated activities pose serious risks to both the environment and local communities.

“The Ministry has noted with serious concern the continued increase in illegal sand and gravel mining activities across various parts of Namibia. These activities are being undertaken without the required Environmental Clearance Certificates (ECCs) issued by the Office of the Environmental Commissioner (OEC), as stipulated under the Environmental Management Act, 2007 (Act No. 7 of 2007),” Daniel said.

She emphasised that any sand and gravel mining activity must be preceded by an environmental impact assessment, the development of an environmental management plan, and the issuance of an ECC by the OEC.

“Illegal sand and gravel mining poses danger to the environment, people, livestock and wildlife, such as land degradation, erosion of riverbanks, damage to infrastructure, destruction of wetlands and agricultural land like Mahangu fields. These impacts threaten human life, water and food security, grazing land and biodiversity. The open pits left behind by illegal sand and gravel mining operations fill with water during the rainy season like now, posing a serious risk to wildlife, livestock and human beings, particularly children,” Daniel warned.

The minister acknowledged the growing demand for sand and gravel driven by national development priorities, including the construction of roads, housing and other infrastructure. However, she stressed that development should not come at the cost of irreversible environmental degradation, noting that proper regulation of sand and gravel mining is essential to balance economic development with environmental protection.

Daniel added that the ministry will be conducting regional stakeholder engagements on Sand and Gravel Mining Regulations to support the implementation and enforcement of the Environmental Management Act, and encouraged all stakeholders to participate.

“In response to the ongoing challenges, the Ministry will soon be undertaking regional stakeholder engagements on Sand and Gravel Mining Regulations. The regulations are a needful ingredient in the implementation and enforcement of the Environmental Management Act. The Ministry therefore encourages all stakeholders to attend these engagements and calls upon all Namibians to desist from illegal sand and gravel mining and to comply fully with the existing environmental laws,” Daniel said.

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