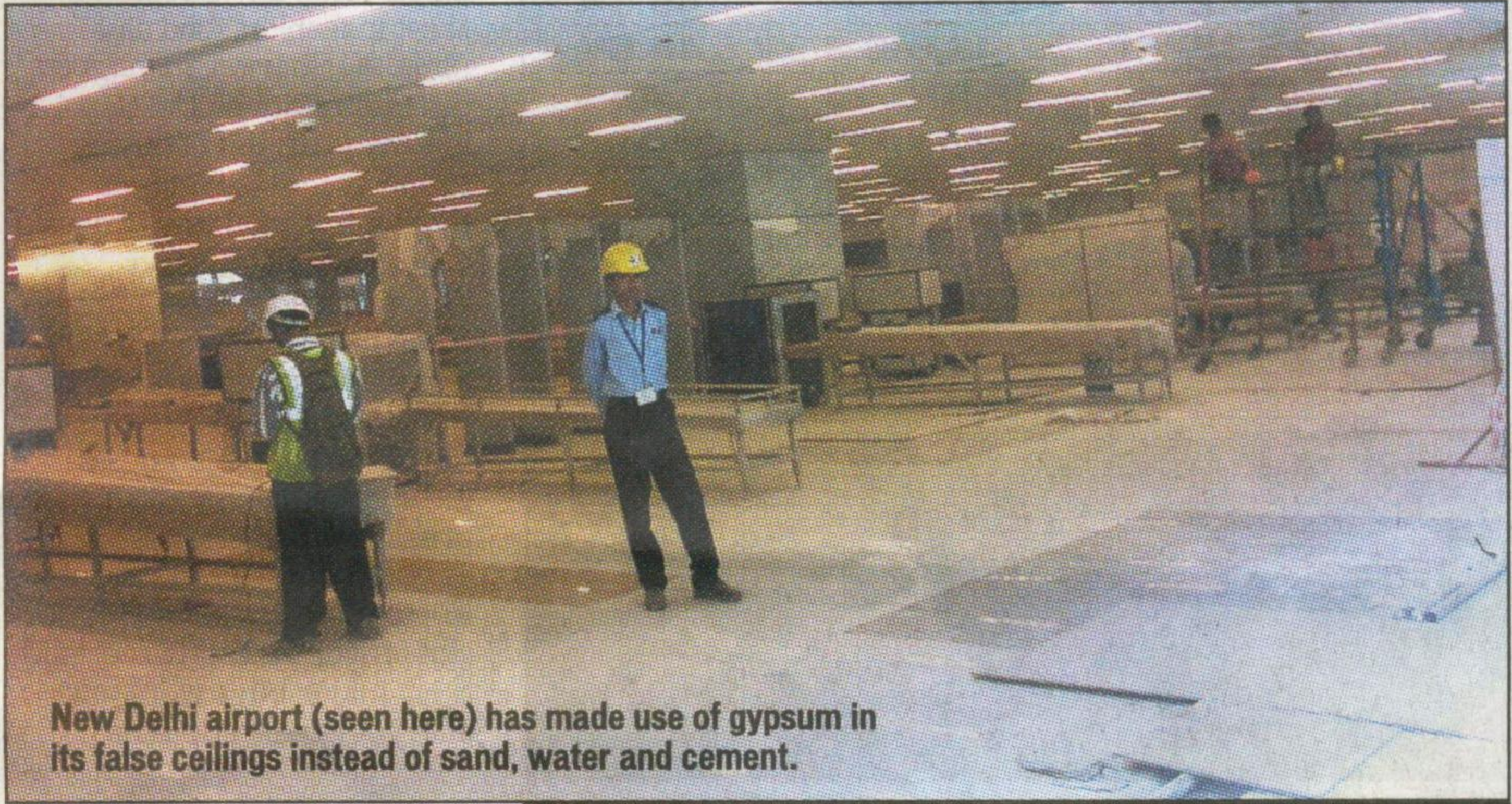


Sand ban stops construction

Builders in Maharashtra have stopped construction following the river sand extraction ban, finds **Sharanya Misra Sharma**



New Delhi airport (seen here) has made use of gypsum in its false ceilings instead of sand, water and cement.

IS GYPSUM THE SOLUTION?

With the recently imposed ban on sand extraction in Maharashtra, builders across the state are being forced to stop the construction of their ongoing projects. Even as the Builders Association of India (BAI) has sought the help of the state government to find an alternative to river sand, an essential material in construction, builders say that they are running out of whatever stock of sand they had saved up since September 24.

“The ban has caused several delays affecting ongoing projects. Also, there has been a rise in unemployment of daily wages workers.

Crushed sand is not only difficult to handle, but also requires more cement for construction, thereby increasing construction cost,” says Rakesh Sanghvi – director, Sanghvi Group of Companies.

The decision by the High Court to ban sand dredging came after a petition was filed by Sagar Shramik Hatpadi Walu Utpadak Sahakari Sanstha, members of which are residents of Mahad, who used to manually extract sand from the river. “Apart from losing our business to big industries coming and extracting this sand, we

■ Hemant Khurana, vice president, marketing and sales, St Gobain Gyproc offers gypsum as a solution, in place of sand, cement and water. Gypsum is a light weight material which is formed as the result of evaporating sea water. This was the material used even in the pyramids of Egypt that have stood the test of time. Gypsum may be used in two forms-

■ It may be used as gypsum plaster boards to create dry walls and false ceilings. This requires a framework that may be made of steel, on which the gypsum plas-

ter board is mounted. “This has excellent insulation properties and is lightweight, so also saves up on construction cost,” says Khurana. In cases where the brick-cement has already been laid for construction, gypsum can be used as plaster for smooth finishing.

PROPERTIES OF GYPSUM

■ Light weight systems - **8 to 10** times lighter than masonry systems.

■ Faster construction - **3 to 4** times faster.

fear environmental damage that can even cause floods. What’s more is that everyone could see that instead of using the stipulated number of machines to extract sand in this area, industries were using many more,” says Anis Jalal, a member of the Sahakari Sanstha. Sumaira Abdulali, an active environmentalist agrees. “Excessive extraction of sand has been known to cause landslides. In fact, a government research in collaboration with IIT Bombay gives alternate solutions to sand. In Scandinavian countries, it is mandatory to use crushed debris of buildings for construction,” she says, adding

that this should be implemented here as well.

Bhagwan Deokar, president, BAI says that their association understands the environmental concerns. “However, we request that there be some allowance or designated areas for sand extraction, while keeping a strict check on the activity. Development and infrastructure must not suffer because of a few who have been involved in illegal extraction,” he adds.

A spokesperson from Omkar Realtors points out that fortunately, they have only two ongoing projects at the moment. “They will have to be delayed indefinitely,” he says.