



The Sentinel

of this land, for its people

Is forest wealth of Barak Valley on rampant loot?

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SILCHAR: This question is impinging the minds of people of south Assam, quite logically, looking at the open plunder of forest materials along Madhurariver. Of course, this phenomenon is unexpected in BJP regime at Dispur. But this is now the reality of the day. The Sentinel reported it umpteen times after receiving written complaints from people living on the bank of the river originating from North Cachar Hills and merging with Barak near this town. In the latest public complaint addressed directly to Chief Minister [Sarbanand Sonowal](#) with clear signal how the protectors of forest are hand in glove with the anti social elements, adding and abetting the crime. Still surprising, Forest Minister of Assam, Parimal Suklabaidya, happens to be the native of the land. Perhaps, he is too busy with other portfolios to look into such silly public complaint.

A strong public resentment is brewing and boiling among the people settled all along the river with vegetations and agricultural products as well as horticulture as means of survival. Not only their products but the land and the settlements are threatened due to reckless digging and extract of stones and other forest materials from the river illegally. The looters of forest wealth and the officials of the department concerned of Udharbond circle of the area have been named and identified and their modus operandi exposed in the letter to the Chief Minister.

The complainants, the peaceful settlers of the trouble zone, living there for the last few decades, are gravely alarmed as large force of labours are engaged to dig and extract boulders and sand from the river bed, causing health hazards to people of the area. The sound, dust and air pollution have made their life miserable. Finding the situation unbearable, the people went to Madhura beat office around midday of January 8 with a request to put a halt to the illegal activities. They were rather asked to stop complaining or else face the consequences for that. In order to shut their mouth, the complaint letter signed by 71 aggrieved people alleged false case was filed against some of them on fictitious grounds at Udharbond police station.

The very geography of Madhurariver has been changed as quarrying has increased indiscriminately by stone mafias, businessmen and their associates by deploying 25 excavators and 250 to 300 trippers every day. River water, a source of settlers' drinking water, is muddy and polluted and a cause of stomach disorders for many. To make it more worst, stone crushers are working round the clock in flagrant violation of Prevention and Control of Air Pollution Act, 1981 as well as The Assam Stone Crusher Establishment and Regulation Rules 2013. Even the directive of the Gauhati High Court to extract stones manually in the specified upper reaches of the river is observed more in breach than in compliance.

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