

Over 20 Illegal Sawmills Reportedly Operating Across Sivasagar, Charaideo



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Amid increasing concerns over climate change and environmental degradation, allegations regarding the unchecked operation of illegal sawmills across the undivided Sivasagar district have sparked fresh concerns about the gradual depletion of forest resources in the region.

Although the erstwhile Sivasagar district has since been bifurcated into Sivasagar and Charaideo districts, both areas continue to fall under a single forest division headed by one Divisional Forest Officer (DFO). Environmental activists and local residents have alleged that numerous illegal sawmills are operating across several forest ranges and beat office jurisdictions without adequate monitoring or enforcement by the forest department.

According to sources involved in environmental conservation activities, licensed sawmills equipped with band saw machines are permitted to process timber only up to a prescribed size limit of 10 inches. Such mills are not authorised to cut or process large round logs. However, it is alleged that several sawmills are violating these regulations by using larger-capacity machines to process sizeable timber logs allegedly sourced through illegal means.

Sources further claim that while approved band saw machines for licensed mills are restricted to a maximum cutting capacity of 10 inches, a number of mills are reportedly operating machinery exceeding this limit. Despite these alleged violations, concerns have been raised over the continued renewal of licences for some of these establishments.

Environmental activists have also alleged that the lack of effective enforcement has contributed to the mushrooming of illegal sawmills across the region. These units are reportedly engaged in large-scale timber processing activities on a daily basis, raising questions about the effectiveness of existing monitoring mechanisms.

The alleged illegal operations are reported from several locations, including Morunai, Hahchara Kujibali, Betbari, Chengelibari and Bihubar under the Sivasagar Range; Santak Bazaar, Missing Gaon and Chengdhora Gaon under the Bihubar Forest Beat Office; Tengapukhuri Mohan Gaon and Rohdai Tiniali under the Sonari Range; and Geleki and Namti Missajan under the Halwating Beat Office.

Similar allegations have emerged from areas in Charaideo district, including Mathurapur, Chakaliya, Engera, Charimuria and Lakuwa, as well as locations along the Assam-Nagaland border under the Nazira constituency.

Local sources estimate that more than twenty illegal sawmills may be operating across the region.

Concerned citizens have warned that unless immediate steps are taken to identify and dismantle such illegal operations, the area's forest cover could continue to shrink, posing serious risks to biodiversity, ecological balance and long-term environmental sustainability.

The allegations have triggered growing concern among residents, who are urging the forest department and district authorities to conduct thorough inspections and take stringent action against any illegal timber processing activities found to be in violation of the law.

Forest department officials were unavailable for comment at the time of filing this report.



SK Hasan

Freelance journalist, Nazira, Sivasagar district.

BY SK HASAN

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