

Save Geleki Forest: Locals Demand Action Against Encroachers



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SK Hasan 10 September 2025 31346 views

The Geleki Reserved Forest in Assam, once a thriving ecological zone, is now under grave threat due to rampant encroachments by tea estates and authorities from neighbouring Nagaland. Despite statewide eviction drives against land grabbers, the Assam government has failed to address this long-standing issue, raising serious concerns among locals.

Declared a reserved forest in 1918, Geleki covered a total area of 5,137 hectares. Today, more than 4,000 hectares are reportedly under illegal occupation. Tea estates such as Borchila, Athkhel, Geleki, Amguri, and Tipuk have allegedly taken over large tracts of land. In addition, authorities from Nagaland are accused of gradually encroaching into the forest and disputed border areas.

Residents and activists argue that while the government has acted swiftly against local encroachers elsewhere in Assam, it has remained conspicuously silent on these large-scale occupations. The alleged encroachments by powerful tea gardens and cross-border entities are believed to be happening with the government's knowledge, leading to accusations of selective action and negligence.

"The inaction of the government is emboldening encroachers and endangering the forest. If immediate steps are not taken, the consequences will be irreversible," warned concerned locals, who have appealed directly to Chief Minister Dr. Himanta Biswa Sarma for intervention.

The Geleki Reserved Forest is home to rich biodiversity and plays a critical role in maintaining ecological balance in the region. Environmentalists caution that continued destruction of the forest will not only disrupt wildlife habitats but also worsen the environmental crisis faced by local communities.

Locals are demanding urgent eviction drives, restoration of encroached land, and stronger protection measures. They insist that safeguarding Geleki is not just an environmental concern but also a question of the government's accountability.

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BY SK HASAN

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