

JOINT PRESS RELEASE

Portion (about 2.5 Ha) of Government plantation raised in 1983 at Ngurawi tlang which is also a part of Village Safety Reserve at the outskirts of Darlawn town where more than 600 mature Pine trees were standing has been illegally allotted and distributed for house sites by Darlawn Venghlun Village Council and as many as 48 mature Pine trees were indiscriminately felled in February, 2022 while clearing the line for construction of motorable road across the plantation without obtaining permission from the competent authority.

As instructed by the DFO, Darlawn, the Range Forest Officer, Darlawn wrote to the President of the Village Council twice in March, 2022 to stop the illegal tree felling and the road construction inside Government plantation area, and planted about 300 seedlings in July, 2022 for gap filling in the area where trees were felled. In August, 2022, the DFO and DLAO, Aizawl District also wrote to the President of the Village Council informing him of the offence committed by them and to stop the illegal activities.

Instead of obeying the orders of the DFO, DLAO and the Range Officer, the road construction was continued and another 15 Pine trees were also felled in the process and the newly planted seedlings were also destroyed in August, 2022. On 28.9.2022, Darlawn Venghlun VC organized a local Gram Sabha meeting in which it was resolved, among others, that Pu Lalnunsanga Khawlhing, DFO, Darlawn was barred from entering Darlawn Venghlun area until further order.

In this regard, the Indian Forest Service Association, Mizoram and the Mizoram Forest Service Association would like to bring out the following points for the information of all concerned.-

1. It is a pity, unfortunate and shameful that the Village Council, Darlawn Venghlun, instead of protecting the beautiful Pine forest which serves as green lung for Darlawn town, encroached upon the Pine forest as well as Village Safety Reserve by allotting the forest land for house sites and forcefully constructing a motorable road and destroying the mature Pine trees therein.
2. The above actions of the Village Council, Darlawn Venghlun constitute offences under the following laws and the Constitution of India.-
 - a) Section 2 of the Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 – “Use of forest land (Government plantation & Village Safety Reserve) for non-forest purpose without permission”;
 - b) Section 13(a) of the Mizoram (Forest) Act, 1955 – “Use of portion of Village Safety Reserve and felling of trees therein without permission”;
 - c) IPC 186 – “Obstructing public servant in discharge of public functions or duties”;
 - d) IPC 188 – “Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant”;
 - e) IPC 425 & 427 – “Mischief causing damage and loss to Government property”;
 - f) Constitution: Article 19(1)(d) – “Right to move freely throughout the territory of India”.
3. Besides, the actions of the said Village Council also violate the Supreme Court’s order dated 12.12.1996 that prohibits felling of trees in any forest without prior approval of the competent authority.
4. We strongly object and condemn the destruction of Government-made Pine forest as well as the Village Safety Reserve in violation of the existing laws and orders in force in the State. We also strongly condemn the resolution of the Gram Sabha that bars Pu Lalnunsanga Khawlhing, DFO, Darlawn from entering Darlawn Venghlun area where the DFO’s office and residence are located thereby preventing him from attending his office and performing official duties in his headquarters.

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