Eviction drive launched in Assam's reserve forest

By Utpal Parashar

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Deputy commissioner Sumit Sattawan said around 500 families living illegally in the forest were issued eviction notices and almost all of them voluntarily brought down encroachments.

Hundreds of security and forest personnel have been deployed for the removal of encroachments over a 500-hectare area under Pabha Reserve Forest in Assam's Lakhimpur district.
Deputy commissioner Sumit Sattawan said around 500 families living illegally in the forest were issued eviction notices and almost all of them voluntarily brought down encroachments and moved elsewhere.

"Since most families have left, the drive would involve razing structures still standing in the area. The eviction is going smoothly, but since it is a big area, we expect to complete it by Wednesday evening," Sattawan said.

Authorities carried out a mock eviction drill on Sunday to ensure that the drive concludes smoothly. Around 800 personnel from Assam Police, Central Reserve Police Force, and forest department have been deployed for the drive.

The government in September told the state assembly that 4,449 families, including 2153 in Darrang, 805 in Hojai district’s Lumding Reserve Forest, and 404 in Dhubri, have been evicted from government lands since May 2021 when the Bharatiya Janata Party-led returned to power.
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Most evictions have been peaceful. Two persons were killed in police firing and at least 20 were injured at Dholpur in Darrang in September last year when clashes between police and residents erupted during one of the first such drives.

The government launched the drive to free land from alleged encroachers and start agricultural and other allied activities by engaging indigenous people.

Two eviction drives were conducted near Vaishnavite monasteries last month. They included the removal of settlements from around 330-acre land around Batadraba Than, the birthplace of 15th-16th century saint-scholar and socio-religious reformer Srimanta Sankardev.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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Utpal is a Senior Assistant Editor based in Guwahati. He covers seven states of North-East India and heads the editorial team for the region. He was previously based in Kathmandu, Dehradun and Delhi with Hindustan Times.

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11 out of 12 ministers in the Nagaland assembly 2023 are crorepatis while chief minister Neiphiu Rio has over ₹45 crore in declared assets, making him the wealthiest among the others, poll watchdog association of democratic reforms (ADR) revealed on Thursday.
ADR and the Nagaland election watch analysed the self-sworn affidavits of the minister in the Nagaland assembly and noted that all 12 ministers had no pending criminal cases against them.

Eight ministers had declared their education qualification was between Class 8th and 12th pass whereas the remaining four had a graduation degree.

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This is also the first time that a woman minister has been elected in the Nagaland assembly.

**Nationalist Democratic Progressive Party (NDPP)’s Salhoutuonuo Kruse** is the only woman in the Nagaland assembly from the Western Angami constituency.

Kruse has studied till Class 12 and has recorded assets of over ₹13 crore, making her the third richest minister in the Nagaland assembly.

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The report further noted that eight of the 12 ministers had declared their age between 51 and 80 while the other four were aged between 41 and 50.

The Nagaland legislative assembly elections were held in the state on February 27 this year for the 60-member assembly. The results were declared on March 2.

The alliance of the NDPP and the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) won the elections with a majority of seats (37), while seven other parties and four independent candidates shared the 23 remaining seats.

The Nationalist Congress Party emerged as the largest opposition party with seven seats, followed by the Naga Peoples Front with five seats. Congress, which contested on 23 seats failed to win any.
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