

Annotated listings - 2 case study finalise

(3)

4/12

12.2

Nov 14

The tribune / Woes of Chail residents

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In a representation to the President, Dr A.P.J. Abdul Kalam, residents of Chail have demanded the denotification of their residential area. Contending that a population of about 15,000 was being denied land rights in the present set-up despite having inhabited the area for decades now the residents in their representation have requested the President to redress, their grievances. While no committee was constituted to gauge public opinion from the seven panchayats of the Chail area and two panchayats of Shimla being affected by this notification, the government arbitrarily declared it as a wildlife sanctuary in 1999. Following this, no infrastructural development could take place in the area and people were facing problems even to avail basic facilities like fodder and firewood from the forest, lamented the residents. The fact that the area falls in a wildlife sanctuary has made the problem more complex and repeated petitioning of the case before the central government by various state governments has yielded no result. Having settled on the forest about a century ago on the "shahi farman" issued by the then ruler of Patiala, the residents were now being denied the permission to even repair their dwellings with the result that the majority of the houses were now in a dilapidated condition. The officials in the Wildlife Department informed that despite sending the case to the central government a number of times, no success could be achieved in getting the area denotified. Efforts made by successive governments in getting the land denotified have proved unsuccessful. The then BJP government headed by Mr Shanta Kumar had appointed a Cabinet subcommittee to look into the matter. However, the committee never met. The then Congress Government headed by Mr Virbhadra Singh, at its Cabinet meeting on December 4, 1994, decided to ask the Centre to denotify the forest area of 25 bighas on which the houses have been constructed. According to an official survey, 3,600 bighas were under encroachment at Chail, but denotification was being sought for only 25 bighas where people resided. Interestingly, a number of government departments are on the list of encroachers on forest land. These included the Forest Department, the HPTDC, the Defence Department, the PWD, the IPH, the Horticulture, the Health, the HPSEB, the Telecommunications and the Animal Husbandry Departments. The residents also plead that since the town had come into existence much before the enactment of the Forest Conservation Act, 1980, the government should not delay getting the area denotified. The area was first notified as a first class forest by the Pepsu government on January 4, 1953. A stretch of 25 bighas was gifted to the people for construction of houses and markets. Later in the year, the then government declared the forest as a reserve first class forest as per a gazette notification. Thereafter, five plots were openly auctioned by the Agriculture Department and leased to the locals. The government collected the lease amount from these plots till the year 1980. With the initiation of land settlement in 1982, about 56 cases were selected and about 108 deodar trees were marked which were located around the government buildings.

① HPTDC

District

Banswara

Name of village

Common title

S.H. No.

Fod/Heav by farm