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Resolution adopted to check illegal mining



CHOTEKALKASA, APR 11: A FINE example of PESA (Panchayat Extension in Scheduled Area) at work, has been reported in a non-descript Chotekalasa Panchayat in Chauki developmental block of Rajnandgaon district. Villagers under the Panchayat, that comprises of people from Chotekalkasa and Kumli, by passing a resolution in the Gram Sabha have stopped the 'illegal' stone mining in their area.

They also took the decision not to use the resources for commercial purposes and save the resource for the future generation's use as well as for the developmental purposes in the Panchayat limit.

After the resolution was passed in the Gram Sabha on Jan 28 this year, the Contractor was informed about it and asked not to continue his activities. "We took the decision as the contractor had not paid the royalty to

the Panchayat for last

three years during which he mined stones.

Besides, in the greater interest of the Panchayat we have also decided not to exploit the resource for commercial purpose. We are saving it for our future generation as well as for the development purpose of our own Panchayat," said Puralal Jureshiya, the Sarpanch.

The contractor was mining stones from the area without any public interference. Nor anybody had given a damn to his activities.

However this was changed- as per his own admission by the Sarpanch, a well qualified tribal having a B.Tech in mechanical engineering under his belt got in contact with the representatives of JSS, a PACS partner NGO working in the area of awareness generation and capacity building.

Getting to know about the finer points of Panchayat Act as well as the special provisions of PESA that allowed the villagers take decision as

per their convenience to sustain their livelihood, Jureshiya checked the financials of the Panchayat to know whether the Contractor has given any royalty to the Panchayat for the mining activities he has done for the last three years.

"I personally checked all the files and spoke to previous Panchayat representatives. After much deliberation it came out that the permission for mining was given by the previous Sarpanch, there was no sight of royalty deposited with the Panchayat, though. Then the matter was circulated to the villagers," Jureshiya added. The matter was taken up at the Gram Sabha on Jan 28 this year where all the vil-

of the resolution citing as to how and why it was passed were forwarded to the concerned

state government officials. Will not this decision affect the earnings of the local people who were working under the contractor for long? Pat came the reply. "We will do other work. If possible we will ask the

Sarpanch to arrange works for us.

But the decision was taken in the greater interests of the Panchayat and we stand by it," said Rein Singh, a villager of Kumli. Other villagers namely Santuram, Heeralal and others also expressed their view in the same manner.

With the villagers using the Gram Sabha for



lagers were unanimous on issuing a blanket ban on the mining activities at the site. The decision was later passed on to the contractor.

The way the matter was dealt with had no scope for it being scuttled by the contractor or other vested interests. Copies

safeguarding their own and the Panchayat's election, this could well be a small victory but a big leap forward in strengthening the Panchayatiraj Institutions really vibrant and effective. It is also a step forward in establishing resident's right in local resources.