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## **ANTHROPOLOGY SNIPPET-459**



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**The tribal areas of the Rajmahal Hills are under threat of extinction due to excessive mining.**



**Stone mining in Santhal Parganas, Rajmahal Hills, is damaging to the local age-old fossils. The local Pahadiya community are being forced to live under constant environmental degradation as a result of illicit mining.**

Dumka: Stone mining in Santhal Parganas, Rajmahal Hills, is not only damaging to the local age-old fossils, but it also poses a danger to the local Pahadiya community. The Sourya Pahadiyas (one of the different pahadiya sects) of Chhoti Pachrukhi village in Borio block of Sahebganj district are now being forced to live under constant environmental degradation as well as decreasing opportunities for agriculture and livelihood as a result of illicit mining. Chhoti Pachrukhi and the surrounding villages have become used to repeat earth vibrations as explosions are effected frequently in dozens of stone-mining units in the area. When an explosion occurs in the stone quarries around our village, it seems as if earthquakes are occurring.

Dust particles emanating from stone crusher plants are also affecting the local flora and fauna, he said. Due to rampant mining activities, all natural streams on the hilltops have either dried up or are on the verge of disappearing. These used to be the only source of drinking water and irrigation, said Pahadiya, adding that his community's ability to obtain forest produce and sell them for food has also been affected. The Sahebganj and Pakur districts are also known for their possession of rare fossils.

It is an issue of great worry for many people. According to him, the rare fossils,

which can reveal the existence of life in that period, are being excavated indiscriminately and transported in large quantities to far-off places. Kumar suggested that the unexplained mining industry should be immediately stopped to help the endangered tribal groups and the local ecosystem. With the administrative parties turning a blind eye to the problem, a number of communities like Chhoti Pachrukhi, Amjola, Pangdo, Dhokuti, and Gurmi are facing a danger.

Hembrom recently provoked a ruckus by blocking the movement of stone chips and highlighting the issue on the assembly floor. Vibhuti Kumar, a district mining officer, denied having any knowledge of the situation of the Pahadiya community. However, he said that proper precautions would be taken against illicit mining. He also stated that attempts to tackle all forms of illicit mining are ongoing.

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