

## Villagers detain two forest officials

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Villagers of Khairbahal held two forest officials hostage on Wednesday, suspecting their involvement in smuggling of timber. The two officials are Raiboga forester Niranjan Dharua and forest guard Bijay Kaler.

The deadlock arising out of the situation continued till Thursday noon and normalcy restored round 3.30 pm.

Reports said villagers caught hold of the two forest personnel while about 25 logs of timber were carried in a trolley attached to a tractor on Wednesday night without preparing the seizure list. The timber was brought from the nearby forested village Dholkana. Receiving information, police rushed to the spot in the night and negotiation ended after 20 hours.

Villagers alleged that in a conspiracy the Van Sanrakshan Samiti (VVS) at Dholkana village was constituted instead of the Forest Rights Committee (FRC) and timber was being smuggled through the VSS. They also demanded action against the forest personnel.

They relented only after being promised a thorough investigation and formation of FRC at Dhokana village.

DFO Behera said the timber was being brought to the Raiboga section office and prima facie it appears that the forester had no mala fide intention.