

Tribal Tiff

The Government sits up as the Koyas hit the warpath

THE KOYA TRIBALS OF THE West Godavari district are fighting to reoccupy their lands. And after a non-tribal farmer, Simhadri Gopala Rao, was killed by the Koyas in Palacharala Rajavaram village in June, panic has set in. Nearly 4,000 acres of land in the district is

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The Koya tribals: fighting for land

caught in litigation, and many more are illegally occupied by non-tribals. Last week, the high court directed the state Government to restore undisputed land to tribals within two months, settle land disputes pending before collectors within a specified time, review cases in which tribals are accused of land grabbing and close cases in which they have been booked for minor offences.

The Chandrababu Naidu Government which had let the issue simmer for long, has now ordered a verification of land records in all the 101 villages of West Godavari. The problem stems from an influx of non-tribals from the Godavari delta to grab tribal land. Any deal transferring land from a tribal to a non-tribal is void according to the Agency Tracts Interest and Land Transfer Act of 1917. It could be almost impossible to seek out all the fake sale deeds, and experts believe that only a fresh survey will provide a solution. With the tribals getting restive, time may be running out for the state Government. —AMARNATH K. MENON