

Govt exploiting tribals

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Express News Service

Kakinada, June 24: 'Sakti' a voluntary organisation working for the welfare of tribals complained to Mr. A. Cherigappa, secretary to Social Welfare dept that tribals were being cheated by Government departments by not implementing minimum wages. 'Sakti' submitted a copy of letter to the district collector here on Saturday.

While daily wage under Minimum Wages Act in Roads and Buildings is Rs. 18.70/- only Rs. 17/- at Maredumilli Rs. 16/- at Rampachodavaram and Rs. 18/- at Addateegala are being paid by the contractors who are executing Tribal Welfare and R and B department works.

Further the Tribal Welfare department [Engineering] which executes certain works on its own is booking daily wages which is Rs. 18-25/- and pays daily wage as above Rs. 16/- Rs. 17/- Rs. 18/-. One can verify any muster rolls in the department and enquire the labourers about the wages paid. This is sheer cheating of tribals by Government agencies themselves who are meant for tribal welfare. Nowhere wage slips are given. Sakti insisted minimum wages at least in tender works where 60% extra estimate is allowed to contractors under 'Accelerated Action Plan'.

While 55 paise rate prescribed by the Government for a bundle of beedi leaves, the contractors in Gangavaram, Devipatnam and Rampachodavaram mandals are

paying Rs. 0-50 ps only.

In forest and timber operations [which cover paper mills etc.] ~~low~~ wages were ^{not revised} paid since 1984. Sakti had filed a writ petition against government for immediate revision of wages.

Any worker continuously working for 60 days is eligible for PF, ESI, bonus etc. which our tribal labourers in forest works are not getting. These labourers are working in the same bamboo coupes for 30 to 40 years.

In laterite quarters also the workers are demanding minimum wages. 'Sakti' drew the attention of project officer ITDA at Rampachodavaram through a hunger strike during April, 27-31 and he promised ~~me~~ that he shall see that they are enforced. Still the Labour department did not conduct any inspection. There are several judgments that the departments under which the works are executed cannot escape this responsibility.

Revolutionaries