

# Neglected tribals vow to avenge

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Tribals & Dev

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KAKINADA, July 18 - The transfer of officers holding key posts in the tribal welfare department in East Godavari, began in March when Mr Neerabh K Prasad, sub-collector, got a premature transfer.

He was holding the special deputy collector (SDC) post for implementing land transfer regulations. Some of the judgments he delivered before leaving on the lands of tribals are yet to be implemented. In Devipatnam mandal, పట్టణం a number of people were murdered in rivalry between Rytu Coolie Sangham and non-tribals the sub-collector reallocated the lands to tribals held by the non-tribals.

Taking advantage of police "repression" after the blasting of DSP's jeep at Rajavommangi, and the murder of Mr Karam Baburao, a Congress leader the non-tribals intimidated the tribals and snatched away their lands. The post of SDC is still vacant. In some cases, the handing over of land to tribals is stayed.

The government outlook has changed with the change of the chief minister. There was no more in-charge minister or official in-charge of accelerated action plan. Even the important officers posts are kept vacant. Though there are two ministers in the district, no one has visited the tribal areas even for the mourning of the DSP killed in the jeep blast.

The police had allegedly failed to arrest the accused in the murder case of Rytu Coolie Sangam leader Mr Nakka Raghava but reportedly succeeded in creating a reign of terror in Devipatnam mandal and in arresting as many as 70 tribals ac-

cused in the case of murder of rowdy sheeter Karam Baburao.

It is clear that the present regime is not interested in improving the lot of tribals, tribal leaders alleged. But the tribals will retaliate in the long run, they warned. "The government is losing its right to govern by distancing itself further and further to the problems of tribals" they alleged.

Hundreds of 'D' pattas issued to non-tribals were cancelled. Whether the lands were assigned to tribals and whether they had taken possession and cultivating them is a big question mark. Several cases were filed for the cancellation of pattas of non-tribals belonging to Muttah lands. It is reliably learnt that a cell was created in the district collectorate, but so far the process of cancelling the pattas was not initiated. Whenever a tribal is harassed by police or a non-tribal, he approaches the RDO. He directs them to approach the concerned MROs, but Addateegala MRO who is incharge of Rajavommangi and Gangavaram mandals was allegedly not available for tribals.

The project officer of ITDA (Integrated Tribal Development Agency) was transferred in April. The post is lying vacant. The previous project officer, Mr. P.V. Ramesh has developed a special monitoring cell (S.M.C) to monitor the programmes in which Government has a special interest. So the main ITDA office was neglected.

One can see in the ITDA office, a colour T.V. connected with a dish antenna with two film shows every week. The public grievances cell was monitored by the S.M.C. The officer allegedly did not develop the

custom of being available regularly once in a week and allow the petitioners to follow up the action taken regarding their grievance.

One wonders what experiments the ITDA, East Godavari, has made in reaching the people. No doubt the ITDA is meeting the tribals but it did not systematise the monitoring of the problems. So the result is disappointment at both ends, people feel. Thousands of pairs of bullocks were distributed on subsidy. Still tribals demand more bullocks. So the ITDA has mobilised the tribals to pay Rs. 500 so that the rest of the amount can be met by the government. Thousands of tribals deposited the money.

The ITDA in the end realised that it is impossible to meet the demand. After a year of waiting, the tribals are withdrawing their deposits.

The East Godavari is one of the districts covered by the IFAD (International Fund for Agricultural Development) programme. One can imagine the fate of its grounding in the absence of the decision-making officers. When there are other pressing works, such as pushkarams and World Bank works, to hold these posts in addition, has become quite difficult to the district officers.

The tribal contractors as well the labourers are up in arms against the engineering department. Neither these contractors are getting the bills nor the tribals minimum wages. The executive engineer (tribal welfare) as principle employer is facing several changes for not implementing the minimum wages.

At the crucial time of school admissions, and formulation of academic policies, the district tribal welfare officer post is vacant. The

officials used to claim 83 per cent enrolment of tribal children in the schools. But one wonders whether the schools are functioning. The villagers of Tativada in Rampachodavaram mandal complained several times that a teacher was not at all opening the school. The officials did not respond. Then they displayed a banner on Devipatnam-Rampachodavaram road which reads that "the teacher is not working - we do not want the school" It has attracted the attention of incharge officer, ITDA. He immediately ordered cut in the salary of the teacher.

The mobile courts are intended to deliver speedy justice to tribals. These courts were created under accelerated action plan to counter the people's courts of naxalites. These courts are "mobile" in name. But the cases are not "moving". A woman from Maredumilli appealed to the court to get back her 3-month-old child taken by her husband and asked for maintenance since the husband has deserted her. Fed up with the adjournments, she stopped going to the court. Similarly one Bapanamma is getting adjournments in a case remanded by the district court. These new courts are in no way new, since the Criminal Procedure Code and trial procedure are no way different.

The Girijan Cooperative Corporation (GCC) has stopped the purchase of tamarind from May 31. The idea for this deadline is that after summer tamarind turns black and do not fetch a good rate in the open market.

Tribals have suffered a lot during the Gangamma festival, which falls on May 31.