

"Power projects displacing tribals in Madhya Pradesh"

Staff Reporter



The Hindu CPI(M) Polit Bureau member Brinda Karat. File Photo: Sushil Kumar Verma

Communist Party of India-Marxist (CPI-M) leader Brinda Karat has expressed concern over irregularities in the implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA) and displacement caused due to power projects in the Anuppur and Shahdol districts of the State.

In the wake of the National Convention of Scheduled Tribes to be held in New Delhi on June 12 and 13 this year, Ms.Karat was here for a two-day visit of the tribal areas of the state. She interacted with several women and men from 14 villages of the two districts.

"I have observed that the implementation of the FRA, the MREGA and the PDS is far from satisfactory in these tribal dominated regions," Ms.Karat told *The Hindu* over phone.

"There is a very strong need for a universal Public Distribution System here as there are a lot of families that own land which is unproductive. This disqualifies them from being identified as BPL, and as a result they face food insecurity," said Mr.Karat.

Ms.Karat also expressed concern over the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Rights) Act in the region. Citing the case of one Buli Bai from Bamuna village whose land was allegedly taken away from her despite all documentary evidence, Ms.Karat pointed out that the act's implementation was fraught with lack of assistance and absence of commitment on the part of authorities.

"The forest department is not the nodal agency for the FRA and yet it has been intervening negatively to impede the implementation of the act by not providing claimants with relevant documents and registering false cases against them," she said.

Another issue raised by Ms.Karat was regarding the procurement and pricing of tendu leaves, which is identified as minor forest produce under the act.

"Government procurement centres are virtually non-existent and as a result private players rule the procurement process with arbitrary pricing. Prices are as low as Rs.55 for a bundle of 5000 leaves, which is much lower than the minimum support price (MSP)," she pointed out.

The CPI-M leader also spoke out against displacement of tribal populations caused due to land acquisition for power projects.

"The New India power project and the Moser Baer power project, which are yet to receive environmental clearances, have already initiated acquiring land with the help of local authorities leading to displacement of tribals like in the Komani village," said Ms.Karat.

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