



By Express News Service

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Hands tied, govt settles land issues of tribals

BHUBANESWAR: Its tribal population going through a critical phase of alienation, Orissa may well be among the top states in India to make the best implementation of the historic Forest Rights Act, 2006, which seeks to restore the land rights to the indigenous population.

In Orissa, the latest estimate says the Government has distributed over 86,000 titles under the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, by December second week. Interesting as it may sound, close to 90 per cent of such titles is in 15 Maoist-affected districts. To be precise, 78,011 titles have so far been distributed in these areas.

It is ironic to note that in these tribal pockets, uprising is at its peak with the people revolting against land grabbing and displacement taking to violent means of resistance.

A glance at the claims point out that the Forest Rights Committee received a good 3,22,590 claims of which 2,86,006 were verified and sent to gram sabhas.

The gram sabha-level committee approved 2,13,666 claims recommending them for titles to the sub-divisional-level committees which verified the cases and in turn sent 99,868 claims to the district-level committees (DLCs). Finally, the DLCs gave a green signal to 88,136 claims for issue of title.

With the Centre mounting pressure for expeditious disposal and Maoist growth taking its toll, the State moved and it shows in the results. Of the 86,878 titles distributed yet, 13,321 titles are in Malkangiri alone. The southern most district is the hotbed of Maoists and is virtually at the mercy of the ultras now.

“It’s very important to note that 17 per cent of these title certificates so far distributed in the 15-affected districts are in Malkangiri alone which at the same time account for 25 per cent (31,570 acre) land. Is it the fear which has driven the Government to do what it would not otherwise have done?” says an activist.

The trend shows in Koraput too. The number of title certificates so far been distributed stands at 13,203 which translates into 21,784 acre land. It would be difficult to ignore what impact the uprising by Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha may have had on the administration which has attempted, and successfully too, to deal with the situation with an iron hand.

For other Maoist-affected districts like Gajapati, Rayagada, Sambalpur and Sundargarh, the rate of title distribution is very high. It was not before an uprising in Narayanpatna earlier this year which witnessed forcible acquisition and cultivation of land by the tribals that forced the Government to take notice and direct quick disposal of the title certificates.

Interestingly, of 1,38,004 acre land for which title certificates have been distributed, 1,25,401 acre are in tribal districts of Mayurbhanj, Jajpur, Nayagarh, Deogarh, Dhenkanal, Keonjhar, Sambalpur, Sundargarh, Gajapati, Ganjam, Kandhamal, Koraput, Malkangiri, Nabarangpur and Rayagada.

So far, 3,551 primitive tribal groups have been issued the titles accounting for over 5,559 acre land.

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