

Govt. is playing with the fate of Kendu leaf pluckers: CSD

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Bhubaneswar: State government has taken decision to deregulate Kendu Leaf (KL) business only in Nabarangpur Kendu Leaf Division (KLD), and left other 18 KLDs of the state out of the benefit. But it is boasting to be the first state in the country recognizing ownership rights to Gram Panchayat. This is an ample example how government is playing with the life of the poor people of the state with false promise and exaggerated propagandas. 8 lakh families engaged in kendu leaf business, today an organization advocating the community right since 2006 alleged.

Today in a press meet Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD) vehemently criticized Odisha government, for its faulty implementation of the pro-

poor schemes. It said sudden deregulating KL collection and sale in Nabarangpur District can jeopardize the economic life of the traditional KL Pluckers; most of them belong to the poor tribal and backward community. Gopinath Majhi, State Convener of the Organization said, simply asking the Gram Sabhas to take over the KL trade without making the pluckers aware on their rights, responsibility, without proper organization setup is likely to throw them into risk. Further he said, “The government is not at all serious for the KL pluckers’ welfare, rather it is playing a mischief. It is a clear indication of double standard of the government”

Braja Kishore Singh Bhoi, Zilla Adivasi Kalyan Sangh (District Tribal Welfare Organization), Bolangir condemned the government move and said, “ KL business has never been in loss and its price has been increased year by year. While other major KL producing states like Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Maharashtra have shared the maximum income (60% to 80%) with the pluckers abolishing State’s Royalty On KL, Odisha continued its KL pluckers y sharing only 17% of the final auction price of KL. Besides this the average price return to a plucker in Odisha is abysmally low i.e. 730Rs per standard bag in 2011 compared with 1237Rs in MP and 3000-5000 in Maharashtra.

Alleging all the schemes are a shrew conspiracy of the forest department CSD demanded to extend ownership right of the Kendu leaf in the Minor Forest Products, recognized under FRA 2006, SCST department should take control of the KL operation from Forest Deptt., and transfer state’s control over KL operation to pluckers’ community.