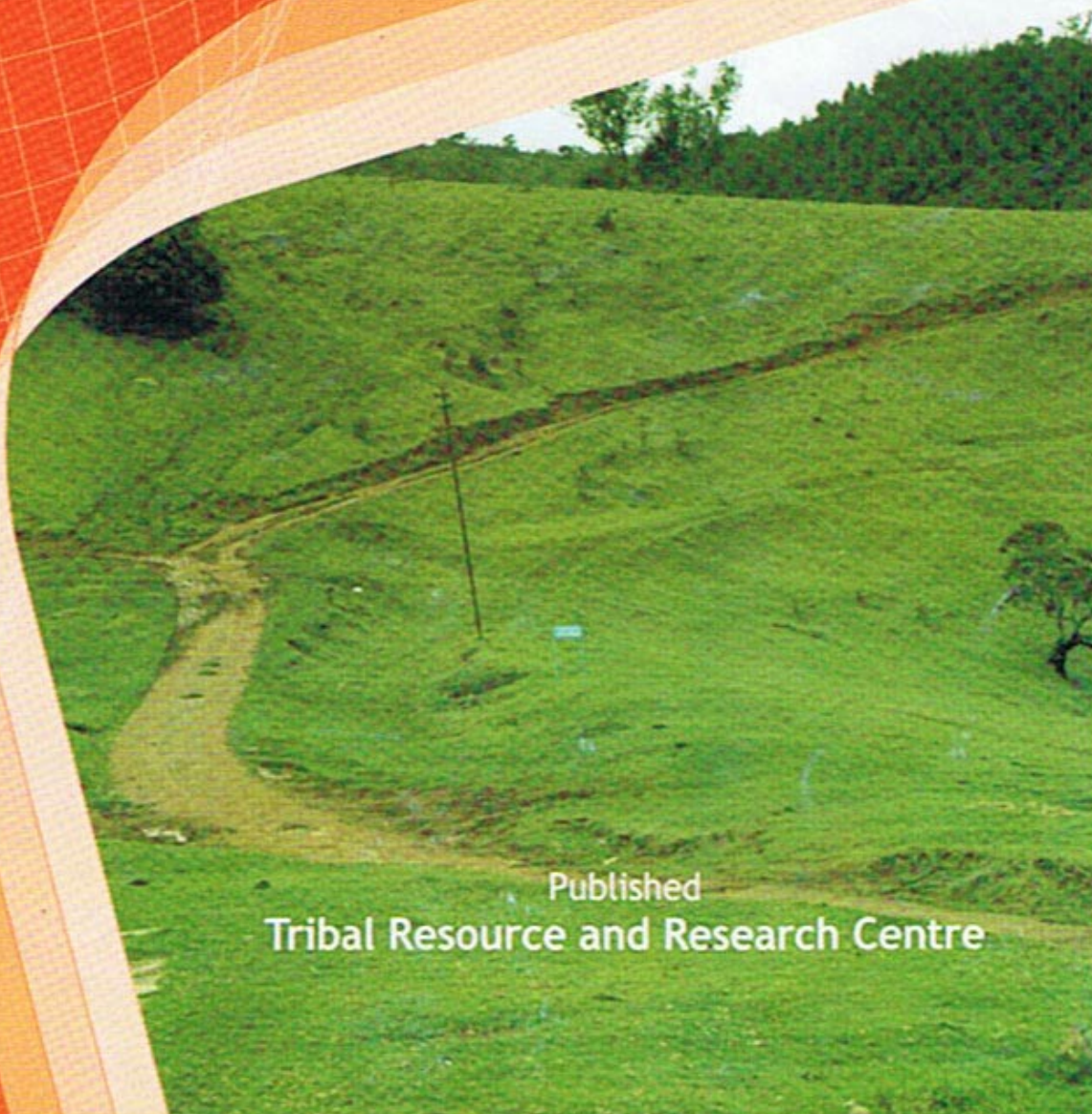




Tamilnadu Tribal struggles towards Land Rights and Forest Rights Act - 2006

TAFSC - TAAK - VRDP, Tamilnadu



Published
Tribal Resource and Research Centre



Demonstration in Chennai to withdraw High Court Stay Against Cutting the Trees and assigning Pattas in FRA - 2006



Capacity Building - Gramashaba Leaders on Forest Right Act 2006 at Kodaikanal



Election Manifesto Submitted to NMDK Political Party by TAAK Leaders

Tamilnadu Tribal Struggles towards Land Rights and Forest Rights Act - 2006

TAFSC - TAAK - VRDP, Tamilnadu

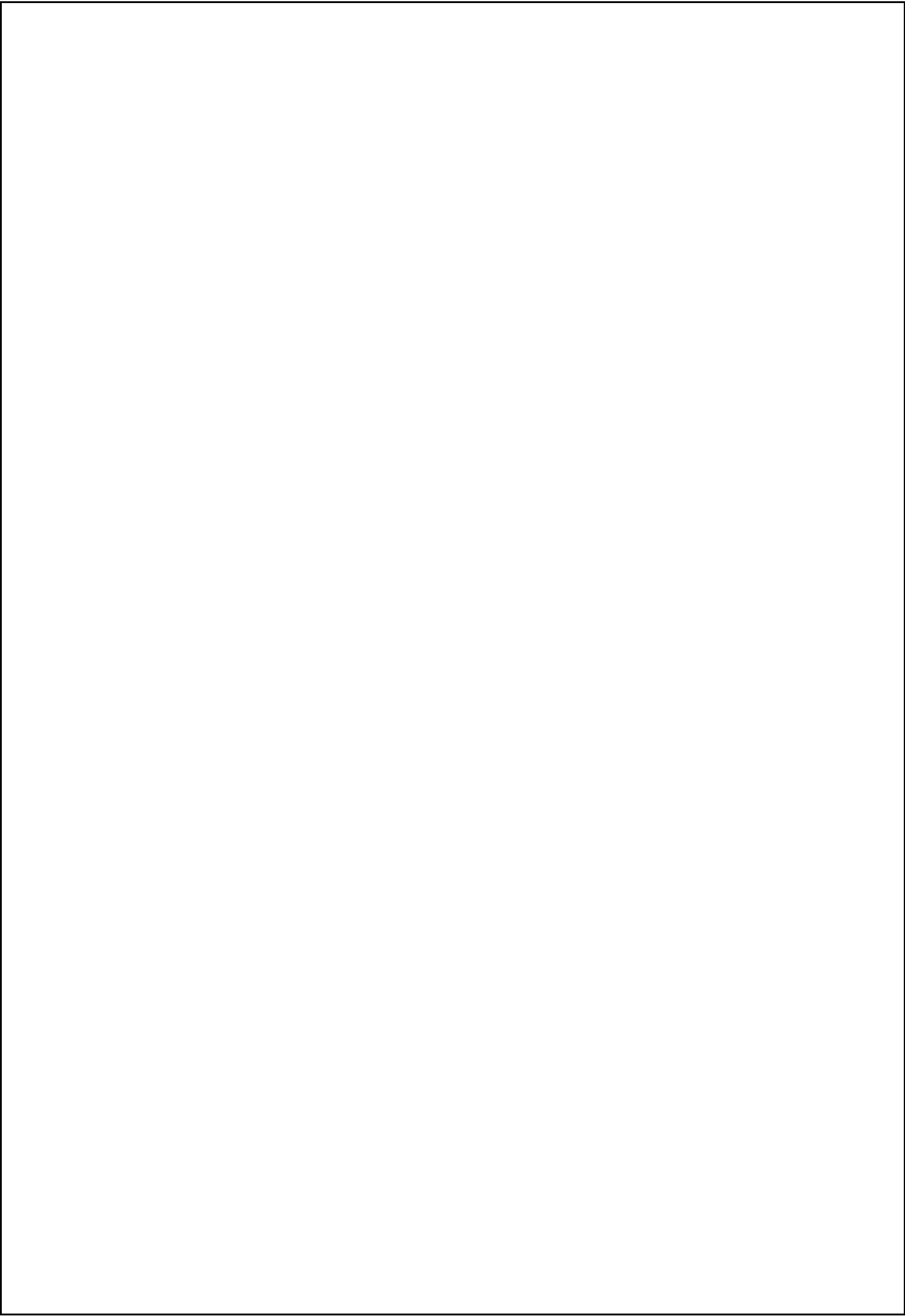
Published

Tribal Resource and Research Centre

C/o. VRDP 3/88 AB Opp. SCCB Kalyana Mandapam

New Fairlands, Salem-16.

Ph.0427- 2442192, E-mail: vrdp@ethnet vrdpslm@yahoo.com



THE ORIGIN OF TAFSC

WITH THE VISION OF "SELF-RULE"

ORIGIN - 1996

TAFSC is a consortium of 35 Voluntary Action Groups working among Tribal Communities in Tamilnadu for their Socio economic Development, Well-being and Empowerment with the vision of achieving Tribal Self Rule as their ultimate. TAFSC strives to empower Tribals through awareness & organization (Tribal Movements) to enable them to critically view and analyze their socio-economic-cultural-political reality and act upon it to bring about desirable changes in their life to be sustainable, self reliant and self governing.

The General background for the TAFSC to emerge...

For centuries, it is Tribals who have been the subject and victim of various kinds of socio economic-political, colonial invasions, and were being driven to the brinks by various forces.

The situation is not so much different even after independence, the legacy of colonial rule still continues with Forest Act Governing the Forest, uprooting the tribal community, depriving their traditional

rights, privileges etc. Despite the Constitutional Safe-guard of Vth Schedule, VI Schedule, Protective discrimination and reservation for the socio-economic-educational development - the situations remains same -or have gone from bad to worse. It was this perception, that when Government is indifferent to the problems of the Tribals, when it destroys their culture and their eco-environmental System in the name of development - the voluntary groups -stretched their heads and hands to the problem ridden communities -of course with divergent views, each one with their own perception, programs -starting from welfare, charity, development - even religious. - But these approaches have not even touched the fringe of this problem

The years long experience and our stock taking of the situation, frequent inter-action with target groups and fellowship with Groups and Organisation Working for Tribals - over a period of time - say ten years culminated in the formation of TAFSC with the ultimate aim of striving for SELF-RULE as constitutional rights, where the whole



TAAK Leaders - Rally towards Parliament, Delhi

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the ultimate aim of striving for SELF-RULE as constitutional rights, where the whole problems and its causes have been hanging upon. Besides welfare, development programs -Tribals were also to be facilitated to strive for their rights, basic amenities, and protection of their resources as well on restoring their alienated lands, resources, culture and livelihood. Around these issues Tribals have been organized as Village groups and as Taluk District - Regional and State level tribal movements by different organizations with different perceptions and priorities -such as Community Certificate, basic amenities, on land alienation, Tribal identity and also Tribals of different Ethnicity, started getting organized on problems common to them on ethnic basis viz. Irular, Kurumba, Malai Kuravas, Nari Kuravas, Kattu Naickers, Kanees etc. etc. and son on. Tribals in the darkness of ignorance and in remote forest and hilly environments started coming out of their way to demand justice -Credit Goes to Voluntary, Charitable, Development and Action Groups -First of its kind in Tribal History - getting together at Seminar, Workshop, Conferences at

State level right from Block to State level, rallying on issues both on local and at State level

THE SPECIFIC CONTEXT FOR TAFSC

It was the Bhuria Committee Recommendations for Tribal Self Rule. Tribals uprising, struggles, violent, turbulent situation all over India, especially in North East and Central Part of India provided the background situation - for Tribal Self Rule as ultimate. It was implemented in North East Central Part of India, But not in Tamilnadu, despite having Tribal Area. It is self-Rule that would determine the Tribals self reliance

A broader and deeper understanding of the New Panchayat Extension Act 1996 formed the background for number of NGOs coming together under the Banner TAFSC,

Rally in Gudalur District



initiated and pioneered by VRDP, one of the leading organizations among Tribals and in building People's Movement both among Tribals and Non- Tribals, especially oppressed and exploited.

Attempts to Scrap V Schedule favoring business corporates: Of late, there has been a drastic change in the political mindset. The central and several state governments are persistently attempting to bring amendments to scrap the Fifth Schedule of Constitution as most of the mining activities are taking place in the scheduled areas. The Fifth Schedule is one among the important out-standing provisions in the Indian Constitution made to protect basic livelihood source. I.e. land belonging to Adivasis living in the Scheduled Areas - the immediate threat of amending this provision of the Constitution and reverting it is to the effect of transfer of Adivasis lands to non-tribal and

Corporates. This move has serious implications to the 80 million Adivasis in the country, their very survival and their culture.

The Government has licensed Mining Corporates in Scheduled Area is an illegal act and in violation of Indian Constitution V schedule Article 244 (1). Where as law prohibits transfer of land or immovable property from Adivasis to non-Adivasis.

New Agriculture Policy speak of transferring Forest Land to the private business corporate for plantations and horticulture development to the detriment of Tribal communities and their eco system

Democratic Set Up and process of TAFSC

TAFSC is a democratic structure and has different committees with different roles and responsibilities. Mr. A. Renganathan is the founder of TAFSC and its Convener.

EMERGING TRIBAL MOVEMENTS IN TAMILNADU -(TAAk)



Hunger Strike in Cuddalore

Tamilnadu Tribal struggles towards Land Rights and Forest Rights Act - 2006

By TAFSC - TAAK - VRDP

Background

The tribal communities were hunters and forest produce gatherers by tradition. They were living in unity with nature and their needs were entirely fulfilled by the forest. As they learnt to use implements and invented fire, they slowly adopted to agriculture as an additional source of livelihood. They became intrinsically united with the land as they were with the forests because they got stable food from land.

The invasion by the inland outsiders into the forests threatened their peaceful co-existence with the land. The conquest of forests by the British led to the conflict between them and the tribal communities. The foreigners had an eye on the rich resources of the forests and therefore enacted forest laws and estranged the tribal

people from the forests. The right of tribal people to live in the forests and get their livelihood from the forest lands was denied by the new comers. The tribal communities felt fish out of water without having access to the forests.

The situation remained the same even after the British left the country. The Indian Government adopted the same acts with regard to the forests and followed the same treatment with the tribal communities. The tribal people were not considered as valuable as the forests and its resources. The forest was looked upon as a commercial value and therefore the tribal people were considered to be a hindrance to have access to those resources. The Indian Government passed several legislations to snatch the indigenous rights of the tribal communities and they were distanced from

Rally in Salem to ensure livelihood Rights



the forest and the forest land in the independent India. There were agitations from the tribal communities here and there against such moves but they could not withstand the pressures of the government very much. The adivasis who continued to collect the minor forest products from the forest were booked under theft cases and punished.

Nevertheless there were also rays of hope for the tribal communities now and then in the history of India. In the year 1990, the Ministry of Environment and Forests of the Union Government of India, passed an Order (G.O. No. 13-1/90 - F.P.(1) dated 18.09.1990) decreeing that no one who was living in and had encroached forest land before 24.10.1980

should be evicted from the place of his livelihood. This was a great relief to the adivasi and forest dependent communities across the country. But alas, this Order was not respected even by the same ministry and no land was allotted to any adivasi in India except some patches of land allotted in Orissa. No other state anywhere in India recognized this G.O.

Hard destiny struck the tribal again. In the year 1995, Mr. T.N. Godavarman

Chennai - Hunger Strike for 5 Acre Land and to implement 5th Schedule in Tamilnadu



Election Manifesto Submitted to PMK Party - May'06

Thirumalpad filed a writ petition in the supreme court of India to evict forest encroachers in India and thus protect the forest land. But the Supreme Court of India ordered the Indian Government to constitute a Central Empowerment Committee to look into this issue and evict all encroachers across the Country.

The Indian Government and its Forest Department took the order so seriously that they attempted to evict even the Adivasi communities whose native land and primary source of livelihood was Forest.

This insensitive attempt of the Indian Government only triggered the anger of 10 million adivasis in India and led to the land struggle of adivasis throughout the country after 2002 with such determination and force.



Agitation in Salem



Rally in World Social Forum, Mumbai



Seminar in WSF, Mumbai

Land Claim Struggle in Tamil Nadu.

A Chronicle of Events carried out by TAAK and TAFSC

- In Tamil Nadu the forest department claimed that 18600 hectares (45942 acres) of forest had been encroached. They started serving eviction notices to 30000 adivasi families in Tamil Nadu especially in Kodaikanal, Kolli Hills, Thadikarankonam in Kanyakumari district etc.
- The tribal people began to realize the need to get united and fight against the move of the forest department. They joined hands under the umbrella organization of TAAK and began to resist the move of the forest department in their respective areas.
- The adivasis of Kollimalai staged a one day agitation in Kalappanaicken

Stage Demonstration in Front of Salem
Collectorate to give Land for all Tribal

paalayam and the adivasis of Kanyakumari district in Thadikarankonam. Against eviction of tribal in their home land by forest department in the name of Supreme Court order. So TAFSC send MOEF 90 circular to all the DFO of Tamilnadu to not evict the tribal according to the GOs.

- In the same year the government of Tamil Nadu decided to allot the wastelands to corporate / companies on lease. This move also was against the welfare of the tribal communities as large number of adivasis depended on the waste lands for their livelihood in the hill regions.
- On 2nd February 2002, a resolution was passed at the Elected Panchayat Tribal Leaders' Conference held at Salem that tribal land should be prohibited from

buying and selling. The conference also urged the government of Tamil Nadu to lift the ban on giving patta in the hilly region and give patta only to adivasis living in hilly areas.

- TAAK organized district level agitations in front of the District Collector's office in each district in the



month of August 2002. It placed two demands to the district administration; 1. Not to evict the tribal families from enjoying waste lands 2. To ban anyone buying and selling the tribal's land.

- In continuation of the district level agitation, TAAK organized a mass agitation in the state Capital Chennai on 21st April 2003 to demand withdrawal of waste land development scheme to be taken up by the companies. Instead the 1000s of adivasis who took part in the agitation in Chepauk, Chennai demanded that the waste lands should be allotted to them for their as well as the land's development. A memorandum was submitted to the Chief Secretary to the Government of Tamil Nadu by the TAAK leaders and the then Opposition Leader of state assembly Mr. So. Balakrishnan.
- Another important development in the same year was a conference on the Livelihood of Adivasis organized at Salem on 4th May 2002. The conference strongly demanded that no adivasi should be evicted from their land and that the lands taken away from adivasis by fraudulent methods should be immediately returned to them without



Fasting - Chennai

any condition or cost. A grand Adivasi Cultural Festival with more than 3000 tribal and general public were organized in same day evening with 27 ethnic tribal groups to give solidarity and to release there own strengthen to ensure their rights.

- Again the adivasis of Kolli Hills were threatened to be evicted by the forest department. A powerful agitation was organized by TAAK at Namakkal on 17th June 2003 to oppose this move. The District collector and DFO assure to people the eviction will be stopped.
- Once again district level agitation was organized in the head quarters of all districts on August 1, 2003 to press upon the same demands and 1000 of tribal participated.
- As a follow up of the previous activities, a memorandum was submitted in person to Mr. Mani Shankar Aiyar, the then



Protest in CHennai

Panchayati Raj Minister of the Union Government of India on 12th March 2005 to pressurize the government to submit the forest bill 2005 in the floor of both houses and take it for voting.

- Subsequently the women and tribal associations jointly carried out an impressive rally and demonstration in Salem on the 30th May 2005 to stop all attempts of the government to evict the tribal people from their place of origin.
- On Aug 2005 Environmental groups-CPR foundation oppose tribal through media bill that the tribal will sell the land and forest land will be sold. TAFSC strongly campaigned through media that lands given under this FRA 06 have no provision to sell the land. So the FRA 206 should be implemented. So TAFSC wrote a clear Memorandum and send to Prime Minister to implement the FRA 2006.
- Likewise on 20th August 2005 a grand

level conference of adivasis organized by Tribal Association for Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC) on the Livelihood Rights of Tribal communities highlighted the demand to pass the Forest Rights Bill 2005 in the Parliament. Traditional way of expression, songs and

dance their joy and sorrows were shared to more than 2000 tribal of Tamilnadu through Adivasi Kalivizha with 24 ethnic groups.

- In the month of November of the same year the district level demonstration was held in every district in demand of the passing of the Forest Rights Bill 2005 in the forthcoming parliament session.
- On 11th of November 2005, a memorandum was submitted to all the Members of Parliament of both houses to vote for the forest bill to be passed in the parliament.
- Again a memorandum of request was submitted to all the Members of Parliament on 15th July by TAFSC and TNEC jointly to move the forest bill during the on going sessions in July 2006 and cast their vote in favour of it. On July the 10th the same year TAAK carried out district level agitations in Tamil Nadu.
- Election Manifesto for State Assembly

has been released to demand land right for tribal and it submitted to all Political parties.

- 27th Nov 2007 district level agitation conducted in 10 district of Tamilnadu to pass the forest right bill with more total 7400 population.
- TAFSC and TAAK leaders participated in the National Level Rally held in New Delhi on 29th November 2006 in demand of passing the Forest Rights Bill in Parliament.
- The Forest Act was passed in the Parliament in December 2006.
- TAFSC translated the Forest Rights Act of 2006 in Tamil and printed 1000 copies and circulated to all collaborating organizations and tribal associations.
- A 10 day state level awareness programme was carried out from 10th to 20th March 2007 in 1700 villages in 17 districts of Tamil Nadu with the help of 1000 tribal leaders.
- One day training was conducted for the Elected Tribal Panchayat Leaders on the Forest Rights Act of 2006 on 14th June 2007 at Salem and decided to form Adivasi Panchayath President Federation to give pressure to implement FRA Act 06.
- On the 18th June 2007 a demonstration and agitation was staged in front of the District Collector's Office in each district to demand implementation of the FRA 2006. More than 10,000 tribal people and

their supporters took part in the agitation all over Tamil Nadu.

- On July 07, a writ petition was filed in the High Court; Madurai Bench challenging the eviction notice issued by the forest department to tribal communities in Kodaikanal hills, the court reorganized tribal forest rights.
- A State level conference and rally of Adivasis was conducted on 3rd August 2007 in Kotagiri where a resolution was passed to take stringent action on the forest officials who tried to evict the tribals from their habitation. Cultural festival with 18 ethnic group performed their traditional folk and dance.
- In the same way on 20th August 2007 TAFSC submitted a petition to the CM of Tamil Nadu to allot the lease lands cultivated by the tribal people to them and to allot legal entitlement to lands cultivated in the hilly areas. On the same date another petition was submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests not to evict tribal communities from Forests
- In the month of September 2007 another memorandum was submitted to the Chief Minister of Tamil Nadu to implement the provision of the FRA 2006 expeditiously.
- Oct 4 07, Against the forest department's attempt to evict the tribal and non tribal people of Suriyur in Salem District, TAFSC formed a committee called

Suriyur Action Committee and conducted several demonstration and agitation to pressurize the forest department to give up their move to evict the rightful people from their place of origin.

- TAAK also did a commendable thing to highlight the Suriyur issue in the national scenario. It submitted a petition to the National Tribal Commission which responded positively to the petition and sent its Member to personally inquire into the eviction issue and suspended the move.
- In February 2008, TAFSC translated the Governing Rules of the FRA into Tamil and printed 1000 copies and circulated to those who were seriously engaged in getting the land rights for adivasis.
- 25000 claim petitions were printed and distributed to tribal cultivating the forest land and train them to fill petition and filed to forest Right Committee.
- On 5th March 2008 a petition was sent to the Prime Minister of India and the CM of Tamil Nadu to implement the FRA 2006. On the 15th March, a state level dialogue between the tribal leaders and the environmental organization which opposed the FRA was held. The environmentalists were illumined on the safety nets provided in the FRA in protection of the Environment and Wild Life.
- On 26th TAFSC convener Mr.Renganathan

and MLA Mr.Tamilarasu met Tamilnadu Adi Dravidar and Tribal Welfare Minister Honorable Ms.Tamilarasi to vacate the stay against cutting the trees and assigning patta to tribal people in hill and wild life sanctuaries under FRA 2006 in the high court.

- On the 27th of March 2008 a state level agitation was held in front of the Memorial Hall in Chennai demanding the Government of Tamil Nadu to intervene to remove the legal barricades against the FRA and ensure the implementation of the FRA at the earliest. 3 MLAs Mr. A.Tamilarasi (PMK), Dr. Neduchelian (PMK) and Selvaperunthagai (VC) and 1500 tribal people and social activists participated in the agitation. The MLAs who participated in the agitation also echoed the demands at the state assembly the next day.
- The High Court of Chennai took note of the developments of the state level agitations and petitions submitted and relaxed the interim injunction. It allowed the Tamil Nadu government to go ahead with the preparation processes for legal entitlement but exhorted the TN government to get the prior approval of the High Court before distributing the patta.
- On 4th May 2008 agitation was taken out in Valparai against the Forest Department's move to evict the tribal communities there with a compensation

of Rs. One Million. A public meeting and rally were also taken out on the same day. Opposition political party leaders of Valparai and TAFSC TAAK leaders participated in the Rally and meeting.

- On 6th May, a rally and public meeting was conducted in Jawadhu Hills in Tiruvannamalai district in demand of the implementation of the FRA in Tamil Nadu. Nearly 2000 tribal people and 5 panchayat presidents and union Chairman Mr. Govingaraj were made aware on FRA 2006.
- To lobby and advocate to government regarding the land for tribal in their hills, RTI act was used to collect data regarding the land in the hill area given for lease to private owners and estates. From Trinelvalli Collectorate we got the reply as 8373.57 acres were given lease for 99 years to Bombay Bharna Trading Corporation for tea cultivation for only Rs.14,235 per year (Rs.1.69 per acre /per year).
- In the same area, the forest department is planning to evict tribal on behalf of Wild life sanctuaries.
- On 26th May, a conference on the FRA was organized in Sathyamangalam for the education of tribal people and leaders of that area by TAFSC partners, CEED organized the seminar.
- On the occasion of the International Day of the Indigenous people, the 9th of August 2008, a Seminar, Rally and

Cultural festival was organized in Salem where in 2500 adivasis from 24 ethnic communities participate. A resolution was passed that the tribal people should not be evicted in the name of wild life sanctuaries and national parks and instead the tribal act should be implemented in letter and spirit.

- On the 6th November 2008 a demonstration was staged in front of the Collectors office, Salem District, pressurizing the district administration to give up its plans of handing over tribal lands to any private companies for mining activity especially the Jindal Company which was on the anvil of getting the contract.
- In 2008 - 09 more than 5000 claim petitions to get forest lands have been submitted to the forest rights committee in various districts in Tamil Nadu.
- On 5th January 2009 a massive agitation was demonstrated in front of the District Collector's office, Salem to issue orders to form panchayat level forest rights committee and speed up the implementation of FRA in some districts of Tamil Nadu wherein no process had been initiated thus far.
- TAAK representatives regularly participated in the meetings of National Adivasi Alliance and Andholan to represent the Tamilnadu tribal situation and ensure their rights to gain solidarity.
- Election manifesto for the parliament

election of India was released by TAFSC, TAAK to demand proper implementation of FRA 2006. And to cancel the lease order to big land lords and farms in hill areas and allot them to tribal, stop mining in hill are the major resolution passed.

- The Right to Information Act was used to get update process and action taken on Forest Right Act 2006 like formation of forest committees, current process on claim petitions submitted etc. in all districts on 19th May 09. TAFSC filled petition to all District Collectors regarding this. Out of 17 districts only 8 turned up and gave reply 2 forwarded letters to concern departments. In these 7 districts particularly in Ooty and Thirunelveli more forest official were members against the formation rules in FR Act. In Trichy, in village level forest right committees the District forest officer is the head which is also against law. So these are the current issues TAFSC is on working progress.
- In order to strengthen the tribal struggles the mapping exercise has been conducted with NGO staff and tribal leaders in Athikadauu and Pillur dam of Western Ghats on 29-30th June 09. 30 NGO staffs and more than 200 tribal from 20 villages of Nelithurai Panchayat, Velliyankadu Panchayat and Kemmaram

Palayam Panchayat.

- In July all NGOs and people leaders Of TAFSC started their Mapping exercise in their concern villages and it's in process.

Conclusion:

The FRA 2006 is a boon to the tribal communities in India. But the precious pearl is kept at a distance and the tribal people are prevented from owning it by the ill-willed government system especially the Forest Department. Any number of struggles and agitations from the part of the people and social organizations do not move the hearts of the rigid system which does not want to lose its power and glory. Therefore it is up to the government to seriously reflect to make its machineries to work the way the nation has to progress. The tribal Community which was deprived of its rights and privileges all along the history should enjoy some pleasures at least in the 21st century. We sincerely hope that the people's movements will keep alive the light it has obtained after long years of struggle.



Rally to take action to implement Forest Right Act - 2006



Village Level Propaganda on FRA 2006 - Kolli Hills





मणि शंकर अय्यर
MANI SHANKAR AIYAR

D.O. No. 978 M.(PR)/VIP/2005

मंत्री
पेट्रोलियम एवं प्राकृतिक गैस और
पंचायती राज
भारत सरकार
नई दिल्ली-110 001
Minister
Petroleum & Natural Gas and
Panchayati Raj
Government of India
New Delhi-110 001

March 23, 2005.

Dear Sir,

Thank you for your letter of 12 March 2005 containing suggestions on the draft Scheduled Tribes and Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill. I am getting the suggestions examined in the Ministry.

W: S yes,

Yours sincerely,

[Signature]

Shri A. Renganathan

Convenor

Tribal Associations for Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC)
3/88 AB Upstairs, Opp to SCCB Kalyana Mandapam,
New Fairlands,
Salem-636 016.

M. Venkaiah Naidu M.P.
Vice President



भारतीय जनता पार्टी
Bharatiya Janata Party

December 10, 2005

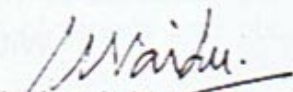
Dear Shri Renganathan,

Namasthe.

I have received your letter dated November 25, 2005. I have noted your contents and shall look into the matter.

With best wishes,

Yours sincerely,


(M. Venkaiah Naidu)

Shri A. Renganathan
State Convener
Tribal Associations for fifth schedule Campaign
3/88 Upstairs
Opp to SCCB Kalyana Mandapam
New Fairlands, Salem - 636 016



सुरेश पचौरी
SURESH PACHOURI

सं. 4523/VI/2005/01

राज्य मंत्री
कार्मिक, लोक शिकायत एवं
पेंशन तथा संसदीय कार्य
भारत सरकार

MINISTER OF STATE FOR
PERSONNEL, PUBLIC GRIEVANCES & PENSIONS
AND PARLIAMENTARY AFFAIRS
GOVT. OF INDIA

19 DEC 2005

Dear Shri Reganathanji,

I am in receipt of your letter dated 25.11.2005 for passing the Tribal Bill, 2005 during the current Parliament Session.

I am glad to inform you that the said Bill is likely to be introduced soon in Parliament.

With regards,

Yours sincerely,

(SURESH PACHOURI)

Shri A. REGANATHAN
State Convener
Tribal Associations for Fifth Schedule Campaign
3/88 AB Upstairs
Opp: SCCB Kalyana Mandapam
New Fairlands, Salem 636 016.

Ro. 6436/11P MOSI 08

एम. वी. राजासेखरन्
M. V. RAJASEKHARAN



योजना राज्य मंत्री
भारत सरकार
योजना आयोग

योजना भवन, संसद मार्ग,
नई दिल्ली-110 001

MINISTER OF STATE FOR PLANNING
GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
PLANNING COMMISSION

YOJANA BHAWAN SANSAD MARG,
NEW DELHI-110 001

TEL : 011-23096561, 23096562

FAX : 011-23096713

E-MAIL : mvr@yojana.nic.in

July 26, 2006

Dear Sri Antony Samy Ji,

Thank you very much for your general letter dated July 15, 2006 addressed to Members of Parliament with regard to 'Forest Bill 2006' which protects sustainable forest life and biodiversity. First of all, I would like to thank you and your colleagues for having taken the responsibility of addressing letters to all the Members of Parliament, seeking their support for the above. I would also like to congratulate you and your colleagues for the better advocacy which you and your colleagues have launched, highlighting the importance of this Bill which would go a long way in protecting the interests of tribal/indigenous people and the protection of forests and our biodiversity.

It is a very important Bill since India has biggest biodiversity resources next to Brazil and I must convey my congratulations to all those friends who have been building awareness about the importance of this Bill.

Please do convey my good wishes to all your colleagues.

With my best wishes,

Yours sincerely,

(M. V. RAJASEKHARAN)

Sri L. Antony Samy

Convener

Tribal Associations for the Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC)

3/88, AB-Upstairs, New Fairlands

Salem - 630 016 (Tamil Nadu)

State-level tribal workshop ends

Express News Service

Salem, Feb 2: The long standing plea of the hill tribes in Tamil Nadu to include areas inhabited by them in the Vth schedule of the Constitution under Article 244 (1) was re-emphasised at a state-level workshop on elected tribal panchayat representatives that ended here on Friday.

Hundred tribal panchayat representatives from 11 districts in Tamil Nadu attended the workshop that was jointly organised by Village Reconstruction

and Development Project (VRDP), Salem, CEDA trust, Dinigul, and Human Rights Advocacy and Research Foundation, Chennai.

The workshop also demanded the implementation of the Panchayath (Extension to scheduled areas) Act, 1996, and the effective use of the special provisions in the Tamil Nadu Act.

Some of the major resolutions made at the workshop were: reservation of seats in tribal-dominated districts, imposition of a ban on purchase of lands posses-

sed by tribals and a separate board for administering the affairs of the tribal welfare.

Unions with more than 2000 tribal members should be brought under the tribal sub plan. Yercaud Panchyath in Yercaud union, Valavanhi Panchayath in Kanyakumari district should be reallocated to tribals. Schools in tribal areas should be managed by the respective gram sabhas.

A book titled *Stolen Education and Neglected Educational System* was released by Dr N Marthandan.

"THE NEW INDIAN EXPRESS"
5TH MAY '2002

Management of forest resources

Plea to restore rights to tribals

Express News Service

Salem, May 5: The management of forest wealth of the country should be restored to the tribals who were displaced from the forests at various periods in history and a ban on mining minerals and quarrying of stones should be imposed on tribal habitats, said V P Gunasekaran, general secretary, Federation of Tamil Nadu Tribal Associations.

He spoke at a seminar held as part of the Adivasi Cultural Festival-2002 at Salfit yesterday. Dr M Durai, Bishop, CSI Coimbatore Diocese, delivered special address, Senthilurugan, panchayat president, Kolli Hills, spoke and A Renganathan, VRDP, welcomed the gathering. Dr Richard Devadas, Director, CSI DM, delivered the introductory lecture.

Gunasekaran said that with

the tribals forced to leave their natural habitats, forests have become vulnerable to thefts and it has resulted in systematic erosion of forest wealth.

The forest area, which was once estimated to be around 40 per cent of the country's geography, is now reduced to 8 per cent.

Ever since the Britishers started exploiting the forests for timber business, the tribals were driven away from the forests.

Though several hill area and forest development projects have been initiated, they have failed to bring in the desired results.

Some resolutions passed at the seminar include ban on mining and quarrying in tribal habitats, ban on purchase and sale of land in Adivasi areas, issue cast certificates to all the 36 tribal communities

in Tamil Nadu and permission to exploit forest resources to tribals.

Besides this, the Government should not displace tribals from their habitats in the name of establishing animal sanctuaries, reorganisation of forests, forest security and maintenance.

Resolutions were also passed in favour of handing over social forestry lands to the tribals and bringing all Adivasis in Tamil Nadu under the 5th Schedule of the Indian Constitution.

The seminar was followed by cultural programmes by Adivasis and an exhibition of tribal goods.

The Adivasi Cultural Festival 2002 was conducted by Voluntary Rural Development Project, CSI welfare projects wing and Tamil Nadu Association for Fifth Schedule Campaign.

"
THE HINDU
5th MAY 2002
"

Unite to fight for rights, tribals told

By Our Staff Reporter

SALEM, MAY 4. A strident call was made to all the tribals to forge unity to assert their rights at a seminar on "towards right to livelihood" organised here on Saturday.

Their fragmented existence should not give leverage to others to exploit them, and if they put up a joint fight, they could get their due share, the speakers at the seminar said. They said the tribals, who were living in small clusters with distinct cultural and ethnic identity in the hilly tracts, had been displaced and dispersed. This had forced many a tribal to fall a prey to contractors and middlemen who had made them bonded labourers in quarries, brick kilns, plantations and so on.

The Bishop of Coimbatore region, M. Durai, said the tribals or adivasis used to harbour unfounded fears. They feared the officials, police and so on.

He called upon them to cultivate self-confidence through unity and hard work. They should also find means to impart education to their

wards, he added. The State general secretary of the Tamil Nadu Tribals Association, V.P. Guna-sekaran, said the census conducted in 1991 and 2001 did not give the exact number of the tribals, most of whom were living in the hilly regions in the districts of Kanyakumari, Tirunelveli, Madurai, Theni, Dindigul, Coimbatore, Salem, Namakkal, Dharmapuri and so on. The enumerators did not bother to trek into the interior areas of forests, where the tribals were residing. He alleged that the interests of the tribals were being neglected by the politicians because they did not form solid votebanks.

The State organiser of the Tribal Association for Fifth Schedule Campaign, A. Ranganathan, said the tribals had become victims of modernisation. Whenever a major dam was constructed, they were displaced in hordes without any suitable alternatives to them.

The director of the CSI Diconal Ministry, Richard Devadas, said that as all the Scheduled Caste people were commonly known as Dalits, all the tribals should be termed as "adivasis."

The New Indian Express

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20 PAGES • R

Tribals observe fast in Salem

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Salem, Aug 26: The tribals represented by Federation of Tribal Associations observed a fast today against the recently announced wasteland development scheme.

Speaking to media persons here, Federation president P. Jaganathan said that in Eastern Ghats, already 60 per cent of the land and in Western Ghats, 90 per cent of the land belonging to the tribals have been grabbed.

The wasteland development scheme will snatch the

remaining lands also leaving the tribals without anything to depend on.

They fear that the scheme will take away the tribals' rights to use natural resources like springs, rivers, streams and grazing lands for cattle.

Instead, the multinational and domestic companies will destroy the natural wealth in the name of development.

The major demand placed by the Federation is that the wasteland development scheme should not be implemented in tribal dominated areas.

Instead tribals should be given 5 acres of land. Further non tribals should not be allowed to buy the property in tribal areas.

About 130 persons took part in the fast. Tribals from Umbellakampati, Yercaud, Denikhet, Panamattanam, Vadiapatti, Bethari and Murrur also participated.

Similar fasts were observed at Dharmapuri, Thiruvallur and Nilgiris districts on Aug 18. Today's fast was organised by the Voluntary Rural Development Project, Salem.



Tribals observing a fast against the wasteland development scheme in Salem on Monday - Express

Adivasis observe fast

By Our Special Correspondent

CHENNAI, APRIL 22. Adivasi leaders and people belonging to various ethnic tribal groups in Tamil Nadu today observed fast near the State Guest House, Chepauk, here, in support of their demands which included a legislation to fulfil the objects of Schedule V of the Constitution.

The Thamizhaga Adivasi Amaipukalin Kuttamaippu said there was no legislative protection in the State for restoring alienated land and prohibition of transfer of land of adivasis. Some land had been allotted to adivasis as conditional patta under which land should not be transferred, donated, sold or mortgaged for 10 years after issuance of patta.

The Scheduled Areas and Scheduled Tribes Commission recommended that all tribal land alienated since January 26, 1950 be returned to the original adivasi owners.

But this recommendation had been ignored by successive Governments.

Forest Dept's move to displace tribals opposed

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Namakkal, June 17: The federation of tribal associations, Tamizhaga Adivasi Amapukalini Kuttanappu (TAAK) and the Committee for Campaign on 5th Schedule propaganda, have alleged that tribals in Kolli Hills in Namakkal district were being displaced from their lands and have sought the immediate action against the move.

The two organisations in separate communications to the Press on Monday alleged that the Forest Department had asked the Adivasis in Kuzivalavu, Siler, Thenkarai and Thirupuli to move out and the department has started planting saplings in these areas under one of its schemes.

It has been alleged that the Forest Department took away nearly 600 acres of the Adivasi lands, where the

tribals had been cultivating for long.

On account of this nearly 300 families had been rendered landless and were on the verge of becoming refugees.

Many of them had cultivated potatoes but did not reap the harvest.

Similar incident has taken place at Vadavani panchayat in Kodaikannal also the organisations have alleged.

Further they have stated that except in Tamil Nadu all other states have included Adivasi lands in the 5th Schedule of the Constitution and have protected the lands under the Land Alienation Act.

But in Tamil Nadu buying and selling of tribal lands goes unchecked.

The idea of restoring and protecting tribal lands, to undertake micro farming in Adivasi lands, to protect

the environment from the onslaught of lopsided planning, to implement government schemes through gram sabhas and to recognise autonomous self-rule in scheduled areas are a distant dreams in our State.

Hence the State Government should immediately take steps to include tribal lands into Schedule 5 and not to push the tribals away from their lands.

ENGAGEMENTS

SALEM

Manam Mandiram: Annual day celebrations, special discourses. Sri Meenakshi Sundareswarar Temple, 6 a.m.

NAMAKKAL

Paavai Engineering College, Pechai: Guest lecture by M. Anand, School of Computing Sciences, VIT University, Vellore, college premises, 9.30 a.m.

Maintenance camp

Staff Reporter

SALEM: The Salem Electricity Distribution Circle of Tamil Nadu Electricity Board will organise a mass maintenance camp from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. on May 7 in Yercaud.

The power supply in Yercaud will remain suspended during the maintenance, which is planned in order to ensure that there is uninterrupted power supply during the forthcoming summer festival and flower show, a press release said.



SELFLESS GESTURE: A woman serves buttermilk free of cost to quench the thirst of people on Sarada College Road in Salem.

— PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

Staff Reporter

YERCAUD: The 8th annual sports meet of Montfort Community School in Kuruvankadu, held here recently, presented the students a chance to display their sporting spirit.

The event began with an impressive march past by the students of the school.

Winners

The Pandian house bagged the overall first place and the Chozhan house came second in the meet.

Chief Educational Officer Ramaraj, participating in the event, distributed prizes to

'Project Su

Staff Reporter

SALEM: The Amway Opportunity Foundation launched Project Sunrise in Salem on Tuesday.

Agreement

The foundation entered into a memorandum of understanding with 'Nesakaramal', a home for destitute children, under the project.

As per the agreement, the

Tribals put together a people's manifesto

Special Correspondent

SALEM: Tribal groups and activists have come out with a people's manifesto in which they urged the politicians to insist upon the government to notify immediately the areas in Tamil Nadu where tribals live under the 5th Schedule.

The manifesto, released by the Tribal Association for 5th Schedule Campaign in Tamil Nadu (TAFSC) and Thamiluga Adivasi Annaipugalin Kootamappu (TAAK) here recently, asked the Tamil Nadu government to implement the Notified Tribals and Traditional Dwellers Depending on Forest (Forest Rights Recognition) Act 2006.

"Forest Act 2006 explained about the right of lands of the tribal people, who live in the border area of the Grama Sabha. There is no mention about the tribals living in the Town Panchayats and Municipalities. So bring a special (amendment) enclosure (appendix) to

protect the interests of tribals living in the areas of Municipalities and Town Panchayats," it urged.

Government should impart awareness and Forest Law Training immediately to the Forest Department and Revenue Department Officers, who are the authority to implement Forest Rights Act.

Till the time of implementing the Forest Act evacuating the tribal people and traditional dwellers, living in and using the forest areas should be fully avoided.

The right of small produce procurement should be given to the respective Grama Sabhas.

The Forest Department must immediately give up the practice of offering Rs. 10 lakh and evacuating traditional tribals living in animal sanctuaries and National Parks, it further stated.

Government must immediately grant 10 acres of lands to those living, depending on forest according to forest Lands Rights Act 2006 and

two acres land under the Chief Ministers free land allotment scheme to the landless people living in the plains. It also should step allotting forest lands for mining purposes.

Stringent action must be initiated on the forest officers, who try to evacuate people living even before the law came into force and suspend its implementation.

Cancel lease

The Government must also immediately cancel the lease of the government lands, given to the big landlords and owners of farms and allot them to the tribals.

The administration of the educational institutions should be entrusted with the tribal people themselves, in order to ensure free education, school opening, teacher's attendance etc. in all the government schools and residential schools functioning in the areas where tribals live.

The community certificate should

be issued with the consent of the leader of the tribal village, in order to ward off the difficulties in the issuance of certificates and to ensure that tribal people get certificates in an easy way.

Stringent action should be taken on those who involve in harassing the women in the name of tourism and by the landlords and forest department in tribal areas.

As it is a hard task for the people to come to the Primary Health Centres and get polio vaccination for their children, the Government should arrange to send the medical staff directly to the villages and administer the vaccination.

TAAK Secretary Gunasekaran released the copy of the manifesto to Joint secretary, CITU, Gopikumar.

Earlier children released their own manifesto under the banner of Campaign Against Child Labour - Tamil Nadu, which RSP candidate for Salem parliament segment Balasubramanian received.

'Don't evict tribals from forests'

By Our Special Correspondent

SALEM, SEPT. 30. Various social, political and livelihood issues that confront the tribals and their representatives in local bodies in the State were discussed at the one-day interactive meeting. 'Issues and solutions of representatives of tribal panchayats in Tamil Nadu' here on Monday.

These tribal representatives and activists who met under the banner of the Village Reconstruction and Development Project (VRDP), urged the State Government to submit a detailed report to the Union Government on the land regularisation and the issuance of 'pattas' in tribal areas before December 2004.

They pointed out that any further delay would lead to social unrest in the forests of Tamil Nadu.

Land issues, however, occu-

pied the centre stage in the discussion. They insisted that no tribal should be forcefully evicted from forests.

Establishing National Parks and Wildlife sanctuaries in forests where tribals' reside should be immediately stopped.

The tribal habitations, they demanded, should be brought under the 5th Schedule of the Constitution.

Need for commission

They also exhorted the State to not discourage the Central Government from funding directly the tribal local bodies. And these tribal panchayats, they urged, should be brought under the Tribal Sub Plan.

The tribal representatives also stressed the need for establishing an exclusive Tribal Finance Commission in the State and urged that the right to collect the mini forest produce be handed over to the tribals in-

stead of forest councils. There should not be any delay in issuing community certificates.

They wanted the State to establish an exclusive university to promote and preserve the language and culture of the tribals.

Speaking on the 'Draft National Policy on Tribals', Tamil Nadu Environment Council State Convener, L. Anthonyswamy, said that the Union Government should come forward to accept the 'Delhi declaration' as tribals' national policy.

VRDP Director, A. Renganathan, spoke on land alienation and related issues. Those who spoke included Chandran from Kolli Hill Panchayat and Rajan Kani from Pechiparai Panchayat.

Salem district panchayat council chairman, Sivaperumal inaugurated the seminar in which about 60 representatives from various tribal panchayats in the State took part.

In one voice

31/5/05



WOMEN POWER: Tribals taking out a rally in Salem on Monday to stress the need for preservation of forest resources. PHOTO: P. GOUTHAM

'Table Tribal Bill in Parliament'

Indigenous people alienated from forests, say activists; send memorandum to PM

R. Ilangoth

SALEM: Tribal associations have urged the Central Government to expedite tabling of the proposed Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights) Bill in the winter session of Parliament, which they claim will be the "essential first step in reforming the country's forest management regime".

'Historical injustice'

Also known as 'Tribal Bill-2005', the Bill, they insist, will remove the historical injustice done to tribals particularly after the promulgation of the Forest Act 1927.

This and other post-colonial legislations of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and Forest Conservation Act 1980 have thrown them into the abyss of poverty after alienating them from their lands and forests.

By bringing them to the centre of forest management, the accelerating pace of forest destruction could be reversed and conservation and protection could be ensured.

Restructuring sought

The forest management, the activists claim, has to be restructured in such a way that should ensure the involvement of tribals, as critical players in the arena

of sustainable management. The forest management has to be reshaped based on the National Forest Policy 1988 and the emerging National Environmental Policy 2004 and as well on the bio-diversity Convention to which India is a signatory.

"These policies underline the pivotal role of indigenous people in bio-diversity management," says A. Rengnathan, a tribal activist and the convenor for Tribal Associations for Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC).

Rights recognised

He told *The Hindu* here that the Tribal Bill-2005 not only recognised the rights of forest-

dwellers but also ensured that they enjoyed certain benefits such as minor forest produce, habitations and lands.

Contrary to what was claimed by a few people including some non-governmental organisations (NGOs), the Bill does not permit any transfer or alienation of these resources.

They cannot use these lands for any commercial purpose. Moreover it bestows the responsibility of protection, conservation and regeneration of forests on tribals themselves.

Misinformation campaign

"A sort of misinformation campaign about the Bill is doing

rounds claiming that if passed, it would lead to destruction of forests from 16 to 60 per cent. Fears about selling of tribals' lands to outsiders and threat to lives of tigers and other wild animals are also expressed. Even some of the neo-colonial hawks in the government machinery are sabotaging the passing of the Bill. This negative campaign against the Bill and tribals should be stopped forthwith," he said.

The TAFSC has sent a memorandum to Prime Minister Manmohan Singh, requesting him to take necessary steps to get the 'Tribal Bill-2005' passed in this winter session of Parliament.

Activists insist on landholding rights to tribals

'Over 35 per cent of them in the State have been deprived of their land'

Special Correspondent

SALEM: Tribal activists in Tamil Nadu insisted on the need to focus on landholding rights to adivasis, which, they said, alone will stop alienating them from their land and forests.

Participating in a seminar on 'The rights of tribals on land' here on Saturday, the activist leaders and activists claimed that unless the land was restored to them, there would be no significant shift in their livelihood, as the majority of the tribals lived below poverty line.

"Despite a sustained struggle, nearly 35 per cent of them live in poverty and thrown out of their homelands - the forests," said Rev. Jacob Bely, Zonal Co-ordinator for the Church of South India (CSI), Diagonal Ministry, while presiding.

Colonisation of forests

Inaugurating the seminar, State Convenor of the Tribal Associations for Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC) A. Rengnathan said that the colonisation of forests had facilitated 90 per cent of land in the Western Ghats falling into the hands of aliens while 60 per cent was brought into the Eastern Ghats.

Over 36 per cent of adivasis in Tamil Nadu had been deprived of their land. Barring Tamil Nadu, other states had enacted special legislations banning the purchase of tribal land. Tamil



FOR THEIR PRIVILEGES: A woman voicing her grievances at a seminar in Salem on Saturday. • PHOTO: P. GOUTHAM

Nadu had not brought the tribal areas under the Fifth and Sixth Schedules.

Centre urged

The speakers urged the Centre to expedite the process of tabling the proposed Scheduled Tribes (Recognition of Forest Rights)

Bill, known as 'Tribal Bill-2005', during the winter session of Parliament. It would be the "essential first step in reforming the country's forest management regime." The Forest Act and the subsequent post-colonial legislations of the Wildlife Protection Act 1972 and Forest Conserva-

tion Act 1980 had thrown the tribals into the abyss of poverty. The tribal groups said that the knowledge on forests and wildlife would make them the best stewards of forests. The activists demanded that the misinformation campaign against the Bill by a few organisations be stopped.

The tribal and Dalit leaders who spoke included Sahayraj (Bangalore), V. P. Gunasekaran (Bhavani), Shanmugam (Chennai), Sathiyaraj (Udhagamandalam), Ganesan (Salem), Leelavathy (Kodalkkanal), Jyothi Rangan (Dharmapuri), Nagapandian and Suresh Dharma (Chennai).

VRDP-TRIBAL RESOURCE AND RESEARCH CENTRE

'Manifesto of the Adivasis' for Assembly polls released

They are a decisive force in 42 constituencies

S. Dorairaj

CHENNAI: Immediate steps to pass a legislation banning the sale of land allotted to tribal communities, reconstitution of the administrative jurisdiction of their villages and an end to their displacement from forests are among the demands highlighted in the 'Manifesto of the Adivasis' for the Assembly elections.

Prepared by the Salem-based Adivasi Resource and Research Centre, it says there are 36 tribes in the State whose total population has been estimated at 15 lakh. The official figure puts it at 6.51 lakh. They live in 42 Assembly segments spread over 17 districts. In each of these constituencies, they are considered to be a decisive force with a minimum of 10,000 votes.

Vote bank

The manifesto laments that for years, political parties have been treating the tribes as their vote bank, ignoring the fact that they have been deprived of their privileges. Scheduled Tribes (ST) in the State do not have an autonomous council. Nor do they enjoy Constitutional privi-

• **Scheduled Tribes in State do not enjoy privileges like their counterparts in North India**

• **Assembly constituencies reserved for STs have been scaled down to two**

• **No effective law in the State to ban sale of tribal lands to non-tribals**

leges enjoyed by the tribes in North India.

The number of Assembly constituencies reserved for the STs in the State has been scaled down from three to two, owing to delimitation.

The ST also face problems such as attempts to convert the reserved panchayats into general panchayats and non-issuance of community certificates to the students in time.

At receiving end

"Though the tribes have played a key role in preserving the forests, they are evicted from forest lands on the ground of implementing huge projects. Hu-

man rights are violated in the name of protecting the environment and sexual assaults have been let loose on tribal women in Vaniyambadi, Thimmam and Mettur forests," says the manifesto.

Around 36.5 per cent of the Scheduled Tribes are landless. Many tribes have small landholdings (between 0.5 acre to 1 acre of dry land). Though many States have banned the sale of tribal land to non-tribes, no effective law has been enacted in Tamil Nadu.

The manifesto calls for distribution of land, at the rate of five acres to each person. As village panchayats with a tribal population of 50 per cent or more alone are eligible to draw benefits under the Tribal Sub Plan, only 1.88 lakh tribals have been able to avail the benefits, the manifesto says.

It calls for fresh delimitation measures to merge tribal villages in a particular area under the same panchayat, block and district. This would pave the way for inclusion of their areas in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution, thereby ensuring the security of their lands.

Classifieds mart: Page 6

More Regional Advertisement: Page 6

Centre asked to pass Tribals Forest Bill

It was tabled in Parliament during the last session

Special Correspondent

SALEM: Tribals in the State on Monday staged a demonstration near the Salem Collectorate demanding that the Union Government pass the Tribals Forest Bill immediately.

The Adivasis, mostly women, who assembled under the common banner of the *Thamizhaga Adivasigal Iyakkam*, pointed out that the tribals had been the custodians of nature for long and depended on the forest produce for their livelihood.

But later the British regime alienated them from the forestlands and allowed a few to enjoy the benefits of the forests. But even after Independence, the alienation of tribals from forestlands continued.

The social injustice that had been perpetrated against these indigenous people remained unchanged.

To recognise their rights the Union Government attempted to bring in a Bill that ensured them their rights on lands and produce.

But a few environmentalists put a spoke by spreading ru-

• Tribals have been the custodians of nature for long and depend on forest produce for their livelihood

• The British regime alienated them from forestlands

mours that the flora and fauna would be decimated if the tribals were given lands.

However, various tribal fora of the country fought and made the Central government to draft a Bill that ensured land rights to adivasis. The Bill was also tabled in Parliament during the last session.

The same was referred to the Selection Committee of Parliament, which after mobilising the views from various quarters had recommended it.

Hence the Bill should not be delayed further and must be passed unanimously in Parliament, they urged.

The Iyakkam's president P. Jeganathan presided over the agitation.



UNITED THEY FIGHT: Tribal women staging a demonstration demanding their rights on forestlands in Salem on Monday. - PHOTO: P. GOUTHAM

Demonstration to protest against eviction held

Staff Reporter

SALEM: Residents of Suriyur Pallakattur village in Panamathupatti block of Salem district and members of the Suriyur Action Committee staged a demonstration in front of the Collectorate here on Wednesday protesting against the forest officials for evicting them from their native place forcibly.

They said that the officials had evicted them from their native place, where they lived for generations and removed their huts, stating that the village was coming under the reserve forests.

Revenue records

The Suriyur, a village which has been reportedly removed from revenue records, did not fall in the reserve for-



EXPRESSING IRE: Residents of Suriyur Pallakattur and members of Suriyur Action Committee staging a demonstration in Salem on Wednesday.
— PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN.

est area, they claimed. The eviction was a blatant violation of the provisions of the Scheduled Tribe and Forest Dwellers Act (Recognition of Forest Rights) 2006.

They wanted the district administration to take action against the forest officials. Residents wanted the State Government to allow them to settle in the village and provide land pattas to them.

Special Deepavali sale begins

Staff Reporter

SALEM: The special Deepavali sale of silk and cotton varieties has begun in the Co-operative Thangam silk house here on Wednesday.

District Revenue Officer M. Rajarathnam inaugurated the sale.

Officials said that the Thangam silk house has set Rs. 2.28 crore as the sales target for this Deepavali season. The Government announced 30 per cent discount for the cotton and silk cloths. The showroom would also provide discount up to 50 per cent on certain cloth varieties.

It had stocked silk cloths, including saris worth Rs. 3.5 crore. People could buy silk saris at the price range starting from Rs. 2,500, they said.

Forest Dept. pulled up for harassing villagers

R. Ilangoan

SALEM: The one-man committee of the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes, which inquired into the alleged atrocities on forest dwellers of Suriyur Pallakattor near here, has condemned the Forest Department for personalising the issue and showing scant regard for the National Forest Policies.

In his report to the Commission on the forced eviction of villagers, a copy of which is available with *The Hindu*, senior member Tsering Samphel, who conducted the inquiry recently, said the dispute (between villagers and Forest Department officials)

had to be sorted out at the earliest as it involved the livelihood of thousands of poor people.

Since the affected people mostly belonged to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, besides a few tribes, a joint meeting with the respective national commissions would help to find a lasting solution to the issue.

The report, split into seven sections including details of the troubles the villagers faced, said the village bore evidence of having human habitation dating back to many years. Mr. Samphel said he had seen old irrigation wells and levelled fields that bore witness to agricultural activities being carried out

for years. The villagers, he said, were traditional forest dwellers. Officials of the Forest and Revenue Departments could not substantiate their claim that the village was located in reserve forests.

So, they personalised the issue, showing scant respect to the Scheduled Tribes and Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Nearly 127 families (17 tribal, 20 dalits and 90 BC/MBC) claim that they were forcibly evicted from their village where they were living since the time of their forefathers.

On a petition filed by the Suriyur Action Committee, the Commission directed Mr. Samphel to visit the village and hold an inquiry.

THE HINDU • SATURDAY, AUGUST 4, 2007

REGION

Utterly buttery profits

The financial performance of the dairy unit of the Sarvodaya Sangam, Uttukuli, Erode, in selling butter and ghee is Rs. 1.75 crore this year. — Page 5

Sethusamudram project continues

Despite a few technical hardships, the works of the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project were going on unhindered, said Union Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways T. R. Baalu. — Page 5

Adivasis subjected to many atrocities

Government urged to take stringent action against officials who try to evict tribals from their habitations

Special Correspondent

UDHAKANALAI: The two-day fourth state level Adivasi Cultural Festival organised by the Tamil Nadu Adivasi Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC) and the Federation of Tamil Nadu Adivasi Associations got underway at Kotagiri on Friday. A seminar on 'Adivasi Livelihood Rights' marked the occasion.

Neglected group

In his inaugural address the State Organiser, Tamil Nadu Environmental Council, Social Action Movement, Antonyasamy lamented that the tribal communities were the most neglected section of the society now.

Rights denied

While atrocities committed



RECOGNISING THEIR RIGHTS: Some of the participants at the state level Tribal's Livelihood Rights seminar in Kotagiri on Friday. — PHOTO: D. RADHAKRISHNAN

against the tribals were numerous, under the guise of protecting forests and promoting tourism, tribals were being denied their rights. He regretted that

even the importance given to protection of wild animals was not being given to the tribal communities. The State Organiser, TAFSC A. Pongathan

presided. The State Coordinator, TAFSC Saroj Kumar Chatterji welcomed the gathering.

Tribal bill 2006

The seminar resolved to urge the state and central governments to recognise the tribal habitations as areas falling under the fifth schedule. By another resolution the government was requested to bring into force the Tribal Bill 2006.

Strict action

The government should take stringent action against officials who initiated eviction proceedings against tribals residing in or near forests.

Grant pattas

Stating that the number of assembly constituencies

reserved for scheduled tribes should not be reduced, the seminar wanted the government to grant pattas for the lands being cultivated by the tribals.

The system of reservation adopted in the elections to the local bodies should be extended to the cooperative polls.

Lands given on lease to the corporate sector in hill areas should be taken back and distributed among the landless tribals.

Preserve traditions

The government should constitute a Tribal Advisory Council. Community certificates to tribals should be issued without delay.

The Central and State governments should help preserve the hoary culture and traditions of various tribal

communities.

Increase reservation

The one percent reservation for tribals in educational institutions and central and state government offices should be raised to two percent. All the landless poor tribals in the Nilgiris should be given two acres each.

Restore land

Todas should be allowed to fell eucalyptus and similar trees on their lands. Lands belonging to the Todas which were now occupied by non tribals should be restored.

While a procession formed part of the occasion, cultural troupes of many tribal communities showcased their traditional dances in the evening.

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Staff Reporter

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— PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN.

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administration to take action against the forest officials.

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Staff Reporter

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District Revenue Officer M. Rajarathinam inaugurated the sale.

Officials said that the Thangam silk house has set Rs. 2.28 crore as the sales target for this Deepavali season. The Government announced 30 per cent discount for the cotton and silk cloths. The showroom would also provide discount up to 50 per cent on certain cloth varieties.

It had stocked silk cloths, including saris worth Rs. 3.5 crore. People could buy silk saris at the price range starting from Rs. 2,500, they said.

Forest Dept. pulled up for harassing villagers

R. Ilangoan

SALEM: The one-man committee of the National Commission of Scheduled Tribes, which inquired into the alleged atrocities on forest dwellers of Suriyur Pallakattor near here, has condemned the Forest Department for personalising the issue and showing scant regard for the National Forest Policies.

In his report to the Commission on the forced eviction of villagers, a copy of which is available with *The Hindu*, senior member Tsering Samphel, who conducted the inquiry recently, said the dispute (between villagers and Forest Department offi-

cials) had to be sorted out at the earliest as it involved the livelihood of thousands of poor people.

Since the affected people mostly belonged to the Scheduled Castes and Backward Classes, besides a few tribes, a joint meeting with the respective national commissions would help to find a lasting solution to the issue.

The report, split into seven sections including details of the troubles the villagers faced, said the village bore evidence of having human habitation dating back to many years. Mr. Samphel said he had seen old irrigation wells and levelled fields that bore witness to agricultural activities being carried out

for years. The villagers, he said, were traditional forest dwellers. Officials of the Forest and Revenue Departments could not substantiate their claim that the village was located in reserve forests.

So, they personalised the issue, showing scant respect to the Scheduled Tribes and Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Nearly 127 families (17 tribal, 20 dalits and 90 BC/MBC) claim that they were forcibly evicted from their village where they were living since the time of their forefathers.

On a petition filed by the Suriyur Action Committee, the Commission directed Mr. Samphel to visit the village and hold an inquiry.

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REGION

Utterly buttery profits

The financial performance of the dairy unit of the Sarvodaya Sangam, Uthukuli, Erode, in selling butter and ghee is Rs. 1.75 crore this year. — Page 5

Sethusamudram project continues

Despite a few technical hardships, the works of the Sethusamudram Shipping Canal Project were going on unhindered, said Union Minister of Shipping, Road Transport and Highways T. S. Basu. — Page 5

Adivasis subjected to many atrocities

Government urged to take stringent action against officials who try to evict tribals from their habitations

Special Correspondent

UDHAMAVALUR: The two-day fourth state level Adivasi Cultural Festival organised by the Tamil Nadu Adivasi Fifth Schedule Campaign (TAFSC) and the Federation of Tamil Nadu Adivasi Associations got underway at Kotagiri on Friday. A seminar on 'Adivasi Livelihood Rights' marked the occasion.

Neglected group

In his inaugural address the State Organiser, Tamil Nadu Environmental Council, Social Action Movement, Antonyyamy lamented that the tribal communities were the most neglected section of the society now.

Rights denied

While atrocities committed



RECOGNISING THEIR RIGHTS: Some of the participants at the state level Tribals Livelihood Rights seminar in Kotagiri on Friday.

— PHOTO: RADHAKRISHNAN

ted against the tribals were numerous, under the guise of protecting forests and promoting tourism tribals were being denied their rights. He regretted that

even the importance given to protection of wild animals was not being given to the tribal communities. The State Organiser, TAFSC A. Ranganathan

presided. The State Coordinator, TAFSC Saroj Kumar Chattriya welcomed the gathering.

Tribal bill 2006

The seminar resolved to urge the state and central governments to recognise the tribal habitations as areas falling under the fifth schedule. By another resolution the government was requested to bring into force the Tribal Bill 2006.

Strict action

The government should take stringent action against officials who initiated eviction proceedings against tribals residing in or near forests.

Grant pattas

Stating that the number of assembly constituencies

reserved for scheduled tribes should not be reduced, the seminar wanted the government to grant pattas for the lands being cultivated by the tribals.

The system of reservation adopted in the elections to the local bodies should be extended to the cooperative polls.

Lands given on lease to the corporate sector in hill areas should be taken back and distributed among the landless tribals.

Preserve traditions

The government should constitute a Tribal Advisory Council. Community certificates to tribals should be issued without delay.

The Central and State governments should help preserve the hoary culture and traditions of various tribal

communities.

Increase reservation

The one percent reservation for tribals in educational institutions and central and state government offices should be raised to two percent. All the landless poor tribals in the Nilgiris should be given two acres each.

Restore land

Todas should be allowed to fell eucalyptus and similar trees on their lands. Lands belonging to the Todas which were now occupied by non tribals should be restored.

While a procession formed part of the occasion, cultural troupes of many tribal communities showcased their traditional dances in the evening.

Implementation of Forest Rights Act sought

R. Ilangovan

SALEM: The State Government's delay in implementing the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act and Rules, 2007 in Tamil Nadu has prompted a group of activists to launch an intense 'village to village' campaign among tribals and forest-dwellers from this week.

As part of their agitation, they have asked the tribals and those residing in forest to send applications to authorities concerned seeking their rights over forest land on which they have been living for long. They have also decided to draw the attention of people's representatives to this issue by launching an agitation at Chennai on March 24 when the State Assembly will meet to deliberate on the budget.

The activists blamed the

State Government for not convening special gram sabha meetings as proposed by Prime Minister Manmohan Singh on February 28 to make the sabha members aware of the provisions of the new Act and the roles and responsibilities of Forest Rights Committees (FRCs).

The Prime Minister has written to the Chief Ministers seeking their cooperation to ensure effective implementation of the Act, which mandates the states to constitute committees that will ensure distribution of land rights. The State and District-Level Monitoring Committees should be set up so that the work can be commenced promptly. It should be ensured that adequate protection was provided to critical wildlife habitats, the Prime Minister had asked.

Union Minister of Panchayati Raj Mani Shankar Ai-

yar, in his letter dated February 15, 2008, had asked the states to initiate implementation of the provisions of the new Act.

Mr. Aiyar points out that Clause 6 (1) of the Act authorises the gram sabhas to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of the rights of individuals and community on forest lands.

While many States including Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh had started taking up the initiative, Tamil Nadu was yet to undertake preliminary steps for its implementation, said A. Renganathan, convener, Tribal Associations for the Fifth Schedule Campaign.

A Forest official, however, said that as the letter from the Minister had given them very little time, they were not able to convene gram sabha meetings on February 28.

Redraw tribal areas, activists demand

International Day for Indigenous People observed

Special Correspondent

SALEM: Tribals and activists have come out with 'Salem Declaration,' on the International Day for Indigenous People, which urged the Tamil Nadu government to redraw the tribal areas so that they could be clubbed together under the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution that ensures the tribal people's rights and also enforce the Scheduled Tribes and other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 in Tamil Nadu with immediate effect.

The activists were participating in a state-level convention on tribals to mark the International Day for Indigenous People here on Saturday.

Deliberating on the issues that confront the tribals in Tamil Nadu, the activists pointed out that tribal habitations had been split and adjoined with other areas thus denying them to forge a common platform.

The State should redraw the boundaries of tribal villages and pockets where the tribals are living so that they could be earmarked under the Fifth Schedule.

The Declaration stated that the Forest Act talks about the rights of tribals on lands only in the areas falling under the jurisdiction of the gram sabhas, since many adivasis are living in Town Panchayats and Municipal limits, their rights on lands should also be safeguarded. Till the provisions of the Forest Act were implemented, no tribal or hill dweller should be evicted, it urged. The other demands included the access to small forest produce, free lands under the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister's Programme, banning the mining in forest



'RETURN OUR LANDS': Tribals in Tamil Nadu taking out a rally in Salem on Saturday.

— PHOTO: E. LAKSHMI NARAYANAN

areas, cancellation of lease of government lands, adequate teachers in residential and other schools in tribal pockets, community certificates, field immunisation of children and cancellation of buying tribals lands by non-tribals. The team behind the release of Salem Declaration include State Convenor, Tribal Associations for Fifth Schedule Campaign A. Renganathan; State Organiser, Tamil Nadu Environmental Council L. Anthonysamy; Organiser, National Adivasi Andolan, V. S. Raj David and Jacob Belly and Richard from

Cornerstone, Chennai. They all spoke on the socio and cultural issues and the rights of tribal people. District Council Chairman K. Shanmugam inaugurated the convention. Earlier tribals and activists took out a procession and later organised a 'Dusk-to-Dawn' Adivasi Festival too. Tribal groups and delegates from Salem, Vilupuram, Kanyakumari, Coimbatore, Udhamandalm, Trichy, Dindigul, Theni, Kolli Hills, Dharmapuri, Krishnagiri, Tiruvannamalai and Vellore participated in the day-long events.



Chennai Agitation



Consultation Against Eviction of Tribals from Forest by Forest Department in Kalakadu



Election Manifesto Submitted to Viduthalai Siruthaigal Political Party by TAAK Leaders



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Tribal Resource and Research Centre

C/o. VRDP 3/88 AB Opp. SCCB Kalyana Mandapam
New Fairlands, Salem-16.
Ph.0427- 2442192, E-mail: vrdp@ethnet vrdpسلم@yahoo.com