

NCST summons Odisha government, seeks report on displaced Schedule Tribe people

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National Commission for Scheduled Tribes. (Photo | Facebook)

By Express News Service

BHUBANESWAR: The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has issued notice to the government over the plight of lakhs of scheduled tribe people displaced by various projects in different districts of the State. The NCST has sought a detailed report from the Chief Secretary within a month.

The petitioner, a rights activist and lawyer, Radhakanta Tripathy cited various issues related to displacement of tribals in almost every district of Odisha. The tribals have been suffering immensely due to the execution of dam, irrigation and industrial projects.

In the undivided Koraput district alone, the tribal displacement was 58 per cent (pc), which comes to around six pc of the total population of the district. The displacement of tribals was about 42.73 pc in case of major irrigation projects.

There are many projects like Salandi project where 94.5 pc ST families were displaced in Keonjhar and Bhadrak districts. Similar is the tribal displacement issue in Hirakud and Kanpur dam projects. Odisha occupies a unique position among the states due to a large tribal population. Tribals constitute about 22.85 per cent of the State's total population.

There are as many as 62 tribal communities including 13 primitive tribal groups. About 44.7 per cent of the State's geographical area is known as scheduled areas which extends over 118 of the 314 blocks in 12 districts.

The petitioner contended since a majority of scheduled tribes live in hilly and forest regions, which are mostly inaccessible and isolated, the tribal economy is largely subsistence oriented, unstructured and non-specialised.

"Injustice has been done to tribals as the projects have not benefited them at all and problems encountered by the oustees are never addressed. The relocation and rehabilitation measures for tribal displaced families should be different and distinct to address their impoverishment effectively. Economic analysis of the projects should adopt specific compensation mechanisms for each project," the petitioner said.

He requested the NCST to set up a separate commission to address the grievances of displaced people and constitute a committee to study the situation and make appropriate recommendations for the government to follow.

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