

# Tension mounts in Khammam villages

HIMBU JULY  
2.7.98 NAO

By Our Staff Reporter

KHAMMAM, July 1.

The tribal agitation is slipping out of the hands of Sakti, the voluntary organisation that had singularly spearheaded it so far in Khammam district. The situation is becoming tense in the villages of both Dammamet and Aswarapet mandals as the confrontation is building up between tribals and non-tribals.

Cashing in on the situation, the political outfits, which had so far been waiting on the wings to take over the movement, are getting into direct action. Backed by the Communist Party of India (Marxist), the Atavi Prantha Girijana Sangham demonstrated its strength by occupying about 200 acres of Government land in Tirumalakunta and Jaggaram villages. Led by the Sangham leader, Mr. Kanithi Lakshmaiah, a large number of tribals paraded across the lands which were reportedly in the occupation not only of non-tribals but also some tribals.

Some Scheduled Caste ryots who were taking firewood from their farms in Mandalapalli village were prevented from doing so by another group of tribals belonging to Kotturu village. They took away the bullock cart used by the farmers for transportation of firewood. The incident led to tension in the area as the SC farmers, supported by other non-tribal communities, sought to settle scores with the tribals.

The police intervened on Wednesday and restored the bullock cart to the SC farmers and managed to diffuse tension in the area. A group

of tribals served an ultimatum to some well-to-do farmers in Mandalapalli village two days ago, asking them either to show valid documents in support of the ownership of their lands in their enjoyment or hand them over to the landless tribals. The non-tribals immediately reported the matter to the revenue and police authorities.

A delegation of non-tribal farmers also met the Minister for Major Irrigation, Mr. T. Nageswara Rao, and appraised him of the situation prevailing in their villages. They also met the Superintendent of Police and sought protection for their lives and properties in the villages. The police in the two mandals were already on alert in view of the tribal protests.

The police department had already kept a tab on the activities of the Sakti activists in the two mandals as well as in the neighbouring areas. The department officials have from time to time been summoning all those involved in organising the tribals against the non-tribal farmers allegedly occupying the Government land. The Sakti volunteers were neutralised and their activities were more or less under check.

But the police exercise had little impact on the CPI(M) activists. They made a study of the land related problems in selective villages like Tirumalakunta and formulated their own action plan to organise the tribals. The Congress party is more or less divided in the district on the tribal issue. One section was trying to settle political scores with, Mr. Nageswarar Rao by taking advantage of the problem.