

Collectors empowered to cancel patta

Express News Service

Kakinada, Nov. 10: It is reliably learnt that the government has issued an order empowering the district collectors to exercise the powers of director of settlement and cancel fraudulent settlement pattas, issued under Regulation 2/70 in the tribal areas after the abolition of muttas.

Mutta is a group of villages given to a muttadar [like the zamindar] by the British government to provide watch and ward and help the government to suppress rebellions in the tribal areas.

There were 394 villages under muttadars in the East Godavari agency area. When the muttas were abolished in 1969 a survey settlement followed under Regulation 2/69. The muttadars of Mohanapuram, Jeddangi and Durcherti who are non-tribals had issued lease deeds for lands under the cultivation of tribals.

Forest land to the extent of 1400 hectares was shown to be on lease to non-tribals of faroff places. These non-tribals managed to get permanent title deeds on the basis of these fake leases from the settlement officer who was at that time based at

Peddapuram and Rajahmundry. The felling of forests and the litigation on these lands pressured the government to take up steps to undo the fraud.

Since the high court has held that unless the pattas are cancelled the non-tribals should not be evicted from the tribal lands, the government has to initiate the cancellation of pattas by delegating the powers of director of settlement [Hyderabad] to the district collectors.

Fraudulent land settlements

Further non-tribals had taken the tribal land by cheating in connivance with muttadars and obtained pattas. Some of them have already appropriated compensation for the submerged tribal lands under Madigadda reservoir.

An extent of 2700 hectares of land for which pattas were issued to non-tribals is being claimed by tribals under either land restoration measures or with the support of Naxalites.

The tribal advisory council at its meeting in December 1988, urged the government to delegate the

powers to the collectors.

Though the present GO is a right step, it might lead to unending litigation through appeals to the commissioner of survey settlement, the high court and the Supreme Court. So a right step is to amend the regulation Section 7 of 2/70 enabling the supremacy of 1/52 Land Transfer Restoration Act [L.T.R] over the settlement proceedings.

The Cabinet sub-committee on left wing extremism also recommended amendment to the regulation.

The present GO extends to muttas and to Nugur Albaka and Cherla mahals of Bhadrachalam of Khammam district. As this GO is limited to mutta lands only, a great deal of injustice under 69 regulation, settling the lands after estate abolition is still left out. It is felt that 3000 hectares of fertile tribal land was settled in favour of non-tribals under 2/69 regulation through which lands were settled after abolition of estates.

There is a great deal of resentment, since the government is very slow in dealing with the bottlenecks of land restoration of tribals.