

# Grave threat to ecological systems in eastern ghats

Newstoday

Visakhapatnam: The "manya prantha chaitanya yatra" in which as many as 50 voluntary organisations are involved, under the leadership of the chaitanya sravanthi has so far completed more than three weeks of the 100-day exploration and study tour on ecological imbalance in the eastern ghats.

In a study report, the chaitanya sravanthi observed that their visit to Srikakulam, Koraput, Vizianagaram and Visakhapatnam districts had revealed that a large number of tribals had been displaced by the massive irrigation and hydel power projects under execution. Besides, the projects have created ecological imbalances on an unprecedented scale. Landslides, soil erosion and siltation caused by frequent floods had upset the goal of the projects. The report opined that these "human-made disasters" if allowed to continue would adversely affect the ecological systems of the entire peninsular India.

The report cited the crumbling of Yeleru reservoir tunnels carrying water to Visakhapatnam steel plant, the dangerous condition of the Kothavalasa-Kirandole line carrying ore to Visakhapatnam port, landslides, erosion of bunds, and the massive siltation of river deltas as early warnings of the im-

pending disaster for the entire peninsula.

The Sileru project, the report observed, had displaced 50,000 Samantha tribals but the displaced persons were being treated as refugees, both by the Andhra and Orissa governments. Neither of the states have accepted them as citizens. The Andhra Pradesh government announced the extension of financial support by the international bank for agriculture and development for rehabilitation of podu cultivators, but for reasons of its own, the

## Study report

government, the report mentioned had not included the Samantha tribals under the assistance scheme.

## Warning

The report warned of degradation of ecological systems in the eastern ghats at a dangerous pace.

The scientists have recommended 37 biosphere reservoirs and the United Nations education, social and cultural organisation's formula in the eastern ghats region of Srikakulam district. The sal forests and the dry deciduous forests of the eastern ghats in Andhra Pradesh would degrade further if the scientists' recommendations made to the Central and

state governments for their preservation were not implemented, they warned. The report opined that tribal rights over forests have been jeopardised due to complicated and sometimes contradictory rules which was resulting in alienation of tribal lands, from tribals to non-tribals on benami transactions.

The report expressed concern at the degradation of the ecological systems in the eastern ghats due to bauxite mining by Nalco and the over-exploitation of bamboo trees for paper mills. Mango, tamarind and jack fruits, which sustain the tribals, were being felled for manufacture of plywood.

## Wild life sanctuaries

The "manya prantha chaitanya yatra" report also demanded the registration of Koleru lake under the international Ramsar convention, of which India is a signatory. The Koleru lake is a sanctuary for migrating birds from Siberia and other countries.

The report appealed to the government to preserve and protect the last vestiges of the pristine wild life sanctuaries on the eastern ghats and the thick jungles of Marripakalu in Visakhapatnam district by implementing the suggestions of environmental scientists.