

Officials shy away from agency areas

15-9-91

EXPRESS NEWS SERVICE

Kakinada, Sept. 14

The State and Union governments are spending crores of rupees on the welfare of tribals. The main aim is to give all facilities to the depressed, suppressed and oppressed tribals and bring them into the mainstream of society.

The Integrated Tribal Development Agency (ITDA) was constituted in districts where tribal population is more. There are eight such districts in AP, East Godavari being one among them. The government has drafted several schemes. There is free flow of funds from the State and Central governments besides international agencies. But the pity is that more than 50 per cent officer posts are lying vacant in a place like Rampachodavaram, the gateway to agency. The ITDA project officer, the sub-collector, the RDO, the DEO, and other top officials posts have been kept vacant since long.

Special allowance is paid to agency staff as an incentive because they work in distant areas prone to malaria and other diseases. Besides, the officers and employees get attractive TA, DA, residential quarters and conveyance facilities. Enjoying all these benefits, the staff hardly stay for a fortnight in tribal areas. As a result, two decades after the introduction of these schemes, the development is not up to expectations.

Teacher posts: In agency schools, there are a number of vacancies of teacher posts. Even those who are working concentrate on collection of forest wood, getting furniture

made out of it and sending tamarind, silky brooms, soapnuts, honey, firewood and coal to their family members in town. Teaching becomes secondary.

Because of "annalu", the hostel students are well fed as admitted by the parents. A recent visit to the agency area brought more facts to light.

Several officials stay only for 10 days in the agency area, the rest of the month in towns. There is a park, shuttle court and cable TV provided with dish antenna for the employees by the ITDA at Rampachodavaram.

The divisional manager of Girijart Corporation, housing divisional engineer, mobile medical unit doctor, veterinary doctor, executive engineer, (tribal welfare), irrigation department engineer, 50 per cent of degree college lecturers, five MROs, MDOs, agriculture officer, bank manager and other officers at Addateegala, Rampachodavaram, Maredimilli and Geddada, are not staying at the headquarters. They come from Rajahmudry, Kakinada and Ravulapalem on flying trips, visit offices and go away.

The doctors are expected to visit villages along with health staff. Unless some epidemic breaks out, the doctors are not seen in villages.

The wardens, teachers and ANMs, stay in mandal headquarters. Seldom do they visit villages.

There are cases of misbehaviour by some officials towards tribal women. Complaints were given to the district collector. They are under investigation. There are officials who get agency allowances without coming under the purview of the ITDA.