

# Surampalem works at brisk pace

*Nabard-aided project to water 6,265 hectare in Agency mandals*

FROM OUR BUREAU

Rampachodavaram, Nov. 8: Construction works of a medium irrigation project taken up with Rs 44.38 crore assistance from Nabard across Burada Canal at Surampalem in Gangavaram mandal in the division are progressing at a brisk pace. The project is considered a boon to the farmers of upland areas of Gokavaram, Korukonda and Rajampet mandals in the Agency which will provide irrigation to 6,265 hectare in the region. The Irrigation Department has promised works relating to environment information and

head sluice construction at the project site at an estimated cost of Rs 6.8 crore in February 2001. The department had incurred an expenditure of Rs 1.33 crore till now on the works. An amount of Rs 15.42 crore has been set aside to undertake spillway construction works. The project would displace 223 tribal families from their houses and lands at Donelapalli, Kottada, Dibbalaveedhi and Tekulaveedhi villages in Gangavaram mandal. The NGOs Samatha and Pragati launched protest programmes to stop construction of the project till adequate compen-

sation is paid to the affected farmers. Some tribals approached the High Court on the matter. In its judgement, the court directed the irrigation authorities to settle the claims of the displaced families for alternative houses and lands first before proceeding with the construction works of the project. So, it was curtains down, albeit temporarily, on the head works from September 8 to 2001. The then East Godavari collector, in a counter petition filed in the HC stated that Burada Canal basin had adequate water resources. The canal, when in floods, submerge 1,600 hectare of lands

in the Agency. The court, after hearing the plea of tribals and the government version, ruled the project may be revived after paying adequate compensation to the affected families in a specified time period. Surampalem project rehabilitation officer M Sridhar stated the Irrigation Department had deposited Rs 83.94 lakh to the account of ITDA. Rampachodavaram to undertake rehabilitation of the displaced tribal families so as not to harm their natural lifestyles. He said ITDA project officer Mukesh Kumar Meena had chalked out a rehabilitation package after consulting the affected tribals

at gram sabhas convened by him. Housing Department deputy executive engineer Ravishankar said the project oustees would be rehabilitated in model housing colonies, which house temple, school building and a community hall. The colony would be equipped with electrical facilities and well laid-out roads. Fifty-seven displaced families from Donelapalli would be shifted to a model colony to be built at Kottada panchayat limits. The other 166 families belonging to Kottada, Dibbalaveedhi and Tekulaveedhi would be housed at Chinagarlapadu.