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Protest rally against triba

By Our Staff Reporter

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A serious conflict is brewing between the tribals and non-tribals in the sub plan area of Khammam district. The sole issue that has created the divide is the scheduled area regulation that has put a blanket ban on the transfer of land in favour of non-tribals. The emergence of the non-tribal organisations with a strong demand for amending Regulation 1 of 1970 has made the tribal pockets increasingly restive.

The revenue divisions of Bhadrachalam and Palvanha have witnessed a series of rallies, public meetings and protest demonstrations by non-tribal sections opposing the implementation of the regulation. Backed by major political parties, barring the CPI(M), they have been trying out all methods to mount pressure on the Government to change the regulation which is "unjust" to the non-tribals living in the tribal pockets.

A huge rally was organised in Manuguru on Thursday last by the Aikya Karyacharana Raithu Committee to highlight the problems being confronted by the non-tribal population, particularly the peasant community in the scheduled area. Thousands of people joined the rally coming all the way from Aswapuram and Pinapaka mandals. Speakers, who included Mr. Puvvada Nageswara Rao, MLA, and Mr. Balasani Lakshminarayana, Khammam DCCB chairman, appealed to the Government to make a thorough study of the situation prevailing in the tribal area and take corrective measures.

Aikya Karyacharana Raithu Committee leaders stated that the non-tribal population was sinking into poverty as their properties had no takers. They had become aliens in their own land. The poorer sections among the non-tribals were also deprived of benefits they were entitled for under the land-based programmes sponsored by the Government because of the regulation. The land purchase scheme of the SC Corporation could not be implemented in the agencies for the same reason. So was the case with the housing programme.

Some of the tribal leaders and elected representatives also have been supporting the demand of the scheduled area non-tribals thus giving credence to the demand for amendment of regulation. The CPI MLA, Mr. Baddu Choudhary, who took part in the Manuguru rally, also declined the need for the amendment in order to restore harmony among the tribals and non-tribals. So was the case with almost all the MLAs and MPs of the CPI. Mr. Kunja Biksham is, however, the lone M.L.A from the party demanding no change in the regulation.

The movement against regulation 1 of 1970 took off in the district in September last with the Andhra Pradesh Scheduled Area Raithu Samithi, another non-tribal organisation, holding a massive rally in Bhadrachalam. It was followed by similar demonstrations in Julurupadu village and a few other places in October last. The non-tribal organisations have been opposing the presumptive clause that the land in the scheduled area belonged originally to the tribals. The existence of the non-tribal population in the scheduled areas was very much established by Captain Glasfouard, the then Assistant Commissioner of Settlement, in his survey report submitted to the British Government in 1862.

Some of the non-tribals have settled in the agencies at the invitation of the Government as well as the local zamindars well before Independence. The Gannavarm colony in the sub plan area of Khammam district was one such settlement, they said. Political parties seeking the amendment have been highly critical of the stand taken by the CPI(M) on the issue. They pointed out that the Scheduled Tribes Restriction on transfer of lands and Restoration of Alienated Lands Amendment Bill, 1996 was passed unanimously by the Left Democratic Front Government in Kerala brushing aside the opposition of the tribals. The condition of the non-tribals in the scheduled areas in the State was in no way different for the CPI(M) to adopt a different line, the said.

The CPI(M), which has been strongly opposing the demand for amendment of the regulation, has taken up a countercampaign in