Mining leases to non-tribals sacrosanct

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Kakinada, Nov. 19: In spite of instructions from the Chief Secretary the Department of Mines is reluctant to cancel the mining leases issued to non-tribals in scheduled areas.

There are nearly 20 leases issued to non-tribals by the department on government lands in the agency areas of East Godavari. A flourishing business has been going on since 30 years for extracting the minerals graphite, laterite. But the paradox is, even as early as 1969 GO 917 prohibited assignment of government lands to non-tribals and leasing was totally banned.

But the Acts are dumb and officials are corrupt. The tribals by and large are not aware of these legislations which are intended to check the infiltration of non-tribals into the scheduled areas' as the high court judgment upholding 1/70 Act, rightly put it.

Several activists and officials working with the tribals had brought it to the notice of the Chief Secretary and he promptly took up the matter with the secretaries of departments on October 25, 1989 and issued instructions to the departments to cancel the licences given to non-tribals in scheduled areas.

Further the additional commissioner of survey settlement also prevailed upon the departments to invoke all kinds of licences.

But the Department of Mines is allowing all the time to non-tribals to make more money and is keeping the genuine applications for licences of tribal cooperatives in abeyance.