

NEWS WRAP

AGD

Adivasis of India, comprise hundreds of distinct tribes, whose languages have no written form. They live in severe poverty in remote areas, with limited government services. The tribal communities have the lowest literacy rates and the highest incidence of infant mortality and malnourished children. The tribals have special legal protection, to safeguard them from being involuntarily dispossessed of their land. Even then pro-business government officials and land surveyors offer promises of cash, jobs and a better future to persuade the tribals to part with their ancestral fields for mines and other large scale industries, which could bring economic development and progress, to the neglected areas. Government officials are brazenly manipulating public consultation processes and overriding community sentiments to seize tribal lands. Even though villagers are absolutely against handing over even an inch of land, tribals under coercion and threats of arrest under false charges, are signing away the land and accepting 'compensation'.

Villagers in Lohandiguda and Chindgaon, in Chattisgarh state, are mainly illiterate farmers from the Gond tribe. In 2005, the Tatas had announced plans of building a steel plant in Lohandiguda district. The families who had parted with their ancestral lands, are still cultivating their ancestral lands. Officials are striving hard to acquire the 20% of the required 5000 hectares, still outstanding. Local civil rights lawyers are threatening legal action against the process. When the government ventures to acquire land for mining or special economic zones, the indigenous people, who live in pre-industrial societies are threatened. One of the most controversial mining projects is the plan by UK-listed Vedanta to mine bauxite, from a mountain that the 2800-strong Dongria Kondh tribe, believe is the tribal deity's sacred home. Neither government officials nor the Vedanta company made any meaningful attempt to inform the illiterate tribes, near the site about the project. They merely published advertisements for a public hearing. Pointing to concerns for the manner in which Vedanta company had handled relations with local communities, recently the Church of England and several other social investors have sold their share holdings in Vedanta. Conflicts between the neglected tribals against powerful business houses are helping to fuel the radical naxalite guerilla movement in the tribal belt.

MINING EMPIRE

Brothers Karunakaran Reddy, Janardhana Reddy and Somasekehar Reddy own two mining companies, viz Obulapuram Mining Company that has three mining bases ; and a partnership firm, Anantapur Mining Corporation, that has one mining lease. The four mines are in Andhra Pradesh, and strategically bordering neighbouring Karnataka. The mining empire earned Rs 3000 corers in revenue in 2009, gaining from a record 700 percent increase in global iron ore prices. The Reddys acquired their first mine in 2002. The local administration and police are rubber stamps, who have failed to collect forest development tax arrears, and have turned down requests for mining permits to the Reddys' arch rivals. Janardhana Reddy is the District Minister-in-Charge of Bellary, that accounts for

roughly two-thirds of the 45 million tons iron ore Karnataka produces, annually. Karunakaran Reddy, the Karnataka State Revenue Minister granted favours in land disputes between miners, and maintained status quo on a long-standing demand for miners to re-fix inter-state borders, where boundary pillars have been destroyed.

Almost 85 percent of land in Bellary is forest land, and the mining regulator, Indian Bureau of Mines (IBM) has been stopped innumerable times from inspecting the mines. The Reddy brothers are all in the BJP, but during the tenure of Andhra Pradesh Congress chief minister, Y S Rajasekhara Reddy the mining companies belonging to the Reddys bagged all four mining leases, on Andhra land that borders Karnataka. Private soldiers and private army of the Reddy brothers have been encroaching and grabbing adjacent mines. There has been nil demarcation of boundaries by the Survey of India, in a time bound manner. The Reddys allegedly mine iron ore in Karnataka, transport it to Andhra Pradesh and show it as production from the mines they own in Andhra.

CHILDREN OF CHINESE OFFICIALS

China is a one-party state, where the leadership lacks a democratic mandate. Even then in an on-line broadcast by the *People's Daily* newspaper, the official Communist Party mouthpiece, China's former state auditor has identified the business dealings of communist officials' children, as a principal source of public "dissatisfaction". There have been calls for better legal structures and greater supervision over the business dealings of officials and their children. Many corruption problems are transacted through sons and daughters, of officials. The Chinese public are annoyed with the rapidly growing wealth of the children and family members of the communist officials. Almost all rich families in China, have political backgrounds. Educated in the western countries, and possessing huge business dealings in China, the children of China's top leaders are often described as "princelings".

Discussions on the issue of nepotism and corruption could be the opening barrage of more spirited political campaign, against certain elements of the Communist Party. In the students protests of 1989, accusations of nepotism and special privileges for the children of China's elite had become stirring rallying cries. In China, grey income is semi-legal or illegal. Many officials earn "grey income" and "black income" in cash, through various shades of illegal income streams.□□