

Assam-Arunachal in new land row



Comments 0



Daya Nath Singh 2 January 2009 8622 views

A serious dispute on land is pending for years between the states of Assam and Arunachal Pradesh. The issue for rehabilitation of displaced persons of Rupahi Rajgarh village under Dulung circle of Lakhimpur district has remained unresolved despite the efforts of an NGO and the orders of the Gauhati High Court.

It has been alleged that some people from Arunachal Pradesh, with the assistance of the district administration of Lower Subansiri district of Arunachal and the circle officer of Dulung, entered into Rupahi Rajgarh village on March 29, 2006 and forcibly evicted thousands of villagers, who were given shelter there by the Assam government itself..

According to the Forest Act, elephant catching is an offence. These villagers were earlier engaged as elephant catchers and tamers at different places in the forest areas.

They informed the matter immediately to the deputy commissioner of Lakhimpur district, who advised them to stay somewhere else until the assembly elections were over. After the polls the villagers returned to their villages, but the forest department did not allow them to settle there and looted their belongings worth rupees four lakh approximately. Now they are facing death as starvation is looming large.

The NGO, namely, All Assam Hatiphandi Union (AAHU), representing the cause of the villagers has urged the Governor of Assam, Hon'ble Shiv Charan Mathur, by submitting a memorandum to him on December 22 last, to redress the problems of the unemployed and unsettled villagers for last three years as they have lost every thing they had. The intruders set ablaze their houses and looted their valuables amounting to more than rupees twenty lakh.

It may be mentioned in this connection that the elephant catchers and tamers lived in Rupahi Rajgarh areas under continuous threat of eviction. Being perplexed with the action of the forest department, they also met the Prime Minister, Dr Manmohan Singh, who allowed them to stay there. The Government of India through an order No.1-1/91 WL-1(Vol-1) dated, October 8, 1992, permitted them to live there. Ignoring the permission given by the government the forest department continued eviction from time to time.

The villagers were forced to seek legal remedy through a writ petition No.8328/05 dated, December 9, 2005 in Gauhati High Court and the court directed the Government of Assam to stop eviction of the villagers until and unless their proper rehabilitation was arranged. But the forest officials did no comply with the directives of the Hon'ble High Court.

A Member of Parliament from West Bengal, Mr Hiten Barman, has also sent a letter to the Prime Minister on December 11 last, enlighting with the plight of the villagers and requested him to use his good offices to solve their problems. In his letter Barman has mentioned that the government of Assam had rehabilitated the villagers to Dulung forest areas in 450 hectares of vacant land and the villagers started living there after making their own houses. The Arunachal state police forces evicted the people from the land which was allotted to the former elephant catchers and tamers families, on the pretext that the said land

belonged to the Arunachal Pradesh.

The AAHU has demanded permanent settlement to the evicted people of Rupahi Rajgarh village and adequate compensation to the poor villagers with five bundles of tin sheets and supply of food materials for six months to them who were residing in Rupahi Rajgarh of Dulung circle on or before March 29, 2006.

The organization has also demanded to set up a border police outpost for protecting the villagers from the Arunachali ingress to the state of Assam and solve the border issue permanently.

Further the organization demanded compensation to the villagers for the Arunachal ingress where they looted the valuables worth Rs.21 lakh and rupees four lakh looted by the forest authorities. It also demanded strict action against the authorities for violation of Gauhati High Court orders. The situation may take a different turn unless the settlement is done amicably.

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