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## Legal hassles stymieing land distribution drive: VS

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Photo: C. Ratheesh Kumar



***Land for the landless: Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan handing over title deed to an elderly woman after inaugurating the State-level title deed distribution drive in Thiruvananthapuram on Tuesday. —***

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Legal hassles are stymieing the State government's efforts to provide land and houses to the poor in a time-bound manner, Chief Minister V.S. Achuthanandan has said.

Inaugurating the State-level title deed distribution campaign at Vizhinjam near here on Tuesday, the Chief Minister said the government was committed to providing land and houses with power connection to deprived sections by 2011. But such efforts were getting entangled in legal issues.

He cited the Golf Club case as an example. In spite of such setbacks, land had been distributed to around 70,000 families during the past three years. Land would be given to landless tribal people in two months under the provisions of the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, he said.

The campaign being organised in phases was aimed at providing land to the landless over a period of time. After securing concessions under the Kerala Land Reforms Act, plantations were being converted for other purposes. The real estate mafia was purchasing small landholdings from various persons in the name of different companies and creating land banks. This had given way to an artificial increase in real estate prices. He called upon Revenue and Registration Department officials to be wary of such attempts, he said.

Revenue Minister K.P. Rajendran, in his presidential address, said the government had adopted a focussed approach in the campaign. The purpose was to cover all sections such as coastal residents, tribal people, farm and plantation labourers, industrial workers and deprived sections through different phases. Title deeds were given to 2,300 persons in the district in the current phase. It had been planned to award land rights to 10,000 persons in the district till January 31, 2010, he said.

George Mercier, MLA, welcomed the gathering. Minister for Fisheries and Registration S. Sarma, Minister for Law M. Vijayakumar, V. Sivankutty and V. Surendran Pillai, MLAs, and district panchayat president Anavoor Nagappan were there among those who offered felicitations. Land Revenue Commissioner K.M. Ramanandan presented a report. District Collector Sanjay Kaul proposed a vote of thanks.

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