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[Orissa Plus]

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## MNCs eye forests for mining

Statesman News Service

KORAPUT, 5 JUNE: Multinational companies are running roughshod over the environment and livelihood of people in the state and their free run allowed by the government because they have invested huge amount, alleged Mr Prafulla Samantara here today.

Mr Samantara, a environmental activist was addressing a tribal rally here to mark the World Environment Day.

He apprehended that the multinational companies and moneybags will pressurise the government to stall implementation of the Forest Rights Act. "The pro-tribal Act will never get implemented in its totality," he cautioned while pointing out that multinational companies were eyeing valuable forest land of Koraput, Kalahandi and Bolangir districts for mining activity.

Mindless and large scale mining in these regions will have a disastrous impact on the ecological balance, he said.

Looking at these concerns of the people where there is a danger of losing the basic livelihood opportunities, the government should put a ban on any mining activity in Deomali, Maliparvat, Kodingamali, Bafilimali and Sadubohumali mountains in Koraput district.

Scores of streams flow from these mountains and once mining starts there no water source will be left for the people and even the Kolab river will lose its source of water, he warned.

Thousands of tribals representing different anti-displacement unions like Deomali Surakhya Sangram Parishad, Maliparvat Surakhya Samiti, Koraput

Zilla Basachyut Mahasangh along with members of Paraja Sangh, Kuvi Sangh, Gadaba Sangh, Koraput Zilla Banavasi Sangh from across the district took out a huge rally in the district headquarters before submitting a memorandum to the district collector in this regard. The tribal leaders demanded expeditious implementation of Forest Rights Act-2006 and issuance of land pattas in favour of the tribals.

They also urged the district administration to create new forest in the devastated land through the participation and ownership of the community.

Rather than promoting mines, efforts were needed to establish more and more small scale food processing units while supporting the cultivation of fruits like pineapple, orange and lemon in the region starting from Niyamgiri to Deomali mountain range, the leaders stated in their memorandum.

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