

## ST panel concerned with rising tribal migration

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The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has expressed deep concern over the issue of migration of tribals to states like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu due to poor implementation of Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee (MGNREGA) Programme in Odisha.

The number of tribal beneficiaries of MGNREGA in the State has reduced by half in 2011-12 in comparison to that of 2010-11. As a result, tribals from Koraput and Balangir are migrating to other States, NCST Chairman Rameshwar Oraon on Thursday said.

Addressing media persons, Oraon said he would request the State Government to provide more jobs to tribals under the employment guarantee programme.

The NCST Chairman also raised alarm that mineral development and industrialisation have impacted tribals severely. They have lost their land resources. He said he came across several complaints that large tracts of land had been damaged by mineral development in Keonjhar while the tribal communities of Mayurbhanj district too have similar grievances.

On Wednesday, the Commission had held a public hearing in Badampahar area of Mayurbhanj where land belonging to 60,000 persons, mostly tribals, has been damaged due to random of mining activities. "I would take up the issue of tribals losing their land during my meeting with the Chief Minister," he said.

The Commission suggested that Odisha could take a leaf out of Andhra Pradesh model of utilisation of funds under tribal sub-plan (TSP). In Andhra Pradesh, guidelines have been proposed which prescribe penalty for violation of TSP fund utilisation.

In Odisha, before 2011-12, TSP funds were utilised in non-tribal areas and projects not concerning the tribals. Beginning last year, Scheduled Tribe and Scheduled Caste Department has decided to monitor utilisation of the TSP fund.

Oraon said he had interacted with tribals displaced by industrial projects in Kalinga Nagar in Jajpur district and found that the State acquired land of tribals for laying a main road in the industrial estate but did not touch land of non-tribals.

The NCST Chairman expressed displeasure that posts reserved for ST candidates are not being filled up. Against an ST population of 22.5 per cent in Odisha, only 12 per cent posts have been filled up by tribal candidates.

He suggested that since 36 per cent of total BPL families in the State are tribal, tribal advisory council meeting should be convened twice a year.