

FRA eludes Jama and Saibani



SARADA LAHANGIR

"BEING born to a tribal family is perhaps a curse. You are doomed to live in deprivation and suppression. You can't raise your voice, because your life and livelihood are controlled by forest officials. They are all in all; they can do and undo anything they wish," says Jama Majhi (40) from Tentulipadar village of Thuamul Rampur block of Kalahandi district. Frustration was writ large on his face.

"If this is not true, why then did the forest officials arrest me and why did I have to spend two days in custody? I was cultivating a small patch of forest land where I have been living since years. Was it a crime?" he asks.

On 29th October 2014, Rupang Majhi (35), wife of Jama Majhi (40), and Saibani Majhi (24), an unmarried woman from the village, were working on the field. However, forest officials arrested them, telling that they held no right over the land and what they had done was against the law. With tears in their eyes, they pleaded with them to set them free, but the forest officials did not listen to them. Rupang's husband came to know of the matter and rushed to the spot. He requested the officials to leave them but they did not listen to their plea. Then Jama pleaded with them to arrest him instead of arresting his wife. Finally, they left Rupang and arrested Jama and Saibani Majhi and took them to the Bhawanipatna forest office. They kept them in their custody for a day and a half. After that they left Saibani but forwarded Jama to the court, from where he was sent to jail. As he was poor and did not have money, he could not arrange an advocate to defend him. After two days, on 31st October, his wife Rupang sold her goat and cooking utensils and managed to arrange Rs 2000 to pay to an advocate to secure bail for her husband.

"Actually, they had arrested me. But as I have a kid, my husband requested them to spare me and offered to go with them. For us, life came to a halt when my husband was

Over 1.3 million tribals and forest dwellers have got right over the land they had been using for years under the Forest Right Act 2006. This can, in some way, be called contemporary India's biggest land regime change-the ownership coming from the forest administration to the rightful owners of forestland. This Act also promises the forest dwellers access to Government schemes. But seven years after the enforcement of this Act, the tribal forest dwellers like Jama and Saibani are still struggling hard to get ownership of their land where they have been living since generations



in jail. I was scared and helpless. Without him it was impossible on my part to feed our four children. I don't know anybody in Kalahandi district headquarters. The advocates were demanding more money to move his bail petition. We are poor we have to struggle hard to get a square meal for our children. How would I get a large sum to pay to an Advocate? So I had to sell off my goat and some of the cooking utensils to pay his fees," Rupang narrates.

Saibani Majhi, who was free after being arrested, says, "I am a single woman and I live with my 10-year-old nephew. My brother and sister-in-law died a couple of years ago. I have to shoulder his responsibility. I live in a small thatched house, which was built by my parent years ago. Very often the forest people are coming and threatening us to vacate this place because this is forest land. They have several times spoiled our

cultivation. A few days back, they arrested me and took me to the forest office. They detained me the whole night there and released me the next morning. I cannot explain the trauma and pain I went through," Saibani narrates her plight.

"I am a single woman; tell me where will I go? A couple of years ago we heard that Government would give land *patta* to forest dwellers but nothing has materialized so far. It seems we are not counted as human beings. We are poor and illiterate; we don't know the rules and policies of the Government. We only want that they should not harass us and let us live peacefully," she added.

Like Jama, Rupang and Saibani, there are seven families facing the same problem. They have not yet obtained ownership rights over their land.

For years, villagers of Tentulipadar had no rights over

their land or even freedom of life. Since they did not have the record of rights or land *patta*, every single day they danced to the tune of the forest officials. Finding no source of income, the villagers wanted to cultivate something on the land where they lived for years. However, every time they did so, the forest officials tried their best to show their power. They destroyed the crops and even arrested many innocent tribals.

Jama Majhi's family was displaced twice for fear of forest officials. "In 1982, I was young but I remembered everything then. I clearly remember how the forest officials came and drove us away. When my father Rup Singh Majhi protested, they arrested him and sent him to jail. All the villagers got scared and we left the village in the night. My mother could not even get time to collect our belongings and we went to Sapmundi village. My father was behind the bar for six months. We virtually starved. When my father returned from jail, he motivated the tribals to go back to Tentulipadar village, to our land where we were born and brought up. And we all again came back to our village. A few years passed peacefully. We tried to settle there once again. But the forest officials came there again and drove us away in 1993. We had to be displaced again," Jama continues.

The forest dwellers of Tentulipadar village have filed their claims since 2009-10. The District Welfare Office (DWO) sources reveal that the files are still pending with SDLC, Bhawanipatna. The authority does not have any answer to what happened to these cases. It is surprising that none of the authorities including the Sub-Collector, Bhawanipatna, who is the imple-



menting authority of FRA, is willing to speak on this matter.

Dillip Kumar Das, an FRA activist and Chairman, ANTODAY, a Kalahandi based NGO, speaks of the highhandedness authorities in addressing this problem.

"Being an NGO working in this field we have tried our best to help these forest dwellers. In 2010, I have taken a representation of these tribals to Bhubaneswar and met the members of the central committee, and told our grievances but nothing has happened yet. Meanwhile, to support these poor tribal we have given them financial assistance so that they can grow something on their land," Das adds.

According to the Kalahandi district administration report till November 2014, FRC (forest right committee) received 11,605 claims, out of which it approved 11,135 covering 16,547.59 acre of area and sent to SDLC. Out of the above, 655 claims are being rejected by the SDLC, which approved claims of 10,480 families

comprising area of 15,967.19 acres and sent the approval to the DLC. The district level committee has given its approval to 10,470 claims. Till today, 10,077 certificates of titles comprising area of 15,299.71 acre are being distributed to forest dwellers.

Over 1.3 million tribals and forest dwellers have got right over the land they had been using for years under the Forest Right Act 2006. This can, in some way, be called contemporary India's biggest land regime change-the ownership coming from the forest administration to the rightful owners of forestland. This Act also promises the forest dwellers access to Government schemes. But seven years after the enforcement of this Act, the tribal forest dwellers like Jama and Saibani are still struggling hard to get ownership of their land where they have been living since generations.

The author is a senior journalist and researcher presently working under Inclusive media -UNDP fellowship.

Measures to make Agriculture profitable

GHANSHYAM GOEL & SAMRAT BANDOPADHYAY

THE various measures taken for quality improvement and availability of essential factors like fertilizers, seeds, electricity and irrigation facilities for agriculture in order to make it a profitable business include the following.

The Government is implementing various missions, Schemes and Projects which facilitate production, availability and distribution of quality seeds and fertilizers to farmers. The Union Government has launched a new scheme viz. Deendayal Upadhyaya Gram Jyoti Yojana (DDUGJY) which aims to provide reliable and adequate power supply to farmers by separation of agriculture and non-agriculture feeders and strengthening of sub-transmission and distribution infrastructure in rural areas, among others. Rajiv Gandhi Grameen Vidyutikaran Yojana for rural electrification will get subsumed in DDUGJY.

Water is a State subject; water resources/irrigation projects are planned, executed and maintained by state governments from their own resources and as per their own priorities. Government of India provides financial and technical assistance to the states under Accelerated Irrigation Benefits Programme, Repair, Renovation and Restoration of Water Bodies Scheme and CADWM Programme, to enhance the irrigation potential of the country as well as to ensure its effective utilization. Financial assistance is also being provided to farmers for micro irrigation and protected cultivation under various schemes viz., Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), On-Farm Water Management (OFWM) under National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) and Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY). Assistance for micro irrigation is being provided under OFWM at 35% for small & mar-

ginal farmers and 25% for other farmers for an area upto 5 hectare per farmer. This assistance is 50% and 35% respectively in the areas covered under Drought Prone Areas Programme, Desert Development Programme and North Eastern and Himalayan regions.

For protected cultivation, assistance is being provided under MIDH @ 50 % for setting up green houses, etc. for an area upto 4000 square metres per farmer. State governments are also promoting these technologies under RKVY.

The government is implementing many Missions/Schemes such as Rashtriya Krishi Vikas Yojana (RKVY), National Food Security Mission (NFSM), Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH), National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP)

and Grameen Bhandaran Yojana etc. for raising investments in agriculture. In addition, government has issued a framework for Public Private Partnership for Integrated Agriculture Development (PPP-AD) for using RKVY allocation for bringing greater association of private sector in agricultural development projects in the States. Agriculture sector has been identified by government as priority lending sector, which con-

Agriculture sector has been identified by Government as priority lending sector, which constitutes at least 18% of the total loan portfolio of the banks. Crop loans are provided to farmers at a concessional rate of 7% per annum with 3% interest subvention for timely repayment. Post harvest loan is also available to farmers on the basis of negotiable warehouse receipts for a period of six months on the same terms so as to prevent distress sales. Thus, crop loans are available to farmers at more favourable terms than loans available to industries sector

stitutes at least 18% of the total loan portfolio of the banks. Crop loans are provided to farmers at a concessional rate of 7% per annum with 3% interest subvention for timely repayment. Post harvest loan is also available to farmers on the basis of negotiable warehouse receipts for a period of six months on the same terms so as to prevent distress

reduction of Custom Duty on specific food items etc. with a view to encouraging the growth of food processing industries. Agricultural & Processed Food Products Exports Development Authority (APEDA) is also implementing various schemes for promotion of export of agricultural and processed food products.

is 50% of the cost as credit linked back ended subsidy for a maximum area of 5 ha. per beneficiary.

b. Under the Sub-mission on Seeds and Planting Material (SMSPP) under National Mission on Agricultural Extension and Technology (NMAET), number of programmes and activities are

varieties of plants. Financial assistance/grant-in-aid is also provided to private/public entities under the component 'Development and Strengthening of Infrastructure Facilities for Production and Distribution of Quality Seeds'.

c. The Krishi Vigyan Kendras (KVKs) also organise quality seed production and distribution to farmers. During the last one year 1.57 lakh quintal seeds of improved varieties and hybrids of cereals, Oilseeds, pulses, commercial crops, vegetables, flowers, fruits, spices, fodder, forest species, medicinal plants and fibre crops were produced and provided to 2.61 lakh farmers by KVKs.

d. Under the National Mission on Oilseeds and Oil Palm (NMOOP) sup-

port is provided for purchase of breeder seeds, production/distribution of certified seeds, distribution of seek Minikits (Varietal Diversification) for demonstration of new technologies, seed infrastructure Development, Variety Specific Targeted Seed Production (VSTSP), planting material for oil palm and Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs), establish-

ment of seed gardens of oil palm, maintenance cost for oil palm and TBOs. NMOOP also provides support for production of bio-fertilizers/bio-agents, gypsum/pyrite/liming/dolomite and construction of vermi-compost.

e. Under the National Food Security Mission (NFSM) certified seeds of high yielding varieties/hybrids which have been released during last 10 years are distributed on subsidy to the farmers under NFSM. Micronutrients, soil ameliorants are provided to the farmers on subsidy under NFSM on rice, wheat, pulses, coarse cereals. Bio-fertilizer (Rhyzobium/PSB culture) is given to the farmers under NFSM-pulses on subsidy.

f. Fertilizer (Control) Order, 1985 has been promulgated for regulation of quality of fertilisers. No person shall manufacture/import for sale, sell, offer for sale, stock or exhibit for sale or distribute any fertiliser which is not notified in the said Order or not of standard prescribed in the said Order. Samples of fertilisers are drawn periodically by notified fertiliser inspectors of state governments to check their quality whereas in case of imported fertilisers, the fertiliser inspectors of the Central Government draw samples from ships/containers for checking their quality.

g. The Department of Fertilizers under Ministry of Chemicals and Fertilizers provides quality urea and 22 grades of phosphatic and potassic fertilizers to the farmers on subsidized rates strictly as per the stipulation under the Fertilizer (Control) Order (FCO), 1985.

Ghanshyam Goel is ADG (M&C), PIB and Samrat Bandopadhyay is Assistant Director (M&C), PIB, New Delhi



and Grameen Bhandaran Yojana etc. for raising investments in agriculture. In addition, government has issued a framework for Public Private Partnership for Integrated Agriculture Development (PPP-AD) for using RKVY allocation for bringing greater association of private sector in agricultural development projects in the States.

Government has also taken several fiscal incentive measures such as tax deduction, waiver/reduction of Excise Duty,

High quality seeds and fertilizers are provided to farmers under the following Missions, Schemes and Projects.

a. Mission for Integrated Development of Horticulture (MIDH) envisages to promote seed production for vegetables and spices. Assistance is provided @ 100% of total cost to public sector. In case of private sector, assistance

organized to develop/strengthen seed sector and to enhance production and multiplication of high yielding certified/ quality seeds of all agricultural crops and making it available to the farmers at affordable prices and also place an effective system for protection of plant varieties, rights of farmers and plant breeders to encourage development of new

port is provided for purchase of breeder seeds, production/distribution of certified seeds, distribution of seek Minikits (Varietal Diversification) for demonstration of new technologies, seed infrastructure Development, Variety Specific Targeted Seed Production (VSTSP), planting material for oil palm and Tree Borne Oilseeds (TBOs), establish-