List of MOUs

Some of the proposed projects for which MOUs have been signed with the land area asked for:

- M/s AML Steel & Power Ltd, Chennai - 1000 acres in Saraikela
- M/s Hindalco Industries Pvt Ltd - 1000 ha in Latehar
- M/s Jindal Steel and Power Ltd - 3000 acres in Saraikela
- M/s Tata Steel Ltd - 980 acres in Saraikela
- M/s Mital Steel Co - about 29000 ha in Ranchi

have been given the right over their land are not. Many, even within 30 km radius of the state capital Ranchi, have not heard of the Act. A few who have are waiting for the administration's response, some for over a year, after filling their application forms. They are routinely and regularly called for meetings 30 km away, meetings that do not happen because one or the other government functionary is unable to attend.

The FRA and the people it is meant for figure low in the government's priority. In practice, the net effect of government's approach would, rather than secure the tribals and forest dwellers in their habitations, uproot and displace a large section of these people without any meaningful resettlement or rehabilitation because that policy is still not in place.

The government has been on a MoU signing spree ever since the mineral-rich Jharkhand (2000) comprising a third of India's entire mineral wealth came into existence. Indian Social Action Forum estimates that over 1,98,362 acres of land is on offer in 44 projects of various companies with whom MoUs have been signed. There are over a 100 MoUs that have been signed. According to human rights activist Gladson Dungdung, various governments in the state till now have signed 102 MoUs for establishing steel factories, power plants and mining industries, which require approximately 2,00,000 acres of land, which directly means the displacement of approximately 1 million people.

A government that drags its feet in taking action to carry out its obligations under the Forest Rights Act to give tribals and forest dwellers their right to land and forests, has gone into an overdrive to cleanse the forests of real and imagined Maoists through 'Operation Green-Hunt' to make them safe for the corporate houses to move in. The operation happens to be in particularly in areas where the government has promised land to industrialists. There were hardly any signs of the "green hunt" in Palamau-Latehar region, a Maoist stronghold, which has seen trains being hijacked by the Maoists.

The government approach has created widespread dissatisfaction and several protests in the state. The kind of development government intends has created a feeling that it only means evicting tribals to make way for multi-nationals and big companies to exploit their land. Widespread impression is, the compensation offered in return for displacement is grossly paltry, transient and only to a few actual sufferers. The past experience of rehabilitation and resettlement does not inspire any confidence in them; particularly since, Gladson says, the government that lost no time in declaring its industrial policy, has not yet formulated a policy for resettlement and rehabilitation of persons displaced due to mining or other projects.

The writer was in Jharkhand under CSDS-inclusive media for change fellowship programme.