

IT'S 'DO OR DIE' FOR JSPUR VILLAGERS

POSCO won't get land

Jagatsinghpur: Fear of Kabir Pradhan, a betel farmer, of Nuagaon village in Odisha's Jagatsinghpur district is far from over. Pradhan's vine yard spread over half-acre of land is only yard which escaped from being pulled down, even though more than 200 vine yards in its vicinity had been flattened to setting up of 12 billion dollar worth mega steel plant by South Korean Steel major Posco.

It is important to note here that Kabir was the only farmer who had refused to accept compensation for demolition of his yard, and is now earning Rs.20,000 per month whilst his fellow villagers, who received compensation for allowing the district administration to raze their vine have reportedly squandered the money, are now passing days as daily wager there.

This has been the story of hundreds of villagers who have been resisting tooth and nail for past seven years to save their fertile land from being acquired for setting up of mega steel plant. But while on the one hand

the villagers are seen resolved not to give up fight against the project, on other both the Company and Governments (State and Union) showed no sign of abandoning their idea of setting up the mega project.

During past five years, villagers clashing with government forces have become order of the day. But the long confrontation has now reached decisive stage. "Come what may, people would put forth their strongest opposition to any attempt of acquiring our fertile land. We are prepared to lay our lives down than handing over our land," said Debendra Swain, a resident of Dhinkia. Swain, who has steadfastly opposing the project, said, "people have long realised value of their land and their sustained livelihood flourishing in the villages. They are so motivated that they could face any offensive from government forces."

It is worthwhile to mention here that those who allowed their betel vineyards to be razed have now turned daily wage earners in Nu-

gaon village. On any early morning, one could find constant exodus of daily labourers, who were formerly proud betel farmers,

People opposing the project now feel threatened. "The pressure of company might work on State government that would not hesitate

ment. Their apprehensions stem from the fact that the POSCO India Private Limited, the Indian arm of POSCO,

tion had announced compensation of Rs. 11.5 lakh per acre of vineyard and 20 per cent of the compensation for daily labourers who

encroachment free if vineyards were pulled down. It is not the vine farming that generates cash here, thousands of people depend on fishing and rich paddy crops.

The State government says 3566.56 acres of total 4004.19 acres required for the project are government land. Of this 2958.82 acres are forestland. Private land constitutes about 10 per cent of total required land which comes around 437.68 acres. But villagers claim there is no such forested land in the region. For ages they have been depending on the land for livelihood. If government snatches away their land identifying those as forest category land they would land nowhere, villagers plead.

Since May last year Odisha Industrial Infrastructure Development Corporation (IDCO), which is nodal agency for land acquisition for the project, with the help of Jagatsinghpur district administration made a firm

move to take physical possession of land. In fact, administration claims to

have been under control of excess of 1900 acres of land. But after that the land acquisition process was stopped following death of a person at the site of construction for a road project connecting the plant area.

Sensing that the silence of government was becoming longer than they anticipated, POSCO authorities threw a barb recently. The company had publicly interpreted non-attending of Chief Minister and Chief Secretary of a seminar it organised at Paradip as 'negative indicator' for the project. It made the administration sit up.

POSCO-India has declared that once at least 2,700 acres of land for the first and second phase out of the total 4,004 acres was handed over within this year, then the company could start the land preparation by the end of this year, the main construction in early 2013, and the operation of the first phase 4 MTPA steel plant in 2016.

By Purusottam Singh Thakur
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to Dhinkia where farmlands have not been acquired. Bira Parida, a 70-year-old villager from Gobindpur, wonderfully summarises. "Betel vineyards are like dairy cows. You can go on etching constant incomes from those for long with minimum effort."

to send forces to our villages. But we are not afraid of confronting forces. We have already

exhibited our resolve by putting up human shield on the border," said Sisir Mohapatra, a sarpanch who was suspended on charges of supporting people's move-

moved a fresh proposal to set up eight million tonne per annum capacity plant on 2700 acres of land. This could stir up the State government to complete the land acquisition and hand over acres of land for steel plant.

Similarly, the administra-

would be rendered jobless. Total 1503 betel farmers from six villages such as Nuagaon, Polang, Noliashahi, Gobindpur, Bhuyanpal and Bayanalakandha were to

lose their vineyards. Jagatsinghpur district administration estimated that 253 acres land would be made

Cholera strikes in Balikuda village, 3 dead

By Our Correspondent

Jagatsinghpur: At least three people have been killed, including a girl child, and about 70 others affected following a break-out of cholera in Dobbhala village under Borekina panchayat in Balikuda block in the last one week.

According to reports, most of the victims are undergoing treatment in the headquarters hospital here and the Borekina and Balikuda PHCs. Meanwhile the dead have been identified as Nari Sethy (70), Kailash Barik (45) and Ankita Barik, a five year old girl child of Sudhansu Barik. Among the affected people being treated at the headquarters hospital are Betani Sethy, Anju Barik, Rangalata Barik, Nandei Sethy and Bebina Barik. However, hospital sources have confirmed that these affected people are fast on the road to recovery and will be discharged soon.

Notably, this coastal village has a population of about 700, and one week ago few people started complaining of

stomach ailments and dehydration. Unfortunately, the ailment was diagnosed as cholera, with Nari Sethy a septuagenarian, being its first victim on Wednesday. Soon, many other people were diagnosed with the same problem and so far 5-7 people are daily making their way to the headquarters hospital for treatment.

Ironically, the nearby Borekina PHC does not have a doctor since the past 6 years and reports said that one retired doctor posted on contractual basis and a pharmacist, are providing medical service at the hospital right now. Consequently, victims are opting to move either to Balikuda PHC or headquarters hospital for treatment.

"A medical team comprising of doctors, pharmacists and health staff has been sent to the village to study the situation and our medical team preliminary investigation indicates that use of contaminated water has led to break-out of cholera. We are taking all health related measures at village," informed Bijaya Sahoo, chief district medical officer.



Installation ceremony of Rotary Club organized

By Our Correspondent

Jharsuguda: Installation ceremony of the Rotary Club of Jharsuguda Royal was organized on Sunday in the town.

Speaking on the occasion, Justice Patel urged the Club members to make efforts to ensure clean environment and take necessary measures to curb the encroachment of government land.

Sources said that Justice B K Patel of the Odisha High Court was the chief guest while P K Dash, IRS, Commissioner of Income Tax, Sambalpur, and Pramod Kumar Rath, former District Governor, Sambalpur, were the Guests of Honour.

Taking over as the new President this year, Ajay Poddar announced two new projects for the Club for the coming years. These include a 10-year project for eradication of open defecation in Jharsuguda district, and one-year project to ensure safe drinking water for all children in Jharsuguda district.



Women vendors selling vegetables braving rains at Market Chowk, Puri

Pic. Ranjan Ganguly

Horticulture programme under MGNREGA to create mandays

Berhampur: The Gajapati district administration has taken up a massive horticulture plantation drive under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (MGNREGA) this year.

Aiming at generating about 1.5 lakh mandays under the centrally sponsored scheme, it would plant one lakh saplings including mango, litchi, orange and cashew in about 1100 hectare in all the seven blocks in the district, official sources said.

The work was now in progress in 935 hectare after launch of the programme recently in 24 hectare when about 2400 mango trees were planted at Kholabada village under Gumma block.

"Since Gajapati is known as the horticulture district,

we decided to take up massive plantation this year under the MGNREGA. We also found that people were interested in the programme," a senior official said.

"We expect that the economic condition of the people will improve through this," he said.

"We have selected beneficiaries from among SC and SC categories who are job card holders under MGNREGA and have land," said district horticulture officer Mihir Samantara.

The administration would provide the saplings free as also fertilizer and pesticides. Owners will bear the maintenance cost for the next two years and would get the yield from the fourth year as the plants are hybrid and early-yield varieties, a horticulturist said. PTI

12 PLFI men held in Sundargarh

Rourkela: Altogether 12 members of the People's Liberation Front of India (PLFI) were arrested in four operations by police in Sundargarh district, police said here on Sunday.

Claiming to be working in line with Maoists, PLFI had of late unleashed a reign of terror in Sundargarh district and their arrest yesterday could curb the crimes to some extent, they said.

Acting on a tip off, a special police squad intercepted four youths riding two motorbikes from Nuagaon to Hurda in neighbouring Jharkhand.

As the youths fired, the police retaliated and nabbed two of them while the other two fled, they said adding one of the two is a minor.

A country-made gun, ammunition, leaflets of PLFI, garments, two mobile sets,

two SIM cards and a motorcycle bearing Jharknad registration were seized from them.

In another case, the police cracked a robbery in a petrol pump at Kuanmunda with the arrest of PLFI's Bishnu Sao alias Karan (22) of Khunti in Jharkhand who carried a reward of Rs one lakh on his head in the neighbouring state.

Four PLFI men were arrested and two country-made pistols, two ammunition, one mobile phone and a bike recovered from them by a police team in Kansbahal.

In yet another breakthrough, police cracked the murder of contractor and local BJD leader Hardeep Singh at Bileigarh on July 7 and arrested five accused persons belonging to PLFI, he said. PTI

Second convocation of Central University held

By Our Correspondent

Koraput: The second convocation of Central Uni-

nary citizens, who in a democracy, were the ultimate monarchs to re-establish the normative traditions of good

a fine centre of excellence, she added. Eminent persons in the field of science and literature like Bikash Sinha, Anil K. Gupta and freedom fighter and eminent social worker Annapurna Maharana were presented degree of Honoris Cause.

Degrees and gold medals were presented to the students of the university. As

many as six topper students Arun Kumar Raj (Odia), Archana Nayak (English), Moushumi Nayak (Anthropology), Arupama Senapath (Sociology), Priyaranjan Swain and Sudarsan Sahoo (Journalism and Mass Communication) in five departments were awarded gold-medals by the varsity in the convocation ceremony.



versity of Orissa at celebrated at Sunabada in Koraput district on Sunday. Speaking on the occasion, Justice Ruma Pal, former judge of Supreme Court said, "The general tendency of citizens is to look towards established institutions like government, the judiciary or the Human Rights Commissions to shoulder the burden of dealing with the rampant corruption in the country".

"While highlighting the possibilities of corruption, these very institutions themselves becoming subjects to allegations of inertia, systemic corruption including political bias and incompetence," she added, saying that it was ultimately the responsibility of the ordi-



governance in the country. Surabhi Banerjee, Vice-Chancellor of the university, said that the university was expanding its existing academic domain very fast by introducing several new courses and programmes. The university was also in the process of evolving innovative policies while striving extremely hard to emerge as

Varsity proposes to set up medical college

Koraput: Proposing to open a medical college and hospital here, Central University of Odisha (CUO) has sent a detailed project report to the Centre for setting up such an institution in the backward region.

This was revealed by CUO's Vice Chancellor Surabhi Banerjee at the second convocation of the university organised at Sunabada in Koraput district.

"Considering the long-standing demand for a medical college in KBK region (Koraput-Bolangir-Kalahandi) under the auspices of CUO, we have submitted a detailed project report for establishment of a medical college and hospital in Koraput to the Centre," Banerjee said.

The project report also includes the budget estimate for setting up the college and hospital and final approval is awaited during the 12th Plan period, she said.

Former Supreme Court Judge Ruma Pal was the chief guest at the convocation while secretary in union ministry of tribal affairs, Vibha Puri Das was the guest of honour.

Speaking on the occasion, the vice-chancellor further said the CUO would launch a school of education and education technology, school of basic and applied sciences and school of health sciences from the academic year 2012-13. PTI

Aanganwadi centres identified as unsafe

By Our Correspondent

Berhampur: As many as 267 aanganwadi centres in Ganjam district were identified as unsafe during inspection by various officers recently.

The administration was prompted into inspecting aanganwadi centres af-

ter the recent death of seven children in Nayagarh district due to the collapse of a wall of an aanganwadi centre. The government has asked district collectors to identify unsafe aanganwadi centres in their respective districts and shift them to safer places. "We have already shifted the unsafe aanganwadi centres in

the district to safer places like community houses or rented buildings," said Ganjam district collector Krishan Kumar. There are no more unsafe aanganwadi centres in the district.

Meanwhile, construction of over 420 aanganwadi centres in various places of the district is on in two phases.