

Land to Scientific organizations, fine on Kisan Sabha cancelled, Chennai Green Tribunal's verdict on Feb. 14

Fate of organizations in the court of Green Tribunal

- K.M. Shivaswamy, Nayakanakatte

The Hon'ble Supreme Court has dismissed the Karnataka High Court's judgement cancelling the Bharatiya Kisan Sabha's appeal questioning allotment of 10,000 acres of land in Khudapura to several scientific organizations and imposing Rs.75,000/- fine.

The Bangalore based Environment Support Group (ESG) has also submitted a similar appeal at the Green Tribunal in Chennai. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has also directed the Kisan Sabha to submit an appeal before the Green Tribunal. While, this has brought a sigh of relief to the Kisan Sabha, it has become a headache for the scientific organizations.

The Karnataka High Court had dismissed the appeal submitted by the Bharatiya Kisan Sabha and had also imposed fine. The Kisan Sabha had appealed in the Supreme Court questioning this. The hearing was held at the Hon'ble Supreme Court on January 19 and dismissed the High Court's verdict. Now ESG and Kisan Sabha will fight against this jointly in the Green Tribunal.

Land has been allotted to seven different organizations including, the Defence Research and Development Organisation (DRDO), Indian Institute of Science (IISc), Baba Atomic Research Centre (BARC), Indian Space Research Organization (ISRO). The DRDO has already constructed 20 kms compound and buildings at a cost of Rs. 150 crore. The construction works of a 3.5 kms runway is under progress. IISc has constructed a 10 kms compound at a cost of Rs. 10 crores and also has initiated construction works of a few new structures. All these organizations have already invested an estimated Rs. 400 crores in this place.

Complaint of violating court orders

The Green Tribunal of Chennai had issued orders on August 21, 2013 directing to stop the construction works immediately. It had informed that none of these organizations have obtained approval from the Pollution Control Boards. Hence, DRDO had stopped the works for just one month. Though the Court has not issued any orders to restart the construction works, it has commenced the works.

Quotes

1. The Chennai Green Tribunal's orders directing to stop the works issued on August 2013 is violated. The works was stopped only for a few months and again the works have been commenced. This is violation of court orders. Complaints have been lodged with the police. Appeal has been made to the Chief Minister to withdraw the distributed land to these organizations. Public agitation is on.
- Dodda Ullarthi Kariyanna, Kaavalu Horata Samiti President
2. The land given to these scientific organizations are reserved forest areas. It consists precious and protected wild life. People of hundreds of village in the surroundings are depending upon this land for their living. In the name of progress and development the

Government has become a reason for destruction of the lives of these people along with environment and forests. Hence, this land should be protected as before.

- Leo F. Saldanha, Convenor, ESG

3. We have not received any orders from our higher officials to stop the works. Only construction works of roads and compounds are in progress. This works will be completed within 4-5 months.

- Hemanth, Civil Engineer, IISc.

Science v/s Environment

• M.N.Ahobalapati

The people's movement and the legal fight regarding the Khudapura and Varavu Kaavl lands in Challakere taluk of Chitradurga districts, which are permanently drought-hit areas, has continued silently. This has turned into a fight between science and environment.

The Bharatiya Kisan Sabha had submitted an appeal before the Hon'ble Supreme Court questioning allotment of 10,000 acres of land for several Government of India organizations including DRDO, IISc, BARC and ISRO. The Hon'ble Supreme Court has dismissed the Karnataka High Court's earlier verdict rejecting the Kisan Sabha's application and imposing Rs. 75,000 fine. It has directed to appeal before the Green Tribunal. This has provided relief to the people of this part of the State.

What is the problem?

The local farmers, shepherds and people who depend upon animal husbandry and cattle rearing are depending upon the Amritmahal land. Since when the government has allotted land the people have been agitating and have been fighting to retain their land for traditional purposes. Presently the Bharatiya Kisan Sabha and the Bangalore based Environment Support Group is fighting jointly at the Green Tribunal in Chennai.

The reason for opposition: Shepherds and farmers in this area have been leading their lives depending upon this Amritmahal land since several centuries. They are enraged over distribution of this land to the scientific organizations.

Science city dream

It is the dream of the Government of India to make Chitradurga as a Science City. It argues that the city would undergo a galore of developments with establishment of all these science organizations. The students of this part of the state will get ample employment opportunities. Even as these arguments are flourishing the local people, especially the farmers have expressed their opposition against the proposed science city concept. They are trying to retain their land on which they are depending upon for their living since ages.

The Amritmahal Kaaval lands have a rich history of more than 500 years. The grasslands in Khudapura, Dodda Ulalrthi and Varavu has been the native of most backward tribals, farmers, shepherds, cattle rearing nomads. These people make their living by making woolen rugs and leather and mutton marketing. Moreover this land has been the base for world renowned breeds

of Amritmahal, Hallikaar cattle. Even in the modern world where traditional and local practices are fast dying, the people of this part of the state were making their living by developing there traditional practices and this local species.

Destruction of bio-diversity

It is the argument of the environmentalists that the rich bio-diversity of this place would be destroyed completely with the proposed projects. This place is the shelter for several protected wild life species including the 'Krishnamruga', wolves, procupines and the most sacred birds including Indian Bustard, Lessar Florica and a wide range of very rare butterflies and flora and fauna.

What is this Kaaval?

This place was reserved for cattle rearing and has been developed as grasslands since several centuries. Out of the total 4 lakh acres of Kaaval lands, presently only 50,000 acres is remaining. This Kaaval land is the most important.

Out of the 4,000 sheep in Khudapura Sheep Development Centre, presently there are only 600 remaining. With the support of Australian government experiments were being done here to produce mixed breed of cattle. After the Australian Government stopped its support the functions of the Sheep Development Centre was handed over to the Central Woolen Development Board. The shepherds of this area were being trained about sheep rearing, developing sheep based products and marketing the same. Even this activity has decreased a lot in the last one year.

Due to restriction imposed for sheep rearing and other similar activities without any other alternative the farmers and shepherds including the tribal community people have migrated in search of fodder and water. Thus the life of an entire community has been left in a lurch, according to the local people.

Pointers

- Since all the administrative activities of all these organizations is carried out in the restricted areas none of the local people are aware about it. There is no truth to the arguments that with the implementation of the proposed project would benefit the local people commercially.
- There is even no guarantee that the local people would get job opportunities.

What are advantages

- Chitradurga will be known as science city with the advent of prestigious organizations.
- The commercial potential of this city will improve.
- The local youth will get more job opportunities

Proposed projects

- Defence Research and Development
- Indian Institute of Science
- Baba Atomic Research Centre
- Indian Space Research Organisation.

Quotes

1. We won't stop our agitation until the government doesn't withdraw the distributed Kaaval lands. We are bonded with this land since our fight will be continuous.
 - Dodda Ullartha Kariyanna, Akhila Bharat Kisan Sabha, Chitradurga.
2. With establishment of the proposed scientific organization projects employment opportunities will improve and the economical condition would improve. But these organizations also has the responsibility of responding to the problems of the people of respective areas.
 - Janardhan Swamy, MP.