

Tribal organisations urge Chief Minister to pay attention to ‘neglected’ Adivasi communities of the State

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The organisations urged Mr. Siddaramaiah to provide rehabilitation to the 3,418 Adivasi families as directed by the High Court. | Photo Credit: File photo

Tribal organisations have urged Chief Minister Siddaramaiah to pay attention to the development of the ‘neglected’ Adivasi communities in Karnataka by announcing special schemes in the upcoming State budget.

Extending their congratulations to Mr.

Siddaramaiah for becoming the longest-serving Chief Minister of the State, the leaders of a group of tribal organisations from the region have issued a joint appeal to him to prioritise empowering the “deprived and voiceless Adivasi communities”.

About 90,000 families, belonging to 12 forest-dwelling tribal communities comprising a total population of around six lakh, reside in nearly 1,500 hamlets across 38 taluks in nine districts along the Western Ghats in the State.

“They live in and around forests, enduring harassment from the Forest Department and surviving on daily wage labour. They are forest-dispossessed communities,” said the appeal, issued jointly by Harsha of Adivasi Jana Parliament, Jayappa of Tribal Farmers’ Association, Lakshmi of Adivasi Women’s Association, Shivanna, president of Federation of Haadi Forest Right Committee, Hunsur, B.S. Vithal Nanachi, former member of Legal Services Commission, and S. Shrikant, director of Development through Education (DEED), Hunsur.

“That nothing constructive has been done for the tribal communities over the 2,794 plus days in office is seen as a blemish on the distinction of having led Karnataka for the longest period,” the Adivasi organisations stated.

Apart from seeking a special scheme in the upcoming State budget to enable Adivasis to

tread the path of development, the organisations urged Mr. Siddaramaiah to provide rehabilitation to the 3,418 Adivasi families as directed by the High Court. “We urge that, in this year’s budget, ₹15 lakh per family and five acres of land be earmarked and the development of these 3,418 families be taken up,” the appeal added.

Other demands include steps to recognise forest rights under the Forest Rights Act and issue title deeds to all the 90,000 Adivasi families living in 1,500 hamlets across the State, besides encouragement for the active functioning of the Haadi Forest Rights committees.

The tribal organisations also sought funds for growing biofuel trees like *honge* (pongamia) and *neem* in degraded forest areas, farmers’ lands, public spaces, and government lands. Arrangements should be made to collect seeds of biofuel trees so that the foundation for fuel self-reliance can be laid.

They have also requested special grants to ensure quality education in government schools and residential (ashram) schools in Adivasi hamlets and for skill development of the youth.

“This year, funds should be earmarked to build at least 20,000 houses and to encourage agriculture,” the organisations said, while demanding that the government constitute an

Adivasi Development Board and an Adivasi Corporation.

The organisations also sought separate funds specifically for forest-dwelling tribes within the Scheduled Tribes category and determination of internal reservation within the Scheduled Tribes, government jobs for educated Adivasi youth, and political reservation to Adivasis in the Panchayat Raj system.

“Allocate funds to provide monthly honorarium to *haadi* heads, *devara gudda* custodians, and traditional herbal experts in recognition of their community service,” they demanded, while urging the government to declare the 1,500 Adivasi *haadis* and their traditional forest areas as Fifth Schedule Areas and take steps to implement the Panchayat (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996.

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