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Kerala

Kerala govt does away with the word 'colony', but will it help the Dalits?

The decision, signed by the outgoing Minister for Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes, K Radhakrishnan, has met with mixed reactions.



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Representative Image: The Adivasi Dalit Students Theatre Movement performing in Kochi (Photo | A Sanesh)

Elsa Sunny & Aami V Shaju

Updated on: 25 Jun 2024, 12:53 pm · 2 min read



The Kerala government has decided to do away with the word 'colony' to describe settlements of Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe communities in official records.

This decision, signed by the outgoing Minister for Welfare of Scheduled Castes, Scheduled Tribes, and Backward Classes, K Radhakrishnan, is seen as an effort to address the negative connotations associated with the term.

However, this decision has met with mixed reactions.

CK Jaanu, a tribal leader is of the view that simply changing the

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terminology does not address the underlying issues faced by Adivasi communities. She pointed out that many Adivasis have official documents like Aadhar and ration cards with 'colony' in their address making the transition complicated. Jaanu emphasized that the government should have consulted the community before making such a decision. She said that changing the term without changing societal attitudes towards Adivasis and their treatment is superficial.

Jaanu's concerns highlight the broader issues that Adivasi communities face. These include lack of basic necessities like burial grounds, toilets, wells, and legal title deeds for their land. She argued that the government's focus should be on addressing these fundamental issues rather than on changing terminology. For Jaanu and many others in the community, the real challenge lies in changing the socio-political mindset that marginalizes Adivasis, not just the terms used to describe their settlements.

On the other hand Sabu M Jacob, founder of twenty-20, the Kitex Group-backed outfit, presented a successful transformation where a settlement formerly known as Vilangu Colony was redeveloped into God's Villa. The change involved not just a new name but also comprehensive infrastructure improvements, including proper housing, sanitation, and drinking water facilities. Jacob argued that merely changing the name without improving living conditions is ineffective. He asserted that true change requires a complete overhaul of the living environment, which in turn can change the residents' quality of life and societal perception.

Jacob said that Radhakrishnan's initiative to replace the term 'colony' is "purely nonsense."

If you change the name of colony it won't change anything. They are living like "animals." Their living conditions should also be changed.

As CK Jaanu and Sabu M Jacob highlight, the focus should be on providing basic amenities and ensuring equal rights and recognition for Adivasis. Only then can such changes be considered truly historical and impactful.



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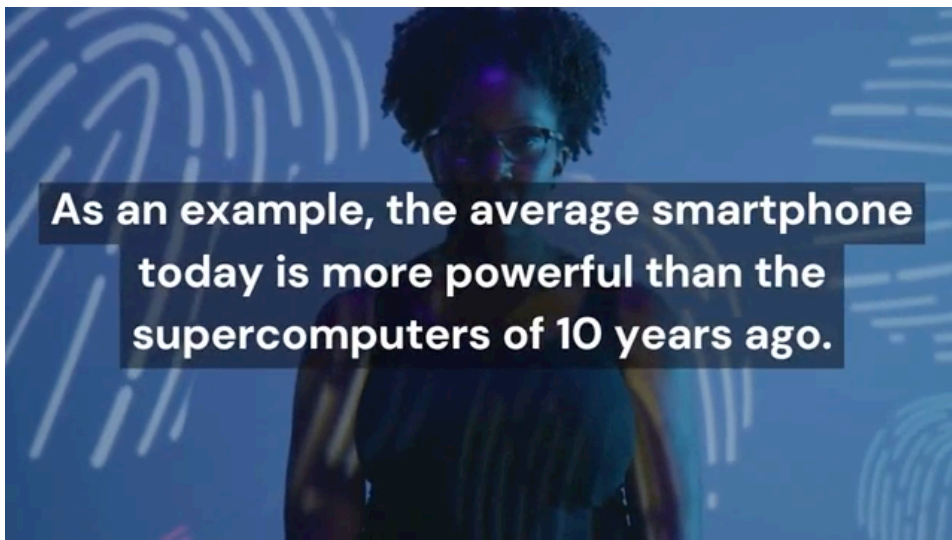
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However, writing in *The Wire*, Anusha Paul noted that according to the directive from the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe Development Department, the terms “colony”, “*ooru*” and “*sanketham*” are currently used to describe places primarily populated by Scheduled Tribes and Castes.

The directive suggested that terms such as “*nagar*”, “*unnathi*” and “*prakriti*” be used instead.

The derogatory label “colony-wasis” has been used to cyberbully people from Scheduled Caste and Tribe communities. This term, along with derogatory phrases like “colony-*vanam*” or “colony-wasi,” has been prominently featured in comedy shows and on social media platforms, contributing to the perpetuation of stigma and discrimination, *The Wire* said.

Activists have long advocated for concerted efforts to address and combat these discriminatory practices.

In Kerala, there are 26,198 housing settlements designated for Scheduled Castes and 6,578 settlements for Scheduled Tribes.



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Wayanad landslides: 96 dead, a town swept away, hundreds trapped as rescue operations progress

Mundakkai, Chooralmala, Attamala, and Noolpuzha villages bore the brunt of the unprecedented landslides with the Mundakkai town reportedly being completely swept away by the gushing waters.

The Army engaged in rescue operations in Wayanad's Chooralmala.



The Army engaged in rescue operations in Wayanad's Chooralmala. (Photo | Express)

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Updated on: 30 Jul 2024, 1:48 pm · 5 min read



WAYANAD: Massive landslides wreaked havoc in the Wayanad district of Kerala leaving at least 96 people, including children, dead and leaving several families missing.

The landslides occurred during the early hours of Tuesday washing away houses and families. It left a trail of destruction, with several houses destroyed, water bodies swollen, and trees uprooted, hampering rescue operations.

Mundakkai, Chooralmala, Attamala, and Noolpuzha villages were the areas hit and cut off by the landslides, authorities said. According to reports, the Mundakkai town was completely swept away by the landslide.

Swollen water bodies changed their course and flowed through inhabited areas, resulting in more destruction.

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