

Tribals release 'adivasi manifesto' in support of their demands

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Adivasi Manifesto has been released by tribals in Mysuru district seeking improvement in their living conditions. | Photo Credit: M.A. Sriram

Members of various tribal groups in Mysuru district have released "adivasi manifesto" to apprise the political parties contesting the Lok Sabha elections of their demands and to ascertain their stance on specific issues germane to them.

The charter of demands or manifesto has 10 key demands including a few pending ones

that have remained unfulfilled for years.

The manifesto was drafted by various organisations including the Adivasi Community Parliamentary Committee, Budakattu Krishikara Sangha, Adivasi Mahila Sangha, Development through Education, etc, and was released in public domain on Friday, March 22.

One of the key demands in the manifesto is the implementation of the recommendations made by the Muzaffar Assadi committee on the rehabilitation of tribals. The committee was constituted as per the directives of the High Court of Karnataka and it recommended that 3418 Adivasi families have to be rehabilitated by allocation of 5 acres of agricultural land, provision of housing facilities etc.

Though the recommendations were made more than 10 years ago, successive governments had failed to implement them and hence, the Adivasis want to ascertain the position of the candidates contesting the forthcoming Lok Sabha polls and extract a promise on its implementation, said S. Sreekanth of DEED, a Hunsur-based NGO advocating the cause of tribal communities.

Another key demand is the introduction of internal reservation within the Scheduled Tribe category to prevent a numerically dominant community from cornering all the rights and benefits. Besides, the manifesto also

sought the nomination of adivasis to boards, corporations, and the upper house of the legislature. In addition, it has also sought reservation of five Assembly constituencies to adivasis from out of 15 seats reserved for scheduled tribes.

The manifesto has also drawn attention to the failure of the government to allocate the title deed in case of those families that were allotted land to take up cultivation. In the absence of title deeds and other documents, the land ownership remains vague and hence, the tribals are unable to avail institutional financial assistance, according to Mr. Ramu of Budakattu Krishikara Sangha.

One of the key demands of the adivasis is the constitution of Tribal Development Board to ensure that their cultural identity was not effaced or obliterated. The manifesto also wanted the present practice of renaming Girijana Ashram Schools meant for tribals as Valmiki Ashram Schools, to be revoked and the standards of teaching and education imparted in these schools, to be shored up.

Drawing attention to the Forest Rights Act, the manifesto said that all adivasis should be bestowed the benefits due under the Forest Rights Act including recognition of their ancestral burial grounds, providing access to it, and enabling them to offer worship. The manifesto also sought pension for adivasi priests engaged in conducting rituals so as to

encourage them in keeping alive the ancient traditions of the tribal community.

Mr. Sreekanth said the manifesto will be circulated to all political parties and candidates and their views ascertained on their demands.