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Chhattisgarh CM to meet tribals protesting security camp



A group of social activists, which was earlier stopped on its way to Silger, met Baghel and Governor Anusuiya Uikey on Tuesday with a list of the residents' demands. They said the protesters have sought an audience with both Baghel and Uikey.

A delegation of tribal residents protesting the establishment of a new security camp at Chhattisgarh's Silger will soon meet Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel, a government statement said Tuesday.

A group of social activists, which was earlier stopped on its way to Silger, met Baghel and Governor Anusuiya Uikey on Tuesday with a list of the residents' demands. They said the protesters have sought an audience with both Baghel and Uikey.

The protesters have had two meetings with government representatives, both of which ended in a stalemate.

Tribal residents of more than 30 villages in Sukma, Bijapur and Dantewada districts have been protesting against the security camp at Silger since May 14.

On May 17, three men died after security personnel fired on the protesters after a clash broke out. The police claimed that three were Maoists who opened fire on the security personnel under cover of the crowd. Their families have dismissed the claims.

According to the protestors, police opened fire on the crowd which led to four deaths; three men died on the spot, while one woman succumbed to her injuries suffered in the ensuing stampede.

The delegation that met Baghel and Uikey on Tuesday included activist Bela Bhatia Chhattisgarh Bachao Andolan convener Alok Shukla, Chhattisgarh Kisan Sabha President Sanjay Parate and trade union organization ACTU General Secretary Bijendra Tiwari.

The letter submitted to Baghel comprised 8 suggestions, including ensuring following of the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act and other rules, as applicable, for tribal residents of the state. The letter also demanded that cases of brutality against tribals from the time of previous BJP government be investigated.

A similar letter was submitted to the Governor.

Bhatia said, "She (Governor Uikey) said that she is aware about the situation and is going to look into it as it is a fifth schedule area. The conversation with both the dignitaries was positive, and

we expect the government to soon meet the delegation of protestors.”

Shukla told the The Indian Express: “We told him how we were stopped and how the state machinery was misbehaving. We have informed the CM about our going to the protestors again, once the block is restored to non-containment zone status.”

The protestors had started with the demand that the camp should be removed and the land on which it is built be given back to its owners. After the death of the three men, the demands have increased to action against the security personnel responsible for the deaths and other brutalities along with promise that the memorial built for the deceased not be damaged, when they stop their protest.

“We can’t live here forever, we will go back to our homes and return in a few weeks. But we will keep protesting the camp. However, we dont want our memorial demolished, ever, ” Sures Kadi, one of the protestors said.