

Stop shedding croc tears: BJP to Odisha oppn over Rayagada clash

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Koraput: The BJP today said the govt is committed to tribals' welfare, countering the BJD-Congress narrative that the administration took inhumane action against tribal communities in Rayagada district's Sijimali recently. The opposition sought urgent intervention of the President and the Centre to ensure justice and restore normality. At a media meet at BJD headquarters in Bhubaneswar, Rayagada district president Jagannath Saraka and Koraput district president Jhina Hikaka alleged that the incident reflects the BJP-led govt's anti-tribal policies. But senior BJP leader Goutam Samantaray said, "The govt is committed to maintaining law and order while addressing concerns of tribal communities. The BJD and Congress have been rejected by the people and should stop shedding crocodile tears." Saraka said a BJD delegation had visited affected villages and gathered first-hand accounts from local residents. "Villagers told us they were protesting a road being built by a mining company. Instead of addressing their concerns, the administration resorted to severe repression. Such actions are condemnable. Industrial development cannot come at the cost of trampling tribal rights," he said, adding that gram sabha consent must be obtained as per law.

Hikaka termed the alleged police action unacceptable in any civilised society, claiming that locals were holding peaceful protests citing violations of the PESA Act and forest laws. According to villagers, the administration allegedly cut off electricity late at night and launched a crackdown when people were asleep. Innocent tribal men and women were targeted. This clearly exposes the anti-tribal approach of the state govt, he alleged. Tension in the Sijimali region escalated following a violent clash on April 6 near Kantamal village under Kshipur police limits, where police and tribal protesters confronted each other over a proposed bauxite mining-linked road project. The confrontation left at least 70 people, including 58 police personnel, after protests intensified against the project, with locals alleging violations of forest and tribal rights laws. On Saturday, BJD Rajya Sabha MP Sasmit Patra wrote to Union tribal affairs minister Jual Oram seeking urgent intervention. Based in Koraput, Satyanarayan Pattnaik is a journalist covering regional news with a focus on agriculture, tribal development, infrastructure, crime, and socio-political affairs. His reporting often brings attention to the challenges posed by Left Wing Extremism and highlights the voices and concerns of tribal communities. Pattnaik's work provides critical insights into the ongoing transformation of Odisha's tribal hinterlands.

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