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## Polepally SEZ oustees on warpath again

M Pradeep Kumar, TNN Jul 25, 2011, 04.58am IST

POLEPALLY (Mahbubnagar): Four years after her 15-acre agriculture land was taken away for Polepally Special Economic Zone (SEZ), Nanavath Gambli now runs from pillar to post for at least obtaining a daily wage labour work.

A resident of Gudlakamma thanda near Polepally village in the backward Mahbubnagar district, Gambli used to cultivate maize, paddy and millets. Her family of six members led a decent life with the earnings until APIIC acquired the land for the SEZ. After middlemen pocketed their commissions, she got only Rs 12,000 per acre. During the land acquisition, the government had assured her employment in the company and a 'good' rehabilitation package.

"We dreamt of a bright future for our kids. We thought that these companies would change the face of our poor village. But today we are pushed away by the guards from the main gate of the SEZ. We are forced to make rounds to the company office for daily wage labour works. We were left poorer by these firms," Gambli rues.

APIIC had procured 1,000 acres of land from 10-15 villages for setting up the SEZ in Polepally in Jedcherla mandal in 2007. Major pharmaceutical and cable companies secured lands in the SEZ. "The land was acquired forcibly in the name of ushering in development. But our lives have turned upside down ever since," complains N Balunaik. He lost 30 acres of cultivable land to the SEZ. Left with no job, he runs an auto on hire for a living.

During procurement of land, rehabilitation cards were issued to the land losers in the SEZ area. That was in 2007. Now, people of Mudireddypally, Gollapalli, Polepally, Chenelli and nearby villages are forced to run around the authorities holding their cards to secure employment. "When we contact the companies, they are asking us to consult the contractor who is never to be seen. After several rounds of running around and recommendations, I was taken as a daily wager in a pharma major. I clean bathrooms and take up gardening," a villager of Thirmalpur says on condition of anonymity. "We were proud land owners once. But are now relegated as daily wage labourers," he explains.

T Mogulaiah of Thirmalpur seeks to know as to how some of the companies are bringing employees from [Hyderabad](#), 80 km away, in Volvo buses but denying jobs to the locals. "I worked for three months in a pharma firm. They removed me later as I was not 'fit' enough to take up their line of work. I was paid Rs 100 a day," he says. Mogulaiah lost 10 acres to the SEZ.

Fed up with the government's response, the villagers even entered the electoral fray in 2009 to rake up the raw deal meted out to them. But their plight continues to be at nadir. "A stringent employment policy should be in place in SEZ firms. The firms must be made to submit annual reports on employment generated in their units," contends civic activist and economist P Jyothi of Mahbubnagar.

While their cup of woes overflows, the affected villagers are now planning to stage protests in front of the companies in the SEZ. P Shankariah Goud of Kucharkal, who lost a substantial piece of land, says they would intensify the agitation till their demands are met.

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