

The Asian Age, Mumbai, 18 Dec 2007

## 'Tribal act is New Year's gift for people'

New Delhi, Dec. 17: Union tribal affairs minister, P.R. Kyndiah on Monday said that the much-delayed Tribal Act will now be notified on January 1 as the New Year gift to the nation. Mr Kyndiah also promised a new tribal policy with clear-cut guidelines on land acquisition for SEZs and other controversial issues.

The government had faced severe criticism from many quarters, including Left parties, for not notifying the Tribal Act even a year after it was passed by Parliament. The Tribal Act promises land rights to tribals and other forest-dwellers.

Mr Kyndiah said that the government will also announce a new tribal policy early next year, which will contain clear-cut guidelines for land acquisition for SEZs, compensation package for setting up industrial units in tribal lands and issues relating to their livelihood.

Mr Kyndiah said, "The draft tribal policy is being prepared by a group of ministers and expected to be finalised in two months. Then it will be presented to the Cabinet for clearance."

He said, the new policy will encompass all key issues related to development of 90 million tribals in the country. "The new document will encompass all matters, including guidelines for land acquisition for SEZs in tribal lands," he said.

The policy will focus on empowering the tribals, whose economic condition has been on decline in many parts of the country. Mr Kyndiah said, it should be ready by the first quarter of 2008.

Addressing the conference organised by National Scheduled Tribes Finance and Development Corporation (NSTFDC), Mr Kyndiah asked the officials to work

with compassion and love to ensure socio-economic development of the tribal population.

"I want you to do something innovative, something new to change the life of tribal people of the country. You will have to address their problems with compassion and love," Mr Kyndiah said. He also asked the officials to strengthen the lending system for tribals to increase the pace of developmental activities in their areas.

"Taking into account the huge tribal population who are in need of financial assistance, I see a great opportunity for all of you to build your organisation by expanding your operation to ensure overall development of the tribals," he said.

The NSTFDC is the apex organisation for providing financial assistance to the projects for development of scheduled tribes.