



Non Profit Organization

Centre for Koch Rajbanshi Studies and Development

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PRESS RELEASE

The Koch-Rajbongshi community of Assam is an indigenous aboriginal tribe of North-East India, which has been demanding for inclusion of their community in the S.T lists of Assam since 1968. The Government of India had adopted (five) criteria viz., (i) Indication of Primitive Traits, (ii) Distinctive Culture, (iii) Geographical Isolation, (iv) Shyness of contact with community at large and (v) Backwardness, in order to determine the tribal status of a particular community. For the purpose of considering the demands of the Koch-Rajbongshi people of Assam for their inclusion in the S.T lists, the Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Assam undertook a detailed field investigation in the light of the aforesaid criteria and on 09/08/1994 the Tribal Research Institute, Govt. of Assam submitted its report stating that **“there are adequate justifications for the inclusion of the Koch-Rajbongshi community in the S.T lists of Assam”**. Based on the said report the Registrar General of India had stated that, **“in the light of the empirical data furnished by the Tribal Research Institute, Assam, this office has ‘no objection’ to the inclusion of the Koch-Rajbongshi community in the S.T list of Assam”**. Thereafter the **Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 1996** to provide for inclusion of the Koch-Rajbongshi’s in the S.T list of Assam was introduced in the Lok Sabha on 14/02/1996 and again on 12/07/1996 by Ministry of Welfare (now Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment). The House referred the said Bill to a Select Committee of Lok Sabha, which also recommended the inclusion of the Koch-Rajbongshi community in the S.T lists of Assam by stating that **“the Koch-Rajbongshis should be included in the list of Scheduled Tribes so that they may come in the mainstream of the public life”**. Prior to the introduction of the Bill’s in the Lok Sabha, **the President promulgated the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Ordinance, 9 of 1996** on 27/01/1996 to give effect to the Scheduling of the Koch-Rajbongshi community in the S.T lists of Assam as Parliament was not in session. The said Ordinance was re-promulgated three times, i.e., Ordinance No. 19 of 1996, No. 30 of 1996 and No. 3 of 1997, but as the Bill was not enacted on time the said Ordinance lapsed and since then the issue of the inclusion of the Koch-Rajbongshi community in the S.T lists of Assam is hanging.

Our position: Having highlighted earlier the main grounds and justifications for granting of S.T status to the Koch-Rajbongshi community, and in view of the failure of the State and Central Govt. to resolve the issue satisfactorily declaring the Koch-Rajbongshi’s as S.T (Plains) and by keeping the matter hanging, CKRSD has filed a Writ Petition being No. 5978/2013 at the Hon’ble Gauhati High Court seeking adequate relief. The Hon’ble Gauhati High Court after hearing the matter is pleased to admit the petition by issuing Rule giving three months notice to both the State and Central Govt. to respond by 20/01/2014. **However we have no objection to various Koch-Rajbongshi organizations, having Tripartite dialogues with the Central and State Govt. to pursue the case for urgent settlement by placing of the Bill discussed here in the up-coming Winter Session of Parliament, 2013.** We are also of the view that the Koch-Rajbongshi organizations, having Tripartite dialogues with the Central and State Govt. should insist the Central Govt. on having a ‘Representative’ from the Ministry of Social Justice and Empowerment [former Ministry of Welfare, which had earlier submitted the Constitution (Scheduled Tribes) Order (Amendment) Bill, 1996] and also from the Office of the Registrar General and Census Commissioner of India.

Vikram Rajkhowa

Chairperson

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