
ArcelorMittal project draws villagers support

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ET reported that the recent pullout threat by steel giant ArcelorMittal seems to have prompted a large section of villagers at Gumla in Jharkhand to come out in favor its 12 million tonnes Greenfield steel project in the area.

Many villagers of Basia and Kamdara blocks of the Gumla district have formed a Pragatishil Manch in support of the project. The group also submitted a memorandum signed by 191 villagers to Gumla deputy commissioner Mr Rahul Sharma last week demanding that the administration extend all support to the project.

In the memorandum submitted to the DC the villagers have said that "In absence of employment opportunities, youths of Gumla are becoming naxalites, so much so that Gumla is often termed as 'crime capital of Jharkhand'. A large number of poor people of the district have to migrate to other places in search of employment. Many girls who work as laborers and maids outside never return home."

The memorandum further said that "There is a lack of cultivable land in the area which can be utilized for industrial projects. Work force is also available in plenty. Moreover, people are ready to give their land for the project happily.

Pointing fingers at the protesters, the memorandum said that "Unfortunately, people from Torpa, Rania and Karra from Khunti district are coming to Gumla to protest against the plant. They are anti-development people. The administration should extend all support to the project."

ArcelorMittal is in process of setting up the steel plant in Gumla and Khunti districts of Jharkhand. However due to protest by the villagers under the banner of Adivasi Moolvasi Astitva Raksha Manch the company recently announced that it may look for an alternative site in India. The company has applied for acquisition of 11,000 acre land for the project.

(Sourced from Economic Times)

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