



THE TIMES OF INDIA

# Forum alleges govt bid to intimidate workers of Manjolai estate

TIMES NEWS NETWORK

**Madurai:** Madurai-based NGO People's Watch, along with Manjolai Makkal Valvurimai Kootamaippu, on Saturday condemned the state govt for allegedly sending officials and police to intimidate and evict workers at Manjolai estate in Tirunelveli.

On December 3, Madras high court refused to entertain a batch of pleas moved by the estate workers seeking directions to the state govt to take over the plantation from Bombay Burmah Trading Corporation (BBTC) Limited and continue running it. A total of 8,374 acres of land was leased to the company for 99 years by Singampatti Zamin in 1929, and the lease period is set to expire on February 11, 2028.

Advocate Robert Chandra Kumar of Manjolai Makkal Valvurimai Kootamaippu said though four years are left, they were asked to evacuate in 14 days on May 30. A voluntary retirement scheme was offered, providing compensation a mere Rs 2.6 lakh to Rs 3.6 lakh.

"Though it was termed 'voluntary', people had little choice. So, we went to court," he said. He said while the workers accept court decisions,

Antony xavier



**FOR A CAUSE:** Manjolai Makkal Valvurimai Kootamaippu founder Robert Chandra Kumar and People's Watch executive director Henri Tiphagne said the govt should provide all basic facilities to Manjolai estate workers till their relocation

the state govt on Saturday hastily sent many officials to the estate creating panic.

"The state govt has assured to rehabilitate the workers and provide them housing and other amenities. In the meantime, they are facing uncertainty over getting facilities like electricity, drinking water, transport, and even medical care," added Robert.

Henri Tiphagne, executive director of People's Watch, said sending govt department officials and not people's representatives is clear intimidation.

They are going for a review petition in the high court, but people should not be pressured till then. The state govt should ensure all basic necessities till relocation, he added.