

Orissa titanium plant offers villagers jobs, work resumes

The work at the site of a proposed titanium dioxide plant in Orissa's Ganjam district was resumed after the company assured employment opportunities to villagers affected by the project, a government official said Monday.

'The local villagers and administration allowed the company to resume work after it assured that it will provide work on priority basis to all the people who lost land due to the project,' additional district magistrate Madan Mohan Deo told IANS.

'The company also agreed to issue identity cards to the affected people. The list will be prepared by the (district) administration,' he said.

Kolkata-based Saraf Group and the Russian government are jointly setting up the plant in two phases in over 600 acres of land near Chhatrapur town, about 175 km from here.

The work of levelling ground at the plant site started early last month and was stopped June 25 after some villagers attacked the labourers working there, describing them as outsiders.

At least five people were injured and 10 motorcycles damaged in the clashes.

The villagers alleged that the company used outsiders for its work ignoring the people affected by the project. The company, however, said the labourers also were the people who were affected by the project.

'The earth levelling work resumed Sunday,' a company official said.

Titanium dioxide is a pigment used in a wide range of applications - from paint and sunscreen to chocolate wrappers and food colouring.

The integrated plant will produce 40,000 tonnes per annum of titanium dioxide per year. The first phase of the project, with an investment of \$250 million, is expected to turn commercial by the end of 2009.

(© IANS / India eNews)