

Remove bar or buy our Kendu leaves: Pluckers

Women kendu leaf pluckers from Ranpur area in Nayagarh district are on dharna near the Assembly demanding opening of more collection centres. Because of the Government's restriction on selling, the pluckers are invariably exploited by the middlemen, they alleged. The Government being the sole agency for purchase of kendu leaf, the tribal pluckers have demanded that either the authorities remove the restrictions or allow more 'phadis' (collection centres) so that they can sell their stuff. Despite a substantial production in Ranpur area, the kendu leaf wing of the forest department has opened only two 'phadis' in 2001, whereas there is a potential of 20 more. On the other hand, official sources said there is huge stock of kendu leaf from last year and there might be a need to close down some collection centres. This effectively means there would be no collection and the tribal pluckers cannot sell the leaves because of restrictions or fall prey to the illegal traders' monopoly.

"If the staff don't take care of their stock and it gets ruined, why should we pay the price. And if they cannot purchase the leaves, why not remove the restrictions so that we can sell the leaves openly to private traders who purchases it at half the government rate," reason out the tribals who are on dharna under the banner of Maa Maninag Surakhya Parishad.

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