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Maluti plan fails to revive hopes

Dhritiman Ray, TNN | Apr 12, 2015, 06.11AM IST

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RANCHI: Jharkhand government's plans to conserve the terracotta temples of Maluti failed to raise the hopes of Padma Bhushan S K Mishra, the lone crusader for conservation of Maluti. The retired IAS officer and principal secretary to the former Prime Minister Chandra Shekhar, Mishra refuses to believe in Government claims until it gets down to work.

"Based on our experiences, believing the government would be dwelling in a fool's paradise," Mishra told TOI in his room at the police guest house in Ranchi. "Our fingers are crossed, but the trust is lacking," he said.

Back in 2011, Mishra, heading the Indian Trust for Rural Heritage and Development (ITRHD), had proposed a conservation plan but the state government was completely reluctant to it. The Arjun Munda government agreed on principle to spend Rs 9 crore for the conservation. Mishra and his team managed to rope in the Global Heritage Fund (GHF), which agreed to pay USD 4000 for the project. Apart from restoring the 62 temples the plan was aimed at building tourism infrastructure, health, sanitation and electricity over a span of five years. However, a nonchalant government lost interest and gave a cold shoulder to the team every time it approached with the proposition.

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"Jharkhand has been our biggest disappointment," said Mishra, whose New Delhi based ITRHD runs rural heritage conservation in states spanning western, southern India and the far-east. Government's reluctance forced GHF to back out, and efforts to rope in CSR funds from Tata and other corporate giants also failed.

Maluti grabbed the attention of Raghubar Das government after the state's tableaux based on the temples bagged second spot in the Republic Day celebrations in New Delhi. Das announced that the temples will be restored to their former glory. The government invited Mishra for deliberations on the project and chief secretary Rajiv Gauba gave his nod to it.

The new work plan, tabled before Gauba for consideration is estimated at Rs 13.6 crore and would include an equal participation of eight government departments—department of art and culture, rural development, health, human resource, energy, drinking water (and sanitation) and tourism for a holistic overhaul of the area.


Government sources claimed it was keen to start conservation work at the earliest. "The proposal is impressive and primary consent has been given already," said a tourism department official who was present at the meeting. However, the veteran IAS officer has threatened to back out with the project if the government changes its mind later. "We cannot waste our time on it again and the government would be solely responsible if the heritage is lost forever," he signed off.

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