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Changes mooted in draft tribal policy

Aarti Dhar

Adivasi Resource Centre made

the suggestions

Wants Ministry

to outline new criteria for scheduling tribes

NEW DELHI: The Adivasi Resource Centre, an advocacy study group, has suggested that the Ministry of Tribal Affairs should organise a series of national and regional consultations before finalising the draft National Tribal Policy (2006), to enable it to overcome issues related to implementation.

Due to the ambiguity around the nature and scope of the term ‘Scheduled Tribe,’ the Ministry should formulate and clearly outline new criteria for scheduling tribes, from the perspective of deprivation and exclusion whether economic, political or social, rather than drawing upon cultural and individual traits only.

The right to self-determination – whether communities wanted to retain or rebuild their cultural and political identities – should be incorporated in the Policy as a fundamental right of the Scheduled Tribes.

Furthermore, apart from the Panchayati Raj (Extension to Scheduled Area) (PESA), the Policy should give recognition to traditional systems of governance and involve local community leaders in decision-making processes, the group suggested.

The Policy does not clearly list out the implementing agencies nor does it set any timeframe for a number of actions, and should incorporate the Nomadic Tribes too .

While addressing tribal land disputes, the Policy does not recognise oral evidence in the absence of records, and this provision should be reviewed. To strengthen forest rights, the redrafted Policy must address the effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act in all States.

Most importantly, it said, the delay in the approval of the Policy served as the greatest detriment to the vision of the document.

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