

Date:31/07/2010 URL:

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Committee to make suggestions to State

Special Correspondent

'Pattas must be given to those who cultivate land'

The panel to hold discussion with the government today

VISAKHAPATNAM: The Joint Committee of Union Ministries of Environment and Forests and Tribal Welfare on implementation of Forest Rights Act will make suggestions to the government to issue pattas under the Act to those cultivating land in the areas where bauxite mining is proposed in the Visakha Agency. This was stated by Co-Chairman of the Committee Devender Pandey here on Friday.

According to the Act, pattas must be given in situ to those cultivating the land but here it was not being followed, Dr. Pandey said. The Centre would have to convey the observations of the committee to the State government.

He found that the implementation of the Act could have been done better but it seemed that the State government did not have the men and material to take up the huge task of conducting survey. Its staff and officers were also overburdened with the process of verifying the applications and issuing pattas. The GPS was used to conduct survey and it was done in a time-bound manner.

Dr. Pandey said though the Act clearly stated that gram sabhas and the committee to decide who should get land under FR Act must be conducted at the village level, the AP Government issued a circular stating that it should be held at gram panchayat level. A member of the committee Ravi Rebbapragada hoped that some clarity would emerge after Saturday's discussions with the government officials in Hyderabad. The committee also received complaints that Forest Department was taking up activities in the lands allotted under pattas.

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