

Forest land belongs to tribals: Soni

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New Delhi, Oct 28 (IANS) Information and Broadcasting Minister Ambika Soni Wednesday vigorously defended the right of tribals on forest land and said that ‘unscrupulous elements mislead and use them to further their interests’.

‘Violence has no place in this century but we have to see the reasons behind it. Tribals are right when they say that forest land belongs to them,’ Soni said here.

‘Unscrupulous elements mislead them (tribals) and use them to further their interests,’ she said amid a growing impression that the appropriation of forest land is leading to a surge in Maoist violence in the country.

‘The United Progressive Alliance government has always advocated for their rights and even the late prime minister Indira Gandhi emphasised on protection of forest land,’ she said.

Inaugurating a three-day workshop held to mark the 50th anniversary of the Directorate of Field Publicity (DFP), Soni asked the field publicity officers to take the pro-poor message of the government to people in the remotest corners of the country.

‘We should work humanely because we are an emotional country. We should not ignore the have-nots and reach out to them and help them come into the mainstream,’ she said.

The workshop is being attended by 22 regional heads and over 150 personnel of the DFP – the vital communication arm of the information and broadcasting ministry.

The meet is aimed at training them in new techniques in inter-personal communications and educating them about the flagship programmes of the central government.

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