

## Forest rights panel on Uttar Pradesh visit from Saturday

**Lucknow, Sep 3** (IANS) The special committee set up jointly by the union Ministry of Environment and Forests and the Ministry of Tribal Affairs to enquire into the status of implementation of Forest Rights Act in the country is arriving on a three-day visit to Uttar Pradesh Saturday.

Headed by retired top bureaucrat N.C. Saxena, the committee will first visit parts of Robertsganj in Sonbhadra district at the southern-most corner of Uttar Pradesh, followed by Chandauli in the neighbourhood.

Both districts have major concentration of tribals spread across the region, regarded as part of the Maoist corridor that runs from Nepal in the north to Andhra Pradesh in the south.

Subsequently, the committee would also pay a visit to the Dudhwa National Park in Lakhimpur-Kheri district. The park, that was north India's second biggest wild life reserve after Corbett National Park in Uttarakhand, has a large tribal population.

The committee intends to do its work through widespread public engagement, including through consultations and hearings, workshops, and field visits.

"The committee would like to invite inputs from local communities, civil society organizations, government agencies, researchers, and others who have information and observations regarding the implementation of the Act," said an official spokesman here.

"The mandate of the committee does not include any exhaustive review of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, but suggest ways in which policies and institutions need to be changed to enable implementation," he said.

"We have invited case studies and information on 'best practice' initiatives where the Act is being properly implemented, as also 'worst practice' examples where its implementation is being hampered," he added.

Besides holding on-the-spot public hearing in each of the districts, a final hearing would be held with tribal representatives from Gorakhpur, Maharajganj, Mirzapur, Banda, Chitrakoot and Pilibhit in Lucknow Sep 7, when a meeting is also scheduled with the chief secretary.

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