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### Kothari panel meets Posco site villagers

fe Bureau

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**Bhubaneswar** The three-member joint committee headed by Ashish Kothari on Saturday visited the proposed site of Posco-India's 12 million tonne steel plant in Orissa's Jagatsinghpur district and interacted with villagers to ascertain whether the Forest Right Act (FRA) had been implemented.

The Jagatsinghpur district collector, Narayana Jena, told Fe that the team accompanied by the sub-collector visited several villages falling under the proposed site on Saturday and spoke to the people.

The ministry of tribal affairs (MoTA) and ministry of environment and forest (MoEF) have formed a joint committee with Arup Saikia and Ravi Chellam besides Kothari as members to inquire into the allegations of violation of Forest Right Act at the Posco site. The MoEF had given clearance for diversion of 1235.2 hectares of forest land for the project. However, villagers of Dinkia, Nuagoan and Gadakujanga gram panchyats petitioned the MoTA and the MoEF that the district administration had not implemented the FRA.

The committee members, who arrived in the district on Friday, had a meeting with the district administration. The district collector said, "We have clarified that there is no violation of FRA." Not a single tribal family resides in the proposed Posco site. The four tribal families of Polang village under Gadakujanga gram panchyat are staying outside the proposed site. The visiting committee was informed that there is no forest dwellers in the site as no villager, who claims to have living here since three decades, possesses any land record, Jena added.