



Friday, June 27, 2008

Ministry of Tribal Affairs**KYNDIAH STRESSES ON TIME BOUND IMPLEMENTATION OF FOREST RIGHTS ACT****INVITING CLAIMS FOR CONFERRING LAND RIGHTS TO THE TRIBALS STARTED IN STATES**

16:23 IST

The Centre has asked States to accord the highest priority to the implementation of Forest Rights Act as its implementation could go a long way in improving the socio economic conditions of the Scheduled Tribes and other forest dwellers. Inaugurating the State Ministers meeting here today convened to review the implementation of the Act, Union Tribal Minister, Shri P.R. Kyndiah said that the Act would help to achieve the objective of empowering tribals and to eliminate historic injustice meted out to them. The Act envisages vesting ownership rights to the tribals, who are historical and traditional residing and dependent on forests for their livelihood. After the enactment of the Act, they would not face the threat of eviction or removal from the forest, he said.

Expressing concern over slow implementation in some of the States, Shri Kyndiah said that the Act would benefit crores of tribals across length and breadth of the country, they would be empowered economically and psychologically and would feel secure and confident. Speedy implementation of the Act would definitely change scenario of tribal development in the country, he asserted. A core committee under the chairmanship of Secretary, Tribal Affairs consisting senior officials of Panchayati Raj and Environment and Forest Ministry has already been constituted at the Centre to assist the States in the implementation of the Act. Such committees are also desired at the State level to monitor the implementation of the Act, the Minister said. Underlining the fact that vesting land rights to the tribals would not create any damage to the

forests, Shri Kyndiah said that tribals traditionally known as protectors of the forests and are most experienced in terms of what kind of human activities can sustain regeneration of the forests and bio-diversity as their lives are historically and culturally linked to the forests. "Renowned international organizations working in the field of environment have hailed this Act passed by the Government of India would become an important model of tribal development for the world" he said.

Briefing the Centre about the implementation of the Act in their respective States, most of the States informed that Forest Rights Committees for inviting claims and apex committee for monitoring the implementation had been formed. Public awareness campaigns were being run to make the tribals aware of their rights and procedure for filing the claims. Publicity materials have been translated in local languages and other forms of communications were being used to reach the tribals in remotest areas. Andhra Pradesh, Chhatisgarh, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Orissa and Tamil Nadu have started even verification of claims for conferring the final rights of the land to the tribals. Some of the States raised the issue of financial difficulty and other technical problems, but assured that these would be overcome very soon.

Shri Kyndiah also informed the States that a National Tribal Policy covering all important matters that concern the development of tribals, including issues such as regulatory and protective regime had been prepared and is in the process of finalization. He expressed the hope that the policy would lay the roadmap for the welfare of tribals.

Reiterating the commitment to the welfare and development of tribals, Shri Kyndiah disclosed that the Ministry would release Rs. 173 crores during the current financial year for development and primitive tribal groups to provide tangible benefits, he said. The Tribal Affairs Ministry is already providing post-matric scholarship to about nine lakh ST students annually and to provide best available opportunities for higher studies not only in the country but abroad also number of other schemes have been initiated recently. Shri Kyndiah expressed the hope that all these initiatives would help to bring tribals into the mainstream of development.

The one-day meeting was attended by the Ministers in charge of tribal affairs from the various States and senior officials of Central Ministries convened to review the Forest Rights Act.

NCJ/DT