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Ensure time-bound implementation of Tribals Forest Rights Act

By Our Staff Reporter

Bhopal, Jan 16: State government has issued detailed instructions for time-bound implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006 and Rule 2007. The instructions issued to all the district collectors and Chief Executive Officers of District Panchayats lay down that the process of the Act's implementation should be completed within the deadline. This process is to be completed between January 26 to September 2008.

About the monitoring of the programme, it has been made mandatory for the district administration to keep informing the state government time to time. In this connection, the first report would be presented on January 31, which would include progress of district and sub-division level committees' formation. The district officers have been asked to sent the second report on February 20, 2008 which would include information about formation of Forest Rights Committees and invitation of claims.

The state-level monitoring committee headed by the Chief Secretary would monitor from time to time the progress of the process of recognising forest rights, their confirmation and transfer. The notification of this committee's constitution is to be issued soon. Member Secretary of this committee would be Commissioner Tribal Welfare.

It has been said about the district-level action that first of all a meeting of sub-divisional officers, divisional forest officers, assistant conservator forest and officers of Tribal Welfare Department should be convened and provisions of the Act be read out at this meeting so that so all the concerning officers are fully acquainted with various rules and articles of the Act. Later, a district-level meeting should be held where non-government members of district as well as divisional level committee should be named and the information of this proceeding be sent to the government. Collectors have been asked to constitute a cell at collectorate

for inclusion of non-government members' names in the district and sub-divisional level committees.

Officers have also been instructed to ensure adequate publicity about Forest Rights Act so that people of every level can be aware of the provisions of the Act/Rule. Master trainers' training programme would be held up to January 18. Afterwards, these master trainers would impart training to nodal officers till January 26, 2008. The nodal officers should be made aware fully about the rules and provisions of Forest Rights Act. They must also be apprised of the action to be taken by village councils (Gram Sabha) so that the nodal officers can pass on the information about the Act to members and secretary (Village Panchayat Secretaries) of the village Panchayats for the meeting to be held on January 26.

The special village council meeting to be held on January 26, 2008 would discuss election process of Forest Rights Committee and invitation of forest rights claims. Instructions have also said that as far as possible the date of next congregation for discussion on issuing notification should be fixed before February 10, 2008. The notice should be given in prescribed proforma and all the records about election of the Forest Rights Committee should be preserved.

After the decision taken by forest rights claims should be invited and notice be issued in the prescribed proforma. For this public announcement should be made in the village Panchayat area and a notice be pasted on the notice board of the village Panchayat.

Instructions have been issued to offices to provide claim forms in adequate numbers to Sarpanch of village Panchayat, Panchayat secretary, Forest Village Committee, Janpad Panchayat, Sub-Divisional Officer (Revenue) and local forest committees by February 10. It has also been instructed to provide an attested photocopy of the electoral list to every Gram Sabha through Panchayat Secretary before January 26.

Caste certificates should be provided to those forest dwellers of scheduled tribes who do not possess caste certificates for claiming forest rights. Instructions have been issued to initiate enquiry to this effect and take necessary action quickly for issuing permanent certificate. Claims can be presented to Gram Sabha or Forest Rights Committee within three months of the issuance of the notice. Forest Rights Committee would chalk out a quick programme for spot inspection and verification of non-controversial claims while controversial claims could be solved after the period of three months. All the concerned officials have been instructed to complete spot inspection/verification of all the claims before the onset of the rainy

season.

The Forest Rights Committee would complete the verification process and then present it to Gram Sabha which would in turn pass a resolution about the claims and send the same to the divisional-level committee. The divisional committee would form a survey team to prepare the layout plan for the Gram Sabha/Forest Rights Committee for fixation of claims.

Time-limit for Act's implementation

The state government has set the time-limit for implementation on the provisions of Forest Rights Act from January 26, 2008 to February 5, 2008. During this period convention of Gram Sabha would be convened, discussions would be made on the Forest Rights Act, Forest Rights Committees would be constituted, Forest Rights Committees would nominate president and secretary and send the same to sub-divisional committees and invite claims.

Claims would be received by the Gram Sabha in March-April 2008. Verification and records of evidences and layout plans would be made by the Forest Rights Committees in May-June 2008. Gram Sabhas would pass resolutions and present claims to block-level committees in July 2008 which would be forwarded to district level committees in July-August 2008. In August-September 2008 the district level committees would approve the claims and publish the same. It would also provide the verified copies of forest rights claims to the claimants as well as Gram Sabhas.