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Job opportunities to tribal communities

By Our Staff Reporter

Bhopal, Feb 4: A national information network based on information about small forest products of states would be developed by Union Tribal Affairs ministry for connecting tribal communities directly to employment opportunities and providing a national market for small forest products. This information was given here on Monday by Union Tribal Affairs Ministry Secretary Gautam Buddh Mukherjee at a meeting held here on the protection of tribal communities' interests in relation to small forest products. Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh took part in the meeting.

Those present at the meeting included Tribal Cooperative Marketing Development Federation of India (TRIFED) managing director Avni Vaishya, Commissioner Tribal Development Jaideep Govind, Madhya Pradesh State Small Forest Product Trade and Development Federation's Ramesh K Dave and officers of Union government's Tribal Affairs Ministry and office-bearers of central co-operative institutions.

Mukherjee said that government of India has been extending co-operation to states' small forest products trade corporations, tribal development corporations and small forest products co-operative institutions. It is being considered to appropriate this co-operation between Union and state governments for the 11th Five-Year Plan. Mukherjee issued necessary instructions to the state government about implementation of new Forest Rights Act based on the tribal communities' right over small forest products. Mukherjee said that the state governments must evolve such strategy and arrangements that the interests of tribal communities are not hurt while implementing the Forest Rights Act.

Representing host state Madhya Pradesh at the meeting, Principal Secretary Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes Welfare OP Rawat said that initiative should be taken to ensure cent per cent membership of members of tribal

communities in small forest products co-operative societies with a view to restoring and ensuring tribal communities' right over small forest products as envisaged by the new Forest Rights Act. Rawat said that Union government's assistance for share amounts of tribal members can prove very effective. Throwing light on problems faced while fixing the minimum support price for small forest products, Rawat said that now the collectors of small forest products are their owners. Therefore, it would be unjustified to deprive them from earning maximum benefits by purchasing their small forest products at support price. He said that the process adopted in this connection by Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh governments should be kept unchanged so that tribal collectors can get the good price for the small forest products.

Maharashtra Tribal Welfare Department Secretary Dr PS Meena suggested that the Union government should reimburse the amount of losses being suffered by small forest products collectors due to fixation of support prices. Chhattisgarh's Deputy Secretary to Tribal Welfare Department Anil Choudhary suggested that the co-operation of private companies like ITC should be taken in the trade of small forest products and urged for Union government's assistance for providing insurance cover for small forest products like agriculture products. Jharkhand Tribal Welfare Commissioner Kamal Kishore threw light on marketing of small forest products in Jharkhand.