



## State gets its first revenue village under Forest Act

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**Lucknow** : The forest village of Dafedaar Gaudi in Behraich district has not only acquired a new name but its dwellers have also for the first time been awarded the ownership of land.

Rechristened as Gokulpur, Dafedaar Gaudi became the first village in Uttar Pradesh to be converted into a revenue village under the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

District Magistrate of Behraich Rigzin Samphel on Thursday distributed the registry deeds of 25.839 hectares of agricultural land to 53 families of the village.

"According to our records, this is the first village in the state where traditional forest dwellers have been given land rights," said Samphel.

The district administration has also asked marked the land for community purposes like building primary school, primary health centre and community pond under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MNREGS).

With a population of 350 families, Dafedaar Gaudi is one of the eight villages in the district which are being covered under the Act.

The dwellers were brought here by the British in 1930 and given land for agriculture purposes.

Apart from guarding the forests, they also worked as plantation labourers.

In 1980, the arrangement, however, came to a stop as the area came under the Forest Protection Act. The families lost their land. Consequently, their condition deteriorated as they could not avail the benefits of public distribution system or rural job schemes.

They primarily worked as farm labourers and the children remained out of school.

"When we visited the village, we found that none of the children went to school, as the nearest primary school is quite far off.

Most of the children suffered from malnutrition. We have asked the district administration to start issuing job cards to the villagers so that they can start work on the community pond under MNREGS," said Samphel, who believes that the status of revenue village would bring a great change in the in the village society's structure.

Jitendra Chaturvedi of Dehat, an organisation working in these forest dweller villages in Behraich, said the step will certainly help these villages get better in terms of development.

“This is certainly a big victory for the people who have been living here for over 75 years but had no access to basic facilities. We are hoping that the seven other villages too will soon be converted into revenue villages,” Chaturvedi said.