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## Tribals must be main beneficiaries of development process: Prime Minister

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KalingaTimes Correspondent

New Delhi, Nov. 4: Prime Minister Manmohan Singh inaugurated the Conference of Chief Ministers, State Ministers of Tribal Affairs, Social Welfare and Forest Departments on Implementation of the Forest Rights Act 2006 and tribal development and welfare programmes here on Wednesday.

Dr. Singh urged the Chief Ministers and their colleagues to spare no effort to ensure effective implementation of the Act and expeditious distribution of title deeds well within the given timeframe.

The distribution of titles is but an important and necessary first stepm the Prime Minister said, while adding that the Act recognises the symbiotic relationship between the forest and the forest dweller.

The Act attempts to deal holistically with the issue in terms not only of the recognition of rights but of livelihood opportunities and environmental protection and conservation. If implemented in its true spirit, this Act will provide significant multipliers in the processes of economic development in some of our critical habitats, he said.

"Those whose lives are dependent on the forests should be made essential partners in the processes of natural resource planning, conservation and protection. It is in this context, I would like to emphasise the importance of implementing in letter and in spirit the Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas known as PESA Act."

Dr. Singh said that there had been a systemic failure in giving the tribals a stake in the modern economic processes that inexorably intrude into their living spaces.

"The alienation built over decades is now taking a dangerous turn in some parts of our country. The systematic exploitation and social and economic abuse of our tribal communities can no longer be tolerated. But the fact is that no sustained activity is possible under the shadow of the gun. Nor have those who claim to speak for the tribals offered an alternate economic or social path that is viable. The cult of violence will only bring greater misery to the common people. We have to counter this threat with determination. While violence cannot be tolerated, the tribals must be the primary beneficiaries of the development process. We have to win the battle for their hearts and their mouths," the Prime Minister said.

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