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Governance

Tribal ministry directs states to create FRA compliance mechanism, report on evictions from tiger reserves

Letter from Centre highlights complaints of FRA violations, seeks complete details on eviction and relocation efforts

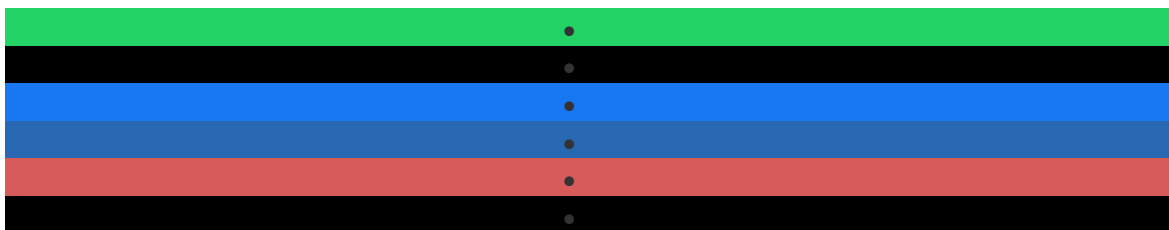


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The Union Ministry of Tribal Affairs has urged state governments to establish mechanisms ensuring compliance with the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 in response to complaints about illegal evictions of forest dwellers. The ministry has also called for a grievance redressal framework to address such issues transparently.

In a letter dated January 10, 2025, the ministry directed state tribal departments and forest departments to implement institutional mechanisms for upholding the rights of forest dwellers, as mandated by the FRA and other relevant laws.

It emphasised the need to recognise and address the rights of these communities, particularly in the face of growing complaints about unlawful evictions from tiger reserves.

The letter, addressed to state secretaries and administrators of the Union territories, highlighted concerns raised by several organisations and Gram Sabhas about evictions in various tiger reserves without due consideration of forest dwellers' rights.

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These concerns stem from a June directive by the National Tiger Conservation Authority (NTCA), which ordered the [relocation of villagers from tiger reserves](#). The NTCA directive impacted 89,808 families across 848 villages across the country, calling for their relocation on a "priority basis" with time-bound action plans.

So far, 257 villages, comprising 25,007 families, have been relocated, according to [conservationist organisations](#). However, 591 villages, home to 64,801 families, remain within notified core areas. The directive has faced opposition from conservationists and activists, who argue that such actions contravene the FRA.

"The provisions under FRA explicitly empower forest-dwelling communities by legally recognising their rights, protecting them from unlawful eviction, and ensuring that any resettlement is carried out with their informed consent and participation," the letter stated.

The ministry's letter reiterated the legal protections afforded under the FRA, stating that Section 4 (5) of the Act prohibits the eviction or removal of forest-dwelling Scheduled Tribes or traditional forest dwellers until their rights have been recognised and verified.

Furthermore, the FRA requires obtaining free, prior, and informed consent (FPIC) from Gram Sabhas before any resettlement or relocation is undertaken. The provisions mandate the settlement of rights in targeted resettlement areas and ensure the active participation of affected communities before any relocation occurs.

To address the concerns of the communities who raised them, the ministry directed the state tribal departments to provide information about tiger reserves, including the name and number of villages and the population residing in each reserve. It also sought details of tribes and other forest dwelling communities inside reserves.

The letter requested village-specific information from each tiger reserve, as well as details of FRA claims received, the nature of rights, and whether FRA claims were vested or rejected, along with reasons.

It has also directed that information be shared on whether the Gram Sabha's FPIC was carried out, as well as the details of the FPIC for each tiger reserve, including whether it includes all adult members of village habitations within the tiger reserves. The ministry also asked for information on compensation paid for the villagers' relocation.