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In Nagarahole, Adivasis hold gram sabha to claim forest rights

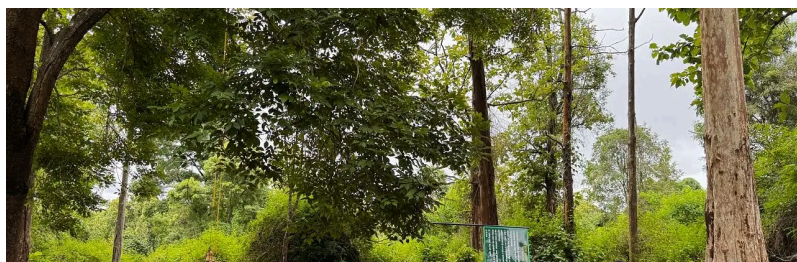
In Nagarahole, adivasis hold gram sabha to claim forest rights



Chiranjeevi Kulkarni | DHNS

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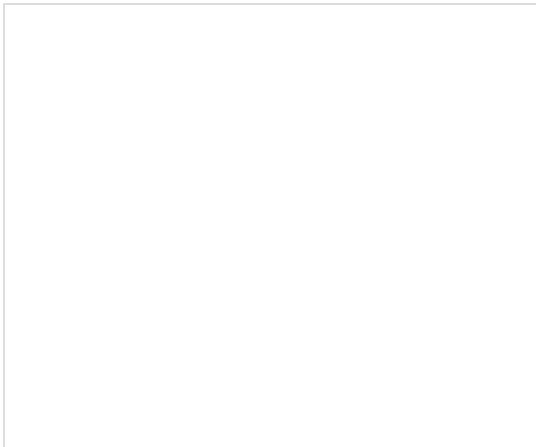
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Members of 52 families seeking claims to ancestral land inside Nagarahole Tiger Reserve held gram sabha on Tuesday. Credit: Special Arrangement

Bengaluru: Two weeks after entering the forests of the [Nagarahole](#) Tiger Reserve to reclaim rights in their 'ancestral' lands, the adivasis of Karadikallu Attur Kolli held a gram sabha to formally resubmit their claims under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006 and decided to file case against officers under SC/ST (Prevention of Atrocities) Act for violating the laws.



The gram sabha discussed eight important matters

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during the meeting between 11.30 am and 2.30 pm. The first key subject on the agenda was the filing of an atrocity case against the Panchayat Development Officer (PDO) of the K Badaga Gram Panchayat for illegally writing concluding reforms on the claims submitted by 52 families.

"On 28-10-2024 and 29-10-2024, a joint survey was conducted. Without intimating the forest rights committee and gram sabha, the PDO wrote his remarks. Moreover, he said 13 of the claimants cannot even file an appeal. None of this is permitted by the law. Hence, we decided to file a case against the PDO," said Shivu J, one of the members of the gram sabha.

Under the FRA, the a forest rights committee under the gram sabha determines the forest rights and passes resolution. The resolutions are then collated and verified by the sub divisional level committee, based on which a draft record of proposed forest rights is placed before district level committee.

Further, he said, the gram sabha passed a resolution to restart their claims for community forest rights and community forest resource rights, which were "unilaterally denied" by the government authorities. "We also decided to file cases against officials from forest, panchayat raj and other departments who have failed to follow the rules despite clear mandate," he said.

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The gram sabha also condemned the blocking of visitors to the habitation. It said the board put up by the forest department to bar visitors from entering the tribal haadi (habitat) violates the constitutional rights of the residents.

The forest department has said that claims by those camping in Karadikallu Attur Kolli could not be considered as the gram sabhas had not provided the same before the Supreme Court order to reconsider the claims.

However, Shivu said there was ample evidence to show that the families resided in the area prior to December 2005. "We had submitted photographic evidence to support our claims. Unfortunately, for more than 10 years, the gram sabhas and forest rights committees were not set up and run as per the law. After a lot of struggle, we managed to submit our claims in 2021," he said.

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