

Forests

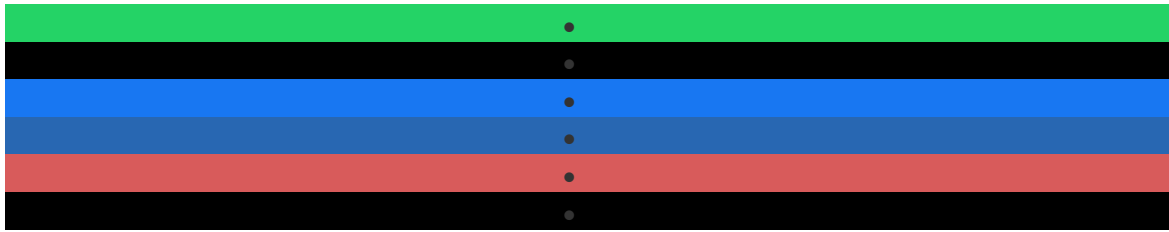
Nagarahole: Jenu Kuruba Adivasis to hold Gram Sabha on May 20

Communities allege violations of Forest Rights Act by forest officials

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The 52 Jenu Kuruba Adivasi families, who returned to their village Karadikallu Attur Kollu on May 5, 2025, to reclaim their ancestral villages and forest rights, will hold a Gram Sabha on May 20.

In a joint statement made by Nagarahole Adivasi Jammapale Hakku Sthapana Samiti, Nagarahole, Karnataka; National Adivasi Alliance, India; Community Network Against Protected Areas, India; and People's Union for Civil Liberties, Mysuru Chapter, the tribespeople said the assertion of their rights was a direct result of the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve authorities' repeated interference, lobbying and hijacking of the due process of law in recognising individual forest rights (IFR), community forest rights (CFR) and community forest resource rights (CFRR).

The statement said that according to the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, the tiger reserve officials hold no mandate in determining the legality of the claimants of the area and the area of forestland being claimed.

According to Section 9 of the FRA, the Gram Sabha as a public authority is vested with powers to determine, verify and recognise or reject any claims, the statement said.

The Gram Sabha on May 20 aims to discuss the violations of the FRA. The members also aim to move further on establishing procedures regarding recognition of CFR and CFRR claims.

"May 20 has been declared by the United Nations (UN) as *World Bee Day* to recognise the critical role of bees in safeguarding food production cycles and biodiversity. For the Jenu Kuruba, wherein *Jenu* means honey and *Kuruba* means forest people," the statement read.

The village residents alleged that the officials were serving the vested interests of conservation cartels and the tourism industry in the Nagarahole forest, owing to which

they purposefully undermined the powers granted to the Gram Sabha by violating the FRA.

They said a similar pattern is being reported by people declared 'illegals' in tiger reserves across India.

After the Adivasi families returned to their villages, the authorities tried to evict them and also stopped any visitors from meeting them, said Rajan, a member of the Community Networks Against Protected Areas (CNAPA), a national coalition of indigenous peoples and forest-dwelling communities, Gram Sabha/Village Council federations, activists, journalists and academics.

"The forest department eventually restored to deploying the Special Tiger Protection Force to demolish temporary shelters set up by the families. These families had given prior information of setting up these shelters and about conducting rituals to pay respects to their ancestors and nature," Rajan said.

"The forest department's lies stand exposed with the letter issued by the Assistant Conservator of Forest (ACF), Ananya J, on May 8, 2025, to Karadikallu members that a temporary injunction order by the High Court of Karnataka, dated May 6, 2025, has been issued regarding joint survey or any FRA related activities until 23rd July 2025," the statement said.

The letter further stated that conducting Sub Division Level Committee and District Level Committee meetings would be a violation of the High Court's order and that the Karadikallu families would have to vacate the Nagarahole Tiger Reserve.

Rajan said through legal consultations, the community members learned that no such order was issued by the High Court of Karnataka.

The activists and Adivasi communities, along with the Karadikallu Gram Sabha, have condemned the fabricated letter by the tiger reserve authorities.

The statement concluded stating, "We are rooted in the belief that forests, peoples, and animals are equals, and any conservation effort that does not acknowledge the historical role of Adivasi /indigenous communities in safeguarding these ecosystems is a theft of land and knowledge systems."

Karnataka
Gram sabha
Nagarahole
Jenu Kuruba