



'Joint Communication' for Tribal Communities

Why in News

A **joint communication** was signed by the **Ministry of Tribal Affairs** and the **Ministry of Environment, Forest, and Climate Change** which is aimed at giving **more power to the tribal communities** in managing the forest resources.

Forest Resources

- Forests are not only home to trees and animals. They are also a vital source of resources. They give clean air, timber, fuel, wood, fruits, food, fodder, and more. These are known as forest resources upon which many depend for livelihood and survival.
- Forests provide resources, which makes its conservation and protection further important. It is also because of these resources that forests are exploited.
- **Initiatives for forest conservation and preservation:**
 - [Indian Forest Act, 1927](#), [Forest Conservation Act, 1980](#), [National Forest Policy, 1988](#), [National Mission for Green India](#), [National Afforestation Program](#), [Wildlife Protection Act, 1972](#).

Key Points

- **Joint Communication:**
 - It pertains to **more effective implementation of the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** and for harnessing the potential for livelihood improvement of the [Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes \(FDSTs\)](#) and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFDs).
 - State forest departments **will carry out verification of claims for forest rights, mapping of forest lands** involved and provision of necessary evidence as required, authentication of records, joint field inspections, awareness generation etc.
 - The lack of recognition of forest rights has left tribal and forest dwelling communities across the country insecure of tenure and fear of eviction from their lands.
 - State forest departments are to undertake projects for **value chain addition** including **capacity building** of primary collectors, new harvesting methods, storage, processing and marketing of [Non-Timber Forest Products \(NTFP\)](#).
 - A nodal agency to be designated for **specific non-timber forest products** as supply chain platforms in collaboration with [TRIFED](#), **Ministry of Ayush, MFP (Minor Forest Produce) Federations, Van Dhan Kendras** etc.
- **Forest Dwellers and MFP:**
 - Tribals and other forest dwellers can contribute significantly in efforts towards climate change through **preservation of biodiversity, environmental conservation and enhancing forest cover**.
 - Forest dwellers are dependent on forests, not only for their livelihood but their traditions are also intertwined with forests.
 - **Non-Timber Forest Products or Minor Forest Produce (MFP):**

- MFP includes all **non-timber forest produce** of plant origin and includes bamboo, canes, fodder, leaves, gums, waxes, dyes, resins and many forms of food including nuts, wild fruits, honey, lac, tusser etc.
- It provides both **subsistence and cash income for people who live in or near forests.**
- They **also form a major portion of their food, fruits, medicines** and other consumption items and also provide cash income through sales.
- NTFP are **also known as MFP or Non-Wood Forest Produce (NWFP).**
 - The NTFP can be further categorized into Medicinal And Aromatic Plants (MAP), oil seeds, fiber and floss, resins, edible plants, bamboo, reeds and grasses.
- **Initiatives for Forest Dwellers:**
 - The government had enacted the [Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers \(Recognition of Forest Rights\) Act, 2006](#), commonly known as the Forest Rights Act and recognized the right to livelihood and occupation within the forest of these communities.
 - [Ekalavya Model Residential Schools \(EMRS\)](#)
 - [Pradhan Manti Van Dhan Yojana \(PMVDY\)](#)
 - Increasing the number of [Minor Forest Products \(MFP\)](#) in the bracket of **Minimum Support Price (MSP)** from 10 to 86 in the last few years has supported tribes immensely in improving their incomes and livelihood prospects.
 - State tribal welfare departments along with forest departments are also to work out strategies to extend [MGNREGA](#) and [National Rural Livelihood Mission \(NRLM\)](#) to forest dwellers as well as initiate **skill development programs** and give impetus to **agro-forestry and horticulture projects.**
 - [Programme for Capacity Building of Scheduled Tribe Representatives in Local Self Governments.](#)

Forest Rights Act, 2006

- The Act **recognizes the forest rights in Forest land for Forest Dwelling Scheduled Tribes (FDST) and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (OTFD)** who have been residing in such forests for generations.
 - Forest rights can also be **claimed** by any member or community who has for at **least three generations (75 years) prior** to the 13th day of December, 2005 primarily resided in forest land for bona fide livelihood needs.
- It **strengthens the conservation regime** of the forests while **ensuring livelihood and food security** of the FDST and OTFD.
- **The Gram Sabha** is the authority to initiate the process for determining the nature and extent of **Individual Forest Rights (IFR)** or **Community Forest Rights (CFR)** or both that may be given to FDST and OTFD.
- The Act identifies four **types of rights:**
 - **Title rights:** It gives FDST and OTFD the **right to ownership to land** farmed by tribals or forest dwellers subject to a maximum of 4 hectares. Ownership is only for land that is actually being cultivated by the concerned family and no new lands will be granted.
 - **Use rights:** The rights of the dwellers extend to extracting [Minor Forest Produce](#), grazing areas etc.
 - **Relief and development rights:** To rehabilitate in case of illegal eviction or forced displacement and to basic amenities, subject to restrictions for forest protection.
 - **Forest management rights:** It includes the right to protect, regenerate or conserve or manage any community forest resource which they have been traditionally protecting and conserving for sustainable use.

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