

To,

1. The Chief Secretaries of all State Governments
(except Jammu & Kashmir, Punjab, Haryana and Delhi)
2. The Administrators of all Union Territory Administrations
(except Lakshadweep and Puducherry)

Sub: Conversion of all forest villages, old habitations, unsurveyed villages etc. into revenue villages under Section 3(1)(h) of the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006.

Sir,

As you are aware, the rights of settlement and conversion of all forest villages, old habitations, unsurveyed villages etc. into revenue villages has been recognized as one of the forest rights of forest dwelling Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers on all forest lands under Section 3(1)(h) of the Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 (in short, Forest Rights Act, 2006). The Ministry has last year issued comprehensive guidelines to all the State/ UT Governments on various aspects of implementation of the Act, which also emphasized the need to implement the provisions of the FRA with regard to conversion of forest villages and other such villages into revenue villages, without any exceptions or exemptions being provided to such villages in any category of forest lands. The State Governments were advised to convert all erstwhile forest villages, unrecorded settlements and old habitations into revenue villages with a sense of urgency in a time bound manner. It was also clarified that the conversion would include the actual land-use of the village in its entirety, including lands required for current or future community uses, like, schools, health facilities, public spaces etc. The Scheduled Tribes and other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Amendment Rules, 2012 notified on 6.9.2012 also contains a similar provision.

2. Though the Forest Rights Act, 2006 has been in operation for more than five years now, the State/ UT Governments have reported very slow progress towards conversion of forest villages and other such villages into revenue villages so far. It has come to the notice of the Ministry that the State Governments are not taking any action for conversion of forest villages and other such villages into revenue villages as the State Forest Department officials still consider that the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006 do not supersede the provisions of Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980 and the Hon'ble