

Podu cultivators to be evicted from core forest

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Cultivators will be given land on fringes: Telangana CM

Chief Minister K. Chandrasekhar Rao has said that the government will clear podu (shifting) cultivation from the core forest and allot land to cultivators on the fringes of forest.

All those evicted will be given certificates and provided power, irrigation, Rytu Bandh and Rytu Beema facilities. Mr. Rao asked Chief Secretary Somesh Kumar and other senior officials to accept claims for title to podu lands across the State from next week. Based on the applications, claims of extent of agriculture by them on those lands should be surveyed and steps taken to finalise them. However, the ultimate goal should be to protect forest lands by ensuring that they were not encroached, Mr. Rao said at an official meeting to discuss the issue.

Mr. Somesh Kumar was also asked to hold a meeting with Collectors of all districts for issuing necessary instructions. The suggestions of MLAs should be taken into account. The forest officials were asked to play a key role in safeguarding the forest land in coordination with tribal welfare department. A survey of forest land would begin in November, a release quoting Mr, Rao said. He asked the forest department to identify the borders of forest land with the aid of coordinates. Wherever necessary trenches should be dug up, fencing and other effective steps to protect the forest land should be taken up. The government would provide adequate budget for the purpose.

The government would also extend police protection if required. Guidelines to constitute forest protection committees should be prepared. Mr. Rao said there should be no room for encroachment of even an inch of forest land after the controversy over podu lands was resolved to an extent. The government would not be found wanting in taking any kind of tough measures to protect forest land. As part of resolving the issue, an all-party meeting would be held and leaders given a field experience if necessary of how the forest lands were vulnerable to encroachment.

He recalled that the government had assured justice to podu cultivators in the Assembly. The government would protect the right to life of tribals dependent on forest. The real problem was only with people encroaching on forest lands and exploiting its wealth. The forest would not be sacrificed to meet their selfish ends.

After finding a solution to podu cultivation, the government would ensure that there was no transgression into forest lands. It would be the responsibility of forest officials to ensure that.

Source: [Podu cultivators to be evicted from core forest - The Hindu](#)