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## Centre rap on forest rights delay

OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT

**Bhubaneswar, Sept. 25:** Despite the government's claim that it is keen to grant forest rights to tribals, the fact remains that only 41,000 claims out of a total 2.92 lakh have been cleared by it.

This came to the fore at a meeting between Union tribal affairs minister Kanti Lal Bhuria and chief minister Naveen Patnaik in New Delhi yesterday.

Bhuria asked Naveen to expedite the implementation of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act-2006 in Orissa. The Union minister also apprised the chief minister of the Prime Minister's concern over the issue and added that a meeting of the chief ministers will be convened in November to review the implementation of the act.

Explaining the delay in settlement of claims, the chief minister said a stay order had been passed by Orissa High Court on the implementation of the Act. The government was now working to clear the claim backlog after a stay order was vacated by the high court, he said. Naveen asked for an early release of central assistance for tribal welfare activities for which a proposal was submitted by the government.

Bhuria informed that a sum of Rs 64.26 crore had been released by his ministry to the state on September 22 based on the government's proposal.

The chief minister also urged for inclusion of a few more communities in the ST and SC state-list so that the deserving people could benefit from government programmes.

He said that 167 such proposals had been sent to the Centre for inclusion in the list.

Naveen also asked for release of Rs 140 crore during the current fiscal for construction of 400 new 100-bedded girls hostels in the state. He also demanded establishment of a tribal university in Kandhamal.

The chief minister requested for a grant of Rs 5 crore for modernisation of the tribal museum at Bhubaneswar and separate fund for opening of tribal museums in all 17 micro project areas in the state.

