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Half the claims to be settled by year-end: Balan

THIRUVANANTHAPURAM: Half of the claims for land made under the Forest Rights Act will be settled by this year-end, Power and SC/ST Welfare Minister A K Balan said here on Saturday.

In all, 33,177 applications have been filed for land through 509 Forest Rights Committees. To settle these claims, a total of 97,759 acres are needed. The State Government expects to settle half of the claims this year itself, Balan, who convened a meeting of officials of the SC/ST Affairs Department on Saturday, told reporters.

Land survey in the districts of Kollam, Idukki, Malappuram, Kannur, Wayanad and Kozhikode is being undertaken under the 'Bhoomikeralam' scheme. In the other districts, District Collectors are supervising the survey. The survey is being delayed in Idukki and Thiruvananthapuram, he said.

Houses for the applicants will be constructed under the EMS Housing Scheme, under which a single unit will cost Rs 1.25 lakh. The Kerala Water Authority (KWA), which is currently looking into water supply to SC/ST colonies, will submit a report to the Government by October 15. As many as 1,016 colonies are currently not networked by the KWA.

A Rs 3-crore scheme for Wayanad and a Rs 4.36-crore scheme for Attapadi have been envisaged as part of electrification of the colonies, he said.

Congress criticised

Power Minister A K Balan on Saturday criticised the Congress party for allowing Rahul Gandhi to use an Air Force plane to cart his car to Kerala.

Congress President Sonia Gandhi should have used the same yardstick she used in asking Union Ministers Shashi Tharoor and S M Krishna to vacate their five-star hotel accommodations. It was also unwise of Rahul Gandhi, protected by the SPG, to break protocol and rush around restaurants and colleges not on his itinerary.

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