

Move to hold gram sabha only in 12 villages flayed

Campaign for Survival and Dignity (CSD), Odisha on Monday alleged that the State government was not serious about proper implementation of the order of Supreme Court direction that held supremacy of gram sabha with regard to taking a final decision on mining in Niyamgiri hills.

According to CSD, the Supreme Court direction which was again reiterated by Union Tribal Affairs Minister V. K. Chandra Deo in his letter to Governor S. C. Jamir said the gram sabhas should be held all the villages depending over forest area

However, the State government was planning to hold Gram Sabha only in 12 villages (5 villages in Kalahandi District and 7 villages in the Rayagada district), CSD pointed out.

CSD activists urged other mass movement groups to support Niyamgiri Surakhya Samiti (NSS), which is spearheading the campaign against mining in Niyamgiri hills.

Besides, the forum challenged the State government's claim of implementing Forest Rights Act better than other States.

Pointing out that the power of the empowered and authorized Gram Sabha had been hijacked, CSD alleged that most of the Forest Rights Committees (FRC) were formed in revenue villages while same was not formed in the forest habitations.

"The status of the FRCs is very poor in the State. Many FRC members do not aware of their membership in the FRCs. Most of the FRCs does not have their own registers to maintain their records, to file the claims received, FRC members were not trained on their role and responsibility," the campaign members claimed.

"Confusions are prevailing as far as recognition of community forest rights is concerned. No proper awareness on community forest rights has been made so far. Even after the passing of five years, there is no remarkable progress in recognition of CFR," activists said.

CSD announced to take out a massive protest rally on alleged failure of State government to implement FRA here on June 5.