

# SC stays its Feb 13 order directing eviction of 11.8 lakh forest dwellers

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NEW DELHI: The Supreme Court Thursday stayed its February 13 order directing 21 states to evict 11.8 lakh illegal forest dwellers whose claims over the land have been rejected by the authorities. A bench comprising Justices Arun Mishra and Naveen Sinha directed the state governments to file affidavit giving details about process adopted in rejecting the claims.

The apex court posted the matter for further hearing on July 10.

The top court had on Wednesday agreed to hear the Centre's plea seeking withholding of its February 13 order asking 21 states to evict

nearly 11.8 lakh forest dwellers whose claims were rejected.

After briefly hearing the matter, the bench said: "We stay and hold our February 13 order."

The bench also directed that the affidavit has to be filed by the chief secretaries of the states giving details of various steps covered for carrying out the eviction of the forest dwellers.

The Centre had rushed to the top court for modification of the order saying the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006 was a "beneficial" legislation and should be construed liberally to help "extremely poor and illiterate people" who are not well informed of their rights and procedure under the law.