

Adivasi leaders slam CM over delay in forest rights settlement, rehabilitation

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THE HINDU BUREAU

Tribals have urged the government to meet their long-pending demands including rehabilitation of forest-dwelling communities.

Tribal leaders in Hunsur have taken strong exception to the prolonged delay by the State government in recognising forest rights of the Adivasi communities and questioned the failure to rehabilitate the forest-dwellers despite an order from the High Court of Karnataka.

In a strongly worded letter to Chief Minister Siddaramaiah on Wednesday, the tribal leaders drew attention to the sufferings of thousands of families displaced from the forests and who continue to suffer.

The letter dated November 19, 2025, pointed out that Mr. Siddaramaiah, during his first tenure as the Chief Minister, had promised to recognise and implement the demands of the tribal communities way back in 2013. He is now the Chief Minister again and despite repeated reminders in his second tenure, Mr. Siddaramaiah has continued to ignore the genuine demands of the tribals, the letter stated.

The crux of the issue revolves around rehabilitation of 3,418 Adivasi families which were identified by the Muzaffar Assadi Committee which was constituted as per a High Court directive.

The leaders pointed out that though a decade has passed since the committee submitted its report, and despite appeals made to the Chief Minister during both his terms — most recently during his visit to H.D. Kote on November 12, 2024, — the government has neither implemented the court order nor granted forest rights under the Forest Rights Act (FRA).

S. Sreekanth of Development through Education (DEED), an NGO which advocates the cause of Adivasis, said that the large-scale rejection of forest-

rights claims in Mysuru district has also been brought to the notice of the Chief Minister.

Out of 12,500 Adivasi families, nearly 7,000 had submitted applications, but 5,500 were dismissed on the grounds that they “do not reside inside the forest”, said Mr. Sreekanth pointing out that the reasoning was flawed.

The families were forced outside the forest much earlier making it impossible for them to provide proof of forest residence even though their displacement itself is documented in the High Court order, he added.

The community leaders have argued that that certain provisions of the Forest Rights Act which recognises traditional forest rights, was ignored during the processing of claims.

The letter also questioned the clubbing of Jenu Kurubas and Betta Kurubas under the general Kuruba category during the recent Social and Educational Survey or caste census conducted in the State. It blurred the distinction between the forest dwelling tribes and the pastoral communities and has put the Adivasis at a disadvantage situation, said Mr. Sreekanth. “Does the Chief Minister not know the difference between the pastoral Kurubas and the tribal Jenu Kurubas who live in the forest?” he questioned.

The leaders further expressed disappointment that no Adivasi has been appointed as an MLC or given representation in welfare bodies, calling it a betrayal of the government’s claim of delivering social justice. The tribal leaders also attached the earlier memorandum submitted in 2015 and 2025 and urged Mr. Siddaramaiah to act decisively and meet their demands.