

Zilla Panchayat Deputy Secretary Stresses on Forest Rights Act Clarity to Solve Tribal Issues

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Mangaluru : Jayalakshmi Raikod, the Deputy Secretary of the Dakshina Kannada Zilla Panchayat, emphasized that officials must possess a clear and comprehensive understanding of the Forest Rights Act to effectively address the challenges faced by forest dwellers. Speaking at an inauguration ceremony on Monday at the Netravati Hall, she noted that Scheduled Tribes and other traditional forest dwellers have inhabited the coastal and Malenadu regions for generations. She highlighted that a lack of specific knowledge regarding the Act often leads to delays in addressing the grievances of these communities.

The workshop, jointly organized by the Dakshina Kannada District Administration, Zilla Panchayat, and the Scheduled Tribes Welfare Department, focused on the implementation of the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006. Raikod pointed out that a significant number of applications remain pending due to a lack of coordination between the Revenue, Forest, Social Welfare, and Rural Development departments. She urged these departments to work in unison to ensure that the rights of tribal communities are protected and that pending applications are cleared promptly.

During the session, subject expert Y. Giri Rao from Odisha explained the pivotal role of the 'Gram Sabha' in identifying forest rights and verifying applications. He remarked that forest dwellers were historically denied their rights since the British era, a systemic issue the Forest Rights Act aims to rectify. He stressed that officials must not only provide land rights but also constitutionally recognize the traditional and cultural rights of these inhabitants. Several high-ranking officials from both Dakshina Kannada and Udupi districts, including Assistant Commissioner Stella Varghese and various Project Coordinators, were present at the event.