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Tribal association protests eviction from forest-fringe lands in Bargur

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The Tamil Nadu Tribal People's Association has urged the State government to intervene and halt alleged attempts by the Bargur Forest Department to evict tribal and hill-dwelling communities from lands adjoining forest areas.

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The district general body meeting of the association was held recently in Sathyamangalam under the chairmanship of district president K. Ramasamy. State executive committee members V.P. Gunasekaran and S. Mohan Kumar, along with the association's legal advisor S. Seyarasu, addressed the gathering. They explained the provisions of the Forest Rights Act, 2006, and resolutions were passed demanding stronger protection for cultivators.

The association said tribal people and other hill residents have for generations been cultivating barren lands abutting reserve forests. These lands, listed in revenue records as "forest-fringe poramboke," were recently reclassified as reserved forest land. Forest officials have allegedly been pressuring cultivators to vacate under Section 68A of the Tamil Nadu Forest Act, 1882.



A resolution pointed out that in an interim order (W.P. No. 1164/2023 dated February 19, 2024), the Supreme Court had directed only the collection of details on lands that could be classified as forest, with the data to be verified by an expert committee. The State government, through G.O. No. 169 (Environment, Climate Change and Forest Department) dated September 11, 2024, had formed such a committee, which is still gathering information.

"At a time when there is no government order mandating eviction, the actions of the Bargur Forest Department in threatening cultivators are unjustified," the resolution stated. It added that while lakhs of acres of forest land are being allotted to corporates for development projects, poor families cultivating half to one acre for survival are being unfairly targeted.

The association demanded that the government immediately stop what it called the "illegal and arbitrary" actions of the Bargur Forest Department. It also announced plans to submit a mass petition to the Chief Minister on October 15.