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Resettlement still a far cry

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Officials say survey of 1,200 acres acquired is on



A majority of those settled in Mudumalai Tiger Reserve belong to Moundadan Chetty.

About 449 families living inside Mudumalai Tiger Reserve are yet to be relocated despite Madras High Court on 2007 directing authorities concerned to resettle them in a year.

N. Lakshminarayanan of the Coimbatore-based Wildlife Conservation Society-India Programme said many Moundadan Chetty families wanted to move out of the reserve area because of increasing incidents of man-animal conflicts.

Elephants, tigers and leopards were destroying their crops and killing their cattle.

Implementation of the National Tiger Conservation Authority-funded plan should be expedited, he said.

Though the Forest Department had identified about 1200 acres at Aiyankolli village in Pandalur taluk and surveying work is progressing. Under a cash incentive programme, 20 families had opted to move out of the reserve areas by accepting Rs. 10 lakh each. But majority of the families have opted for land-based relocation plan, which offers alternative farm land and civic amenities.

Earlier this month representatives of the villagers including Sivaprakash, secretary, Mudumalai Relocation Committee; N.R. Gopalan, vice-president, Benne Relocation Committee; and Murali of Puliyalam committee along with a Gudalur-based Social activist H. Madhusudanan met C.V. Shankar, Principal Secretary, Environment and Forests at Chennai and urged him to speed up the relocation process since their livelihood had been severely affected.

A memorandum was submitted to the Principal Chief Conservator of Forests Gautam Dey.

C.R. Krishnan, adviser, Moundadan Chetty Community Association, said that on account of the delay it was feared that the objectives of the plan may not be served. Since those who had opted for the cash-based relocation scheme were being paid in instalments, they were finding it difficult to make a fresh beginning. He expressed the hope that the survey work would be completed soon.

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