

## NCST asks Odisha govt to submit DMF fund diversion report

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Bhubaneswar, Mar 7 (PTI) The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has asked the Odisha government to submit a detailed report within one month on the alleged diversion of funds under the District Mineral Foundation (DMF).

The commission issued such a direction to the state government after a team headed by its chairperson Harsh Chouhan reviewed different aspects related to socio-economic development of tribal community in Odisha. The commission was of the opinion that the funds collected under DMF was the share of the community which should be spent on them instead of being utilized in some other places.

“The commission has also taken serious view on diversion of DMF Fund in the state. The commission asked the state government to submit a detailed report on the issue within period of one month,” Chouhan told reporters here after a review meeting with chief secretary P K Jena and other senior government officials on Monday.

The NCST chairman said the purpose of constituting the DMF was to compensate the community (not any person) on the adverse impact of mining. The funds cannot be spent anywhere at will. “We were told by the officials that the funds is spent in the district. Therefore, we have sought a detailed report within a month,” Chouhan said.

Noting that the NCST team has noticed that the inmates of some residential tribal schools and hostels managed by the government were staying in “unhygienic” and “inhuman” condition, Chouhan said the state government has been informed about the sorry state of affairs in some places.

The NCST chairman, however, did not reveal the then names of the schools or hostels where the tribal boys and girls were being put in “inhuman” condition.

Chouhan said the commission has strongly recommended the state government to set up a separate department exclusively for the tribals. “Now, one department in Odisha has been looking after ST, SC, OBC and minorities. Therefore, ST, who constitute about 23 per cent of the state’s population, are not getting the required attention as they deserve,” Chouhan said.

Accompanied by the commission members Ananta Nayak, Alka Tiwari and others, Chouhan said the objective of the meeting with the state government was to review the implementation of constitutional and legal rights, review of socio-economic development and safeguards of the scheduled tribes in the state of Odisha.

The NCST team found that the state government on urgent basis require to address the issues relating to diversion and non-utilisation of STC funds which has been reserved for welfare of the scheduled tribes in the state of Odisha under various heads, long terms delays in rehabilitation of project affected tribals, land displacement and long term pendency of compensation amount to tribals who were displaced under various projects, financial frauds and atrocities against STs, deficiency of doctors, paramedic staff and other medical infrastructure facilities in tribal areas.

Chouhan said the commission has suggested to the state government to make PESA rule for implementation of PESA Act -Panchayat (extension to Scheduled Area) in Odisha.

Replying to a question, he said, "As per government reply it is found that a large number CFR (Community rights and reforest resource), IFR (individual forest rights), CFRR (community forest resources) are rejected at large extent and the government was again reconsidering the rejected forests rights".

He said during visit, the commission also found absence of basic amenities like water, road, electricity which are necessary for human life, job opportunities in PSU's and other government services for ST's, extremely poor telephonic connectivity in tribal areas of Odisha.

The commission also suggested to the state government to conduct the meeting of Tribal Advisory Council (TAC) at regular interval in order to expedite welfare schemes. PTI AAM  
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