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[Home \(https://www.thestatesman.com/\)](https://www.thestatesman.com/) » [India \(https://www.thestatesman.com/india\)](https://www.thestatesman.com/india) » [NCST notice to Odisha on plight of people in border villages](#)

NCST notice to Odisha on plight of people in border villages

The Odisha government admitted that the boundaries of over 100 villages at the state's border could not be determined.



Representational Image:

The National Commission for Scheduled Tribes (NCST) has issued notice to Odisha Chief Secretary and sought for the government agencies to ensure basic human rights and justice to more than ten thousand tribals living in around 45 villages bordering Andhra Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand and West Bengal.

The apex panel for tribal rights took cognizance of the petition filed by lawyer and rights activist Radhakanta Tripathy and sought for detailed reply within 15 days.

Odisha is stuck in border disputes with neighboring Andhra Pradesh over the highest number of villages. Odisha has about 38 villages, including 35 of Balasore and rest of Mayurbhanj that share a border with West Bengal.

Apart from it, Nuamalpada, the border village of Burjabahl, has a dispute with Chhattisgarh. At the same time, five villages – Limitur, Purusottampur, Kankadapat, Jagannathpur and Champur in Keonjhar district have border disputes with Jharkhand.

The Odisha government admitted that the boundaries of over 100 villages at the state's border could not be determined.

Alleging deprivation of basic human rights of the tribals living in the border villages, Tripathy sought for the intervention of the Commission for a permanent solution of people's plight.

The Government of Odisha does not have proper records of the disputed villages at its border as records and demarcation are yet to be done, the petitioner contended.

These are classic cases of failure of the State government mechanism in acting over the issue. Due to inaction, negligence and failure of the State administration the tribals are left in the lurch without bare necessities like potable drinking water, communication facilities, benefits of social welfare schemes, education and health care, the petition alleged.

The annual verification, specifically in the villages sharing boundary with neighboring states, is an important component of revenue administration, the dispute arises as no such assessment is made by the collectors of bordering districts, it added.

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