

Farmers urge Centre to implement Forest Rights Act

[Vikas Vasudeva](#) NEW DELHI, December 16, 2015

Hundreds of landless farmers, agricultural workers and labourers from across 20 States assembled at Jantar Mantar here on Tuesday under a joint platform ‘Bhumi Adhikar Andolan’ (Land Rights Movement) and observed December 15 (Forest Rights Day) as ‘Chetavni Divas’ — day of challenge and warning.

Addressing a gathering, social activist Medha Patkar said the Forest Rights Act (FRA) was enacted in 2006, but successive governments have never taken efforts to implement the Act. “Rather things are moving in opposite direction. The NDA government has introduced two dangerous moves by declaring a cut-off date for claiming of rights and also to involve corporates in plantation activities in degraded forest areas,” said Ms. Patkar, adding that both these steps were against the rules and provisions of the FRA and would endanger the rights of communities.

Social activists who participated in the event pointed out that attempts were being made to dilute the Environment Law (Amendment) Bill 2015. “Environment impact assessment and public hearing form the only basis for communities to participate in the development process and now this very right is being taken away from them,” said Jarjum, a farmer leader.

Several other leaders pointed out that Schedule Tribe and other Forest Dwellers, Recognition of Forest Rights Act, 2006 and the Right to Fair Compensation and Transparency in Land

Acquisition, Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act, 2013 which were meant to transfer the rights of resources back to people have not been implemented. It was important to note that the comprehensive report of high level committee (HLC) on the status of Adivasis submitted in 2014 says that the implementation of these Acts have been weak despite the promising provisions, they said.

“The NDA government is keen to alter the spirit and basic features of these Acts. The fate of altered Land Acquisition Act, 2013 is hanging in legislature and the basic tenets of Forest Rights Act, 2006 are being diluted through executive orders to avoid being answerable to the people of the country,” Ms. Patkar said.

The members of the movement submitted a memorandum to the Centre asking implementation of Forest Rights Act to ensure collective rights of communities.

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