

Hundreds of Villages Across India Demand End to 'Afforestation' As Excuse for Forest Dept Land Grab

In July of this year, Parliament [passed the Compensatory Afforestation Fund Act](#).

Afforestation sounds like a good thing, but in practice this [law would transfer huge amounts of money to forest officials with little oversight](#) on whether they use that money for genuinely ecologically friendly activities - and with no oversight at all on whether that money is used to grab common and individual lands that belong to people.

Despite concerted [efforts by the opposition](#) to address these issues when the bill was passed, the government managed to fob them off with a simple assurance that it would "deal with these matters in the Rules" (the separate procedures for implementation of the law).

Now, hundreds of villages across India have called on Environment Minister Anil Dave to live up to his promise. The letters have been sent by:

- **54 villages** in Tamil Nadu, along with an alliance of 12 organisations
- **over 100 villages** in three districts in Jharkhand, with more in process
- **165 villages** in Maharashtra
- **14 block level confederations from five districts** in Rajasthan
- **46 villages** in Uttarakhand

The letters point out that if the Environment Minister is serious about his assurance, he must ensure that:

- No work under this Act should be undertaken without the informed consent of the gram sabhas whose members use the lands affected by the project, or whose customary boundaries include that land. This consent should be taken with a minimum of 50% quorum and should take place at the village / hamlet level, regardless of whether the land is revenue land or forest land. This is the bare minimum required for any genuine participation.
- No work under this Act should involve lands used (individually or in common) or occupied by Dalits, adivasis, small farmers, etc.
- Funds under this Act should be under the control of the gram sabha and not just of the officials.
- On forest land, no work should be undertaken under this Act unless the implementation of the Forest Rights Act is complete in the area and all villages therein have been given their titles to community forest resource rights (as the law requires for every village with forest dwellers).

Will the Modi government ignore the voice of hundreds of villages across India, and persist in its desire to violate the law?

Campaign for Survival and Dignity

9873657844, www.foresightsact.com, forestcampaign@gmail.com