

5th January, 2010.

Dear

As you are aware, the Ministry of Tribal Affairs had convened a two-day Conference of Chief Ministers, State Ministers (Tribal Development/Social Welfare Department) and State Ministers (Forest Department) on 4th and 5th November, 2009 at New Delhi to take stock of the status of implementation of the Forest Rights Act and a few major tribal development/welfare programmes, and therefrom arrive at a consensus on how to improve programme delivery, output and outreach. The Conference was inaugurated by the Hon'ble Prime Minister.

2. In his inaugural address, the Hon'ble Prime Minister had, inter-alia, made the following observations:

"The livelihood concerns of forest dwellers should be central to the development agenda in forest areas. It is important to dovetail all development and welfare programmes in tribal areas so that our strategy is coherent and there is a coordinated approach involving all Departments. Education and health need priority attention. It is equally important to pay adequate attention to improvement of agricultural productivity in tribal areas."

A copy of the speech of the Prime Minister delivered at the inaugural session of the Conference is enclosed.

3. The Ministry of Tribal Affairs has already advised the State/UT Governments to plan convergence of existing welfare and development initiatives for the potential title holders in the forest land under the Act so that their conditions improve and they are weaned away from the timber related activities. The Ministry is also advising the State Governments constantly to dovetail the funding under the programme of Special Central Assistance to Tribal Sub Plan with other States/Central Schemes.

4. Since the Ministry of Rural Development has established a Task Force for the convergence of programmes concerning, Education, Health and Agriculture sectors with NREGA, it is requested that the above directions of the Prime Minister may be kept in view for dovetailing development/welfare programmes in tribal areas. This Ministry may be informed of the action taken in this regard.

Yours sincerely,

(G.B. Mukherji)

Dr. Rita Sharma,