Chhattisgarh Forest Control Battle

Prelims : Current events of National and International Importance

Why in News?

Recently, Chhattisgarh Forest department attempted to control over community forest management, contradicting the provisions of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006, leading to widespread protests.

Theme 1	Theme 2	Theme 3	Theme 4	Theme 5	Theme 6	Theme 7	Theme 8	Theme 9
Poverty Free and Enhanced Livelihoods in Panchayat	Healthy Panchayat	Child-Friendly Panchayat	Water Sufficient Panchayat	Clean and Green Panchayat	Panchayat with Self-Sufficient Infrastructure	Socially Just and Socially Secured Panchayat	Panchayat with Good Governance	Women Friendly Panchayat

- **Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) -** It is a transformative provision of the FRA, recognizes the right of gram sabhas to manage their customary forests.
- It seeks to rectify the injustices of colonial forest consolidation which dispossessed local communities and supplanted their traditional management institutions with centralised state control.
- **Issues with centralized control –** Chattisgarh Forest Department Attempting to declare itself the nodal agency for CFR management, usurping the role of Gram Sabhas.
- Gram Sabhas should follow a specific plan from Ministry of Tribal Affairs (MoTA).
- It means Gram Sabhas should follow the ***National Working Plan Code (NWPC).*** Thus, undermines local autonomy.
- **Prohibition -** It also prohibited other departments or NGOs from supporting gram sabhas in CFRR management planning.
- **Resistance -** Strong resistance from GS, local political representatives & Adivasi rights groups forced the forest department to retract its decision.
- The letter was withdrawn after a spirited grassroots mobilisation by gram sabhas,

local elected representatives, and Adivasi rights groups.

- **Historical context -** Forests under government control were traditionally managed through "working plans" rooted in colonial-era "scientific forestry."
- Aims to maximizing timber extraction by disregarding local ecosystems and community needs, leading to forest degradation and conflicts with forest-dwelling communities.
- **Challenges in FRA Implementation -** Despite over 10,000 GS receiving CFR titles nationwide, fewer than 1,000 have successfully developed their management plans due to persistent resistance from forest departments.
- **Dharti Aaba Janjatiya Gram Utkarsh Abhiyan** - A Central government program, offers a flexible framework for community forest management plans, which can be further improved.
- MoTA must firmly uphold the autonomy of GS under the FRA and resist pressures to impose NWPC on community forest management.
- Forest departments need to transit from timber-focused "scientific" approach to a people-centric forest management model, providing necessary financial and protective support to GS.

National Working Plan Code (NWPC).

The NWPC is a set of guidelines issued by the **Ministry of Environment, Forest and Climate Change (MoEFCC)**, Government of India.

Standardizes Forest Management: Its primary purpose is to regulate and standardize the way forests are managed and planned scientifically across the country.

Blueprint for Forest Divisions: Essentially, it acts as a blueprint for the preparation of "Working Plans" for specific forest divisions or regions. These plans typically cover a period of 10 years.

Focus on Sustainable Forest Management (SFM): The NWPC aims to ensure that forest management balances conservation, sustainable resource use, and the livelihood needs of communities.

Reference

[The Hindu | Future of forest governance](#)