

News

The Supreme Court orders States and UTs to give the Forest Department back any forest lands that are owned by the Revenue Department.



Within three months, the Supreme Court has ordered all State Governments and Union Territories to transfer ownership of lands designated as "Forest Land" that are now held by the Revenue Department to the Forest Department.

Under the guise of resettling members of the backward class whose ancestors' agricultural land was acquired for public use, the bench of Chief Justice of India BR Gavai, Justice Augustine George Masih, and Justice K Vinod Chandran rendered a decision on a writ petition that claimed that a relationship between builders, bureaucrats, and politicians led to the conversion of valuable forest land for commercial purposes.

The Court referred to it as a "glaring issue" and ordered the Chief Secretaries of each State and the Administrators of each Union Territory to form Special Investigation Teams (SITs) to look into whether any of the Revenue Department's reserved forest land had been given to private individuals or organizations for uses other than forestry.

It further stated that states and UTs should recoup the land's cost from those individuals or institutions and use the money for conservation, restoration, and afforestation if regaining possession of the land was not feasible in the greater public interest due to the fact that the land had already been converted for non-forest uses.

It was mandated that all state governments and Union Territories take action to reclaim the land from the individuals or organizations that currently owned it and turn it over to the Forest Department.

In order to guarantee that all of these transfers occur within a year, the Bench also directed the Chief Secretaries of each State and the Administrators of each Union Territory to form Special Teams. It further said that such land should only be utilized for afforestation.