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Chhattisgarh is set to become the second Indian state to allow its tribal population to manage and exploit forest produce at a community level under the Forest Rights Act, 2006.

According to a statement by the Bhupesh Baghel government, tribals in the state will be given rights of forest land ownership and exploitation of resources under the Community Forest Resources Rights (CFRR) provisions of the Act.

The forest rights activists in Chhattisgarh have welcomed the state government's decision offering CFRR to forest dwellers, but with caution, saying it has to be seen if the government has the will to implement its decision.

So far, the management and exploitation of these resources was done by the state forest department.

The new rights will be granted at the gram sabha level and not at an individual level.

The state tribal affairs department will serve as nodal agency for the CFRR provision, and the forest department will function as facilitator, said a senior state forest department official.

Forest officials in the state have called the extension of these rights to the tribals a "historic" move.

The tribal make up close to 32 per cent of Chhattisgarh's 3.2 crore population.

Forest Minister Mohammed Akbar said the state forest department will soon begin infrastructure creation to help in implementing the decision.

Maharashtra was the first state to allow community forest rights under the 2006 Act.

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