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High-level meeting on effective implementation of AAMA SIMILIPAL YOJANA

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Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Mohan Charan Majhi has allocated Rs. 50 crores for our Similipal scheme in the current budget 2025. A high-level meeting was convened today at the departmental conference hall in Kharavela Bhawan under the chairmanship of Minister for Forest, Environment and Climate Change Shri Ganeshram Singkhuntia on the effective implementation of this scheme and proper utilization of funds.

Minister Shri Singkhuntia said that Similipal is the pride and glory of our state. Why only our state, its unique biodiversity has brought fame to the whole of India. Similipal is home to a variety of wildlife including tigers and elephants, 304 species of birds, 20 species of amphibians and 62 species of reptiles, 1076 species of flowers and 96 species of orchids. However, the region also faces challenges such as deforestation and access to qualitative education and healthcare for the local Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes communities. Realizing this, our popular Chief Minister has allocated Rs. 50 crore for the development of Similipal region. Forest Minister expressed his indebtedness to Hon'ble Chief Minister for this budgetary allocation. There is political and administrative will to implement this scheme. The flow of funds will be regular as per the proposed annual budget and necessary institutional support is being arranged for the project. Minister Shri Singkhuntia announced that steps are being taken to get Similipal National Park status soon.

Additional Chief Secretary, Forest, Environment and Climate Change Department, Shri Satyabrata Sahu, said that AAMA SIMILIPAL YOJANA will focus on building institutions for the economic upliftment of tribal communities, good management of natural resources and biodiversity, improvement and management of wildlife habitats, mitigation measures for human-animal conflict, environmental conservation measures, promotion of community-based eco-tourism, farm afforestation measures, efforts to improve livelihoods and enhance socio-cultural life, capacity building efforts, formation of circle level cells, DMUs and FMUs and training of project staff, survey and delimitation, formation of Forest Protection Committees and Environment Development Committees, preparation of village level micro-plans, identification and selection of beneficiaries for various livelihood schemes of line departments, identification of sites in each village for Forest Protection Committees and Environment Development Committees and construction of houses there. In the field of natural resources and biodiversity management, forest fire control and management, soil moisture conservation measures along with drainage, removal of noxious weeds and grasses, avenue plantation, medicinal plant nurseries and gardens, protection of forest boundaries and maintenance of forest roads will be taken up. For the improvement and management of wildlife habitat, construction and maintenance of water bodies for drinking and sports of animals, fodder gardens and grasslands for herbivores, flood warning system will be made. For the reduction of human animal conflict and protection of the environment, solar fences, solar light posts and solar lighting system in the EDC building, plastic free campaign, establishment and maintenance of salt licks, digging of elephant proof ditches and promotion of alternative cooking fuels will be done. Agroforestry initiatives will include plantation of trees, fencing of agroforestry areas, and promotion of agroforestry. ACS Shri Sahu said that emphasis will be given to project staff for various tasks, construction of institutions and project implementation, small schemes, forest and water transport management, forest fire management, biodiversity conservation and management, vocational training for youth and cluster promotion for primary beneficiaries.

The meeting also discussed in detail the second phase of the Odisha Forest Sector Development Project (OFSDP). Hon'ble Chief Minister has made an allocation of Rs. 40 crore for the second phase of this project in the budget. Elaborating on the proposed project, Ms. Mita Bishwal, Director, Odisha Forest Sector Development Project said that it is a comprehensive project that will integrate afforestation, biodiversity conservation, climate change mitigation, livelihood promotion and institutional development initiatives and achieve holistic development of forest-dwelling communities in Odisha. The project focuses on promotion of community-based sustainable forest management practices, promotion of alternative livelihoods among forest-dwelling communities, strengthening of community-based institutions (VSS and SHG). Community participation in biodiversity conservation, economic sustainability of forest-dependent households through livelihood security, capacity building of water-dependent communities, documentation of community knowledge in environmental conservation practices, community-led natural resource protection and conservation strategies, coordination between forest resource users and administrators through collaborative and participatory approaches, collaborative models of sustainable forest management for increased ecological health, community prosperity and environmental well-being of the state can be achieved. Sustainable forest management through community participation and livelihood promotion through coordination of line department schemes are the two main objectives of the proposed project, she said.

There are a total of 16,169 VSSs in our state. 24,264 VSSs were included under the first phase of Odisha Forest Sector Development Project (OFSDP), 1220 VSSs were included under the second phase of Odisha Forest Sector Development Project (OFSDP), 4601 VSSs were included under AAMA JUNGLE YOJANA - thus 8247 VSSs (including 61 EDCs) have been included so far. 7983 VSSs have not been included under the project so far. It is proposed to include about 3600 VSSs in 32 Regional Forest Divisions under the new Project, said Smt. Mita Bishwal, Director, Odisha Forest Sector Development Project.

In this review meeting, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Chief of Forest Force Shri Suresh Pant, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Wildlife) and Chief Wildlife Warden Shri Prem Kumar Jha, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests and Project Director, Odisha Forest Area Development Project Mrs. Mita Bishwal, Principal Chief Conservator of Forests (Kenduleaf) and Member Secretary of State Pollution Control Board Mrs. Uma Nanduri, Additional Secretary Shri Deben Pradhan, Joint Secretary Shri Dharam Hansda, Additional Secretary Usharani Das, Joint Secretary Shri Dinakrishna Kar and all other senior officers of the department were present and provided a lot of information to the Minister and ACS.



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