



# DAILY EDITORIAL ANALYSIS

TOPIC

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**CONTESTING THE FUTURE OF  
FOREST GOVERNANCE**

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## CONTESTING THE FUTURE OF FOREST GOVERNANCE

### Context

- In a recent development, the Chhattisgarh forest department issued—and later withdrew—a letter claiming itself as the nodal agency for implementing **Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) under the Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** highlights a critical and ongoing struggle in India's forest governance.

### About Forest & Its Governance in India

- India's forests are more than just ecological assets — they are cultural landscapes, livelihood sources, and climate buffers.
- Forests are central to India's climate goals, including carbon sequestration and biodiversity protection.
- India's **25.17% geographical area** under forest cover, with increasing tree and mangrove cover. (India State of Forest Report 2023)
- The governance of these forests has evolved through colonial legacies and post-independence reforms.

### Historical Foundations and Legal Frameworks

- **Colonial Legacy:** Forest governance began under British rule with the **Indian Forest Act of 1865**, which prioritized timber extraction and centralized control (Scientific Forestry).
- **Post-Independence Reforms:** The **Forest (Conservation) Act, 1980** and the **Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006** marked significant shifts toward conservation and justice for forest dwellers.
- **Recent Amendments:** The **Forest Conservation (Amendment) Act, 2023** has sparked debate for diluting protections and enabling commercial exploitation of forest lands.

#### Key Provisions of Forest Rights Act (FRA), 2006

- **Title Rights:** Ownership of forest land cultivated before December 13, 2005 (up to 4 hectares).
- **Use Rights:** Access to minor forest produce, grazing areas, water bodies, and traditional routes.
- **Relief & Development Rights:** Protection from eviction and access to basic amenities.
- **Forest Management Rights:** Communities can protect and conserve forests they've traditionally cared for.

### Community Forest Resource Rights (CFRR) and Decentralized Governance

- CFRR was introduced by FRA, 2006 empowering **gram sabhas (village assemblies)** to manage forests based on traditional knowledge and local needs.
  - ♦ The **FRA, 2006** recognizes the **rights of Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers** to access, manage, and conserve forest resources.
- It corrects colonial-era injustices that stripped local communities of control and replaced their traditional institutions with centralized state apparatus.
- Over 10,000 gram sabhas have received CFRR titles, but fewer than 1,000 have developed management plans due to institutional resistance.

### Governance Challenges: Institutional Roadblocks and Policy Conflicts

- **Conflicting Policies:** The push for infrastructure and mining often clashes with conservation and community rights.
- **Institutional Resistance:** Forest departments have been slow to relinquish control, undermining FRA implementation.
- **Legal Battles:** The Supreme Court continues to hear cases that could impact millions of forest dwellers' rights.

**Way Forward**

- Strengthen community-based management through legal and financial support.
- Reject colonial-era planning models in favor of adaptive, ecosystem-based approaches.
- Ensure transparency and accountability in forest diversion and conservation decisions.
- Integrate climate resilience into forest governance frameworks.

Source: TH

**Mains Practice Question**

**[Q]** How does the Forest Rights Act challenge the conventional paradigms of forest governance in India, and what are the implications of community-led stewardship for climate resilience and ecological sustainability?

