



Plot points Delays, misinterpretations and corruption in the distribution of land to tribals, all add to the groundswell of resentment



PHOTOS: VIJAY PANDEY



FOREST TRAVAILS 1

The Forest Rights Act was meant to restore rights of forest dwellers. **RAJESH SINHA** traverses Jharkhand to see how it is impacting the targeted population

Stranger Than Paradise

IN THE predominantly tribal Palamau belt in Jharkhand, 'Dhoti Father' or George Monipalli is an easily recognised man. A priest who has donned the ubiquitous *dhoti*, he has for years fought along with Adivasis for the rights guaranteed to them under the Forest Rights Act (FRA). The act formally called the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) was notified in December 2007. Since then, the Palamau district administration has recognised the claims of only two families from Durup village in the district.

The FRA was enacted to restore the rights of forest-dwelling communities over land and other resources that had been denied to them under previous forest laws which do not take into account the ways of life of tribal communities. The Act provided for recognition of individual family rights over land that had been classified as "encroached", despite the family's traditional use. In addition to this, FRA took into cognisance community rights over grazing lands and forest produce. But as in evidence in Palamau, despite what the Act states, the actual implementation revolves around government functionar-