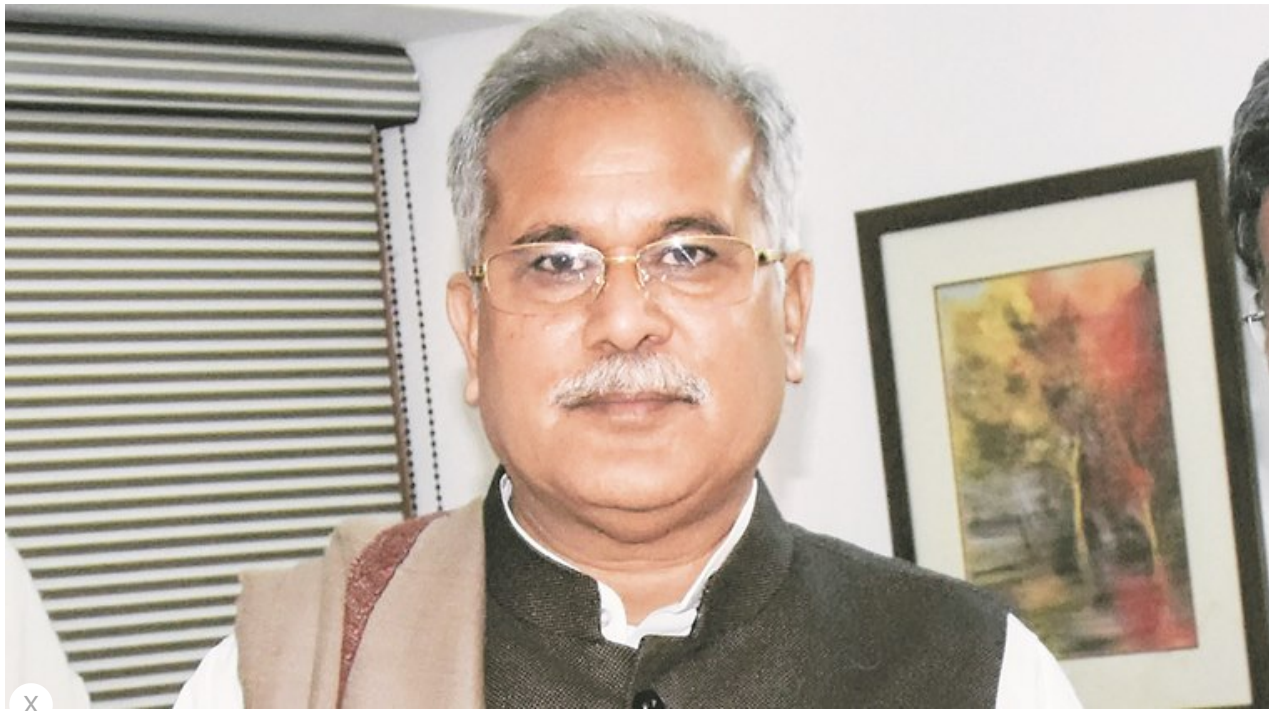


Chhattisgarh to return Bastar land acquired for Tata Steel to farmers

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel is learnt to have instructed officials to begin the modalities of the process and submit an action plan before the next Cabinet meeting, which is likely to be held after the swearing-in of additional ministers on Tuesday.

Written by **Dipankar Ghose** | Raipur | Updated: December 25, 2018 1:43:28 pm



Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel has told officials to start the paperwork.

After the farm loan waiver, the newly elected Congress government in Chhattisgarh has announced that it plans to begin the process of returning land acquired from tribal farmers in [Bastar](#) for a Tata Steel project which did not materialise.

Chief Minister Bhupesh Baghel is learnt to have instructed officials to begin the modalities of the process and submit an action plan before the next Cabinet meeting, which is likely to be held after

the swearing-in of additional ministers on Tuesday.

In its poll manifesto, the Congress had promised that in case of projects which fail to take off within five years of land acquisition, the land would be returned to their owners. Party president Rahul Gandhi had reiterated this promise to farmers in the affected region in the run-up to the assembly elections.

In 2005, the then **BJP** government had signed a memorandum of understanding with Tata Steel for a Rs 19,500-crore integrated steel plant in Lohandiguda area of Bastar district. The acquisition of land — which belonged to tribals — began in 2008, and the government acquired 1,764 hectares from the 10 villages of Lohandiguda, Chindgaon, Kumhali, Beliyapal, Bandaji, Dabpal, Badeparoda, Belar, Sirsiguda and Takraguda.



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While there was widespread debate among farmers and unrest over the land acquisition process, with activists calling the process exploitative and under duress, 1,165 farmers of the 1,707 farmers whose land was acquired accepted the compensation. The government maintained that the compensation for the rest had been deposited with the revenue deposit fund.

In 2016, even as the government hadn't yet "taken possession of the land", Tata Steel announced that it was pulling out of the project. Officials cited various reasons, including protests, procedural