

LETTER

CITIZENS' CONVENTION

Eminent jurists, lawyers, educationists, teachers, poets, litterateurs, scientists, artists, social activists, doctors, engineers and people from all walks of life, from different parts of India, gathered at Hindi Bhavan, New Delhi today for the All India Citizens' Convention Against Atrocities on the People of Nandigram and Against Special Economic Zones on June 19, 2007.

The Convention was addressed by Ms. Medha Patkar (eminent social activist) S/Shri Rajinder Sachar (former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court), Prabhash Joshi (former Editor of Jansatta), D. Bandopadhyaya (former Secretary, Land & Land Revenue, Govt. of West Bengal), Prakashbhai Shah (former Editor, Jansatta Gujarati), Tarun Sanyal (President, Forum of Artists, Cultural Activists and Intellectuals, West Bengal), Gursharan Singh (eminent playwright, actor and director), Sumit Chakaravarty (Editor, "Mainstream"), Ramji Singh (former VC, Jain University, Rajasthan), Prof. Vijay Kumar Piyush (President, Federation of University Teachers' Association, Jharkhand), Anil Nauriya (Advocate, Supreme Court), Suhas Borker (independent documentary film-maker & director), Prof. Arun Kumar (Centre for Economic Studies and Planning, JNU), Prof; Tanika Sarkar (Centre for Historical Studies, JNU), Prof. Soumitro Banerjee (recipient of Bhatnagar award & professor, IIT Kharagpur), Prof. K.R. Chowdry (retired Professor, ANGR Agricultural University, Hyderabad) and Prof. Miratun Nahar (former Member, West Bengal Women's Commission).

Eminent jurist Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer sent a message to the Convention.

The Convention was also addressed by prominent social activists—S/Shri Nando Patro (Convener, Bhumi Uchchedh Pratirodh Committee, Nandigram), Anup Singh (Vice-President, Haryana Kisan Mazdoor Sangarsh Samiti Against SEZ & Agricultural Land Acquisition), Vilas Sonavane (organizer of movement against SEZ in Raigad, Maharashtra), Tapan Das (organizer of the Singur resistance movement), Dr. D. Surendranath (President, Karshaka Pratirodha Samithi, Kerala), Ms. Binapani Das from Orissa and Shri Ramanjaniappa from Karnataka.

During the day-long deliberations at the Convention a Resolution was debated and adopted, condemning the grabbing of lands by State Governments, which is being used by the people for agriculture and other purposes for supporting their livelihoods, at the behest of domestic and foreign corporates; and condemning the brutal suppression of people's democratic movements against land-acquisition by State Governments. The recent State-sponsored violence against the people of Nandigram was specifically condemned by all the speakers. The Resolution demanded of the Central Government to take steps to immediately repeal the Special Economic Zone Act, 2005.

The speakers hailed the manner in which the peasants and workers in different parts of the country are continuing to develop resistance movements against acquisition of farmers' lands despite all-out repression by State Governments, and expressed solidarity with all these movements. They noted with admiration the determined and courageous exemplary role of the women of Nandigram who, alongside men, faced the brutalities of the police and the criminals engaged by the ruling party valiantly, and did not bow down even after being physically tortured and raped.

Narendra Sharma,
All India Citizens Convention,
New Delhi.