

LETTER

## GANGTIKULI TRAGEDY

It is paradoxical that the news media became euphoric while a rural lad named "Prince" fell into a sixty feet deep discarded well at the outskirts of Chandigarh, the capital of Haryana, but the same news media demonstrated sheer apathy towards 30 odd persons, trapped inside a submerged dilapidated coal mine at Gangtikuli in Assansol. To save the life of little Prince, even the Prime minister responded positively and asked the army to do their best. Prayer was organized throughout the country in temples, mosques and churches. A spy camera was also hanged inside the long hole to facilitate direct telecast of the little lad's plight under sixty feet deep ground. After fifty hours ordeal was over, the little 'Prince' was rescued and awarded at least Rs seven lakhs along with assurance from the chief minister to bear his educational expenses till teenage. All these are nothing unfair. On the contrary, it was a rare gesture on behalf of the army to save a little child from the jaws of certain death. But it is unfathomable to imagine what was the felony of these trapped persons that they had to face so merciless death. It was alleged; these persons went down under the mine to collect coal unlawfully. De facto this was the sole reason why the question of the survival of so many lives was unheard. Hence the obvious question arises, why the administration let loose of so many poor people's lives leading to sure death. The army was also called in Gangtikuli, but it was too late to tackle the situation. No prayer was made. No wave of sympathy cropped up. Perhaps the news media thinks it prudent to remain almost shy. The people of West Bengal just observed the sure death of so many persons. The other day a local left leader's statement came out in an English daily. The leader stated that this unlawful coal collection was going on for many years. If someone opted to collect coal from this abandoned mine on its own risk then "We have nothing to do". But no leader is raising question why Goenkas, the owner of this mine, left it in such a perilous condition. If someone makes death trap he will be termed innocent. When did some people on their own risk enter into this death trap? Just to feed their hungry families they took such risk. All the victims were in the age group of 15 to 20s. They entered inside the mine on 31st July, inundation into a mine suddenly occurred soon after their entrance. Knowing consequence of such deluge into a discarded mine, the local administration or the CCL authority did nothing to rescue the victims.

Jayanta Sinha  
Kolkata