

'ENOUGH IS ENOUGH'

[Following is the Press Statement issued from Raj Bhavan, Kolkata]

The ardour of Deepavali has been dampened in the whole State by the events in Nandigram. Several villages in Nandigram are oscillating from the deepest gloom to panic. Large numbers of armed persons from outside the district have, it is undeniable, forced themselves onto villages in Nandigram Block I and II for territorial assertion. Thousands of villagers have consequently been intimidated into leaving their homes in villages such as Daudpur, Amgachi, Jambani, Simulkundu, Brindabanchak, Tekhali, Nainan, Kanongochak, Takapara, Satengabari, Ranichak, Kamalpur and Keyakhali.

Even as of 4 pm this day, I have received phone calls from responsible persons in Nandigram saying that several huts are ablaze. Large numbers of villagers have taken refuge in the local high school in Nandigram, bereft of food and personal security.

At the time of writing, the most accurate description for Nandigram is the one used by our Home Secretary, namely, it has become "a war zone". No Government or society can allow a war zone to exist without immediate and effective action.

I am fully aware of the fact that, earlier in the year, many villagers in Nandigram who were perceived as sympathizers of the ruling establishment had been obliged to leave the villages and seek shelter in Khejuri. I am also aware of the apprehension that some Maoists, their numbers being unverified, are believed to have entered the area.

Those who had to flee to Khejuri must come back with full confidence and dignity. And no quarter should be given to the cult of violence associated with Maoists. But the manner in which the "recapture" of Nandigram villages is being attempted is totally unlawful and unacceptable.

I find it equally unacceptable that while Nandigram has been ingressed with ease by armed people on the one hand, political and non-political persons trying to reach it have been violently obstructed. Some of them were bearing relief articles for the homeless. The treatment meted to Smt Medha Patkar and other associates of hers last evening was against all norms of civilized political behaviour.

A group of five MPs and one MLA, representing the CPI(M) met me this morning and urged me "to apply my good offices for the peace processes in Nandigram". Peace is the need of the hour in Nandigram. For that peace to come, I told them, effective action will have to be taken in terms of action initiated against those responsible for the March 14 events in due process.

The alert and observant people of West Bengal have a right to know that following discussions with political leaders like Smt Mamata Banerjee, MP, Shri Partha Chatterjee, Leader of the Opposition, West Bengal Legislative Assembly, Shri Pradip Bhattacharya, Working President, West Bengal Pradesh Congress Committee, Shri Manash Bhuiyan and non-political persons, I have been in regular communication with the Hon'ble Chief Minister Shri Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee and requested the State Government to take certain immediate

steps. These include (i) the immediate return of the ingressers (ii) the giving of urgent relief to the displaced persons in Nandigram and (iii) the facilitation of their return to their homes.

I have also asked the administration to remove the new unauthorized manmade blocks at entry points to

1. Chandipur-Ria Para-Phulni More-Khodambari-Nadia
2. Nandakumar-Kapasaria-Ferry to Cross over to Nandigram
3. Heria-Nandigram
4. Potashpur-Nandigram

in order that the isolation of Nandigram from the rest of the State ends.

I have made it clear that unless these steps are taken within hours, and the syndrome of "capture and recapture" is not ended, the beginnings for a resumed dialogue through the package announced by the Chief Secretary last night will not get off the ground and the peace talks process will remain grounded. Peace talks must resume soon and, despite the lateness of the hour, I welcome the pragmatic optimism expressed in this regard by our elder statesman, Shri Jyoti Basu.

Let me conclude by saying : Enough is enough. Peace and security should be restored, without any delay, from where they have been evicted from Nandigram.

Sd. Gopalkrishna Gandhi
[Source : Official web site of
Raj Bhavan, Kolkata

<http://rajbhavankolkata.gov.in.>]