

LETTERS

DISPLACING FARMERS

At a time when it is being widely realised that the displacement of farmers cultivating fertile and irrigated land should be minimised as much as possible, it is shocking that farmers cultivating nearly 650 acres of fertile irrigated land in an agriculturally rich area of Kushinagar district (UP) are threatened by a project involving the construction of a huge statue and related activities. Social activists who have inquired into this so-called *Maitreyi* project have found out several instances of false claims to collect donations. The farmers here are determined to resist this eviction. The government should immediately give instructions to prevent this costly disruptive and entirely avoidable displacement of people.

Bharat Dogra
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SAVE 'AAMI'

Aami river flows in Sidharthnagar, Gorakhpur and Sant Kabir Nagar for nearly 100 kms. before merging into the Rapti, a sub-tributary of the Ganga. This river has close ties to the lives of Gautam Buddha and Sant Kabir. Gautam Buddha gave up his royal dress to take up sanyas on the bank of this river. Sant Kabir breathed his last on the bank of the river in Maghar. His memorial has been built here including a temple as well as a mosque. However in recent years this river has been so badly polluted by industrial effluents that the life and livelihood of lakhs of people is badly threatened. Hardly any fish has survived in this polluted water, so livelihood of fisherfolk is completely gone except in a few rainy days. Farm animals are dying, crops have been damaged, drinking water is badly polluted and water-borne diseases are spreading widely. Urgent steps should be taken immediately to prevent pollution of this sacred river. Villagers should be suitably compensated for the heavy damage caused to them.

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