

## LETTERS

**JUNGLERAJ IN JUNGLEMAHAL**

After long struggles the political change has taken place in Paschim Bangla. Before election the opposition party promised that the political prisoners will be released unconditionally and Joint Forces will be withdrawn, if they come to power while campaigning for their candidates in Midnapore, Bankura and Purulia.

After coming to power, the Chief Minister of Bengal has shown no political will on these two issues. More than hundred days are over but not a single political prisoner has been released. Forget about the withdrawing joint-forces, like the Harmads (hired killers of CPM) the joint forces are rounding the villages in motor bikes to terrorize villagers and arresting those who dared to oppose them.

But the people of Jungle Mahal are not scared. They are continuing the just programmes—like re-starting their developmental work, all the health centres they were running were shattered by the joint-forces. Thousands and thousands of Adivasi and Mulvasi (non-tribal local resident) are coming out in procession and meeting and placing their demands forward.

Kanchan Kumar (Convenor)

Peoples' Literary Cultural United Forum

**WHERE IS INDIA?**

It is hard to believe that out of 5653 communities in India with 653 tribal and of which 213 indigenous, over 400 other tribal and sub-tribal communities, and 200 ethnic groups are found in the Northeastern region alone with distinct languages, dialects and socio-cultural identity. The majority of the people in the region are Scheduled Tribes (ST) communities. And also, it is predominantly rural in nature with over 84 percent of their population living in the countryside. The zeal of Christian Missionaries is no doubt improving the literacy rate in most of the Northeastern states, but they are very elusive in making the people of the region to be proud of Indian culture and tradition. Instead, they promoted the western cultural of integration through spreading of Christian Missionaries Schools in every nook and corner of the Northeastern states. They influence and misguide the tribal population in different ways. This creates a division in the society. As a matter of fact, most of the people who live in the countryside don't even know what is India? Where is India? Which country they belong? By looking into the physical appearances and stature of the people particularly, from the Northeastern states blindly, they pose a direct question like are you a Nepalese, Thai or Chinese? What ashamed? Is this the way to be treated in a true sense as an Indian citizen? And what kind of National Integration are politicians talking about? On the other hand, for bridging this gap, the idea of cultural integration of exchange programmes of 'My Home India' (Bharat Mera Ghar) was a good initiative in bringing people from North East to other States to have a feeling about India's

oneness and vice-versa. Assimilating of knowledge couldn't have been possible without integrating education and cultural exchanging programmes. To conclude it is important to critically and thoroughly examine the socioeconomic and political effects of alternative methods of funding on primary and higher education that are being implemented and planned to be implemented. While some measures may help in raising resources, they at the same time may cost the society dearly, creating serious problems of inequities. Short term myopic policy solutions might create serious problems in the long term.

**Rikhil Chyrmang**

### **CONTINUING AGONY**

On the eve of the Legislative Assembly elections in West Bengal Mamata Banerjee in his election campaign, made the pledge that she would release all political prisoners, if her party was voted to power. She also said that she would also withdraw joint forces from the Jungle Mahal area that had been one of the main instruments of brutal repression against the struggling people of the adivasi area. Mamata Banerjee has come to power with a huge public mandate. However, people are surprised to see that after coming to power, she has backtracked from her earlier pledge and not a single political prisoner has as yet been released after the withdrawal of cases. The joint forces have not only been not withdrawn, they are committing crimes against the people in collusion with WB police forces as also TMC goons called "Bhairab Bahini". People are being arrested, tortured and humiliated as in the days of the Buddhadev-led regime. People from different walks of life-civil rights activists, members of different mass democratic organizations and even physicians who went to those areas to meet and talk to people to understand the ground reality and to treat the poor people in areas where the government does never meet the minimum requirements of the people, are being arrested in an arbitrary manner and booked under false charges.

The most glaring of such incidents took place on 16th September 2011, when eight persons who went to Belpahari in the West Medinipur district for on-the-spot investigation were picked up by the security forces, illegally detained them and then, feeling the pressure from the public on this side of the border, handed them over to the hands of the police force of the neighbouring Jharkhand state. The persons who have been arrested are: Som Prakash Chakraborty (son of Gour Chakravorty, a UAPA political prisoner), Nemai, Nityananda Thakur, Prasenjit Chakraborty (a media person), Niranjana Singh, Sahadev Singh, Suryadev Singh and Jayanti(Ila). The Jharkhand state which has the record of booking the largest number of political prisoners under the draconian UAPA, sang to the tune of the central home minister, Palaniappan Chidambaram and promptly booked them under this act, so that they are unable to get bail at all.

Concerned citizens strongly condemn this dastardly attack on the freedom of movement and democratic rights of the people of the land in an unequivocal manner and demand the unconditional release of all the eight prisoners.

Varavara Rao, Gautam Navlakha, Partha Sarathi Roy, Amit Bhattacharya, Sukla Bhowmick, Sanchita Mondal, Saroj Giri, Pranab Nayak, Kanchan Kumar

### **POLITICAL PRISONERS**

On October 16, Birbhum District Branch of the *Bandi Mukti* Committee (Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners) held its first conference in the town of Suri, Birbhum. About 150 delegates attended the conference. Two representatives from the state committee, Sujato Bhadra and Chhotan Das were also present.

In its resolution which was accepted unanimously, the committee deplored the attitude of the State Government, saying that the Government has reneged on its promise of releasing political prisoners and withdrawing joint forces from the Junglemahal area. The resolution drew attention to the various commissions set up by the Government for investigations into past episodes including even the Sainbari Killings of 1970, killing of two brothers who were local Congress chieftains, Malay Sain and Pranab Sain, along with their friend Jiten Ray. The resolution then demanded a probe into the cold blooded killings of Naxalites by the police in Birbhum in 1971. The Naxalite, Siddhartha Mitra, was released from Jail, re-arrested from the prison gate, and then reportedly taken to a place about ten miles away and shot dead. The resolution demanded an investigation against the then District Magistrate, Manish Gupta (now a minister in Mamata Banerjee's cabinet), the then SP Amiya Samanta and the then Jailor of the Suri Jail Kamal Banerjee. It also asked the government to try and punish these three persons on charge of murder. The conference noted with concerns that quite a large number of persons in Birbhum were implicated in false cases and some of them were still in jail. The conference demanded immediate release of these prisoners and withdrawal of all such cases.

The history of the activities of the *Bandi Mukti* Committee in Birbhum was briefly described, and various speakers spoke on different aspects of state terrorism. Sujato Bhadra and Chhotan Das also spoke narrating their experience as members of the review committee for the release of prisoners, and explaining their stand on the issue. They also held a press conference and replied to various questions put to them by the journalists.

**Anirban Biswas,**  
Birbhum