

LETTERS

No Change in Jangalmahal

Sanhati strongly condemns the recent arrests of activists by the central and state government joint security forces in the Jangalmahal region of West Bengal. It is a renewed attempt by the state government to prevent access to this area. In the space of the last two weeks two such incidents have taken place: first the arrest in Belpahari of Arun Chakrabarty, an activist associated with the Bandi Mukti Committee and two medical students on 7th August while they were collecting data on adivasis who are imprisoned under various political charges in West Bengal prisons and then that of Dr Siddhartha Gupta and Abhijnan Sarkar on 14th August while they were returning from attending a medical camp at Patharchakri village. Incidentally, Siddhartha Gupta and Abhijnan Sarkar, who had treated 140 poor adivasi patients in the medical camp the previous day, have been charged under Sec. 151 of the CrPC which is purportedly to "prevent the commission of cognizable offences".

It is a matter of grave concern that the newly elected government in West Bengal led by the Trinamool Congress is walking in this path, in spite of its pre-poll promises of withdrawal of joint forces from Jangalmahal and normalizing the situation there, release of political prisoners and stopping terrorizing by the state. The brutal repression by the joint forces and the CPI(M) haramds on the people of Jangalmahal while Sec. 144 was promulgated there for a period of nearly two years, and access to all citizens was blocked, is well known. It is quite apparent that the government of Mamata Banerjee is following in their footsteps, surely with the active encouragement of the central home ministry led by P Chidambaram. Furthermore, Mamata Banerjee's recent announcement at a public meeting in Jhargram about her intention to recruit thousands of adivasi youth as "special police constables" is very ominous as it is clearly an attempt to start a Salwa Judum like force in the adivasi areas of West Bengal, disregarding the well known atrocities by the Salwa Judum in Chattisgarh and the recent judgment by the Supreme Court declaring any such arming of a section of the population completely unconstitutional. This is clearly a nefarious scheme in the name of bringing employment and development to the adivasis of Jangalmahal. At the same time, there are reports that the Trinamool Congress is building its own private gangs in the area, emulating the example of the *Harmad Bahini*, and giving them equally ominous names, such as *Bhairav Bahini* (terrible force). At the same time, even after four months of coming to power, no efforts are being made to release the hundreds of adivasi men and women who had been arrested during the course of the joint forces operation in Jangalmahal and who are languishing in jail till date.

These moves by the Trinamool Congress government in West Bengal are aimed at intensifying oppression on the people of Jangalmahal. All democratic-minded people demand that unhindered access to the area should be allowed to all people; the joint forces, whose occupation of the area has marked a dark phase in Indian history, be immediately withdrawn; any plan to create state or quasi-state vigilante forces be cancelled; and all political prisoners, including the hundreds of adivasis arrested from the Jangalmahal area, be immediately released.

Sanhati

RENAMING THE LADY DUFFERIN VICTORIA HOSPITAL

Dr Kadambini Ganguly (18 July 1861–3 October 1923), who was the First Female Medical Graduate of India, was one of the first female graduates of the British Empire and was also one of the first female physicians of South Asia to be trained in Modern European Medicine.

She studied medicine at the Medical College, Bengal (now known as Calcutta Medical College). In 1886. she was awarded a GBMC (Graduate of Bengal Medical College) degree, which gave her the right to practise medicine.

Opposition from the teaching staff and orthodox sections of society, could not prevent this courageous lady to go to the United Kingdom in 1892 and return to India after qualifying as LRCP (Edinburgh), LRCS (Glasgow), and GFPS (Dublin). She worked for a short period in Lady Dufferin Victoria Hospital at Calcutta. Subsequently she started her own private practice.

The MAJUMDAR INSTITUTE OF HISTORY, SOCIOLOGY AND PHILOSOPHY OF SCIENCE AND HEALTH SCIENCES, KOLKATA, in its meeting held on the 20th Day of April, 2011, at the School of Tropical Medicine, Kolkata, while celebrating the SESQUICENTI-NARY of this pioneer female medical doctor, the first native Lady Doctor of the Lady Dufferin Hospital at Calcutta, resolved to request the Chief Minister of the Government of West Bengal, to rename the Lady Dufferin Victoria Hospital in the name of Kadambini Ganguly as a SESQUICENTENNIAL homage to this pioneer legendary personality.

Sisir K Madumdar and 69 others,
Kolkata