

## **Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha ( Unity Forum) - First Conference Process and Report February 2022 to May 2022.**

### **Process leading to the formation of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (UF)**

The parent organisation of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (UF) was created in February 2018 at the initiative of CPI ML Red Star and other like minded groups to deal with the twin question of survival of Adivasis and the Corporate/ Capitalist attack on the lives and livelihood of Adivasis; who in the interest of profit have either destroyed their homelands or transformed production in a manner that the major means of production like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides, tractors are in the control of Corporates/ Capitalists forcing Adivasis to either destroy the natural resources on which they depend in a bid for survival or be co-opted as producers for the market controlled by a handful of Corporates with the help of middle men. Despite this marginalisation there are islands of struggle against the multi pronged Corporate/ Capitalist attack. In order to fully capture this diversity of struggle, ABM had a twin policy of membership and affiliate membership.

In the course of developing ABM over the last four years, the approach of CPI ML Red Star to organisational issues has been the source of numerous discussions within. The failure to resolve these by the leading organiser CPI ML Red Star led Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti an affiliate member to step in actively into the decision making process with a concrete proposal to re- examine the way in which ABM is organised so as to give space to the diverse groups and diverse ways in which Adivasis are dealing with the issues on the ground. Instead of seriously examining this proposal from ABMKSS, CPI ML Red Star chose to ignore it altogether in a manner that led to serious organisational issues in the functioning of ABM Telangana State Committee ( ABM-TSC) . CPI ML Red Star in its continued bid to deny the existence of organisational issues that need to be resolved instead chose to brand Suresh Kinaka the President of ABM - TSC as working against the organisational interests of ABM and disbanding ABM -TSC altogether.

Having failed in its endeavour to resolve the issue, ABMKSS called a meeting on 7<sup>th</sup> March 2022 to deal with questions related to organisation of Adivasis under the banner of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha left unanswered by the way in CPI ML Red Star was dealing with the issues. The meeting was attended by participants from Telangana, Andhra, Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jharkhand and Delhi. The meeting resolved to take forward the issues raised by Suresh Kinaka in ABM and go ahead with a call to hold the second conference at Adilabad. The meeting resolved that Participants from Telangana and Jharkhand who had actively participated in the formation of ABM and taken forward the process in their respective States would raise the matter of how the President Bhojlal Netam surrendered his role as President to Saura Yadav who has been consistently acting in favour of issues raised by CPI ML Red Star instead of taking ABM forward in the manner intended by all groups that had participated in the foundation of ABM.

The group also resolved to have regular preparatory meetings every fortnight to resolve pending organisational issues and work towards the successful organising of the Conference

at Adilabad. The group recognises the right of CPI ML Red Star to work with Adivasis in the manner they deem fit but do not grant the right to CPI ML Red Star to unilaterally impose this approach on other groups who have their own approach to addressing the fundamental questions facing Adivasis even as they generally agree to the political agenda, the draft of which had been formulated by CPI ML Red Star and approved with some modifications by the others.

Considering the active participation of ABMKSS as originally envisaged in the first party Congress a report prepared by Tarun Kanti Bose on the Implementation and Violations under the Forest Rights Act was briefly presented before the participants of the planning meeting. The report highlighted the non implementation of the Forest Rights Act in general and community Forest Rights in particular, the report also pointed out that far from recognising the Act, Adivasi, forest dwelling and forest dependent communities were sought to be criminalised in the name of violating the now superceded 1927 Forest Act. Tarun Kanti Bose in his presentation also covered briefly aspects from his second report on Tribals, Pastoralists, Fishers, Small farmers and Labour originating from the village. In general it indicated the general proposition of ABM of the marginalisation of these communities and the severe impact this placed in the context of COVID. Firoz Khan who participated from Kota has done a study of the impact of COVID on different sections of unorganised labour sector in Kota city. While Firoz Khan participated in the meeting with the idea of learning the issues facing rural communities the idea of involving him and others like him from other cities in this country was with the idea of examining in practise how urbanisation, industrialisation and globalisation have failed to provide a serious answer to the questions plaguing rural India about the unviability of farming and natural resources rendered so by the development policies of the government.

Participants from Rajasthan, Gujarat, Jharkhand, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh gave details of the extent of mobilisation of local communities they were working with while at the same time endorsing the findings of Tarun Kanti Bose regarding the non implementation of FRA in their respective States.

### **Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha - Unity Forum\* expresses its Solidarity for people of Oting in Nagaland**

At the planning meeting of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha ( Unity Forum) , participants expressed their solidarity with the people of Oting and the newly wedded wife of one of those killed as the report shared by N Ibungochoubi was shared before the house. The report highlighted the impunity powers of the army under AFSPA and its misuse on innocent civilians and citizens of this country. While Home Minister Amit Shah has apologized to the people of Oting and ordered an enquiry, he stands by the report of the army of 'credible intelligence' of an insurgent attack and that the truck was asked to stop, the latter denied by the survivors of the killings.

The house resolved to send representatives to attend the meeting on AFSPA organised by North East Indigenous Forum to be held on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April at Dimapur

## **Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (Unity Forum ) : Brief note**

The need to provide space for local and regional Adivasi struggle groups to find their own expression and work voluntarily towards collective actualisation resulted in the emergence of Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (Unity Forum) on the dual plank of recognising individual identity while identifying collective rallying points. ABM (UF) is also simultaneously a recognition of the way Capitalism tries to decimate collective struggles forcing the masses to struggle individually.

A serious examination has shown that even as one tries to work within the rights and duties enshrined in the constitution, communities/ individuals have been criminalised, dehumanised and denigrated in an attempt to smash their moral courage for self actualisation and depend on doles, subsidies and largess of the State/ Philanthropists. The large number of indigenous and socially and economically backward communities incarcerated in jails across the country without trial is witness to the nature of status the State provides its citizens. AFSPA, IFA 1927 and other draconian Acts , more than the Constitution of India provide the framework in which a majority of Indigenous communities exist. Even as **India voted in favour of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007 and signed the ILO Convention 107**, the government continues to deny the term and concept of “Indigenous Peoples” claiming that all Indians are Indigenous.

This claim gets contradicted by a number of Acts and steps taken by the Government of India against its own people, foremost among them being the Citizens Amendment Act selectively recognising citizenship to refugees entering this country while simultaneously denying the rights of ‘Indigenous citizens’ of this country to protest these Acts. As a result subjectivity on the Nationality question has sharpened many fold allowing the Government to arbitrarily declare its citizens as anti national, charge them for sedition, targeted State support for vigilantism in areas where constitutional and other legal provisions do not allow the State apparatus to formally intervene in favour of one particular thought process. Undermining principles of secularism and democracy and using this to grant extra judicial and extra constitutional favours to Corporate is an undercurrent of this polarisation and decimation of the social and cultural fabric of this country.

So far two meetings have been held. The second meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March attended by 19 persons from 14 States of the country resolved to evolve a multi pronged approach to encompass the diversity of issues faced in different parts of the country. The Forum expressed solidarity with the people of Oting village in Mon District on hearing the report of the unfortunate killing of 14 persons by the Armed Forces and agreed to participate in the Conference on AFSPA in Dimapur on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> April by the North East Indigenous People’s Forum.

## **Planning meeting for the second ABM conference at Adilabad**

After discussions the following agenda emerged as the agenda for the google meeting on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022.

- a. Concept of local self governance and 73rd amendment and its manifestation in 5th Schedule, 6th Schedule, AFSPA areas and other regions where tribals/ forest dwelling and dependent communities are present.
- b. Local self governance has different connotation in pastoral areas where pastoralists have to negotiate with local communities. Experience from Uttarakhand, J&K and Ladakh, Rajasthan, Gujarat and other regions should help define the contours.
- c. Similar but different issues affect fisher communities. These have been sharply identified by DMF in Sundarban and in the forum's they are part of. Tarun Kanti Bose's two reports contain the essence of what they have highlighted.
- d. Land acquisition, mining, sanctuaries provide another major plank.
- e. Migrating wage labour, child and women trafficking and issues facing tribal migrants to cities another area of concern

The meeting will give a chance for participants to highlight some of the issues while attempts will be made to identify people who can address issues left out. It will provide the first cut to define the agenda of the conference and the unique role of the participants coming from different States/ regions.

In the tribal region of Andhra, Telangana and Chhatisgarh, the issues emerging from Internally displaced persons , mono culture due to Eucalytus plantations for Bhadrachalam Paper mills will also feature. Each region having its own issues. Narmada oustees, displacement due to Statue of Unity are some issues on the border of Gujarat, MP and Maharashtra.

Nineteen people from 14 States participated in the meeting. The following was discussed.

- a. Date of the meeting tentatively fixed for 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May at Adilabad will be confirmed after discussion on 27<sup>th</sup> March.
- b. Issue related to functioning of the timber mafia was highlighted from Tripura. Despite the presence of autonomous village councils the forests are controlled by the Forest Department who has a nexus with the timber mafia.
- c. Conditions of Manipur which has 90% mountainous region and 10% valleys were discussed and the rampant cultivation of poppy due to lack of employment avenues in the region. The region which adjoins Myanmar, Mizoram and Nagaland is fast becoming a hub for drugs, very much like Myanmar, Thailand and Laos.
- d. Implication of AFSPA in the North East were shared with the recent example of killing of 14 innocent villagers of Oting village in Mon District of Nagaland on 4<sup>th</sup> December 2021. Details of this incident were posted on the What's app planning group. The following decisions were taken regarding this incident.

- Solidarity letter to the people of Oting and the widow of one of the deceased who was married just 9 days before the incident.
- Representatives of the forum attending the 2 day meet of the North East Indigenous People's Forum to be held at Dimapur on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> of April. Other members of this forum may participate through Google connection.
- e. Nanajee from Dharitri, based in Vishakapatnam raised issues related to the non implementation of CFR in 5<sup>th</sup> Schedule areas of Andhra. Forest rights committees have not been constituted . Though there are lots of community lands having bamboo and teak, CFR titles have not been granted on these lands. A more detailed report is available in the report on Status and violations of FRA by Tarun Kanti Bose.
- f. Keshav Gurunule from Gadchiroli, Maharashtra talked of the violations of the Forest Department, post granting of CFR titles. Despite the constitution of Forest Rights Protection, Forest department has assumed indirect control of the Forest and finances of the Gram Sabha. A number of post CFR issues need to be resolved. In addition the fact that CFR titles have not been given in other parts of Maharashtra is a matter of concern.
- g. In discussions with Agnoo Sahoo from Chhatisgarh who could not attend, similar issues were reported there. It must be noted that during COVID 19 period a large number of CFR titles in Chhatisgarh covering about 30% of the forests of Chhatisgarh, however despite this rights on these lands are limited. Rights have also not been granted in areas reserved for mining and other 'developmental activity..
- h. Dinesh from Wynad in Kerala pointed out the issues related to non implementation of FRA and marginalisation of tribals in Kerala.
- i. Renganathan from Tamil Nadu pointed out similar issues for Tamil Nadu, In addition he talked of the illegal take over of 9000 acres of land by PACL affecting 15,000 families.
- j. Nandu Bhai from Chhota Udepur in Gujarat pointed out the limited application of CR titles for 41 villages of Naswadi, not recognising their rights to protect the Forest under Section 5. he also talked of a proposed mining project in Kavant that could potentially displace people from 100 villages.
- k. Suresh and Ramesh talked of similar issues in Telangana and non functioning of the gram Sabhas, legal provisions granted under 1 of 70 , monoculture plantations of Eucalyptus affecting the ecology of the region. Ramesh pointed out that Internally Displaced persons from Chattisgarh had got rights related to ration cards, voting rights but issues related to livelihood in the forest were still pending due to non application of the provisions of FRA for those settled there post 2005. issues related to recognition as tribals, educations and other facilities were also still pending.
- l. Since most of the reports given here are covered in detail in the report on FRA and violations of Tarun Kanti Bose, this report will be presented at the proposed conference in Adilabad.

Next planning meeting proposed for 27<sup>th</sup> March. Draft newsletter to be released at Adilabad conference to be presented

## **Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (Unity Forum) meeting on 27<sup>th</sup> March 2022**

Post the meeting held on 14<sup>th</sup> March 2022, consultations were held to understand some of the issues to be taken up at State and regional level. The discussion with Munish Kumar from Dehra Dun revealed the following issues

- a. Non implementation of FRA in Uttarakhand adversely affecting the rights of the pastoral community and subjection to atrocities by the Forest Department due to ‘considered’ illegal occupation of Forest Lands.
- b. Lack of a unified approach by the ‘leadership’ of Uttarakhand resulting in confusion on the strategy to be taken up on the ground.

Following suggestions were given to Munish based on earlier consultations that had taken place.

- a. The claim by pastoralists to be filed in the ‘village of origin’ , the pastoral route taken and the time in other villages/ other districts/ other States mentioned. It is the responsibility of the Collector of that particular district to engage in dialogue with the other villages of the district. With other Collectors in other Districts and with the State Level Committee of the other States.
- b. Pastoralists have problem in gram sabha due to not being in a majority there. As per the Act, they can constitute a separate gram sabha of the hanlet in which they reside and give notice of its constitution to the sarpanch. There however cannot be two gram sabhas for the same location.
- c. Seventy five year residence proof for pastoralists is difficult due to migratory nature. What is needed is residence proof of the community in the region based on gazetter information or other such similar government authenticated document.
- d. Combined strategy on these issues for pastoralists of Uttarakhand, Himachal Pradesh, Jammu and Kashmir and Ladakh.

Based on discussions with people from North East and others, plan for members of the forum to attend the Conference at Dimapur on 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> June was finalised. The Forum has already issued a Statement in solidarity with the victims of the army firing on civilians of Oting village.

Ningthoukhongjam Ibunguchoubi from Manipur gave a brief overview of the conditions of Manipur which is bordering Assam, Nagaland, Mizoram in India and shares an International border with Burma. Three highways connect Manipur to Assam, Nagaland ( Kohima) and Burma. The Meitei represents around 53% of the population of Manipur state, followed by various Naga tribes at 24% and various Kuki/Zomi tribes at 16%. The main language of the state is Meiteilon (also known as Manipuri).

On March 21, the Southern Angami Public Organisation (SAPO), an outfit representing the Angami Naga tribe residing in areas bordering Manipur, had called for a 72-hour-bandh in connection with “developmental activities” and “deployment of armed personnel” at what it

referred to as the “disputed” Kezoltza area by the Manipur government. This bandh continuing for more than a week now, has frozen vehicular traffic on the National Highway 2, and disrupted supply routes to Manipur. At the root is an old land ownership dispute between three Naga tribes — the Angamis of Nagaland, and the Maos and Marams of Manipur. <https://indianexpress.com/article/explained/explained-bandh-naga-outfit-blocked-national-highway-manipur-nagaland-border-7841223/>

The house resolved to send an appeal that the tribal dispute related to the land should not cause disturbance to the entire population of Manipur.

Vasavi Kiro from Ranchi Jharkhand described two movements in Jharkhand. The first being Netrahat Firing range The struggle against the range has been ongoing for the last 28 years since the 1990s, when the Centre had earmarked about 1,471 sq km in Netarhat Hills in Gumla and Latehar for field firing practice by the army, prior to the creation of what is now known as Jharkhand. Owing to enormous resistance in 1994, practice in the range and the displacement of over 2 lakh tribals across 245 villages was stopped, however, as the deadline for the renewal of the notification nears in 2022, the adivasi community on the ground is revamping their struggle.

The second relates to the demand to return unused land under Section 24 (2) of the Land Acquisition Act 1984. Issue assuming importance due to the status of third generation tribals who have been displaced as a result of various development programmes and have issues related to education and employment. This issues grips the entire belt of Odisha, Jharkhand, Madhya Pradesh and Chhatisgarh.

While earlier protests related to dilutions of CNTA and SPTA , there is a movement towards ensuring the implementation of the Forest Rights Act in general and Community Forest Rights in particular as a way of coordinating the efforts related to assertion of tribal identity around long standing issues related to displacement, livelihood, education and employment.

Nanaji of VRDP raised the issue of how Vishakhapatnam District is going to split into three. . Alluri Sitharama Raju the largest district covers an area of 12,251 square km. It will constitute of Paderu, Araku, and Rampachodavaram. The new district of Visakhapatnam will be the smallest, covering an area of only 928 sq km. Bheemili, Anandapuram, Padmanabham, Visakhapatnam Rural, Maharani-peta, Gajuwaka, Pedagantyada, Gopalapatnam, Mulugada, and Seethammadhara areas will come under the new Visakhapatnam District. Anakapalle District will now cover an area of 4,412 sq km. It will remain the largest in terms of population (according to the 2011 census Anakapalle has a population of 18.73 lakhs). Areas such as Madugula, Devarapalle, Kasimkota, Rambilli, Munagapaka, Atchutapuram, Chodavaram, Pendurthi, Paravada, Sabbavaram, Narisipatnam will come under the new Anakapalle District. The newly formed districts will have two new revenue divisions each. This division will impact the tribals in these districts due to land acquisition process. A meeting on this issue is to be held on 2<sup>nd</sup> April, the proceedings will be shared with the group.

In Tamil Nadu, Renganathan talked of meeting to be held in Rotagiri in April relating to the progress under FRA. The proceedings will be shared with the group. In Gadchiroli A more detailed report will be presented at the Conference in Adilabad on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May. Similar experiences from Chhatisgarh also expected to be shared.

Outline of newsletter of ABM (UF) to be released in English, Hindi and Telugu versions at the Adilabad conference were shared with the participants. Ideas to sharpen and enhance the content were discussed. It was explained that the newsletter would give a thrust to the question of Adivasi rights in the context of the United Nations Declaration of Rights of Indigenous people's and relating it to denial of these rights in India on the grounds that all the citizens of India are Adivasis.

### **Persons who participated in the planning process for ABM (UF) and organisational affiliation**

Suresh Kinaka - President ABM Telangana State Committee  
Ramesh Tholem - Vice President Telangana State Committee  
Venkatesh - Member Andhra Pradesh Telangana Consortium  
Hemant Das - Convenor, Jharkhand Mazdoor Kisan Union  
Prabhat Kumar Sinha - Secretary Rajasthan Kisan Mazdoor Union, member Kisan Samanvay Committee Rajasthan and Convenor Rajasthan Asanghatit Shramik Adhikar Abhiyan ICAN and convenor Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti  
Tarun Kanti Bose - Journalist and activist from Delhi  
Firoz Khan - Activist Kota  
Nadubhai Rathva - Member Fenaimata Jaiv Shristi Mandal and Karyakarta Adivasi Jan Utthan Trust  
Shannabhai - Member fenaimata jaiv Shristi Mandal and Karyakarta Adivasi Jan Utthan Trust.  
Keshav Gurunule - Shruti, Maharashtra  
Jagan ada Jagan- member ABM TSC, Telangana  
Goldy George - Activist, Chhatisgarh  
Nanajee - Dharitri, Andhra Pradesh  
Munish Kumar - Activist, Uttarakhand  
Kamal Gopinath - Journalist, Karnataka  
Dinesh - Jwala Kerala  
Rengnathan - VRDS, Tamil Nadu  
N Ibungochoubi - Journalist, Manipur  
Siddhart Bhattacharya - Journalist, Tripura  
Vasavi Kiro - Activist, Ranchi Jharkhand  
Lenin Raghuvanshi - Convenor PVCHR, Varanasi  
Chitta Behera - Lawyer and Activist from Odisha  
Viren Lobo - Member Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti  
(13 Oranisations from 17 States)



## **Second General Conference of NEIPF, Dimapur, Nagaland 29<sup>th</sup>-30<sup>th</sup> April**

At the invitation of Ibunguchoubi Convenor NEIPF a delegation from ABM (UF) attended the two day conference and interacted with the leadership of NEIPF. Some of the main points that emerged from the Conference and Interactions are as follows

- a. NEIPF is concerned about the Indigenous people of NE becoming a minority in their own land. Accordingly the Forum aims at unity among the 200 + tribes of the North East so that their common issues and concerns can be articulated.
- b. The major concern are border issues between the North Eastern States and the borders of India. NEIPF is committed to resolution of internal border disputes among tribes which they believe is a created problem to destroy unity among the various tribes of the NE who have deep familial and other ties between them.
- c. The common thread is the origination of most of the North East States from the Ahom kingdom in Assam. Assam and Manipur got annexed to British Empire in 1826 after the three Indo Burmese wars where the Ahom King was forced to seek the help of the British.
- d. British intervention has brought with it two major issues to the North east hitherto unknown

- The introduction of tea gardens and with it Indigenous communities from other regions of India namely Jharkhand, Odisha, Chattisgarh who now demand status as Indigenous people of the North East. NEIPF is making a distinction between these communities and those indigenous to Assam prior to 1826. This distinction is important to understand the different nature of questions between these two Indigenous communities of India.

- The influx of traders in general and Bengalis in particular from undivided India at first, then later from Bangladesh. This infiltration of outsiders into Assam and now other parts of the North East threatens to overrun the local communities which is already the case in Assam. The situation is being made more complicated by superimposing this concept of outsiders to the North East with infiltrators from Bangladesh and Burma.

The net impact of the change in complexion of the North East is the destruction of the habitats on which the tribes survived and exploitation of the resources of the North East by outsiders from 'mainland India'. North East has responded by changing exploitative governments but structural reasons for the exploitation still remain.

Keeping the following in mind the following report was presented by ABM (UF) to the NEIPF.

### **Report presented to North East Indigenous People's Forum by ABM (UF)**

My dear brothers and sisters of the North East,

#### **Background:**

All fingers of the hand are not alike yet they work together to produce many marvelous and unheard of things. So too are the seven sisters of the North East. Not alike I mean. The table below provides a glimpse into this diversity. While Assam has one third of the population of the North East it has 70% of the population. On the other hand while Arunachal Pradesh has

slightly more land than Assam it has only 3 % of the total population. Why so ? While Assam lies in the Brahmaputra plains, Arunachal is mountainous.

#### Brief Profile of the North East

Sr No.	State	% Geographical Area	% Population	Population Density
1.	Assam	2.4	2.6	397
2.	Tripura	0.32	0.31	350
3.	Meghalaya	0.69	0.25	132
4.	Manipur	0.68	0.25	122
5.	Nagaland	0.50	0.16	119
6.	Mizoram	0.64	0.09	52
7.	Arunchal	2.54	0.11	17

The historical development of mankind shows the pivotal role played by water and topography in availability of food and consequently the demographic growth of populations. As the Honorable Minister Temjen Imna Along said, before going to Old Delhi Station, he never saw so many people in one place. The mountainous North East made dispersed settlement necessary for survival .

The diverse and colourful traditions and cultures of the North East are born out of conditions in which people lived and worked. The North East Indigenous People's Forum, while recognising this diversity calls for Unity on the basis of preservation of this rich cultural and ethnic diversity.

#### **The arrival of the British and the puncturing of this rich tapestry.**

To pit this quite simply tea plantations and the felling of wood/ floating them down the river Brahmaputra with the help of imported labour and domesticated elephants changed the fabric of the region and necessitating a regime of command and control

Post British, the scenario was no different . the chicken neck corridor, the lifeline of the North East actually served as a conduit for import and export of commodities in and out of the region with the control in the hands of outsiders. Hydro Electric power, Oil and Natural Gas and other mineral wealth have resulted in displacement and low paid jobs for local communities while the wealth gets centralised in the stock exchange of Mumbai for instance.

#### **Rediscovering the strength of Indigenous communities**

This North East has politically given a fitting reply to the continued exploitation of the North East . However issues related to preservation of the identity, culture and heritage of the North East remain. It is our contention true dignity of the people of the North East cannot be preserved without recognition of the relevance of the traditional knowledge and wisdom of the people of the North East related to the preservation and management of the natural resources of the region for livelihoods and governance. The recently formed NEIP needs to have a concrete agenda related to the development and conservation of natural resources of this region. Distinct from the exploitative corridor module of development that is being posed as the harbinger of jobs etc.

### **Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha (UF) and Unity in Diversity**

Formed in 2018, Adivasi Bharat Mahasabha recognised the question of consistent marginalisation of the Adivasis under whatever form and pretext. ABM (UF) emerges out of this process as a concrete way to give shape to questions related to unity in diversity. Assertion of community rights to local self governance, using existing provisions for dealing with issues related to livelihood with dignity and raising one's voice against demonisation and alienation of local communities the need of the hour.

In a parallel process small groups from 17 states across the country were meeting regularly to discuss the issues facing adivasis from pastoral, fishers and tribal communities. In 2019 it was decided to do a systematic documentation of the issues facing these communities and present before the Union Minister of Tribal Affairs. This culminated in a report titled Forest Rights Act - Implementation and violations.

The report listed violations in relation to filing of Forest Rights claims, delays in processing claims and violations related to post- Community Forest Rights (CFR) recognition. The report highlighted the need for creation of federation of users that could take up common issues facing forest dwellers and forest-dependent communities. It promoted the primacy of CFR as a way of addressing multiple issues and concerns related to the process of filing of claims.

Following the study it was realised that there was a need for a systematic exposure of the conditions facing these communities. Accordingly, study was commissioned to study the interface of these communities in three states of the country, mainly, Maharashtra, Jharkhand and Chhattisgarh and then, use these understanding to develop a perspective on these three communities across the country. The study highlighted that despite continuous struggles these communities were continuously being marginalised due to the exploitative nature of the policies put in place by the Government of India. The study 'Marginalised But Not Defeated' therefore spelt out a roadmap where these communities could jointly conduct struggles on the basis of principles of autonomy, dignity and inclusiveness.

Viren Lobo and Tarun Kanti Bose - members of ABM ( UF)

In the open discussion held on 30<sup>th</sup> April, ABM (UF) shared the essence of the report and indicated its willingness to engage in a study of the deeper issues facing the North East so that a home solution can be evolved with participation of the local communities.

## **Conference of ABM (UF) at Adilabad 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May**

The ABM (UF) conference at Adilabad on 2<sup>nd</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> May combined a zoom meeting along with attendance of key leadership from different parts of Adilabad District and few representatives from other districts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. Participants introduced themselves and presented some of the key issues related to land and other rights that they were facing. Since most of the issues have been talked of in depth above, they will not be repeated here. Of importance however was the presentation of Chitta Behera a lawyer and activist from Odisha who shared the need to place ABM (UF) in the concrete context of the historical struggles which gave rise to laws and Act related to local self governance in various States. Chitta Behera contacted later has expressed his agreement to draft the political note for ABM (UF) on the basis of his talk and concerns articulated by him. This draft will be shared at the next meeting of ABM (UF) to be held at Delhi in August/ September.

The meeting concluded with the election of the following office bearers of ABM (UF)

**Convenor :** Kinaka Suresh (Adilabad Telangana)

**Co- Convenor ( Women's wing) :** Tulasi ( Adilabad Telangana)

**Members :** Dr Vasavi Kiro (Jharkhand), Girija Uike (Maharashtra), Nandubhai Rathva and Shannabhai Bhil (Gujarat), Koda Shiva Keshava, A Eshwari ( Andhra Pradesh), Kurseng Yadav Ram, Tholem Ramesh (Telangana)

**Advisors:** Viren Lobo ( Rajasthna ) , Tarun Kanti Bose ( Delhi ) , Chitta Behera ( Odisha)

### **Organisations:**

Shristi, Birsa Kranti Dal ( Maharashtra)

Rajasthan Mazdoor Kisan Union ( Rajasthan)

Jharkhand Mazdoor Kisan Union ( Jharkhand)

Samajwadi Lok Manch (Uttarakhand)

Baijnath kisan Sabha ( Himachal Pradesh)

Van Adhikar Manch ( Kashmir)

JWALA ( Kerala)

Dharithri ( Tamil Nadu)

Parivarthan ( Chattisgarh)

Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti (Odisha, Delhi and other States like Tripura, Assam, Nagaland, Arunachal, Meghalaya, Manipur, West Bengal, Karnataka, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana and Bihar including ones above)

It was also resolved that considering the issues was about Adivasis of India, head quarters should be at Adilabad. Accordingly Suresh Kinaka President ABM (TSC) and Tulasi President Women's wing of ABM (TSC) have been made convenor and co-convenor of ABM (UF). Tulasi has been entrusted with the task of developing the women's wing of ABM (UF) with help of Suresh Kinaka and women members of ABM (UF) in other States.