

## **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 Ibungchoubi 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” Kezoltsa 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 Vishakapatnam 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, Maharanieta, 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 present**

Keshav Gurunule - Shruti, Maharashtra

Nanajee - Dharitri, Andhra Pradesh

Rengnathan - VRDS, Tamil Nadu

Ningthoukhongjam Ibungochoubi - Journalist, Manipur

Tarun Kanti Bose - Journalist and activist from Delhi

Vasavi Kiro - Activist, Ranchi Jharkhand

Lenin Raghuvanshi - Convenor PVCHR, Varanasi

Viren Lobo - Member Akhil Bharatiya Mazdoor Kisan Sangharsh Samiti