

Reports:

All India Tribal Convention in Visakhapatnam, on 21st May 2023

A one-day All India Tribal Convention was held on 21st May 2023 at Visakhapatnam. Over 600 delegates from 11 states engaged in the struggle of the tribals participated in the convention.

The Convention began with the speech of the Chief Guest, renowned tribal author and activist, Dr. Vasavi Kiro from Jharkhand, who said Adivasis in India suffer because of state policy which is based on 'development induced displacement', loot of forests and natural wealth, land alienation, degradation of nature, failure to recognize their indigenous religions like Sarna and attempts to forcefully assimilate them into Hindu religion, failure to implement their Constitutional and legal rights. She said of the 10 crore people uprooted in India 80% are Adivasis and Indigenous people.

EAS Sarma, retired Secy. to GOI, addressing the delegates said that the govt is bulldozing the Adivasis, attacking their rights and it should be mandatory that permission of Gram Sabhas, Tribal Councils be taken in all matters pertaining to them. But this government is so anti people that it does not consult even the National ST Commission.

Senior Journalist Ramanamurthy hailed the Convention for raising the issue of Constitutional rights of tribals and trying to unify the Adivasi movements all over the country.

Guest speaker, senior Advocate and writer on Adivasi issues, Pala Trinadh Rao explained in detail the legal and constitutional securities for Adivasis in Scheduled areas and how the govt is undermining them to favour Corporations and MNCs. He was sharp in his attack on alienation of tribal lands for mining, reforestation, Tiger Sanctuaries, Polavaram and other projects and on changes being made in law and in rules for these purposes. He said a determined struggle on the ground helps in asserting the rights legally also.

AIKMS President, V. Venkatramaiah appealed for widest possible unity of all Adivasi groups to wage a determined struggle for tribal rights. He appealed to all to learn from the SKM formation and struggle against the three anti-farmer black laws. He said we must build joint struggles on the basis of issues.

AIKMKS all India leader and Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangh, Odisha State Secretary Comrade Srikant Mahanty attended the seminar and he presented a paper and seminar paper given below.

Comrade Presidium & Comrades,

cs-jun-2023-artical-Visakhapatnam

On behalf of All India Khet Mazdoor Kisan Sabha, I thank the organizing committee for holding this All India Tribal Convention at a crucial juncture. At the outset, let me pay my revolutionary tribute to the thousands of martyrs who laid down their lives fighting against the British Colonial rulers such as, Baba Tilika Majhi, Sidho-Kanu-Chand-Vairab, Birsha Munda, Komaram Bhim, Alluri Sitarama Raju, Laxman Nayak, Dora & Chakara Bisoi and thousand others had sacrificed themselves fighting against the injustice, exploitation & loot. It is only because of their supreme sacrifices that we enjoy whatever rights we have today, be it our rights over forest, land or autonomous area.. I also pay tribute to the martyrs who laid down their lives in the struggles in the post 1947 periods. Particularly, the martyrs of the movements/struggles which are led by communist revolutionaries such as Telangana Armed struggle, Naxalbari struggle, Srikakulam Struggle and other struggles against exploitation & repression unleashed by the ruling classes and the state.

I also pay tribute to the martyrs, specifically, our tribal brothers & sisters who laid down their lives in various struggles for land and other struggles against forceful displacement and dispossession such as Kalinganagar, Kashipur, Koelkaro.

This convention is held at a time when the Modi Government at the Center strives to push the Forest Conservation Amendment Bill 2023 to minimize the rights of the Adivasi and other forest dwellers. This bill aims at completely curtailing the power of Gram Sabha. It seeks to water down substantially the provisions of Forest Right Act., PESA, LARR Act. 2013. It is also meant to take away whatever rights the Adivasi People have today. It will further marginalize the tribal and indigenous people. If this bill is passed, it will accelerate the process of deforestation, loss of livelihood and bio-diversity. And it will lead to large scale displacement, hunger and starvation of Adivasi & other forest dweller. The process of diversion of forest land for non-forest use, that is for mining, for setting up of industries and for construction of infrastructure, is going at an alarming speed. In between 2008 & 2019, a total of nearly 4,00,000 hectares of forest land was diverted for so called development projects. (E-green Watch)

Again in the name of compensatory afforestation under CAMPA Fund millions of acres of lands are being acquired including forest land & common land. Needless to emphasize, these lands have been cultivated by our tribal brothers & sisters and also by other deprived sections of the society for generations together. It may be noted that prior consent of Gram Sabha is not required for the diversion of forest land under compensatory afforestation. This compensatory afforestation is a myth. No amount of plantation will replace the naturally grown forest lost due to the projects.

Likewise, various State Governments have acquired millions of hectares of land including forest land and common property land through land Bank to be handed over to capitalists. There is a systematic plan to surrender our forest, natural resources, mines to foreign and comprador capitalists. This is nothing but primitive accumulation. This is nothing but accumulation by dispossession. Our tribal brothers and sisters are at the receiving end of these anti people & anti environment projects.

This Govt., the Govt. under Modi is in a hurry to handover our forests, our livelihood, our ecology to satisfy the hunger for Profit of multinational capitalists and comprador capitalists. We can see the speed at which environmental clearances have been awarded for projects. In the year 2022 alone, environmental clearances have given to over 12,000 projects. It is a 20 times increase over 2018. The speed at which the destruction of virgin forest, coastal eco system & bio-diversity is going on will soon invite catastrophic havoc to the environment and ecology. This development process is designed by imperialist masters & carried out by our native rulers is based on the expropriation of mines and natural resources. It has devastated the lives and livelihood of the people. This model of development is unsustainable both economically and environmentally. Tribal people are on the forefront opposing this model all over India.

A large number of Adivasi families own no land, even today, in the 5th schedule. They have no land rights. Under the British Raj most of the fertile land had been transferred to the non-tribal exploiters. Even though, 1/70 Act in AP, 2/56 regulation in Odisha and CNT/SPT Act in Jharkhand have been promulgated very little land has been restored to the original tribal owner so far. Land alienation is taking place in the schedule area till today ignoring the legal provisions. Tribal brothers and sisters are in struggle in number of places to get back this alienated land. This Govt. is also trying to weaken this protective measure given to tribal people, especially in the 5th / 6th schedule area.

This Govt. is applying every fascist method to clamp down the voice of protests. Today so many tribal brothers & sisters, so many activists are behind the bars for opposing the ruling class policies.

The historical injustice bestowed on the tribals and indigenous people of our motherland is still going on under the native rulers, be it UPA or NDA.

Let us fight unitedly to save our forest, save our land, save our natural resources. Let us oppose unitedly the forest conservation amendment bill 2023. Let us strive to save our culture, our tradition our language from the Brahminical & imperialist cultural onslaught.

Let us raise our voice for tribal autonomous area, complete autonomy for the indigenous people, let us fight for a society based on equality, liberty and free of exploitation.