

**Report of NCM Team on its Nandigram Visit**  
**From 26<sup>th</sup> to 28<sup>th</sup> November 2007**

Attention of the National Commission for Minorities was drawn to persistent reports in the newspapers to the alleged atrocities being committed by CPM Cadres on members of minority communities during the agitation against land acquisition for SEZ's (Special Economic Zone) in Nandigram. The Commission took cognizance of these reports and deputed NCM team consisting S. Harcharan Singh Josh & Ven. Lama Chospel Zotpa to get first hand report about the atrocities and other problems being faced by the minority communities in Nandigram.

From News Reports, it was gathered that Nandigram is an area adjoining Midnapur where a proposal was mooted by State Government of West Bengal for setting up a chemical hub, Haldia Development Authority issued a memo on 12<sup>th</sup> September 2006 proposing a 'Special Economic Zone'. Notification was issued by HDA on 28<sup>th</sup> December 2006. The response of the people was almost instant as they gathered and organized themselves against acquisition of their land. Initially there were exchange of fire between CPM Workers and their opponents. As firing continued, 14 persons died of which two were Muslims and rest Hindus, 45 persons went missing and four women were also raped. Majority of whom were Muslims as conveyed. The NCM team decided to conduct its own first hand investigation.

**26<sup>th</sup> November 2007 :-** The Team reached Kolkata at 12.35 P.M. and met the Chief Secretary, the Home Secretary and the DG of Police regarding the situation prevailing in Nandigram. The Team was informed that the situation was now under control. They also informed that there was no communal issue involved in the incidents but was basically a struggle between different political parties for political supremacy in that area. It has been conveyed by many sources that elections for Panchayats are due in April 2008.

At 3.30 P.M., The NCM Team met the Chairman and Members of the State Minority Commission, West Bengal. The Commission informed that they were advised by the Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal against visiting the area as it could have incited aggravation of disturbances in the area.

In the evening at 5.00 P.M., the Team met Shri Buddhadev Bhattacharjee, Hon'ble Chief Minister of West Bengal in his office and discussed the incident and the reasons for failure of the State Government to check the violence. In March 2007, 12 persons were killed; again in November 2007, there was resurgence of violence. He informed that some political vested interests were keen to disturb the peaceful environment of the State by instigating riots and exploiting the sentiments of the farmers and people residing in the places notified for acquisition. The State Government meanwhile has decided to withdraw its earlier notice for acquisition of land but these political groups continued to foment trouble by provoking the innocent people of the area. The NCM Team requested the Hon'ble Chief Minister to declare relief for the people who had suffered losses of life, limb and property during the agitation.

The Team also discussed the issue of implementation of the 15-Point Programme of the Hon'ble Prime Minister as well as recommendations of the Sachar Committee regarding minorities education, social and economic welfare etc. The Commission and the Government of India, had identified 90 minority concentration Districts throughout the Country of which 12 Districts were located in the State of West Bengal. He informed that several schemes for welfare of minorities were already being run by the State Government (copy enclosed).

At 6.30 PM, the NCM Team visited the house of Mr Rizwanur Rehman to pay condolence to the victim's family on behalf of the Commission and also assure them about all possible help from the Commission.

A letter received by the Hon'ble Chairman, NCM from Shri P.R. Dasmunsi, Hon'ble Minister for Information & Broadcasting regarding the opening of the two Senior Secondary Schools in Block-2, Gopalpokhar. Principal Secretary of Education met and apprise the Team that the suggestion had been accepted and the school was slated to start functioning from next session i.e. from May, 2008. The State Government also had a proposal under consideration to start one more such school for Girls in that area. Recruitment of teachers for additional shift in schools in the nearby Blocks was also under consideration.

**27<sup>th</sup> November, 07 :-** At 8.00 AM, NCM Team left for Nandigram and reached there at 11.00 AM. There the Team visited Relief Camp which was housed in a School known as "B. M. Tiwari School" Maidan. The Team heard the victims comprising 125 Refugees who were staying in the Camp for over three weeks. The two persons those who were shifted to their native places, informed that threats from CPM Workers still existed in the event of any challenge to CPM Leadership. They wanted protection against such threats. They also said that they have been threatened of consequences if they give the names of CPM leaders to CBI.

In the Camp, two women informed the team about the rape of their daughters on 7<sup>th</sup>, 8<sup>th</sup> November 2007 by the miscreants from their own village, whose names had already been given to the police but no action has so far been taken by them. They returned to their native places with the help of CRPF. The general impression among the public was that local police was conniving with CPM Workers. The people in the camp explained that they were living on this land for generations and could not allow the State Government to take away this land from them. This whole movement was started by Bhumi Uchched Pratirodh Committee led by some NGO's, Trinamool Congress, and other Political parties of the State.

In village Daudpur with about 350 families of the Muslims are living with divergent political ideology out of which 38 houses were looted and destroyed by CPM Cadre in the presence of the Village Pradhan who happens to be Muslim and CPM supporter. These houses have been looted on 9<sup>th</sup> November but till 27<sup>th</sup> November no FIR was lodged by the police against the miscreants even though the villagers had given the names of miscreants who damaged their properties. The Villagers informed that false cases are being made against the persons who have opposed acquisition of the land. Also they are being threatened if they give any statements before CBI against the CPM workers, they will further be punished in same way.

The NCM Team also visited the Civil Hospital in Nandigram where the injured persons were being treated. As per the record of the hospital, 200 persons were brought from various areas for minor injuries and were given the treatment and discharged. Serious cases were referred to Kolkata P. G. Hospital.

The Team also visited Tumlug Government Hospital, where injured persons were being treated. One lady named Akreoza Bibi made a complaint before the team that she and her two minor daughters aged 14 yrs and 16 yrs were raped on 6<sup>th</sup> November by their village boys and she had given the names to the police but so far no one has been arrested. The Police is avoiding the arrest of miscreants on one pretext or other.

The Team had a meeting with Mr. S.S. Pandey, S.P., Nandigram and Shri Alok Raj, DIG, CRPF. The Police and the CRPF were at loggerheads. CRPF informed that persons arrested by them from various villages were let off by the local police without registering any case under pressure from some political leaders. In the evening the Team had a meeting with the D.M., Nandigram. The DM informed that State Government had decided to pay Rs. 10,000/- for houses which were fully damaged, Rs. 5,000/- to the partially destroyed houses and Rs. 1,000/- for lost Utensils. Till 27<sup>th</sup> November, 2007, Rs. 17,13,000/- were disbursed to the Nandigram Victims ( Block-1) and another Rs. 6,10,000/- was yet to be disbursed in few days to Block-2 Victims. NGO's and villagers informed that on 9<sup>th</sup> November, 2007, this whole area was under CPM occupation and workers brought from the other districts. The Team was also informed by the police that about 45 persons are missing since 3<sup>rd</sup> November and so far there is no clue as regard to their whereabouts.

**28<sup>th</sup> November 2007** :-The Team met Ms. Mamta Banerjee, MP and Former Minister of Government of India and Shri Mukul Rai, MP of Trinamool Congress charged in the State for the violence by the CPM Workers and there is no rule of law in the State. They demanded immediate intervention of the Central Government in this regard for saving the innocent people who are being implicated in the false cases.

The Team had a meeting with the leaders of the various political parties, Assembly leaders such as Dr. Manas Bhunia, Leader of CLP-West Bengal who has given the statement before the committee. Another Delegation led by Shri Subhanudev Chatoupadhyay, MLA and leader of the Trinamool Congress and Trade Union leader, also explained their atrocities before the Team.

The Hon'ble High Court Divisional Bench has stated that :- "The PIL instituted by the BAR Association of High Court, Calcutta and other petitions are maintainable". "The Court was justified in taking Suo-Motto

notice of the wholly indefensible incident of police firing at Nandigram on 14.03.2007, on the basis of the Newspaper Reports; and the statement made by his Excellency, the Governor of West Bengal as reported in the Newspaper "Hindustan Times". " The action of the police department to open fire at Nandigram on 14.3.2007 was wholly unconstitutional and cannot be justified under any provision of the law".

The Hon'ble Governor Shri Gopal Krishan Gandhi has also issued very sharp criticism of the Government for handling situations in Nandigram.

**Recommendations:-**

1. The affected persons should be re-settled as early as possible in order to create confidence among the villagers;
2. The compensation announced by the State Government is inadequate as the NCM Team visited their houses found them badly damaged and requires more funds to be released by the State Government;
3. Those who have lost their lives they should be paid at least Rs. 5 Lakhs each as compensation to their dependents and those seriously injured to be paid Rs. 2 lakhs as compensation by the State Government;
4. 45 persons are still missing and out of that young girls those who were raped are also not traceable. The Administration should immediately trace the missing persons as well as the young girls. The culprits who have been mentioned by the complainants should be arrested immediately;
5. It seems that it was a total failure of administrative machinery which resulted in the whole unrest among the people;
6. Enquiry may be conducted by an Independent Authority.

**(Ven. Lama Chospel Zotpa)**  
Member  
December 3, 2007

**(Harcharan Singh Josh)**  
Member  
December 3, 2007