

# **Joint Action Committee for Protection of Holy Land Dzongu**

## **Press Release**

**5th December 2007**

**Camp New Delhi:** The movement to protect Dzongu, the holy land of Lepchas has reached the National capital of republic of India.

A team of representatives of various Lepcha organizations of Sikkim, Darjeeling hills including Lepcha Association of Delhi and rest of the world held a protest Dharna at Jantar Mantar. The basic theme of the protest is to ensure stop implementation of all mega hydroelectric power projects in demographically endangered and environmentally fragile Lepcha reserve of Dzongu.

The program started by offering prayers by the Lepcha priest (Bong Thing) followed by offering of neysol by the monks of Sangha of Dzongu.

Thereafter Dawa Lepcha, General Secretary of ACT gave a presentation on the issue involved in Dzongu followed by Ren Lamsoong Tamsang, President of Joint Action Committee for protection of Holy land Dzongu addressed the gathering. In his address Mr. Tamsang highlighted the various aspects of Lepcha culture, tradition and ethos. He further dwelled upon the serious negative impacts of numerous mega hydroelectric power projects in an area like Dzongu and the region on whole.

Mr. Soparna Lahiri from Delhi Solidarity Group addressed the group and likewise Mr. **Kuldeep Nayar**, ex MP expressed his solidarity for the movement. Mr. Surendra Mohan, senior socialist leader and his wife Manju Mohan, an active socialist also participated in the Dharna and expressed support. Mr. Manjit from Kashipur Solidarity Group also expressed his support and spoke on the occasion.

Alongside the Dharna, delegation called upon Planning Commission member Dr. Kirit S. Parikh and apprised him of the issues involved. Dr. Parikh accepted the views of the delegation and agreed to make an on the spot site visit to Dzongu and Sikkim.

The team further met Shri Mani Shankar Aiyar, Union Minister for Rural Development and solicited his support to protect the Lepchas in their homeland.

The Dharna will continue tomorrow which will be followed by candle light march in the evening.

Tseten Lepcha, Chief Coordinator, ACT & Joint Action Committee