

Joint Action Committee for Protection of Holy Land Dzongu

Press Release

17th October 2007

HQ Gangtok, Sikkim: For the first time on the 118th day of the Hunger strike started by Affected Citizens of Teesta at Gangtok, 59th day of the hunger strike by the Lepchas of Kalimpong and the 46th day of the Hunger Strike started by the Lepchas of Darjeeling to protect the Sanctity of Dzongu against the implementation of numerous destructive Mega hydro electric Power Projects in North Sikkim.

A Major break through has been achieved in the process to find a solution to the issue by way of a direct dialogue between Shri Pawan Chamling, Hon'ble Chief Minister of Sikkim and the Representatives of Various Lepchas organization under the banner of Dzongu Holy Land Protection,joint Action Committee at Mintokgang, on 16th October 2007.

The JAC was represented by the President, Shri Lyangsong Tamsang Lepcha, who is also the President of Indigenous Lepcha Tribal Association. Shri NT Lepcha- Secretary Kalimpong Lepcha Association. Shri SM Lepcha ,Advisor Darjeeling Lepcha Association.Shri Dorjee Lepcha,President Rong Ong prongzom, KPG, Advocate B Namchu of Kurseong Lepcha Association, Shri Nhen Tsh Lepcha President of Darjeeling Lepcha youth wing,Samden Foning-General Secretary Darjeeling youth wing. The sikkim was represented by Shri Namgyal Lepcha,Advisor CLOS,Gyatso Lepcha,President CIOS, representative of Sangha of Dzongu , Tenzing Lepcha . ACT was represented Shri Sherap Lepcha.

The Delegation submitted a memorandum to the Chief Minister, stating that **Dzongu is the holy Land of all Lepchas and requested that it should be protected at all cost.** The HCM stated that he was committed to protect the sanctity of Dzongu and that no development will come at the cost of the Culture,tradition and identity of the Lepchas.He further stated that the Government of Sikkim has stopped work on 5 hydro Electric projects till the Review committee completes it report. HCM urged the members of the JAC ,particularly the members from outside sikkim to view the issue rationally and suggest necessary steps to find an reasonable solution and that the ACT should participate in the review process so that the Govt can find a way to fulfill the wishes of the Lepchas without having to face legal and other complications later on.

The JAC brought to the notice of the HCM that all the organizations involved in the movement to protect the Lepchas are non-political and committed to the cause. The most important out come of this historic meeting has been that the ice has been broken and dialogue process reestablished and that the Representatives of the Lepchas could place their view directly to the HCM.

The JAC is hopeful that with the positive commitment of the HCM, the hopes and aspirations of the Lepchas will be fulfilled soon.

The satyagarha will however continue till a final resolution is achieved.

(copy of memorandum attached)

Tseten Lepcha
Coordinator JAC
Dzongu Holy Land protection committee