



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MAOIST)

DANDAKARANYA SPECIAL ZONAL COMMITTEE

Press Release

June 7, 2011

**OPPOSE THE RAOGHAT RAILWAY LINE AND THE MINING PROJECT
WHICH WOULD DE-RAIL THE VERY EXISTENCE OF BASTARIYA PEOPLE!**

CLAIM OF SAVING BHILAI STEEL PLANT IS NOTHING BUT TRICKERY!

**ENSURING THE PLUNDER OF BASTAR'S WEALTH
BY MULTI-NATIONAL COMPANIES IS REALITY!!**

The moment when the process of deploying the Army in Bastar is just underway, the Steel Authority of India Limited (SAIL), one of the biggest Public Sector Units of India, has declared that the Raoghat mines would be privatized. These two acts not just coincided, but there was a conspiratorial coordination between them. Raoghat hills are located just 25 kilometers away from Narayanpur (in Maad region), a district headquarter town, where the Raman Singh government of Chhattisgarh has given permission to the Army to acquire 750 square kilometers (i.e. 185,250+ acres) of land. Now so many notorious MNCs will rush into this area to rob the iron ore which is known for its best quality. From one side, the Army and from other side, the corporate companies are trying to gulp down the whole Maad region which is the motherland of *Maria* and *Gond* adivasis, the primitive tribal communities of Bastar.

In 2006, before the Raoghat project is commenced, some accusations were made against the management of BSP that it had illicitly leased out some of the deposits of Raoghat mines to Tata and NECO companies. People believed strongly that the BSP management was acting as paw in the hands of big business houses such as Tata, Essar, Jindal, NECO etc. But then it had cleverly managed it and stated that there was no such thing. But lately the chairperson of the SAIL, Chandrashekhar Verma himself has declared that they are going to privatize Raoghat mines and global tenders would be invited for this. (Source: Hindi daily *Dainik Bhaskar*, May 24, 2011). With this, now the game of hide-and-seek is over! Intentions of the exploitative governments are very clear! With the neo-liberal policies dictated by the imperialist masters getting implemented so openly, the MNCs would capture not just Raoghat mines; they would even buy the BSP or buy the SAIL itself. The recent examples of POSCO, Vedanta etc. of other states also clearly indicate this trend.

It's believed that Raoghat hills are having 7.4 billion tonnes of iron ore which is known for finest quality with 62 percent Fe grade. BSP is supposed to excavate 511 million tonnes of iron ore. Construction of Dalli-Raoghat-Jagdarpur railway line is underway for this purpose. Government has already started grabbing the lands forcefully from the peasants between Dalli and Raoghat. But it's facing stiff resistance from the local people.

This project in fact is an old one. In 1992, government was forced to give up implementing this project due to massive protests of people. In Antagarh, ten thousand adivasis had taken a massive procession to register their strong opposition to the proposed mining project. But the state had responded with repressive methods as always happens. A police camp was set up on the top of these hills. That camp is still present there. Our Party has been actively supporting this just struggle.

Local people are opposing this project because 3,278 hectares of forests would completely be destroyed. Apart from this, large portions of adjoining forests would also be destroyed. River Mendhki and so many other streams flowing through the region would get polluted. The farming will be destroyed so much that it is difficult to quantify. Local people see these mountains as their cultural centers and ritual faith. After the opening up of the mines these will be buried for ever. Many environmentalists believe that environment and monsoon from the perspective of Bastar, Raoghat Mountains are extremely important. With Raoghat mining project the existence of 23 villages will immediately be endangered. Further, 13 villages of adivasis might be uprooted in Chargaon area, next to this mine proposed by a private company of NECO Jaiswaals. (And now if you add the proposed massive acquisition of land by the Army - bloated 750 square kilometers - you can't imagine that the existence of how many villages is going to disappear!)

On the issue of where to setup township for the proposed mines, an ugly tussle is going on amongst the business classes of Narayanpur and Antagarh. These selfish people do not worry at all about how many

villages will be destroyed, how many thousands of tribals will be displaced, how much forest will be cut, how many rivers will be polluted and to what extent the tribal culture will be destroyed, when the mining work is started in this region. Overall, they don't bother about the oncoming destruction in this region. They are supporting the government's false claims of 'Bastar development' because they think that their own business will grow with this at the price of whatsoever.

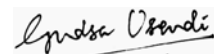
Government still makes the argument in support of railway line and mine that the digging up of Raoghat mines is necessary as the mines of Dalli Rajhara which are supplying the raw material to the Bhilai steel plant are going to end up. It's making dubious propaganda that if the mining will not start in Raoghat, BSP could be stopped due to the scarcity of raw material, threatening the future of the thousands of BSP workers. Thus, such an environment is created that anybody dares to oppose Raoghat mine will immediately be labeled as 'anti-development'. In fact, in the guise of this promotion, the government and administration have put a veil over many realities.

Dalli town today is in a position of almost desolation only because of the wrong policies of the BSP, particularly of indiscriminate mechanization. All rivers and streams of this area have been badly polluted. In Dalli and several surrounding villages, as red dirt coming of mines and roads turned on to the fields of farming, and the farming has been fully destroyed. In Dalli where 16 thousand workers used to work earlier, today the number has decreased drastically to 1200. Can the businessmen of Narayanpur and Antagarh and the contractors sitting in Raipur and Jagdalpur give the guarantee that after 20-25 years this region will not become another Dalli?

If the government is really worried that the 'BSP will be closed if it won't get raw materials supply', then why doesn't it stop selling iron ore of Bailadilla mines to the multinational companies of Japan, China and Korea? In fact, many sponge iron factories in Raipur and Bhilai have closed due to lack of iron ore supplies. They appealed to the government several times for supply of raw material from Bailadilla for them and to stop selling the iron ore to foreign companies. Doesn't this prove that the interests of big and foreign capitalists are paramount for the spineless rulers of our country? Isn't the government's "concern" about the future of BSP workers just a pose? Isn't this just a ploy being adopted to deal with the opposition putting up against proposed the Raoghat mine?

We urge all the workers, employees and other people who are concerned with the future of the BSP, that they should recognize who actually is a threat to the BSP. In 1960s, when the Bhilai steel plant was founded, the annual production was 1.5 million tonnes and the number of workers was 95 thousand. Today, the production has been increased to 4.5 million tonnes, but the number of workers is reduced to less than 37 thousand. Contracting, mechanization and partial privatization process are in full swing in BSP. Many facilities for workers have been taken back. New recruitment and compassionate appointment is closed. BSP is planning to increase the production to 7.5 million tonnes by 2012-13, taking up further modernization and expansion. This means even more layoffs and 'retirements' of workers will take place. And even there is a talk of selling out of BSP to Tatas, Mittals or Jindals! BALCO experience is before us. Overall, the policies of imperialist globalization which have been implemented by governments are responsible for this situation. So, you must fight against the anti-worker and pro-capitalist policies of the governments to protect the BSP. You should not fell prey to the designs of the ruling classes to inflict destruction to the *Jal-Jungle-Zameen* by opening mines in another area. You should fight against this too. Entire people of Dandakaranya will support your struggles.

The Special Zonal Committee of the Communist Party of India (Maoist) calls upon all the workers and farmers of Chhattisgarh and democratic and patriotic forces of our country to demand the closure of Raoghat project; to register their protest to mechanization, contracting and all other anti-worker policies being implemented in Bhilai steel plant and other industries; to demand to stop selling the high quality iron ore to the foreign companies from Bailadilla; to lend support to the people of Dandakaranya who are fighting for the right over their *Jal-Jungle-Zameen*; and to oppose the Army deployment in Bastar to suppress their just struggles.



(Gudsu Usendi)
Spokesperson

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