

English gist of affected villagers' Memorandum in Oriya dated 16.8.2007 protesting against the environmental clearance for POSCO Project granted by the MoEF, GOI ignoring the people's objections raised in the Public Hearing

To,  
The Secretary, Ministry of Environment and Forests, Government of India,  
Paryavaran Bhavan, CGO Complex, Lodhi Road, New Delhi-3

SUB: Issue of Environmental Clearance for POSCO proposed projects for Marine Port and Steel Plant in Orissa in complete disregard of the objections raised in the public hearing- reg.

Sir,

We the villagers belonging to POSCO affected areas like to state the following facts for your immediate attention and decision-

- 1) On the direction of the Ministry of Environment & Forests, GOI, a Public Hearing on environmental impact of POSCO proposed marine port and steel plant was conducted jointly by Orissa State Pollution Control Board and Jagatsinghpur District Administration on 15<sup>th</sup> April 2007 at B.B.High School, Kujang. The Additional District Magistrate (stationed at Paradip) was present on behalf of the district administration.
- 2) Since the chosen venue was far-off by 15 km from the proposed project site, the villagers who likely to be displaced and affected by the POSCO project had over all boycotted the said public hearing. Despite the distance, some educated and conscious persons from the affected area came to attend it but due to distance reached late and couldn't participate in its proceedings.
- 3) Again, the EIA Report for the POSCO Project or its summary in Oriya was not available in the Panchayat Offices of the affected villages as it should have been done as per the EIA Notification-2006. Thus most of the common people of the affected villages who had wished to comment on the POSCO EIA Report were not able to do so either orally or in writing before or during the public hearing.
- 4) A few educated persons from the affected villages who somehow got themselves acquainted with the Oriya summary of the EIA Report from other sources and who got the chance to speak in the public hearing had strongly opined that the POSCO EIA Report contained factually incorrect and misleading information in every respect about the affected villages and people and demanded therefore publication of an authentically rewritten EIA Report and holding of another public hearing at a place located within the 3 affected Panchayats based upon the rewritten report.

- 5) Due to vehement resistance by the local people against the inauthentic EIA Report and the arbitrary manner of conducting the public hearing, the public hearing had to be abruptly closed half-way by the concerned authorities.
- 6) Thereafter the local people had hoped that in a democratic country like ours, the Government and the State Pollution Control Board would respect the overall opinion of the speakers of the public hearing and arrange another public hearing as per the norms of EIA Notification-2006. But strangely enough, instead of doing so, the Government at the first instance and that too quite hurriedly released the environmental clearance in favour of POSCO's Port proposal. Such an unwarranted step by the Government favouring POSCO is simply a betrayal of people's faith in democracy.
- 7) Further, as if adding salt to the injury, the Government in the next instance, released the environmental clearance in favour of POSCO's Steel Plant proposal. Following the news of such environmental clearances, a feeling has grown among the people of the affected villages that both Government and POSCO are going to exploit them for their vested interests and therefore adopting such patently illegal and deceptive methods.
- 8) If the concerned authorities go on defying the wishes of the local people in this manner, there is every likelihood that the bloody episode of Kalinganagar may be re-enacted in the POSCO affected area in future, and the Government shall be held accountable for it.

Date: 16<sup>th</sup> August 2007

Signed by the people of the POSCO affected villages