

PRESS RELEASE

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TRAINING ON DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS

This is for general information to all the concerned that Indian Confederation of Indigenous and Tribal Peoples North East Zone (ICITP-NEZ) in collaboration with its 55 MOs and with support from Taiwan Foundation For Democracy (TFD) is organizing a five-day intensive “Training on Democracy and Human Rights for Indigenous Peoples of North East India” from June 6-11, 2009 at Guwahati, Assam, India.

Main Goal:

The main long-term goal of this training is to help strengthen democratic institutions and civil societies, and to adopt and adhere to democratic values and practices through empowering and creating effective social leaders, politicians, thinkers, scholars, academicians, students, youths and women in the region and to build solidarity and net work of IPs in the region for effective and meaningful advocacy and policy influencing for realization of IPs aspiration through peaceful democratic manner and effective participation in dialogue with the concern party/parties including government for peaceful political solutions to their problems and social justices and human rights.

Other objectives are:

1. To share ideas and to explore mechanisms to bring change in the flawed democratic institutions, the promotion of political pluralism, and human and civil rights;
2. To help exploring mechanism to provide support for Human Rights education, human rights NGO start-ups, to improve respect/ enforcement of human rights, torture victim rehabilitation;
3. To impart knowledge on exploring mechanism for publication and distribution of legal documents, translation into minority dialects and dissemination of the Constitution and other laws, legal education, bar and encourage legal aid projects;
4. To impart knowledge on present Judicial system & Action, Role of the judicial branch in a democracy, improvement of the judicial system, modern/traditional judicial officials-on the rule of law;
5. To explore and design on capacity building of Legislature to Improve the Legislature’s efficiency, and future training for Tribal MLs & MPs and their staff;
6. To strategize to carry out public education and training for Indigenous independent journalists on the role played by the independent media in a democracy, technical assistance, support to journalist association start-ups;
7. To sensitize on public awareness campaign or voting rights and/or the social costs of public corruption. Education, counseling and legal aid for the prevention of violence against women or female genital mutilation;

8. To educate on initiating action oriented programme on empowerment of women, women-led NGO start-ups, increased access of women and ethnic groups to the judicial system and the political processes;
9. To educate fundamentals on monitoring of elections, role of independent electoral commissions, local agents or NGO's responsible for following up the electoral process;
10. To educate on the basic concept on Conflict Resolution, Limited intervention in promoting tolerance and understanding among various groups, which make up the society (ethnic, religious, or political factions);
11. To identify and denounce regimes those deny their citizens the right to choose their leaders in elections that are free, fair, and transparent;

Background:

It is needless to reiterate that India is the biggest democratic country in the world and the home of Mahatma Gandhi, the icon of non-violence. But it is ironical to witness the continued unabated violence, social disparity, racial discrimination, economic and historical injustice and classicism prevailing in India, particularly in the North Eastern States. These have direct linkage and manifestation with overwhelming growth of population, lack of proper education, poor or too expensive health care, uncontrolled pollution and disturbance to eco system, growing law and order problems and chaotic bad governance. On the other hand, the plight of the vulnerable section of Indian society, particularly the weaker section of the society who are termed as Scheduled Tribes (Tribals) and other backward classes (Dalits and Harizons) are at the receiving end with all kinds on continued exploitations resulting to ironical pathetic situations who are not only facing their identity crisis and slow extinction but also haunted by continued disposition of their life sustaining resources like land, water and forest and other intellectual properties. Due to India's flawed democratic behaviour deliberate discriminatory policies and practices of the dominant classes over them for assimilation and continued influx of external populations particularly from neighbouring countries like Bangladesh, Nepal and Myanmar in the North Eastern Region of India, and its adverse impact on the local communities and their lives are additional pressure on them to suffocate. As saying goes necessity knows no laws, the Indigenous and Tribal peoples who are over 100 millions in the country, under compulsion have no any other option but to raise their voices for equal political rights and social justices. Thus in the name of political assertions and political movements armed conflicts, violence and human rights violation has become the common and daily routine which have actually dominated in the Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' areas particularly in the North- East region and these issues need urgent interventions. Besides all these, the repressive policy of continued imposition of draconian laws "Special Armed Forces Act of 1958 in the region reflects the denial of democratic human rights to express Indigenous Peoples' genuine aspirations compounded the situations to be more volatile.

We feel, strong political will on the part of the government and long term peaceful democratic means on the part of the Indigenous Peoples are required to mutually come forward to address these problems and therefore it is time for us to empower our legislators, judiciaries, bureaucrats, social and political leaders, youths and women to properly sensitize and activate on the true concept, promotion and practice of effective and meaningful Democracy and respect for Human Rights. We, as net working organization of the

Indigenous and Tribal Peoples' issues, believe that the relevant democratic mechanisms, tools and sharing of examples of good practices are to be deep rooted through practice to find amicable solutions to all these problems and therefore, a capacity building training is required urgently to specially create effective good democratic leadership to carry out and practice full democratic cultures and its values in true sense to address these issues as torch bearers in this region. These issues are becoming more critical and challenging because of the tremendous adverse impact of the ongoing aggressive national development policies under the pressure of globalization, cultural invasion and political domination of the dominant society and mushrooming forced industrialization, urbanization and influx of external populations and the internal dominant society further marginalizing the IPs in the region.

Promoting Democracy and respect for Human Rights have long been central components of ICITP's objectives. Supporting democracy not only promotes such fundamental Democratic values as religious freedom and worker rights, but also helps create a more secure, stable, and prosperous global arena in which the Democratic States can advance its national interests. In addition, democracy is the one national interest that helps to secure all the others. Democratically governed states and peoples are more likely to secure the peace, deter aggression, expand open markets, promote economic development, protect citizens, combat international terrorism and crime, uphold human and worker rights, avoid humanitarian crises and refugee flows, improve the global environment, and protect and improve human health.

What we expect out of this training?

This training will bring a clear conceptual clarity on Democracy and Human Rights and encourage our people to adapt and promote democratic system and practice democratic values to bring solidarity and peace and new direction to the IPs movement for self rule/self determination in the North East Region with a clear democratic conceptual clarity in vision, mission, role, strategies and programmes and will enhance their leadership qualities/capacities for effective negotiation through peaceful and democratic means, which itself is a new and immerging changing trends of advocacy and lobbying for realization of IPs aspirations for honourable survival through democratic peaceful means rather than violence.

Who should attend this training?

Potential IPs leaders, activists, revolutionists, scholars, academicians and students totaling to 100 will attend this training who will be provided a certificate of successful participants as Trainers of Training (ToT) from this training, who will in turn share and impart trainings to their own communities to benefit their people.

Indigenous women and children

Indigenous women and children are the most vulnerable and soft targets of the conflicts and human rights abuses in this region and therefore this programme will include equal number of women activists, scholars, leaders, academicians and students who will have equal participation and contribution to the sharing information and interactive session during the training.

Whom to contact for detail information?

Please contact Ms. Pompei Basumatary, coordinator, ICITP-NEZ for details of the programme at icitp.nez@gmail.com or icitp_nez@rediffmail.com