Protest against N-power plant after rural poll

Machhimar Adhikar Rashtriya Abhiyan

Midnapore: Even as chief minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee keeps harping on the need to step up power generation in East Midnapore in his panchayati polls rally, members of the Haripur Panchamas Bidyat Prakalpa Pratirothi Andolan (HPBPPA) are quietly preparing to step up their campaign against the proposed nuclear power plant.

Immediately after the panchayat polls, thousands of fishermen and farmers from Haripur will join an agitation under the banner of Machhimar Adhikar Rashtriya Abhiyan that has called for the cancellation of all projects that violate the coastline regulations. Meetings and rallies will be held from May 22 and locals will renew their vigil at all entry points to Haripur to make sure that government representatives can’t enter the area.

“The nuclear power plant will not only throw thousands of fishermen out of their jobs but will also do immense harm to the environment of the region. Also, hundreds of farmers will have to give up their land for the project which is unacceptable to us. Even though the government has put the project on hold, it has not yet been officially scrapped. Our campaign will go on till the announcement comes,” said Debashish Shyamal of HPBPPA.

Three village panchayats at Haripur, which is around 50 km from Nadmidang, will be affected by the proposed power plant. Ramnuni, Mallijpur and Mayapur panchayats will go to the polls on May 17. In spite of the agitation and the brewing tension, there will be no attempt to boycott the polls. “On the contrary, we would like the polls to be held smoothly. People of Haripur are looking forward to a change of guard at the panchayats. But the HPBPPA is not taking any side. We are only interested in safeguarding the interests of fishermen and farmers,” added Shyamal.

West Bengal
Fishworkers forum to demonstrate before Parliament

Statesman News Service

KOLKATA, June 27: To protest against the Union environment and forest ministry’s alleged attempt to replace the Costal Regulation Zone (CRZ) Notification by a more corporate friendly Coastal Management Zone (CMZ) Notification, members of the National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) will demonstrate in front of the Parliament.

NFF will also submit a petition to the Prime Minister to cancel the new notification, said Mr Harekrishna Debnath, chairperson of NFF.

According to Mr Debnath, implementation of CMZ will enable capitalists to explore the coastal areas that will destroy the coastal and aquatic resources. The forum demanded that both state and the union government should not permit setting up of special economic zones, nuclear and thermal power projects, chemical hubs and cottages for tourists within 500 metres from the coast line.

“The setting up of such projects will destroy mangroves and sand dunes that act as natural barriers. Competition among the state governments to bring in more investment in their own state has forced the governments to allow capitalists to choose land anywhere in the state,” said Mr Debnath.

Mr Debnath also opposed the Centre’s decision to allow Reliance Industries Limited to set up 10,000 outlets to sell fish as he felt that setting up of these outlets will affect the livelihood of about 17 lakh fish sellers.

“The new law is based on Mr M S Swaminathan’s report on coastal environment after the Tsunami. Even after the failure of ‘green revolution’, the Centre is attempting to bring in ‘blue revolution’ through CMZ,” Mr N D Koli, general secretary of NFF said.

He said that the Centre’s decision to allow 97 trawlers of countries like Taiwan, Thailand and Mexico to operate in Indian coasts has affected 1.2 crore fishermen in the country. “Each of these ships net large tons of fish everyday thus resulting in over exploitation of the aquatic resources along the Indian coast,” said Mr Koli.