**URGENT APPEAL TO STOP FORCED EVICTION OF INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES FOR CONSTRUCTION OF NATIONAL SPORTS UNIVERSITY AND FOR ASIAN DEVELOPMENT BANK (ADB) FINANCED ASIAN HIGHWAY 1 IN MANIPUR**

**Incident:** Eviction threats by forced land grabbing at Yaithibi Loukon, Thoubal District, Manipur

**Identification of Perpetrator:** Government of Manipur and the Asian Development Bank

**Identification of Victims:** Residents of Yaithibi Loukon, Thoubal District inhabited by several ethnic and indigenous communities of Manipur

**Time of Incident:** Since August 2014

**Source of Information:** The Affected Land Owners’ Association against Forced Land Acquisition for Sports University and the Centre for Research and Advocacy, Manipur

**Event Description:** In a move to undermine the survival of small scale farmers of Manipur, the Government of Manipur in North East India embarked on an arbitrary plan to set up the National Sports University at Yaithibi Loukon, a prime agriculture land, in Thoubal District, Manipur. The announcement of the Government of Manipur through the Chief Minister was made on August 24, 2014 without the free, prior and informed consent of the farmers and residents in and around Yaithibi Loukon.

The ‘Yaithibi Loukon’ is a prime agricultural land surrounded by five villages comprising various communities. The site is also one of the most fertile cultivated land suitable for multiple cropping in a single year. The proposed land acquisition will affect an area of approximately 642 acres comprising 380 acres of agricultural land, 100 acres of habitat areas and 162 acres of hill/forest areas, and will render the villagers homeless and landless. The acquisition affects the following 5 villages: Koijam village (95 houses), Laiching Minou village (150 houses belonging to the Maring community); Sora village (1402 houses of Muslim community); Langthabal village (98 houses) and Yaithibi Khunou village (7 houses) belonging to the Meitei community). The forced acquisition plan will affect homestead land, religious sites, agricultural, forest land and Cemeteries etc.

The Government of Manipur arbitrarily declared the proposed Sports University Site as “Khas Land or uninhabited land”, despite the fact that the proposed site, the Yaithibi Loukon is an inhabited land with sufficient land records. The proposed site includes the areas, which fall within the jurisdiction of the Hill Areas of Manipur. However, the Hill Areas Committee from the hill areas – was not consulted. The government, has failed to comply with the provisions of Art 371C of the Indian Constitution.

The residents of Yaithibi Loukon are also threatened with confiscation of their prime agriculture land due to the construction of the Trans Asian Highway or the Asian Highway 1, to be funded by the Asian Development Bank and which envisaged connecting Manipur with South East Asian Countries. The proposed Asian Highway will affect more than 100 acres of agriculture land in and around Yaithibi Loukon. There has been no social, environmental, economic, cultural impact assessment.

The affected villagers have vehemently protested against the State government for attempting to illegally obtain land without the consent of villagers for the setting up of the Sports University at Yaithibi Khunou through coercive measures. The locals of five villages in Thoubal district held several meetings and reaffirmed resolutions to object the government’s move of land acquisition without peoples’ consultation and consent. The affected communities opposed the forced survey by the Thoubal District Deputy Commissioner and Revenue director on October 23, 2014.

The effort of the Government of Manipur to forcibly acquire land in Yaithibi Loukon also involves use of military might where several farmers and affected communities were hurt in police brutality. The recent brutality unleashed by state police using force to scare away a peaceful rally on November 24, 2014 and desecrating religious sanctity shows that the government would go to any extent to evict the concerned people and snatch their lands leaving them as victims of state’s forceful land acquisition.

An additional concern is the arbitrary arrest and illegal detention of Md. Jalaruddin by the Manipur Police from the Kakching Police Station on 22 February 2015 for resisting the forced move of the Government to acquire land at Yaithibi Loukon. Further, the Government is also trying to arbitrarily arrest other members of the “Affected Land Owners Association against Forced Land acquisition for Sports University in Manipur”. Such arbitrary detention of a community leader endeavouring to defend peoples' land and future is a clear case of human rights violations and undemocratic act.

Despite the opposition of absence of consent of affected communities, the Govt. of Manipur claimed to have acquired 213 Acres on 18 March 2015 without the knowledge and consent of affected communities. The Government through the Deputy Commissioner of Thoubal District cancelled the land records of the villagers of the Langthabal Khunnou, Yaithibi Loukon on 3 February 2015 without any consultation and their knowledge and arbitrarily transferred ownership of these lands around 20 Acres, to unknown people. Further, the Govt. of Manipur through the Deputy Commissioner, Thoubal District arbitrarily conferred ownership of communities land records, around 10 (Ten) Acres to the Department of Youth Affairs and Sports, Govt. of Manipur on 12 February 2015 without their knowledge. Such land transfer is illegal and violated the ruling of the Manipur High Court on 8 December 2014 concerning Yaithibi Loukon land acquisition matter to follow the due process of law.

The State Government of Manipur has been disturbing the peaceful existence and environment of the affected areas by deploying around 40 personnel of security forces and occupying the school premise of Sora High School despite opposition of affected communities since October 2014. The pursuance of development projects such as Sports University with full deployment and reliance on state security forces is a clear evidence of undemocratic and barbaric practices.

The Affected Land Owners’ Association against Forced Land Acquisition for Sports University would also like to apprise that the Government of Manipur also failed to conduct an option assessment with peoples' participation. The Government also failed to consider the offer of land from Koutruk, Senjam Chirang, Senjam Khunou etc. Alternatively, there are many other suitable lands for the establishment of the Sports University in six other districts, particularly, Koutruk village in Imphal West district, for which the villagers are ready to donate the land.

The Affected Land Owners’ Association against Forced Land Acquisition for Sports University would like to assert that that the National Sports University and the proposed Asian Development Bank Funded Trans Asian Highway (Asian Highway 1) should not be constructed without the free, prior and informed consent of affected communities. The heavy traffic and congestion envisaged along the Trans Asian Highway route will never provide a conducive environment for the healthy growth of sports in Manipur. The communities with further land acquisition by Trans Asian Highway will extinguish the survival of affected communities. A Sports University should not be at the cost of poor helpless farmers.

Any forced land grabbing will violate the UN Declaration against forced and arbitrary Displacement and UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, article 32, which requires taking the Right to Free, Prior and Informed Consent of all indigenous peoples before any decisions affecting their land.

The UN Resolutions 1993/77 and 2004/28 of the UN Commission on Human Rights clearly outlined that forced evictions constitute gross violations of a wide range of internationally recognized human rights and mass evictions may only be carried out under exceptional circumstances and in full accordance with international human rights law. Article 11.1 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, to which India is a party states that the State party recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living for himself and his family, including housing and to a continuous improvement of living conditions.

The Affected Land Owners’ Association against Forced Land Acquisition for Sports University would like to make this earnest appeal for your kind and urgent intervention to urge upon the Government of Manipur to

1. The National Sport University and the Trans Asian Highway at Yaithibi Loukon, Manipur should not be constructed without the free, prior and informed consent of affected communities.
2. Shift the National Sports University Construction to other locations, especially where communities are willing to donate adequate land.
3. The Government of Manipur should vacate all state security forces in Sora High School and end all forms of threats on communities affected by proposed land acquisition at Yaithibi Loukon.
4. The Asian Development Bank stop finances the Asian Highway 1 without the free, prior and informed consent of affected communities.
5. Revoke all land transfer of Yaithibi Loukon to Department of Youth Affairs and Sports and further to revoke the cancellation of the land records of villagers of Yaithibi Loukon in February 2015 and should investigate and prosecute all those involved in such fraud.
6. The Government of Manipur should also stop arbitrary arrest and detention of community members of Yaithibi Loukon resolving for defence of their land and future.

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