

REPORT OF A DISCUSSION MEETING ON
INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL COURT & INDIA

(Held on 18 January 2006, Bhubaneswar, Orissa)

A discussion meeting on International Criminal Court & India was held on 18 January 2005 at Bhubaneswar, Orissa. The meeting was organized by ICC-India – the Indian campaign on International Criminal Court, in collaboration with Martin Luther King Centre for Democracy and Human Rights, Bhubaneswar. The event was hosted by the Post-graduate Department of Psychology, Utkal University, Bhubaneswar. The participants for this discussion included lawyers, human rights activists, representatives of non-governmental organizations, law teachers, students and media persons. Prof. P.K.Sarkar, Head of the Department of Post-graduate Department of Law, Utkal University, presided over the event.

Saumya Uma, coordinator of ICC-India, was the resource person for this meeting. She began her presentation with a screening of the film 'If Hope Were Enough'. She talked about the need felt for the ICC, its benefits over ad hoc tribunals, principles and trigger mechanisms, crimes covered by the ICC as well as the limitations of ICC. This was followed by a discussion on the following issues:

- suo motu powers of the ICC prosecutor;
- possibility of Indians being tried by the ICC even if India does not ratify the ICC treaty;
- time duration taken by the ICC for investigation and commencement of trial;
- history behind inclusion of the complementarity principle;
- the role of ICC in a context in which faith in international organizations has reduced drastically;
- ratifications by Asian countries and powerful countries in other regions;
- role of United States;
- an understanding of crimes against humanity and its relevance in the Indian context;
- relevance of ICC to terrorist acts;
- the present status of the court and its investigations;
- criteria for judges of the ICC;
- prison services and detention centres for imprisonment of convicted persons;
- difference between ICJ & ICC;
- Indian official position
- activities of ICC-India campaign and ways in which interested persons could participate in it;

The meeting ended with Prof. P.K.Sarkar giving a summary of the ICC, emphasizing the need for many more such events in Orissa and the need to work towards inclusion of the ICC in the syllabus of law courses at the graduate and post-graduate levels in the state universities.

The meeting was telecast by Doordarshan (national) on 19 January 2006 at prime time, as well as by OTV – a local news channel. Subsequent to the meeting, an informal discussion with press persons from three local newspapers was held, following which they carried a write up on the issue in the subsequent days.

REPORT OF A SEMINAR ON
MEDIA & HUMAN RIGHTS
(Held on 24 January 2006, Bhubaneswar, Orissa)

A seminar on Media & Human Rights was held on 24 January 2005 at Bhubaneswar, Orissa. This seminar was organized by the Post-graduate Department of Journalism & Mass Communication of the Academy of Management and Information Technology (AMIT), Bhubaneswar. Participants included students and faculty members of the department.

Prof. J.N.Patnaik, principal of the Academy, presided over the seminar. Mr. Banabehari Mohanty, Head of the Department of Journalism and Mass Communication, gave a welcome speech. Ms. Saumya Uma, the resource person for the seminar, talked on the role of media in respecting, protecting and promoting human rights. She emphasized the need for the print and electronic media to respect human dignity and right to privacy, and the role of media in highlighting human rights violations. While highlighting violations, there was a need for consistent work, the need to refrain from sensationalizing, and the need to do an in-depth research on the issue, she said. Ms. Saumya also dealt with the distinction between investigative and intrusive journalism, and the phenomenon of trial by media, that violated the human right to presumption of innocence unless proven guilty. In explaining the important role of the media in awareness-raising, she talked about the forging of linkages between the media and human rights campaigns, including on the right to information campaign, right to food campaign, the Domestic Violence Bill and the ICC-India campaign. She drew illustrations from the media coverage of Sri Krishna Commission report on the communal riots in Mumbai, tsunami, death penalty issue in Dhananjay Chatterjee's case, Abu Salem's extradition and the trial of S A R Geelani who was suspected of participating in the attack on Indian Parliament.

Discussion that followed the talk focused on the following issues: the role of media on human rights issues in a context of increasing state control over the media; how a coverage of an issue was possible without intruding into the privacy of the victim concerned; representation of violence by the media; and a critique of the media coverage in the recent Kalinga Nagar police firing in Orissa.

This was followed by a screening of the film 'If Hope Were Enough', after which a brief discussion on the ICC, the need for such an institution, the unprecedented incorporation of gender-related provisions into the ICC Statute and its relevance for human rights in India ensued.