

PRESS RELEASE

“Tell us at least now who gains from RCEP,” People’s Forum challenges the Indian government as the 19th Round of RCEP negotiations comes to an end

**People’s Forum against FTAs and RCEP
28 July 2017, Hyderabad**

As the 19th Round of RCEP Trade Negotiations comes to an end today (July 28th) in Hyderabad, the Peoples Forum against FTAs and RCEP challenged the Indian government, “At least now, can the Indian government tell us who gains from RCEP?” The Forum said that after 12 days of negotiations, the continued secrecy and lack of transparency about the content or outcomes is alarming – with arrest of protestors, a sham consultation and blocking of media.

While in Hyderabad, Commerce Secretary Rita Teatota stated that India was committed to the RCEP and there was enough political will to go forward. The Forum questions the basis of her statement because large sections of the society and economy who stand to lose from RCEP are already making their voices heard loud and clear. The Government could not provide concrete evidence on what India stands to gain from this mega FTA covering the entire economy.

An internal estimate of the commerce ministry is reported to have found that India will lose 1.6% of the GDP due to tariff reductions. Media reports indicate that even industry associations are skeptical about any gains. The statement from senior officials at AMUL India clearly expresses alarm at the implications of RCEP.

The available information indicates that the most dangerous Investor-State-Dispute-Settlem

The Forum asserted, “All the concerns raised at our People’s Summit from July 22-26 stand vindicated. Hundreds of people who attended the People’s Convention, the protest rally at People’s Plaza, and the thematic workshops, are representatives of millions of affected people of various communities and mass organizations. We reiterate our collective position that India should immediately halt the RCEP negotiations given that there is much to lose on all fronts and nothing to gain for common people.”

As the RCEP negotiations move to the Ministerial level in Manila in September 2017, the Forum pledged to intensify the campaign urging the state governments and political parties to take a stand on RCEP and Free Trade Agreements, and the Parliament to have a debate on RCEP. The Forum continues to demand that the RCEP negotiating text be made public.

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