

## Agitation against Coca Cola in India

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Stir before Coke plant enters 1,000th day

By Our Staff Reporter

PLACHIMADA (PALAKKAD), JAN. 15. The move by the Union Government to "link the rivers of the country will lead to looting of waters and deprive the local people of their lifeline and their right over natural resources," Medha Patkar, leader of Narmada Bachao Andolan, has said.

Inaugurating a picketing of the Hindustan Coca-Cola Beverages Limited here today, Ms. Patkar said the struggle by tribals and the local people of Plachimada, which entered the 1,000th day on Friday, symbolised the struggle worldwide against commercialisation of water by multinationals such as Coca-Cola and Pepsi Cola. The Plachimada agitation is in protest against the 'exploitation' of groundwater by the local Coke plant.

She said it was shameful that the State Government had not held talks so far with the representatives of the struggle. The agitation at Plachimada was to protect the natural resources of the country and the sovereignty of the State, which political parties had failed to do. "We are against those who convert water into commodity."

She said during her visit to the tsunami-affected areas in Tamil Nadu, the local people told her that prawn farms had aggravated the intensity of the disaster, by preventing receding of water.

Addressing the agitators, Vandana Shiva, environmentalist, said the Anti-Coca Cola Action Committee would hold an agitation demanding 'Coke-Pepsi Quit India', in front of all 87 plants of Coca-Cola in the country from January 20.

Later, inaugurating a cultural meet, M. Mukundan, writer, said the struggle at Plachimada was not against development, but to ensure drinking water for the local people. The question is whether you need Coca-Cola or drinking water, he said. The agitation at Plachimada was a struggle against globalisation and writers should stand by the people in this struggle, he said.

Sukumar Azhikode, social critic, said water and other natural resources belonged to the people and these should be protected for posterity. The Indian Union Muslim League leader, Abdul Samad Samadani, MP, said imperialist forces were trying to take control over natural resources in the country. Coconut is the backbone of Kerala, but people here did not drink tender coconut water and instead go in for the "poisonous" Cola drinks. Globalisation and commercialisation had led to consumerism, he said.

The Janata Dal (S) State president, M.P. Veerendrakumar, MP, said "water is our right and it is not a commodity. The nationwide struggle starting on January 20 is to establish this right over natural resources. The Governments have sold rivers but we should fight against it, as it is a struggle for the survival of life system."

<http://www.hindu.com/2005/01/16/stories/2005011605220600.htm>