

EcoSikh Report

VATAVARAN ATE SAMAJ BACHAAO MORCHA (VSBM) PUNJAB

Ludhiana, 19th January 2012: EcoSikh collectively with various local NGO's and GGN Khalsa College, Ludhiana organized a public event for Vatavaran ate Samaj Bachaao Morcha (VSBM) Punjab. VSBM is an alliance of 50+ environmental and social organizations of Punjab is organizing public dialogues in all district headquarters and other important cities of Punjab to create awareness among the voters who can demand answers from the candidates and parties that come to seek their mandate this time.

As many SIX candidates from various Ludhiana constituencies appeared to face the public. Hira Singh Gabria of Akali Dal (B), Malkeet Singh Birmi Indian National Congress, Rajinder Bhandari of BJP, Ajit Singh Khurana, Amarjeet Singh Madaan and Dharam Pal Maur all three of PPP took oath and signed the pledge to protect Environment and Health of People.

Eminent environmentalist Baba Balbeer Singh Seechewal, patron of the group while speaking at the occasion said, "Buddha Nullah of Ludhiana is prime example of how toxic industrial waste is polluting drinking water sources of Punjab and spreading death and disease in the Malwa belt of Punjab and regions of Rajasthan. The right time to ask tough questions from political parties and candidates on this subject is now, before people vote so that we know which parties and candidates are really serious about tackling these extremely important issues and can choose accordingly."

Another Patron of VSBM Giani Kewal Singh, ex-Jathedar Takhat Sri Damdama Sahib informed the gathering, "The main motive of the Morcha (campaign) and this series of public events is to bring environmental health and ecological crisis to the center stage of current election debate."

Umendra Dutt of Kheti Virasat Mission said, "Use of highly poisonous agro-chemicals, discharge of untreated or partially treated industrial waste into natural water bodies and coal based power plants and vehicles are the main sources of pollution in Punjab. It's high time that our political parties clearly spell out their environmental priorities. We are confronting the entire political class with some hard questions related to destruction of ecology, contamination of food chain and high prevalence of environmental toxins in Punjab."

Ravneet Singh of EcoSikh said, "We depend on our Government to enforce the environment laws but we must also realize that is a struggle for our air, our water and our food. This is our cause and we must contribute, it is the cause of our own earth and our own generations. All of us here should pledge to keep our surroundings clean and green, we should all commit to respect the nature and make our earth livable."

Those who were present on the occasions from various organizations includes Jagdev Singh Jassowal, Sukhdev Singh Bhopal (NHCPM) and Malwinder Malli.

VSBM is seeking among other things a proclamation of an 'Environment Emergency' in Punjab and a comprehensive epidemiological mapping to ascertain the impact of chronic toxicity on human population in the state.

The group has also demanded from the Election Commission to declare election manifesto as a legal document. If a party coming to power fails to implement at least 75 per cent of its election promises, it should be de-recognised and its office bearers and leaders debarred from contesting elections.

VSBM represents voice of concerned social forces which include Kheti Virasat Mission, Nature Human Centric People's Movement, Internationalist Democratic Party, United Communist Party of India, Phagwara Environment Association, Association for Democratic Rights, Indian Doctors for Peace and Development, Environmental Health Action Group, EcoSikh and Election Watch Punjab, Punjabi Sath, Jan Sakhsam and others. It is supported by various factions of Bhartiya Kisan Union and other farmer's organizations.