

RED BANNER

Voice of Democratic Movements in South & South-east Asia

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Front cover: Demonstration in Delhi by Students From Manipur Demanding for Peace in Manipur and Democratic Rights, 8 August, 2011.

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Editor
 Malem Ningthouja
E-Mail
 cpdmanipur@gmail.com

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Assam

ASSAM AND THE QUESTION OF NATIONAL SELF-DETERMINATION

Trajectory, Present Situation and Prospects

"To glorify democracy and to silence people is a farce; to discourse on humanism and to negate people is a lie."

- Paulo Freire

Claiming freedom from the British rule, India had a 'tryst with destiny' on August 15th, 1947. Ever since that fateful day, the India has attempted, many a time with brute force, to shape the destinies of nations that came under its territory. Carrying forward the logic of the British colonial state, and adding theatrics of 'liberal' democratic phrasemongering with a virulent strain of illiberal nationalism, the Indian state has butchered and subsumed many histories in its zeal for integration.

Brief Historical Background:

In the colonial period, Assam was the first territory in the northeastern region to be occupied by the British East India Company after the Treaty of Yandaboo in 1826, using it as a base to extend rule to adjoining hill and plain areas including Naga, Manipur, Mizo and Matak territories. An extractive colonial economy saw the region being envisaged as a huge tea plantation. This was accompanied by forcible dispossession of the tribals and peasantry from their means of production, separation of the historical linkages of the plains and hills people with the *Inner Line*, infusion of opium along with a banning of local production, exorbitant taxes and a destruction of the collective ethos and local subsistence economy. Cheap indentured labour brought in from central India and being made to work in slave-like conditions ensured the super-profits of the colonialists. The excavation of coal and petroleum since the 20th century added to this scenario as another capital-intensive and extractive industry. To ensure continued economic exploitation and hegemony, colonial rule of law was established militarily with complex network of posts and commands, as well as administratively, with a class of middle-men carved out of the feudal rural gentry of the Ahom era and new traders from Marwar region. The policies and instruments of rule find a continuation in the post-1947 period with Indian State's occupation of the area. While the region remains a 'low cash' economy, the plantations, together with a

petroleum extraction industry, are highly capital-intensive sectors that link the region to metropolitan dynamics in a most direct way. In this context, though there is apparently formal representative democracy, the basis of rule is military and it reinforces the racial inflection in the constituting logic of India, treating the region as enemy territory of the 'other'.

There are two ways of looking at the northeast from the Indian hegemonic viewpoint: as a security or law-and-order problem of the 'frontier region', and as a zone of ethnic or racial conflicts, where identities of ethnicity/race is the ruling logic. Under this cover, genuine peoples' aspirations for self-determination and workers and peasants mass organizations struggling against the repressive state, are being crushed daily and with increasing vigour and impunity.

In the Name of Integration:

The Unified Command structure is the basis of state rule in the region, with the Indian Army along with Paramilitary forces and Assam Police as the de-facto ruler. The Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act which provides the Army with powers to 'kill anyone and destroy public property on suspicion' with complete impunity from the courts has been in place since 1958, and an ever-intensifying centralisation of the armed forces is the order of the day (with even the looming threat of air bombing in central India already an experimented reality here with ruthless decimation of Aizwal, Mizoram by hunter and toofani fighters on March 4th, 1966). All movements and appeals against this draconian law have been summarily crushed by the military state which considers it necessary to contain 'militancy' in the region. That military is the de facto ruler can be read from the fact that all governors till date in the region have been Retired Army generals with ret'd. Lt. Col. S.K. Sinha being particularly repressive - he would later render his services to crush the Kashmiri national struggle. Along with brute military repression, which in Assam alone has killed more than 11000 people in the past three decades, a rapid militarization of every democratic space is carried forth. Splits within resistance groups were engineered and vigilante groups popped up by the State to counter opposition to the struggling people. Creation of confusion by fostering divisions and hampering dialogues between communities in Asom has been a well-used tactic. Historically, these communities have had greater interaction with one another than with the Indian state. All of a sudden, when the Indian state becomes the patriarchal benefactor of some communities, pitting them against others, one should try to see the designs of the state in its new found love for these communities. The parliamentary

institutions and the parties operating in this are mere puppets in this setup, with a section of the Assamese middle-class and upper classes of other communities acting as the lapdogs of feudal-imperialist nexus. The present Congress government is thus leaving no opportunity lost to usher in neo-liberal policies with the extraction of natural resources - already 168 big dams have been built, toeing the 'structurally-adjusted' "Look east policy" under the aegis of World Bank and ADB.

Resistance to Military Occupation and Exploitation:

Against this form of colonial occupation, workers and peasants have a history of resistance since 1827 when Gomdhar Konwar led the struggle against the British. The Assam Movement from 1979 to '85 is a case in point of the mass participation for struggle to expose and challenge the continued economic exploitation of the region, and the racist logic which informs it. Around the same time, ULFA started its trajectory in April 1979, signifying a progressive nationalism in order to establish a "sovereign, socialist Assam" by overthrowing the occupying forces through armed struggle. Against the exclusive form which nationality movements tend to be pushed into and the chauvinist anti- Bangladeshi sentiment used by the right-wing to communalize the region, ULFA in a document puts forth the concept of *Asombasi* i.e anyone, irrespective of their "prior identity...is prepared to fight for Assam's future" rather than the exclusivist *Asomiya* (Assamese) it says that it would even consider changing the name *Asom*(Assam) or the term *Asomiya*(Assamese) "should it be necessary to do so in order to build a revolutionary unity of the people who live in Assam". It carried forward many developmental drives through community labour with the mass participation and support among all sections of the population including the peasantry, workers and youth. It has also taken a consistent approach against communalism, giving clear warnings and taking action against the right-wing fascist forces- like during and in the aftermath of the Nellie massacres in 1983, and also during the 1992 Babri Masjid demolitions, and politicizing a unity against their attempts to split the people along religious lines.

Along with the demonizing of the resistance forces as coldblooded terrorists and waging a war of hegemony, the state through the Indian Army launched coordinated military attacks as Operation Bajrang and Operation Rhino since 1990, (right after the attack by ULFA on tea plantation owners, showing the state's complicity with who it actually represents) along with constant combing operations.

The killing of Parag Kumar Das in 1996, the former secretary of the human rights group MASS (*Manab Adhikar Sangram Samiti*) inaugurated one of the darkest period in recent memory, that of 'Secret killings' which was a joint project of extra-judicial killings sponsored and maneuvered by the Assam police (headed by the IGP, G.M. Srivastava), the ruling AGP under Prafulla Kr. Mahanta, and the state's sponsored vigilante group SULFA (Surrendered-ULFA). The unemployed youth of rural Assam were used as pawns in this game of fratricidal killings, wiping out entire families of the ULFA cadres and other organization who spoke against the exploitation of the people of Assam.

Keeping with its big brother logic state, India muscled the Bhutanese King Jigme Sime Wangchuk in 2004 to launch Operation All-Clear to decimate the camps of the resistance forces, who were also working in solidarity with the oppressed peasantry in bordering Bhutan who have historical ties with Assam, and which became a sore to the King. At present the pliant Shiekh Hasina government of Bangladesh is fully hand-in-glove with the Indian State, and has worked in tandem with RAW and the Indian armed forces and attacked the resistance forces sheltered in the country.

Recent Developments:

The present situation is one where on the one hand a complete decimation and humiliation of those speaking of sovereignty is taken to be granted, and new justification through an extension of Operation Greenhunt by labeling of groups and activists as 'Maoists' are given for the state-corporate nexus's bullets. The vigilante groups are carved from among the militants who have surrendered or forced to do so, by keeping them in designated camps. The 28th battalion of the ULFA coming for talks two years back, are in the tune of SULFA being sought to be used as a lumpen force by the state. And now a breakaway faction of the ULFA, including the former chairman Arabinda Rajkhowa, recently came for talks with the central government, while the commander-in-chief Paresh Baruah still commands the ULFA forces struggling against Indian State's occupation. This is being projected by the shrill corporate media as the way forward for all struggling forces. Some 'respectable' middle class papers like *The Hindu* have already written the obituary of the selfdetermination movement in Asom with gleeful malice, and are calling for a return to 'normalcy'. This "normalcy" is brought about by homogenising of all struggles as some form of terrorism, whose only way ahead is "talks". The language of conflict-resolution in which these and other such "talks" have been held exposes their farcical nature which is

only used by the government to crush the movements under the veneer of democratic dialogue, either surreptitiously or by joining the mainstream electoral process and serve as stooges of patriarchal-casteist-fascist Indian state. Along with this, other organisations working among the masses like Assam Students and Youth Organisation and *Brihot Nodibandh Pratirodh Manch* (Anti-big Dam Protest Committee) and *Asom Chah Jonogosthi Surakhya Samiti* (Assam Tea community protection committee), who highlight the plight and conditions of the working class here, which is forged of a violent splitting of communities, against the merely singular identity and ethnicity-based way of looking at the northeast, are being daily attacked.

While the loot of resources and pauperisation of the population is declared as a "national goal", from central India to the northeast, the working masses cannot be totally silenced from their expropriation from their means of production of life and culture. As the 'nation' is mapped only through GDP, and any disagreement and resistance against this brutal primitive accumulation, armed or non-armed, is de-legitimised and de-humanised as the terrorists, secessionists and Maoists or as their 'sympathisers', with the machinery of the judiciary and media toeing the line, people are daily revolting.

Necessity for Solidarity:

At a juncture when various national liberation struggles similar to that of Assam are being brutally repressed throughout the world, it is imperative for them to unite on a common platform to learn from each other's experiences and to challenge hegemonic discourses set by the various pro-state media.

Coordination Committee for Oppressed Nationalities (CCON) works with the belief that genuine free-union of nations with the right to politically secede is the only way forward for the creation of truly democratic societies. As a platform, we seek to discuss, debate and deliberate on the struggles of various nationalities, with special focus on South Asia, with the aim of standing in solidarity with the struggle of oppressed nationalities.

Oppressed Nationalities of the World Unite!

Delhi: 17th March 2011

Coordination Committee for Oppressed Nationalities

Bangladesh

REVOLUTIONARY WOMEN'S (MLM) MOVEMENT FORMED IN BANGLADESH

Call of International Women's Day New Democracy-Socialism-Communism is the path to women's liberation

March 8 is the International Women's Day. On this day in 1908, women workers in Chicago city in USA finally came up to the street in demand of reducing working hour, women's right to vote, develop factory environment, maternity leave etc.,.

What is the real condition of our women? Regardless of rural or urban area, women of workers, peasants and middle class are bound to give birth of children, bring them up and all sorts of house hold work. In Garment prison (It's like a prison) they use to work hard. Neither there is minimum wage nor working environment. In every step they are being discriminated. Many times, workers are burnt to death by being locked inside by the authority. They are working with lesser wage than a male worker would get only because they are women.

What is this outlook? This is male chauvinist outlook. This is a special method of exploitation of human by human in exploitative society. Its origin lies in imperialist world system and semi-feudal semi-colonial society. This outlook lies in each and every arteries of this society. Male domination over women started since the origin of class. When there was no class in primitive communist society, women were equal to men. Agriculture was women's invention. Its work availability was more than hunting. On the other side, continuing human generation by giving birth to children was an honorable task. Later, when a few people who were clan chiefs, they, by exploiting the different opportunities, seized ownership of property and riches, then they made the mass majority people slave, class society emerged since then.

After the invention of plough, men captured agriculture. Men started to keep male chauvinist system by establishing ownership over children. As consequence, women went under men all the way. This male chauvinist system was sustained in slave society, feudal society and present capitalist stage. Karl Marx and Frederick Engels first showed that the

exploited class of society the proletariat will destroy this capitalist society and construct socialist and communist society. In Russia, under Lenin's leadership, first socialist society was established what continued under Stalin's leadership. In China, the systematic trend of new democracy-socialism-communism was initiated by overthrowing feudalism and imperialism. The trend of women's liberation is closely linked with that trend of Great Marx, Lenin and Mao. There will be no exploitation in communist society, so male chauvinism too will be wiped out.

In Bangladesh, the imperialist collaborator bureaucrat bourgeoisie is dragging women to factories and confining them in over working to get maximum profit by giving fewer wages. Major portion of profit goes to imperialist buying house, shopping mall and big shops. In those garment industries, women workers don't have any fixed working hour. They are bound to work overtime, sometimes whole night. Many times, those extra working hours have no payment or if they have that are very little while they are the one who are giving the country the major part of foreign currency.

On the other side, religious fascism is carrying absolute feudal repression on women. Still many women in rural area and smaller towns are subjected to repressive veil system. Every now and then women are being murdered by Fotwabaji (Fotwa is a so called Islamic rule in which the Mullah give the verdict). Recently in South Bengal, a minor girl, Hena was killed by being target of Fotwa. The killing of Felani named handicapped minor girl by Indian BSF is an example of imperialist oppression over women.

A lot of women are working as housemaid with negligible wage. That work neither has any respect nor fixed wage. Actually, they are subjected to unpaid labor with very little return. Many times, they die by torture of house members. Many women work as cooker in hotel. A lot of women work in brick breaking (for building construction), soil digging (for road construction) and those types of various works.

Despite carrying great responsibility as nurse and maid in hospitals, women are being brutally discriminated. Men use to take dowry for marrying women. Innumerable women are subjected to dowry system. Apart from that, many women lead a discriminated life as divorcee. A lot of women, driven by poverty, or are forced to take the profession of prostitution. There too, the owners grab the major portion of income. Bourgeoisie is using women in Television, Cinema, and Theatre as commodity.

In cottage industry, in long days, women make very special commodities only to give big profit to capitalists and big markets while they themselves hardly can survive in daily life by too little payment.

Grameen bank, brac etc NGOs are exploiting and cheating rural women by taking compound interest. Many women commit suicide when they can't pay back debt.

In the nineteenth century, Begum Rokeya dreamed of emancipation of women. She wanted to break the then restriction over women. Priti Lata, Kalpana Dutt, erstwhile Ila Mitra and Shikha (of Payarabagan) are pride for Bengalee women.

Taslima Nasrin is a rebel but not useful for women because of her surrender to imperialism. Bourgeoisie feminists don't want to join revolutionary movement as they don't want revolutionary transformation of society. On the other hand, bourgeoisie reformists of women movement despite saying about some reform like female education and job are nothing useful to women because they want to protect the rotten semi feudal semi colonial society. But progressive part of these two trends should be convinced or swept to revolutionary women movement.

This is why, we have to commemorate Great women leader Klara Zetkin, Rosa Luxemburg and Chian Ching who said about communist society where there will be no exploitation. There will be no capitalist upon our head. So, male chauvinism will vanish.

So, struggling women;

Let us unite to break the chain.

Let us unite under the banner of Revolutionary Women's Movement to overthrow the semi feudal semi colonial society with goal of a communist society.

March 8, 2011

Revolutionary Women's Movement

Bastar

STOP WAR ON PEOPLE! WITHDRAW THE CENTRAL FORCES! SCRAP THE PLANNED ARMY BASES IN BASTAR!

The Indian state's war on the people in the name of Operation Green Hunt (OGH) is about to complete two years. These two years have left a bloody trail of state brutalities. Soon after the United Progressive Alliance (UPA) started its second term in 2009, it was hell bent in repressing the people's movements for their land, water, forests, and mountains. Thus it declared war against the people in the name of OGH. In the leadership of the central government, the state governments of Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, Odisha, and other states unleashed the same war on the people. The adivasi population of central and eastern India has been subjected to extreme forms of state repression and brutalities since the beginning of OGH in the leadership of the Army. More than 2 lakh police and paramilitary forces have been deployed in the above-mentioned states. People in their hundreds have been killed in Chhattisgarh alone in the last two years. There the OGH was carried out by the paramilitary forces consisting of the CRPF, COBRA, Grey Hound, BSF, ITBP, C-60, CISF etc. along with the SPOs. These forces perpetrated mass murder of adivasis in various villages. Adivasis have been forced to flee to Andhra. There too, the illegal vigilante gangs of Chhattisgarh government – the Salwa Judum – have been oppressing the adivasis in various ways. Hardly any civil society bodies, democratic organizations or media are allowed to visit these areas to probe into these instances of atrocities perpetrated by the state. If someone tried to go to these places then the government-backed lumpens of Salwa Judum and Maa Danteshwari Swabhiman Manch have either harassed them or beaten them up in order to restrict them for entering these areas.

In Odisha, the CRPF has been widely utilized in the last two years to repress the people's movements which are trying to reclaim people's lands from the illegal appropriation of the landlords and the contractors. Within the last two months the armed forces of the government killed around 20 people related to peoples' movements in fake encounters. All the dead were part of struggles against forced displacement in various places of Kashipur, Sundergarh, Gandhamadan, Niyamagiri, Kalinga Nagar etc. In the Adivasi areas of north and western Odisha, the people are forced

to stay under the perpetual looming terror perpetrated by the state. In Jharkhand too, thousands of deployed forces are repressing the people. There too a number of people have been killed in fake encounters. In Kharasamba and Latehar alone almost 30 cases of harassment and repression by the police and paramilitary forces have been registered. In these incidents the police forces have slapped false cases on the people, they have been tortured with illegal third degree methods, their houses have been set on fire, their forests have been burnt, encroached in social affairs like marriages, and so on. They have even arrested women for the 'crime' of wearing *salwar kameez*. Serious cases have been slapped on persons without any basis who have stood by people's movements. In addition, the government is using various mercenary gangs like the TPC, JPC, JLT etc. to finish off militant struggles of the masses, particularly targeting their leadership.

The repression ushered in by CPI (M), the ruling party of West Bengal, on the people of Jangal Mahal is known to all. In Lalgarh area more than 50 armed training camps of CPI (M) are being run illegally with the full consent of the state government. There are more than 1600 Harmad goons in these camps who ruthlessly repress the villagers and play the same role as the SPOs of Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh. In West Bengal the Joint Armed Forces, the Harmads and the Gana Pratirodh Committee (GPC) have so far brutally killed more than a hundred people. The leaders of People's Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA), like Lalmohan Tudu, Umakant Mahato, Sidhu Soren have been killed by the CRPF in fake encounters. Hundreds of people have been arrested and jailed under draconian charges. They had put the entire area under section 144 and heavily scuttled the democratic rights of the people in the area. In order to malign the movement the police staged the Jnaneshwari Train 'accident' which resulted into the deaths of hundreds of people. In Bihar, as soon as the Nitish Kumar government was elected for the second term, it intensified its repression on militant people's movement. Following the notorious Andhra model the Bihar government is doing covert operations to exterminate the leadership of revolutionary and democratic movements.

With the objective of intensifying the war, the state has now announced the setting up of Indian Army bases in the adivasi areas. According to the Indian Army, two training camps, one in Narayanpur district of Chhattisgarh and the other in Raygada district of Odisha will be set up soon. Going by the army sources, these so-called training camps will be of the same model as the Jungle Warfare Schools in Mizoram and

Kanker. The question is: what is the need of setting up army training camps right in the middle of the country at this juncture? The real motive behind setting up these 'camps' is not merely to provide 'training', but is aimed to serve strategic purposes for the state. Since the last few years the Indian state which is parroting the phrase "Naxalism is the biggest threat to internal security", has been trying all means to repress the people's movements that are growing against its agenda of corporate loot of natural resources. These camps should be seen as a part of furthering that same agenda. Although the Indian Army has so far denied any plan of undertaking direct combat action against the Naxalites, there can be no explanation for establishing such infrastructure for the army other than intensifying the war on the people of these regions.

The setting up of army bases in Chhattisgarh and Odisha is a precursor to Indian Army's induction into the war on people as direct combatants. If such an extensive scale of state repression has been carried out even before the direct involvement of the army in combat role, one can well imagine the situation after its entry. It is however known that both the Army and the Air Force have been closely involved in OGH from its very inception. Now the Air Force is given the license to shoot and kill, although in the name of 'self-defense'. It is worth noting that the central coordination of this Operation from its inception has been done by the army. Army officials of the brigadier rank have been appointed in the office of the home ministry to coordinate this operation. Moreover the forces deployed in the operation have been trained in the Jungle Warfare School in Mizoram which is run by the army. The army is also training the forces in the Jungle Warfare School set up in Kanker district of Chhattisgarh.

Operation Green Hunt is a multi-pronged attack on the people and their movements. In the past too, a sub-command of the army was set up in Bilaspur which was directly under the army central command. Moreover, the 'Unified command Structure' has been already put in place in order to centrally coordinate OGH in various states under the central Home Ministry. In the pretext of setting up 'training camps' the state is preparing the army to confront the struggling people directly. According to *The Hindu* the army has marked out 600 square kilometers for its camp out of the 4000 sq.km. area of Abujhmad. Thus by carving out such a big area the army will not only clear the forests but will also displace the local people. There will be invariable use of force to displace the people living here. So in the process of setting up of camps the army will attack the

people and in the name of land-grab they will perpetrate further atrocities. This is clear from a statement made by the army in 'Jansatta' on 23 March 2011, where they clearly stated to have "the right to attack first and not always to wait for their enemy to attack first". Thus training camp is just a pretext to actually spread state-terror in this region to devastate the forests, grab the land and mineral resources and ravage the people's movements. The army trainer in Kanker, Brigadier Panwar spoke about his intentions in clear terms by declaring that "this is to tell the Maoists clearly that the lion is waiting right outside your doorstep".

The incursion of the Army must be opposed. The central government has an undeclared understanding that the central region of the country belongs to foreign corporates. Thus although they sugar-coated their project with terms like 'training' etc. they are actually trying desperately to remove the entire adivasi population from this region and hand over the land and resources to the corporates. As a part of the same project they had earlier used Salwa Judum to clear 650 villages and forced its residents to migrate outside or stay in government camps as prisoners. When the force of people's movements ousted this project of the government, the state is now using army to further its agenda. That is why they are planning to capture this huge area of 600 sq km. Using these bases as their stepping stone, the army would penetrate deep into the forested adivasi areas and 'clear' them for the corporate. This will be done by using the might of force and by unleashing violence, thereby pushing the country towards an inevitable civil war. Forum against War on People appeals to the progressive and democratic sections of the society to raise a strong voice of protest and opposition to the Indian state's decision of setting up these army bases, so as to put a stop to this genocidal war on people.

21 May 2011

Forum Against War on People

Bengal

THE COLLAPSE OF THE 'LEFT FRONT' IN WEST BENGAL AND THE WAY AHEAD FOR THE INDIAN LEFT

Dipankar Bhattacharya

The inevitable has finally happened. The Left Front government of West Bengal, the longest-serving government in India's parliamentary history, has been trounced quite miserably in the recent Assembly elections. The defeat certainly has not come all of a sudden – all recent elections including the 2008 panchayat elections, 2009 Lok Sabha elections, 2010 municipal elections and several by-elections had clearly revealed that the CPI (M)-led dispensation had been losing ground quite alarmingly. The 2011 Assembly elections marked the culmination of this process of decline of the CPI (M) in West Bengal.

Large sections of the mainstream media, in West Bengal as well as elsewhere, have tended to treat the defeat of the CPI (M) and its allies in West Bengal as a turning point signifying an end of sorts for the Left in India. They also understandably rush to attribute it to the Left's dogmatic opposition to neo-liberal policies and Indo-US strategic partnership. The advice naturally follows that if the Left has to stay relevant it will have to shed its dogma and reduce Left politics to just providing better governance without challenging the policy environment and the politico-economic direction chosen by the ruling elite.

The problem with this analysis is that it has nothing to do with what has actually happened in West Bengal. In fact, the Left Front government of West Bengal had precisely begun to follow this much advised path of ruling class wisdom. A few years ago, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee was the greatest darling of the corporate media, much like Chandrababu Naidu in his heyday or Narendra Modi, Naveen Patnaik and Nitish Kumar in their current phases. Some media houses had even enthusiastically elevated him to a new brand of Left politics in India, 'brand Buddha' as they fondly called it. The CPI (M) has not gone down in West Bengal resisting the LPG policies, it has just paid the price for daring to implement those policies by trampling upon the rights and interests of the rural poor and the labouring peasantry.

Let us look at the context and circumstances of the CPI (M)'s ouster in West Bengal. Its government has not been toppled by a hostile Centre. Nor has the ouster been scripted by the Tatas or some major

corporate lobbies for being denied entry into West Bengal or being driven out of West Bengal through militant trade unionism. What has cost the CPI (M) its flagship state is not a feudal backlash against the party's much-trumpeted record of land reforms. Nor is it a revolt of an upwardly mobile middle class angered by the non-fulfilment of its consumerist dreams of globalised grandeur. On the contrary, it is essentially a peasant rebellion on the good old plank of land, livelihood and democracy which has gone on to produce this most spectacular electoral drubbing for the CPI (M).

If the dominant media analysis of the CPI (M)'s West Bengal debacle is totally misplaced, and the therapy suggested mischievously motivated, the CPI (M)'s own response is nothing but characteristically evasive and hollow. Ever since the peasant protests started in Singur five years ago, the CPI (M) dismissed it as an anti-industry campaign and accused whoever stood by the protesting peasants of Singur of being a Narodnik or Luddite. When Nandigram happened, the CPI (M) called it an anti-Left conspiracy hatched jointly by the far-right and the ultra-left. When Lalgarh revolted against police atrocities, the CPI (M) made common cause with the Centre to unleash a combined paramilitary campaign. It is only after the drubbing in Lok Sabha elections that the CPI (M) started admitting that something had gone wrong and promised to rectify and bounce back.

But there was never any clear admission of major political mistakes, no sincere apologies tendered for the forcible land acquisition in Singur or the massacres in Nandigram and certainly no attempt at course correction. This is why Nandigram was repeated in Netai and CPI (M) leaders continued to make arrogant boasts and several leaders went on to deliver vulgar sexist speeches reflecting a feudal-patriarchal mindset all through the election. The debacle in the Lok Sabha election was reduced to a simple statistical deficit of only 11 lakh votes and words went around that the deficit could easily be neutralized by ensuring a few additional votes in every booth!

Even now CPI (M) leaders talk in terms of bringing back the 'deserters' and regaining the confidence of the people who have been 'alienated'. There is absolutely no recognition of the sense of derailment that all sincere Left activists and well-wishers can feel so acutely and of the fact that what the CPI (M) is now confronting is its own increasing isolation and even insulation from the broad masses of working people and large sections of the progressive democratic intelligentsia, and not just the problem of managing a few 'dissidents' or 'deserters'!

Trying to put up a brave face, CPI (M) leaders now present the West Bengal debacle as a mere defeat in one election after seven victories in a row. They would like us to believe that the people of West Bengal had desired change just for the sake of it, perhaps because of some time-induced fatigue and there is nothing more to it. They also tell us that elections are just a part of their overall political activity, and a poor showing in one election has therefore no political implication. But however much they may try to downplay the impact of the Bengal blow, the fact remains that West Bengal is not just any average state for the CPI (M). For three and a half decades now, West Bengal was the biggest bastion of the CPI (M) and what the CPI (M) has just experienced in Bengal is not a normal election defeat as it experiences in Kerala in every alternate elections, but a veritable collapse of its 'impregnable fortress'.

We are reminded time and again by CPI (M) propagandists of their achievement in carrying out land reforms in West Bengal and establishing the panchayati raj in West Bengal. This inspires little conviction today when the CPI (M) is being indicted by the rural poor precisely for reversal of land reforms, eviction of peasants and share-croppers and large-scale denial of routine panchayat benefits to the deserving and the needy. It is quite like the Congress talking of bringing independence and parliamentary democracy at a time when the people experience growing US domination in every sphere and systematic assault on democracy through draconian laws and military campaigns!

Ironically, the West Bengal elections have not only extracted a heavy price from the CPI (M) for its shameless acts of opportunism and renegacy, they have also exposed the utter political bankruptcy of the Maoists. In the wake of the peasant revolt of Nandigram and the adivasi resistance of Lalgarh, Maoists had found a fertile political ground in the forested areas of the western region of West Bengal called Jangalmahal. They flowed with the growing tide in West Bengal, declared their support for Mamata Banerjee as the next CM and got sensational and often sympathetic coverage in the West Bengal media. But they were only interested in their kind of armed actions, indiscriminately targeting CPI (M) leaders and activists and derailing the powerful militant mass upsurge of Lalgarh in the face of heightened state repression. When Chhatradhar Mahato, the main surviving face of the Lalgarh movement decided to contest the Assembly election from Jhargram, the Maoists virtually disowned him and many of them projected it as a diversion that would help the CPI (M) and damage the TMC's prospect! In the event, while the

TMC candidate won the seat, Chhatradhar finished third with an impressive support of 20,000 votes.

The Mamata Banerjee-led dispensation has now taken over. As reflected in the thumping win of the TMC-Congress combine, one can clearly see ex-pressions of a massive popular euphoria on the streets of West Bengal. Perhaps such early euphoria is quite understandable at this hour of change and transition, and there is undoubtedly an element of spontaneity in it, but one can also clearly discern the beginning of a very conscious, concerted and comprehensive campaign by the Right to use this euphoria as a veritable license to launch all kinds of attacks on all streams of Left politics and ideology. An aggressive rightward shift would of course be out of tune with the overwhelming spirit of the West Bengal verdict and revolutionary communists will have to boldly invoke and nurture the popular democratic core of the protest movements of the recent past to challenge and confront the unfolding rightwing agenda.

It remains to be seen how the CPI (M) proposes to reinvent itself as an opposition party in West Bengal. After 34 years of government-centric existence, the implications of the party being forced to go back to the people as an opposition party, and what is more, as a professed party of class and mass struggle, will be quite interesting to watch. For revolutionary communists and all sections of sincere Left forces, the present juncture is surely an hour of profound possibilities and challenges both within West Bengal and on the national political plane. The CPI (M) model of government-centric 'Left unity' has suffered an unprecedented blow and the time has surely come for the fighting Left to regroup and march ahead with the agenda of people's struggles. In December 2007, the CPI(ML)'s 8th Congress held in Kolkata had issued the clarion call: "People's Resistance, Left Resurgence". There has been no dearth of powerful struggles in the country during the last two decades of neo-liberal offensive, the Left can move forward only by forging stronger ties with the people and organically championing and leading the struggles of the people through to the end. And with the government-centric, CPI (M)-centric image of the Left getting a body blow, it is indeed time that the role of the Left as a consistently democratic and fighting force acquired greater prominence and the revolutionary Left came to the fore as the driving force of the Left camp in India.

Note: The author is the General Secretary, CPI (ML) Liberation.

Delhi

DELHI DHARNA AGAINST CORRUPTION & PRICE RISE AND IN DEFENSE OF DEMOCRATIC RIGHTS

A massive dharna was organised today at Jantar mantar by over thirty (30) left political parties and mass organisations of student, youth, women and workers, such as — CPI(M), CPI, RSP, AIFB, CPI(ML) Liberation, SUCI-C, CPI(ML-ND), Peoples Front, Yuva Bharat, PDFI, WPI, AIDWA, NFIW, AIMSS, SFI, AISF, AIDSO, AISA, DYFI, AIYF, RYA, SYAC, AIDYO, CITU, AITUC, AIFTU, AICCTU, IFTU, AIUTUC, Journalists (Seema Mustafa, Khalilul Rahman), Teachers (Kamal Chenoy, Anuradha Chenoy, S.N. Malakar) and Teesra Swadheenta Andolan — and other concerned citizens including journalists and teachers. Through this dharna attention was focused on the concerns of the people and the central government's inability, and unwillingness, to deal with the issues of rising prices and corruption.

Proceedings of the dharna were conducted by Amarjit Kaur (CPI) and Vijender Sharma (CPI-M). Fourteen speakers addressed the dharna which included Atul Kumar Anjaan (CPI), Gopal Rai (Teesra Swadhinta Andolan), Albeena Shakil (CPI-M), Asit Ganguly (RSP), Dharmendra Kumar (AIFB), Kavita Krishnan (CPI-ML), Pratap Sawal (SUCI-C), Naresh Gupta (People's Front), Arjun Prasad Singh (PDFI), P.C. Henza (WPI), Aparna (CPI-ML-ND), Rakesh Rafiq (Yuva Bharat), P.K. Shahi (AIFTU) and Khalilul Rahman (Journalist). The speakers criticized the pro-rich, anti-people and anti-poor policies of the UPA government which has proved to be incapable of handling crisis and challenges. Spiraling prices and increasing corruption involving politicians, industrialists and their lobbyists has put the UPA and its allies on the defensive to the point where the government is adopting authoritarian tactics to deny civil society and the people of India the right to democratic space.

The Left and democratic forces have been highlighting these issues for several years now, suggesting concrete measures to bring down the prices, tackle corruption and bring relief to the common man. Unfortunately, the government has apathetic and indifferent to these vital issues. Instead it is resorting to increasingly authoritarian measures with the democratic rights of the people being seriously impinged upon by the state. The Left parties and organizations have decided to launch a united, mass political action starting with today's dharna. We call upon the government to take immediate measures to curtail corruption and tackle

price rise. The Lokpal Bill can be just one of the many steps required for a meaningful and effective response to corruption that is eating into the vitals of India.

After a long gap various types of left and democratic forces came together to raise voices against Corruption & Price Rise and in Defense of Democratic Rights. As the state is going more and more repressive, there is an urgent need to organize united resistance against all kinds of repression and exploitation. This Dharna has initiated the process of broader unity.

New Delhi, June 15, 2011

People's Democratic Front of India

Gorakhpur

DEMAND FOR URGENT ACTION: FIRING INCIDENT ON WORKERS BY HIRED GOONS OF FACTORY OWNERS IN GORAKHPUR (UP), INDIA

To:

Ms. Mayawati
Hon. Chief Minister,
Uttar Pradesh Government

We, the undersigned, strongly condemn the gruesome incident of indiscriminate firing upon the factory workers of Ankur Udyog Ltd, Gorakhpur (UP) on 3rd May by the dreaded criminals hired by the factory owners which caused serious injuries to 19 workers. The workers were protesting the suspension of 18 of their colleagues. The factory owners were unhappy with the workers and wanted to “teach them a lesson” because they had enthusiastically participated in large numbers in May Day rally held in New Delhi where thousands of workers had gathered from different parts of the country as part of the Workers’ Charter Movement 2011 to demand their basic constitutional and legal rights.

This heinous incident is just a new episode of a series of shenanigans resorted by the industrialists of the Gorakhpur region in the last couple of years to stop the workers from uniting and organizing for their just and lawful demands. What is more intriguing, however, is the fact that the local political, administrative and police machinery is fully hand in glove with the industrialists in their nefarious design. It is evident from the fact that even though the workers had laid siege to the factory after the firing took place and encircled the criminals who opened fire, the police allowed the criminals to go scot free after reaching at the site. Instead of arresting the criminals the police arrested few workers and an attempt is being made to implicate the workers and their leaders in false charges. The rabid anti-labour and fascist attitude of the BJP Member of Parliament of the area, Yogi Adityanath has added salt to the injury of the workers. Ever since the workers of Gorakhpur started an organized movement two years ago, Adityanath has been attacking it through a mindless smear campaign in the regional media that this movement is being run by “Maoist-Terrorists” and had even tried to communalise the issue by claiming that the movement is being “funded by the Church”.

The workers of the industrial areas of Gorakhpur are living a life which can at best be described as inhuman. The labour laws related to the

minimum wages, overtime, working hours, job card, PF,ESI, safe working condition etc exist only on paper. The local administration has completely failed to fulfil its constitutional and legal obligation to implement these laws. Two years ago, the workers of this region started an organized movement for the basic demands of implementing the labour laws in the factory. But instead of paying heed to the just and lawful demands of the workers, the administration started conspiring to break the back of this movement at the behest of the industrialists. The leaders of workers, who went to the DLC's office for a dialogue, were taken into illegal detention and were beaten brutally. They were slapped with false charges and there were reports that they could be even encountered by branding them as "Maoists". It was only after a campaign was organized by several democratic and civil right groups and intellectuals that the administration had to finally release the leaders.

This time around the workers had to face bullet simply because they dared to go on leave for a couple of days to attend the May Day Rally in Delhi as part of the Workers' Charter Movement. In the countdown to this rally, the factory owners had been threatening the workers to "teach them a lesson" if they dared to attend the rally. The Divisional Commissioner of the division also issued a statement in the media that the "outside elements" who are instigating the workers would not be spared. Whatever transpired after the rally has completely exposed the politician-businessman-administration nexus in the region.

Clearly there is a condition of total anarchy prevailing in the industrial landscape of Gorakhpur. Ms. Chief Minister, you have often given statements in the media about the need of a determined fight against the menace of terrorism. We just hope that your definition of terrorism encompasses this naked reign of terror of the industrialists in connivance with the local administration which prevails in Gorakhpur. In order to restore normalcy in the region we demand that:

- * the criminals who fired upon the unarmed workers and the factory owner who hired them be arrested immediately and tried;
- * a judicial inquiry should be instituted on this entire episode including the on the complicity of the local administration and police and the guilty officials be punished;
- * all the false cases against the workers be revoked immediately;
- * suspension of all 18 workers be revoked and the illegal lockout by the two factory owners be ended.

May 8, 2011

Jammu and Kashmir

PROBE INTO THE KILLINGS OF POLITICAL WORKERS IN JAMMU KASHMIR

JKCCS

Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society (JKCCS) is concerned at the spate of killing of civilian political workers belonging to different religious and political parties. So far in this year, five civilian political workers have been killed.

- * Farooq Ahmed Sheikh s/o Abdul Gani Sheikh, of Koil Pulwama was shot dead on 6th February. Farooq Ahmed was a National Conference activist.
- * Ghulam Hassan Dar (47), s/o Ghulam Muhammad of Dander Mohalla, Hajin Bandipora was shot on 18th February. Ghulam Hassan was associated with National Conference.
- * Abdul Rashid s/o Mohammad Akbar of Nowbugh Chadoora was strangulated to death on 16th March. Abdul Rashid was a Congress worker.
- * Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din Bhat of Pinglish, Tral was shot dead in the evening of 30th March. Ghulam Mohi-ud-Din was NC Block President.
- * Moulvi Showkat Ahmed Shah (55), president of Jamiat-e-Ahli Hadith was killed in an IED blast outside Jamia Masjid Ahle Hadith, Gow Kadal, Srinagar on 8th April.

As a civil society organization, JKCCS has always expressed unacceptability of any civilian killings at the hands of any state or non-state actors. Killing of civilian political workers only creates a culture of intolerance and chokes dissent.

JKCCS has been urging all the combatant forces – Indian military forces and the members of United Jihad Council to refrain from killing any civilian political workers. In March 2010, United Jihad Council responded positively to the demand made by JKCCS regarding the observance of International Humanitarian principles in Jammu and Kashmir.

JKCCS demands an impartial and independent investigation into all the killings of civilian political workers. Impartial investigations would help bringing the perpetrators to justice and also act as a deterrent.

Political killings in Jammu and Kashmir have always remained an enigma. Every time it results into blame game, this only has helped the perpetrators to escape responsibility.

11th April 2011

Spokesperson
Jammu Kashmir Coalition of Civil Society

HUNDREDS HELD EACH YEAR WITHOUT CHARGE OR TRIAL

The Indian state of Jammu and Kashmir is holding hundreds of people each year without charge or trial in order to ‘keep them out of circulation’, a new Amnesty International report released on 21 March 2011 shows.

A ‘*Lawless Law*’: *Detentions under the Jammu and Kashmir Public Safety Act*, documents how the Public Safety Act (PSA) is used to secure the long-term detention of individuals against whom there is insufficient evidence for a trial.

Estimates of the number detained under the PSA over the past two decades range from 8,000-20,000, with 322 reportedly held from January to September 2010 alone.

“The Jammu and Kashmir authorities are using PSA detentions as a revolving door to keep people they can’t or won’t convict through proper legal channels locked up and out of the way,” said Sam Zarifi, Amnesty International’s Asia-Pacific Director.

“Hundreds of people are being held each year on spurious grounds, with many exposed to higher risk of torture and other forms of ill-treatment.”

Detainees include political leaders and activists, suspected members or supporters of armed opposition groups, lawyers, journalists and protesters, including children. Often, they are initially picked up for ‘unofficial’ interrogation, during which time they have no access to a lawyer or their families.

Over the past decade there has been a marked decrease in the overall numbers of members of armed groups operating in Jammu and

Kashmir. But in the last five years, there has been a resurgence of street protests.

“Despite this apparent shift in the nature of the unrest, Jammu and Kashmir authorities continue to rely on the PSA rather than attempting to charge and try those suspected of committing criminal acts,” said Sam Zarifi. “The PSA undermines the rule of law and reinforces deeply held perceptions that police and security forces are above the law.”

Amnesty International research shows how the implementation of the PSA is often arbitrary and abusive, with many of those being held having committed no recognizably criminal acts. The Indian Supreme Court has described administrative detention, including the PSA, as ‘lawless law’.

Those held under the PSA can face up to two years in detention. But the Jammu and Kashmir authorities consistently thwart High Court orders for the release of improperly detained individuals by issuing successive detention orders. Many detainees are thus trapped in a cycle of detention and remain, in the words of one high-ranking Jammu and Kashmir official, ‘out of circulation’.

The PSA provides immunity from prosecution for officials operating under it.

“Those being held have no access to legal representation and cannot challenge their detention in any meaningful way,” said Sam Zarifi. “Once released, they cannot seek any redress or compensation for the wrongful detention they have endured and virtually never receive justice for the torture and ill-treatment.”

Amnesty International acknowledges the right, indeed the duty, of Indian authorities to defend and protect their population from violence. However, this must be done while respecting the human rights of all concerned and abiding by international law.

“The use of administrative detention does not conform to international human rights legal obligations and agreements that the Indian government is a party to,” said Sam Zarifi. “The Indian government must ensure that Jammu and Kashmir authorities repeal the PSA and end the odious system of administration detention once and for all.”

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Jammu and Kashmir to:

- * Repeal the PSA and end the system of administrative detention, releasing all detainees or charging those suspected of committing criminal acts with recognized offences and trying them fairly in a court of law.
- * End illegal detentions and introduce safeguards ensuring those detained are charged promptly, have access to relatives, legal council and medical examinations and are held in recognized detention facilities pending trial.

Amnesty International is calling on the Government of Jammu and Kashmir and the Indian Government to:

- * Carry out an independent, impartial and comprehensive investigation into allegations of abuses against detainees and their families, including allegations of torture and other ill-treatment, denial of visits and medical care, making its findings public and holding those responsible to account.

Amnesty International is calling on the Indian Government to:

- * Invite and support visits of UN officials, including the Special Rapporteur on Torture and the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention.

Source: <http://www.amnesty.org/en/news-and-updates/report/jammu-and-kashmir-hundreds-held-each-year-without-charge-or-trial-2011-03-21> (accessed on 22 March 2011)

Manipur

ECONOMIC QUESTION IN MANIPUR; THE DISCOURSE OF UNDERDEVELOPMENT

Malem Ningthouja

Introduction

Spectre of economic crisis looms over Manipur. It is a crisis characterised by: (a) dependence on import of commodity and money, (b) capital accumulation at the market dominantly controlled by the Indian monopolists that drain wealth of the people, (c) corruption, misappropriation and mismanagement of fund by the State machineries and (c) comparative underdevelopment that has serious repercussion on peasants and workers. The crisis is emanated as a result of Manipur's unfavourable balance of exchange with the outside world. In other words, annexation of Manipur by the capitalist Dominion of India in 1949 and a corresponding finance imperialism superimposed since then had been systematically destroying the material premises of sustainable development. Manipur has been heading towards impoverishment and dependence. While state terrorism, e.g., Armed Forces Special Powers 1958, camouflaged under the propagandist 'security cover' has been a primary threat to the rights to life and remains a challenging issue; the political economy of State terrorism is better explained by the class agenda of the Indian rulers who are operating in Manipur.

Indian National paradox

India had neither been a nation nor federation of peoples based on voluntary unionism. Firstly, material condition for a common national psychological expression manifested in a cultural way of life has been missing among the peoples. Semi-feudalism and communal, racial and nationality questions remained largely operating and unresolved. Secondly, present Indian Union is a mechanistically constituted political community created through political manoeuvring and use of military forces. In the context of what is being termed the Northeast Region, the Indian ruling class, through adopting terror tactics and unjust policies, became the *de facto* inheritor of the British colonial assets. Consistent national liberation movement in Kashmir and Northeast suggests perennial suppression of the right of sovereignty the nationalities. India is, therefore, neither a nation nor a democratic federation formed on the basis of voluntary unionism.

The historical courses of forcibly annexation of Manipur in 1949, border bargaining with Burma till 1953, the Assam Disturbed Areas Act of 1955, the Armed Forces Special Powers Act, 1958, the India-China Border War of 1962, and the Look East Policy since 1990s are few examples that suggested for an enduring class interest of the Indian ruling class towards playing the dominant imperialist role in the Northeast Region and Southeast Asia. Precisely, Indian rulers' geo-strategic interest in the Northeast has been conceptualised on the basis of the ideological framework of capitalist expansionism. It has been a threat to the political independence and economic development of nationalities and freedom yearning political communities. The nationhood claim for India encompassing the Northeast is a paradox covering beneath its cloak class project that are primarily suppressive and exploitative at the receiving end. The economic crisis in Manipur, therefore, is a material condition of finance imperialism enforced by the Indian ruling class.

Teleological fabrication

Economic crisis in Manipur contradicts economic growth that is being projected in the teleological fabrication widely articulated by the Indian rulers. For the purpose of analysis one may concentrate on 1972 as the vantage point. The year 1972 is considered a vantage point primarily for the reason that the Indian State had identified statehood with political autonomy, i.e., relative economic development.

According to the government reports Manipur has been economically integrated under the Indian Five Years Plans. The growth in the number of town from 1 in 1951 to 33 in 2001 has been construed as one of the several indicators of economic growth. Similarly, comparative analysis of the Indian Five Years Plans have suggested for a steady rise in the gross estimates of expenditure or plan outlay, particularly after the Fourth Five Years Plan.

- According to the Planning Commission of India, plan outlay for Manipur have increased from Rs 2 crore, to Rs 6 crore, to Rs. 12.9 crore, Rs. 30.25 crore in the first four five years plans.
- During the period after statehood in 1972 Manipur have benefited from economic programmes instituted by the North East Council.
- An increase in fund inflow from the Centre becomes apparent by 1980, e.g., Central assistance to Manipur was increased from Rs. 286.51 crore in the Sixth Plan, to Rs. 613.44 crore in the Seventh Plan, to Rs. 1,230.03 crore in the Eighth Plan, to Rs. 2,493.61 (agreed) in the Ninth Plan and to Rs. 2,166.42 (projected) in the Tenth Plan.

- Plan outlay for Manipur was increased dramatically from Rs. 30.25 crore in the fourth Five Years Plan to Rs 430.00 crore in the seventh Five Years Plan (1985-1990). It was further increased to Rs. 1787.01 crore (Expenditure) in the ninth Five Years Plan and further to Rs. 2804.00 crore (Outlay) in the tenth Five Years Plan.
- Manipur enjoys status of Special Areas, i.e., strategically important and backward. It has been financially improving through funding and finance management under various institutions such as the North Eastern Development Finance Corporation Limited (NEDFI), established on August 9, 1995 and the Ministry of Development of Northeastern Region (DONER), established in September 2001.
- Apart from receiving investment under Border Area Development Programme, funds & grants for Manipur are allocated through Non-Lapsable Central Pool of Resources.
- By the time an Indo-ASEAN Car Rally for promotion of international trade was held in November 2004 Manipur have been an economic focus for successful implementation of India's Look East Policy.

The government reports, therefore, argued for an endless effort to improve economic condition of Manipur and had projected positive growth in the North Eastern Region Vision 2020.

Economy sans welfare

Quite contrary to the apparent growth as mentioned in the fabricated teleology, reading against the grain of parallel reports and researches illustrated a comparatively backward economy for Manipur. Economic condition of Manipur since 1949 "had not improved even up to the level of subsistence." The fact that Manipur was under the Central Rule from 1949 to 1971 would have had tremendous economic growth during this period had it not been for the super profit agenda of the Indian rulers.

- During this period various mega industrial establishments costing thousands of crore of rupees to the Consolidated Fund of India were set up in the privileged States of mainland India. However, till the fifth Five-Year Plan Manipur got 1.55, 6.25, 12.88, 30.15 crore respectively, i.e., too little for development. And the corrupt Indian bureaucrats did not fully utilize it for any initial stage of development".

- According to a report of the Institute for Human Development, New Delhi, Manipur as late as 2005 continued to be largely underdeveloped and agrarian with a weak industrial sector and inflated services sector. Analysing growth and interstate disparities in India would reveal that Manipur which had a low ranking economy in the period beginning with 1960-61 had continued to be in lower rank throughout the period till 1995-96.
- As far as developmental and fiscal deficit are concerned, “the share of the state in the All India Net Domestic Product remained stagnant at 0.2 per cent almost throughout the period 1991-92 to 2001-02”. Till 1993 Manipur has deficit of 158 crore Rupees. As a result Manipur’s own resources in the tenth Five Years Plan had been Rs – (minus) 362.42 crore.
- As far as Per Capita Income of Manipur is concerned, in 1980-81 (at 1993-94 Prices) it had stood at Rs. 4901 against all India income of Rs. 5966; and correspondingly at Rs 5811 against Rs. 8759 in 1993-94; Rs. 8963 against Rs. 12496 in 2001-02 respectively.
- According to the 55th Round of the National Sample Survey Organisation’s (NSSO) (July 1999 to June 2000), though the poverty ratio had declined, the number of poor had increased from 5.86 lakhs in 1973-1974 to 7.19 lakhs in 1999-2000.
- The NSSO 61st Round survey report has showed a drastic decline in the number of poverty to 3.95 lakhs in 2004-2005. The decline is based on new methodology of poverty estimation and doesn’t calculate actual number of poor persons whose access to basic requirements of subsistence has been fast declining.
- Unemployment problem among the youths in Manipur increases beyond controllable stage. Financial position of Manipur is considerably weakened and it had resulted in the State Treasuries remaining open for a few days only in each month. “Many have not got their wages for many months”. The Manipur Rifles had attempted a *coup* in 1999 against the government for delaying their monthly salary for months. In 2002 the State was no longer in a position to discharge its debt-service burden. In the year 2005 out of the total number of 356193 households living in Manipur 115600 households were living at the Below Poverty Line.

The overall economic condition remains precarious and unfavourable to growth. The situation contradicts concept of economic welfare. Firstly, economic welfare is a material condition founded on productive utilisation of natural resource and human skills. Productive production is required in order to create and supply effective demands. Secondly, production constitutes the backbone of political economy and as such, good governance is a precondition for effective production. The two understandings suggest that polity and economy are interplaying. In a seemingly democratic Indian sub-continent, the State that is in absolute control over the political economy, therefore, has the obligation to invest for the economic welfare of the people of Manipur. This expectation is not being fulfilled by the Indian rulers whose primary interest in Manipur is concentration and centralisation of capital.

Resource exploited

There has been gradual loss of control over the natural resources (including land) as:

- Resources are regularly de-regulated by the Indian laws and transferred for private use to outsiders, government agencies and corporate bodies for economic exploitation without the consent of the people.
- Natural resources are no longer absolutely managed by the local people. “Forests are stripped off, water bodies destroyed by pollution, hydro-electricity generation projects and neglect of maintenance.”
- Controversial capitalist projects are being forcibly imposed. Capitalist ‘projects’ become controversial as a result of state violation of existing democratic norms, lack of transparency and public accountability, corruption, mismanagement, brutal suppression of public opinion, and arbitrary imposition of projects under the protection of police or paramilitary forces. The controversial Loktak Hydro Electric Power Project and Tipaimukh Dam are few of the several examples to illustrate.

Firstly, the Lokatk Hydro Electric Project, better known as Loktak Project, has been a matter of controversy for several years for various reasons:

- There is visible lack of a Scientific Integrated Approach to systematic utilization of multiple advantages thrown open by Loktak Lake.”

- A total of 27,404.94 acres of agricultural land are lost as a result of the Loktak Project. The government of India has not planned compensation to landowners whose cultivating fields are being destroyed.
- While heavy loss remains uncompensated, the power project is owned and managed by the National Hydro-Electric Power Corporation (NHPC). Instead of supplying electricity for local consumption, the project sells power to neighbouring states. As a result Manipur purchases electricity from Assam for home consumption and suffers from constant blackout.

Secondly, the controversial Tipaimukh is being protested as it created a typical Special Economic Zone for capitalist profiteering and would lead to displacement and destructions.

- According to a protest raised in 2001, "...The proposed 162.80 metres high dam, ... will result in permanent submergence of 275.50 sq kms of land surface in Manipur...The Manipur people's constitutional rights were circumvented by secret approval of the project given during the period of central rule in Manipur (in 2001)... The government of Manipur is at present attempting to sign the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Limited without the participation of the people, particularly the affected people of Tamenglong district. ...".
- The Government of Manipur, however, has decided to go ahead with the project at any cost without taking into consideration public opinion. In March 2009 it had demanded provision of four battalions of central paramilitary forces in addition to the pre-existing forces for deployment in the Tipaimukh project areas.

What becomes apparent is that 'developmental aggression' instituted by the Indian rulers contradicts 'sustainable development.' Whereas 'developmental aggression' represents capitalist material interest, 'sustainable development' required for survival and progress of the people of Manipur remains suppressed.

Uprooted agriculture

In so far as the agriculture sector is concerned, attention given to agricultural development in Manipur from the First to Fourth Five Years

Plan was inadequate for a possible breakthrough into an advanced agriculture.

- The Plan outlays in agriculture from the First to the Fourth Five Years Plans were respectively Rs 6.30; 109.51; 190.97 and 305.66 lakhs only. According to Mohendro "one cannot possibly expect 'impressive' turn with this meagre outlay."
- There was absence of a sound development strategy for agriculture planning guided by the principles of: increased productivity of land and labour; bringing more land under cultivation; and increased intensity of cropping. No attempt was made to strengthen agricultural base in terms of improvement in: Land system, Irrigation, Technology, Institutional finance and etc. No census of land holdings and cultivation was carried out for Manipur as late as 1955.
- According to a survey published in 2006 only 8 per cent of the total geographical area of Manipur was under agricultural operations, compared to the All India average of 64 per cent. The spread of irrigation was comparatively poor with merely 15.5 per cent of the total area cultivated being under irrigation.
- The share of agriculture in the state's income had declined from 45.6 per cent in 1980-81 to 24.7 per cent in 2003-04. Compared to the all India trend, this is a far more steep fall since the share of the primary sector in the state fell from 49 percent in 1980-81 to 29.2 per cent in 2003-04 as against 38 percent to 25 per cent at the all- India level.
- According to the Manipur State Assembly, Manipur had no agricultural policy as late as 2007 and that the matter had been "under active consideration of the Govt."

Disinvested Industrial sector

In so far as the issue of industry is concerned there could have been industrial expansion, at least in the handloom and silk sectors. An analysis of the trend of resource committed to the so-called industrial development conveys a message of less attention.

- The token outlay of Rs. 0.60 lakhs in the first Five Year Plan was increased to Rs. 13.06 lakhs and Rs. 49.39 lakhs only in the second and third Five Year Plans respectively. During the third Five Year Plan sericulture received a share of Rs 4.29 lakhs only as plan allocation. No skill inventory was prepared.

- The Industrial Policy of 1982 had laid primary emphasis on development of large and medium industries. The Industries Policy of 1990 focused mainly on the development of the small-scale sector. However, the State has not witnessed desired level of industrial activity. A new State Industrial Policy was announced in 1996. But it was silent on the necessity for earmarked industrial area. It has not declared any Industrial Area. Industrialisation attempts existed on paper only. No substantial investment in constant capital for manufacturing industrial take off had been initiated by the government.
- Between 1993-94 and 2000-01 the share of industry in Net State Domestic Product had rose from 15.73 percent to 21.75 percent, i.e., 38.27 per cent increase. The increase is due to high share of the construction sub-sector in Manipur, e.g., dams, office buildings and beautification projects. However, Manipur has the largest decline in the share of manufacturing in Net State Domestic Product from 4.61 percent in 1980-81 to 3.37 percent in 1995-96. In 1996-97, the state accounted for the lowest share in the Northeast region.
- High Level Commission Report to the Prime Minister, Government of India in 1997 has stressed that Northeast (Manipur inclusive) has little or no plan resources but heavily indebted in spite of high per capita Plan outlays and subventions. Huge establishment costs exceed state revenue collections as government service provides the sole and certainly the principal avenue of employment. In terms of per capita state domestic product or other standard development indices such as power, road length or hospital beds, the Northeast ranks well below the national average.
- In 2002, out of 2014 registered factories, 80.3 per cent were rice mills, another 10.3 per cent were saw-mills and 4.76 per cent were oil mills. The situation had not been improved as late as 2005. In 2005 most of the State-Owned corporations have been closed. 30.86 percent of Small Scale Industry units were sick and 90 percent of micro enterprises were in trouble.

Marginal peasants & workers

Internal dynamics within Manipur between the period 1950 and 2000 has revealed dramatic rise in population and corresponding rise in the consumption demand. Slow growth in the productive scale, slow scale

improvement in the instrument of production and disproportionate investment could not satisfy demands.

- In other words the Indian State has expected private investment when a backward region such as Manipur requires for tremendous investment in the public sector. As a result productive capacity of Manipur has not been built up over a long period of time and, therefore, its resource base could not be effectively moulded into the development process of Manipur.
- Food grains, pulses, vegetables, fruits, edible oil, milk and dairy products, medicines, snacks, liquor, poultry products, fish and almost all varieties of consumer goods of day-to-day usage are imported from outside.
- Effective demand for import leads to export of money that has been largely derived from service sector and imperialistic loan & fund. As a result of comparative decline in local production, heavy reliance on import drains the wealth of the people.

A steady rise in the number of poor has been indicated by the growth of marginal workers.

- According to the official record the number of marginal workers has increased from 40,469 in 1981; to 66,621 in 1991 and to 285849 in 2001. During 1991-2001, the growth rate of marginal workers was 329 percent.
- As far as the incidence of unemployment is concerned, in 1983 the rate of unemployment was 0.4 percent of the total labour force. It was increased to 1.8 per cent in 1993-94; further increased to 3.5 percent in 1999-2000.
- According to the department of Planning, Government of Manipur, 21.58 % of the total population remained unemployed in 2005 (4.93 lakhs).

The growth in the number of poor is more or less explained by relative decline in landholding and continuous breaking down of household based subsistence economy.

- According to the report of the Statistics Department, Government of Manipur, the actual area under landholding increased by 16734 hectares between the years 1975 and 1990. The increase was due to deforestation and claiming of hitherto unclaimed lands. However, total number of holders increases by 281 only.

- Analysing the breakup of the statistics reveals that actual area of large holding (above 10 hectares) increased by 45 hectares only and the number of holders by 9 only. The corresponding figure was 4685 hectares and 811 holders in case of medium (between 4 and 9.99 hectares); and 6082 hectares and 1392 holders in case of semi-medium (between 2 and 3.99 hectares) respectively. The statistics reveals a different picture in case of both the small (between 1 and 1.99) and marginal (below 1 hectare) holdings. In case of small holding the actual area under this category increased by 6109 hectares but the number of holders was declined by 343 holders.
- In case of marginal holding, both the area under this category and number of holders declined by 187 hectares and 1588 holders respectively. The overall area of holding of marginal class in 1990-91 was 37820 hectares against the overall area under holding, i.e. 174981.

It is likely that a sizable number of the marginal holders completely parted with land but some new holders emerge all of a sudden taking over those parted lands or pre-existing richer holders bought up the parted land. There appeared to be transfer of holdings without causing much affect in the number of holders in that category. A further fall in the number of the holders of the marginal category was rather prevented due to three reasons.

- Firstly, in compliance with the customary distribution of property for inheritance among family members, those big holders above the level of marginal produced both small and marginal holders through fragmentation.
- Secondly, fragmentation by those in the category of marginal produced the category of marginal only.
- Thirdly, family without any inheritance of holding became better off and started buying up land of that category.

An equally alarming situation has been the process of fragmentation of land for the purpose of housing or conversion of household gardens into construction. It creates disequilibrium in the household subsistence economy that relies heavily on it for garden products such as vegetables, firewood, fruits, flowers, pulses, grains, roots, stems and other daily requirements.

- In the central valley areas the total area declined between 1985 and 2001 under the category of forest, non-agricultural usage area, barren, pasture or grazing, misc., culturable waste land, fallows was 20760 hectares. Since the area actually used for showing crops during the corresponding period increased by 15305 hectares only it is likely that the rest of the 5454 hectares were used for the purpose of constructing roads, government and private complexes, institutions and settlement areas.
- There is considerable scale of conversion of household gardens for construction purposes. People could not afford to build multi-storeyed buildings and, therefore, they extended their construction horizontally on ground floor. One then has to increasingly depend on market for everything including those items hitherto available in respective household gardens. And since the opportunity to earn money is always scarce, material interest of the large chunk of poor remains unfulfilled.

Accumulation of Capital

Bribery, corruption and misappropriation of fund at the superstructure level and service sectors have deprived a large chunk of peasants and workers of positive investment, free and fair resource mobilisation, and other economic opportunities. Capital is dominantly accumulated by a microscopic section of the population basically composed of political leaders, bureaucrats, smugglers, absentee landlords and professional groups who ran profiteering enterprises and indulge in corruption and misappropriation of fund. The microscopic section is least affected by the economic crisis as long as they are agents and promoter of finance imperialism. The capital they accumulate is not invested for economic growth. They use it to meet expenses for imports, extravagant activities and living a luxurious livelihood.

Capital accumulation also takes place in the market by outsider monopolists. Most of the consumer goods available in Manipur markets are imported through a network of *Mayang* commercial entrepreneurs who were in control of the Manipur economy. Profit that went into their treasury is repatriated to their respective home state beyond Manipur. Therefore, cosmetic financial incentives or funds that is allocated for Manipur, in the absence of local production, remains under circulation in the market for few days and is siphoned off beyond Manipur through the unfavourable balance of exchange and monopolists. The economy, therefore, is unfavourable to progressive growth. Gradual decline in the economy has

corresponding impact on peasants and workers. Economic experience of Manipur since 1949 has been steady rise in the number of poor and marginalisation. This is an inherent syndrome of capitalism under Indian rule.

Conclusion

There is an organic relation between politics and economy. The material relation between India and Manipur may be understood in terms of the theoretical understanding of Alexander Buzuev that had argued for *economic inequality of nations*. Manipur plays a subjective role under India's capitalism. The forcibly annexation of 1949 was a threshold in placing both India and Manipur into an economic arrangement instituted and governed by the Indian ruling class. It was a threshold to conditioning interrelated phenomenon: firstly, Indian ruling class creating a military base in Manipur for accumulation of super profit from Northeast region and Southeast Asian Countries; secondly, Manipur's loss of political autonomy and a corresponding loss of control over economy and a *vice versa* and; thirdly growing impoverishment of the larger chunk of the population. The Indian State's aggressive attitude towards imposing finance imperialism explains its failure to respond positively to people's demand for accountability, transparency, compensation, rehabilitation, equitable distribution of profits and peoples' role in the decision making. It becomes crucial factor in shaping the prevailing economic condition in Manipur. Manipur and oppressed peoples must have to collectively fight for a progressive change.

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MEMORANDUM SUBMITTED TO THE PRIME MINISTER OF INDIA DEMANDING A TERRORISM FREE AND PEACEFUL MANIPUR.

To,

The Prime Minister of India,
South Block, Raisina Hill,
New Delhi - 110001

Subject: An appeal demanding a terrorism free and peaceful Manipur.

Honourable Sir,

Killing *operandi* continues without restraint in Manipur (India). Five persons including two girl students were killed while eight others sustained injuries in the Sangakpham Bazar bomb blast on 1st August 2011 in Imphal East II. Although the Chief Minister Okram Ibobi has held the insurgent party NSCN-IM as responsible for the bomb blast, the later has refuted the allegation. No organisation / individual have claimed responsibility for the blast. But Manipur has lost lives and several others injured. There has been public clamour for the last few days against the incident and protests are queuing up. We on our part would like to express condolence for those who were killed and express concern for the surviving victims.

The Sangakpham incident, although we condemn, was not the beginning and may not be the last one unless terrorism as an institution is rooted out. We have been experiencing unrestraint terrorist activities such as abduction or killing for ransom; extortion at gun points at offices, homes and highways; warnings and intimidations for settling personal grudge and vengeance; tortures and harassment; indiscriminate firing, planting of land mines, bomb blasting in public places; and etc, which have been routinely carried out in the last one decade. The impact at the grassroots is rampant human rights violation, suppression of democratic voice, injustice, insecurity, war hysteria and mistrust to one another.

Terrorists are operating amongst us, if not ruling over us in varied forms. Many fear to speak out the truth and expose them. But it has become our bounden duty to speak out the truth to bring an end to terrorism. Leaving aside individual terrorism, terrorism as an institutionalised form is largely perpetrated by; (a) The Indian State that imposes repressive Acts including AFSPA 1958 and deploy killing machines that commit repression, fake encounter and cold blooded murder with impunity in the name of defending national security and development, (b) The underground parties who, in the name of revolution and counter-reaction, commit collateral damages and irreparable mistakes and (c) The State agents, communal warlords, and imposters who for personal gain used the cloak of revolution and carried out terrorist activities.

Tracing the root of terrorism is important to bring an end to it. This brings us to rethink and emphasise that terrorism within an administrative entity is dominantly nurtured and perpetuated by the governing State. Practically an oppressive State remains the main supplier and defender of the means of terrorism – guns, bombs, soldiers, police, secret killing agents, gun licensees and other repressive Acts to suppress democratic voices. To perpetuate its rule by creating divisions and disunity among people a totalitarian State may supply arms to communal warlords and reaction to indulge in criminal activity and misrepresent it. In Manipur, the armed groups that wage war against the Indian State, many of whom have become perverted and indulge in criminal activities, are largely the product of the State. Lack of political will on the part of the Indian State to address nationality question and other democratic questions in a democratic way but dependent on militant tactics of suppression, thereby, giving due importance to the voice of gun has promoted armed resistance. Guns & bombs became crucial factors for maintaining *status quo* in the power relation between the rulers and the rebels. Correspondingly,

subsequent growth of warlords, armed gangsters, killing agents, etc., is to be seen as offshoots manufactured within the ideological framework of militancy and terrorism promoted by the State. We, therefore, consider that the Indian State should play important role in rooting out terrorism in Manipur.

We, therefore, appeal:

- (1) The Government of India to initiate peaceful democratic process to address nationality questions in the Indian subcontinent with due acknowledgement to the sentiment and aspiration of the peoples who claimed for different nationhood.
- (2) The Government of India to repeal the Armed Forces Special Powers' Act 1958 and other repressive Acts such as NSA, UAPA, Seditious Act, etc. on the one hand and at the same time demilitarise Manipur.
- (3) The Non State Parties to stop targeting civilians in the name of revolution or for sectarian gains.
- (4) The Civil Societies in Manipur to take non-partisan position and collectively work when it comes to the question of targeting innocent civilians or terrorism in any form by any force.

Thanking You

Dated, Delhi
Monday, 8 August 2011

Document signed by: Samon Beerjurekha, Manipur Students' Association Delhi; Khuman Leima, International Manipuri Mothers' Association; Pranshu Prakash, All India Revolutionary Students' Organisation; Vijay Singh, Janpaksh; Lun, Indian Social Action Forum; Asish Gupta, People's Union for Democratic Rights; H. Sanate, Hmar Students' Association; Alok, Karantikari Yuva Sangathan; Vijay Pratap, All India Students' Association, and; N. Jhulon, Religious Universal Friendship Organisation.

Myanmar

PROTEST AGAINST INDIA ARMS SUPPLY TO BURMA REGIME

Hundred of Indian Civil Society Organizations, Individuals, and Burmese pro-democracy forces staged a peaceful protest demonstration on 22 July 2011 to show disagreement and disappointment to the Government of India for recently supplying arms and ammunition fully loaded in 52 military trucks to the world most notorious Burmese military regime. Those arms and ammunitions would be used by Burma's Army against the Kachin and other ethnic minorities in eastern Burma. It is unacceptable for all peace-loving peoples as the Government of India knowingly supplied weapons and conducted joint military exercises leading to systematic human rights abuses and criminal hostilities against ethnic groups, political activists, journalists and civilians. These unlawful abuses are still being committed by Burma Army even after the installation of so-called civilian type government. Supplying weapons to Burma military dictatorship is not only violating democratic principles but also betraying the people of Burma which will have negative impact on India's long-term interest. We strongly and sincerely urged India to support the Burmese people's movement for restoration of peace and democracy in Burma.

Burma Centre Delhi (BCD)

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Memorandum of BCD endorsed and signed by 46 Indian civil society organizations and 49 Individuals, and 24 Burmese organizations submitted to Dr. Manmohan Singh, Prime Minister, Government of India on 22 July 2011.

To,
Dr. Manmohan Singh
Prime Minister
Government of India

Sub: Condemning the supply of arms by India to the world's most repressive military regime in Burma

Respected Prime Minister,

We are shocked and outraged to learn that Government of India has recently supplied arms and ammunitions fully loaded in 52 military

trucks to the world most notorious Burmese military regime.

We the undersigned believe that India is a nation founded on sound democratic principles. And time and again our nation has proven to uphold the principles of constitutionally elected governments. Further as a nation committed to playing an important, if not pivotal role in maintaining peace in the region, it is unbecoming of a responsible nation to supply arms to countries known to abuse military power. It also belies the recent welcome statement of your UPA government on US suspension of military aids to Pakistan that reads “heavy presence of arms would have disturbed the equilibrium in the region”.

As witnessed by United Nations and International community, democracy and human rights activists in Burma have been imprisoned, intimidated, tortured and put to death for demanding justice, peace, human rights and a democratic government. Presently, there are over 2,200 political prisoners in Burma.

It is beyond question that the Burma military dictatorship would use those arms and ammunitions against the ethnic minority and to assault its own innocent citizens who are struggling for justice, peace and democracy for decades.

If India’s interest is to have a good neighbor which is stable and democratic then India would be better advised to focus on long-term interests i.e. to restore a form of government in Burma that is compatible with present day needs for stability, growth and development within the region and beyond.

We the Civil Society Groups and citizens of India strongly condemn your Government for supplying arms and ammunitions to Burma’s military dictatorship.

We strongly and sincerely urged India to support the Burmese people’s movement for restoration of peace and democracy in Burma.

22 July 2011
New Delhi

Nepal

THE INTERNATIONAL COMMUNIST MOVEMENT AND NEPALESE REVOLUTION

Indra Mohan Sigdel ‘Basanta’

The world communist movement, which suffered a serious setback as of the counter-revolution in Russia in 1956, had to suffer another bigger setback of counter-revolution in China after Mao’s demise in 1976. While arriving at the counter-revolution in China, the proletariat that exercised at one time socialism in a one third of the globe reached to such a situation at which there was no single socialist country in the world. It was an awful defeat for the world proletariat. However, the communist revolutionaries, who believe Marxism i.e. the dialectical historical materialism is a guide to action, never got disappointed but taking lessons from such defeats advanced further. The proletariat, which had been struggling against counter-revolution, succeeded to realise two important achievements in 1980s.

The initiation in 1981 of people’s war by the Peruvian Communist Party led by comrade Gonzalo was the first feat on the part of proletariat in that decade. And second one was the founding of the Revolutionary Internationalist Movement in 1984. Everyone is aware that the Revolutionary Communist Party of America, the RCP USA, apart from other revolutionary parties, had had an important role in organising the RIM. When there was widespread disappointment among the people due to counter-revolution these two achievements can be regarded as two important milestones in the erstwhile communist movement. It is evident that these two political events had succeeded to create all across the globe a new revolutionary wave in the erstwhile international communist movement, which was very weak from the standpoint of organisation and struggle.

No revolutionary can and should forget the ideological energy imparted to the entire party cadres and the Nepalese people in favour of new democratic revolution in Nepal by a revolutionary song, ‘Our red flag is flying in Peru’, sung at the time of initiation of people’s war in Nepal. Nor can and should a revolutionary forget the further ideological clarity that our party acquired from discussion and exchange of experiences among various revolutionaries all across the world. For a revolutionary the internal aspect is principal, but it is also clear that the deep discussions, interactions and debates that took place with the revolutionaries in India

and those within RIM played an important role for the preparation of great people's war in Nepal. Playing down it does not suit to a revolutionary.

New democratic revolution in Nepal is a part and parcel of the world proletarian revolution. All through the time of preparation, initiation and continuation of people's war our party had seriously grasped that the Nepalese revolution serves the world proletarian revolution and vice versa. It is also clear that our party had seriously grasped the proletarian internationalism at that time. In addition to a PBM, deputation of five efficient cadres to work in the RIM clarifies how seriously our party had comprehended then the importance of proletarian internationalism. Together with our party, the entire RIM had served the world proletarian revolution by accomplishing important revolutionary tasks at that time. From the viewpoint of ideology, organisation and struggle, some of the tasks that RIM had accomplished in favour of the world communist movement and the new democratic revolution in Nepal can be listed as follows and they are very good examples of proletarian internationalism.

Firstly, the synthesis of Long Live: Marxism-Leninism-Maoism, which the second expanded meeting of the RIM reached to in 1993, has had an important ideological contribution to the contemporary world communist movement. This synthesis established that the terminology, Maoism, is an introduction of a revolutionary communist in the 21st century. Today, none can become a Marxist without becoming a Maoist. A genuine revolutionary can never minimise the vital role the RIM played in this regard.

Secondly, the formation of WPRM, which was organised from among the anti-imperialist political parties, forces and individuals all across the world, is another important international work on the part of RIM. In the context of Nepal, it had issued a slogan, Imperialism: hands off Nepal. And it is clear to all that the resistant movement launched on the basis of this slogan had played a vital role to defend the Nepalese revolution. In active participation of the RIM forces, the mass demonstration of more than fifty thousand people organised by "Solidarity campaign to support the people's war in Nepal" on February 13, 2001 in Delhi not only challenged the Indian expansionism but also served Nepalese revolution by spreading revolutionary vigour among the revolutionary masses, cadres and the leaders as well in Nepal. Apart from that, this event had also been able to bring the revolutionary and anti-imperialist forces at one platform in India.

Thirdly, the role RIM played to unite the Maoist revolutionaries in India is vital. In India, armed clashes had been a regular phenomenon

since long between the Maoist Communist Centre and the CPI (ML) (PW), two revolutionary communist parties of India. Although both of the central committees had regarded each other as revolutionary centres but the lower level committees had involved in armed clashes, a blemish for the Indian revolutionaries for long. The regional conference held in 1999 of the Maoist parties of South Asia called upon both the parties to stop the armed clashes unconditionally and unilaterally. Both of the centres accepted the call and then the clashes stopped. Not only that, the fraternal relation begun from this very event finally reached to party unity in September 2004. After the CPI (Maoist) was formed by way of unity between these two parties the Maoist movement in India has now become a formidable strength that is challenging the central power of India today.

Fourth, issue No. 28 of 'A World to Win', a magazine known to be ideologically close to RIM by writing a long analytical article entitled, "Look to the Himalayas: a new world is in the offing" played an vital role to make the world people know about the new democratic revolution in Nepal. During that period there was hardly an AWTW publication that did not have any material published on Nepal and Nepalese people's war. We must admire the magazine, published in six different languages, for its role to make Nepalese revolution know to the world.

Fifth, while discussing the role of RIM in the context of new democratic revolution in Nepal, one cannot forget the international mass mobilization the RIM led at the time of building martyrs road in Rolpa. The joint action of well-dressed western revolutionary youths equipped with spade and shovel in their clean hands and Nepalese people with torn-clothes and cracked-legs in the operation of constructing Martyrs road had shown an unparalleled example of proletarian internationalism. Be it destruction of the old or construction of a new, the event of martyrs road, which disseminated a message that Nepalese people are not alone but revolutionaries the world over are with them, was a shocking news for the imperialists.

Sixth, after our party headquarters was shifted to Rolpa one of the leaders of RCP, USA, who was assigned to work in RIM, reached to Rolpa on foot to discuss the problems of the world communist movement in general and the Nepalese revolution in particular. When we heard from our chairman that the RCP leader embraced him saying that "I arrived at Rolpa, the place from where the proletarian revolution in the 21st century originated", we expressed high regard to him for his unique example of the proletarian internationalism and we do now too. His high regard to the

revolution in Nepal had made us feel that the task of accomplishing revolution in Nepal is upon our shoulder and so we feel now too.

However, along with unity our party had serious differences with RIM parties including RCP on various ideological and political issues and we have now too. Particularly, there are problems with the RCP on the question of understanding the dialectics between theory and practice. Among others, our party does not agree with the one-sided emphasis they lay on the development of theory. In spite of this dissension, it will be a blunder to minimise the positive role the RIM and RCP played to develop the revolution in Nepal. If someone does so, it will be simply a prejudice nothing other than that.

RIM had provided important help to our party at the time of initiation and continuation of people's war, and on the other, they had and have been struggling on various theoretical questions even today. The secret and open letters of the RCP is an example. Before our party had entered into peace process, the RCP in a letter dated October 2005 had pointed out towards a danger that the concept of democratic republic, which comrade Baburam Bhattarai had put forward in an article headed 'On a new type of state', could entrap our party in a sub-stage of bourgeois democratic republic before new democracy. The party vaguely replied that letter and the party did not organise any discussion on the theoretical questions they had raised. The ideological and political debate going on in our party on this very question at present also shows how timely they had raised that theoretical question before us.

Before our party entered into peace process, our party had had regular ideological debates with Maoist revolutionaries in India and other parties in RIM, including the RCP. It is an indisputable fact that the Nepalese revolution had attained that height with the very strength of co-operation and collectivity of the ICM. In the situation when there were no established leaders like Lenin and Mao and socialist countries like Russia and China to support the communist movement, collectivity and mutual co-operation was the correct way of working for the communist revolutionaries. But the situation is quite different today.

After our party entered into peace process, the international work among the fraternal parties has become almost nil. Yesterday, our party used to cooperate with CPI (Maoist) while today this cooperation has started with the revisionist parties like CPI (Marxist) and SUCI. Our leadership, who used to lay a lot of emphasis on the international work in the past, hardly pays attention in it today. The words like RIM and

CCOMPOSA might become today the words of terror for some comrades in our party. Fraternal parties have been raising a lot of questions with our party after we entered into the peace process. Our leadership does not think necessary to reply them rather he is fleeing away from the international debate. Why this? Why our chairman remains tight-lipped when one of the PBMs of our party, who claims ideologically and politically close to chairman, accuses in our party CC meeting that the RCP leader Bob Avakian is a CIA agent and another PBM writes in an article that Bob Avakian is a renegade? Should not our chairman speak on this?

With whom does one show his or her class partisanship in the international arena is a question related to proletarian Internationalism. Without a doubt, proletariat's international class partisanship remains with proletariat and that of bourgeois with the bourgeoisie. With whom does he have his class partisanship, if not with the bourgeoisie, when a person who claims to be a leader of the proletariat accuses that a communist party leader of another country is a renegade or an enemy agent? How can a revolutionary cadre of our party see that our chairman is a proletarian internationalist leader if the later sides with those PBMs, who show their class partisanship with the bourgeois? Question is very serious.

Is he doing all this with no knowledge of what he is doing? Certainly not. Yesterday he was ideologically sound, so he was a proletarian internationalist leader, he saw the roles of RIM and RCP to be positive in favour of revolution and he also showed high regards to them. But today, he has undergone ideological deviation, so is hesitant to see his previous comrades as the comrades of today and yesterday's enemies as the enemies of today. For him, yesterday's friends seem to be like today's enemies and vice versa. Why our party chairman, who sent a central representative along with a letter of condolence on the funeral day of the revisionist renegade Jyoti Basu, did not write a single word against the killing of the spokesperson of CPI (Maoist), comrade Azad, who was killed in cold blood by the enemy? In fact, bourgeois ultra-nationalism is gradually replacing proletarian internationalism in the thinking of our chairman, this is the reason.

The problem that our party and Nepalese revolution are confronting at present is the ideological one. Our party is going deeper and deeper to the quagmire of reformism because of the ideological deviation in our party's main leadership. The vulgar evolutionism is gradually replacing Marxism and the bourgeois ultra-nationalism is slowly replacing proletarian internationalism in our party. The first step for the

success of Nepalese revolution is to bring this situation to an end. And for that, the revolutionary transformation of our whole party in general and our chairman in particular is the first condition.

The objective situation is gradually becoming favourable for revolution. But, the subjective strength is very weak. Revolutionary transformation of the whole party including chairman, adoption of a correct ideological and political line, strong party unity based on it, formation of a broad united front amongst entire patriotic, progressive, leftist and revolutionary forces, a strong proletarian internationalist solidarity among Marxist-Leninist-Maoist parties internationally, formation of an anti-imperialist united front among anti-imperialist forces in the international level etc. are the preliminary conditions to build up party's subjective strength. By fulfilling these conditions the favourable objective situation can be transformed into revolution. To advance in this direction is the duty of the entire revolutionaries today.

July 10, 2011

REVOLUTIONARY LINE WILL PREVAIL: COMRADE GAURAV

Rishi Raj Baral, The Next Front

* Interview with Com Gaurav for the Next Front on 3rd May 2011. Chandra Prakash Gajurel, popularly known as 'Gaurav' was born in April 29, 1948. Now he is a member of the Standing committee and Secretary of the Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist). ...

In current politics, we all know that things are not moving towards correct direction. There is a sharp two line struggle within the party. Revolutionaries are fighting against the rightist opportunism and centrist utilitarian tendencies - now they are in the same boat. At present, safeguarding the achievements of ten years People's War and marching forward to achieve the goal of New Democratic Revolution is the main task of the revolutionaries. But the situation is very complicated. We are at crossroad: liquidation or revolution?

The Central Committee meeting of UCPN-Maoist is concluded. And we all know the official line of People's revolt, which was passed by the Palungtar extended meeting and the CC meeting which was held immediately after the extended meeting, has abandoned by numerical

decision. The 'centrist' and rightist groups within the party are united in the name of 'Peace and Constitution'. They have adopted the line of bourgeoisie democracy. Comrade Mohan Baidhya 'Kiran, who had presented separate document of the revolutionary line, wrote a note of decent.

Concerning to the present situation within the UNCP (Maoist) and national-international issues, we had put some questions to Comrade Gaurav. Here are the answers. We believe it will be beneficial to the viewers and readers abroad and across the country.

What will be the future plan, policy and program of revolutionaries is a matter of wait and see. But Comrade Gaurav says: "It is widely felt that if the party was sincerely unified in the correct line the 'people's revolt' would have been succeeded. But the wrong lines at the level of leadership sabotaged this golden opportunity. Our party is the party of heroes who have shed their blood and sacrificed everything for the revolution. This quality of the party still prevails at different levels. We hope that the revolutionary line will prevail and party will be able to lead the revolution."

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Question: *It's been almost five months since the sixth extended meeting or the plenum of the party was held in Palungtar of Gorkha district. It has been widely felt that things are not moving towards correct direction. No change has taken place and no sense of newness has been felt in the party. Only stereotype of working style exists. What is your view about this situation?*

Answer: Yes. Five months have been elapsed after the Sixth Expanded meeting of the Central Committee of Unified Communist Party of Nepal (Maoist) held in Palungtar of Gorkha district. High level of polemic in the midst of around seven thousand leaders and cadres was a very significant event in the history of our party and whole political movement of Nepal as well. There were many new things to be noticed in the expanded meeting. One peculiar event was that none of the three documents among that of Chairman Com Prachanda, which the press likes to call 'the Supremo' of UCPNM was passed in the historic meet. However, 'there is no option to unity', 'there is no option to the people's revolt' and 'there is no option to transformation' were agreed as the catch words of the historic meet.

The CC meeting which was held immediately after the historic meeting approved a plan of action based on the general line of 'people's revolt'. But this plan was completely aborted and there was no progress in

implementation of this line. It is true that no significant change has taken place even after that. It caused a new debate in the party, who was responsible for the failure of this line? Many opined that it was the main leadership which was mainly responsible for the failure of implementing this plan of action. It was one of the main points of debate in the historic CC meeting held at the last week of April.

Question: *Who is responsible for this inaction? Who do you think is responsible for this—the main leadership or the entire team of leadership or the existing circumstances?*

Answer: Well, it was one of the most confronting issues of the recently held CC meeting. There were three different opinions regarding the question of which factor and who was responsible for the failure of implementation of this line. One, it was the leadership which was mainly responsible for this. Two, it was not implemented because the general line of people's revolt was wrong due to which it was not implemented. Three, it was due to the lack of discipline in the party and factional activities that prevailed in the party, was the main responsible factor.

Question: *The party adopted the political line of People's Revolt. But the political activities of your party do not seem to be compatible with the party's official political line. Is the relevance of Palungtar meeting is now over or is it just the result of opportunistic and compromising attitudes?*

Answer: Yes, 'there is no alternative of the People's Revolt' was a catch word of the Palungtar meeting. And the CC meeting held immediately after the expanded meeting, worked out a plan of action based on the same line. But the same plan was aborted in different excuses. So conclusion cannot be drawn that the general political line and plan of action were irrelevant. Still I believe that the political line adopted by the plenum and plan of action worked out based on the same line were correct. This plan of action and the line was deliberately sabotaged due to the line bias.

Question: *The party has a barrage of problems and challenges especially in the ideological field, party's political line and its organizational set up. How can you believe that the present party organization—mass party organization—could successfully launch the people's revolt in order to achieve the goal of New Democratic Revolution?*

Answer: Definitely, we have been facing hosts of problems and challenges. Now the size of the party has become very large, but the quality has been reduced considerably. The party of the advanced proletariat is losing its character and seems to become a mass party. It is obvious that if the character of the party is not back in the track, if the party is not rectified, it is simply impossible for this party to lead a people's revolt. We cannot carry on the rectification movement isolated from the class struggle. So, there is no doubt about the fact that the party should be rectified. But the way party is rectified is to carry the class struggle and once again it has to be tested in the class struggle. It requires that the leaders also have to come under the test. Passing test once in life is not enough. Even the leaders have to pass the test time and again. I am confident that it is only the Maoist party which is capable to lead the New Democratic Revolution, but not exactly at the present condition. The party should undergo through a test, should enter into the furnace of class struggle based on correct ideological-political line and correct tactics and correct plan of action.

Question: *You, on the one hand, are talking about People's Revolt while there has been marathon bargaining in the party for posts and positions like ministers. Do you not think it is contradictory?*

Answer: Yes, many selfish and bourgeois tendencies have emerged in the party right from the most top level to the bottom. People even at the central level, are showing their greed for the ministerial post and other posts of profit. This type of character which is emerging and developing slowly in the party reflects the sign of the party changing the colour. This change is naturally effecting the line of the party, different deviations like centrism and rightism, reformism are being emerged in the party and the struggle against these wrong tendencies have been developing. The two lines struggle which was clearly manifested in the 'Kharipati National Convention', 'Sixth Expanded meeting' and CC meeting concluded last week, reflect the real situation of the party.

Question: *Imperialist and expansionist countries, especially Indian expansionism are active to create political disturbances and turmoil in the country. The comprador forces and Indian lackeys including Madhesi parties and some armed groups backed by India are talking of a 'democratic front' in Nepal. In addition to this, the Nepali Congress party and Indian lackeys within the left parties are also collectively echoing Indian voice. They are dancing to the Indian tune. Against this backdrop, progressive and nationalist forces in Nepal are facing a big challenge to*

safeguard national sovereignty and national independence. What type of plan and programs you have to cope with this challenge?

Answer: What has been described regarding the role of Indian expansionism and role of comprador bourgeoisie and bureaucrat capitalism is basically correct. It has been realized by the party since quite a long time back. Therefore party has identified that the principal contradiction has been changed. The contradiction between comprador and bureaucrat capitalism and remnants of feudalism and that of Indian expansionism is principal contradiction. The policy of united front has been changed accordingly. Basic policy of the party is to forge united front between Leftist, Patriotic and Democratic forces. It has been recognized that struggle for national sovereignty and national independence has become major form of struggle. But the major problem in implementing this line is the wrong line of thinking especially at the highest level of party leadership and sabotaging the plan of action to implement the line. Major causes of emerging the two lines' struggle are all these factors.

Question: *How can you fight against these reactionary forces without strong unity within your party? Analyzing from the revolutionary perspective, you are exercising opportunistic line and advocating eclecticism in practice in the name of party unity. Undermining and minimizing the two line struggle in the party is tantamount to avoiding the class struggle. Do you agree?*

Answer: Party unity should have to be seen in two ways. One, the stage of People's War has reached to the concluding stage in which insurrection is decisive. To achieve this aim we should have a strong party and unity among all communists who want revolution is necessary. On the other hand, unity of the opportunists is also felt necessary to bring down the revolutionary forces in minority position. As explained above signs of opportunism, one of them is eclecticism, has been noticed in the party and two lines struggle has been waged against all wrong tendencies erupted in the top level of the party. We are not minimizing the lines' struggle which has been repeatedly reflected in the practice. It is true that strong unity in the party is the precondition for the success of the revolution. But the unity should have to be based on correct line, which the revolutionaries within the party are striving for.

Question: *The Maoist revolution is rapidly growing and accelerating worldwide. But UNCP (Maoist) appears to be a passive and mute spectator of this revolution. What do you say about the recent*

activities of CCOMPOSA and RIM? And what do you think would be the role of UNCP (Maoist) in future?

Answer: Yes, communist movement is an internationalist movement. As most advanced party of the proletariat we were discharging our revolutionary duty by contributing in International Communist Movement. What Lenin has taught us is that one can best serve the ICM by making revolution in one's own country. Based on this principle we were playing very significant role within the RIM and also in the CCOMPOSA. But when line problem has been emerged within the leadership of the party our role has been limited. The leading role of our party was established during the time of PW, but unfortunately right at this moment communist revolutionaries are looking our party with suspicion, whether this party will change colour and will become the vehicle of reformism. In this situation, it is very difficult for our party to play leading and substantial role. One important point is that Maoists of the world are keenly looking towards the ongoing two lines' struggle of the party. If this lines' struggle would not have been emerged, Maoists of the world would have severed the tie with our party and the fraternal relation would have been broken. They are hopeful of the result of the two lines' struggle. We still hope that we will be able to revitalize the RIM and CCOMPOSA and will enhance our role.

Question: *Can you elaborate more on Nepalese Maoist Revolution? And also anything about the Next Front?*

Answer: Well, our party is now facing two different problems: problems of inner struggle and problems of class struggle. It is widely felt that if the party was sincerely unified in the correct line the 'people's revolt' would have been succeeded. But the wrong lines at the level of leadership sabotaged this golden opportunity. Our party is the party of heroes who have shed their blood and sacrificed everything for the revolution. This quality of the party still prevails at different levels. We hope that the revolutionary line will prevail and party will be able to lead the revolution. Therefore, I see a bright future of Nepalese revolution.

The next front seems to me as a new initiative to propagate revolutionary line and revolutionary activities at the international level. So, it is appreciable and seeks support from the Maoist revolutionaries. Thanks !

A REPORT FROM GROUND ZERO

DSU

A team of students from DU, JNU and IGNOU belonging to the Democratic Students' Union (DSU) visited Narayanpatna Block in the Koraput district of Odisha from 11 April to 16 April 2011. The objective of the visit was to study the ground situation at present in the region where a militant mass struggle is going on for the last few years, and according to the media reports, has faced extreme forms of state repression. The aim was also to study the socio-economic aspects of the social life of Narayanpatna region, and to look into the factors that have contributed to the emergence of this important peasant struggle in contemporary South Asia.

Narayanpatna is inhabited by sixteen tribal communities including Kui, Parija, Jorka, Matia, Doria and others, of whom the Kuis are numerically predominant. The adivasis, who constitute more than 90 percent of around 45,000 people of Narayanpatna block, are interspersed with Dalit communities such as Mali, Dombo, Forga, Paiko, Rilli, etc. Dominant castes such as the Sundis and Brahmins are numerically small but are powerful and influential. Though the incursion of non-adivasis has a long history going back to the establishment of the Narayanpatna Raj centuries back, the Sundis have entered the district after they were driven away from Coastal Andhra during the Srikakulam armed struggle in the 1960s. The Sundis as well as a small section of Dalits from the Dombo and Rilli castes too have made money by exploiting the adivasis and selling them liquor. The non-adivasis are around 5000 in number, and the ruling elite of Narayanpatna belong to this group. It was also clear to us that the identities such as that of landlord, liquor trader, money-lender and politician are not separate or mutually exclusive, but usually coexist in the members of the dominant classes of the region.

Over the last few years, the poor and landless peasants of Narayanpatna, Bandhugaon, Simliguda, etc. have organised themselves under the banner of Chasi Mulia Adivasi Sangha (CMAS), and fought back their tormentors the Sundi-Sahukar-Sarkar nexus. Even though CMAS was working in the region for more than fifteen years, it was only in the last three to four years that its anti-liquor movement took a decisive turn. It reached a flashpoint in January 2009 when the rural masses of Narayanpatna not only drove away the liquor traders from their villages,

but mobilized themselves in thousands to pursue them to their stronghold, the towns. Four thousand people went to Narayanpatna town and destroyed liquor factories and wine shops, including shops selling foreign liquor. By late 2010, only two liquor shops were running in the entire region, and that too in the block headquarters of Narayanpatna and Bandhugaon where state's armed forces are stationed. In January 2011 more than 3000 CMAS members destroyed the shop in Bandhugaon town as well. In villages like Baliaput, Mahua trees from which cheap liquor was produced were destroyed under a political programme of CMAS and BAMS (Biplabi Adivasi Mahila Sangha), and today not a single Mahua tree is to be seen in Narayanpatna's villages. The prohibition in the sale and consumption of liquor was almost total by 2009. The mass upsurge led to the fleeing of landlords and liquor traders from the region, leading to the collapse of this parasitic trade. The villagers narrated how Jairam Pangi, the incumbent BJD MP from Koraput, tried to dissuade the people from the anti-liquor agitation by claiming that it was a part of adivasi culture, custom and worship, to which the people retorted that the very instrument which destroyed their lives cannot be a part of their devotion and sacrifice that is conducted for their common wellbeing.

The success in the anti-liquor movement encouraged the masses to intensify the land struggle. The CMAS led the reclamation of agricultural land from the landlords and sahuksars which were tricked out of the adivasis. Within months, we are told, more than 3000 acres of such land were recaptured and distributed among the villages. As a reaction to the growing tide of mass struggle, 'Shanti Committee' was formed by the landlords and liquor traders with the active support of the state administration on 4 May 2009. After the successful culmination of the anti-liquor struggle and the intensification of the land struggle by 2009, and particularly after the NALCO raid by the Maoists in April that year, the state repression on the people and their movement was also scaled up. One such incident of state repression was the murder of Wadeka Singana and Nachika Andru at Narayanpatna police station on 20 November 2009, followed by wanton attacks, raids and combing operation in the region, establishing a reign of state terror. Entire village populations are often forced to take shelter in the forests and hills as fugitives. The government has now virtually imposed a seize of Narayanpatna by deploying more than 5000 paramilitary troops including BSF, IRB, CRPF, and hundreds of Special Operations Group commandos, Odisha police personnel and Shanti Committee vigilante forces and closing off all the important entry and exit points to and from

Narayanpatna. Rather than addressing the demands of the people, it is mobilising more and more troops to crush the movement.

In the six days of our visit from 11 to 16 April 2011, we interacted with the residents of above twenty villages spread out in the adjacent blocks of Narayanpatna, Bandhugaon, Simliguda, Lakhmipur and Potangi, and visited about twelve of them. Our first stop was Dimtiguda village in the Alamanda panchayat of Bandhugaon block. We passed through the village Jangri Walsa in Kabribari panchayat, where we met the family of Kondahara Kasi who was arrested in 2010 for allegedly being a Maoist. The plea of his wife to meet him in prison has been repeatedly turned down. 14 persons associated with CMAS are presently in jail from this village alone. The next village we visited was Silpalmanda where we were told that Ratnal Madhava was arrested in March 2011 by the Bandhugaon police and a false kidnap case was slapped on him. Village Karaka Itiki under Borgi panchayat was the first village we visited in Narayanpatna, where we heard stories of atrocities committed in the region by landlords, liquor traders, the police and now the Shanti Committee. There we came to know from the villagers that eight out of the thirty houses in Masarimunda village were burnt down by the CRPF in January 2011 after an encounter with the Maoists in the vicinity of the locality. Just a month before this, CRPF personnel destroyed houses in Goloknima village as well after another battle with the Maoists, and looted Rs.8000 from the villagers.

The team could also talk to villagers from Jangri Walsa village. Madan Merika, Poala Malati, Polla Bhima and Seena Mandangi described the attacks from 'Shanti Committee' and Bandhugaon CMAS under the leadership of Kedruka Arjun of CPI ML (Kanu Sanyal) party in 2009. They attacked their village in thousands wearing police uniforms and with firearms on the suspicion that the villagers have started to align themselves with the CMAS Narayanpatna Area Committee under its president Nachika Linga. Nariga Poala, Aashu Pirika, Bhima Kedraka, Kasi Kondagari, Muga Poala, Penta Kondagari, Acchanna Poala and Enkanna Poala of this village, many of whom are teenagers, were arrested by the police later that year for allegedly being Maoists, and kept in prison for almost 1½ years, and only recently were they released on bail. K. Suhabsh and K Raman of Keshbhadra village of Bandhugaon block testified to the atrocities committed by the police, the Shanti Committee as well as by the CPI ML (Kanu Sanyal) led by Arjun.

In Upar Itiki village we were told that the people have collectively undertaken developmental works under the leadership of CMAS, and rejected the government schemes. Though the pace of the land struggle

has been reduced of late due to the intense state repression, the villagers have continued to undertake developmental works with their own initiative. They have completed 7 big irrigation projects in the last two years, and three are under construction as one we witnessed at Boriput village. The Block Development Officer (BDO) tried to distribute money to the villagers for these works, but was refused by the people. In February and March this year the CMAS gave a call to stop all governmental projects in Narayanpatna in protest against the continued atrocities by the state's forces including arrests, torture, forcible detention, etc. and demanding a halt to Operation Green Hunt and withdrawal of armed forces. As a result of the call, all projects such as NREGA, PDS, Indira Avash Yojana came to a halt in the entire region for two months. The influence of NGOs, which was rampant till the CMAS movement became popular, has also considerably waned, with very little presence now in Narayanpatna block.

The land reclaimed by the CMAS in Manjariguda village under Borgi panchayat was shown to us, where the villagers have collectively cultivated 14 acres of irrigated land. We are told that in this village individual plots have not been distributed to the landless peasants so far, but will be done in the near future. Subbarao Somu, Sitala and Kanta from Langalbera village who belong to the Dombo Dalit caste, testified that poor people from both adivasi and dalit communities have benefitted from the peoples' struggle against liquor and for land. He said that dalits inhabit two of the nine panchayats of Narayanpatna — Borgi and Langalbera panchayats. They said that there was no truth in the misinformation campaign that the struggle has harmed the dalits, and that there has been an exodus of dalits from villages in the wake of the movement. Somu said that around 50 families from only two villages of Gumandi and Podaradar have fled after the land struggle started. He said that most of them were involved in the liquor trade and were working against the interests of the adivasis. Dinabandhu and Simadri from Borgi village informed that the six landless Dalit families in their village have received 3 acres of land in March 2011 from CMAS, and have irrigated the land by putting community labour. Simadri said, "Those among Dalits who have garnered wealth and become politicians tried to instigate a contradiction between adivasis and dalits, but the poor have no contradiction. The poor dalits of entire Narayanpatna who support CMAS are in the struggle." Gumpa Vidika, a dalit worker who is presently the spokesperson of CMAS and is hiding from the state in fear of arrest, also talked of the class unity between the adivasis and dalits forged by this struggle in spite of the repeated attempts to pit one against the other.

We were informed that 171 villagers connected to the CMAS have been arrested so far, out of the 637 adivasi political prisoners jailed in entire Orissa. We heard narratives about recent attacks on the villages by the paramilitary and police forces deployed in the region. The police entered Dakapara village on the night of 4 April 2011 and beat up villagers including Sirka Sika and Sirka Rupaya whom we spoke to. They looted Rs.5000 and Rs.2500 respectively from the two villagers. On a previous occasion, the government's forces attacked Sirka Bina's house on 1 January 2011, detained him and forcibly took him to the police camp, tortured for many hours and released him the next day. His wife's gold ornaments were also taken away by them. The team members interviewed Sonai Hikoka of Dumsili village whose husband Sitanna Hakoka was taken away by policemen from Lakhimpur police station in November 2010 along with two others. While Kaila Taring and Sodanna Himbreka, the other two villagers have been released by police, there is no trace of Sitanna as yet. The police denied that they arrested him. She filed a Habeas Corpus application in the Odisha High Court, but her plea has been rejected recently by the court reposing full trust on the police's affidavit. Sonai says that her crops, grain, and cattle were looted by the goons of Shanti Committee when she went out to attend the court hearings. We visited Baliaput village where we saw the dilapidated houses of Nachika Linga and Nachika Andru which were burnt and destroyed by Shanti Committee goons. We met Nachika Taman who spent more than a year in jail for allegedly being a Maoist, and were released on bail just a week ago, while Nachika Sanjeeva of his village is still languishing in Koraput jail. In addition, two of the undertrials were killed by the police through third-degree torture, and later it claimed that they have committed suicide! Other prisoners are being subjected to regular beating and harassment, and many have sustained grievous injuries at the hands of the police and paramilitary forces. And these are only a few instances which were brought to us by the villagers of the region during our six days' of interaction.

The team interviewed Nachika Linga, the president of CMAS Narayanpatna Area Committee, and the 'most wanted' person for the police at present. He informed us that the movement has moved beyond the narrow limits of fighting for economic demands, and have held the present political system to be responsible for the marginalization of adivasis and the poor peasantry. We were told that the election boycott call given by the Sangha during the assembly elections in 2009 was highly successful in Narayanpatna, with very few votes being cast. He also informed us that CMAS has been able to form its organisation in every village of

Narayanpatna block, and is spreading its base to the adjoining blocks as well. Linga told that in spite of severe repression, the people have been able to defend the gains of the movement by resolutely depending on their collective strength, by fortifying self-defence mechanism through the formation of Ghenua Bahini, the mass militia of CMAS, and by educating the people in political struggle. We also talked to the president and secretary of BAMS, who told us about the overwhelming response of the women of the region to the anti-liquor struggle waged by CMAS, which enthused them to form a separate women's organisation. BAMS have fought against the patriarchal relations and customs within the adivasis such as the two-wives system, and have achieved considerable success in their endeavor.

The presence and role of the Maoists in Narayanpatna have also come under discussion in the media in the past, and this was one of the aspects we wished to investigate. From our interaction with the political activists of the region, we learnt that the Maoist movement started in Koraput from 2003, and soon garnered support from the poor peasantry of the district. We are told that the movement has grown to the extent of giving shape to embryonic forms of peoples' power to take place of the exploitative state power by forming Revolutionary Peoples' Committees (RPCs) covering two panchayat areas of Narayanpatna block. The RPCs are presently concentrating their energies in three heads: self-defence, agricultural development, and health & education. The Maoist party seemed to have roots among the working masses, and have so far been successful in withstanding the armed assault of the state. The state, alarmed by the spread of the movement, has sought to use brute force, and thereby further isolating itself from the people.

The Narayanpatna struggle, we came to realise, is one of the most important but least known movements of our times, and the corporate media as well as the statist academia has played their roles in presenting it in a distorted form. We appeal to the media, academics and the people at large to visit Narayanpatna and expose the crimes committed by the Indian state on its people, fighting for their inalienable right to land, livelihood and dignity. The fact-finding team wishes to bring out its experiences in Narayanpatna in a detailed report in the coming days, so as to act as a corrective to such media misinformation, to give voice to the peoples' concerns and bring out the reality which the Indian state so desperately wishes to hide.

The DSU Fact-finding team reiterates its solidarity with the peoples' movement of Narayanpatna, and makes the following demands to the Indian government:

1. All the 171 prisoners associated with the Narayanpatna struggle must be released unconditionally and immediately. The state must ensure that the illegal arrests, torture and killings of people in custody must be stopped in Narayanpatna.
2. Cases against the office-bearers, activists, members and sympathizers of CMAS, BAMS and other mass organisations must be withdrawn, and these organisations must be allowed to work freely without fear of attack or persecution. The 'most wanted' warrant on Nachika Linga by the police must be withdrawn, and he be allowed to perform his duties as the president of CMAS freely, without any fear of intimidation and arrest.
3. The personnel of the state's armed forces who are responsible for the loss of lives and property of the people of Narayanpatna must be punished, and the people who suffered their atrocities must be compensated by the government.
4. The paramilitary and police camps in Narayanpatna must be withdrawn immediately.
5. The vigilante organisation called Shanti Committee must be disbanded, and their members be punished for their crimes.
6. The land reclaimed by the adivasi people of Narayanpatna under the leadership of CMAS must be recognized by the government.
7. The rights of the adivasis over their land, water, and forests and minerals must be ensured, and they must be provided with the basic necessities such as healthcare, education, drinking water, etc.
8. Journalists, intellectuals, academics, activists and all those who are interested to visit Narayanpatna and interact with the people must not be prevented from doing so by the government, and it must ensure their free movement to and from any part of Narayanpatna and Koraput.

Note: Preliminary Report of the Democratic Students Union Fact Finding Visit to Narayanpatna Odisha was compiled by DSU Fact-finding Team composed of Kuldeep and Sourabh from the University of Delhi, Manabhanjan and Ritupan from the Jawaharlal Nehru University, and Kundan from the Indira Gandhi National Open University.

NATION'S CONSCIENCE MUST BE AWAKENED TO ANTI-POSCO STRUGGLE

Tackling Corruption Must Begin by Scrapping the Scandalous POSCO Project

The brutal police action unleashed by the UPA Government on Baba Ramdev's fasting camp in Delhi has shocked the nation's conscience; even the Hon'ble Supreme Court has taken suo moto cognisance of the blatant disregard for fundamental rights, and questioned the Government *raison d'être* to so quell dissent. Most mainstream political parties have jostled with each other to gain attention in condemning the incident; and this has by far been the only issue covered and debated non-stop by the electronic and print media for some days now.

However, little or nothing is being said or done about a far more serious situation that is developing in Jagatsinghpur district of Odisha, where villagers of Dhinkia, Gobindpur, Patana, etc., are resolutely and peacefully opposing the forcible acquisition of their private and forest lands by the Odisha Government for the benefit of South Korean steel major POSCO. Over the past few days, at least 26 platoons of riot police (over 1,000 police personnel) have been deployed to ruthlessly beat down women, children, the aged, and men who have kept a day/night vigil and not allowed any State functionary, police or company official to enter these villages; thus continuing a phenomenal act of peaceful resistance to POSCO venture, sustained for six years now under the leadership of POSCO Pratirodh Sangram Samithi.

Brutal police tactics, criminal intimidation and illegal methods are being employed here to wrest from these peacefully protesting villagers 4000 acres of extraordinarily fertile agricultural and forest land to establish the single largest industrial foreign investment conceived in recent times. The project involves the establishment of a mega steel plant (12 MTPA), backed by a massive coal-fired thermal power plant (400 MW expandable to 1,100 MW), and a major captive port for handling the world's largest cargo ships (Capesize, usually more than a quarter km. in length).¹ The project involves further land acquisition for a captive iron ore mine requiring 6,100 acres of predominantly forest land in Khandadhar Hills of Sundergarh district and at least 2,000 acres more for a massive gated township to house POSCO employees. In addition, there would be dedicated water, road and rail linkages that will further exacerbate the displacement and environmental destruction caused by the project.

POSCO: A scandal far bigger than 2G scam

It is high time the nation's conscience is affected by what the project affected communities are suffering under the hands of the Navin Patnaik regime in Odisha. It is time to appreciate the fact that the POSCO project is perhaps the most shocking example of corrupt practices legitimised by State support. This is because the project is nothing short of a legalised loot of our natural resources – iron ore in this case. In an unprecedented deal, Indian and Odisha Governments have supported POSCO's demands to mine 600 million tonnes of the finest iron in India on a 30-year lease. Of this, 30% can be exported for processing in POSCO's Korean plants and thus endorsing profiteering abroad! With current fine iron ore rates crossing Rs. 8,000/tonne, it is simple arithmetic to note that POSCO can recover its capital investment of Rs. 52,000 crores in less than eight years, an unthinkable proposition in any industrial venture! Truly, the POSCO venture is a scandal far worse than those involving 2G and Commonwealth Games.

In fact, A. Raja, principal accused in the 2G scam, may have facilitated POSCO's entry when as Indian Environment Minister in 2007 he accorded the first major statutory clearance by approving the captive port component, one day before he transited to the Telecom Ministry. This was done without any review and also in response to severe pressure from then Union Finance Minister Chidambaram. Various key environmental and forest clearances quickly followed, all by subverting laws and breaking down the massive industrial/mining venture into little parts to hide their true environmental, social and economic consequences.

Three years later when Jairam Ramesh, the sitting Environment Minister, ordered a comprehensive review of these clearances by setting up two independent investigations, both committees confirmed that the clearances had been secured by fraud and subterfuge, and strongly recommended withdrawal of these illegal approvals. The appropriate action that the Minister should have taken was to cancel these fraudulent clearances and initiate criminal action against all involved in the POSCO decisions. Such action would have been true evidence of the oft-made claim by the UPA Government that it is serious about tackling corruption.

Instead, Jairam Ramesh claimed he was working towards "cooperative federalism" and on the basis of his "faith and trust" in the Odisha Government approved the project's environment and CRZ clearances on 31 January 2011 and subsequently the forest clearance on 2nd May. This was despite absolute evidence that the Forest Rights Act had been fundamentally violated by deliberately overlooking Gram Sabha

resolutions (convened by the constitutionally empowered Panchayats in the project affected villages) that clearly rejected the project. Ramesh, thus, became a party to the fraud in environmental decision-making and also directly responsible for the dangerous situation that is developing in the POSCO affected villages today.

We fear that the exigent State police action that is now underway in these villages may result in another Kalinganagar or Nandigram type of situation. The scant attention paid by mainstream political parties, the media and the public is only strengthening the Navin Patnaik Government to disregard Constitution norms and act ruthlessly to secure lands for the advantage of POSCO.

In an effort to prevent such a carnage from taking place, various eminent people in the country have intervened and appealed to the Prime Minister of India to "immediately ask the Odisha government to halt this illegal attack, to withdraw all clearances given in violation of law, and to take an impartial position in the court cases filed by the people. Failure to stop this attack will show that the UPA government's much vaunted concern over issues of displacement, forest rights and "inclusive growth" is simply eyewash." A copy of this appeal is enclosed.

While endorsing these demands, we additionally urge that:

- * The Odisha Government must immediately withdraw its police operations and forcible acquisition of land for POSCO.
- * The Central Bureau of Investigation must immediately expand the scope of its ongoing investigations against A Raja by reviewing his role in the POSCO clearances, and that of all those who have been involved in illegally promoting this scandalous project, possibly including then Finance Minister and presently Home Minister, Chidambaram.
- * The scandalous POSCO project must be scrapped as its benefits will be accrued mainly by major American financiers (including Warren Buffet) who are major stockholders of this South Korean company.

New Delhi, 07 June 2011

Issued by: Environment Support Group (Bangalore), Campaign for Survival and Dignity, National Forum of Forest People and Forest Workers (NFFPFW), National Alliance of People's Movements (NAPM), Delhi Solidarity Group, All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) and All India Students' Association (AISA)

Pakistan

CAPITAL INDUSTRY WORKERS UNION GOT GREAT VICTORY IN REFERENDUM

Capital Industries (Pvt) Ltd. manufacturing by-cycles. The referendum was held on 24th May, 2011 under the supervision of Registrar Trade Union by the secret ballot. The majority of votes had obtained by the Capital Industry Workers Union, which is affiliated, with All Pakistan Trade Union Federation and was declared Collective Bargaining Agent. The Workers Union got majority of the vote and won the referendum and pro management union was defeated badly although the bosses has launched campaign and spend lot of money to win the election, but all in vain.

This victory has encouraged the working class of the area and the winning union representatives determine to struggle for dignity, fair wages, better working environment and social justice. It is not the victory of Pakistani working class it is victory of millions of workers around the globe. In Industrial Area, workers gathered around the factories early in the morning, a great enthusiasm seen not only among the workers but also the surrounding shopkeepers and general peoples.

Rubina Jamil, General Secretary All Pakistan Trade Union Federation, Fazal-e-Wahid, President, Ameer Butt, President railway Workers union, M. Sarwar, Masood Malik, Muhammad Ilyas, Shabbir Shah speaks on this occasion and congratulated Nasir Gulzar, General Secretary, Capital Industry Workers Union and Mirza Akbar President. Speakers said that it was a third referendum won by Capital Industry Workers union, we salute to Comrade Gulzar Chaudhary's great dedication for Capital Industry workers, speaker further narrated that there was a great lead in referendum, also said that dedication and hard work of the workers let down the management and now new era is started in which workers will get the fair wages, dignity, respect and all the basic rights, speakers further described that even though the management of the factory used a lot of money and put hurdles to defeat the genuine union (workers union), but workers power let down the management.

So lets celebrate the victory together, this victory will spark a movement of more workers fighting for improved wages and working conditions.

Unity is Power!

All Pakistan Trade Union Federation

Philippines

IN LIGHT OF PRICE HIKES State Workers March to Mendiola, Press for Wage Increase

MANILA –Hundreds of government employees, public school teachers and public health workers united under the WAGE FIGHT Alliance marched to Mendiola today in order to reiterate their demand for a Php 6,000 increase to the minimum pay of all government employees.

Judiciary Employees Association (JUDEA) President and WAGE Fight! Alliance Spokesperson Maurino Aguilar condemned the government's easy dismissal of the workers' demand for a substantial wage increase. "We are outraged to learn that Malacañang has declined to prioritize the wage hike bills (HB 3746 for state workers and HB 375 for private sector workers, both sponsored by Anakpawis Rep. Rafael Mariano) filed in Congress. This thumbs down is indicative of Noynoy's utter indifference to the sorry plight of workers and employees nationwide. Instead of giving us measly nonwage benefits and subsidies, we demand a substantial wage increase, especially for public and private sector minimum wage earners who bear the brunt of unabated price increases," Aguilar said.

"While we welcome the wage hike afforded to the judges and judiciary employees, we demand that the same be given to all rank-and-file government employees. The soaring prices of commodities and services have devalued our salaries so much so that our take-home pay cannot even take us home anymore," Aguilar added.

Ferdinand Gaite, president of the public sector labor center Confederation for Unity, Recognition and Advancement of Government Employees (COURAGE), declared their intent to continue their protests until this year's Labor Day celebrations. "Today's protest action is only a prelude to the bigger mobilization that we, together our fellow workers from the private sector, will stage on May 1, 2011. If the government continues to neglect the needs of the labor sector, the rumbling of our hungry stomachs could very well send us to the streets and transform into a "Day of Outrage" similar to the protests held in the Middle East and North Africa," he said.

COURAGE and the WAGE FIGHT! Alliance is seeking the passage of House Bill 3746 sponsored by ANAKPAWIS Representative

Rafael Mariano which embodies their Php6,000 demand and is supporting HB 375 which seeks to grant a P125 increase for the private sector.

7 April 2011

Note: The WAGE FIGHT! Alliance is composed of JUDEA, Sandiganbayan Employees Assoc., KKK-MMDA, KASAMAKA-QC, Phil. Heart Center Employees Assoc., QC Public School Teachers Assoc., CUE-National Housing Authority, Department of Labor and Employment Employees Union, Dept. of Trade and Industry Employees Union, Nat'l. Food Authority Employees Assoc., Water System Employees Response, SWEAP-Dept. of Social Welfare and Dev't., SENADO-Senate, Alliance of Concerned Teachers, Alliance of Health Workers and COURAGE.

STATEMENT OF THE CPA ON THE THIRD ATTEMPT AT REGIONAL AUTONOMY

Cordillera Peoples Alliance

A third attempt for an Autonomy Act on Regional Autonomy for the Cordillera is again being pushed by some politicians and other adherents. The National Economic and Development Authority (NEDA–Cordillera) and the Regional Development Council (RDC) had earlier initiated research and information campaigns, and a draft of the proposed law crafted by the Third Autonomy Act Drafting Committee (TAADC) chaired by Mayor Mauricio Domogan of Baguio City is now the subject of consultations with Local Government Units and the public. After two popularly rejected Organic Acts for the Cordillera in the past (RA 6766 in 1990 and RA 8438 in 1997), as well as the publicized failure of the Autonomous Region of Muslim Mindanao (ARMM), how does the Cordillera Peoples Alliance (CPA) view this third attempt for Regional Autonomy in the Cordillera?

There is no popular clamour for Regional Autonomy in the Cordillera at this time, except by the proponents of this third attempt. It is enough that the different provinces have been brought together in the Cordillera Administrative Region.

In the past, the urgent demand for Cordillera regionalisation was advocated by the militant mass movement through sustained popular campaigns such as the *Regionalisation and Beyond (to Regional*

Autonomy) campaign from 1984 to 1986. The regionalisation of the Cordillera provinces was a popular demand that had the active participation and support of a broad section of Cordillera society. Proponents of the third autonomy act warn that the Cordillera region would be dismembered with parts reverting to regions I and II if their proposed third Autonomy Act is not passed. Such threatening scenario is nothing but blackmail and is irresponsible.

While Regional Autonomy is our perspective and our aspiration, we have come to realise that it is a futile objective at this time. As with our past campaigns to reject the two earlier Organic Acts that sought to establish Regional Autonomy in the Cordillera, we reiterate that *Genuine* Regional Autonomy is not possible at this time. This is because essential changes in Cordillera and Philippine society are not yet in place that would guarantee the operation of a Genuine Regional Autonomy that would serve the specific interests of Cordillera peoples, as distinct indigenous peoples and as Filipinos, and also the other residents in the region.

The present pyramid structure of Philippine society is characterized by a ruling class – elite based politics and system that is corrupt, with feudal and decadent bourgeois values, and questionable patriotism because of subservience to foreign interests. There must be system change so that Genuine Regional Autonomy can be realised as our assertion of the right to self determination, which is the right to freely determine our political status, and to freely pursue our economic, social and cultural development.

The militant national democratic movement sets such a high standard for Regional Autonomy as a form of Self-Determination, that it now qualifies its program as Genuine Regional Autonomy (GRA). This is to differentiate our aspiration from mere bureaucratic decentralization and devolution of powers which is the regional autonomy perspective pursued by politicians and other adherents within the significantly unchanged political system.

There are then two perspectives in the pursuit of Cordillera Regional Autonomy. The perspective of the Cordillera Peoples Alliance is based on indigenous peoples' rights and human rights, on the inalienable right to self determination of indigenous peoples, and on regional autonomy as the appropriate application of the right to self determination. This would also define the relationship of the autonomous region with the national government, as well as that of the Cordillera people in particular with the wider Filipino people of which they are also part of.

This would require a genuinely democratic local and national context for its substantial operation. It combines the process and program for the fulfilment of our strategic aspiration of genuine regional autonomy with programs and campaigns that deal with the urgent problems and issues that we presently face.

Regional Autonomy is empty and bogus if it does not address the current problems which are the manifestations of national oppression that violate the right to self determination. For the militant mass movement, Genuine Regional Autonomy is both a long term goal (i.e. autonomy act, structure, and positions) alongside simultaneous action on current peoples issues, while continuously building unity and practice on the substance and features of self determination at local levels or on specific concerns. These are the building blocks for grassroots people's empowerment which should be the foundation for Genuine Regional Autonomy in the future.

The other perspective characterized by the initiative of politicians and bureaucrats gives general recognition to the history and specific identity of Cordillera indigenous peoples, but is essentially lacking in substantive rights and principles. It is largely of structures, positions, and budgetary allocations. It is decentralization of functions and devolution of powers much of which already obtain in the regionalised Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR) or even in the other regions created by the Local Government Code. This regional autonomy perspective is also political expediency because it is associated with the ambitions of politicians and bureaucrats for a niche in Cordillera regional politics.

Now, on the present third attempt for an Autonomy Act, an outright critique is that it would allow the dismemberment of the Cordillera Region; with the provision of "Article I, Sec 2. (a) The area of the Cordillera Autonomous Region shall consist of the cities and provinces that shall vote favourably in the plebiscite called for the ratification of this Organic Act..." This provision destroys the premise of the Cordillera as ancestral territory of indigenous peoples that they have occupied, defended, and nourished since time immemorial. To allow the possible dismemberment of the Cordillera region undermines the integrity and unity of Cordillera indigenous peoples. The Cordillera region and its people are indivisible. We achieve Regional Autonomy as one, or not at all at this time. If it requires a longer time to build higher unity towards achieving regional autonomy, then so be it. But we will arrive there as one united Cordillera people and one region. In the absence of the necessary requirements for genuine regional autonomy, we will not be railroaded by politicians' ambitions and expediency for regional autonomy at this time.

Another specific critique is on Article II, Sec 2.(b), that defines a relationship of *subsidiarity* between the national and regional governments; where "the national government shall *veer away* from activities best handled by the autonomous government." (italics provided). This is not a relationship of an autonomous region with the national government founded on the recognition of the right to self determination. The national government should not just merely *veer away*; but should *categorically* not counter or undermine the self determined will and actions of the Cordillera autonomous region. Furthermore, *subsidiarity* relations already obtained in the present regionalised status. In short, except for providing structures, positions and added allocations, this third attempt does not address the genuine substance of regional autonomy as an application of self-determination. Its provisions are just improvements on the present Cordillera Administration Region.

To gauge the public pulse on Regional Autonomy, we can say that the discourse of these two perspectives — one for comprehensive substance although to be achieved in the long term, and another for form and political expediency to be achieved immediately — have impinged on the popular rejection of the past two Organic Acts and the anaemic response to the present third attempt. There is great public hunger for information and analysis — on the concept and practice of regional autonomy as application of the principle and right to self determination, on the particular problem of indigenous peoples which is national oppression, and the general problems of Philippine society of which Cordillera people are also part of, on indigenous peoples rights and ancestral land rights, on the discrimination of indigenous peoples and on reverse discrimination. There is much available literature from decades of CPA work that can be accessed and made available to the public.

On the other hand, a major factor in the rejection of the past two organic acts, as well as the lacklustre response to the present third attempt, is the identity and suspected political ambitions of the proponents. In the earlier attempts, the association of the organic act with the Cordillera Peoples Liberation Army (CPLA) and its bankrupt divisive politics among Cordillera peoples and between indigenous peoples and non-indigenous peoples, as well as its mercenary character and criminal acts was translated into popular rejection of the Organic Act identified with it. Public suspicion of political motives for pushing Regional Autonomy now, without doubt also affects the credibility of this third attempt.

A positive sign of our growing political education is in being critical and not readily accepting politicians' prescriptions, i.e. regional autonomy, if this is not sufficiently understood. Unless internalized well and seen to contribute to the overall unity and wellbeing of the Cordillera people, as well as being in tandem with the wider struggles of the whole Filipino people, such politically expedient efforts as regional autonomy in the here and now will only be self serving and divisive, and will likely be rejected.

Instead of regional autonomy now when the people are not yet ready, we can live with the present status as a Cordillera administrative region (CAR). We propose, however, that EO 220 which created CAR should now be scrapped and another executive order be issued by the president to allow the continuance of the Cordillera administrative region as a regular region, but without the unnecessary and controversial structures and privileged status for a few.

This would rightly be so as it is pertinent for President Benigno Aquino to rectify a grave injustice committed by his mother, President Cory Aquino in 1987, against the militant mass movement in the Cordillera and the struggle for self determination and regional autonomy.

For a flashback on history, Cory Aquino and the CPA were would-be allies in the anti-Marcos dictatorship struggle, up to the campaign for Cory as President in 1986, and up to the early months of her presidency. Attesting to this alliance is a faded black and white photo of Cory meeting with CPA leaders in Malacanang, where the CPA recommended the cancellation of the Chico dams and the CRC logging/paper mill, the return of the Ibaloi lands in Taloy Sur, Tuba where the Marcos park and bust were erected, and the agenda for ancestral land rights and regional autonomy for the Cordillera, among others. While some of our demands were granted, such as the return of the land grabbed lands of the Taloy folk, and the cancellation of the Chico dam project, the big issues of ancestral land rights and regional autonomy had to be addressed by a new law.

Cory Aquino promised the CPA that she would appoint a CPA representative to the Constitutional Commission in order that we would be able to help craft the new law. She however reneged on this promise. Unfazed, the CPA was able to mobilize region-wide and lobby the Constitutional Commission to have the provisions on ancestral land and regional autonomy passed.

It is ironic that while the CPA was at the forefront of the anti-dictatorship struggle, and also the regionalisation and regional autonomy campaign since its organization in 1984, Cory chose to turn her back on the CPA, and instead embraced the Cordillera People's Liberation Army (CPLA) which had emerged from a split with the New Peoples Army (NPA) in the Cordillera shortly after EDSA I. They had the so-called Mount Data *sipat* after which Executive Order 220 was issued.

EO 220 caused the formation of the Cordillera Administrative Region (CAR), created the Cordillera Regional Assembly (CRA), Cordillera Executive Board (CEB), Cordillera Bodong Administration (CBAd), and gave privileged status to the Cordillera People's Liberation Army who then became the kingpins in the region. History itself has judged the irrelevance of said superfluous bureaucracy as it withered away after Congress refused to provide the funds to maintain it, without having accomplished anything of worth.

When the Cory government forged its partnership with the CPLA, these were difficult times for the CPA. We became the target for virulent red-baiting and attack by the CPLA under the regime of the so-called icon of democracy. The Cory regime colluded with the CPLA and traditional politicians to try and derail the mass movement and reap the results from our earlier campaigns and lobby. Worse, she allowed the CPLA license to rule roughshod in the Cordillera. They were allowed to harass CPA organizations, destroy socio-economic projects of CPA communities, and even to murder CPA leaders with impunity.

While the CPLA had publicly acknowledged that they were responsible for the killings of then CPA vice-chairperson and Tanglag pangat Ama Daniel Ngayaan and CPA organizer Romy Gardo from Tubo, Abra, the Cory regime did not lift a finger to hold them accountable. Such was the disgraceful honeymoon and criminal embrace of the CPLA and the Cory Aquino government that they have blood on their hands. Because the tainted partnership was the immediate context of the issuance of EO 220, this should now be scrapped and replaced with another executive order, for the continuance of the Cordillera Administrative Region as a regular region, but without the folly associated with EO 220.

The Cordillera struggle for indigenous people's rights and aspiration for genuine regional autonomy is a continuing movement among the grassroots and the middle forces, of which the militant national democratic mass movement is a significant part. Attaining GRA may be slow as we wish to build it from the grassroots, with corresponding changes

also at the national level. But as the dynamics of local and national politics still have to unfold, there may come a time when an Autonomy law may indeed be passed and subsequent Autonomy structures established, even without the prerequisites being met. As this would not yet be GRA that we envision, trust that the militant mass movement will pursue its comprehensive and substantive program and campaigns for self determination in the Cordillera together with advancing the politics of national democracy, as these are the continuing preparations for, and until Genuine Regional Autonomy will finally be attained.

In summary, given our local and national situation, it is not yet the right time to establish the Cordillera Autonomous Region, regardless that there is a Constitutional provision for such, which was the result of the militant mass movement's lobby in the past. The integrity of the Cordillera as territory of indigenous peoples and as a region for administration and a level of development has already somewhat been achieved with the regionalisation of the Cordillera provinces. Let us be satisfied with this for now, as we nurture and develop our region for our people's welfare, demand sufficient allocations, and always assert our indigenous peoples rights and our right to self determination, while continuing to collectively empower ourselves for genuine regional autonomy in the future.

The CPA is issuing this statement as the government celebrates its Cordillera month this July, and its Cordillera Day on July 15, which is the anniversary of the signing of EO 220. Alternatively, since 1985, the CPA has commemorated Cordillera Day on April 24, the anniversary of the martyrdom of Cordillera hero Macliing Dulag, who gave up his life in defense of ancestral land and indigenous peoples rights, including other martyrs and heroes. We hope that the difference is clear, as are the differing perspectives and approaches to regional autonomy.

July 6, 2011

Sikkim

SIKKIM DAMS ON THE HORIZON

Kanchi Kohli

Today's story goes back to 1998 when the Teesta River in Sikkim was the subject of intense hydro power debate.

At that time the expert committee for River Valley and Hydroelectric Projects in the MoEF was in the process of granting approval to the 510 MW Teesta V Hydro project to be constructed on the free flowing Himalayan river, Teesta. This approval was required as part of the procedure prescribed under the Environment Impact Assessment Notification (EIA). An initiative of the National Hydro Power Corporation (NHPC), this project was set to be the first of the six stages 'cascade' plan to harness 3635 MW of hydropower, all within 175 km of the river Teesta.

At the initial stage, discussions within the River Valley Committee were veering towards the view that the Teesta V project should be allowed to go ahead only after a comprehensive carrying capacity study of the Teesta River is carried out. The purpose would be to ascertain the extent of load the river can actually take when it comes to social, ecological and environmental impacts. But this never happened and approval to the Teesta V project was granted in 1999 following pressure from the Ministry of Power. It came with the condition that no other project in Sikkim would be considered for environmental clearance till the carrying capacity study was completed.

Even as the Centre for Inter-Disciplinary Studies of Mountain and Hill Environment (CISMHE) in New Delhi began studying the carrying capacity of the Teesta, the processes for the grant of approval to the 1200 MW Teesta III project (another run of the river scheme) was initiated and approved by the Ministry of Environment and Forests (MoEF). In fact, the MoEF granted approval to five projects on the Teesta river basin, in violation of the condition prescribed for the Teesta V project. CISMHE's study funded by the NHPC took six years to complete from 2001 to 2007.

In a parallel development the Government of India announced a list of another 10 hydro power schemes for the river Teesta, as part of Prime Minister Atal Bihari Vajpayee's initiative to boost power generation in the country. It did not matter that the findings of the carrying capacity study had not been ascertained or articulated at this point of time.

This was also the time when several youth from Sikkim and the Affected Citizen's of Teesta group took to the streets of Gangtok and launched an unending satyagraha. Representatives of the Lepcha tribal community began an indefinite hunger strike to save Dzongu, their traditional homeland. It was one of the most inspiring campaigns led by the youth which received national and international attention. The Lepcha community and their supporters were deeply concerned about what would happen to the free flow of the Teesta and how it would impact their identity. Apart from land acquisition a crucial concern was of cultural erosion due to the influx of outside labour into this protected region once dam construction begins.

It was in October 2008 that the MoEF issued a letter to the Government of Sikkim that no activities related to dams (even investigations) should be taken up North of the Chungthang region, home to the Lepcha, Bhutia and other communities. Whether this was in recognition of the satyagraha was not stated, but it was certainly a critical step forward. What the MoEF admitted was that their decision was in the light of the observation of the Carrying Capacity Study by CISMHE on the ecological sensitivity of the Teesta Basin in North Sikkim. MoEF asked the state government to scrap five projects – Teesta I (300 MW), Teesta II (480 MW), Bhimkyong (99 MW), Bop (99 MW) and Lachung (99 MW) HEPs, with a total installed capacity of 1077 MW.

But the tug of war continued between the Sikkim government and the MoEF. In January 2010, the Power Secretary of the Sikkim government attended a meeting of the Expert Appraisal Committee (EAC) on River Valley and Hydroelectric Projects set up as part of the environment clearance process. What is interesting is that the resource person for the Sikkim government at this time was PG Sastry, who was Chairperson of the EAC for River Valley Projects as late as 2007. Professor Sastry said that the carrying capacity study by CISHME was exemplary and the project developers were willing to take on board the concerns raised in the CISHME study. But the developers and Sikkim government were constrained by the decision of the MoEF to carry out exploratory work upstream of the Teesta, where they can gather additional data.

In February 2010, the EAC gave permission to Teesta I and II projects to conduct investigations based on revised location and parameters. As the projects were close to the Kanchandzonga National Park, the Government of Sikkim was asked to take permission of the National Board of Wildlife (NBWL). In March 2010, EAC members visited Sikkim and

were hosted by the government and, local activists alleged, by the project authorities themselves. In April 2010, the remaining three projects in North Sikkim were allowed to carry out investigations. These were Lachung, Bhimkyong and Bop HEPs. In the judgment of the sub- group that visited the sites of the above projects, Bop and Bhimkyong do not have any rehabilitation issues and the 10 km stretch of the tunnelled river is intercepted by several perennial streams.

Till then the MoEF had stuck to its decision of not allowing any dams upstream, though the processes were pointing to the inevitable. In November 2010, the MoEF granted Terms of Reference (ToR) to Lachung, Bhimkyong and Bop HEPs to initiate EIAs which will set the ball rolling for procuring environment clearances. This was facilitated by the 'optimisation study' that the MoEF allowed to ascertain the impacts of all three projects together so that the diversion structures/tunnelling can be minimised, environmental flow determined and so on; and following which survey and investigations were approved in September 2010.

What all this means is that one has gone back to the pre-1999 scenario and opened the door for hydro power development in Sikkim's fragile ecology. The MoEF which can at one stroke decide on "no-go" or "go slow" regions chooses to turn the picture on its head.

Note: The author is member of Kalpavriksh Environmental Action Group and is based in Delhi. The article is available at April 2011 Edition of <http://www.civilsocietyonline.com/apr11/apr1112.asp>

Sri Lanka

STATEMENT OF NDMLP ON THE TAMIL HUMAN RIGHTS QUESTION IN SRI LANKA

Statement to the Media
20 April 2011

The Central Committee of the New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, having discussed the statements issued by the Senate of the U.S. and by the U.N. Panel of Experts on the Government of Sri Lanka has issued the following statement on the issues concerned.

The Government of Sri Lanka is obliged to respond to charges of denial of democracy to the entire people of Sri Lanka, alleged acts of violation of human rights, and alleged war crimes committed against the Tamil people and that to dismiss the report of the U.N. Panel of Experts as a violation of the sovereignty of Sri Lanka, rather than address the issues is frivolous as well as dangerous. The sovereignty of Sri Lanka means the sum total of the sovereignty of the sovereignties of the Sinhala, Tamil, Muslim and Hill Country Tamil nationalities as well as of other minority communities of the country. It is necessary to arrest the encroachment upon such sovereignty through the U.N., against a background of ulterior motives of the U.S. and other Western imperialist powers. The only way to achieve it is for the Government to take the responsibility of responding meaningfully to the matters put forward by the Panel of Experts appointed by the Secretary General of the U.N. It is thus that the efforts driven by ulterior motives of the U.S. and other Western imperialist powers.

It should be noted that, since the Government of Sri Lanka is a client of imperialist neo-colonialist organizations including the U.N. that accepts their rules and regulations, it is committed to be answerable to them. Infringement of the sovereignty of countries is nothing new to U.S. imperialism and the U.N. It is not therefore necessary to accept such infringements. However, to avert and to resist such infringements, governments should be under obligation to provide honest answers to their own people. People know that leaders of countries who are in the embrace of imperialism praise imperialist powers when they are supportive of their oppressive regime and display great anti-imperialist and patriotic passion when the imperialist powers act in ways hostile to or in disagreement with their oppressive regime. Reports have been released in quick succession by the Senate of the US and by the Panel of Experts appointed by the

Secretary General of the U.N. claiming that human rights have been violated and democracy has been denied by the Government of Sri Lanka and the defence forces of the Sri Lankan state and that, in the final stages of the war between the Sri Lankan defence forces and the LTTE, there have been violations of international humanitarian law by the defence forces of the Sri Lankan state, and that the Government of Sri Lanka is obliged to answer these charges.

The New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party has never endorsed the acts of personal terror by the LTTE and its call for a separate state. But it had the duty to point out that the fundamental reason for that organisation to indulge in armed struggle was the chauvinistic oppression against the Tamil people and that the oppression still continues.

The Party has been advocating a state structure in which all the nationalities of Sri Lanka can live in unity as a multi-ethnic society, based on the right to self determination, equality and autonomy. The Party has consistently pointed out that it is only when such arrangements do not exist that the oppressed nationalities are driven to call for secession and a separate state.

National oppression by the chauvinistic capitalist governments that have continuously ruled Sri Lanka and the narrow nationalistic stand of the reactionary, conservative forces among the Tamils provided the basis to justify the call for secession.

Imperialist and regional hegemonic powers have pretended to be supportive of the secession of Tamil Eelam to deflect the struggle of the Tamil people and finally drowned that struggle in Nanthikkadal. They also directly and indirectly supported the chauvinistic Sri Lankan government. The U.S. and other Western imperialists, who despite all of it, have been unable to bring the Mahinda Rajapaksa government entirely to their side, are now posing an expression of support for the Transnational Government of Tamil Eelam formed by the elite of the Tamil diaspora.

Besides, the continuing threat of subjecting the Government of Sri Lanka to a war crimes inquiry is not motivated by a desire to provide justice to the affected Tamils but by the imperialist aim to intimidate the Government headed by Rajapaksa and thereby take control of the whole of Sri Lanka. Although Rajapaksa's government presents an anti-imperialist façade to the Sinhalese, it has situated the state of Sri Lanka as a client to neocolonialism. One finds now, under these conditions, that the rejection of the right of nationalities to self determination, comprising an aspect of his feudal attitude, is in conflict with imperialist concerns. But there is no

anti-imperialism in Rajapaksa and there is no imperialist interest in self determination for the Tamils.

The failure of the Rajapaksa government to find a just solution for the national question as well as its refusal to accept answerability to the affected people on matters of war crimes and violation of human rights has created a situation in which imperialist and hegemonic forces are able to exert pressure on Sri Lanka.

The report of the senate of the U.S. has imperialist intentions. The report of Panel of Experts appointed by Ban Ki Moon, Secretary General of the U.N., which is a neo-colonial instrument, has neo-colonial motives. Blunt denial by the Government of Sri Lanka is no answer to the questions raised in the reports. The Government of Sri Lanka has the responsibility to conduct extensive inquiries and report on whether civilians had not been killed, international humanitarian laws were not breached, and human and democratic rights had not been violated, during the military action of the government against the LTTE. If it fails to do so, it risks surrendering to its imperialist masters.

Thus, beyond the humbug of the U.S., the U.N. and others and beyond the Sri Lankan government's denial, the Government headed by Rajapaksa should come forward to conduct a just inquiry into war crimes, violations of human and fundamental rights, and other such matters. Meantime, initiatives should be taken to find a political solution that will ensure power sharing between nationalities. That will unite the entire people to resist pressure and intervention from the U.S. and the West.

S. K. Senthivel
General Secretary
New-Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party

STATEMENT OF INDIAN WOMEN'S RIGHTS ACTIVISTS IN SOLIDARITY WITH WOMEN IN SRI LANKA

It's been more than two years since the supposed end of the war in Sri Lanka. The issues of concern are many, particularly with regard to the period after the end of direct combat. The Sri Lankan government has been abysmal in acknowledging the range of human rights violations that have been committed by the armed forces, which has been documented without a kernel of doubt by the United Nations report as well as the Channel 4 documentary. This documentation has been made in spite of circumstances where any neutral observation of the last stages of the conflict was made impossible by the Sri Lankan government and its army.

Among the myriad communities who have been affected by the prolonged conflict in terms of destruction of property, lives and support structures through death, injury and displacement, are women from different communities. This includes women from both Tamil and Muslim communities in the northern and eastern provinces. Most of the concerns are shared, along with particularities to specific communities such as the Muslims for instance.

In the event of the Sri Lankan Government appearing before the CEDAW committee, we would like to bring to your notice the extensive report put together by the Coalition of Muslims and Tamils for Peace and Co-existence posted earlier on kafila. We stand by all aspects of the report put together by activists, yet again, in severely adverse circumstances. Through rigorous, grassroot-level work in a sustained manner, this report has been put together in a situation where the government is actively impeding any work by humanitarian agencies and civil society organisations across the country, especially in the north and east.

We address you from our vantage point as women's rights organisations and feminists based in India who are deeply concerned about the role of the Indian and Sri Lankan governments in Sri Lanka today, especially concerns affecting women who often bear the brunt of oppressions caused due to war meted out to them by state and non-state actors. We would like to completely support our colleagues in Sri Lanka who are often silenced by real dangers of harm to their person on a daily basis and activists working on Sri Lanka based elsewhere. We strongly urge both governments to act upon the following demands:

1. The right to return and speedy, sustained and holistic resettlement of women and their families in their chosen places of return. This includes simplifying processes of registration and resettlement and setting up transparent and democratic systems for the same. This should include, among other things, a realistic compensation package to rebuild lives that have been shattered repeatedly for three decades if not more. Specifically, we demand that this should apply to all plans, including the large-scale housing project that is being done by the Indian Government through contracts with private companies.

2. Dismantling of high security zones which have caused a serious loss of land to many families, such as in Sampur in Trincomalee district, Mullikulam and Silawathurai in Mannar district.

3. Canceling of industrial projects in various parts of the country, including those in high security zones. Here we would like to particularly stress on industrial projects such as the Sampur power plant that is being set up in collaboration with NTPCL and the Indian Government. We strongly urge the Indian government to desist from actively participating in industrial and developmental projects in Sri Lanka wherever they result in the permanent loss of the land and livelihoods or ethnic cleansing of war-displaced minorities.

4. The increased militarization in the country as a whole, particularly in the north and east, needs to be brought to an end immediately. This includes, but is not restricted to, ending the immense power accorded to the state under emergency regulations, the unchecked power of the Presidential Task Force, and the unchecked power and impunity given under the Prevention of Terrorism Act. It is imperative that military and ex-military personnel be immediately removed from positions of governance and be replaced by civilian administrators and a civil police force, as should be the case during peacetime.

5. The specific concerns of women such as problems of title on land in women-headed households and among widows and so on be taken cognizance of and addressed at the earliest. Further, cases of sexual assault and rape meted out by security forces and other state actors need to be taken cognizance of. The accused must be tried in the locality where the rapes and assaults took place rather than in a distant Sinhala-speaking locality, the perpetrators must be punished and the victims compensated.

6. Government to take active measures to find missing persons, and either prosecute or release prisoners who have been kept in prison without any prosecution for many years.

7. The trafficking of women and girls, not just for forced sex work but also for work in Free Trade Zones, often in faraway places without being allowed any contact with their families or other community members, is a horrifying index of the complete vulnerability and helplessness with which they survive, due to ongoing displacement, militarization and draconian legislation. We are aware of an overwhelming practice of sexual force, abuse and deception of minors and women from the northern and eastern regions to push them into violent situations of work. We demand an immediate rigorous enquiry and halt to this heinous practice, adequate compensation to the victims, and punishment of all those who have engaged in trafficking them. Situations of coercive work due to social, economic and conflict-related reasons are complex and it is incumbent upon the state to halt any practice of taking advantage of these already vulnerable communities. We demand that the state provides adequate mechanisms and resources to rebuild their work and lives in ways they choose.

We no longer believe the empty promises of the Sri Lankan Government to bring peace and reconciliation, and strongly demand immediate action that will convince us of the seriousness of this intent. We strongly condemn the Indian Government's silence and active participation in many of the human rights violations meted out by the Sri Lankan Government. We demand that the Indian government take positive steps for justice and the basic welfare of all those people adversely affected by the prolonged conflict in Sri Lanka. As women's groups and feminists in India, we will no longer silently stand witness to such violations and will continue to raise a voice against our own government as well as the Sri Lankan government and will stand in eternal solidarity with our friends and colleagues in Sri Lanka.

July 26, 2011

Source: <http://kafila.org>

EXPOSE THE DUBIOUS UN REPORT!

Oppose the Heinous Attempts to do Business on the Dead Bodies of the Martyrs for Tamil Eelam!

The Report of the United Nations “on accountability in Sri Lanka” is finally out, having nothing to add but for a further brandishing of the liberation struggle for separate Tamil Eelam as ‘violent ethnic conflict’. It is a follow-up on the joint statement by UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-Moon and the Government of Sri Lanka made on 23rd May 2009. They spoke of the importance of an ‘accountability process for addressing violations of international humanitarian and human rights law violation’. The UN secretary-general made his visit to Sri Lanka just after the official announcement of the end of the bloody “Final war” on 19th May 2009. Furnished on the line of Hitler’s ‘final solution’, Rajapaksa’s ‘final war’ on LTTE tried to terminate the decades long genuine demand for separate Tamil Eelam. The ‘solution’ was simple—to silence the voice of resistance and liberation by murdering, dismembering and assassinating lakhs of Tamils in Northern-eastern Sri Lanka. It was one of the biggest acts of state-terrorism, targeting no-fire zone, hospitals, orphanage and international bodies, using chemical weapons, cluster bombs on civilian targets. The report, while reiterating that the Sri Lankan state has indeed indulged in war crimes violating all forms of human rights and humanitarian laws, does so only in the context of condemning the violence unleashed by LTTE. The report clearly states that its mandate does not include fact-finding or investigation; it is rather a report made on the basis of allegations collected from different sources having some factual validity and admissibility with respect to international laws.

Tamils in Eelam are not mere victims of a genocidal war. They were and still are aspirants for an independent and free Tamil Eelam. The report obviously chose to exclude this political aspiration of the Tamils and reduced them to mere *helpless victims* caught up between the Sri Lankan government and the ‘terrorists’ LTTE. This war was also not just violation of human rights and international laws as the UN claims, but a planned genocide, that too not the first of its kind on the Eelam Tamils. The discrimination against the Tamils started with the independence of Sri Lanka in 1948. It was not mere Sinhalese domination in government as the UN report puts it that led to the ‘conflict’, but the oppression of Tamils at every level that led to the fight for the independent Eelam nation. Parroting Rajapaksa, the report reduces LTTE’s decades long struggle

and setting up of a parallel government for the Tamils in Eelam, as a ‘successful outcome of the effect of intimidation, mass extermination and threat’. In a world where international relations are forged on the principle of ‘war on terror’, the story seems to be very convincingly marketable. Such branding has always been a potent tool for any ruling classes in today’s world to delegitimize people’s movements and repress their struggle in the most ruthless manner possible. The report also adopts the same formula—that of silencing the people’s struggle for just political demand to mere ‘human rights violation’. It glosses over the repression and oppression in the context of global ‘war on terror’. Further it recommends the secretary-general to suggest that the Sri Lankan government adopt necessary measures to carry out proper investigation with full accountability. To put it simply, the report declares the Sri Lankan government allegedly guilty of war-crimes, and then requests the same government to supply proof of it, being fully accountable! It calls for accountability and transparency from the same government that it found guilty of blatant distortion of truth and justice by severely repressing and silencing democratic voices, mass media or restricting movement of international organizations at the time of war! So the report seeks justice for the victims of the Sri Lankan government’s terrorism from their perpetrators! The report speaks of “common homeland” for Sinhalese and Tamils, thereby completely rejecting the existence of separate geographical territory for the Tamils and Sinhalese. In north and east of Sri Lanka the Tamils have historically been a dominant force since the 13th century. While it had alleged the Sri Lankan government, the UN has cleverly tried to mask the dubious role of Vijay Nambiar, the personal advisor of Ban Ki Moon. One cannot forget that the LTTE commanders including Nadesan, who were shot dead in cold blood, came to surrender to the Sri Lankan Army with white flags only after the assurance from Vijay Nambiar. It is no secret that Vijay Nambiar’s brother was an advisor of the Sri Lankan army. In fact the UN, as always in the past, has colluded with the perpetrators of crime and then cried hoarse about human rights violation.

With the end of war, the Sri Lankan government has colonized lands, resources and infrastructure which rightfully belong to Tamils. Today in the name of ‘reconstruction of the north and east’, Sri Lanka has been completely militarized. Visitors’ accounts state that the only concrete structures in many areas in the north are that of army barracks. Sri Lanka has become the newfound ‘land of opportunities’ for imperialist plunder by the US and its competitors like Russia and China. In a mad rush when US imperialism is working through Indian expansionism, China and Russia

are also trying their best to win over Rajapaksa. Already, heavy investment in terms of infrastructure, road and rail construction and service industry has been made by India in the recently ravaged Tamil Eelam. Sea beaches of this part of Sri Lanka has been rented out to Chinese companies. While Obama issued occasional statements asking Rajapaksa to stop the war, Israel-US have extended their full cooperation to Rajapaksa's genocide through intelligence support and military equipments. The UN report must be read in this context of competition among imperialist and expansionist forces. After the publication of the report, Rajapaksa sought support from Russia and China, two Security Council members of UN with veto power. Russia came to his immediate rescue extending their solidarity opposing UN's report alleging him of war-crimes.

UN has never been an international organization with neutral position. It is the nexus of imperialism which controls the interest of UN too. It is merely the 'human face' of US-imperialism, masking impoverishment caused by imperialist invasions and devastating economic reforms imposed by IMF and World Bank. Nothing proves the link better than UN role's in Iraq invasion. Even before US military invasion, it was UN's sanction on Iraq that pushed the country to the brink of destitution and caused millions of deaths. Despite prominent international intellectuals and politicians pointing out that the sanction is eventually detrimental for Iraqis, the UN persisted with it. And it did so under the guidance of the US. It is crystal clear to the world that the sanction was neither against Saddam for genocide nor for alleged possession of Weapons of Mass Destruction. It was particularly targeted to weaken Saddam's resistance to US efforts to monopolize the oil resources through privatization of oil mines. The inevitable result was US invasion and innumerable war crimes which the UN would do nothing about. Except mere token cautions to US and its junior partners, the UN has done nothing to restrict imperialist aggression in Africa, Middle East, Afghanistan where imperialism has nurtured, funded and aided local war-lords and feudal elements to subvert governments in order to meet their own interests. The bombing of Serbia by NATO in 1999 or the recent involvement of the French Government and NATO and subsequent invasion into Libya are other glaring examples. Despite violations of boundaries of nations and delegitimization of sovereignty of countries, the UN did nothing but pay lip service in the name of 'human rights'. The hollowness and subsequent political agenda of the human rights discourse is visible for us to see.

While the UN speaks of 'accountability' of the Sri Lankan state, the latter forced people to take shelter in 'welfare camps' that are nothing but modern day Auschwitz or Dachau. This is what the Sri Lankan government perpetuates under the guise of rehabilitation and resettlement. The Forcefully Detained People (FDP) face physical and mental torture and humiliation as a part of the official policies in such camps. If one is suspected of having any LTTE links or sympathy, (s)he is taken away, never to be returned again. Besides these, women are targeted specifically. Estimates show that there are over 89,000 war widows in Eelam. Women are molested, sexually harassed and raped as a part of their torture strategy, ensuring that the surviving Tamil population never recover from the horrors of this war. Deplorable conditions of food, water and other basic amenities have already led to several epidemics in the camps and steady rise in death toll. Last estimate suggests almost three lakh Tamils in these modern day concentration camps, even after two years of war and millions pumped into Sri Lanka in the name of 'rehabilitation'. Some of these camps were 'let open' last year, but there is no information or evidences of resettlement; no one knows what happened to those 2 lakh people. However nobody can confirm the number too as no credible information about these camps can be obtained under the dictatorship of Rajapaksa. Only status-quoist pro government media is manufacturing relentless lies to manoeuvre the national and international opinion. Not just in camps but every Tamil in Sri Lanka and particularly in Eelam are living under threat, including the MPs and members of opposition party Tamil National Alliance. It is quite clear by now the situation is going to continue in the similar fashion as long as Rajapaksa is able to satisfy his imperialist masters and successfully play the cunning game to balance the international expansionist forces' economic interests in the region. No UN report is even going to create a single ripple.

The Eelam war was not just between two parties – the Sri Lankan state and the LTTE, but a brutal assault on the people of Eelam who were fighting an uncompromising struggle for their national liberation. India is not just complicit, but was actively aiding the Sri Lankan state in its genocide and did all it could to crush the liberation movement just as it is trying in Kashmir and north-east. The recommendation of the report to 'find a political solution that recognises Sri Lanka's ethnic diversity and the full and inclusive citizenship of all its people' only comes as a cruel joke when even civilian jobs are today filled by military personnel in the north and east, facilitating the colonisation of

Eelam by Sinhalese. Hence only a resolute struggle by the Tamils for a free Tamil Eelam and our unconditional support to their struggle is the answer to the fascist dictats of the Rajapaksa regime. No politics of opportunism or NGO-isation of politics can deliver justice to the Tamils. Tamils not only fought or is still fighting for a separate Tamil Eelam, but they are also fighting against inequality, oppression and marginalisation. Their fight is for justice, for a democratic progressive society which the oppressed masses all over the world now aspire for. At this crucial juncture the UN report strives to show the world that the fight is over. As if the time has come for 're-building and reconstitution'.

Thus, to celebrate the UN report for merely alleging Sri Lankan state of war-crime is nothing but doing business on the dead bodies of the revolutionaries who fought for national liberation. UN report must be seen in the context of facilitating and strengthening the interests of imperialist and comprador capital, and their incessant war on people in south Asia in the name of 'war on terror' or 'internal security threat'. It therefore must be rejected and resisted in-toto, while standing in full solidarity with the people fighting such repression. A section of civil society and some 'left' political parties however are now betraying the peoples' movements and fuelling up 'emotions' to sell off movements as a commodity for their own opportunist politics. We must resist these brokers of peoples' aspirations and struggles. We must carry on the mantle of the glorious legacy of Eelam Tamil's liberation struggle. **We must join the struggles of the oppressed masses of Eelam, Kashmir, North East and India in their onwards march for national liberation and for the victory of revolution!**

Democratic Students' Union

9 May 2011

Telangana

THE STRUGGLE FOR STATEHOOD

1

SEPARATE TELANGANA STATE: A PEOPLES' DEMOCRATIC DEMAND

19 May 2011

The assembly elections in five states are over. And with that ends the deadline for the UPA government to bring the bill for a separate state of Telangana in the parliament. But the central government so far has not shown any inclination to fulfill its promise. The history of betrayal with the people of Telangana on their just and democratic demand for a separate state thus continues. But along with that the historic struggle of the people for their separate state is also intensifying. While various mainstream parties, shedding their initial belligerent 'commitment' for the cause, are once again showing clear inclination for a compromise, the people in and outside Telangana are gearing up to win the final battle. The people braving ruthless state repression are yet again out on the streets. The writing is clear on the wall: the people of Telangana are NOT going to give up this struggle.

This is what the Indian government is scared of. They fear the collective, uncompromising, militant struggle of the people. That fear is apparent in the Sri Krishna Committee report. This yet another farcical committee, set up by the central government only to buy time and delay the final outcome of the movement, had publicly not recommended *anything* that upholds the historical mass aspiration of the Telangana people. It rather prioritized the interests of the dominant rulers of Seemandhra. From the day of Andhra Pradesh state formation, whenever there is a mass movement demanding separate state, central government resorts to forming one committee or the other so as to quell the movement. Gentlemen's Agreement, 6-Point Formula, 8-Point Formula, Constitution of Regional Boards, special packages, Pranab Mukharjee Committee, Rosaiah Committee have been constituted one after another in the past without any fulfillment of the demand. It seemed the Sri Krishna committee was no different, till it was revealed that it is in fact even more dangerous. Because the Sri Krishna Committee contained a secret 'Eighth Chapter' which is yet not made public.

It was only after the judgment of Justice Narsimha Reddy, who along with directing the Eighth chapter to be made public, also quoted at length from that nefarious document, did people come to know of the real intentions of this committee. The secret recommendations made by the committee are highly repressive. It has directed how to 'manage' this entire brewing movement by parroting age old pretext that Telangana, if formed, can become a hotbed of 'Maoist and Islamic' forces. It has brazenly directed how to crush the movement, by 'softening' and 'purchasing' the opposition, by sheer media management and by repressing the students more ruthlessly. It has gone as far as recommending the 'right weapons' to more brutally suppress the students who are spearheading the movement currently. It has also recommended safeguarding the interests of the dominant castes, the Kammas and Reddys. The ruling elite of Seemandhra and the centre have maintained a shameful silence over such a despicable betrayal by the Indian government. But the people of Telangana are vocally opposing it. Currently the journalists of Telangana are holding a large demonstration against the central government in Delhi rejecting the Sri Krishna Committee report and reiterating their demand for the formation of Telangana state immediately. The people all over Telangana have rejected the Sri Krishna Committee report and are out in the streets to clinch the final battle for a separate statehood.

The fight for Telangana is a fight for justice and democracy. It is a fight of the oppressed masses against the entrenched dominance of the ruling elites. It is a fight of the downtrodden of Telangana, the peasants, workers, Dalits, Muslims, adivasis, women, the students, and all oppressed sections. It is a just struggle for long denied rights over land, resources, livelihood, opportunities and dignity of the people. Braving all sorts of repression and consistent betrayals, the people of Telangana have heroically fought for their right. It is only a matter of time before they win this historic battle.

2

MANMOHAN-SONIA-CHIDAMBARAM IS RESPONSIBLE FOR MANDADI YADI REDDY'S MARTYRDOM! INDIAN STATE IS FORCING HUNDREDS OF YOUTHS FROM TELANGANA ON THE PATH OF SUICIDE!

Form Telangana State Immediately! No More Delay and False Promises!

Today on 20 July at around 7.30am, Mandadi Yadi Reddy –a thirty-year old student from Ranga Reddy district of Telangana– hung himself to death in front of Krishi Bhavan, a stones' throw away from the Parliament, the North Block and South Block, and from Rashtrapati Bhavan. In his 20-page suicide note written in Telugu, he demanded the formation of Telangana state without any delay.

The Delhi Police and the political class at the Centre who directs it, tried its best to temper with the note written by Mandadi Yadi Reddy, wishing to portray it as a common case of suicide. They tried to hush-up the incident fearing that Mandadi Yadi Reddy's martyrdom will further stoke the ongoing peoples' struggle for Telangana. They are scared that Telangana youths have come to the country's capital – and to its political nerve-centre, the Parliament/North Block– to register their protest by taking the extreme step of suicide. There has been a concerted attempt also to completely black-out the news of this suicide in the so-called 'national media' in a condemnable act of corporate media's self-censorship in order to please the Central government.

Mandadi Yadi Reddy's suicide is only the latest of the more than 600 Telangana youth who took their own lives for the cause of Telangana. They, along with the people of Telangana, have rightly accused the Central government of deliberate manipulations to delay the formation of Telangana state. The Union Home Minister himself promised the formation of the state on 9 December 2009, only to back out a few days later. After this, there has been only deception and delay by the Congress-led UPA government on the issue Telangana, testing the patience of the people of Telangana and especially its students and youth, who have waited for five decades for their own state. The Indian state is responding with brutal repression to crush the democratic aspirations of the people, and have turned the campuses in Telangana into police camps.

The Central government run by the Manmohan-Sonia-Chidambaram is squarely responsible for the martyrdom of Mandadi Yadi Reddy and hundreds of others who have died for separate Telangana state. It is high time that the Indian state takes an immediate decision to form Telangana state, or else be prepared to face in the days ahead for an intense struggle of the people fighting for their democratic rights.

Note: The above pamphlets were released by the Students' Solidarity Committee for Separate Telangana

Thailand

TRAJECTORY OF TACTICAL ALLIANCE DURING ELECTION AND AFTERWARDS

1

WHY SOCIALISTS IN THAILAND CALL FOR A VOTE FOR THAKSIN'S PHEU THAI PARTY

June 16, 2011

Normally, no socialist should ever call for a vote for a capitalist party in any election. To do so would risk making the kind of mistakes by adopting the Popular Front strategy of building alliances with the bourgeoisie and making anti-working class concessions. But it is my opinion that in the July 3, 2011, general election in Thailand, socialists has no choice but to call for a vote for the Pheu Thai Party (also spelled Peua Thai Party). Pheu Thai is a thoroughly capitalist party.

The Pheu Thai Party is the descendant of the Thai Rak Thai Party of former Prime Minister Thaksin Shinawatra. Although a party of big business, like all other Thai parties, it was democratically elected to office, with a large majority. This is because it put forward pro-poor policies such as universal health care. But this Thai Rak Thai government was overthrown by a right-wing royalist military coup in 2006 and the party was disbanded by right-wing judges.

Thai Rak Thai morphed into the Palang Prachachon Party, which won the next general election in 2007. This government was then brought down in 2008 by a combination of legal manoeuvres, fascist demonstrations (which closed the airports) and pressure from the military. The party was disbanded by the courts and the present "Democrat Party" government under Abhisit Vejjajiva was installed by the military. Thaksin's party morphed a second time into Pheu Thai Party and a mass movement for democracy arose. This was the mass movement called the Red Shirts.

Red Shirts: The Red Shirts are the largest mass movement in Thai political history, larger than the communist movement in the 1970s and numbering many hundreds of thousands. Its supporters run into millions. Its main base is among the poor: small-scale farmers, petty traders, urban workers and the urban poor. Although made up of supporters of Thaksin Shinawatra, the movement has developed beyond him. It has moved to the left, stressing the inequality in Thai society. Last year it staged huge demonstrations for democracy.

Many aspects of Thai society, including the monarchy and the military are regularly criticised in Red Shirt circles. In April and May last year, the Democrat Party government and the military shot up to 90 unarmed Red Shirt demonstrators. Now a general election will be held in early July 2011.

Thai socialists: Obviously Thai socialists had to relate to and join the Red Shirt mass movement. Turn Left Thailand did just this. But we are extremely small. We have less than 50 members with two key members exiled abroad. We have been trying to relate to a movement of hundreds of thousands. We have managed to have an input into political debates. We have urged people to learn from the Arab uprisings, especially the importance of mass movements and workers' strikes. We argue that we don't just want democracy, although that is extremely important. We want a welfare state and eventually socialism. We have also campaigned against draconian royalist laws and for the release of political prisoners.

In the coming election, millions of Red Shirt supporters will be hoping for a Peua Thai victory. Such a victory will not be easy given the level of censorship and repression and the opportunities for the military and the elites to fix the election. The head of the army has been on army-controlled TV many times, warning of a "republican plot". This is an attempt to stop people voting for Pheu Thai, even though it is in no way a republican party. The National Human Rights Commission and the Electoral Commission are staffed by royalists. There are no parties of the left or the trade union movement.

The coming election is not about trying to get a woman to become Thailand's prime minister (Thaksin's sister, Yingluck Shinawatra, leads the Pheu Thai), even though a Pheu Thai victory would have such a result. We are well aware that the politics of the candidate is much more important than their gender. We have seen reactionary women leaders in the Philippines, India and Britain.

The election will be a stark choice between the forces of dictatorship and repression and a party which represents the democratic aspirations of millions. If the Democrat Party and the military have a victory at the polls, they will claim democratic legitimacy for everything that they have done since the 2006 coup, including the shooting of demonstrators. That is why Thai socialists have to call for a vote for Pheu Thai.

We make no concessions to Pheu Thai in doing so. We are talking to Red Shirts, not Pheu Thai.

Abstention: To call for an abstention would be seen to be side-stepping the fight and it would make us totally irrelevant. Not only that, the fascist PAD (People's Alliance for Democracy, or Yellow Shirts) movement is calling for an abstention because it set up a party and now realises that it will not be able to win any seats.

But by calling for a vote for Pheu Thai, socialists have to point out that we should have absolutely no illusions. We should not have illusions that Pheu Thai want to take on the ruling elites and destroy the power of the military. Pheu Thai won't campaign against royalist repressive laws and won't want to bring the generals, judges and authoritarian politicians to justice. Pheu Thai certainly won't start to build a welfare state.

Power: The power to bring about real change in Thai society lies with the Red Shirts. But this mass movement has to be convinced politically that these tasks are necessary. That is what we and many others are trying to do. But to be able to argue and discuss with Red Shirt activists, we need also to stand with them in the immediate electoral battle. We must also talk about the need to build a socialist party as an alternative to Pheu Thai.

Turn Left Thailand welcomes any discussions which international comrades might wish to have with us on this issue.

2

THE NEW SETTLEMENT BETWEEN PEUA THAI AND THE ELITES

Saturday, 13 August 2011

We are starting to see the results of a "new settlement" between Peua Thai and the elites in order to "resolve" the Thai crisis in the interests of the latter. This may or may not be a formal agreement, but we are already seeing the effects.

Following the last crisis during the Cold War conflict with the Communist Party, the elites crafted a settlement where parliamentary democracy was tolerated so long as elections could be dominated by money politics and there was no challenge to the ruling class. Today's "settlement" is designed to allow Peua Thai Party to form a government and to bring the Peua Thai leaders, including Taksin, back into the elite's exclusive club. We must remember that previous to the 2006 crisis, Taksin and Thai Rak Thai was a recognised part of the ruling elites.

The anti-Taksin elites could not crudely and directly prevent the formation of the Peua Thai government because the election result was so clear. But at the same time Peua Thai was prepared to enter into a process of compromise, under the banner of reconciliation, by promising not to touch the military or any interests of the royalist elites. In the past we saw the 19th September military coup, followed by the judicial coup against the Palang Prachachon government. Now we are seeing a silent coup resulting from pressure being applied behind the scenes in order to achieve the new settlement which betrays the aspirations of most Red Shirts.

Let us look at a number of important issues like *lèse majesté*, the civil war in the South, the political prisoners and the influence of the Military.

lèse majesté:

On 5th August Norwet Yotpiyasatien, a recent graduate from Kasetsart University, in Bangkok, was arrested and jailed under the draconian *lèse majesté* law for copying an article on to his PC from the internet. He has now been released on bail. It was the Deputy Rector of Kasetsart University, Nipon Limlamtong, who filed charges against the student with the police. Nipon has special responsibility for student activities. In other words he is there to enforce censorship and prevent academic freedom in the university.

On 13th August Group Captain Anudit Nakornrap, the new ICT Minister declared that the new government would be even more repressive in the use of *lèse majesté* and the computer crimes law. Clearly nothing has changed on the issue of *lèse majesté*.

Lèse majesté prisoners such as Somyot, Surachai, Da Torpedo and many others are still in jail. Some are awaiting trial and others have been found guilty by kangaroo courts.

The *lèse majesté* law is vitally important to the Military's influence on Thai politics because the Military use the Monarchy for its legitimacy and then use *lèse majesté* against those who oppose it. Peua Thai's defence of *lèse majesté* shows that it is prepared to accept the continuing influence of the Military in politics and hopes that the Military and royalists will stop accusing Taksin and Peua Thai of being against the Monarchy.

The Civil War in the South:

Peua Thai Party promised before the elections to resolve the southern conflict peacefully and by political means instead of using

repression. A limited degree of autonomy and self-government was proposed. This was an important step forward, given the history of violent repression against Malay Muslims by the Thai Rak Thai government in 2004.

But on 10th August Sudeereuman Mala was sentenced by a court to 2 years in prison. He was accused by Pol. Maj. Gen. Jaktip Chaijinda of a “giving a false statement” about being tortured by police in the 2004 case of gun theft from an army barracks. Yet, there is ample evidence that defendants were tortured into providing false confessions by the police. The defence lawyer Somchai Neelapaichit, who helped these victims of torture, was murdered by police during the Taksin government. So the gross injustice in the South continues.

On 11th August, in the southern province of Naratiwat, police raided the local prison looking for drugs. This caused a riot and the authorities then brought in military snipers to crush it. Luckily no one was killed. This is just typical of the Thai state that continues to use violence against unarmed civilians. There are a number of important questions. 1. Since everyone knows that the prison guards are the people that bring drugs into prisons, why crack down on the prisoners? 2. When will the authorities use political and social methods to solve problems instead of armed snipers? 3. How can this possibly help bring peace to the South? 4. Even if the Yingluck government did not directly order the prison crackdown, which is debatable, the government could make a statement criticising the methods used. But why has it not done so?

It is clear from pre-election statements made by the army chief Gen. Prayut that the Military do not favour any autonomy or political solution to the southern conflict. They want a military solution, which can never be successful. This means that these recent events raise questions about the new government’s sincerity about building peace in the South if it means going against the Military.

Red Shirt political prisoners:

There are still many Red Shirt political prisoners held in Thai jails on charges resulting from last year’s pro-democracy protests. More people are still being arrested. Most Red Shirts have not received bail. It seems like nothing has changed and there has been no announcement that there will be a thorough investigation into the killing of unarmed civilians by the Military last year.

The new cabinet is in mourning for a minor royal and has agreed with the spending of millions in public money on an elaborate funeral. But these politicians have never worn black for those who were killed by the Military while trying to defend Democracy. The head of the Department of Special Investigation which has covered up the killings and which has initiated trumped up charges against Red Shirts is still in post.

The “settlement” with the elites means that it will be harder to bring to justice those who were responsible for ordering the killings of civilians last year.

The Military:

The “settlement” with the elites is more than anything a settlement with the Military. The appointment of a military officer, with a dubious background in human rights, to the post of Defence Minister, shows that this government has no intention of creating a culture where elected civilians control the Military. The head of the army Gen. Prayut, who showed such contempt for the Red Shirts, and who opposed Peua Thai during the election campaign, has yet to be sacked.

Red Shirts:

Red Shirts must organise a thorough debate within the movement in order to determine their strategy to counter the settlement with the elites which betrays everything for which they have been fighting and all their dreams and aspirations. This government should be pressurised into making real democratic reforms, and if it will not listen, it must be vigorously opposed. The election was important in that it showed that most Thais opposed the military dictatorship and the Democrat Party. But the election only marks the next round of the struggle.

Notes: The above articles by Giles Ji Ungpakorn, Turn Left Thailand are available at: [Links International Journal of Socialist Renewal Or http://redthaisocialist.com/english-article/54-thai-political-crisis/250-the-new-settlement-between-peua-thai-and-the-elites.html](http://Link International Journal of Socialist Renewal Or http://redthaisocialist.com/english-article/54-thai-political-crisis/250-the-new-settlement-between-peua-thai-and-the-elites.html)

Indian Sub-Continent

WORKERS' CHRONICLE

April 7, 2011 - CENTRAL GOVERNMENT REVISES THE NATIONAL FLOOR LEVEL MINIMUM WAGE (NFLMW):

The Central Government has revised the National Floor Level Minimum Wage (NFLMW) from Rs. 100/- per day to Rs. 115/- per day effective from 01.04.2011, on the basis of the rise in the All – India Consumer Price Index for Industrial Workers during the period. The NFLMW is a non-statutory measure. Accordingly, all the State Governments/Union Territory Administrations have been requested to fix/revise minimum wages in such a way that in none of the scheduled employments, the minimum wage is less than National Floor Level Minimum Wage of Rs.115/- per day at present. In the Central Sphere, minimum rates of wages were revised for workers in the Employment of 'agriculture', stone breaking and stone crushing', sweeping and cleaning', watch and ward', 'loading and unloading', 'construction', and 'non-coal mines' w.e.f. 01.10.2010 in the range of Rs.146/- to Rs.310/- per day for different categories of workers in different areas. The Central Government had also notified the Payment of Wages (Nomination) Rules, 2009 defining the procedure for nomination and restricting the nomination by workers to his family members. *Source: PIB*

April 6, 2011 - TRIBUNE EMPLOYEES UNION HOLD PROTEST AGAINST SUSPENSION OF JOURNALISTS:

As an outcome of the suspension of senior journalists and giving charge sheet to few other members of the Tribune Employees Union by Tribune Trust Management, on account of the protest by the union on March 22, the union once again displayed their rage on April 26 through a rally supported by various other unions and organizations in Chandigarh. It may be recalled that, on February 22 a senior sub-editor in The Tribune, Ms Chetna Keer, complained the editor-in-chief Raj Chengappa of misconduct by the Manager Head Administration, MPS Kahlon, to which no heed was paid and no action taken. The indifference by the management led to March 22 protest organised by the Tribune Employees Union. The 22nd March rally demanded serious and immediate legal enquiry into the corrupt practices going on in the office, action against the manager accused of misconduct and harassment and to immediately reinstate the suspended employees. *Source: <http://www.punjabnewslines.com>*

April 28, 2011 - DELHI GOVT EXTENDS ICDS SERVICES TO CHILDREN OF MIGRANT LABOURERS:

Department of Women and Child Development, Government of Delhi in a circular issued on 28 April 2011 extended ICDS services to children of migrant labourers and temporary residents. The circular comes after a long struggle led by mobile creches and other child right groups. The extension of services would have huge implications for the vast majority of children who are affected by migration and whose parents work on construction sites, brick kilns etc. This right was denied to them since the inception of the scheme. The next step would be to get similar sanctions in all the states and to ensure its implementation in the field. *Source: New Trade Union Initiatives*

MAY 2, 2011 - CENTRE'S GIFT OF SAFETY FOR MINE WORKERS:

Union labour minister Mallikarjun Kharge on Sunday said the Centre was bringing amendments to the Mines Act to ensure the safety and health of mine workers. He said 32 amendments were being introduced to make mine owners accountable and ensure the safety of the workers. The health and safety of the workers is governed by the Mines Rules, 1955, created under the jurisdiction of the Mines Act, 1952. The proposed amendments, which have already been introduced in the Rajya Sabha, is before the standing committee. *Source: Times of India*

MAY 31, 2011 - NEGOTIATIONS ON WITH CONTRACT WORKERS OF COCHIN SHIPYARD LIMITED:

Contract workers under the banner of Cochin Shipyards Workers Union working in the Cochin Shipyards Limited (CSL) have been on strike since 31 May 2011. An agreement has been reached on two out of their three major demands, and negotiations continue. The major demands were; (1) Wage hike- one of the major demands of the workers was revision of wages. Wages has now been revised to a uniform 30% rate after a negotiation with the management. (2) Payment of wages according to experience and seniority- the management has agreed to this demand and annual increment will be paid according to seniority. (3) Gratuity- negotiations are still going on the issue of gratuity. The management has agreed to pay gratuity in the form of a bulk payment to the contractors who would then pay the contract workers. The workers have refused this mode of disbursement and have demanded that they be paid individually. *Source: New Trade Union Initiatives*

June 9, 2011- EXTENSION OF MEDICAL FACILITIES TO BEEDI WORKERS UNDER RASHTRIYA SWASTHYA BIMA YOJANA:

The Union Cabinet today approved extension of medical facilities to beedi workers under the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY). The beedi worker and his family (unit of five) will be covered and the total sum insured would Rs.30,000/-. Any claims beyond Rs.30,000/- will be reimbursed directly by the related Welfare Commissioner to the concerned empanelled hospital through the existing procedure. The State Government will identify and register beedi workers. It is proposed to cover 10 lakh beedi workers in the current financial year and cover 100% of the total beedi workers by the year 2013-14. At present, the health needs of these beedi workers are being met through 204 dispensaries and only 7 hospitals. The beedi industry is primarily a home based labour intensive industry which provides employment to about 55 lakh workers (out of which Identity Cards have been issued to 49.80 lakh beedi workers) mainly in the States of Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Karnataka, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Maharashtra, Orissa, Rajasthan, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, Assam, Tripura and West Bengal. The Beedi Workers Welfare Fund Act, 1976 has been enacted to provide for financing of measures to promote the welfare of beedi workers. The beedi worker is not in a position to spend money from his own pocket initially and get the reimbursement. Hence, they are deprived of the benefits of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY), presently implemented for BPL category only. *Source: PIB*

June 13, 2011- CONTRACT WORKERS FROM COCHIN SHIPYARD LIMITED STRIKE:

Around 3000 contract workers from Cochin Shipyards Limited (CSL) have been on strike since May 31, the workers are members of the Cochin Shipyards Workers Union. The workers who have been on strike for the past 13 days are demanding a hike in their wages along with other demands. Some of their major demands are: (1) Wage revision of contract workers. According to the agreement, the wages of employees under contractors should have been hiked since January 2010. The union is demanding a wage hike agreement of 22.5% over three years. But the contractors and the management are not ready to heed to these demands. (2) Introduction of gratuity for the workers. (3) Payment of wages according to the service and experience, so that workers with more experience be paid more than a daily wage worker is at present. The management has refused to agree to any of the demands and have said that 'the wage rates prevalent in the CSL and offered to the workers

of the contractors were the best in the industry and the demand made by them were unsustainable and baseless', as said by the Company Secretary.

Source: New Trade Union Initiatives

June 18, 2011 - (THIRUVANANTHAPURAM); CRZ NOTIFICATION: FISH WORKERS FEAR LIVELIHOOD

LOSS: The National Fishworkers Forum (NFF) and the Kerala Swathatra Matsya Thozhilali Federation (KSMTF) have urged the government to revise the Coastal Regulation Zone notification 2011 issued by the Ministry of Environment and Forests, with provisions that would benefit the coastal communities. Addressing reporters here on Friday, NFF secretary T. Peter and KSMTF general secretary P.P. John alleged that the Union government scheme to map the near-shore sea and coastal areas for the coastal management project would alienate the fisherfolk community. They said the government was going ahead with the construction of atomic power plants along the coast and laying submarine pipelines for transport of natural gas without consulting the coastal communities or compensating them for the loss of livelihood. The leaders said the proposed establishment of marine parks, ship-breaking units and marine protected zones would ultimately affect fisherfolk. They feared that fishing operations would be restricted to breeding zones, forcing them to seek other means of livelihood. These moves, they alleged, were designed to open up large tracts of coastal land for tourist resorts, construction companies, industries and real estate developers. Mr. Peter called on the government to ensure proper representation for fish workers in the national and State committees for coastal zone management. *Source: The Hindu*

June 21, 2011- GORAKHPUR MILL WORKERS WIN

VICTORY: The workers of two mills in Gorakhpur won a long battle against the owners, after much struggle and sacrifice. Workers who had been dismissed for participating in a May Day rally in Delhi were reinstated, and the locked out mills reopened on June 3, 2011. These two mills were locked out on April 10, 2011. 12 of the 18 dismissed workers will join work immediately and the remaining 6 will be taken back after a domestic enquiry. The workers also forced the owners to accept that no one from the management will be in the enquiry committee; it will have two members from the office staff and one workers' nominee. It may be recalled that about 1500 workers from the town participated in the May Day rally in Delhi. The factory owners tried their level best to prevent this from happening. So did the government officials, who threatened the leaders of

the workers with arrest for “instigating workers”. During the course of the struggle of the past few months, the workers have faced the full brunt of the united onslaught of the owners and the district administration. They have been fired upon by the goons of the owners. They have been lathi charged. Their leaders have been arrested. The owners have tried every trick in the trade to break the morale of the workers. However, they failed in their aims, and the workers stood united. Finally, the owners had to relent. *Source: Mazdoor Ekta Lehar*

June 23, 2011- EXTENSION OF RASHTRIYA SWASTHYA BIMA YOJANA TO THE DOMESTIC WORKERS: The Union Cabinet today approved extension of the Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana (RSBY) to all the registered domestic workers in the country. The scheme is expected to cover approximately 47.50 lakh domestic workers in the country. The Scheme envisages smart card based cashless health insurance cover up to Rs.30,000/- in any empanelled hospital anywhere in the country. The funds will be allocated from the National Social Security Fund for Unorganised Workers. The premium will be shared by the Central and State Governments in the ratio of 75:25. In case of States in NE Regional and J&K the ratio is 90:10. ... Domestic work forms one of the largest sectors of female employment in the urban areas. Domestic workers are unorganized and the sector remains unregulated and unprotected by labour laws. These workers come from vulnerable communities and backward areas. Most of these are poor, vulnerable, illiterate, unskilled and do not understand the urban labour market. The RSBY provides for smart card based cashless health insurance cover of Rs.30,000/- per annum to BPL workers (a unit of five) in unorganised sector is presently being implemented in 25 States / UTs. More than 2.34 crore smart cards have been issued as on 31.5.2011. The scheme has since been extended to building and other construction workers registered with Welfare Boards constituted under the Building and Other Construction Workers (Regulation of Employment and Conditions of Service) Act, 1996, street vendors, beedi workers and such MNREGA workers who have worked for more than 15 days during the preceding year. *Source: PIB*

July 11, 2011- NOTIFICATION ON HIKE IN HONORARIA FOR ANGANWADI WORKERS AND HELPERS: Ministry of Women and Child Development, Government of India through its notification dated 11 July 2011, has revised the honorarium rates for Anganwadi workers and helpers, as it was decided in this year’s budget.

As per the revision, Anganwadi workers will now receive Rs. 3000 from their earlier amount of Rs. 1500. Anganwadi helpers and workers of mini Anganwadi centre on the other hand will receive Rs. 1500 from the earlier amount of Rs 750. The revised rates would be effective from 1 April 2011. *Source: New Trade Union Initiatives*

July 22, 2011 - STRUGGLE OF WORKERS OF VOLTAS IN MUMBAI INTENSIFIES: July 22, 2011 marked the 100th day of the relay hunger strike of workers of Voltas. The workers of Voltas are resisting the attacks on their livelihood and their union. Voltas has through outsourcing, reduced its all India workforce to just 11,500. Of this, 7,700 are contract workers. Out of the balance of 3,760 workers, the vast majority have been categorized as “management”, to split them from other workers. As a result, this company has only 600 workers in the regular worker category today! The wages of the workers of the three categories - contract, regular, and management —are extremely disparate. The union is fighting for the regularization of all contract workers, and against the anti labour policies of the owners. They are also fighting for reinstatement of dismissed activists of the Union. *Source: Mazdoor Ekta Lehar*

July 25, 2011- TEA GARDEN WORKERS OF BENGAL DEMAND WAGE INCREASE: On July 25, 2011, tea garden workers organized under the Progressive Tea Workers’ Union (PTWU) stopped dispatch of tea from the gardens demanding an increase in wages. Demonstrations were held across all the tea gardens in West Bengal on July 25, 2011 for the same demand. The trade unions amongst the tea garden workers have threatened to go on an indefinite strike from August 10, demanding a wage revision. The Coordination Committee for Plantation Tea Workers (CCPW) and the Defence Committee for Plantation Workers’ Rights have asked the garden managements to consider the matter at the earliest. There are more than 3 lakh workers in the tea gardens of Dooars and Terai who earn Rs 67 a day for their labour. The PTWU has demanded this to be increased to Rs 250. In Darjeeling, the daily wage of garden labourers was increased to Rs 90 from April 1 after the Gorkha Janmukti Morcha-backed Darjeeling Terai Dooars Plantation Labour Union and the garden management agreed on that. There too, the union had stopped dispatching of processed tea. PTWU has followed the same path. *Source CGPI*

August 5, 2011- BANK WORKERS GO ON ALL INDIA STRIKE IN SUPPORT OF THEIR DEMANDS: Tue, 16/08/2011

- Bank employees all over the country went on strike on August 5, 2011 at the call of the United Forum of Bank Employees. Workers from Public Sector Banks, private Indian and foreign banks, rural banks and cooperative banks participated in the strike action. On this occasion, the bank workers roundly condemned the liberalisation privatisation program of the UPA government. In these rallies and dharnas, the bank workers pointed out that the banking reform program announced by the government as anti-worker and-anti national. The Khandelwal Committee recommendations are aimed at breaking the unity of bank employees, and to loot the public. Main demands of the Bank workers were: No to privatisation of Public Sector Banks! No dilution of government capital in these banks; No to loans from the World Bank for increasing capitalisation of Public Sector Banks; No to further mergers; No to unregulated entry of foreign capital in the banking sector! No to scrapping of Section 12 of the Banking Regulation Act! The limits on voting rights of foreign investors in Indian banks must not be raised; Industrial houses in India must not be given licenses to start their own banks; Regular Banking work must not be outsourced! The move to push for private trading representatives must be scrapped! The bilateral agreement between the management and bank workers on outsourcing must be strictly adhered to; Maintain and improve banking services for the clients by ensuring that the vacant posts are filled, and the working hours are not extended; and The recommendations of the Khandelwal Committee must be rejected. *Source: CGPI*

Political Prisoners

UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE OF PROFESSOR DEVENDER PAL SINGH BHULLAR

Memorandum to Smt. Pratibha Devisingh Patil, President of India Demanding Unconditional Release of Professor Devender Pal Singh Bhullar.

All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF) is a recognized and registered organization committed to work for the betterment of Sikh community, promoting the values of Sikhism and to raise voice on the issues concerning the Sikh community.

Sikhs for Justice (SFJ) a US based human rights organization, believes and adheres to Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

National 1984 Victims Justice and Welfare Society is a group consisting of widows, victims and survivors of November 1984 Sikh Genocide working to achieve justice.

Devenderpal Singh Bhullar, a former instructor of Guru Nanak Engineering Polytechnic College Ludhiana, Punjab has been sentenced to death by a split decision of the Supreme Court of India. Professor Bhullar was taken into custody in January 1995 and has been convicted under the notorious TADA (Terrorist and Disruptive Activities (Prevention) Act of India. During the police custody, Professor Bhullar was tortured and was forced to sign on “blank sheets of papers” which were later used to engineer his “confessional statement”. During the proceedings before the trial court, Professor Bhullar retracted from the so called “confessional statement” and explained how he was forced to sign on the blank papers. Despite Bhullar’s denial, retraction and highly improbable and questionable nature of the “confessional statement”, he was sentenced to death solely on the basis of this “statement” and without any independent corroborating evidence or witness.

According to Justice MB Shah of the Supreme Court of India who allowed Professor Bhullar’s appeal, Bhullar deserved to be acquitted because:

- a) Prosecution had no independent corroborating evidence against Bhullar and solely relied on his “confession” which was of questionable authenticity and no one can be awarded death sentence on mere “confession”.

- b) All of the co-accused of Bhullar were acquitted and thus Bhullar alone cannot be sentenced for “conspiracy”, an act which by definition requires “two or more persons”.

Professor Bhullar’s has not only been convicted in blatant violation of “due process” but he is also suffering from inhuman and cruel treatment as he is in continuous detention for the last sixteen (16) years.

Professor Bhullar’s case is of unusual significance because in democratic India, Professor Bhullar met with injustice at every stage in that

- a) Before the trial, Professor Bhullar was tortured in police custody and was forced to sign on “blank sheets of papers” which were later used to engineer his “confessional statement”.
- b) During the trial, despite of Professor Bhullar’s vehement retraction, every rule of law that protects the rights of accused was either violated, overlooked or bent against him to award him “death sentence”
- c) After the completion of judicial process, despite clear errors of law in the judgment sentencing Professor Bhullar to “death”, he was once again denied justice by President of India when Bhullar’s illegal conviction was not reversed as mandated by under Article 72 of the Constitution of India.

Ms. President, as a constitutional head of the India, you are duty bound to act and protect the rights of all the citizens of India regardless of religion against any injustice. Professor Bhullar’s conviction and planned execution is in violation of Article 21 of Constitution of India which prohibits taking of life and liberty without “due process of law”.

We the Citizens of India demand “Unconditional Release” of Professor Devender Pal Singh Bhullar.

From;

Karnail Singh Peermohammad, President, All India Sikh Students Federation (AISSF)

Gurpatwant Singh Pannun, Legal advisor to Sikhs for Justice (SFJ)

Babu Singh Dukhiya, President, National 1984 Victims Justice and Welfare Society

Date: July 15, 2011.

POLITICAL PRISONERS ON HUNGER-STRIKE DEMANDING UNCONDITIONAL RELEASE

MIDNAPORE/KRISHNAGAR, 23 JUNE: Hundreds of political prisoners, who are lodged in different correctional homes across the state, observed a day-long hunger-strike today demanding unconditional release. The prisoners include those arrested on the charges of having links with Maoist and members of the People’s Committee against Police Atrocities (PCPA) that spearheaded movements against the police atrocities on the tribal people in Junglemahal from November 2008. Among the prisoners, spearheaded the hunger strike, are Chhatradhar Mahato, Sukhshanti Baskey, Prasun Chatterjee and Raja Sarkhel in Midnapore Central Correctional Home, Chandi Sarkar, Sabyasachi Goswami, Zakir Hosen and Pradip Chatterjee in Krishnagar, Gour Chakrabarti in Presidency and Telugu Dipak in Alipore. To support their demand, family members and sympathisers of these political prisoners, who mostly came from Junglemahal, took out a rally under the banners of Bondi Mukti Committee and Association for Protection of Democratic Rights (APDR) in Midnapore town and over 10,000 people walked over 2 km. A political prisoner in Nadia’s Krishnagar Correctional Home had written a letter to the APDR on some issues and went on for a token hunger strike. The information spread to the other correctional homes and all the political prisoners observed the strike today. Their charter of demands included the release of Bangladeshi prisoners, many of whom have already crossed their period of punishment. The other important demands include filling up of vacancies of the judges in various courts, including Ranaghat court of Nadia.

Source: Statesman News Service

RELEASE AKHIL GOGOI IMMEDIATELY

Stop the Unjust Evictions of People From Around Guwahati City!

PUDR strongly condemns the undemocratic and arbitrary arrest of Akhil Gogoi, RTI activist and leader of Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS). His arrest comes in the wake of police brutality and firing on people protesting their eviction from the hills and wetlands surrounding the city.

Akhil Gogoi's crime is that on 22 June, he led over 10,000 protestors towards the Central Secretariat in Guwahati (in Assam) against the Tarun Gogoi government's eviction drive. Over 95,000 households have been termed 'encroachments' and the drive's victims have been tribals and working class people. The protest turned violent and the police firing and rioting left three people dead and over sixty injured.

Chief minister Tarun Gogoi promptly condemned the ill-fated protest. This in spite of the fact that his earlier claims of giving pattas to long term residents and rehabilitating BPL families have not materialized. Appallingly, he has now sanctioned an exclusive 'Forest Protection Battalion' of over a 1000 new recruits to guard against 'encroachments'.

Not surprisingly, in this context of extreme state repression, Akhil Gogoi was brazenly arrested by a large posse of policemen even as he was addressing a press conference. While it remains unclear what specific cases he has been arrested under, in total, ten cases, including four non-bailable ones, have been slapped on him. Many of these are likely to be various sections of the National Security Act which will hold him 'responsible' for the rioting that occurred on 22 June. It must be noted that Akhil Gogoi has already stated that the riots were started by government agents and that the KMSS protest had been a peaceful one.

PUDR demands that the Assam government immediately withdraw the spurious cases lodged against Akhil Gogoi and release him immediately. Additionally, we demand that the government recognize the rights and livelihoods of the thousands of people who live in the hills and wetlands around Guwahati city and stop its eviction drive.

24 June 2011

People's Union for Democratic Rights

JEETEN MARANDI AND OTHERS IN DEATH ROW ARE TARGETS OF INDIAN STATE'S CONSPIRACY!

Immediately Withdraw the Death Sentence Pronounced against Adivasi and Dalit Cultural Activists Jeeten Marandi, Anil Ram, Manoj Rajwar and Chhatrapati Mandal!

The Giridih Lower court has awarded death sentence to peoples' cultural activists Jeeten Marandi, Manoj Rajwar, Chhatrapati Mandal and Anil Ram in connection with the Chilkhari killings. On 27 October, 2007, Anup Marandi, the son of Babulal Marandi, ex-chief minister of Jharkhand, was shot dead by the Maoists along with 19 members of the Nagarik Suraksha Samiti, a vigilante gang promoted and patronised by the ex-chief minister. Jeeten was deliberately and falsely implicated in this case, because Jeeten as a cultural activist has been exposing and opposing the anti-people and repressive policies of the state, through his organisations *Jharkhand Aven* and *Krantikari Janvadi Morcha*. Through his songs, plays and articles he consistently opposed displacement, corporate loot and state repression. Jeeten had been arrested and jailed in the past too as he tried to spread consciousness among people through his cultural activities about the anti-people policies of the government. The state wants to strangle his bold voice. He was being implicated in the Chilkhari case because he wrote an article in three parts in a Hindi daily *Prabhat Khabar*. In the article he tried to explore the reasons behind the spreading of the Naxalite movement where he analysed and exposed the anti-people role of the state and showed the close relations the Naxalites have with the people. On 5th April 2008, after the third part of the article was published, the police immediately arrested its writer when he was returning home from a state committee meeting of *Visthapan Virodhi Jan Vikas Andolan*, which took place in Ratu Road, Ranchi.

The state had first put the charge of sedition on Jeeten Marandi where they alleged that he has given 'inflammatory speeches' in the rally that took place on the issue of release of political prisoners on 1st October 2007, in front of Raj Bhavan in Ranchi. After that a series of false cases were slapped on him. Along with the Chilkhari case, the state had put two cases from Thana Gaon, one case from Pirtand police station and two cases from Teesri police station. It must be noted that when the cases of Pirtand and Teesri P.O. took place, Jeeten was in jail for different cases. This clearly reflects the real intention of the government to implicate him in false cases to silence his voice.

Even in the Chilkhari case, the police denied the possibility of involvement of Jeeten Marandi. While reporting the incident of Chilkhari the Hindi daily *Prabhat Khabar* published Jeeten's photo in the first page calling him the prime accused of the case. Later the editor of *Prabhat Khabar* acknowledged his mistake and publicly apologized to Jeeten. That time the police officers also confirmed that the prime accused of Chilkhari case was not cultural activist Jeeten Marandi, but allegedly a Maoist commander of the same name. But later the police changed its statement and said both cultural activist Jeeten Marandi and Maoist commander Jeeten Marandi are involved in the case. In order to involve the cultural activist Jeeten Marandi, three new witnesses were incorporate in the case. This is how the conspiracy to falsely implicate Jeeten Marandi was hatched.

On 24 March 2009 Jeeten Marandi was produced in the Sessions court for the Chilkhari case. There he was waiting in the Sessions lock up along with other accused, when a person who claimed himself to be the OC of Giridih Town police station came and met Jeeten Marandi, and left. Later the police constables forcefully took Jeeten out alone and took him to the Sessions court. Outside the Sessions lock up the Giridih P.S. O.C showed Jeeten to some people and said this is Jeeten Marandi, remember his face. Then all those people followed Jeeten till the court. In the sessions court they tried to take him out without signing the attendance register. Later the people to whom the police had shown Jeeten in the court gave false witness and said Jeeten Marandi was present when the incident happened. Jeeten Marandi even intimated the court of this whole incident. None of these so-called witnesses were the family members of the ones who died in Chilkhari. They were all members of Babulal Marandi's party Jharkhand Vikas Morcha. The Sessions court sentenced Jeeten Marandi and three others to death on basis of these 'witnesses'.

The sentence awarded to Jeeten Marandi and three others once again exposes the puppet nature of the criminal court procedures of the government and police. This is the way the criminal court implicates and frames people who resist the state policies or raise their voice against oppression or injustice. Especially the most oppressed sections, the dalits, adivasis, backwards sections and minorities are always targeted and are given the harshest of punishments like death sentence by the court. The ones who have been given death sentence in Chilkhari case, i.e. Jeeten Marandi, Manoj Rajwar, Chhatrapati Mandal and Anil Ram are also from extremely poor adivasi, dalit, and backward families. The use of the judicial process and criminal court proceedings that led into the capital punishment

of Jeeten Marandi is not a new thing. Earlier also the revolutionary leader from Andhra Pradesh Kista Gaud and Bhumaiyya were sentenced to death. In Barah, Bihar, five poor peasants have been given death sentence. Justice Bhagvati from the Supreme Court had accepted earlier that 'many times the police create witnesses in order to prove their cases'.

In the same case the Supreme Court said that death sentences can be awarded in the 'rarest of the rare' cases. But despite that in the Indian judicial system death sentences are being distributed like freebies. According to a report by the Amnesty International, as many as 140 death sentences were handed out in India during 2006-07. In 130 countries death sentence has already been abolished. But the country that claims to be the world's largest democracy is not ready to end the practice of death sentence so that it can use death sentences in largest numbers to strangle the voices of the revolutionaries and the people who dream to change the society and can implement the policies of loot and exploitation without any resistance or dissent.

Revolutionary Democratic Front demands the immediate withdrawal of the death sentence of Jeeten Marandi and three others and their unconditional release. The politicians and police officers involved in the conspiracy against Jeeten and the rest three must be punished. Death sentence must be abolished. RDF appeals to all intellectuals and democratic people and organizations to unite and intensify the struggle for the release and justice of Jeeten, Anil, Manoj and Chhatrapati without delay.

27 June 2011

Revolutionary Democratic Front

Displacement

AGAINST GUWAHATI POLICE KILLINGS ON 22ND JUNE, 2011

On 22nd June 2011, at around noon, the Assam police opened fire, killing four, on a demonstration led by Krishak Mukti Sangram Samiti (KMSS) - a peasant organization of Assam. The protesters were demanding a halt to a massive ongoing eviction drive for more than a week around the hills in the city of Guwahati. Different tribal communities and labouring poor of the city have been living on these hills for over many decades and many of them are clearly entitled to pieces of land based on the 'Forest Regulation (Rights) Act' and other provisions of law. KMSS has been demanding a thorough survey to be undertaken by concerned Government agencies, of not just hills but of the entire city and 'notify' all lands according to law, and also hold mass consultations and public hearings before any evictions is undertaken by the State agencies.

However, the Government of Assam has ignored all legal rules and procedures. And over the last few days the city has witnessed an unprecedented 'emergency' like situation with thousands of people being rendered homeless due to the frenzied eviction drive.

It is worth mentioning here that in recent times the hills of the city are also becoming sites for huge land-grabbing by construction lobby and their Mafia associates. There are enough indications to suggest that the recent eviction drive was perhaps meant to clear the land of the poor so that it can be handed over to these Mafiosi. It is very clear that talks about 'illegal encroachment of land by the labouring poor in the hills and its effect on ecology' are nothing but a sham.

Rather than addressing the demands of adhering to proper regulations, procedures and the rights of the people; on 22nd June when more than 10,000 people gathered near the State Secretariat to press for their demands, Deputy Commissioner refused to meet the protestors. Soon the police started lobbing Tear-Gas shells and resorted to a baton charge. In the milieu, many people got injured and started running for cover. Police then resorted to firing which killed four people, including one minor. More than 50 people were seriously injured.

This unprovoked aggression, agitated a section of the protesters who retaliated by pelting stones, and grabbing what-so-ever they could lay their hands on, including twigs and branches of tree. And in the ensuing

scuffle some policemen were also injured and hospitalized; a few Government vehicles were also set on fire.

However, a section of the mainstream media in Assam has been trying to harp on the singular fact that few policemen were injured and few government vehicles were burnt down, to present a distorted picture that the State Police forces are holier than thou and that the protesters are to be blamed for the casualties, as if the protesters pre-planned the pitched battles that were fought between the Government Forces and the protesters.

Instead of demanding accountability from the administration for consciously creating such a tense and murderous situation; certain influential and affluent section in Assam and their 'brethrens' in rest of India blame the protesters for all blood that tainted the streets on the 'faithful' afternoon.

What did the Government do? It went on a witch-hunt. Shamelessly, the Chief Minister-cum-Home Minister of Assam, Mr. Tarun Gogoi, went on to give a 'George Bush kind of dictum' on news channels; he said in a – "Whoever stands with Akhil Gogoi and KMSS have invited their own death".

On 24th June the Assam police arrested Akhil Gogoi, the general secretary of KMSS for inciting riot, arsoning, culpable homicide etc. We are apprehensive that in the coming days more and more people are going to be arrested, and if one go by the "good records" of Assam Police, all of them will certainly be tortured under Police Custody. ...

We Demand:

1. Land grabbing by the State should be stopped immediately, and poor and tribal inhabitants of Guwahati be given legal title to the land for homestead.
2. A judicial enquiry into the police firing which resulted in the death of four protesters.
3. Immediate action against the concerned police officials who approved the decision to fire upon the protesters.
4. Ensure the safety of the KMSS leadership which has been sent to the police custody by the court of chief judicial magistrate, metropolitan ghy on 24th June 2011.
5. An unconditional apology by the chief minister/home minister of Assam Mr. Tarun Gogoi, to people of India.

26th June, New Delhi

Delhi Action Committee Against Guwahati Police Killings on 22nd June, 2011

IN DEFENCE OF SINLUNG PEOPLE'S RIGHT

The Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organisation (SIPHRO) is deeply concerned by the recent statement of the new Chairman-cum-Managing Director (CMD) of North Eastern Electric Power Corporation Ltd., (NEEPCO) who alleged that environmentalists and NGOs are misleading the people on the proposed 1500 MW Tipaimukh Dam project. The allegation and the government's plan to forcefully go ahead with the proposed Mega Dam project despite peoples objection clearly reflects the insensitivity and indifference of the Government and NEEPCO on the issue of environmental justice and sustainable development of the indigenous peoples in the region.

The government and NEEPCO are instead misleading the public on the proposed destructive project through false promises, militarisation, staged and restrictive public hearings that were held without free, prior and informed consents of the indigenous peoples.

The insensitivity and indifference of the government and NEEPCO are absolutely inhumane, undemocratic and unconstitutional. The peaceful co-existence and survival of the indigenous peoples who, otherwise, are marginalised, with their rivers, land and natural resources is more important than the loose wagging tongue and blind adventurism of a career-minded CMD, who is foreign to us, our land and rivers, our lives and our survival prospects.

A dictated and imposed project will forever stand against the intent and spirit of any democracy. It will never stand to be acceptable nor palatable to the people who represents and constitute the heart of democracy.

It should be noted that:

- * The indigenous peoples who will be directly and indirectly affected by the Tipaimukh Dam project were already left out and marginalized by the proposed project. As a result, they are unaware of the adverse impacts the project would have on them.
- * The democratic process for delivering "free, prior and informed consent" was totally absent. Moreover, there is no "active, free and meaningful" participation from the public.
- * There is no identification of the people who would be affected by the project.
- * There is no recognition of the survival and cultural uniqueness of the indigenous peoples who, along with their land and resources, will be affected.

- * Monetary compensation was employed by the implementing agencies and dam builders as a method to win the consent and approval of the indigenous peoples in their pursuit to build the dam.
- * There is no culturally appropriate development plan based on full consideration of the options preferred by the indigenous peoples.
- * Nothing about the proposed project is transparent or made accessible to the public.
- * The project is absent of any social assessment process.
- * There is no assessment of the legal status of the indigenous peoples as reflected in the Country's constitution and legislation.
- * The adverse impacts of the Tipaimukh Dam project, whether short term or cumulative, have been seriously under-estimated.
- * Monetary compensation should never be employed to reduce and alienate the indigenous peoples from their land, rivers and natural resources.
- * The Fundamental Rights of the people, along with their land rights, who will be affected by the leviathan project, should never be under-estimated. It shall remain to be Fundamental for all purposes.

In view of the above, SIPHRO reiterated its demand that:

- * The Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) inked between NHPC, Satluj Jal Vidyut Nigam Limited (SJVN) and Manipur Government is without the knowledge, consent, confidence, and approval of the Hmar people and as such be declared null, void and invalid.
- * The government and the implementing agencies immediately and comprehensively adopt the recommendations of the World Commission on Dams (WCD).

July 15, 2011

Sd/-

(LALREMLIEN NEITHAM)

Secretary

Sinlung Indigenous Peoples Human Rights Organisation

Homepage: www.siphro.org

MEMORANDUM OF YAIPHA LEIKAI, LAMPHELPAT

To,

Mr. Okram Ibobi Singh
Chief Minister of Manipur (India)

Sub: Request for revocation of the eviction order of Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat, Imphal West District, Manipur dated 3 June 2011 and to provide adequate rehabilitation and resettlement for villagers of Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat, Imphal evicted on 6 June 2011

Dear Sir,

We, the fifteen (15) families affected by the eviction at Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat, Imphal West District on 6 June 2011, would like to take this privilege to submit this memorandum for your kind perusal and necessary action thereof.

That on 6 June 2011, fifteen (15) houses of Yaipha Leikai village, Lamphelpat Wetland near Employment Exchange, Imphal West District, Manipur had been destroyed by Manipur Police from the Lamphel Police Station under the orders of the Government of Manipur on the pretext of building the National Institute of Technology (NIT) complex and a water body at Lamphelpat as informed to the villagers at the time of eviction and also as reported widely in the local media.

That prior to the eviction, an order issued by the Sub Divisional Officer, Lamphel, Imphal West on 3 June 2011 was served to our villagers of Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat only on Sunday, the 5 June, 2011 around 10 a.m in the morning asking us to dismantle our houses the same day before 5 in the evening. We would like to inform you that villagers were completely taken by surprise as most of the senior household occupants were off to work in Lamphelpat Wetlands for fishing and many went out to earn as daily laborers.

The eviction drive was carried out on 6 June 2011, the next day from around 7 a.m in the morning despite our submission not to dismantle our houses to the Officer in Charge Lamphel, Lamphel Police Station on 5 June 2011. The eviction process, overseen by State Works minister K Ranjit, PDA chairman Kh Loken among other officials of different departments and police officials of Lamphel Police Station, Imphal West

District was carried out by using earthmovers and other heavy machineries despite the request of affected villagers to consider the survival needs and right to life of the villagers.

That the eviction has led to displacement and widespread suffering among the affected villagers. Elderly people, women and children, more particularly suffer severe inconveniences due to repeated destruction of our shelter and incessant rains during and after the evictions. The affected villagers also suffer shortage of food and health complications, primarily water borne diseases as they sought temporary shelter in makeshift camps near the wetlands. The repeated dismantling of the temporary shelter by the Police worsens our situation. We had been living at Yaipha Leikai for over four decades and we depend on the Lamphelpat Wetlands and also to the nearby Meitei Langol Hills for our survival and livelihood. Most of us live on hand to mouth and we survive from the fish we catch and from the seasonal vegetables we collect from Lamphelpat Wetlands and from the wood we collect from Langol Hills. Our ancestors and relatives are buried in Lamphelpat Wetlands and this eviction will uproot us from the connections with our generations.

That the eviction is carried out without any rehabilitation and resettlement arrangement for the affected villagers of Yaipha Leikai. We would also like to inform you that the alternate site provided for our resettlement near Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat is waterlogged all throughout the year and is not feasible for us to relocate. As the properties of the affected families are confiscated and as the evicted families are already economically impoverished, we are constraint with no ability to construct habitable houses in waterlogged areas. Moreover, our local MLA, Mr. Brajabidhu also informed us that our resettlement is only for temporary measures and this only adds to our insecurity, as we fear that we might be evicted again and even if we invest and laboring our efforts to resettle in the allocated site, all our efforts will go in vain.

We would like to inform you that the principle of Free, Prior and Informed Consent, as universally agreed to be undertaken before any developmental plan meant for the Lamphelpat wetlands nor has timely information been furnished to us prior to the eviction. That we are not aware and yet not informed of what exactly will be undertaken at our dismantled village as we believe that our village is too small for any mega project to be taken up. We also heard that our dismantled village will be converted into shopping complex and if this is so, it will be injustice done to us as the eviction process will then be carried out with big misinformation campaign.

The families of Yaipha village, Lamphelpat who are affected by the eviction on 6 June 2011 would like to request your good office to kindly:

1. Revoke the order of SDO, Imphal West, dated 3 June 2011 for eviction of residents of Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat.
2. Provide rehabilitation and resettlement of the evicted families from Lamphelpat for construction of National Information and Technology and Water Body
3. Reveal detailed plan of proposed project to be taken up at Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat.
4. Take the Free, Prior and Informed Consent of indigenous peoples before introducing any development processes in Manipur.

Imphal: 19 June 2011

Signed by: The evicted families of Yaipha Leikai, Lamphelpat, Imphal West District, Manipur

AT LEAST 20 INJURED IN PROTESTS OVER JAITAPUR NUCLEAR PLANT

Danish Siddiqui

Tue Apr 19, 2011 – MUMBAI (Reuters) – People protesting against a planned nuclear power plant at Jaitapur attacked a hospital and torched buses on Tuesday and at least 20 people were injured a day after an anti-nuclear activist was killed in police firing. Protests led by opposition politicians shut down towns near the site of the \$10 billion plant in Maharashtra where anger over land acquisitions has intensified after the nuclear crisis in Japan. Five demonstrators were taken to hospital with bullet wounds, and at least six policemen were injured, the administration head in Ratnagiri told Reuters. Protesters attacked and damaged a hospital to prevent a government autopsy on the activist killed on Monday. Protesters think the autopsy will not be impartial. Police wielding wooden sticks tried to disperse the protesters who set fire to tyres to block a road to the site of the planned 9,900 megawatt (MW) plant, television pictures showed. Last week, Environment Minister Jairam Ramesh restated the government's intention to go ahead with construction of six reactors at the site in what is touted as the world's largest nuclear power complex. The conflict is one of many battles across the country between villagers and planners of industrial projects that have sharpened the debate on how Asia's third largest economy sustains its economic boom. The plant site, which is flanked by several small fishing hamlets, is 300 km (185 miles) south of Mumbai. Protesters stormed a police station near the site on Monday, smashing computers and ripping up papers, television pictures showed.

ISSUES RELATING TO SETTING UP OF AN ASBESTOS FACTORY AT MARWAN IN MUZAFFARPUR DISTRICT

PUCL

There had been news about activities and incidents relating to the controversy surrounding establishment of an asbestos factory at Marwan in Muzaffarpur district in Bihar. The following is the excerpt from the report compiled by a fact finding team composed of PUCL activists Prof Vinay K. Kantha, Former President; Mr Nageshwar Prasad, General Secretary; Prof Kishori Das, Former General Secretary, Bihar PUCL; Mr Shahid Kamal, District Secretary, Muzaffarpur PUCL, and; Mr Ramesh Pankaj, Member, Bihar PUCL.

Editor

...

1. Visit of the Team & Mode of Enquiry

The team visited Marwan on 25 January and met a large number of villagers besides inspecting the sites of incident. The team met one Mr Vijay Kumar, a supervisor, at the factory gate, who presumably contacted his superiors and finally did not allow the team members to enter inside the factory premises on the plea that only five members of the Core Committee formed by the City S P were authorized to enter the factory. He gave the mobile number of one Mr D K Tiwari who agreed to meet us on 26th in his Patna office. When he was contacted in Patna on 26th he asked us to come on 27th at 4.00 pm. On 27th he switched off his mobile and his office in Luv Kush chamber was found locked up. He was given our number earlier, but he did not contact us even as we had explained to him that we are willing and interested in getting his version and if he wants to produce any documents he may do it. But it was clear that the Company people were evading any public contact, much less scrutiny.

The team visited the local police station and talked to the P.S. in charge Mr Jogendra Paswan at length besides perusing the FIR filed by Shashikant the probationary SI who was leading the force on the forenoon of 23rd January. Shashikant was not available in the P.S., but Jogendra Paswan, Officer in charge of the P.S. was the I.O. in the case and his version was important. The team also spoke to some members of SUCI, NAPM and Asbestos Virodhi Nagrik Morcha. District officials however could not be contacted, 25th being a holiday, although a message was given to the DM Muzaffarpur and we had gone to the residence of SDO, but he was out for some meeting.

Some documents were also examined to understand the objections of the villagers to the setting up of asbestos plant in Marwan. The letter of KBJBSS to SDO (West) Muzaffarpur along with several supporting documents, including couple of papers issued by WHO, as well as chronology of events were perused. Villagers also brought before the team the two text books, one book on biology for class X and the other Inter Rasayan for Class XII, published by Bharati Bhawan which had listed the harmful effects of asbestos. Environment Impact Assessment report was also examined.

2. Issues to be examined

.... The purpose of the enquiry was thus three fold: first, it related to the events at Chainpur Bishunpur particularly on 22 January when villagers were allegedly lathicharged on the factory gate and teargas shells were fired; secondly, there was larger question of the setting up of an asbestos plant when the local population has started opposing it; and thirdly, there are still larger issues relating to industrialization in the state of Bihar or for that matter elsewhere. Before the first and second questions are raised it would be worthwhile to get an idea about the place of occurrence, including the rival descriptions, and the history of events.

3. Context and the Background

A. Area and the Proposal Brief Profile of the Area

Village Chainpur Bishanpur comes under the Jakhra Sheikh Gram Panchayat in Marwan Block, Muzaffarpur District. The panchayat comes under Karja police station. The village Chainpur and adjoining villages have fertile agricultural land. Paddy is grown in most of the fields, and at the time of visit many fields adjoining the factory had standing crop of mustard. Chainpur is a large habitation with more than 1000 households, including a large number of dalit families. The local mikhiya of Jakhra Sheikh panchayat is Ms Lalmuni Devi w/o Suresh Paswan. Adjoining villages are Bisunpur, Parari, Jeean, Panapur, Raksa, Mohammadpur etc, and in the movement that has emerged there some persons of these villages are also involved. For example, Ramchandra Rai who is currently very active and was present in the gathering belonged to Jeean village. A large number of schools were located within a distance of one kilometer from the site of factory. Primary school of Chainpur is barely at a distance of 400 meters. Parari Primary school was reported to be still closer- at a distance of merely 200 meters. In Jeean within a distance of 500 meters from the factory as the crow flies there were two schools, one primary school and another Urdu Vidyalaya. In Bisunpur likewise the primary

school is within 300 meters from the site of factory. Besides there were several anganwadi kendras nearby. In fact the inhabited areas are quite close to the factory, in some directions within 100 meters radius.

Purchase of land: From 2009 'Balmukund Asbestos Cement and Roofing Ltd.' purchased at least about 18 acres of land for the factory through middlemen, without disclosing to the land owners the proposal of establishment of an asbestos factory. The team spoke to the villagers gathered there and several persons gave their versions all confirming that they were not told about the asbestos factory in the beginning. There was an impression apparently based on the versions of middlemen that either an iron rod factory would come up, or possibly some agro-industries would be set up. Most of the land was purchased at the rate of Rs. 10,000 per kathha, and a large number of farmers, more than a dozen, gave their land including some dalit families. Some of their family members were present in the gathering, but they were not aware that the factory to be set up was an asbestos factory.

After the purchase, construction was started on site without clearances. Today the factory stands on a large piece of land amidst farms and close to residential bastis.

Discrepancies in Company's proposal and EIA/EMP Report: M/s Balmukund Cement & Roofing Ltd. proposed for the establishment of Asbestos Fibre Cement Roofing Sheet Plant (3,00,000 TPA) at village Chainpur Block Marwan in Muzaffarpur district for which they have acquired 17.8 acres of 'barren land' of which green belt will be developed in 5.9 acres (33% of the total land). No rehabilitation, resettlement or forest land etc are involved. Total cost of the project is Rs 31.0 crores. as they submitted in the petition for environmental clearance while Rs 125.00 lakhs and Rs 50.0 lakhs are earmarked for capital cost and recurring cost/annum for environmental pollution control measures, Rs 125.0 lakhs and Rs 50.0 lakhs are allocated towards Corporate Social Responsibility activities and Occupational Safety and Health Measures respectively. Total water requirement of 300 m³ / day will be sourced from own bore wells.

The Committee responsible for making recommendations for granting clearance took note of the complaint of Centre for Science & Environment (CSE), a villager and the reply from Bihar State Pollution Control Board in this regard. A clarification was sought by the Committee w. r. to distance of the project from nearby plants and the proponent clarified that the distance of school from the plant is more than 500 meters. Based on these submissions the Committee recommend the company for

environmental clearance subject to a set of 19 specific conditions along with other environmental conditions.

B. Background of Events leading to start of movement against the establishment of factory and incidents of January 22 Background

While the land was purchased or even after that when construction work started, the local people did not raise any objections believing that the factory would be a harmless industry, iron based or agri-based, giving jobs to people. However, some of the local village people working in the factory leaked the actual purpose of the factory, that it would produce asbestos sheets used for roofing. Reportedly some persons (maybe including a person close to the promoters named Sanjay Jalan) were responsible for distribution of a pamphlet describing the ill effects of asbestos in a local meeting some months after. As the truth came out there was discontent building up amongst villagers. Interestingly the matter was brought up by some children as well, who were aware that asbestos production causes various incurable illnesses including lung cancer. This information was passed on to the villagers by their children whose textbooks talk about the ill effects of asbestos. In the book Jeeva Vgyan Bhag II published by Bharti Bhawan authored by Banerjee and Varma it was mentioned on p.166 as pointed out by a student of class X Harekrishna Ram s/o Devendra Ram. Their tutor showed them another book Inter Rasayan written by Singh & Sinha (published by Bharati Bhawan itself) where again there was a discussion on diseases like asbestosis, mesothelioma or lung cancer which asbestos may cause. During this period some villagers also recalled that three persons of that locality who worked in asbestos factories of Rajasthan had died earlier after contracting asbestos-related diseases. Another development that has provoked people against the factory is the sudden lowering of water table after the commissioning of the boring tube wells on the factory campus. It was pointed out by villagers that the boring of Niranjana Singh which was in the vicinity of the factory had dried up after the start of factory boring. They feared that in times to come water scarcity may also result from running of the factory so close to habitations.

While this debate has begun in the village a public hearing was organized by the Bihar State Pollution Control Board (BSPCB) on 28th June, 2010, at the Marwan High School. According to the villagers they were not informed about this hearing, but on the day of the hearing Tarkeshwar Giri (an ex-Mukhiya) and Sanjay Singh were present near the venue and went to see what was happening. When Tarkeshwar Giri got to know about the asbestos factory, he tried to register his protest. Some

assurance was given to him but apparently nothing came out of it. In a letter written by CSE Associate Director Mr. Chandra Bhushan, it has been pointed out that the public hearing was not done in the right spirit. According to the letter CSE Representative Nivit Kumar Yadav attended the hearing and “found serious flaws in the proceeding of the public hearing, especially not providing proper opportunity to the local representatives who had adverse opinion about the project”.

The beginning of protests: After coming back from the hearing Tarkeshwar Giri shared the happenings of the public hearing and this confirmed the rumours that it is indeed asbestos which would be produced in the Marwan factory. This led villagers to form the KBJBJSC, with Tarkeshwar Giri as its convener. After protests were launched by the committee, a tri-partite meeting was held in September, 2010 between the company administration, representatives of the KBJBJSC and the SDO, where it was agreed to stop further construction work of the factory but this agreement was violated and construction restarted. Later in November, 2010 after protests at the BDO office, the BDO gave a public assurance that work of the factory would be stopped, but yet again construction activity was restarted.

In December, 2010 peaceful protestors were allegedly fired upon by company goons. On the same day unknown persons burnt a car (magic van that used to ferry workers) owned by factory management. Villagers believe that the factory management themselves burnt the car, and implicated organizers of the KBJBJSC. Later Mr. Tarkeshwar Giri and Kumod Ram were arrested on charges of arson, and are still in jail.

4. Examining different aspects

A. Alleged Lathicharge on 22 January

The sequence of events: Peeved by the tacit administrative support to the company by allowing it resume construction KBJBJSC decided to organize dharna at the factory gate and informed the officials in this regard. 22nd January was the fifth day of the dharna by the KBJBJSC. At around 11.00 am people were gathering at the factory gate. While the arrangement was in progress, a truck carrying the company’s goods arrived, allegedly accompanied by a police jeep from Karja thana. The police team led by probationary SI Shashikant asked the people present to allow the truck to go into the factory. But the protestors refused and this provoked Shashikant who reportedly became very aggressive. As protestors stood their ground, the SI assaulted Ashok Kumar Singh, a frail old person, who

was arguing on behalf of the protestors. Others who tried to intervene and protect him were also sustained injuries.

While the protestors retreated in the beginning, people from the villages had already started gathering for the day’s dharna. As more people heard about the assault by police more and more people arrived at the factory gate. The protestors insisted on sitting on the dari laid out outside the factory gate and refused to move. The police personnel at this point lathi charged at the crowd, probably in the hope that they would be able to disperse the crowd. The team met five women and two men at the district hospital who had sustained injuries in the lathicharge. Two more persons admitted there, namely, Manoj and Rajesh had left in the meanwhile. Rajo Devi w/o Umakant Paswan, had been admitted to the Muzaffarpur district hospital with head injuries and a hand injury because of which she could not move her left hand. According to Rajo Devi, she was hit by a policeman using his rifle butt and she fell. Seeing his wife fall Umakant Paswan s/o Matukdhari Paswan, went to pick up his wife and in the process was also hit with a rifle butt. He was also admitted in the district hospital, though his injuries were less serious. The team also met Sheela Devi w/o Satyanarayan Paswan, who said that she had come to the dharna sthal in solidarity after she heard about the beatings taking place at the site. When she reached she tried to stand at the site of the dharna but was attacked with a rifle butt. Her hand was swollen and she also got head injuries. It was alleged by the villagers that bricks were also thrown from inside the factory campus. Subhagi Devi w/o Singheshwar Ram was also admitted to the district hospital reportedly hit by one such brick, and suffering head injuries. Police reinforcement reached the factory gate at this time along with a vajra vahan and more police jeeps. By this time people had become very aggressive, having suffered the lathi-charge and attacks on women. The people in turn attacked the vajra vahan and police jeeps. The reinforcement personnel also lathicharged and the scene became ugly. It was somewhere around this time that Kalash Devi w/o Harinder Mahto realizing that the scene was going out of control, took shelter by the factory wall with four other women. But some policemen attacked these unarmed women, Kalash Devi was hit by a rifle butt and she is in the district hospital with a swollen jaw. At this point the vajra vahan took flight and most police vehicles also left but one police jeep was left behind and the mob, which was out of control by now, ransacked the jeep.

The city SP reportedly arrived there in the afternoon at around 3 pm accompanied by the SDO. By that time the crowd was completely out of control and even when the SP tried to address the crowd, people were not ready to listen. At this point the city SP sought the assistance of some

senior persons among the organizers who succeeded in bringing order. After that the city SP addressed and made two important announcements. He assured that on the 27 January, 2011 he would himself come to Chainpur and make an investigation in the case of arrests of KBJBJSC convenor Tarkeshwar Giri and Kumod Ram. He further assured that the factory would now remain closed and the police will be stationed to protect the people. The city SP also constituted a committee of local persons who could inspect and confirm that the factory has not resumed work.

B. Regarding the demand for the ban on asbestos

KBJBJSS submitted a well argued petition before the S.D.O. (West) Muzaffarpur on 28 December 2010, and a copy of the petition was provided to the PUCL along with three annexure. The first annexure contained a document produced by Public Health and the Environment, World Health Organization (WHO) in September 2006 titled 'Elimination of asbestos-related diseases'. The second one was also a WHO paper on 'Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments' and a third annexure was a letter written by Dr Sanjay Chaturvedi, Professor & Head, Department of Community Medicine, University of Delhi, Delhi which summarises the findings of medical researches confirming that 'occupational as well as nonoccupational exposures to any form of asbestos are associated with mesothelioma and other malignancies among humans'.

These documents supported by a large number of references to researches, resolutions etc establish beyond doubt the various ill effects of asbestos, and the need to curb its production and use. The following brief observations should clarify the underlying issues:

a. There is an international move to phase out and eliminate the use of asbestos. Taking note of large number of deaths taking place in different countries WHO document 'Preventing Disease through Healthy Environments' note, "Elimination of asbestos-related diseases should take place through the following public health actions: a) recognizing that the most efficient way to eliminate asbestos-related diseases is to stop the use of all types of asbestos; b) replacing asbestos with safer substitutes and developing economic and technological mechanism to stimulate its replacement; c) taking measures to prevent exposure to asbestos in place and during asbestos removal (abatement), and d) improving early diagnosis, treatment, social and medical rehabilitation of asbestos related diseases and establishing registries of people with past and/or current exposures to asbestos." International Labour Organization (ILO) has passed several resolutions on this issue, the most recent one is a Resolution in June 2006 in its 95th session meet asking for "the elimination of the future use of

asbestos and the identification and proper management of asbestos currently in place." The WHO document reports that "To date, more than 40 countries, including all member states of the European Union, have banned the use of all forms of asbestos, including chrysotile."

b. In India too way back in 1995 Supreme Court had directed the Government of India to take cognizance of the resolutions of ILO. In several studies the ill effects of asbestos has been brought out and demands have been raised to ban it or at least restrict its production and use. A bill on Prohibition and use of White asbestos is lying with the Rajya Sabha since 2009. The preamble to the bill points out that white asbestos is 'highly carcinogenic' and that 'more than fifty countries have already banned the use and import of white asbestos'. It notes further that 'Even the countries that export it to India prefer not to use it domestically' and that safer and almost cheaper alternatives to asbestos are available in the country.'

B. Regarding the agitation and the role of State

It was clearly noticeable in our enquiry that the agitation in Marwan was a spontaneous reaction of the local people. Initially villagers gave away their land willingly, but when they came to know about the asbestos factory, they became uneasy and then suspicious. The mode of public hearing reinforced their doubts about the desirability of the factory in their locality. Interestingly children and their textbooks helped them understand the possible hazards, about which they gathered more information and eventually decided to form an organization and launch an agitation to oppose the opening of factory. It was only after the start of the movement that some political groups like SUCI extended support to their movement. While the local movement is still largely being carried out by villagers, outside groups sometimes expressing their solidarity to the cause, the activities in Muzaffarpur and Patna are being organized by urban support groups. If a determined mood of the villagers and their unity are the hallmarks of the local agitation, widespread support of intellectuals and eminent citizens lends strength and credibility to the movement, which has started addressing larger issues as well. There is an ongoing anti asbestos movement in India, and even at the global level. The national group has provided informational ammunition to the local struggle. In Patna an Asbestos Virodhi Nagrik Manch has been formed consisting of some doctors, teachers, lawyers etc apart from social and political activists. Impressive citizens march against the proposed factory were organized both in Muzaffarpur and Patna. In Patna it took the form of a rally with a large participation of villagers from Marwan. Already there is an opposition

of the other five asbestos plants proposed in the state as per reports available so far.

Unfortunately the response of the State both at the political and administrative levels is unsatisfactory. There has been a silence or evasion of the issue at the political level, while in one way or the other there is evidence of administrative support to the setting up of factory. According to newspaper reports the Chief Minister first feigned ignorance about the local agitation, shifted the onus on the central government putting forward the plea that if a ban has to come it is the responsibility of the centre. Even regarding the environmental clearance or permission to set up the factory it was done at that level. He may be technically correct, but the state government comes into picture in many ways and will have to take a clear stand, particularly in the wake of a widespread people's opposition. It has led to building of an agitation which is a law and order problem and a definite responsibility of the state government. The land was wrongly certified as barren land by an official of agricultural department. As for the administrative response the police force sometimes seems to have worked in collusion with the company authorities, and the District administration seems to be favouring them. Despite a clear promise of SDO Sadar (West) to stop the construction work at the site and hold a tripartite meeting, work was allowed to be resumed and no meeting took place. Another disturbing feature has been the general reluctance to meet the delegations of civil society both in Patna and Muzaffarpur. A delegation of very respectable citizens of Muzaffarpur sought an appointment with the DM who reportedly kept them waiting first and then disposed them off standing in the corridor in a few minutes. This attitude is objectionable. After a massive demonstration when a delegation went to see the CM all that the government conceded was a meeting with a junior Deputy Secretary rank official to receive the memorandum. This kind of response may be on account of arrogance or some kind of fear of the people, and in either case it does not augur well as it precludes the possibility of negotiation and democratic dialogue. The likely course for an issue on which people are determined to oppose would be some kind of avoidable confrontation at the ground level. It is by no means a feature of good governance in a democracy.

4. Conclusions and Recommendations

A. Regarding Incidents on January 22

1. The initial action of the police force was provocative and uncalled for. They had prior knowledge of dharna being staged and yet they insisted upon trucks to move in forcing the peaceful squatters to allow

the entry. The police force was led by Shashi Kant a junior officer and he should be suitably punished for his indiscretion and highhanded behaviour.

2. Subsequent action of the force was also excessive and unwarranted until the arrival of the city S.P. The crowd assembled at the factory gate could have been engaged in dialogue, was clearly established by the later turn of events even as the situation had turned very ugly by that time. It is true that they were uneasy and worked up because of continued administrative support to the factory owners. But it will be wrong to infer that they were inclined to create scenes on their own.

3. The assault on women, that too by male police personnel, is highly objectionable. Apparently they were soft targets, and the application of force was surely excessive. It was also clear from the team's visit to the sadar hospital that out of the eight injured admitted there, the four women were more seriously injured than the men.

4. The FIR lodged by the PSI Shashikant reveals his strong prejudices and attitudes very clearly. He has recounted the later part of events, omitting the early portion of incidents which could have thrown light on the build up of the confrontation. He goes on to assert that people were armed with 'lathis, bhala, tengari, hathora etc', which is apparently with a view to portray the militancy and preparedness on the part of the crowd. From the entire enquiry it is not borne out. Further, the FIR suggests that the militant demonstrators (ugra pradarshankari) were indulging in the act motivated by 'commercial jealousy' and that they were misleading the ignorant innocent villagers spreading the illusion that asbestos caused cancer. He goes on to insinuate that they were receiving huge money from the professional rivals. These assertions are obviously uncalled for and sustain the allegation of the local people that police force, at least some of them, are acting as the stooges of the Company.

5. The people seemed to have no faith in the local thana or those stationed in the factory. The people's perception is that the police are only to protect the factory and would not listen to both the sides (i.e. the Company and local people). This view seems to have been reinforced by the events of December, 2010 when Company goons fired on local protestors, but the police only arrested two KBJBJSC members and took no action on the people's complaint of the firing by company goons.

B. Regarding the demand of closure of asbestos factory

1. The people's demand for closure of the asbestos factory should be addressed in earnest by calling all the parties involved. Meanwhile the work should stop in the factory. A state level investigation committee may be formed to look into the manner and validity of grant of permission

despite objections from the local people. The averment of the factory owners regarding the type of land and proximity of habitations and schools need to be re-examined. The PUCL visiting team noticed that the land is fertile and there are several schools, not one in the vicinity of the site of factory. Persons responsible for wrong certification with regard to these should also be suitably reprimanded.

2. As far as PUCL recommendations are concerned we have no doubts that the asbestos factory should not be allowed to be set up there in view of strong protests of local people as well as clear possibility of ill effects including health hazards for the people residing nearby. However, Balmukund Company may be allowed to set up some agro industries or some other safe industry taking the people into confidence.

C. Regarding the demand of ban of asbestos industry

1. It is time that the demand for ban on asbestos is seriously considered by the central government. Maybe a period of phasing out is decided for the present, making assessment regarding the existing unavoidable requirements and the time which may be taken for substitution by some alternative materials. But surely opening of new factories should be stopped. There is a bill pending before the Rajya Sabha for the regulation of import and use of white asbestos and this should be passed without any further delay.

2. Considering the worldwide move for a ban on asbestos it will be unwise and a misplaced idea to promote factories of asbestos in the state of Bihar. It is reported that as many as six plants are coming up in Bihar, the Marwan being in the most advanced stage with largest capacity. Others are proposed in Madhubani, Chapra, Vaishali, W. Champaran and Bhojpur. PUCL recommends an immediate stoppage of the work at all the places. Bihar cannot be made the dumping ground of hazardous production exposing the people here to all kinds of risks, because they are poor.

D. Regarding the State policies on industrialization and development

1. After decades of economic stagnation Bihar is supposed to have started its pursuit of development and growth. A high rate of growth, higher than the national average, is being claimed and the level of public investment has increased manifold. This is expected to spur private sector investment as well and beginning of a new phase of industrialization. But meanwhile the world has moved ahead, particularly during the past two decades of liberalization and globalization, accompanied by vast technological changes. All of this has thrown up in new problems, while

opening up new possibilities, which need to be carefully appraised in the specific context of Bihar.

2. Agriculture continues to be the mainstay of Bihar economy, while given the high density of population in the state, the pressure on land is heavy. This brings up the problem of protecting fertile land from encroachments by industries or other profitable economic pursuits. Hence clear policy framework is required both for industrialization and land use, including the issues relating to land acquisition. The developed countries and even developed states in our country are reluctant to allow industries with adverse ecological impact in their own land, preferring outsourcing of such production until substitutes are available. Asbestos is such an item which is already banned in many countries. A state like Bihar has to guard against dumping of such industries here, even if there is a keen desire in the official quarters to attract private investments. Before it is late we have to realize the need and importance of protection of environment and preservation of natural resources like land, water or greenery. Marwan episode has to be appraised in a holistic perspective, and does provide an early warning as to the problems of misplaced zeal of industrialization. Greater care is needed and the state will have to intervene to ensure that industrialization is promoted in a manner which does not harm the people and causes the least injury to environment.

3. As a matter of fact the model of development being pursued in the state currently seems to follow the same course that started two decades back in India and taken up vigorously in some of the relatively developed states like Gujarat or Maharashtra or backward states keen on development like Orissa or Andhra Pradesh. This strategy of development however has been opposed by many for their inequitable exploitative character, and there are people's movement noticeable particularly in the backward states. While Bihar is poised for growth, it has to carefully work out its strategy of development keeping in view the large poor population of the state and its precarious control over natural resources. After all development is meant for human beings and in a democratic country it is all the more necessary to respect the views and interests of the bulk of the population while designing policies.

Whatever is happening at Marwan is of larger significance than one off local problem at this point of time in Bihar. The present government will be well advised to appreciate the complexities and lay down clear policies with regard to industrialization as well as development. Development is a matter of human rights, and no less. It is time that the government accepts this fact.

OUR STRUGGLE FOR RIGHT TO SURVIVAL: OUR STRUGGLE TO RETAIN CONTROL OVER OUR GRAZING LAND, FOREST, LIVELIHOOD AND BODILY INTEGRITY

Thervoy Youth, Women and People's Struggle Committee

Background¹

Our village Thervoy Kandigai, Gummidipoondi Taluk, Thiruvallur District, Tamil Nadu (50 km North of Chennai) has 2000 households (majority dalits, the rest belonging to Backward Castes and (a few) Scheduled Tribes). As per number of ration cards there are only 959 households, because some families are joint families. 90% of households have agriculture land which is irrigated through channels from tanks in the village, including seven in the 1127 acres of 'Mekkal Poromboku' (grazing) land. Of the 90% who have land, 70% have less than two acres, 20% have less than 1 acre and 10% have more than 2 acres of land. We take two crops most years and only twice in the last 10 years we have had to harvest one crop. We are employed for 9 months in the year in agriculture because of irrigation (which is now under threat). Only few go out in search of waged work. Roughly 80% of our households have livestock, for which fodder and water comes from the grazing land. Around 1995 a check dam was built by the Forest Department under the Watershed Development Program. The Mekkal Poromboku land hosts seven tanks, and acts as a watershed not only for our village, but neighbouring 24 villages in the same Taluk. Further, it is used by women of our village to collect twigs for fuel, for open defecation (with few households having toilets in the villages) and for menstrual hygiene. It provides us medicinal herbs and fruits during off season (see Box 1 for song of 70 year Nayamma on the use of the Poromboku land, also referred to as forest land for reasons explained later). The Mekkal Poromboku land is likely a nurturing mother to us. 15 households live in Mekkal Poromboku land and some have planted cashew trees. There is a reserved forest next to the Mekkal Poromboku land.

Till 1824 the Zamindari system was in operation and they were collecting taxes and these 1127 acres of land was classified as patta land with the Zamindar. The Zamindari system was abolished after independence, and there was an attempt to bring this land also under the Land Ceiling Act around 1969. But we fought with the Kannakupillai (Accountant) and later Village Administrative Officer (1977) and ensured that this land was classified as Mekkal Poromboku or grazing land was under our control and not redistributed as private land.

We have been guarding 1127 acres of grazing lands classified as Mekkal Poromboku land for 200 years. The system is that each house in the village gives two "Marraka" (around 6 kgs) of rice or paddy, and this is used to pay for two watch persons for looking after the grazing land.

SIPCOT's coming and rationale for our resistance

In 2007, we saw an advertisement in Tamil newspaper Dinathanthi on the upcoming SIPCOT complex stating this complex will be located on the Mekkal Poromboku land (grazing land of 1127 acres). On 30/1/2007 the Panchayat Raj Institution passed a resolution without Gram Sabha's consent stating that they do not have an objection to the giving away of 32/2 and 33/2 survey number of Mekkal Poromboku Land to SIPCOT industrial park. We, the village people went and met the Thiruvallur District Collector and District Revenue Officer. We knew if such a project emerges it would affect our livestock, agriculture, water, and fuel and health security. We had also heard that SIPCOT industrial complexes in Cuddalore in Tamil Nadu was causing health hazards through effluence and had the potential to damage nervous system and kidneys, and, cause heart and eye ailments.² We heard from elsewhere that such complexes hardly created employment for local people after the construction phase was over often did not create much permanent employment for local people, and people from other states were brought in once the construction stage was over. The companies would soon start buying our agriculture land to build houses for employees at higher levels, hotels would come, women would be exploited, and our subaltern dalit culture would get eroded. Equally we were worried what would happen to us, if we moved to cities. We had seen that cheap labours immigrants from other states had already dominated the cities. We would become indebted, pushed into near bonded work in cities while now we are self-employed and lived with dignity. In fact we were informed that between 1998/1999 and 2005/2006 rural landlessness in the state had increased from 59.9% to 64.3%.³ Rural landlessness was higher in Tamil Nadu than India as a whole. If all rural agriculture land was industrialised what would happen to food and nutrition security? As traditionally we are tillers we were worried about this. Though we are educated in our village, we are interested in agriculture.

Our protest

Three thousand of us fasted in front of the Collector's office in 2007. Member of Legislative Assembly (MLA) belonging to AIADMK KS Vijayakumar supported us at that time. 500 of us went and met the Collector, atleast half of whom were women.

The then Collector Ranvir Prasad agreed that giving away of the Mekkal Porumbokku land was a violation of our right to livelihood and grazing land. The honest Collector Ranvir Prasad was transferred in three days by the DMK regime. Given this setback, 5000 of us went on a fast in the first quarter of 2007, and Edapadi Palaniswamy of AIADMK joined us. This was broadcast on Jaya TV. But the previous regime (DMK) did not change its stand. In the middle of 2007, we approached the National SC/ST Commission. The Commission instructed the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister, Collector and Village PRI President to look into the matter. But no order came to our hand stating that the project was shelved.

On 21st January 2008 an agreement was drafted between Forest Department and PRI (Agreement number 24883 signed by Forest Range Officer and PRI President on 4/2/2008) stating that 250 hectares of the Mekkal Porumbokku land (revenue number 32/2. 33/1) would be handed over to the PRI for protection for the year 2008-9 and after 3 to five years a village forest protection committee would be formed which will maintain this 250 hectares of land. That is, as per this agreement the forest still belongs to PRI and to form village forest protection committee.⁴ We, the Thervoy people, still have not received a copy of any order stating this agreement has been cancelled and neither has such a cancellation been discussed in the Gram Sabha.

In 2008, members of Dalit Mannurumai Kootamayaippu (DMK under the leadership of Mr Nicholas), National Alliance of People's Movements (State Coordinator Anbuvedan and Youth Coordinators Arul Doss and Sudarshanam), Anti-SEZ group (Madhumitta Dutta), Unorganised Workers Federation (Geeta Ramakrishnan), Pennurumai Iyyakkam (Leelavathi and Kamala) and Association for the Rural Poor (Dr Felix) came to support our struggle. A newspaper cited a staff of DMK which pointed to the fact that in the same taluk there were non-functioning SIPCOT complexes.

We thought that with so many groups and movements supporting us the industrial park would be closed. We were however wrong. In the first week of January, 2009, SIPCOT put up a board near the house of one of our residents, Kalai. SIPCOT and Michellin Tyre Factory (budget of Rs 4000 crore for this project) brought JCP machines to demolish the forests and some of the tanks. We protested against this demolition immediately and the police arrested 61 persons, including six women. Interestingly, Vani, the Panchayat President, Vedamani the Councillor and Sarasa, Karpagam and Mala who were Ward members all representing the DMK party were also arrested. They joined the protest though they were hand in gloves with the then government (DMK). All were kept in jail for four days, and then released on conditional bail.

On January 22nd, 2009, the demolition began on a larger scale. Police came with revolver and stood in every street. There were 300 police personnel deployed. 150 of us from the village went and met the District Revenue Officer and then the (then) Managing Director SIPCOT, Govindan, an IAS Officer on January 23rd, 2009. Our meeting began at 10 PM and ended at 2.30 PM. Only 15 of us were allowed entry, of whom approximately 6 were women. The SIPCOT manager did not relent and did not heed to our request to stop the project. When the then Industrial Secretary MF Farooqui, promised to construct roads, schools and primary health centre in return of our land, we retorted that it was our fundamental right to be provided such basic facilities. Our grazing land need not be taken by the government in exchange for delivery of 'welfare schemes'!

Hence we boycotted republic day celebrations in Panchayati Raj Institution in 2009 and hoisted a black flag in school. Each house hoisted a black flag. We boycotted Gram Sabha meeting. On January 29th, 2009 all the households gave back our ration cards.

On February 2, 2009, Armstrong, Bahujan Samaj Party president joined us. 500 of us walked to Ponneri 35 kilometer away where the taluk office was located. 247 of us were arrested, of whom 180 were women. After a day we were released.

On February 17, 2009, one thousand five hundred of us (including 1200 women) protested in front of the MLA Guest House, Chennai along with representatives of Dalit Mannurumai Kootamayaippu, NAPM and anti SEZ committee. But no action was taken. We hence went to the High Court, but the court was closed from February 2009 to March 18, 2009. On May 12, 2009 a stay order was issued by the high court (WP 9319/2009). Judges Jyothimani and Sivagnanam ordered for a stay of demolitions for three months, but not a permanent stop to the SIPCOT industrial park and proposed industries. We boycotted elections. An interim order was issued by Justice Dananbalan and Sundaresan stating that bushes and shrubs can only be cleaned, but not trees

On 15th September 2009 the Gram Sabha of Thervoy Panchayat, Gummudi Pundi Taluk passed a resolution under the leadership of the President Vani and ward members Sarasa, Janakiraman, Shivakumr, Thirupati, Mala, Karpagam, Sinivasan, A Manoharan and PRI Assistant (Udaviyalar) Ravi and Nalapaniyalar (welfare officer) K Gajendran(resolution ix) opposing the establishment of SIPCOT industrial park resolution stating that they wanted the withdrawal of the establishment of SIPCOT Industrial park in the Mekkal Porumbokku land Serial number 32/2 and 33/2. It also recorded that 63 people were arrested in struggles against the Industrial park.

On 16th September the high court under Ibrahim Kalifullah and Bhanumathi ruled (final judgement) that in compensation of the 1127 acres of Mekkal Porombokku land, the government would give 450 acres of Pural land (porombokku) in the village for conversion to grazing land. This land had eucalyptus trees and cashew shrubs, and was used as firewood collection and open defecation. Another 300 acres of land should be given somewhere else in the same district. That is we were expected to take cows and livestock grazing several kilometers away. The High court judgment also ruled that SIPCOT would allocate 100 acres within its premise for fodder development (Survey number 32/2). The High court judgment also stated that 16 HH who had “encroached” the mekkal porombokku land would be given housing elsewhere. There was no mention that the 7 tanks constructed in the premises of the land grabbed by the SIPCOT industrial park under the watershed development program would not be demolished.

On 14th February 2010, an agreement of ‘no work’ till 23rd February was negotiated by us with SIPCOT when over 500 women went to the SIPCOT site and asked them to stop work. But on the following day, 8 villagers, including three key activists among us who were spearheading the opposition against the land acquisition, were illegally detained and charged with various sections of the IPC and jailed by the Gummidipoondi police.

On 9th March 2010 we moved the Supreme Court with the support of Dalit Mannurumai Kootamaippu. But the judgment of Justice K G Balakrishnan upheld the High Court judgment. We started fasting immediately. The village school was closed after hearing the judgement.

On 30th April 2010 a public hearing was held in Kaveraipatti located 18 km away from the village, though the public hearing was supposed to be held in the same village as per the government rule. 1500 villagers (1000 women) went with great difficulty. In the public hearing, the people expressed their opinion to the Collector and District Pollution Control Board Chairperson that they were opposed to the SIPCOT industrial park.

In September, 2010 Professor Lakshmanan, Associate Professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies completed a useful study “Environment and Social Impact Study of the Implementation of an industrial Zone: Thervoy village of Tamil Nadu.”⁵ The study made it clear to us that four companies were proposed to be built under the Industrial Complex: Michellin Tyre Company, Aluminium and Ferrous Alloy Metal Maker Hunter Douglas India Private Limited, Harsha Float Glass, and Harsh Exito Engineering Company. According to his report a site evaluation and suitability matrix for SIPCOT Industrial Park at Thervoy was available

which clearly showed actual violations of CPCB guidelines. The report also highlighted that the right to livelihood, right to protest and democratic resistance were dealt with undemocratic violence by the State and ruling class against the people. The ground water is classified as category A, has extensive vegetation and medicinal herbs. If the forest was destroyed our agriculture and agriculture of 24 other villages would be affected, and the region would receive poor rainfall, affect storage of water in lakes and ground water supply. The quality of atmosphere would become warm and unsuitable for many species. Industrial pollution is another hazard. The socio cultural milieu of the people would be affected. Hotels, real estate, restaurants and business centres would usurp more land and ultimately we may have to live without dignity. This report indeed confirmed our initial apprehension, and added many more insights.

On 10th October 2010 we went on an awareness padayatra to 18 villages on the consequences to life and livelihood if the SIPCOT industrial park with the proposed industries is established. 400 people (150 women) took part in this padayatra. The padyatra spanned 32 kilometres. All stakeholders supporting us took part in this padayatra.

On 14th February 2011, 400 women tried to occupy the SIPCOT industrial park. The Deputy Superintendent of Police and Tehsildar pacified the women stating that they would put a stop to the project, but never took action. On 15th February 2011, false cases were foisted on 90 people, of whom 60 were women. Eight people were arrested for protesting for their right to forest- the cases were filed by Micheelin Tyre Company. From 16th to 22nd February hunger fast was held by 3000 women and men demanding the immediate closure of SIPCOT industrial park and the concerned industries. AIMDK, DMDK, CPI, CPIM VCK, BSP, and MDMK took part in the hunger fast. Collector and Superintendent of Police visited the site and agreed to immediately stop the work, as well as released the eight persons. However the work was stopped only for one week.

Madhumita Dutta, a member of the anti SEZ committee and closely associated with Dalit Manurumai Kootamaippu asked information under the Right to Information Act, 2005 on 28th February asking whether the SIPCOT industrial park had obtained clearance from the Pollution Control Board. Mr Jaykumar Te Ethiraj, Public Information Officer, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board directed the Joint Chief Environmental Engineer to reply on 2nd March stating that “TNPC Board had not yet issued Consent for Establishment to the SIPCOT industrial Park at Thervoy Kandigai. The file is under scrutiny and process”. As pointed by her, SIPCOT has obtained an environmental clearance from the Ministry of Environment & Forests at the Centre, based on flawed process and fraudulent data.⁶

On 15th March 2011, National Alliance People's Movements at the request of the village and other stakeholders invited Medha Patkar and Gabriele Dietrich and other representatives of the National Alliance of People's Movements to Thervoy Kandigai, in which representatives of political parties including AIADMK, MDMK, CPI, CPIM, DMDK, Bahujan Samaj party, Vithuthalia Chirutha Katchi, Pattaly Makkal Katchi, Puthiya Bharatam, Dr Ambekdar Peravmai, and representatives of dalit, women's rights and human rights organisations like Dalit Mannurummai Kootamippu Unorganised Workers representatives, Pennurumai Iyakkam, anti SEZ committee members and Tamil Nadu Dalit Grama Viviasaya Uzzappaalar Sangam took part.⁷ The Collector issued a statement stating that the matter will be looked into within a week, but nothing happened.

On 19th March 500 women and children tried to prevent a truck carrying iron rods. They were beaten by the police. 138 women were arrested and released, and ten men were arrested and put in Puzal jail. Though we had called the press, they were not allowed entry, and this was reported in Dinamalar on the following day. On 19th of April 2011 a Caveat notice was issued to us the "Thervoy Grama Makkal Munnera Nala Sangam" by Michellin India Tyres Private Limited (Caveator) through their Counsel Kochar and co, J Sivandaraaj, No 6 Indian chambers (SICCI) Esplanade, Chennai 600 018, stating that the Thervoy Grama Makkal Munnera NalaSangam should not do anything in above matter without notice to the Caveator.⁸ However the Caveat does not extend to the women's self- help groups or people of Thervoy in general. In 2011, The National Human Rights Commission, under pressure from NAPM, has issued a directive to the senior superintendent of police (SSP) of Tiruvallur district to take action over a complaint of alleged foisting of false cases against dalit activists in Thervoy.⁹ But no action was taken.

Subsequently on 9th May Thervoy women and men, NAPM, Unorganised workers Federation, Penn Urumai Iyakkam met with Jairam Ramesh in Chennai when he had come to Asian College of Journalism. He said in the meeting that he will look into the matter. Nothing has happened so far. We had also visited Jairam Ramesh in New Delhi, through Mr Venugopal, AIADMK on 5th March 2011.

AIADMK had mentioned in their election manifesto that they would give back Thervoy Kandigai back if it comes to power. Therefore, on May 27, 2011 we celebrated the Amman festival after three years and fall of DMK government was hand in gloves with the earlier government. On the way to the temple, the company tried to video graph us. We were only travelling on public road. Further, the police are alleged to have told the priest not to allow us, but the priest refused. It is our cultural right to celebrate. Ranjani K Murthy, associated with Dalit MuktiMorchha,

Chattisgarh and other groups, Initiatives: Women in Development, NAPM, Ecomwell and media activists (Narmada and Ponnuswamy) joined in the celebrations.¹⁰

On 31st May, various Christian denominations came together to celebrate the downfall of DMK regime, and we were sure justice would prevail. Ranjani K Murthy visited us to hand over Tulir magazine brought out by an NGO operating under Michelin Tyre Company (see Box 2). She encouraged us to form a youth and women's struggle committee, but we told her it should be youth, women and people's struggle committee as we wanted the support of village elders as her.¹¹ We now have such a committee, and have our own email account, and are learning to operate it. We heard over the phone from representatives of Dalit Mukti Morcha (also associated with National Coordination of Democratic Forces) as to how other struggles elsewhere had dealt with such evictions.

When representatives of Penn Shakti and Pengal Munnani (both represented by Josephine) and Ranjani K Murthy visited us on 30th June most of the tanks in the complex we understand are demolished, labourers are being brought in from neighbouring villages to work at higher wages than normal. We understand that one engineer had died without an enquiry. We are not able to graze our livestock. We are worried about water supply (which is going down in our channels, ground water and lakes outside the complex). Women are finding it difficult to access fuel and open space for defecation and one day in fact a woman had to confront a naked man in SIPCOT industrial park. Now women go in groups. We are not able to sleep in peace. Some livestock have died. The weather is becoming hot with cutting down of our trees. While we feel let down by the previous regime and VCK, we hope that DMDK representing our area will do justice. We expect that communist parties that endorsed principles of justice will stand by us when our right to life, livelihood, and bodily integrity is being violated- not only of all adults, but also of women and children. The police are protecting Michellin Company (a contingent) on a day to day basis instead of those whose rights to life, livelihood and bodily integrity are being violated.

Our Demands:

1. Immediate Closure of SIPCOT industrial park and the companies coming therein
 - a. using the illegality of abiding by PRI resolution, when Gram Sabha has ruled otherwise,
 - b. against the wishes of public hearing
 - c. without proper pollution control clearance for SIPCOT industrial park and

- d. no evidence of agreement on handing of Mekkal porombokku land to PRI and JFM committee being cancelled
- e. AMPLE EVIDENCE OF LOSS TO OUR AGRICULTURE, LIVESTOCK, WATER, FUEL, HERBS, BODILY INTEGRITY
2. Reestablishments of tanks, check dams and trees destroyed
3. Dropping of all cases pending against men and women of the village, including false cases foisted by Michellin Tyre company
4. Action against perpetrators of violence against our right to protest for our right to grazing la1.
5. Compensation for loss of livelihoods, livestock, wounds and torture.

July 7, 2011

Endnotes:

- ¹ As told by Mahesh, Gautham, Kalai, Mariamman, Bala, Vendammal, Kuppamma, Anita, Katamma, Pongodi, Usha, Anita, Rose, Krishnaveni, Pothiamma, Govindammal, Kanniammal, Thangamman, Kasturi, Santhamaria, Ilamalli, Krishna, Janakiraman, Iyumalai, Sujatha, Deepa, Naynamma on 30/6/2010 to Ranjani Kamala Murthy, Researcher and Activist associated with Dalit MuktiMorchha and Josephine Sagayam, Penn Shakti and PengalMunnani. Also integrates comments from the visit of Ranjani Kamala Murthy on 27/4/2011 with youth Coordinator of NAPM.
- ² Report on SIPCOT industrial pollution Study unduly delayed, *The Hindu*, Saturday, May 31, 2007, <http://www.hindu.com/2007/03/31/stories/2007033102210500.htm>
- ³ International Institute of Population Sciences, and Macro International, 2001, Tamil Nadu National Family Health Survey, 2 (1998/1999) and International Institute of Population Sciences and Macro International, 2008 National Family Health Survey 3 (2005/2006).
- ⁴ Non Judicial Agreement on stamped paper 01AA 60424 no 24883 dated 21/12/2005 signed on 4/2/2008
- ⁵ Lakshmanan, 2010, *Environment and Social Impact Study of the Implementation of an Industrial Zone: Therovy village of Tamil Nadu*
- ⁶ <http://expressbuzz.com/cities/chennai/nhrc-directive-on-thervoy-issue/267430.htm>
- ⁷ Notice issued by village leaders, women's self help groups, Thervoy village people's Development Committee
- ⁸ Memorandum of Caveat Petition (under Section 148A and order 52 CPC.
- ⁹ <http://expressbuzz.com/cities/chennai/nhrc-directive-on-thervoy-issue/267430.html>
- ¹⁰ <http://www.publishaletter.com/readletter.jsp?plid=28117>