

RED BANNER

Voice of Democratic Movements in South & South-east Asia

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Front cover: Elderly Women Running Marathon on 12 December 2010 at Imphal to Commemorate the Outbreak of Manipuri Women's War Against British in 1939. Photo source: www.e-pao.net



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INDIAN SUB-CONTINENT

Aftermath of the Radiia Tapes Exposures

Communist Ghadar Party of India

The capitalist class is desperate to limit the exposure of the system of capitalist democracy

The leaks of the Radiia tapes have revealed, once more, the stark truth that the biggest monopoly capitalists are the drivers and beneficiaries of the system of democracy in our country, which is oriented to serve their interests. The monopoly capitalists and their parties are able to dictate every aspect of the political process – from the selection of candidates, the election campaigns, government formation and the appointment of Ministers, to the policy and legislative decisions. The capitalist class uses the State to ensure greater exploitation of labour and more intense plunder of the land and natural resources, to pocket maximum profits.

The capitalists, the ministers, top bureaucrats, leaders of the trusted parties of the establishment, the senior-most judges – are all part of the ruling capitalist class. This class wields state power to keep the exploited masses down and to share the loot among the owners of capital. It is very important to the capitalist class to hide the real nature of its democracy and present it as “rule of the people, by the people and for the people”. Preserving this myth is important for continuing with ruthless exploitation and plunder of the land and labour of workers, peasants and tribal communities.

Following the exposure of the Radiia tapes, Ratan Tata (who had been badly exposed) tried every trick to absolve himself and declare his innocence. He went public in his own defence and against the opposition members of Parliament who were criticizing his role. As such public polemics were leading to further exposure of dirty linen, the Congress Party veteran Pranab Mukherjee intervened. He advised capitalists to remain hidden in the wings, as they usually are, and not join the public debate.

In effect, Pranab Mukherjee reminded his class that carrying out public polemics against one another is the job of the politicians in Parliament. The barons of finance capital pull the strings hidden from public view. If they expose themselves it is dangerous for capitalist democracy.

Following this warning, the Congress party and the opposition parties have assumed centre-stage in the media. Highly publicized CBI raids have been carried out against ministers and officials. The real drivers

of the system have gone back to the wings, once again hidden from public view.

People have been fed on this myth that “ruling” and “opposition” parties represent different sections of the people, and that democracy is maintained through the debates in Parliament and on TV. We have just witnessed the spectacle of the BJP demanding a JPC probe and the Congress Party refusing, and each one blaming the other. The focus of the discussion has not been the problem with capitalist democracy, but whether the Congress or the BJP is more corrupt.

The corporate media is playing its role in fostering the lie that this telecom scam is another ‘aberration’ in a democratic system. The myth is promoted that the secret dealings revealed by the tapes are problems of some individual corrupt politicians, which can allegedly be resolved through Commissions of Enquiry or by replacing this or that politician. Mr. Raja was made to resign. There have been discussions ad nauseam in the print and TV media on reforms to “clean up the stables” of Indian democracy. But nothing whatsoever is said about the class nature of this democracy and what needs to be done about that problem.

No matter how hard they try, the capitalist class and its spokespersons cannot continue to fool the people as before. They cannot any longer hide the glaring fact that the existing political order is nothing but the dictatorship of the capitalist class, headed by the monopolies. They cannot stop workers and peasants from realizing that the central government and the entire state machinery works for the super-rich global capitalist giants, to further intensify their exploitation and robbery.

Highlights of Exposures

The Confederation of Indian Industries’ (CII) chief pushed Kamal Nath’s name for surface transport ministry, after his performance in distributing lucrative contracts as Minister of Commerce in the previous UPA government. As is well documented now, Raja of DMK was re-appointed as Minister for Telecom, at the behest of Tata and other capitalists. Mukesh Ambani ensured the appointment of Murli Deora as Minister of Petroleum. The Radia tapes have also recorded a discussion on Praful Patel, the appointee as Minister of Civil Aviation. It was acknowledged that he would more likely be the “minister for Vijay Mallya of Kingfisher Airlines”, having till then been the “minister for Naresh Goyal of Jet Airways”.

It is now undeniable that Tata Teleservices was allotted GSM spectrum out of turn and ahead of 343 other applicants, and till 2010, this allotment was at 2001 prices. With this, the net worth of Tata Teleservices skyrocketed. In November 2008, Tata Teleservices sold 26 per cent stake to Japanese telecom player Docomo for a staggering \$2.8 billion, making huge profits out of a single deal.

In 2008, the Manmohan Singh government took a number of steps in the name of addressing the problems created by the global economic crisis. Amongst these was the reduction by the Ministry of Petroleum in the administered price of aviation fuel by 38% in two months. There was also massive reduction by the Ministry of Commerce in the export duty on iron ore and steel. Such measures were targeted at protecting the profit rates of companies in aviation, steel production and oil refining, including the Tatas and Reliance. Further “relief packages” were proposed and demanded by big business associations for textiles, cement and other sectors. Tax revenue that should be applied for public purpose was given up for the sake of boosting the profits of big capitalist corporations.

Politics Of Ram Temple In Ayodhya

Vidya Bhushan Rawat

The October 30th Judgment of the Lucknow bench of Allahabad High Court is being challenged by both the parties involved in the case, in the Supreme Court. Lot of things has been said and political parties are positioning themselves accordingly. Whatever be the result in the Supreme Court, a few things need to be examined and explained.

Reams of paper have been wasted in dubbing this verdict as ‘historic’. Television channels brought back the old redundant saffronites for a ‘united India’. We saw, the Maulanas and Brahmins at the helm of the affair of India again. Lord Rama is the conscious keeper of India and Advani’s heart melted as he felt exonerated for his anti-national act of destruction of the Babari mosque on December 6th, 1992. These forces were totally out of power in Uttar-Pradesh and Bihar and have been waiting for this issue to reinforce their Brahmanical vision on India. While media and political analysts may say that much water has flown in Saryu and India has moved ahead yet it is the media which revived the issue and not the people. The cut throat competition in the media was so much that for

the entire day they 'analysed' this on various shows and all the saffron Sadhus and their favorite chant, 'we respect court verdict, statement became the hall mark of the day. We forgot the same saffron gang shouting loudly led by both Kalyan Singh and Uma Bharati that the issue of faiths cannot be decided by the court of law and that no court was bigger than the court of Lord Rama.

The decision of the court was more shocking. It ventured into an area which will open a can of worm. Was the issue before the court really 'whether Rama was born in the same place where the mosque existed?' 'Should the courts entertain such petitions? How can court decide on it? What will happen if the courts are asked the same question related to Mathura and Kashi? The judges in their wisdom decided to distribute the land between three parties. Actually, it is two parties but how interestingly it is that Nirmohi Akhara is a separate party other than the 'Hindus and Muslims'. How can they be the separate then Hindus? The issue of illegal occupation of the mosque was side tracked as how the idols of Lord Rama were placed into the mosque in November 1949. The court did not make any inquiry into it and therefore those perpetrators of a gory crime got legitimized by the courts though inadvertently.

The time when the judgment came and afterwards the saffron forces were in full flow. Ravi Shankar Prasad, speaking as lawyer appearing for 'Hindus' appealing to 'Muslims' to 'honor' the court verdict. Prasad should tell his party president to honor everything that the court says and mourn the planned demolition of the Babari mosque even after the then chief minister had assured the Supreme Court as well as the National Integration Council for protecting the mosque at all cost. Yet, it was demolished and created an unprecedented anarchy in India which could be compared to partition days only. The saffron forces were always interested in that as they are losing hold over the masses and need some tantrums to show us their legitimacy. Hence, this judgment cannot be called a judgment in legal sense. It is more a political judgment to keep two religious groups happy and hand over the leadership of the two communities which want to move ahead from the religious thugs both the sides. India need to look ahead to the path of democracy where the voices of marginalized are continuously asking questions and seeking their space in our democratic set up. The religious rights are feeling marginalized in their own way and need to show the predominance over the masses. The media run by the capitalists on the guidance of the religious thugs is always happy to play the dirty game of 'sarva dharma samabhava' thus

marginalizing those voices which challenge the 'popular discourse'. Hence those who question the very legitimacy of Lord Rama as an idol of India are not only marginalized but targeted and forced to keep quiet. The Sangh Parivar has succeeded in it as almost each one of us is shouting 'Jai Shri Rama'.

All the babas who have amassed huge properties through their crooked deals were basking on a 'grand Ram Mandir' to be built at Ayodhya. One does not know what does a 'grand' temple mean. And why should they need 67 hectare of land for the temple. Does India lack temples and mosques? One is amused by this focus on the temple by the top brass of the Sangh Parivar. The Hindus have lot of problems to resolve but the Sangh Parivar and its very offshoots only need the issue which involves the Muslims. The right wingers of the Muslims also want the same so that the voice of the Pasmada remains on the margins. Though it is very clear that Muslims feel betrayed by the judgment but the fact is that their leadership too used the 'respecting court's verdict' according to their fancies. We all know what happened to other issues including that in Shahbano case. Justification can always come from Mr Shahbuddin about Ayodhya but the fact is that it is the religious leaders of both the sides that are fixing the agenda and that does not hold good for a secular democracy.

In the High Court, we saw the lawyers with the red mark on their forehead. Such marks never used to be part of their fraternity. These days, a Tilak is used in such a way, as if it is ready to attack all those who do not agree with it. This show of militancy at every level has to be rejected. Indian courts must admonish those lawyers who show their religious faith outrageously in the court. It is trying to put pressure on the judiciary. Each party was saying that it respect the court verdict. Then, why are they again thinking to go to the higher court. The Muslims as an aggrieved party are taking it to the Supreme Court. The Hindu Mahasabha wants the entire area to be declared as the place of Lord Rama. Everybody is asking for huge temple and we all know in this wonderful land, there is no land ceiling law applicable to huge land amassed or collected in the name of temples or mosques, muthths or churches, Gurudwaras or farm houses. So, as India's poor continue to lack land to live and cultivate, the likes of Ramdev, Advani, Imams will have thousands of acres to cultivate their gods and goddesses. The state is a party to it. The media knowingly handing the entire issue to these gangs who want this issue to rise so that they can have their TRPs.

Till the 30th, we all were debating the issue of land rights, tribal rights, issue of caste based census and many more things but from that day, all the dead woods are back to business. The sarva-dharm champions are back with the candle lights. It is nothing but trying to bring back the Brahmanical supremacy in Indian life. One has to understand the entire game of Ayodhya and its Ram temple. The brahmanical forces know equally well that the Muslim religious lunatics too would not like to 'accept' 'defeat'. Both need to feed each other and hence the issue will continue. These Babas have earned millions of rupees and now they want entry to the Parliament and save their illegally grabbed money.

While I fully endorse the view that rule of the law has to prevail but what is rule of the law in this country. It is brahmanical values. That RSS and other Hindu organizations with the help of other parties have been able to again put forward their own castiest agenda on the country and all other issues are out. One friend wrote in the face-book that there is no OBC-Dalit priest in Ayodhya. Unfortunately, he is wrong. OBCs are the foot soldiers of the Hindutva brigade and the day they understand it, it would be better. I can provide many OBC babas in Ayodhya living in their Akhadas and part of brahmanical value system. They have to understand that Advani's Rath yatra started to eliminate the Mandal effect that time and it failed as the Mandal forces were very strong enough but in that entire process the Sangh Parivar got Mandalised and co-opted the shudras. This time the target is the caste census issue. Advani and congress both do not want census on the basis of caste and want the issue to get diluted. They have foot soldiers like Ram Dev and others who are here to repose our faith in those brahmanical values that degraded the Bahujan masses of the country. This is dangerous. These 'so-called' non Hindutva Babas also want the same domination in Ayodhya. None of them talks about the annihilation of Buddhist culture from entire Avadh region. We must ask this question. I had posed this question to a Swami in Ayodhya during an interview and he proudly proclaimed that we threw the Buddhists away. He clearly admitted that Ayodhya was a Buddhist place named as Saket and that we threw them away. Even today, Ayodhya has a number of places which can easily be termed as Buddhist places. Our Buddhist friends actually could not do their home work well or may be in the din of Hindu Muslim noise, the voices of Buddhists and Dalits were ignored. I have visited number of temples in Ayodhya which I can say are Buddhists particularly some of their statues but have been converted into Hindu Gods.

The Supreme Court must take all issue into one. It must punish those who perpetrated the ghastly crime of dismantling the mosque on December 6th, 1992. It must also punish those who put the idols in the mosque. The court also must seek clarification from the Archaeological Survey of India. It said during the Setu Samudram Finding that there is nothing as such Ramsetu in Rameshwaram region and that all that was fictitious. How can the same department say that there were signs of the birth of Lord Rama in Ayodhya. There could have been a temple but can anyone prove that Lord Rama was born there. Can court was capable enough to decide about this matter. The Supreme Court must hear this petition with a longer bench and give a verdict so that tomorrow such issues do not come up. The verdict should not be given in isolation. The verdict must involve all those issues related to Ayodhya and demolition of Babari Mosque. The courts must ask the government as what has it done to the promise made by the then Prime Minister Narsimha Rao to the nation that a mosque would be rebuild there?

Can we undo the injustice of history? And if yes, then how. If Babari Masjid was the symbol of victory of aliens then what was Rama's victory. Can you undo the Muslim contribution to India and its four hundred old histories? Can we demolish Taj Majal, Red Fort, Qutub Minar and much beautiful structure which were made by the Mughal Kings? Will we not listen to Mohammad Rafi and Bagum Akkthar simply because they were Muslims? Buddhists and Dalits have beliefs that Ayodhya was Saket and that many temples and idols there have been demolished by the Hindus and converted them to Hindu Gods and Goddesses. Things were explained to me by several Buddhist friends and I did record events there. But Buddhists are not a party. History has enough evidences that a large number of temples are actually built on the edifice of Buddhist structure. What should the Buddhist do? Should they also start undoing the historical wrong and if yes, then how?

Undoing the history could prove expensive to the Hindutva forces. How will the Dalits and Shudra undo the history? Should they start thrashing these Aryan forces? In democracy, it is number that matter. The numbers are with the Dalit, Shudras, Adivasis and other such people oppressed by the brahmanical tyranny in India. If they all unite and start undoing everything Hindu dharma will collapse as it is based on a fad of caste hierarchy. It is time for these religious lunatics to come to senses and leave their false egos aside and work for an equitable and united India. Let them work for the eradication of untouchability. Let them work

against dowry system. No, those who started the practice cannot go against it.

The courts have to come clear on these issues. The faith of the so-called majority community cannot be the rule of law in the democracy. But unfortunately that is happening. Our political parties, intellectuals have conspired against India's indigenous people. One side they are being thrown away from their homes in the name of 'development' and 'beautification' of our cities and towns, the other side, they are being fetched by these religious thugs through cultural annihilation. Imposition of Rama culture by mass media on Indian people is actually an attempt to annihilate the indigenous culture of India. The new history is being written by the Dalits, Adivasis, Shudras by questioning the relevance of these patriarchal gods and their brahmanical masters. Ambedkar questioned it long back, Periyar moved against, Phule exposed them. The Hindus want to build a Ram temple while the Muslims want to build a mosque there. The best option for the oppressed communities is to read more 'Sachchi Ramayana' and 'Riddles of Hinduism' by Periyar and Ambedkar respectively so that they can understand the conspiracy of these classes against the oppressed Bahujan masses of India. Remember, the Hindutva is not against Muslims, it cannot actually do anything against them, and its target is to curtail the growing assertion of the Dalits, Shudra and Adivasis in the country. We must not keep quiet. We cannot watch the game from outside which affects us. Speak up for human rights and humanist values. Let us send these hate mongers to their den only. Let us not allow them to lead our polity. Let us be careful as the Hindutva were first to indulge in social engineering work after Mandal. The war for supremacy of Brahmanism has begun as despite political defeats they are still active, aggressive and manipulative as they run their agenda through culture. It is time to combat it with our counter culture which is more humane, more rational and more civilized.

Source: <http://www.countercurrents.org/rawat201010.htm> (20 October, 2010).

Decisions of All India Coordination Committee Meeting of Peoples' Democratic Front of India (PDFI)

Delhi, 1 February 2011

- Attended by Swapan Goswami (WB), Arjun Pd. Singh & Manishwar (Delhi), S.N.Prabhat (Jharkhand), Ramchandra Singh, Ashok Prakash & B.R. Sharma (UP), Sanjoy (Manipur), Shashikant (Rajasthan), Vittal Raj & S.N. Rao (AP) & Manoj (Uttarakhand).
- Presided by Swapan Goswami

Decision: 1. Review:

- We decided to issue leaflet and organize programs in different states upon Repression on Manipur & Kashmir. The leaflet was issued, but no separate program was taken up. However the issue was raised in different anti-state repression programs.
- We decided to issue leaflet and organize programs in different states on the 4 common demands, such as Equitable Entitlement for Agriculture Community, Recognizing Kheti-Kisani as Skilled Work, No to Compound Interest and No to Civil Jail for Farmers. But, we could not issue the central leaflet for this program. However these demands were raised in different states during mass programs organized by our constituent Peasant / Farmer organizations.
- In the meanwhile the Radia Taps came out in the open and the issue of corruption became very responsive. We issued a central leaflet on the issue of corruption which was promptly published in Bihar. In Delhi photocopies were distributed in different anti-corruption programs.
- Following our old decision we continue to participate in joint activities against state repression. We issued a Press Release condemning the registration of a case of sedition against revolutionary poet Varavara Rao, well known writer and activist Arundhati Roy, Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani, democratic rights activist Sujato Bhadra, Delhi University professor SAR Geelani and others by Delhi Police, following a court order. We also issued an Appeal against the life imprisonment of noted civil rights activist Dr. Binayak Sen, senior Maoist leader Narayan Sanyal and businessman Piyush Guha. In this Appeal we

demanded the unconditional release of Dr. Binayak Sen, Narayan Sanyal, Piyush Guha, Asit Sengupta, Prashant Rahi, Seema Azad, Sudhir Dhawale and other political prisoners by lifting their cases pending in different courts. We also demanded the withdrawal of all draconian acts such as, UAPA, AFSPA, CSPA and others and the repeal of the colonial provisions of 'sedition' and 'waging war against state' from the Indian Penal Code.

- Our AP unit is taking part in Separate Telangana Movement along with other organizations. Our UP unit organized solidarity trip in support of farmers' movement against Yamuna Expressway.

Decision: 2. Future Political Tasks:

It is decided:

- 1) To publish leaflets and organize programs in different states upon:
 - a) Repression on Manipur & Kashmir,
 - b) The 4 common demands, such as Equitable Entitlement for Agriculture Community, Recognizing Kheti-Kisani as Skilled Work, No to Compound Interest and No to Civil Jail for Farmers and
 - c) The issue of corruption.
- 2) To continue to take part in joint activities against state repression on peoples' movements and to raise voice against the conviction of Dr. Binayak Sen, Narayan Sanyal, Piyush Guha, Asit Sengupta and other political-social activists.

Decision: 3. Organizational Tasks:

The proposal to organize the Central Conference of PDFI was discussed seriously and the following decisions taken:

- a. It is not possible to organize the Central Conference in July 2011. But we should complete the process of finalizing the Review Document up to July 2011. Conveners Committee will sit and finalize the Draft of the Review Document until April 2011. This Draft will be sent to the members of the AICC and state committees. It will be finalized in the next meeting of the AICC. After that State Conferences / General Body Meetings will be held in different states wherever possible.
- b. All the members of AICC should try their best to form and revive state committees as soon as possible.

Decision: 4. Publication:

Next Bulletin of PDFI will be published in March 2011. All the members of AICC are hereby requested to send reports, articles and sale proceeds of the Bulletins, so soon as possible. They are also requested to arrange special contributions for the regular publication of Bulletin and Booklets. For this Central Receipt Books will be issued by the All India Coordination Committee.

Decision: 5. Accounts:

Accounts of the last 4 months (Oct.2010 to Jan.2011) were submitted. There is a deficit of Rs.17, 000 altogether. It is decided to collect the amount from AP, Punjab, UP, Bihar, Jharkhand and other states.

Decision: 6. Next Meetings:

The Conveners Committee will sit in Hyderabad on 27 March 2011. The next meeting of the AICC will be held in Delhi on 22 May 2011.

Arjun Pd. Singh,

On behalf of the AICC of PDFI
4.2.2011

Anti-Imperialist Campaign in Delhi

1

Go Back-War Monger US President Barack Obama!

US President Barack Obama is coming to India at a time when the US imperialists are continuing their brutal occupation over Iraq and Afghanistan killing and maiming thousands and thousands of innocent people including women and children, aiding and abetting Zionist rulers of Israel in brutally suppressing the most legitimate struggle of the people of Palestine for an independent homeland, posing serious threat of attack against Cuba, North Korea and Iran and are extending their military as well as espionage network throughout the world. At the same time, the US imperialist rulers are developing a military nexus with the ruling Indian capitalist class with a view to making India a pliant partner in establishing their hegemony round the globe.

Through the "new Af-Pak policy" which the Obama administration unfurled soon after his coming to power, the US imperialists and NATO have beefed up their armed forces in Afghanistan and have

launched murderous attacks on its civilian population. Tens of thousands of men, women and children have been killed and wounded as a consequence of the scorched earth policy and “target practice” pursued by US and NATO forces. These military operations have been expanded to include several parts of Pakistan, particularly its regions bordering Afghanistan.

US imperialism has been trying in every possible way, to keep up tensions between India and Pakistan, to keep our peoples divided. Its aim is to create newer and wider markets for its militarized economy which can only be ensured through perpetual fanning of partial and localized wars and terrorism in different parts of the world. The peoples of India and Pakistan need to understand this imperialist conspiracy and come together to jointly oppose US imperialism which we consider as the biggest threat to peace and security and the main source of terrorism in this region and all over the world. Obama’s visit to India also signifies the desire of US imperialism to engage India more closely in its strategic games and plans in the region to contain China—a fast emerging capitalist competitor to the US economy.

We, on behalf of the people of India, who have a great heritage of anti-imperialist struggle, vigorously oppose the visit of Barrack Obama as well as the Indo US strategic relationship, which poses a grave threat to sovereignty of all the peoples and to peace in this region.

We call upon the countrymen to rise up against this ill intentioned visit of the US President **and join the joint protest rally on 8th November, 2010 starting from Mandi House to Parliament Street, New Delhi.**

Go back – war monger U.S. President Barack Obama!

U.S. imperialists - Get out of Ira and, Afghanistan!

US imperialism – Hands of South Asia!

U.S. imperialists - stop aiding and abetting Zionist Israel!

U.S. imperialists –Hands off Cuba, North Korea and Iran!

Down Down - U.S Hegemonism!

Organisations: Communist Ghadar Party of India, Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist), Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, Lok Raj Sangathan, All India Worker Council, CPDM, Delhi Shramik Sangathan

Date & Time : 8 November, 2010 at 11 am
Protest march : Mandi House to Jantar-Mantar

2 “NOBAMA!” is the Call From Delhi, India

A remarkable anti-imperialist demonstration against Obama’s visit to India took place in New Delhi (November 8). Many issues were raised, including internationalist solidarity with people in the US. Among the slogans raised were:

NOBAMA! KILLER OBAMA GO BACK!
DOWN WITH IMPERIALISM! U.S. OUT OF AFGHANISTAN!
JUSTICE FOR OSCAR GRANT! FREE MUMIA ABU-JAMAL!

Hundreds of protestors converged today (8 November 2010) at the Parliament Street to participate in the Joint protest. Starting in a march from Jantar Mantar, at the heart of New Delhi and a stone’s throw away from the Indian Parliament which was to be addressed by Obama this evening, the demonstration raised slogans of ‘Killer Obama Go Back!’ and ‘Down with Imperialism!’.

Slogans were raised against the U.S.-led imperialist world order, its wars of occupation against the people of Iraq and Afghanistan, against growing U.S. intervention in South Asia, against the complete sell-out of the country’s resources by the Indian comprador ruling class to U.S. corporations, against the Indo-U.S. Nuclear Deal, demanding the extradition of Warren Anderson, the criminal former-CEO of Union Carbide who was responsible for the Bhopal Gas Disaster.

Slogans were raised demanding the immediate release of Mumia Abu Jamal, wrongfully incarcerated and put on death-row for more than two decades in the U.S. prison for being an uncompromising critic of imperialism and racism. The demonstrators also demanded justice for Oscar Grant and exemplary punishment for his murderers.

The march culminated at the Parliament Street, where speakers after speakers representing various participating parties and organizations condemned the anti-people U.S. imperialist policies across the world, and termed Barack Obama and his war-crazy government as the biggest enemy of the world people. It was said that though the Indian ruling classes have become lackeys of Barack Obama and his regime, the people of the subcontinent –and especially its working masses– are suffering from policies dictated by the imperialist forces, and implemented by the Indian state. At the same time, it was pointed out that the people of South Asia are fighting valiant struggles in various forms against Indian state and its imperialist masters.

Thus, they also are part of global resistance against imperialism, fascism and occupation, be it in Iraq, Afghanistan, Palestine, or other regions. The protestors resolved to intensify this struggle against imperialism, and for democracy and justice. Several revolutionary songs were presented, and finally the effigy of U.S. imperialism was consigned to flames amid resounding slogans.

The demonstration was jointly called by CPI(M-L), CPI(M-L) New Democracy, CPI(M-L) New Proletariat, Democratic Students' Union (DSU), Campaign for Peace & Democracy, Manipur (CPDM), Indian Council of Trade Unions(CTU), Indian Federation of Trade Unions(IFTU), Inqilabi Majdoor Kendra, Krantikari Yuva Sangathan, Mool Pravah Akhil Bharatiya Nepali Ekata Samaj, Pragatisheel Mahila Sangathan, Progressive Democratic Students Union(PDSU), Revolutionary Democratic Front (RDF), Trade Union Centre of India, Bahujan Vam Manch, and other parties and organisations.

Source: <http://revolutionaryfrontlines.wordpress.com/2010/11/11/nobama-is-the-call-from-delhi-india/>

3

Re: [MLL] Delhi, India: Nov. 8 Protest of Obama Visit Raises Demands on Afghanistan, Oscar Grant, and Mumia abu-Jamal

This is an inflated account of a small but militant demonstration by some of the grouplets in Delhi. The gathering was smaller than the combined CPI and CPI-M demonstration. It was far smaller than the demonstration organised by CPI ML Liberation or that organised by the SUCI and the CGPI. All these demonstrations were *separately* organised by various left organisations within a few hundred yards of each other at the same day and time. This sectarian farce is enacted year after year in what are called “anti-imperialist demonstrations”. I recall that one year, perhaps in a demonstration against the Iraq war, each separate demonstration separately courted arrest, then sat in separate corners of Parliament Street police station and chanted their separate militant slogans. The absence of unity of action on a particular issue weakens the common cause irrespective of the militant slogans which are chanted.

Vijay Singh,
Editor, Revolutionary Democracy,
Monday, November 15, 2010.

Statement on Operation Greenhunt and the US-India Military Partnership

International League of Peoples' Struggle
11 November 2010

The International League of Peoples' Struggle (ILPS) joins the Indian people in condemning the increasing collaboration between the US imperialists and the Indian reactionaries in further opening up the Indian economy to imperialist exploitation and plunder, while escalating and strengthening the military partnership between the US and Indian governments to further suppress the resistance of the Indian people and serve US geopolitical objectives.

The recent India visit by US President Obama is aimed at firming up this collaboration with the Indian ruling classes while encouraging and egging on the Indian government to further commit to aligning with US strategic interests. The US seeks to turn India into its junior economic and military partner in South Asia, especially as an outpost and counterfoil to China in the region.

Significantly, the Obama visit has been timed to coincide with the first anniversary of the launching by the Indian government of the massive military counterinsurgency campaign that has come to be known as “Operation Greenhunt”. On November 11, 2009, the Indian government unleashed more than 100,000 army, police, paramilitary and special commando troops against its own people, mostly in tribal areas in several states in Eastern and Central India, and especially in areas suspected to be strongholds of Maoist revolutionaries known as “Naxalites”.

The purported objective of Operation Greenhunt is to clear these areas, once and for all, of guerrilla insurgents. But these states — Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra and Orissa where millions of tribal people or adivasis live — are covered by hundreds of Memoranda of Understanding (MoUs) between the government and multinationals for mining and other so-called “development” projects which the tribals and other Indian people are protesting against and resisting, betraying the real object of further opening up Indian natural resources to the plunder of foreign monopoly capital and their local comprador agents.

Operation Greenhunt has resulted in widespread and rampant human rights violations against those suspected of being sympathetic to,

allied or affiliated with the Naxalites, and against the tribals or adivasis resisting eviction from their ancestral lands and the entry of multinational corporations raring to mine iron ore, bauxite and coal and build steel, aluminum and other industries. Hundreds of thousands, especially from tribal communities have been forcibly displaced. The military clearing operations have invariably been characterized by assassinations, arrests, tortures, arson, rape and other atrocities.

US-Indian military partnership has grown by leaps and bounds over the past fifteen years since the collapse of the USSR, with whom India hitherto had close military ties, and the signing of the first MoU between the US and Indian governments in 1995, and more especially since 2001 when the US stepped up aggression and intervention in the Middle East and Central Asia. India now holds more joint military exercises with the US than with any other country, with the exercises becoming bigger and more complex. India had agreed to buy USD 10 billion worth of military hardware from the US the past two years. Obama is expected to persuade India to purchase another USD 11 billion worth of warplanes and exclusivity in military partnership. Meanwhile, US- India trade had ballooned from USD 5 billion in 1990 to USD 50 billion this year.

Indian authorities have announced that US counterinsurgency experts are “advising” the Indian security forces on the campaign strategy and tactics of Operation Greenhunt. They have adopted the “winning hearts and minds” approach and the “clear-hold-consolidate-develop” counterinsurgency formula widely used in Vietnam and supposedly refined out of the recent experiences in the Balkans, Iraq, Afghanistan and other countries where the US had intervened military to quell people’s armed resistance to reactionary puppet regimes. It is noteworthy that in August 2002, then US State Secretary Colin Powell offered the Nepalese King and Prime Minister US assistance in crushing the Nepalese revolutionaries, declaring that “Maoist insurgencies... are really the kind of thing we’re fighting all over the world”

Despite the massive nationwide military offensive with US backing, Operation Greenhunt has dismally failed in its objectives of isolating and crushing the Naxalites, intimidating the tribals and clearing the areas to give way to the multinationals’ operations and so-called development projects. The state security forces have suffered a string of dramatic setbacks in several states, including attacks on police district headquarters and ambushes where scores of troops were annihilated and their weapons confiscated by the revolutionary guerrillas.

Operation Greenhunt has earned widespread condemnation by the Indian people as well as internationally. Many quarters even within the Indian government have objected to plans of throwing in more army troops and using warplanes against the tribals and the Naxalite guerrillas. As in other countries where the people have resolutely put up armed resistance against the reactionary regime and its imperialist masters, Operation Greenhunt and the counterrevolutionary connivance between US imperialism and the Indian ruling classes are bound to fail.

Statement Released on the Occasion of the Convention for the Formation of Students’ Solidarity Committee for Separate Telangana

10 March 2011, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi.

Dear friends,

The world has been very much familiar with the history of the heroic sacrifices of the Telangana people. The struggle for a separate Telangana state is one of the most longstanding democratic movements of the Indian subcontinent. From the very inception of Andhra Pradesh in 1956 the people of Telangana have demanded a separate statehood. The more than five decades of continuous struggle have resulted today in the recognition and acceptance of a separate Telangana as a necessity among the people of the country. There is a wide acceptance among the rest of Andhra Pradesh that its people have a right to a separate statehood because they have been economically, socially, politically and culturally exploited and discriminated against by the rulers of Seemandhra. Clearly, it is only with the formation of a separate Telangana that a concrete step towards resolving the problems of the region can be taken, and a true people-oriented process of development can be initiated.

The present Telangana movement is in a continuation to the movement that had begun seven decades ago, with a great vision to liberate Telangana people from the clutches of Nizam’s brutal autocracy and the system of Vetti. The people of Telangana were made to join the Indian Union on 17 September 1948, while the people of India is said to have got independence from British colonialism on 15 August 1947. This political change created the necessary conditions to exploit the region with the establishment of Seemandhra colonial rule in the form of government employees from Seemandhra, who replaced the Nizam rule. Seeing that the

independent Hyderabad state has been a potential source of natural resources like coal, iron-ore, limestone, forest wealth, water resources and the cheap labour of hard-working Telangana people, Seemandhra capitalists and feudal landlords who constitute the ruling classes usurped the Telangana region. Against the recommendations of Fazl Ali State Reorganisation Committee Report which recommended Hyderabad state to be independent, and against the aspirations of the Telangana people, Andhra Pradesh state was formed, merging Seemandhra region with Telangana region. All the GOs, committees and agreements that have been made, right from the Gentlemen's Agreement in 1956 to GO 36, 6 Point Formula, 8 Point Formula, Regional Council, Presidential Order, 610 GO, Girglani Commission, Pranab Mukherjee Committee, Rosaiah Committee and even the most recent Sri Krishna Committee, are the attempts of the Government of India to betray the democratic demands of the Telangana people, who have consistently fought against the secret plot behind the 'Telugu nationality'.

Above all, in the United Andhra Pradesh, Telangana people are to lead the existence of mere 'second grade citizens'. The people of Telangana region, which is rich in natural resources, are to migrate and live as bonded labourers. The exploitative policies followed by the central government in collusion with the regional ruling classes of Seemandhra has led to the scarcity of water for both drinking and cultivation purposes, even when Telangana has several perennial rivers like Krishna and Godavri running through the region. The negligence of the Seemandhra government to develop better irrigation and safe drinking water facilities can be identified as the cause for the increased number of farmers' suicides and Fluorosis cases in the Telangana region. It is due to nearly 3 lakh Seemandhra employees, who illegally occupied several governmental positions reserved for Telangana people by producing fake local certificates, graduates and post graduates from Telangana are compelled to become auto drivers, day-labourers and some even have to leave the motherland for abroad (Dubai, Muscat and Saudi Arabia etc.) to be bonded labourers. It is heart-rending to know that the parents, wives and the children of the dead in abroad are not in a position to pay the last sight to their beloved. Telangana region has now become dried and decimated due to internal colonial exploitation by the Seemandhra ruling classes that began in 1956 with its merger with Seemandhra. Threat of losing language, dialect and the culture, Telangana people have been fighting against economic, political and cultural exploitation to have independence from Seemandhra domination. In 1953, Jawaharlal Nehru, then Prime Minister of India, rightly

identified the expansionist designs behind the idea of Visalandhra and at a public meeting in Nizamabad compared the conditional merger of Telangana and Seemandhra with the matrimonial alliance which always have a provision of divorce in case the alliance becomes unwanted for any party. Even after seeing through the reasons behind the merger, Nehru gave in to the Seemandhra ruling classes' interests, and did a historic injustice to Telangana by approving the merger. Subsequent Indian rulers, be it Indira Gandhi or presently Sonia Gandhi, followed the path of Nehru to act against Telangana.

Telangana movement is a democratic movement for self-respect, liberty, equality and fraternity, for which the people of Telangana have been fighting for decades. Going against the people's justified and democratic demand, the Central Government under the leadership of Indira Gandhi and the State Government under the Seemandhra leader Kasu Brahmananda Reddy had brutally suppressed the people's movement in 1969 firing bullets, killing around 400 students and putting thousands behind the bars. In this way, the government has acted to serve the interests of only the ruling classes, employing different repressive methods to put an end to the people's heroic battle. They have drenched Telangana region with bloodshed, violating even the fundamental right of its people to live. While Telangana movement has followed a non-violent path and remained under the constitutional limits, the government has been most violent, undemocratic and unconstitutional in addressing it.

In 1971 the Telangana people overwhelmingly cast their votes to TPS, a party that went to people with the single demand for separate Telangana state. The people made TPS victorious with a thumping majority, electing 11 parliamentary members out of its 14 candidates. This continued in 2001, 2004, 2006, 2007, 2009 and 2010 elections when TRS party went with the same demand and the people of Telangana expressed their aspirations repeatedly. But, all the political parties, particularly the Congress party, have been successfully using the people's emotions and their heroic sacrifices to play their political games in order to come to power. The Congress party, in the 2004 elections, included the demand for separate Telangana in its election manifesto. However, it changed its stand once it came to power, cleverly constituting the Pranab Mukherjee Committee to delay the process of state formation. It again repeated the same in the 2009 elections. But bowing down to the latest phase of the movement with participation of people from all walks of life, including students and advocates, the Home Minister of India Mr. P. Chidambaram officially announced on 9 December 2009 the initiation of the process of

introducing the Telangana Bill in the parliament. But the Congress, influenced by the Seemandhra ruling classes, once again repeated its history of betrayal and changed its own statement in less than 15 days of announcement.

For the past 14 months, the ruling Congress has imposed a military rule in Telangana by deploying large numbers of paramilitary forces all over the region. It has appointed a cruel and anti-people ex-police officer, Mr. Narasimhan, as the governor of Andhra Pradesh in order to turn Telangana region into a sea of blood. These paramilitary forces have been lathi-charging the protesting students, firing rubber bullets and tear gas shells on them and filing false cases against the students to put them behind bars. These armed forces have occupied colleges, universities and the student hostels (including those of the girls), torturing the students with their inhuman behaviour and derogatory language. These forces are not even hesitant in assaulting the media persons who try to report the police atrocities on the students and the common people. The Journalists' Forum has marked its protest against these actions. The police have also tried to break the movement from inside by acting as agent-provocateurs, joining the student protestors in civil dress and pelting stones at their own fellow policemen, and later charging the students for violence. In these ways, the government has been converting the universities into war zones, and are playing with the lives and aspirations of the Telangana people. In this critical situation, many of the dejected youth, who had dreams of a bright future in a separate and independent Telangana state, have been committing suicides leaving behind their suicide notes addressed to the rulers. Not less than 600 students have committed suicide so far. While the Congress government has been indifferent to the self-immolation of these students, the leaders of Telangana political parties too are mortgaging the self-respect of Telangana people for their personal political careers. The progressive and democratic sections of the country, all major parliamentary parties of India such as BJP, BSP, CPI, JDU, FB, RPI, excluding CPI(M), and various democratic and people's organisations have extended their solidarity to the demand of separate Telangana state.

There is an urgent need to stand in solidarity with the people of Telangana in the coming phase of their struggle, and to build up a movement across the country in its support. The students and youth of Telangana have spearheaded the movement with their militant and uncompromising struggle in the past, which have captured the imagination of not only the people of Telangana but also outside. Now is the need to build a broad-based solidarity of students and student organisations across

various states and regions with the fighting masses of Telangana, particularly with its students and youth. With the movement now about to enter a critical phase, solidarity of students for a separate Telangana is the need of the hour. It is with this understanding that the students of universities and colleges of Telangana wish to invite you/your organisation to participate in a students' convention in New Delhi towards forming a solidarity platform where students and students' organisations across various states and regions can come together with the agenda of fighting for a separate Telangana state. The convention will be followed by a march to parliament demanding that the central government introduce a bill for separate Telangana within the upcoming budget session.

- Implement the Central Government's official statement on separate Telangana state made on 9 December 2009 by introducing a bill in the parliament in the coming budget session!
- Withdraw the paramilitary forces deployed in Telangana region, including university and college campuses!
- Withdraw all the cases that have been filed on the protesting Telangana students, activists and the people!

On behalf of Preparatory Committee,
Students' Solidarity Committee for Separate Telangana.

Supported by the All India Backward Students' Front (AIBSF), All India Students' Association (AISA), Democratic Students' Union (DSU), JNU Forum for Telangana, Manipur Students' Association Delhi (MSAD), Progressive Democratic Students' Union (PDSU), Students' Islamic Organisation (SIO), Students' Uprising Movement, Tamil Nadu (SUMS), Campaign for Peace & Democracy, Manipur (CPDM), Naga Students' Union Delhi (NSUD) and, Telangana Students' JAC.

When Two Muslims Meet: The Media(ted) case of Madani and Shahina

K Ashraf & Jenny Rowena

Shahina K K, a journalist with *Tehelka* went to Karnataka to prepare an investigative report on the case on Abdul Nasar Madani, the Chairman of PDP. Madani had spend almost 10 years in Jail as an undertrial in the 1998 Coimbatore blast before he was let off without any charges on 1 August 2007. In her report (*Why is this man still in prison?*, *Tehelka*, December 4th, 2010) Shahina tried to look into the police story that Madani had conspired in the Bengaluru blasts in separate meetings two years ago — one which took place in Madani’s rented home in Kochi and the other in the Lakkeri estate in Kodaku Karnataka.

Here, she not only talks of the reports about the many people who have questioned the police story – like James Varghese, the owner of Madani’s rented house in Kochi, and Madani’s brother Jamal Mohammed – but she also investigates the witnesses whose accounts have led the court to deny Madani bail. According to her investigations Shahina finds out that many of the witnesses have things to say that goes against the police story. For instance, Yoganand, a BJP worker whose testimony is recorded in the charge sheet, Shahina reports, does not even know that he is a witness in the Madani case!

Now this is a case of good investigative journalism, which has the power to unsettle the stories that are constantly being planted in the media by the police. However, just a few days after her report comes out, the Karnataka police slaps a case against Shahina under IPC 506, for “intimidating the witnesses.” No stretch of imagination allows one to view the attempt of a journalist to talk to the witnesses in a particular case as ‘intimidation.’ Yet, in this age of embedded journalism and paid news and the likes of Praveen Swamy and Burkha Dutt, this critical attempt at investigation which challenges a given police story, can easily be labeled thus and the journalist targeted. More importantly, Shahina’s case is further mediated through other important issues, which includes the political career of Abdul Nasar Madani, whose case she was investigating and her own identity as a Muslim woman.

Shahina’s attempt to investigate goes deep into the whole issue of how Abdul Nasar Madani, who holds a particular and important political position in Kerala, was incarcerated in jail for long years, without trail, and then acquitted with all charges against him unproved. This gross case of injustice was further extended when the police tried to implicate his wife Sufiya in the Bengaluru blasts that took place on 25th July 2008. Three months back, in spite of protests from various quarters in Kerala, Madani was arrested once again for conspiracy as one of the accused in the Bengaluru blasts. Later, his bail application was also dismissed considering what the court called the “nature and gravity of the offence.” The repercussions and the backlash on Shahina’s investigations are clearly connected to the case of Abdul Nazar Madani. In fact, even to bring up the issue of Madani is to evoke anxieties about Islamic fundamentalism and terrorism. In the words of Charles Hirschkind and Saba Mahmood, “a whole set of questionable assumptions, anxieties, and prejudices [are] embedded in the notion of Islamic fundamentalism.” (From their article: *Feminism, the Taliban, and Politics of Counter-Insurgency*.)

This then is used as a bogey to deal with any kind of response, activity or political action from the location of a Muslim identity. However, no one worries that this political leader has been in jail for 10 long years without trail and that now, he is back in jail and being systematically denied bail. An issue that Shahina’s report addresses too, with its title: “Why is this man still in jail?” In fact, today, the question of terrorism and the Muslim can obfuscate all other questions about equality and justice. The Muslim, is caught in a construction that implicates him/her as inherently capable of terrorizing this country and therefore easily punishable. S/he is always already someone who can be easily pushed outside the ambit of the discourses of human rights and legal justice.

In fact, Madani is an important political voice in Kerala who addressed the question of Muslims and dalitbahujans after the Mandal-Masjid phenomenon of the 90s. Rooted in a discourse that drew from Islamic tenants, Madani’s vision focused on the inherent inequalities in Kerala society, both in terms of caste and religion. However his new political language was found ‘deviant’ and ignored or attacked by dominant discourses, mainly because of its allegiance to Islamic discourses and the Muslim identity. Thus Madani, who had been able to organize some of the most unprivileged sections in Kerala, is shorn of all his political credentials from within the stand point of the construction of the Muslim as the fundamentalist other of a Secular State/Culture.

The media has always stood strongly on the side of such dominant constructions all through the political career of Madani. Recently when his wife Soofiya Madani was alleged to have been involved in a conspiracy that led to the burning of a Tamil Nadu State Transport Corporation bus at Kalamassery, Kochi in September 2005, reports in the media found her guilty even before Judicial processes could start. Similarly we have seen the media conniving with the Police/State on other issues concerning the “others” of Kerala. One can recall the maligning of the Dalit Human Rights Groups (DHRM) as terrorists and the false case of Love Jihad, where young Muslim men were accused of converting Hindu women into Islam after starting romantic relationships with them. However, when in May 17, 2009 6 Muslim men from a fishing community were killed and 47 others injured (27 of them had bullet injuries) in a police firing in Beemapally, most of the Malayalam media kept completely silent about this incident, which was one of the most violent incidents of police oppression that Kerala had ever witnessed. All this are surely signs of the impunity with which the Malayalam media treats issues that are related to its “others,” especially the Muslim.

It is this entrenched attitude of the media that Shahina’s report tries to confront, head on. However, it is a Shahina who is doing this and not just another journalist; like Madani, she too is caught in the same issues that haunt the Muslim location and identity. In fact, Shahina herself has reported how, when she went to the village to investigate, she was stopped by the police and asked whether she was a terrorist. Many of the papers in Karnataka like Sakthi, Prajavani and Kannada also reported the incident as a “suspicious” visit by a “group of Muslims !” Here, just as Madani’s Islamic roots could tarnish the weight and importance of his political career, Shahina’s Muslim name could do away with all her other identities.

It is no wonder then that a report in the Mathrubhumi faithfully reports the police version that Shahina and the others in her group tried to “threaten” the witnesses. Such a report, without even a preliminary kind of investigation, quickly reiterates the police story, putting the blame squarely on Shahina’s shoulders. This is exactly how much of the media has behaved in the case of Madani too. In many ways, it was the media in Kerala that raised the alarm against Madani so high and shrill that it was so easy for the police to get him back in jail and keep him there. We need to think seriously about all these issues raised in connection to the Shahina case.

Surely, as Shahina writes in her status message in Facebook: “this is not a case against me as an individual, but it is a warning to the entire press community not to try to quash the cooked up stories by the police.”

Moreover, this is also yet another instance where the complex and often oppressive relationship of the Indian state and the Muslim minority is clearly revealed – a relationship in which the media has always played a highly dubious and questionable role. It is not surprising then that Shahina’s alternative mediation, to investigate into this and to reveal the fissures within many of our consensus has met with such a reaction. It is important that we reflect on these issues and extend our support to Shahina and to Madani, who is still in jail, also as a result of all these various, anti-minority mediations.

Source: <http://thefishpond.in/ashraf/2010/when-two-muslims-meet/> (accessed on 6 December 2010).

2

Journalists Urge Kerala CM to Intervene in K. K. Shahina’s Case

2 December 2010

In a letter, senior journalists in Kerala and outside today sought Kerala Chief Minister V. S. Achuthanandan’s immediate intervention in the case of K. K. Shahina, Tehelka’s state correspondent, against whom the Karnataka police has slapped charges of attempting to intimidate witnesses in the Bengaluru blast case.

They have pointed out this is not an issue concerning one journalist or media house alone, but one concerning the entire society, and voiced confidence that he would get the Karnataka Chief Minister to act decisively in this matter so that the wrong committed by that state’s police is set right.

The following is the text of the letter:

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Sir,

We are writing to you to draw your kind attention to a matter of utmost seriousness which has been agitating journalists in Kerala and outside for the last one week.

Smt. K. K. Shahina, a reporter of Tehelka magazine based in Thiruvananthapuram is facing harassment and intimidation from the Karnataka police for having interviewed the witnesses in the case relating to Sri. Abdul Nasar Madhani.

The Karnataka police had depended on evidences given by persons living in Kodagu region of Karnataka to link Sri. Madhani with the Bengaluru blasts case. These persons, according to the police, had claimed they had seen Sri. Madhani when he reached the area when the blasts were in the planning stage. When Shahina interviewed two of the witnesses, Sri. K. K. Yoganand and Sri. Rafeek Bappatty, they told her they had not seen Sri. Madhani in the area at the time.

Even as she was travelling in the area and meeting these persons, the local police arrived on the scene under the leadership of a Circle Inspector, who told her he suspected she was an extremist. When she informed him that she was the reporter of Tehelka, he insisted on speaking to her editor. She gave him her managing editor, Smt. Shoma Chaudhury's number and was allowed to leave the place.

On her return to Kerala, Smt. Shahina filed a report based on her interview with the two witnesses and this was carried prominently by Tehelka. Once the matter came to the attention of the entire nation, the Karnataka police registered two cases against her and the persons who had accompanied her on the journey to the Kodagu region for the interviews. The two cases have been registered at the Somawarpet police station (No. 199/10) and Siddhapura police station (No. 241/10) under Section 506 of the Indian Penal Code for intimidation of the witnesses.

This, we feel, is a clear case of infringement of journalistic freedom by the Karnataka police. Howsoever serious a case might be, the media has always had the freedom in this country to meet witnesses and even the prime accused to hear their versions and place them before society. It is this freedom, among many others, that has given our democracy the vibrancy that it has today. By registering a case for criminal intimidation against a journalist, the Karnataka police has cut at the very root of democratic and media freedoms in our country.

Besides, there is also the equally serious question of 'profiling' evident in the action of the Karnataka police. We strongly suspect that the Karnataka police has swung into action against Smt. Shahina because she is a Muslim and she had tried to an investigation in a case relating to another Muslim. This is the height of intolerance and should be nipped in the bud if the democratic rights of our people are to be safeguarded.

We consider it the duty of every citizen of this country to question this action of the Karnataka police, both for its naked infringement of journalistic and democratic freedoms and its violation of the principles of equality that we have carefully nurtured in our society and polity. The growing trend of intolerance among governments and their arms towards criticism should be viewed with seriousness by all who cherish democratic rights.

We would, therefore, request you to kindly draw the attention of the Hon'ble Chief Minister of Karnataka to the issues involved in the cases that have been slapped on Smt. Shahina so that early corrective action can be taken and the democratic freedoms in this country remain unfettered. We wish to point out that this is not an issue concerning one journalist or media house but the entire society, and we are sure that you would get the Karnataka Chief Minister to act decisively in the matter so that the wrong committed by the Karnataka Police is set right.

Sincerely yours,

B. R. P. Bhaskar (Veteran Journalist and activist); C. Gouridasan Nair (former President, Kerala Union of Working Journalists); K. P. Mohanan (Chief Operating Officer, Jaihind TV); M. G. Radhakrishnan (Associate Editor, India Today); M. P. Achuthan MP (Editor, Janayugom); N. Madhavan Kutty (Consultant Editor, Deshabhimani); N. P. Chekkutty (Executive Editor, Thejas daily); N. P. Rajendran (Deputy Editor, Mathrubhumi daily); N. Padmanabhan (former General Secretary, Kerala Union of Working Journalists); N. R. S. Babu (Veteran Journalist and Director, Institute of Journalism, Thiruvananthapuram); Neelan (Chief Executive Editor, Amrita TV); Paul Zacharia (Writer and columnist); S. Jayachandran Nair (Editor, Samakaalika Malayalam Vaarika); S. R. Sakthidharan (Chairman, Kerala Press Academy); Sashi Kumar (Chairman, Media Development Foundation and Asian College of Journalism, Chennai); Sebastian Paul (Former MP and Media Analyst); V. M. Ibrahim (Executive Editor, Madhyamam daily) and ; Venkitesh Ramakrishnan (Deputy Editor, Frontline, New Delhi).

Source: <http://www.countermedia.in/?p=368>

Women's Groups From All Over the Country Gift The CBI More Sheets For Their Next Cover Ups

Demanded Justice against CBI Cover Up

Today, 13 December 2010 marks one year of the report filed by the CBI on the double rape and murder of two young women, Asiya and Neelofar in Shopian. A report that blatantly covers-up the crime, acquits responsible officials and indicts those who dared to speak out against the injustice.

Tired of trying to seek justice against through the usual channels about 100 women and men from women's groups, students groups, democratic rights as well as concerned individuals gathered near the CBI Headquarters in Delhi today to gift the CBI some more bedsheets for their next cover-ups. Peppered with signatures and messages like GIFT FOR YOUR NEXT COVER-UP! CBI INVESTIGATE YOURSELF! JUSTICE FOR ASIYA AND NEELOFAR! COVER-UP BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION NOT CENTRAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION!, each sheet was a reminder that from Delhi to Jammu and Kashmir, Tamil Nadu to Maharashtra, Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh the voices demanding justice in Shopian are still rising.

Also in the gathering was the father of Neelofar - Sayed Abdul Hai, her husband - Shakeel Ahmed and her three year old son - Suzain who had come all the way from Shopian to express their anger and frustration with the 'findings' of the CBI.

The delegation met with the Director of the CBI, Mr Singh, and gifted him scores of bedsheets with hundreds of endorsements from all over the country demanding a fresh investigation into the case! The Director, while accepting our sheets, the memorandum, critiques and the report of the Independent Women's Initiative for Justice, said he would look into the matter but refused to give a timeframe in which he would do so.

The Women against Sexual Violence and State repression (WSS), is committed to following up the case and is demanding a reply from the CBI within a month.

A brief background: On the morning of 30 May, 2009, Asiya Jaan and her sister-in-law Neelofar Jaan were found dead on the banks of Rambiar Nullah in Shopian, Kashmir.

The police did little, refusing to even register the case for five days! Two postmortems conducted immediately after clearly stated that

the women were raped and murdered. Even as Shopian town observed a 45-day long bandh, the people of Kashmir put aside all other political demands to join this agitation and the people of Jammu also lent solidarity.

Justice Jan Commission appointed by the Chief Minister indicted the police. The High Court also stated that the police were either implicated in the crime or were shielding the culprits.

Amidst the failure of the local police and political pronouncements of the Union Home Minister giving a clean chit to the armed forces before the Parliament, the case was handed over to the CBI on September 17, 2009.

But the premier investigative agency in the country, the CBI, built an extra-judicial case and used the media extensively to make all earlier investigations in the case seem motivated or incompetent. Some of the news leaks were simply fantastic – like finding Asiya's hymen intact four months after she was buried and hence denying the rape of both women!

The CBI also concluded that both adult women had died from 'accidental drowning' in a nullah that with just six inches of water! It filed supplementary charge-sheets against the State prosecutors, Government doctors, advocates for the complainant, advocates demanding justice and the family members of the women calling them separatists.

Shockingly, the CBI report also states that since there was no crime the implicated and suspended policemen were innocent.

The report does not explain how the bodies of the two women were invisible to the search party the whole night and appeared suddenly at dawn, how these young women drowned in a shallow nullah where no deaths have taken place nor explained eyewitness accounts that Neelofar's body was wet only from one side when she was found.

We have been following this case from the very start. A demonstration demanding justice was held in Delhi in mid- June, 2009 followed by a fact-finding in August, 2009. A press conference on the findings was held prior to the submission of CBI's final report to the Courts in December, 2009. In May, 2010, with no justice in sight, we wrote an open letter to the Chief Justice of India, to the National Commission for Women and to the National Human Rights Commission which was endorsed by more than forty organizations from the whole country.

It is clear that the CBI, the country's leading investigative agency has made a report to suit the political exigencies of the extant governments, whether at State or Union level, and made a mockery of the due rights

guaranteed in the democratic republic of India. Hence the Cover-up Campaign!

Through this action we want the Home Ministry and the CBI to be aware that we continue to DEMAND JUSTICE FOR NEELOFAR AND ASIYA, for all women of Jammu & Kashmir and for all women of India, especially in instances of sexual violence against women are increasing either by, or in collusion with, the forces of the state.

Hence, we are demanding an immediate re-opening of the case, and a commitment that as the premier investigating agency of the country, the CBI, and the government will commit themselves to greater course of justice in cases, especially those of sexual violence.

Note: Circulated by the Women against Sexual violence and State repression (WSS), Delhi.

BANGLADESH

The Crisis at Rupganj

1

Rupganj Locals Torch Army Camp¹

Angry locals have torched a temporary army camp at Musuri on 23 October 2010. The military personnel deployed there had been obstructed for over five hours before they were evacuated by helicopter. The mob descended upon the camp on Saturday afternoon almost immediately after the army men were airlifted. Earlier, at least 50 people were injured in a clash between police and demonstrators who blocked the Rupganj-Ichhapura road for about four hours from 6am demanding cancellation of the government decision to acquire about 5,000 bighas (165,000 decimals) for an army housing project.

The police and Rapid Action Battalion (RAB) brought the situation under control around noon when they opened fire, charged batons and fired tear-shells on about 7,000 demonstrators. But the law enforcement agencies have denied firing upon the people. However, 10 persons with bullet wounds have been admitted in Dhaka Medical College Hospital. Former MP of the area, also a former army chief K M Shafiullah, told reporters that the incident occurred over a misunderstanding. The current MP, Gazi Golam Dastagir, a freedom fighter, and ruling Awami League joint general secretary Mahbub ul Alam Hanif alleged that the main opposition BNP had instigated the locals to protest and demonstrate.

Locals alleged that the army initiated the 'Army Officers' Housing Society' on 5,000 bighas of Rupganj Union three months ago. They said the newly-set up army camps at Purbagram, Musuri and Ichhapura villages of Rupganj were forcing locals to sell off their land very cheaply. Moreover, the local residents of 24 moujas were being prevented from having their land registered, locals alleged. Several persons, requesting anonymity, told reporters that Kayetpara Union Awami League president Zahed Ali and one 'Tareq' also compelled them to sell their lands cheaply.

The agitated locals blocked an eight-kilometre stretch of the Rupganj-Ichhapura-Kaliganj road with tree trunks. Rupaganj Police Station chief Forkan Sikder told reporters: "At least 7,000 people took part in the demonstration. They also burnt tyres." Locals said four of the protesters had been taken to the Musuri Army Camp around 10am for a dialogue. The agitated people surrounded the camp laying siege to it as rumours spread that one of the four had been shot dead inside the camp. The demonstrators

and law enforcers came to a face-off around the four camps and locked in a clash, locals added.

The locals started hurling brickbats as the police charged batons on them. The frenzied people also beat up a local Awami League leader Zahed Ali, and went on rampage at his house and set fire to his motorcycle. The protesters also alleged that some associates of Zahed had injured four of them with sharp weapons. Shafiullah and former MPA K M Shamim Osman reached the spot to calm down the angry people. Narayanganj police superintendent Afzal Hossain told reporters that RAB and police had charged batons to bring the situation under control.

Meanwhile, the locals alleged that the law enforcers had fired on them. The Narayanganj police chief, denied the allegation. "The police have not even fired a single bullet." He, however, could not confirm whether the other law enforcers had opened fire. At least 20-25 army personnel remained confined inside the camp after the clash erupted at 11am. As the situation settled down at about 3pm, a military helicopter rescued the army persons, Shafiullah said.

2

Clash Over Army Housing Project in Rupganj Inadequate Care Blamed²

The army housing project at Rupganj that ironically forced the service people to be in action to quell local resistance was the work of some over-ambitious people piloting the same, insiders say. They say the project was initially developed to provide housing to about 8,000 army officers, mainly from captain to major ranks of the three services as they usually do not get land in defense officers housing societies. But the initial size of the project was enlarged to develop 27,000 housing plots on over 13,000 bighas of land.

But this forced local people to take to the street. There is no formal authorisation for the expansion, the sources said. The project size became so big over a landmass of Narayanganj and Rupganj upazilas in between the rivers Sitalakha and Balu that it could block flood flows and cover crop land and villages become a sensitive issue in the end. Many people wonder why the project was enlarged without taking the sensitivities of local people who were opposed to selling land on pressure allegedly at about half of its market price.

The project officials moreover, put a kind of informal ban on land registration in the area to any person or other organisation other than

their own project and critics wonder what was the legal basis of such action. A total of 7,800 army officers reportedly applied for a five khata plot each in the project within the stipulated time and their total deposit stands at Taka 624 crore. There is no more applicant. Why then the project was enlarged to buy more land - three times the initial project estimate - is a question. It may be mentioned that this is a private project unlike other Rajuk housing projects; where officers will pay for land managed by a society registered with the Registrar of Joint Stock Company. Army officers initially did not turn up in the area in uniform and carefully avoided showing their presence. But their agents contributed to bring the issue to boiling point and took the army to a level of confrontation with the local people, the sources said.

Critics say wealthy and powerful people are taking advantage of their positioning in society to take away land from the poor around the city under public and private housing projects making most people homeless. The state apparatus is mostly working here to reward the elite for their loyalty to the party in power. Bangladesh government is altogether ignoring the matter and thus not helping the poor and the most vulnerable to save their valuable land.

The army housing project at Rupganj was promoted by the government last year in the aftermath of BDR mutiny when emotion was running high. It was developed in October 2009, presented to Prime Minister's office on November 23 and approved in January this year. The housing project was a good initiative but it was handled with inadequate care. It should go to its initial make up again to win back local confidence, insiders say.

3

Salute to the People's Resistance in Rupganj Against the Army³

Yesterday, October 23, 2010, in Rupganj, at the outskirts of capital Dhaka, around ten thousand people of forty villages started resistance simultaneously against army, police, Rab and Awami fascists to protest against the effort of army of illegally grabbing people's land to build quarters for their officers. In this incident many people have been injured being shot by police and Rab. A person died and ten are missing so far. Agitated masses torched an army camp. Some Local Awami League leaders along with several high police officials were beaten by people. Then the army took away their members from four camps through helicopters. In

order to seize people's land, the army had ceased all the selling and buying lands of that area. They led local brokers to collaborate with them.

This is an outburst of accumulated anger against Awami fascists. At a time when people's situation is disastrous because of multiplying increase of daily goods like rice, dal, oil, when garment workers didn't get wage for a minimum livelihood, peasants are compelled to till land by buying fertilizer, oil and water in excessive price, government is starting a new campaign from 1st November to clean hawkers from the streets, the conspiracy to wiping out masses from their land is just like slaying the slain.

Land grabbers are grabbing huge lands surrounding Dhaka and its neighborhood. Biggest capitalist groups like Bashundhara and Jamuna groups are leading in these. Many of them are associated with Awami league while many are with BNP. Apart from them there are many petty land grabber groups. Administration and government is also overthrowing people from lands in the name of various project. That's nothing new. The conspiracy of army is one of those. The army hatched the conspiracy to grab more than two thousand acre land there. Needless to say, not the common army members but the officers have interest here.

Situated at the eastern side of Dhaka city, this suburb area is totally rural. During the national liberation war of 1971 these villages were the shelter of liberation fighters. But in 40 years of formation of Bangladesh, there is not a single bit touch of so called development. Though being 4/5 km away from Dhaka city, boat is the only communication to reach here. There is no road communication here to Dhaka. Neither Awami League nor BNP sided with people of this area, rather they continuously cheated with them with so called electoral vote business.

What is the way out?

...

Endnotes:

¹ <http://www.bdnews24.com/details.php?id=176936&cid=2>

² http://www.thenewnationbd.com/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1261:clash-over-army-housing-project-in-rupganj-inadequate-care-blamed&catid=85:frontpage&Itemid=241

³ Circulated by the provisional central leading body, Maoist unity group, Proletarian Party of East Bengal (Bangladesh), 24 October, 2010.

MYANMAR

Asian Left Parties Condemn Attacks On Workers' Rights

16 September 2010

We, the undersigned organisations, strongly condemn the military junta of Burma for its new decree to curb workers' right to form trade unions and its harsh punishments against any industrial action.

The military junta of Burma — the State Peace and Development Council (SPDC) — decreed a new regulation on August 20, 2010, at a meeting in Rangoon attended by industry employers, government ministers and Burmese military officials, including Lt-Gen Myint Swe of the ministry of defence. It stated that, whoever launches or participates in industrial protests demanding better rights or conditions will be fired and blacklisted. The reason for the decree, labour activists in Burma believe, is that the junta wants to prevent further industrial action and employers don't want their workers taking action to demand better wages, so now they can fire those who protest and stop them from getting jobs elsewhere.

In March, workers at industries such as Shwe Pyi Thar, Taung Dagon and Hlaing Thayar launched protests demanding that employers give them time off during public holidays and increase their salaries and payments for working overtime. An industrial worker in Burma earns about 20,000 kyat to 40,000 kyat (US\$20-40) monthly. Many have to work overtime to augment their insufficient income.

Historically, labour movements have played a major role in the Burma people's struggles against colonialism and fascist military dictatorships. Burma has experienced two major uprisings in its history in which the workers played the leading role, together with students and the general public. These were the "1300 [Burmese calendar] anti-colonial uprising" and the student-led "88883 pro-democracy demonstrations. The 1300 anti-colonial uprising took place from 1938 to 1939 and was kindled by a labour strike staged by workers from the Chauk petroleum refinery, owned by British Oil Company (BOC). The "1300 uprising" awakened strong patriotic and nationalist sentiments throughout the whole country and paved the way for a countrywide anti-colonial independence movement.

Following the military coup in 1962 led by General Ne Win, democracy, human rights and freedom to form independent labour unions was effectively suppressed; education, health and other socioeconomic determinants deteriorated significantly as well. Under General Ne Win's

Revolutionary Council, and later the Burma Socialist Program Party, workers in faced various forms of oppression and exploitation, including low pay, poor living conditions and lack of personal security.

In June 1974, railway workers in Burma staged a strike that later culminated in a nationwide workers' strike. The strike brought all government administration and the operation of public works to a virtual standstill. The workers demanded higher salaries, lowering of basic commodity prices, freedom to form an independent labour union, and some fringe benefits for their families. The government rejected their demands, and the workers' strike was effectively crushed. Many workers were gunned down inside the factories and on the streets; others were arrested and sentenced to long-term imprisonment, fired from their jobs, transferred to other towns and cities, or were forced into early retirement.

During the 1988 nationwide demonstrations, many government workers joined the students in the streets of Rangoon and other cities to call for democracy and human rights. The demonstrations quickly gained momentum and ultimately became the largest uprising in the history of modern Burma.

The one-party system government of General Ne Win faced a serious political crisis and, again, government administration came to a virtual standstill as a general strike took hold. During the demonstrations, a myriad independent organisations, including labour unions, emerged throughout the country. Following the September 18, 1988, military coup, however, all independent organisations and unions were banned. Many of the workers who participated in the demonstrations were given long prison sentences, were dismissed from their jobs or transferred to other locations, or were forced into early retirement.

Despite the several attempts made by labour rights activists and lawyers to register independent labour unions, the regime has always turned down the applications. On June 23, 2010, the Burmese regime again rejected an application to form a "Burma National Labor Union". In the absence of independent labour unions and other channels, such as a free press, to express their grievances, workers in Burma remain exploited by both foreign and local factory owners and they have no means to demand the absence of all workers' rights, adequate pay, proper working conditions and personal security.

Therefore, we the undersigned organisations and political parties declare our solidarity with the struggle of Burma's working class, and hereby demand that:

1. The new regulation to prevent the labour rights be abolished.

2. Any form of repression of workers by factory owners or government agencies be rejected.
3. Full democratic rights for workers, including the right to organise, build independent trade unions and to form political parties.

We declare our full support to the people of Burma to build a democratic Burma, because only a democratic Burma can prosperity and justice be achieved.

Workers of the world unite!

Signed by:

Working People Association, Indonesia

Network of Progressive Youth Burma

Confederation Congress of Indonesia Union Alliance

All Nepal Federation of Trade Unions

Socialist Party of Malaysia

Socialist Alliance, Australia

Socialist Alternative, Australia

MAP Foundation, Thailand

Partido ng Manggagawa (Labor Party, Philippines)

Note: The statement was initiated by Working People Association (Indonesia) and Network of Progressive Youth Burma.

Petition to the Government of India to Review its Policy on Burma.

To,

Dr. Manmohan Singh

Honorable Prime Minister of India

New Delhi

Subject: Petition to the Government of India to Review its Policy on Burma.

Honorable Prime Minister,

We, India- based Burmese democratic organizations are submitting this petition on the upcoming election in Burma on 7 November

2010 which was proposed by the military regime as an attempt to entrench and legitimize military rule, is being condemned by people around the world.

The elections will enact the 2008 Constitution, which not only contains many undemocratic measures including giving the military effective veto power over decisions made by the new parliament and government, but also depriving people of their basic human rights by stipulating “exception clauses,” and preserving draconian laws that explicitly prohibit freedom of speech, association, and assembly. Thus, this constitution is designed to keep the dictatorship in power and will not bring any new freedom to the people of Burma.

Furthermore, the election cannot be free and fair under the present situation. Democracy 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, including Nobel Peace Laureate Aung San Suu Kyi, recipient of Jawaharlal Nehru’s Award for International Understanding, who has been under house arrest for 15 of the past 20 years and is being barred from participating in the elections.

The main opposition party, the National League for Democracy (NLD) led by Daw Aung San Suu Kyi is left with no other choice under the entirely unfair election laws imposed by the military regime except to denounce this election. We, Burmese democratic organizations and activists have persistently called on the military regime to meet three benchmarks to bring about peace and stability in Burma:

1. All political prisoners, including Daw Aung San Suu Kyi, Khun Htun Oo and Min Ko Naing, must be released before the elections.
2. Inclusive dialogue with key stakeholders from democracy groups and ethnic nationalities, including a comprehensive review of the 2008 Constitution must be convened.
3. Systematic human rights abuses and criminal hostilities against ethnic groups, political activists, journalists and civil society must be stopped.

We believe that India, being the world’s largest democracy and emerging power in the world can play a crucial role in the process of national reconciliation and restoration of democracy in Burma. We therefore strongly recommend the Government of India not to endorse and recognize Burma’s military regime’s sham constitution and elections, as it will only lead to entrenchment of military rule in the country.

We earnestly urge the Government of India and All India Congress Committee (AICC) to join with the UN and the international community in taking concrete action to secure the release of Daw Aung San Suu Kyi and ensure genuine democratic change in Burma.

We reaffirm our appreciation to the Government of India, especially for allowing hundreds of thousands of Burmese refugees to take shelter in India at this juncture while Burma is in critical conditions. At the same time we also thank the people of India who stand with the Burmese people in their struggle for peace, justice, human rights and democracy in Burma.

Sincerely,

India-Based Burmese Organizations,

1. All Burma Monks Representative Committee (ABMRC)
2. All Burma Student Democratic Front (ABSDF/WB)
3. All Kachin Students & Youth Union (AKSYU)
4. Arakan Liberation Party (ALP)
5. All Burma Democratic Lusei Women’s Union (ABDLWO)
6. Burma Information Team (BIT)
7. Burmese Community Resource Centre (BCRC)
8. Burmese Women Union (BWU/WB)
9. Cho Ethnic Association (CEA)
10. Chin Human Rights Organization (CHRO)
11. Chin Refugee Committee (CRC) Delhi
12. Federation Trade Union of Burma (FTUB/India)
13. Human Rights Education Institute of Burma (HREIB-India)
14. Kachin National Organization (KNO/India)
15. Matu Youth Organisation (MYO)
16. Naga National League for Democracy (NNLD)
17. Shwe Gas Movement
18. Women Rights and Welfare Association of Burma (WRWAB)
19. Women League of Chinland (WLC)
20. Women’s League of Burma (WLB)
21. Zanniat Youth Organization- Zanniat Mino Pawlkom
22. Zomi National Congress
23. Zomi Students & Youth Organisation (ZSYO)

3 November 2010

New Phase For Democracy Struggle

Tony Illis

Green Left Weekly
21 November 2010

Burma's November 7 elections — held under an undemocratic constitution in an atmosphere of repression and with the result crudely rigged — have been overshadowed by the release from house arrest of opposition National League for Democracy (NLD) leader Aung San Suu Kyi on November 13. Thousands of supporters lined the streets to her house and flocked to NLD offices to hear her speak. Suu Kyi's release has been compared to that of Nelson Mandela in 1990. However, unlike Mandela, Suu Kyi was not released from detention by a regime seeking negotiations.

Burma's military junta is pushing ahead with its project — centred on the rigged elections — of giving itself a “civilian face” without relinquishing its hold on power. The military have been in power since 1962. The current junta have been in power since the previous dictator, Ne Win, was overthrown in a student-led popular uprising in 1988. The military crushed the protests but allowed elections in 1990, which were won by the Suu Kyi-led NLD. However, the junta refused to hand over power. It still holds more than 2100 political prisoners. Suu Kyi has been under house arrest for 15 of the past 20 years. In 2007, protests over bus fare rises were joined by monks and escalated in to mass demonstrations for democracy. The protests were crushed by the military.

Undemocratic election rules, including a ban on political prisoners running for parliament, led the NLD to call for a boycott of the latest poll. The National Democratic Force (NDF), which split from the NLD, took part. Due to vote rigging, the NDF and other opposition parties suffered a landslide defeat to the pro-junta Union Solidarity Development Party.

Speaking to 4000 supporters at the NLD headquarters on November 14, Suu Kyi called for freedom of speech, democracy, and for unity between opposition forces, the BBC reported. She called on her supporters not to give up hope. “We must work together”, she said. “If we want change we have to do it ourselves.” Speaking to the BBC on November 15, she described her aim as a “non-violent revolution”.

The NDF and another opposition group, the Democratic Party, welcomed her call for unity, the November 16 Wall Street Journal said. These parties will still take what seats they were able to win in parliament. Despite her calls for democracy and change, she also called for national

reconciliation and offered to negotiate with junta leader Senior General Than Shwe. “I think we will have to sort out our differences across the table, talking to each other, agreeing to disagree, or finding out why we disagree and trying to remove the sources of our disagreement”, she told the BBC on November 14. The junta has not responded. The military has not attacked the crowds who have turned out to support Suu Kyi. But hopes that the junta's project of adopting a “civilian face” will lead to greater freedom of speech and human rights are tenuous. On November 17, Suu Kyi visited an HIV clinic in east Rangoon. The following day, the military closed the clinic down, the BBC reported on November 19.

After her release, Suu Kyi called for “a second multi-ethnic Panglong Conference”, the November 16 Bangkok Nation reported. The first Panglong Conference, in 1947, led to agreement between Burmese independence leader Aung San (Suu Kyi's father) and the leaders of ethnic minorities that make up a third of the population for full autonomy for the ethnic minority regions. Aung San was assassinated on the eve of independence in 1948 and the Panglong agreements were never implemented. As a result, there has been continuous warfare between the Burmese army and ethnic insurgencies ever since. Beginning in 1989, the military reached ceasefires with 17 of the ethnic insurgent armies. The military ceded considerable parts of the country to de facto control by rebel groups in return for not threatening the power of the central government.

Some groups continued to fight, notably the Karen National Union (KNU) and Shan State Army-South. However, those groups that signed the ceasefire have been alienated by junta attempts to convert them into an army-controlled Border Guards Force. Fighting broke out in 2009 between government forces and ethnic Kokang rebels. The largest ceasefire group, the 30,000-strong United Wa State Army (UWSA), prevented the recent elections from being held in its territory.

As tensions escalated, “the government ... cancelled voting in 3,400 villages in ethnic areas, disenfranchising 1.5 million people”, Associated Press reported on November 2. Lahpai Naw Din, editor of the Thailand-based Kachin News Group, told AP: “We had high hopes to solve the problems by political means but we could not. That's why we Kachin people are preparing for an inevitable civil war. We have to defend ourselves.” The November 4 Irrawaddy reported a meeting in Thailand of representatives of ceasefire groups and those still fighting to plan a united response to an expected government offensive. “We don't want war”, a

UWSA official told Irrawaddy. “But we will react if one of our groups is attacked.”

Since the elections, the KNU has been joined in its fight against government forces by its rival, the Democratic Karen Buddhist Army, which previously observed the ceasefire. Leaders of ethnic groups, both those observing the ceasefire and those not, responded positively to Suu Kyi’s call for a second Panglong Conference, the November 15 Irrawaddy reported.

It is clear the democracy struggle has a long way to go. Welcoming Suu Kyi’s release, Burma Campaign Australia warned on November 13 that her release “should not be interpreted as a sign that democratic reform is on the way. Burma Campaign Australia also called for the immediate release of 2100 political prisoners who remain in detention.” Zetty Brake, Burma Campaign Australia’s spokesperson, said: “The release of Aung San Suu Kyi is about public relations, not democratic reform.”

DISPLACEMENT

Memorandum of the Lei-Ingkhol Residents

Imphal, 28 December 2010.

To
The Hon’ble Chief Minister,
Manipur.

Sub: Humble prayer and pleading from the residents of Lei-Ingkhol Village to:

- (1) reconsider the Manipur State Cabinet Decision of 16 December 2010 to include Lei-Ingkhol Village in the construction of High Court and Civil Secretariat complexes, and
- (2) to save and protect the dignity, integrity and socio-economic survival of the hitherto neglected residents of the Lei-Ingkhol residents.

Hon’ble Sir,

We, the residents, of the Lei-Ingkhol Village, Village No 8 Mantripukhri, Sheet No 2, Tahsil- Imphal East, Manipur, would like to state the subject mentioned above for your kind consideration that;

- (1) We express our heartiest thanks to both the Central and State Governments for having planned and construct a Capitol Project in Manipur.
- (2) We appreciate and welcome infrastructural development brought about by your government.

We, however, are deeply disheartened and dismayed by the decision of the government to construct components of the Capitol Project, i.e., High Court and Civil Secretariat complexes or any other components at Lei-Ingkhol. The recent cabinet decision of 16 December 2010 has disheartened us since it was taken without taking into consideration our objective condition and subjective conscience.

- (1) We consider, the apprehension of displacement against the backdrop proposed construction of the components of the Capital Project at Lei-Ingkhol is not a legal matter, but has to be dealt with humanitarian approach as it is directly related to our dignity, integrity, economic survival and social security as a community of people who had been surviving on this track of land for more than six decades as of now.

- (2) For your kind information we would like to briefly trace the genesis of the Lei-Ingkhol village that was founded and developed by a community of lepers and tuberculosis patients and their descendants. In fact, Lei-Ingkhol holds a significant place in the history of 20th century Manipur and till today. Till mid-20th century, there were no proper hospital in Manipur that could adequately diagnose and give treatment to those who were suffering from the dreaded diseases, viz., Leprosy and Tuberculosis. The victims of these diseases were being indifferently treated with social prejudices as a result of which they were socially compelled to remain aloof and restricted themselves from all social gatherings or public places. The infected persons were discriminated with social stigmas and were being tabooed from intermixing and public appearances. Unapproved and unaccepted not only by the society, but also by their own families, the victims had to eventually leave their respective sweet homes and beloved families, thus deliberately shivering from a network of primordial social ties. Around 1947, the then Govt. constructed huts on the surrounding wastelands of Lei-Ingkhol and provided them with shelter and medical treatment. They settled in and around the hospital areas; filled the marshy land, cleared the surrounding bush and gradually founded the village. They inter married and have been settling here since then.
- (3) Our existence as a community of people has been recognized by the Government for several decades. Since around 1960s we are enlisted in the electoral roll of the Wangkhei Assembly Constituency. Entrepreneurs among us had founded registered Leprosy Patients' Welfare Society (1976), a Destitute Children Home, and a Community Care Centre (1999) that provides with medical treatment and shelter to AIDS/ HIV victims. Besides, there are government recognized Anganwadi and Primary learning centers. Recognising our impoverished economic condition and the significance of social upliftment role that we continue to play for victims of dreaded diseases & socially deprived sections, the then Deputy Chairman DRDA, Govt. of Manipur, in 1990 under Social Housing Scheme had constructed houses as an incentive to 39 household that were recognized as beneficiaries. In 2005 out of the total number of 89 households 41 were Below Poverty Line card holders issued by the Government. Significantly, we also constitute a bulk of the community who are the legitimate tax payers in the format of service taxes on consumer goods.

We, having expressed our plight and apprehension, as responsible citizen of the nation would like to submit to your democratic conscience for the democratic solution towards development, peace and integrity of our community, that;

- (1) The Lei-Ingkhol village that has well demarcated by natural boundaries of Irong Rivulet and Cheiraoching Hill has been inhabited by us for more than six decades. The village is our homeland, we have developed it and we believe that our prosperity lies in this village. We appeal the government to defend safeguard our homeland, defend our integrity and allow us to prosper.
- (2) The village has a history of its own, our umbilical cords are buried in it, the soils and graveyards of our beloved ones are embodied in it. Most of us belong to the community of people who has a history of being socially ostracized in the formative stage, thrown out of the society, i.e., symbolically and practically similar to what is being today widely termed as internal displacement. We appeal the government to provide us with adequate security measures to protect us from any kind of displacement policy in the name of development in the future as well.
- (3) We appeal your government to earmark adequate amount of fund; to develop our village guard against attempted encroachment into our land by outsiders, construction of medical Centre, community hall, library, tutorial Centre for young students, electricity supply, nursery Centre and mid wives for child bearing women workers, women's dormitory, playground, proto- ashram for the old age persons, development of roads and infrastructures for promoting tourism in our village. These are some of the necessity material premises upon which we shall try to achieving the basic fundamental ideals of democracy, i.e., liberty, equality and fraternity. We support your government to fulfill our dreams. Please fulfill our dream during your tenure. Please support us and please stand for our cause.

Thanking you honorable Sir.

Yours faithfully,

1. Sd/-, Secretary, Leprosy Patients' Welfare Society.
2. Sd/-, Secretary, Lei- Ingkhol Youth Development Organisation.
3. Sd/-, President, Lei-Ingkhol Development Committee.

Forced Evictions due to Commonwealth Games Violate Human Rights, Contribute to a Permanent Negative Social Legacy

Housing and Land Rights Network
New Delhi, 13 October 2010.

The preparations for Delhi's Commonwealth Games (CWG) have witnessed a range of human rights violations of the city's working poor, including the homeless, beggars, street vendors, and construction workers. The process has also been marred by financial mismanagement, embezzlement of public funds, and lack of accountability. One of the least reported violations, however, has been the forced eviction and demolition of the homes of thousands of Delhi's residents. These evictions have taken place for various reasons ranging from constructing stadiums, building parking lots, widening roads, city 'beautification,' and clearing of streets on grounds of 'security.'

Housing and Land Rights Network (HLRN) has been involved in a study on forced evictions carried out due to the Commonwealth Games in Delhi. HLRN estimates that at least 250,000 people in Delhi have lost their homes as a direct result of the Games since 2004. A table of some of the demolished sites is included below.

While the study is still ongoing, preliminary findings from a few sites reveal the following characteristics of forced evictions:

1. Failure to provide notice and reason for the demolition; due process not followed: In majority of the cases, authorities did not provide a notice for the demolition. The only exceptions were Dargah Bhure Shah Camp, Viklang Basti, and Madrasi Camp (notice pasted two days before the demolition). The usual trend has been of police threatening people to vacate the area on the evening before the demolition. People of the settlement near Shiv Mandir, Sewa Nagar, were very vocal about the fact that they had not been informed about the demolition. Said Ms. Ishwar Kali, "If they had to break our homes, at least they could have told us." People from various sites reported that their homes were destroyed while they were away.

The Bengali Camp demolition took place on January 13, 2009, when people were celebrating the winter festival of 'Lohri.'

2. Use of force and large police presence during the demolition: All slums demolitions took place in the presence of a large police force. Approximately 200 police personnel were present for the Dargah Bhure Shah Camp demolition, 100 at Madrasi Camp, 100-150 for the demolition of 25 *jhuggis* (homes) in the Sai Baba Camp, and two police buses, eight bulldozers and 8-10 fire brigades for the Gadia Lohar Basti demolition. While women police officials were present during the demolitions, they generally just stood and watched.

3. Injury and adverse effects on health: At Shaheed Arjun Das Camp in East Kidwai Nagar, a woman delivered a baby girl early in the morning, a few hours before the demolition began on January 13, 2009. On seeing the bulldozers she lost consciousness for four hours and could not even be taken to a hospital. The shock of the demolition has left Kamla, aged 40, from the settlement near Shiv Mandir, Sewa Nagar, permanently paralysed on her left side. People in Bengali Camp reported that there was a stampede like situation once the demolition started. An old woman fell to the ground and someone dragged a cylinder over her, and was miraculously saved.

Most people from the demolished camps reported that the frequency of illness, especially among children, increased after the demolition. Poor sanitation, lack of access to medical facilities, and living in the open, contributes to the spread of illnesses like fever, cough, and cold, and diseases such as pneumonia, malaria and dengue.

4. Loss and destruction of possessions: Evicted people from all sites expressed their frustration at not being able to salvage their possessions. Women from Bengali Camp mentioned that children's milk was confiscated, while a woman from Shaheed Arjun Das Camp said that even the food they were cooking got buried under the rubble. A disturbing fact is that whatever possessions people managed to save, including cooking vessels, were later confiscated by officials. Satyadeen Maurya of Sai Baba Camp recounts how all his belongings were crushed under the bulldozer. Dargah Bhure Shah Camp was the only settlement where people reported that they had managed to save their possessions.

5. Children adversely affected: The psychological impacts on children who lose their homes and witness a demolition, are severe and long-lasting. Several children have been forced to drop out of school. Many have lost a year because the demolitions happened immediately before or during

examination time. Pyarelal's son lost an entire school year as the Dargah Bhure Shah Camp demolition took place on May 14, 2007, during school exams.

6. Death of persons: Two homeless persons lost their lives at the Pusa Road Roundabout when the MCD demolished their night shelter during the peak of Delhi's winter on December 24, 2009. Investigations at various sites have revealed suicidal tendencies and some deaths amongst displaced communities due to adverse living conditions and the lack of any housing. At Bengali Camp, residents mentioned two lives being lost to dengue.

7. Loss of livelihood and income: For most of the affected, demolition of homes also means a loss of livelihood opportunities. Several families of the Sai Baba Camp are now entirely dependent on the temple for their meals. "I have not been able to earn one rupee after the demolition" said Bajrang from Sai Baba Camp. Many others have reported a marked decrease in income. A woman at the Gadia Lohar Basti reported a drop in income from Rs. 100-200 (before the eviction) to Rs. 20-30 per day. Pyarelal of Dargah Bhure Shah Camp owns a barber shop. He said that while previously he earned between Rs. 400 to Rs. 1000 in a day, after the demolition, the maximum he has earned in a day is Rs. 400.

Demolitions also result in temporary loss of wages for the evicted. Women of the Madrasi Camp who work as domestic help in nearby areas said they lost wages for two-three months when they were living on the streets. Wage labourers find it impossible to go to work when their possessions are lying in the open, as they fear theft. Evicted families at all sites reported a marked increase in expenses on healthcare, travelling and rent.

It is not just homes but also small shops and other enterprises that have been destroyed for the Games. Daily wage earners, vendors and other informal sector workers across Delhi have lost their livelihoods. The police beat Shekhar, 14, from Sai Baba Camp when he tried to sell flowers near the Sai Baba temple. Authorities demolished around 70 shops in the vicinity of the Gadia Lohar Basti and 10-12 shops in Kotla Pijanji Gaon, adjacent to the Thyagaraja Stadium. Weekly markets have been prohibited and other markets such as the one in Sarojini Nagar have also been cleared of vendors for the duration of the Games.

8. No compensation or resettlement provided in all cases but one: No compensation or resettlement has been provided at any of the sites surveyed. The only exception was the Dargah Bhure Shah Camp, where plots have been allotted in Savda Ghewra to around 80-85 of the 115 families who lost their homes. While the High Court of Delhi has ordered relocation for the families at Gadia Lohar Basti, they have still not received any form of rehabilitation. People of the demolished Shaheed Arjun Das Camp have survived by putting plastic sheets over the broken walls of what was once their home. But every morning they have to remove the plastic sheets, as they are afraid the police will destroy them.

9. Violation of national and international human rights law: All the above characteristics of forced evictions carried out in the run up to the CWG indicate a violation of a range of national and international legal instruments, in particular the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*, the *International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights*, the *Convention on the Rights of the Child*, *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women*, and the *International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination*. They also contravene the *UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement*, which stipulate that evictions must not take place in inclement weather, at night, during festivals or religious holidays, prior to elections or during or just prior to school examinations. The UN Guidelines call for States to ensure that no one is subject to direct or indiscriminate attacks or other acts of violence and also mandate just compensation and sufficient alternative accommodation, or restitution when feasible, to be provided immediately upon the eviction.¹ The forced eviction and demolition of people's homes without due process also violates the Indian constitution. The Supreme Court of India has held that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right emanating from the right to life. The High Court of Delhi in its February 13, 2010 judgement in the case *Sudama Singh and others v. Government of Delhi and others*, clearly calls for the protection of the right to adequate housing, minimising of evictions, and adequate rehabilitation.

Forced evictions, as affirmed by the United Nations Commission on Human Rights in 1993, constitute a gross violation of human rights, including the right to adequate housing. The UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights encourages State Parties to ensure that "legislative and other measures are adequate to prevent, and if appropriate

punish, forced evictions carried out without appropriate safeguards by private persons or bodies.”

The Delhi authorities responsible for forced evictions have violated people’s entitlements to security of tenure and freedom from forced evictions; access to, and benefit from public goods and services; information, capacity and capacity building; participation and self-expression; rights to resettlement and adequate compensation for violations and losses; and physical security and privacy. All are elements of the human right to adequate housing as recognized in international law. **While the attention of the media has been centred on lack of preparedness, organizational glitches and financial scandals related to the CWG, the more severe impacts of the Games have largely been ignored. Attention needs to be drawn to the serious human rights violations,** especially of construction workers who have been denied minimum wages and decent working conditions, of the homeless and ‘beggars’ who have been arrested, detained and forcefully banished from the city, of women and children who have been trafficked, of over 300,000 street vendors who have been denied their right to work and are going hungry, and of slum dwellers who have been evicted for the Games.² These abuses have contributed to the creation of a permanent negative social legacy of the Games, in contradiction to the claims of benefits and false notion of ‘national pride’ that the organisers constantly harp on.

Recommendations:

- Immediate compensation to be provided to all evicted families for loss of their homes, possessions and livelihoods.
- Compensation to be paid to all those who suffered injuries or adverse health impacts.
- Compensation to be paid to families whose members lost their lives as a result of the forced eviction.
- Adequate rehabilitation to be provided to all evicted families, in accordance with international human rights standards, including the *UN Basic Principles and Guidelines on Development-based Evictions and Displacement* and judgements of the High Court of Delhi, in particular the Sudama Singh case.
- Improvement of living conditions in existing resettlement sites, including provision of basic services, infrastructure, healthcare, education and transport.

- Restoration of educational facilities for evicted children, including provision of school books, uniforms and other material destroyed during the eviction.
- Expansion of ongoing investigations by the Comptroller and Auditor General, Enforcement Directorate, Central Vigilance Commission, and Parliament, to include human rights violations.
- Prosecution of all officials who are found guilty.
- Study and audit of the social, economic, and environmental impacts of the Games.
- Moratorium on evictions in Delhi, including of the 44 settlements that have been listed for demolition after the Games.

The dazzling opening and expected closing ceremony of the Commonwealth Games and India’s commendable sporting performance cannot in any way erase the gravity of human rights violations committed by the state and central government in the preparation of the event. The government must accept responsibility for the intense suffering of Delhi’s poor due to the Games, and provide compensation, restitution and rehabilitation at the earliest. The legacy plan of the Games must focus on restoring social justice to the thousands of evicted families, as well as the homeless, beggars, street vendors and construction workers who have witnessed the worst violations of their human rights in the name of the Games. The state must ensure the protection of the human rights of the city’s working poor and marginalised populations. India’s stark socio-economic reality should have precluded the government from bidding for the Commonwealth Games. Given the inability to deal with the colossal costs and consequences of mega events, as demonstrated in the case of the CWG, the country must under no circumstances bid for the Olympics or other such events.

Note: HLRN’s report – *The 2010 Commonwealth Games: Whose Wealth? Whose Commons?* and subsequent press releases are available at: www.hic-sarp.org.

Endnotes:

¹ The Guidelines are available at: http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/housing/docs/guidelines_en.pdf.

² See HLRN press release on human rights violations at: http://www.hic-sarp.org/documents/Press_Release_12_August_2010.pdf.

POSCO Project Justification Based On Flawed Data

Mining Zone People's Solidarity Group

Orissa Government and POSCO Have Misled the Public on Benefits to the Country, says New International Report

A team of US-based researchers have released a report today claiming that the POSCO project in Orissa is fundamentally flawed and economically unviable, and that the company and the government of Orissa have deliberately misled the public by putting forth false data and numbers. Coming close on the heels of the divided report of the POSCO Enquiry Committee, where the majority of members held that the POSCO project is illegal, the new report, *Iron and Steel: The POSCO-India Story*, authored by the Mining Zone People's Solidarity Group (MZPSG), goes a step further. It argues that apart from violations of law and procedure, the POSCO project has been justified based upon deeply flawed numbers with benefits exaggerated and costs purposefully minimized. "This sorcery of flawed numbers has been perpetrated on the country by the Government of Orissa, POSCO and the National Council for Applied Economic Research (NCAER)," said Dr. Girish Agrawal, a California-based lawyer and civil engineer experienced in large infrastructure projects, who is a member of MZPSG and one of the authors of the report.

Iron and Steel is a data-rich and comprehensive report, which has received the endorsement of several renowned intellectuals including Amit Bhaduri (Prof. Emeritus of Economics, JNU), Prashant Bhushan (Advocate, Supreme Court) and Manoranjan Mohanty (Prof. of Political Science, Delhi University). At the press conference today, Shankar Gopalakrishnan, with the Campaign for Survival and Dignity, said that the very reason that the POSCO steel plant was mainly located on forest land was that at the time of the signing of the MoU in 2005, the government could simply hand over the forest land to any company, without giving any thought to people dependent on it. It is only after the Forest Rights Act (FRA) came into effect in 2006 that the rights of forest dwellers have been recognized and this is what makes FRA compliance so hotly contested in the region. Prof Amit Bhaduri pointed out that in the current neoliberal environment, the political leadership is only interested in promoting a climate for investors, even at the cost of all democratic norms and constitutional rights. Commenting on the report, Prof. Mohanty said that

Iron & Steel is "the most comprehensive, most persuasive, the best researched report on the POSCO Project."

While substantiating the various illegalities and procedural irregularities in granting clearances to the project, *Iron & Steel* suggests that the very reason for the violation of democratic principles and lack of transparency is that the base data on which the project is justified is itself wrong and therefore could not be allowed to come out. *Iron & Steel* concludes that the POSCO project has been allowed to proceed without a basic socio-economic study, a complete blockade on discussion of the current local economy, wild exaggerations of benefits and a deliberate overlooking of infrastructural and ecological costs. The primary findings of the report include:

- the existence of a thriving agrarian economy that the Government of Orissa has refused to acknowledge in Coastal Jagatsinghpur with average annual net yields of over Rs. 40,000 per decimal of land (100 decimals = 1 acre) per year in sharp contrast to the paltry Rs. 11,500 per decimal being offered as one time compensation by the GoO/ POSCO,
- gross exaggeration of employment benefits, EIRR and tax revenues by the Orissa, POSCO and NCAER,
- deliberate and systematic procedural violations for environmental and socio-economic impact assessment by both the government of Orissa and POSCO,
- failure to conduct a socio-economic study that would measure the impact of 22,000 people being displaced and more than 50,000 people being affected by the project in coastal Jagatsinghpur and Khandadhar hills.

With the release of *Iron and Steel*, MZPSG has also announced the launch of its international information campaign on the POSCO India project. Thus far, the POSCO project has only been hyped as India's largest FDI and much has been written about the scale of the project in terms of its captive mines in Khandadhar, and integrated plant and port in coastal Jagatsinghpur. The objective of the report is to focus on the real data around the POSCO project and increase the awareness within the international community about problems with the project.

Note: The Mining Zone People's Solidarity Group is an international research group focused on India. or more details, visit: www.miningzone.org

Mapithel Dam Construction Must Halt for Now

Citizens Concern for Dams and Development -

23 November 2010

The Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCDD) reiterates its position, as mutually agreed between the Government of Manipur and the affected people, that the review of Rehabilitation and Resettlement (RnR) by the Expert Review Committee of the upstream and downstream affected villages, of the Mapithel Dam should be conducted and implemented prior to the completion of the dam.

However, we observe that it is going the opposite, while the effort to complete the dam is underway with visible urgency; there is no clear sincerity of commitment to conduct and complete the Review of RnR indicating that the affected people come last in the scheme of things. In our recent visit to the dam site, it is observed that construction activities have begun possibly trying to complete the dam within early next year and at the same time there is no progress on the expert review processes.

According to the Rehabilitation Plan for the Oustees, 1998, prepared by the Irrigation and Flood Control Department (IFCD), Government of Manipur for Thoubal Multipurpose Project (Mapithel Dam), Page no 52 Para 8, it is stated clearly that “The Rehabilitation plan will be completed before one year of the completion of the project”. In addition, the Government has accepted the Terms of Reference [of the Expert Review Committee- constituted by GOM order no.20/1/2005-IFC(Pt) dated 18 January 2008] No.12 which requires that the “Rehabilitation and Resettlement should be completed at least one year before any submergence takes place”. These are excerpts from legally binding documents and must be strictly adhered to.

As we have already stated earlier, urgency for completion of the project must be associated with ethical treatment of the affected people. CCDD once again calls for immediate halt of dam construction activities until proper completion of the Review of Rehabilitation & Resettlement and its implementation. As CCDD have in the past made it clear that it will not stand mute to neglecting the affected people and CCDD will be left with no option but to take this matter to the people and the court in order that the affected people are rehabilitated first before the completion of the dam.

Aram Pamei (Co-Convenor)

Ramananda Wangkheirakpam, (Coordinator)

KASHMIR

Report of the Fact Finding Team to Kashmir

November 2010

Since June this year, the Kashmir valley has been torn by mass protests which have been met with overwhelming force by Indian security forces. Curfews and closures have been frequent, often shading into each other. No less than 111 deaths have been registered, of which a large number have been of students and youth in the age group of 8 to 25 years. There have besides, been hundreds – if not thousands – of injured, both protesters and those who just happened to be at the wrong place at the wrong time. An independent fact-finding team went to the Kashmir valley at the end of October to go into the totality of the situation, principally to inquire into the causes for the unconscionably large number of deaths that have occurred in the current phase of mass agitation. The team comprised of academic BELA BHATIA, advocate VRINDA GROVER, journalist SUKUMAR MURALIDHARAN and activist RAVI HEMADRI of The Other Media, a Delhi based campaign and advocacy organisation, at whose initiative the effort was organised. Each member of the team spent varying lengths of time in the valley, but in total, roughly about twenty-five person days were put in to the fact-finding exercise. In groups or individually, the team met the families of almost 40 persons who had been killed since the beginning of the civil unrest. Several individuals who had suffered serious injuries were also met. The team worked out of the state capital of Srinagar, and visited villages and towns in five of the Kashmir valley's ten districts: Baramulla in the north (Sopore and Baramulla tehsils); Anantnag (Bijbehara and Anantnag tehsils) and Pulwama (Pulwama tehsil) in the south; Badgam in the west (Chadura and Badgam tehsils) and Srinagar itself. Separate sessions were held with journalists and media practitioners, university teachers and students, doctors, lawyers and activists besides officials in the police headquarters and the civil administration. This is the third in the series of reports coming out of the Fact-Finding Team's findings.

REPORT # 3, 17 November 2010

Blaming the Messenger: Kashmir's media under pressure

Junctures of civil unrest in Kashmir invariably call forth the reflexive attitude of blaming the messenger, making any form of restraint

on the working of the valley's journalists – which often stretch all the way to active repression — a perfectly permissible stratagem for restoring order.

Since the upsurge in civil unrest in Kashmir in June, media practitioners claim, their situation in terms of daily work routines, has deteriorated sharply. Accessing news sites has now become an ordeal and gaining authentic information on the disturbances that break out with alarming regularity, virtually impossible.

There has been a lessening of the violence in Kashmir since the visit of an all party parliamentary delegation to the valley in September and journalists may be more assured now that they can travel to work and back without serious hindrance. But they continue to suffer enormous restraints on daily functioning.

Newspapers have been shut for an estimated total of thirty days since Kashmir's protests began to rise in fury mid-June. The travails for journalists became particularly grim from about July 7, when after several years, the Indian army was summoned out of its barracks and deployed in the streets of Kashmir. A notification by the state government and local authorities at the time extended curfew to cover the movement of all civilians, and word was put out that press passes would no longer be honoured.

Photographers and news cameramen in Srinagar were assaulted as they sought to record the day's events. Some had their professional equipment confiscated by security agencies. Media identity cards were scant protection against the easily roused rage of the security forces, nor did they afford the least assurance of mobility for the discharge professional obligations.

These incidents followed similar occurrences the preceding day, when at least 12 photographers working for local, national and international media were assaulted in Srinagar and suffered injuries of various degrees of seriousness, as security forces sought to restrain them from recording ongoing demonstrations. As the photo-journalists and news cameramen were attacked, senior police officers were heard remarking that without media attention the demonstrations would soon die out.

On July 2, authorities in the region of Jammu sealed the premises of three publications on the grounds that they had allegedly carried false and misleading news reports that tended to aggravate tensions between religious communities. The following day, copies of *Greater Kashmir* and *Kashmir Uzma*, the leading newspapers in English and Urdu in the Kashmir valley, were seized as they were readied for distribution.

All Kashmir's media personnel were confined to their homes for several days following the entry of the Indian army on July 7. A few days into this round of closures in the valley, the Kashmir Press Guild – a platform of the most senior journalists in the region – issued a statement deprecating the situation in which local journalists were confined to their homes by an unrelenting curfew, while media personnel flying in from Delhi were afforded armed protection and allowed considerable freedom of movement. It was as if the story of Kashmir – if at all it were to be told – could only be entrusted to the narrative skills of journalists enjoying the stamp of official approval that comes from working in the national capital.

On July 9, when curfew and closures were at their most oppressive in the Kashmir valley, the state government seemed to relent marginally after virtually locking all journalists in for days. Journalists in Srinagar were given a telephonic assurance that they would be provided fresh curfew passes to replace the ones invalidated after the army deployment of July 7. As senior journalist Riyaz Masroor set off from his home in the Alucha Bagh neighbourhood of Srinagar, to collect the fresh issue of his curfew pass, he was stopped at a police checkpoint on the main thoroughfare near his home. Personnel of the local police reportedly did not ask him why he was stepping out during the curfew, nor did they wait for an explanation. Few seemed to care that he was responding to a summons from the state government's Information Department. He was attacked with heavy batons and forced to return home with injuries to his hip and right wrist.

On August 14 and again on September 28, a senior journalist now working with India's largest news agency, the Press Trust of India, was stopped as he was going to work and his curfew pass confiscated by security forces. No reasons were given and it was made abundantly clear to him that he was not entitled to ask for any.

On October 1, Merajuddin and Umar Meraj of the Associated Press TV news service, and Mufti Islah and Shakeel-ur Rahman of the Indian news channel CNN-IBN, were assaulted by security forces while on their way to the state legislative assembly building in Srinagar. The incident began with a heated argument over the police insistence that they would not allow journalists to pass, even if they held curfew passes. Merajuddin, whose documentation remains one of the richest visual records of Kashmir's years of insurgency, suffered a serious injury to his neck in the incident and spent days recovering in hospital.

Through fifteen days in September, few newspapers were printed in Srinagar because journalists and print workers could not reach their

places of work. Those who made the effort and succeeded on any one day, often were confined within their workplaces indefinitely. Among the few newspapers published, most found distribution channels blocked, as delivery vehicles were detained at the Mirgund and Kotibagh checkpoints just outside Srinagar.

On September 30, all copies of *Greater Kashmir*, *Rising Kashmir*, *Kashmir Uzma* and *Buland Kashmir* were seized from points of production in Srinagar city and taken to local police stations. The following day, the chief minister of Jammu and Kashmir, Omar Abdullah, informed the state assembly that he had not issued any order for the seizure of the newspapers, though the police had the authority to examine all media content prior to publication.

Journalists in Srinagar hesitate to use the term “discrimination”, but they have reason to believe that an increasing degree of arbitrariness has crept into the allocation of government advertising budgets among newspapers. The evidence available today, of selective allocations to newspapers that are seen as amenable and severe cutbacks to those that are seen to be too independent, comes on the heels of longstanding grievances that government advertising budgets overwhelmingly favour newspapers in Jammu rather than Srinagar. Illustratively, the annual report of the central government’s Directorate of Advertising and Visual Publicity (DAVP), the nodal agency for the placement of official advertising, records a spending of over Rs 3.44 crore in the print media in Jammu city in 2008-09 and just fractionally more than Rs one crore in Srinagar.

The cross-section of journalists that this team met in Srinagar was convinced that even this relatively meagre allocation for the print media in their city, is now distributed with intent to ensure compliance with the official *diktat*. Three leading newspapers published from Srinagar – *Rising Kashmir*, *Greater Kashmir* and *Kashmir Uzma* – believe that they have been unfairly deprived of advertising, and have had to enforce stringent curbs on staff salaries and in some cases, limited staff retrenchments.

News gathering processes in Kashmir have been severely impeded by restrictions on movement and disruptions of communications. Illustratively, text messaging (or SMS) through the state’s mobile telephone network has been suspended with effect from June. This final crackdown on a service that Kashmir’s journalists had begun to use as a vital news gathering facility, came after a rather long prelude. In June 2009, when the valley witnessed large-scale civil disturbances over the suspected rape and murder of two women in the southern orchard town of Shopian, bulk

text messages, which were a news source that media organisations in the capital city of Srinagar could tap in the more remote districts where they had no presence, were banned. This effectively put out of work newsmen in these districts who were able to generate a modest, though significant, revenue stream for themselves through the provision of news items to Srinagar’s newspapers.

In April this year, well before mass protests became a daily occurrence, India’s central government ordered telecom companies in Kashmir to suspend text messaging for all subscribers of post-paid cellular telephone services. Subscribers using the pre-paid facility were to be allowed no more than ten such messages a day. This measure ostensibly was taken in response to a request from state security and intelligence agencies in Kashmir.

It soon became evident that serious miscommunications about communication services are a regular feature of Kashmir’s policy landscape, when the state government shortly afterwards went on record with a denial of any such request. Far from calling for a ban on all text messaging, the state government, it emerged, had only requested that bulk messages be proscribed, since these had been identified by security agencies as a source of destabilizing and disruptive rumour. This was merely the reiteration of a ban decreed during the Shopian disturbances, though over time, it had begun to be breached in some measure. The ban on text messaging was revoked within a day, leaving the prohibition on bulk messages in place.

In June though, with the protests registering a sharp upward spiral, the state government ordered a complete ban on text messaging services. This prohibition remains in place at the time of this writing in all of Jammu and Kashmir. Voice telephone services are subject to frequent and unexplained disruption, especially in the northern Kashmir region.

The numerous restraints on communication, both declared and otherwise, remain a serious impediment to legitimate news gathering activities in the Kashmir valley, especially since curfew impositions and other forms of restrictions on physical movement have become common.

These restrictions are often introduced in response to imagined security anxieties. Illustratively, on August 15, when India’s independence day observances were being held in Srinagar’s Bakshi stadium – under a heavy security cordon – mobile telephone and internet services were suspended over the entire valley for at least six hours. Already constrained by closures and restrictions on personnel movement, Kashmir’s news

organisations were prevented by this unannounced shutdown, to update their websites for the duration of the Bakshi stadium event.

Kashmir's numerous TV channels were a major source of local news and had an especially vital role in days when civic security was badly disrupted and few could feel sure of what lay in store if they ventured out of home. That facility was effectively ended in June 2009, in the wake of the Shopian disturbances, when the Directorate of Information in the state government issued notice to all local cable TV channels to suspend news broadcasts. This *diktat* was partly diluted a month later, when the channels were allowed to air the 15 minutes of news permitted under their rules of registration. All channels were under compulsion moreover, to confine their news broadcasts to the same time of day, i.e., 8 p.m.

As the editors and owners of the channels put it, they were summoned early in June 2009 and given a virtual ultimatum by the authorities that they needed to "behave properly". Several were told that their fiduciary relationship with secessionist political formations was well known, and that the dossiers available with state intelligence agencies provided ample grounds for their prosecution under the special security laws in force in Kashmir.

September 13 this year was the worst single day of bloodshed in Kashmir since the current protests began, with twenty killed and an estimated 200 injured. Protests ascended that day to a level of rage not seen before, after the Iranian news channel Press TV telecast news of the alleged burning of the Quran Sharief in a U.S. city. The report was swiftly denied but anger had already erupted on the streets of Kashmir.

Immediately afterwards, the state administration decreed that Press TV would be taken off the menu of all local cable TV operators. Concurrently, in what seemed a panic reaction, local channels were told to suspend all news broadcasts. The situation that has resulted is described with great aptness by one of the news channel representatives who met this team: "none of the local channels cover any news and the national channels do not cover Kashmir."

Despite frequent disruptions, the internet has become, ever since the current phase of troubles began, the principal mode for getting the word out in Kashmir. Transmission bandwidths are small and the volumes of data that can be transacted, limited. But essential information gets around, such as the protest calendars and schedules periodically announced by the leadership of Kashmir's Tehreek-e-Hurriyat (Movement for Freedom).

Social networking sites have become a means through which journalists and other citizens in Kashmir conduct the conversations that are otherwise denied by heavyhanded restrictions. Unsurprisingly, users of the social networking site Facebook have begun to attract the hostile attention of the security agencies. One user, Faizan Samad, was arrested in August for allegedly posting material that brought the armed forces to disrepute. He was released shortly afterwards.

Another Facebook user, Mufti Wajid Yaqoob, was arrested in the south Kashmir town of Shopian after being held responsible for organising protest demonstrations through his network of friends on the site.

Journalists in Kashmir have organised to deal with these multiple threats on the two main platforms of the Kashmir Press Guild and the Kashmir Press Association. Following complaints filed by three newspapers from Srinagar and the efforts of Kashmiri journalists based in Delhi, the Press Council of India (PCI) on August 4, issued notice asking the state government to explain the many restrictions imposed – both formal and informal — on the functioning of the press.

Journalists' bodies based in Delhi have also stepped in with gestures of solidarity and support. The Delhi Union of Journalists (DUJ) has been particularly vocal, with a statement by its executive committee in September, sharply deprecating the "undeclared ban on newspapers in Kashmir" and calling on the PCI to conduct its own independent inquiries to restore a semblance of normalcy for journalistic functioning in the valley.

The Editors' Guild of India and Press Club of India have also at various times, organised to show solidarity with colleagues in Kashmir. It has often been the case that journalists in the national capital and the main metropolitan centres of India remain relatively indifferent to the travails of colleagues in outlying parts of the country. Even if Kashmir has not suffered from this form of indifference in its most acute form, the enemy of press freedom here is the brevity of public memory and short attention spans in the rest of India to the incessant turmoil there.

**Resolution placed in the Convention on Kashmir –
Azadi: The Only Way – at the LTG Auditorium,
Copernicus Marg, Mandi House, New Delhi on 21
October 2010.**

Resolution:

Kashmir today has turned into a tortuous prison for its people where the right to life is a mirage. Mourning is a luxury which common masses cannot afford. Everyone in the beautiful valley is condemned, whose turn for being murdered could come anytime, anywhere. Ironically, the murderer is a claimant to democracy. And the murder is of democracy.

The killings of at least 110 civilians, most of them young teenage boys, from the start of early summer till now are testimony to this fact. Curfews were imposed, bullets were fired, tear smoke used to intimidate and suppress the people of Kashmir into submission by the Indian state. Every trick in the book was employed, perhaps surpassing even the Machiavellian imaginations. In the face of brute force and scheming tactics of the state, the people of Kashmir have shown the highest levels of patience, perseverance and courage. A lively spirit, and a determined attitude which is exemplary for the resistance struggles worldwide and brings to light the pinnacle of the strength of the human will.

While many people have shown concern and expressed their views about the recent turn of events in Kashmir, it is imperative to contextualize the whole situation. We need to ask the question as to why people are getting killed in hundreds, injured in thousands, kept behind bars, tortured and maimed. It is important at this juncture to bring the attention towards the fact that the basic issue at hand regarding the Kashmir dispute is the self-determination of the people of Jammu and Kashmir for which they have been steadfast and hence been the target of the repressive military machine of the Indian state. The people of Jammu and Kashmir are clear about the fact that what they want is Azadi which they have time and again defined in coherent terms of letting them decide their own future. They have made clear that for them Azadi is the only way.

The latest people's resistance - which forms the part of the recently launched 'Quit Jammu and Kashmir Movement' - needs to be viewed as a continuity of the resistance movement (*Tehreek*) which the people of Kashmir have been sustaining for over six decades. And which for the past few years has been completely non-violent and peaceful. The only violent party being the Indian state.

The political dispute vis-à-vis Kashmir need not be confused with the superficial measures like the removal of AFSPA, human rights

violations, other draconian acts, stopping of unlawful killings, tortured, enforced disappearances etc. Though all these things do exist and need to be stopped at any cost, they manifest only symptoms of a broader and deeper malaise- a militarized governance used to maintain a military occupation of the region by the Indian state, through its armed forces, numbering at least 7,00,000.

In order to address these issues several measures are required, which would move in the direction of the attainment of Azadi for the people of Jammu and Kashmir. And we at this convention 'Azadi : The Only Way' organized by the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP), on 21st October, 2010 at LTG Auditorium, New Delhi, propose the following:

We ask the Indian state to:

1. Formally admit that Kashmir is an internationally recognized dispute.
2. Immediately start steps towards complete demilitarization of the region.
3. Release all the political prisoners languishing both in Kashmiri as well as Indian jails.
4. Removal of draconian laws like AFSPA, Disturbed Areas Act, etc.

Also, we would ask all democratic people in the world at large to:

1. Pressurize the Indian state to take immediate steps in this regard,
2. Investigate into thousands of unnamed and mass graves in J&K,
3. Prosecute and bring to justice all those responsible for the murder of innocent Kashmiri civilians

Note: The convention was attended by: Gurusharan Singh, noted dramatist & President Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners; Syed Ali Shah Geelani, Tehreek-e-Hurriyat, Jammu & Kashmir; Vara Vara Rao, Revolutionary poet; Retd. Justice AS Bains; Arundhati Roy, writer; Sheikh Showkat Hussain, Law Faculty, University of Kashmir; N Venuh, Naga People's Movement for Human Rights (NPMHR); Thiagu, writer and activist; Amit Bhattacharyya, Secretary General CRPP; Malem Ningthouja, Campaign for Peace and Democracy Manipur (CPDM); Najeeb Mubarak, Economic Times; Sujato Bhadra, Association for the Protection of Democratic Rights; Shuddhabrata Sengupta, Sarai; Aparna, IFTU; Kanwarpal Singh; SAR Geelani; GN Saibaba and; Revolutionary Democratic Front.

Human Rights Defenders' Statement of Manipur

Imphal, 10 December 2010.

We are human rights defenders who have gathered here from many organisations and associations in Manipur¹. We are fathers and mothers, daughters and sons, brothers and sisters, husbands and wives, partners and friends working side by side with respect and shared goals. We speak one language – the language of human rights! We extend our solidarity greetings to the human rights defenders of the world.

We affirm that all human rights are universal, indivisible, inter-related and interdependent. We also affirm that the International Bill of Rights with the Universal Declaration of Human Rights constitute the globally accepted minimum standards regarding the full enjoyment of civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights by every individual.

We also affirm the principles of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, which protect and promote the rights of indigenous and tribal peoples as collective rights. We also affirm the United Nations Declaration on the Right and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms (known as the “Declaration on Human Rights Defenders”), which obligates all States, including India to promote and protect rights of all human rights defenders.

We welcome the forthcoming India mission of Mrs. Margaret Sekaggya, the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on human rights defenders in January 2011, and extend an invitation to her to include Manipur and the north-eastern region of India during her visit to assess the rights situation of human rights defenders in Manipur, who work in a situation of armed conflict with serious scale of violations perpetrated with impunity.

We pledge to protect, promote and encourage human rights and fundamental freedoms, all of which derive from the inherent dignity of the human person, and are essential for his/her free and full development.

What unites us is our pledge to end the inequality and discrimination that still plagues the lives of the people of Manipur. We are also outraged at the prolonged and deliberate legislative and executive impunity of human rights violations that exists in Manipur in the name of national security.

National security can no longer be at the cost of human security. We believe that security should be founded on the sanctity of human

dignity, and security obligations of the State must refer to a people-centred approach that includes chronic threats such as hunger, disease, repression, and grave disruptions of ordinary life.

In this context we recall and affirm the resolutions and statements of the people and human rights defenders over the past years on human rights, in particular the Human Rights Resolution of the National Seminar on Human Rights, 8th -9th December 1994.

We express our deep concern about the emerging trend of States to flaunt the due process of their own domestic laws applicable while arresting and detaining a person, illegally deporting a person across international borders and rendering even the cardinal principles of the rule of law meaningless. In this context, we recall and support the human rights resolution of the National Convention on the legal and political implications of the abduction of the Sanayaima alias R.K. Meghen, held on 4th November 2010 as a recent most blatant example of the failure of the State to adhere to the rule of law.

We express our concern with the long term neglect of the Manipur Commission for Human Rights and current state of non-appointment of its members and Chairman. We urge upon the Government of Manipur to fulfill its human rights obligations under the Protection of Human Rights Act, 1993.

We insist on the Government of India to repeal those dated and colonial-era laws that breach contemporary international human rights standards. These legal remnants of a bygone era range from laws which provide the security forces with excessive emergency powers, including the Armed Forces [Special Powers] Act and impose collective punishment to laws that arbitrarily deprive people of their land and livelihoods.

We reiterate that human rights defenders are subjected to violations, ranging from arbitrary killings, torture, arbitrary arrest, sexual harassment, etc., and India’s non-ratification of UN Convention against Torture and reservations with International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and other human rights treaties abetted such violations on human rights defenders. We call upon the Government of India to ratify UN Convention against Torture and its Optional Protocol, and fulfill its international human rights obligations.

We fully recognize that the reason for the long-standing Manipur-India conflict is in its core a question of the civil and political rights of the people of Manipur. It is an affront to humanity and human values that both parties in this long-term armed conflict have not respected international humanitarian law. We urge upon all parties to conflict in Manipur, State and non-State Actors, to adhere to the principles and norms established

under International humanitarian law (Common Article 3 of Geneva Conventions).

We are deeply distressed that the youth of Manipur, young girls and boys, are increasingly drawn into the conflict, both as victims and perpetrators. We strongly believe that any repression in seeking a solution to the conflict is futile, and will only deepen it. We also believe that as long as peace is elusive, human rights and fundamental freedoms will continue to be a meaningless shadow for the people of Manipur.

We are also alarmed that the State of Manipur is now a failed state that cannot or will not safeguard minimal civil conditions for the people: domestic peace, law and order, and good governance. We are concerned that the present priority of the government of Manipur on introducing a development agenda that robs people of their socio-cultural and economic rights and livelihood. Corruption, in all walks of life, is openly tolerated and promoted, compromising and challenging the basic rights and civil liberties of the poor and majority of the rural areas (valleys and hills) of Manipur.

We are convinced that a just and honorable settlement to the Manipur-India conflict can only be achieved through an inclusive and transparent process of political process between the contesting protagonists.

We pledge and commit to peaceful conduct of our activities, and give our firm support and solidarity to every peaceful, fair and transparent means towards the full attainment of human rights and fundamental freedoms in Manipur and across the world.

We, therefore, take the view that nothing should prevent any human rights defender organisations and institutions, both government and nongovernment, from sharing a common platform, coming together, and working in unison on every issue of violations of the principles of human rights; failing to do so amounts to a serious problem in the perceptions or interpretation regarding the human rights principles that negate the very International Bill of Rights that we are promoting and defending.

Dr. Arambam Lokendra Singh,
Presiding the Observance,
10th December 2010,
Imphal.

Sd(s)/-

Action Committee Against Tipaimukh Project (ACTIP), All Manipur Muslim Development Organisation (AMMDO), Chanura Lamchinglen Kangleipak (CLK), Citizens Concern for Dams and Development (CCDD), Committee on Human Rights (COHR Manipur), Centre for Organisation Research & Education (CORE), Extrajudicial Execution Victims' Families Association Manipur (EEVFAM), Families of the Involuntarily Disappeared Association Manipur (FIDAM), Human to Humane Transcultural Centre for Trauma & Torture (H2H), Human Rights Alert (HRA), Human Rights Initiative (HRI), Just Peace Foundation (JPF), Forum for Indigenous Perspectives and Action (FIPA), Leimarol Khorjeikol (LEIKOL), NACHOM Arts of Contemporary Dance Kampni (NACHOM), PEACE Core Team Manipur, Rongmei Lu Phuam (RLP), Threatened Indigenous Peoples' Society (TIPS), United NGOs Mission – Manipur (UNMM) and others.

We're Against Political Terrorism in All Forms

CPDM chairman Malem Ningthouja tells Suneha Dutta that people in Manipur have taken up arms only as a reaction to 'police/army atrocities.' The people of Manipur want the Indian government to put an end to the Armed Forces Special Powers Act and want to see development in the region on par with 'mainland' India, but there are others who are fighting for complete independence.

Campaign for Peace and Democracy in Manipur (CPDM) chairman Malem Ningthouja has been fighting against human rights violations. He was one of the speakers at the recent Kashmir Convention held in Delhi. In a chat with Tehelka, Ningthouja explained why the struggles of Kashmir and Manipur are similar and why both states want to break free.

Why is the CPDM supporting the cause of azad Kashmir?

The CPDM stands for development, peace and unity. On the Kashmir issue, we have two understandings. First, the political community in Kashmir want to enjoy the right to self-determination. The UN has recognised Kashmir as a disputed region. Both Pakistan and India have militarised Kashmir and have fought disastrous wars. Both governments are considered oppressors by freedom-loving Kashmiris.

Is the Manipur movement secessionist as well?

Yes, if you are talking about the movement led by armed organisations banned by the Indian government. If we go by the propaganda of those who are fighting for an independent Manipur, it can be described as an ‘anti-colonial movement’, ‘freedom movement’, ‘liberation movement’, etc.

Hurriyat leader Syed Ali Shah Geelani said that azadi can happen only when Kashmir secedes from the Indian Union. What are the terms of freedom for Manipur?

If the people think that they are living in a colonial state under Indian rule and if they are against it, then the obvious pre-condition would be freedom from India.

Was it a conscious political decision to share the platform with a Naga leader in Delhi, keeping in mind the history of antagonism between Nagaland and Manipur?

I don't think there is antagonism between Nagaland and Manipur. However, there has been some tension over the issues of Nagalim and Manipur's territorial integrity. In this matter, the CPDM believes that there cannot be permanent obstruction to the unity of the oppressed people. N Venuh had represented the NPMHR and I had represented the CPDM. We have worked together on common democratic issues.

There are Naga groups in Manipur who want parts of the state to join Greater Nagaland. Manipur has more than 36 recognised communities.

Call it Greater Nagaland or South Nagaland or Nagalim or Zogam; accession or secession should be conditioned by the material relation where every community is a stakeholder of the common territory.

It has been said time and again that Nagaland and Kashmir have entered into talks with the Indian government to resolve their demands while Manipur hasn't even taken that first step. Has the time come for Manipur to take the initiative?

The government has responded with cosmetic economic packages mostly in the tertiary construction sub-sectors, police modernisation, AFSPA, other black laws, Manipur Police Commando, Village Defence Force and other repressive and divisive tactics. All these responses are the antithesis of democracy.

What about the violence unleashed by the insurgent groups?

We are for peace. We are against political terrorism in all forms.

Will the violence subside once Manipur is released from the ‘oppressive’ Indian government?

In a people's democracy, there will be justice and no place for political violence or terrorism.

What do you think is the best way to combat the Indian government's shortcomings?

The media should play an effective role in covering the real voice of the subjugated and the oppressed and expose political terrorism in any form perpetrated by the State.

In Kashmir, the military is held guilty if they fire at a stone-pelter. However, if they fire at an armed insurgent in Manipur, a similar empathy is not earned. Why?

Thangjam Manorama was a cadre of the banned PLA when she was raped and killed by the Assam Rifles in 2004. There was widespread protest that led to the institution of the Justice Jeevan Reddy Committee by the Indian government. Whether any section of the people could protest against a particular incident of killing of an underground cadre or civilian would depend on the degree of repression carried out by the government vis-à-vis such protest.

There are peaceful protests by Irom Sharmila and the Manipuri women's movement. What is your take on them?

Such individual initiatives have to be regarded as an integral component of the democratic movement. We endorse the struggle of Irom Sharmila, who has been on the fasting for the past 10 years demanding the repealing of AFSPA. Such peaceful demonstrations or revolt have not been adequately addressed by the government. This is unfortunate.

Do you support violent forms of revolt?

We do not appreciate violent forms of revolt. However, violent revolts, militancy or insurgency against the police/army are a reaction to the violent character of the rulers. We demand demilitarisation of Manipur, the repealing of draconian Acts and an end to the reign of terror so that political violence does not gain mass appeal.

Kashmir has agreed to hold a plebiscite to abide by the wishes of the people. If the Indian government agrees to consider a separate Manipur, will something similar be done?

What should be the formula of separation or integration will have to be decided by those who are part of the conflict. As far as the people's aspirations are concerned, there should be a platform where they can have free and fair expression of their democratic aspirations.

So, what methods should Manipuris use to fight for their cause?

We are a campaign organisation. We carry forward the democratic aspirations of the people towards development, peace and unity. We do not work beyond that. The people of Manipur must first try and understand the difference between what is revolutionary and what is reactionary activity. Freedom was in their hands but they did not realise due to the lack of consciousness and unity.

You recently said that the term 'nation' has been coined to trump other forms of identity. So, is India just a concept?

I said that India is not a nation in the strict sense of the Stalinist term of nationhood. There can be several collective identities within a nation. But to perceive India as a nation would be anachronous. The perception of an Indian nationhood comprising Kashmir and the Northeast percolated at the conscience of certain section of the Indian population rather informs about the institutionalised process of the down-linear infiltration of statist illusion of an imagined India. The term 'India = nation' de-contextualises the genuine democratic movement of the people who do not want to be in India. For instance, there can be killing, harassment, displacement, subjugation and exploitation in the name of Indian national security. To me, India is a geographical expression whereupon the Indian rulers exercise unrestrained armed power to perpetuate semi-colonial condition to fulfill their vested interests.

Should all Indian states then demand separate nationhood?

I'm not suggesting that India should be broken into different countries. All I'm saying is there should be no subjugation or oppression. The European Union had come into being on the basis of a formula acceptable to all members. There should be justice and recognition of the right to self-determination of the communities who are willing to enjoy this right. My simple question is: what is the problem if someone wants freedom?

Note: The interview was webcasted on 19 November 2010.
http://tehelka.com/story_main47.asp?filename=Ws191110MANIPUR.asp

MIZORAM

Online Petition to the Government of India Demanding Apology to the People of Mizoram for the Unwarranted Air Raids on Aizawl by IAF on March 4-5, 1966.

According to Sinlung Indigenous People's Human Rights Organisation till date, the GoI has repeatedly denied the aerial bombing of Aizawl on March 4-5, 1966 by the IAF. The day of the bombings has since been commemorated by the people of Mizoram as Zoram Ni (Zoram Day). Various organizations in Mizoram have repeatedly demanded that the GoI should have the courage to admit its inhuman acts against the Mizo people and officially apologize to the people of Mizoram for the series of unwarranted air attacks on Aizawl and against the innocent civilian populace. The undersigned, fully support and endorse the stand of the people of Mizoram on this issue and urge the GoI to take corrective steps to heal the lingering emotional wounds the Indian security forces caused to them by sincerely and honorably apologizing to the Mizo people without any further delay.

Editor

Text of the Petition

To,
The Government of India.

In 1959, Mizo Hills District was devastated by a famine known as "Mautam Famine" caused by cyclical flowering of bamboo and the explosion of rat population that devoured all paddy crops. A relief team called Mizo National Famine Front (MNFF) was formed to voice the grievance of the people against the indifference and neglect shown by the Assam government. MNFF was later transformed into Mizo National Front (MNF) with a goal to achieve 'Independent Zoram' comprising all the 'Mizo' inhabited areas. This movement soon culminated into an armed rebellion in March, 1966.

On 1st March 1966, the MNF made a Declaration of Independence from India after launching coordinated attacks on the Government offices and the posts of security forces in different parts of the then Mizo Hills district in Assam. To suppress the Mizo armed uprising, the GoI responded viciously with air raids. On 2nd March 1966, the Government of Assam

invoked the Assam Disturbed Areas Act, 1955 and the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 and proclaimed the entire Mizo district as “disturbed area”.

On the afternoon of 4 March 1966, the Indian Air Force (IAF) jet fighters strafed Aizawl using machine guns, causing civilian casualties. The next day on 5th March, 1966, a more extensive airstrike was carried out for about five hours. The Toofani fighters of 29 Squadron operating from Kumbhirgram and Hunter fighters of 17 Squadron operating from Jorhat were used to suppress the MNF insurrection. According to the locals, the jet fighters which attacked Aizawl used incendiary bombs and scorched Dawrpui and Chhinga Veng areas in Aizawl. Apart from Aizawl, the neighbouring villages of Tualbung and Hnahlan were also bombarded. No human casualties were officially reported in these airstrikes. After the air raid, the civilian population fled Aizawl and took refuge in the remote villages in the adjacent hills.

In the aftermath of the Aizawl air raids, two MLAs of Assam, Stanley DD Nichols Roy and Hoover H Hynniewta, went to Mizo district to see what happened to the people of the Mizo District and were totally shocked by what they saw. Later in April, Nichols Roy moved a motion in the Assam Legislative House on the Aizawl air attack. Condemning the air assault, Roy pointedly told the Assam Chief Minister and the House thus: “The use of air force for taking Aijal was excessive because you cannot pinpoint from the air who is loyal and who is not loyal, who is an MNF and who is somebody pledging allegiance to the Mizo Union, the ruling party in the Mizo district.”

As a proof of their assertion, the other MLA Hynniewta produced photographs of one unexploded bomb and some fragments of exploded bombs. The on-the-spot findings of the two MLAs was however strongly denied by the GoI. Upon this, Hynniewta told the Chief Minister and the House in no uncertain terms: “We touched it, we measured it and we took photograph of it. We have fragments of the bombs. We have the testimony of hundreds of people who have heard the explosions the moment the planes flew over in Mizo Hills. If you want to suppress the MNF rebellion, ordinary bullets are sufficient. From any point of view, military, physical or economic, these weapons should never have been used.”

Till date, the GoI has repeatedly denied the aerial bombing of Aizawl on March 4-5, 1966 by the IAF. The day of the bombings has since been commemorated by the people of Mizoram as Zoram Ni (Zoram Day). Various organizations in Mizoram have repeatedly demanded that the GoI

should have the courage to admit its inhuman acts against the Mizo people and officially apologize to the people of Mizoram for the series of unwarranted air attacks on Aizawl and against the innocent civilian populace.

The undersigned, fully support and endorse the stand of the people of Mizoram on this issue and urge the GoI to take corrective steps to heal the lingering emotional wounds the Indian security forces caused to them by sincerely and honorably apologizing to the Mizo people without any further delay.

Sincerely,
The Undersigned

Note: The Petition to Government of India was created by and written by SIPHRO. Circulated through <http://www.petitiononline.com/zoramday/petition.html>.

Nepal Maoist Central Committee Passes Dahal's Paper

KATHMANDU, 18 Dec 2010: The UCPN (Maoist) Central Committee meeting on Friday endorsed the political paper of party Chairman Pushpa Kamal Dahal that proposes to go for a revolt if there is any conspiracy against peace and the new constitution.

The CC meeting held at party headquarters, Paris Danda endorsed Dahal's political paper by voice vote as Vice-chairman Mohan Baidya, who had presented a separate political paper during the Palungtar plenum, supported Dahal, except in his review of the party's history from the Chunwang meeting to date.

Another Vice-chairman, Dr Baburam Bhattarai, has expressed his disagreement over Dahal's political paper, saying that it would only encourage counter-revolution but voiced his support for the immediate work plan proposed by Dahal. The three top leaders, however, are in consensus over the party's immediate work plan as there has been agreement to hold a debate on the differences seen in the political papers of Chairman Dahal and Dr Bhattarai.

"The political paper presented by the chairman at the Palungtar plenum has been endorsed by the CC meeting," said Maoist spokesperson Dina Nath Sharma after the meeting.

Chairman Dahal and Vice-chairmen duo Baidya and Dr Bhattarai had presented separate political papers at the Palungtar plenum as there was no consensus among the top three leaders on the party's immediate action plan. The plenum had given responsibility to the party's CC committee to resolve differences seen in the three separate political papers and come up with a single document on the party's immediate action plan.

All three political papers mainly dwelt on determining the party's principal enemy and a review of the Chunwang meeting, among other things. While Chairman Dahal had proposed 'Indian expansionism and intermingling of domestic reactionaries' as the principal enemy, Baidya and Dr Bhattarai had taken 'India' and 'domestic reactionaries' respectively, as the principal enemy of the party.

Friday's CC meeting endorsed Dahal's political paper as Baidya agreed to Dahal's proposal that 'Indian expansionism and intermingling of domestic reactionaries' be taken as the principal enemy. While proposing to forward a slogan of struggle for peace and constitution, Dahal in his political paper has given emphasis to people's revolt. The Palungtar plenum had decided to hold a debate both within and outside the party on differences seen among the top three leaders.

According to spokesperson Sharma, the CC meeting decided to start a new publication, 'Bichar Dhara', to debate the ideological differences seen among the leaders —something leaders close to Dr Bhattarai have opposed saying that it would close the door for open debate.

Baidya had expressed reservations over the analysis of Dahal and Dr Bhattarai that the party's political course of peace, constitution and federal democratic republic adopted by the party's Chunwang meeting was correct.

Among other things, Baidya has said it was mistake on the part of the Maoists to agree to the end of the people's war in the Comprehensive Peace Agreement and dissolution of the Maoists' self-styled people's government. He has also criticized the party-led government as a total failure as it could not do anything significant during its leadership.

Vice-chairman Bhattarai has expressed reservations over Chairman Dahal's political paper. "This action plan will only help counter-revolution if we take into account both the national and international situation," a CC member quoted Dr Bhattarai as saying. "I may be in a wrong position as well. Despite my reservations, I support the immediate work plan adopted by the party." Dr Bhattarai had said at the meeting that the work plan proposed by Dahal would neither bring peace nor ensure promulgation of a new constitution or a revolt.

Maoists to hold struggle programs: As a part of the party's struggle program for peace and constitution, the Maoists plan to hold rallies starting from December 30 and internal orientation for party cadres until January 14, 2011. Likewise, the party has proposed to appeal people in the streets along with a publicity campaign from mid-January to mid-February and launch a strong struggle from February 13 that coincides with the anniversary of the Maoist people's war launched in 1996 and take the struggle program to a new height beginning April 7, which marks Janaandolan Day.

Maoists to seek UNMIN term extension: Maoists have decided to seek consent from other political parties for extending the term of UNMIN yet again if the integration and rehabilitation of combatants is not accomplished by the set deadline of January 15, 2011. The Maoists also decided to seek an alternative if there is no consensus with political parties on UNMIN's term extension.

Source: http://www.myrepublica.com/portal/index.php?action=news_details&news_id=26269

Interview to Basanta

A month ago, Geraldina Colotti, of the Italian daily *Il Manifesto*, interviewed comrade Basanta, member of Politburo and International Department of Unified Communist of Nepal (Maoist). The interview is here enclosed. Basanta answers to matters of those days, and explains an important phase of the ongoing struggle in Nepal between the revolutionary and the reactionary forces, and on the struggle within the revolutionary forces themselves.

As regards the struggle within the party, he says: “To put it bluntly, we have to answer the masses of the people why the proletarian revolutions of the 20th century failed and why those of the 21st century can sustain. For this, we need a serious ideological work in our party.”

We add that this “serious ideological work” is needed in every communist party in the world. We also know that is a duty of the communist parties to carry out this ideological work through the debate in the International Communist Movement about the issues told by Basanta, and the other issues that must be dealt with for its renaissance, strengthening and unification, so beginning the work for building the new Communist International.

Building the Second Communist International is an indispensable aspect of the work of every communist party and group. As the ICM is still weak, and its renaissance at the beginning, many people think that building the new Communist International will be a very long work. If it is so, it is one more reason to begin straightaway. Founding ourselves on Marxism Leninism Maoism we shall follow the most just and direct line towards the success.

CARC Party - Italy
March 2011

Interview by Geraldina Colotti, of the Italian daily *Il Manifesto*, to comrade Basanta, member of Politburo and International Department of Unified Communist of Nepal (Maoist).

Q. After six months of impasse, the chairman of CPN-UML Jhala Nath Khanal was elected prime minister. At the last moment, seeing that he could not win this election, the Standing Committee of UCPN-Maoist

has decided to cancel the candidature of Prachanda to support the candidacy of Khanal. How did you come to this decision?

A. Yes, for about six months in the past, there was an impasse in the Prime Ministerial election in Nepal. It is clear to everybody that the six months-long standoff was the result of meddling in the internal affairs of Nepal by the Indian ruling classes who do not want any changes in favour of the Nepalese people and Nepal. Nepalese people want stability and an anti-feudal and anti-imperialist constitution that resolves the basic contradiction in Nepal. Chairman Prachanda withdrew his candidacy and supported J N Khanal when it was clearly noticed that India was meddling to form a government that would play more in the Indian interest to maintain status quo.

Q. Khanal was elected by the votes of Maoist parliamentarians and by those of small Maoist communist parties. Has the institutional balances shifted to the left? And what will happen now?

A. Nepal is now at a serious crossroads of revolutionary advance or status quo. The entire country is now in a process of polarisation. The comprador bourgeoisie which is leading the reactionary power has been collaborating with Indian expansionist ruling classes to maintain status quo in Nepal while our party is struggling hard to unite the entire patriotic, republican, progressive and left forces to safeguard national sovereignty and ensure people's republic. This very event of prime ministerial election is one of the reflections of this process.

Q. The Nepali Congress criticized UML for not having supported their candidate. Moreover, three members of the Standing Committee and 51 parliamentarians close to Bhattarai have publicly expressed their disagreement, and have also accepted the decision of the Party. What forces these parties are representing now in Nepal? What are the foreign interference and to whom are targeted?

A. Nepali congress in general represents the comprador bourgeois and feudal class in Nepal while the UML is a mixture of various classes. K P Oli and Madhav Nepal faction is close to Nepali Congress while others are not. In this situation, it was obvious for NC to criticise UML for not supporting their candidate. So far as the disagreement of comrade Baburam Bhattarai and other comrades are concerned, it was their difference on whether chairman Prachanda should have withdrawn his candidacy or not. Only when Prachanda and J N Khanal reached 7-point agreement on

the issues of immediate concern then chairman Prachanda withdrew his candidacy.

Q. Is it true that the Maoists will be given various ministries? What is the policy of UCPN (Maoist) in this regard? Which concrete proposals does it have to the main problems the country faces?

A. Once we are a part of the cabinet we will definitely have ministries. However, the number has not yet been fixed. Our claim will be to represent our strength in the Constituent Assembly.

Q. At what point is the issue of integration of the fighters in the army?

A. The question of army integration is being misinterpreted by the reactionaries. We have not abandoned and will never do so with our revolutionary cause. We will in no case make the issue of army integration an excuse to surrender PLA, which has developed at the expense of people's blood and sweat. However, we are prepared to integrate two armies and build up a national army.

Q. The Nepalese soldiers who are part of MINUSTAH (the UN force to stabilize Haiti that is in this Caribbean island since 2004), were accused of having brought and spread of cholera in the country destroyed by the earthquake, where there have been over 4,000 deaths. What is the position of the Maoists as regards international missions that are often at the expense of the oppressed peoples in other areas of the South?

A. In these days good or bad of anyone is measured by the amount of wealth he/she has accumulated. Poor countries are accused as a place of wrongdoings and the poor people are counted as the wrongdoers. The charge upon poor Nepalese soldiers, which are accused of spreading cholera in Haiti, is nothing other than this. Reactionaries the world over have been sending armies from the underdeveloped countries through the UN to help sustain their counterparts. We strongly oppose it. No such acts of the oppressed of one country using against those of the other will be permitted once the oppressed become the master of the state power under the leadership of our party in Nepal.

Q. What is the situation inside the party now? Is it true that the leadership of Prachanda and his guidance on the institutional level have been challenged? And if so, about what issues?

A. Ours is a vibrant and lively party. So it is obvious to have intensive and extensive debates and discussions in our party to make it livelier. The fact that Comrade Prachanda has been leading our party since the last 25 years does not make him immune to any mistakes. Nor it was like this in the past. Whether it be chairman Prachanda or any other leaders in our party if they come up with some ideological and political problems our party goes through a sharp debate. We had serious line struggles in the past and we do have now too. We communists regard line struggle as the motive force of a party of the proletariat. Therefore the ongoing line struggle in our party is aimed at correcting the mistakes of the past and making him ideologically and politically stronger than before to lead the party ahead.

Definitely, we are at a difficult situation now. We have to emerge victorious in Nepal from the encirclement of the imperialist marauders all across the globe. And on the other we have to convince the masses the world over on how can we accomplish, sustain and develop the proletarian revolution. To put it bluntly, we have to answer the masses of the people why the proletarian revolutions of the 20th century failed and why those of the 21st century can sustain. For this, we need a serious ideological work in our party. It is not a petty quarrel among the leaders but a serious ideological and political struggle to confront the challenges at present. The crux of the ongoing line struggle remains here. Thank you.

Date: Feb 13, 2011

Basanta,
PBM,
UCPN (Maoist).

Note: Circulated by the Party of the Committees to Support Resistance – for Communism (CARC) - Italy.

Justice for Aasia Bibi; Speedy Trial of Salman Taseer's Killers

History is said to be made when humanity has tried to break asunder forces of unreason, irrationality, bigotry, intolerance and reaction which keep reappearing in newer forms in its onward journey. But what can one say when it tries to do the exact opposite, or prefer to go back on the path undertaken.

Pakistan, a country of 170 millions, stands at a similar juncture today.

A woman has been sentenced to death, for the first time in Pakistan's sixty year old history, for an alleged act of blasphemy against Islam, an act which itself abhors modern sensibilities. All attempts by justice loving persons in Pakistan to stop the impending execution of this agricultural labourer, Aasia Bibi, who is a mother of five children and belongs to Christian minority community, seems to have reached a dead end. Whether she would ever be able to get glimpses of the outside world, free from the shackles which bind her today, remains uncertain. The story of her conviction under the infamous blasphemy law has been told umpteen times. We know how her troubles started when she had a fight with her fellow workers on some petty issue which culminated in their charging her under this law.

She has been languishing in jail for around one and a half year now.

Under this law, which was introduced under the Zia Ul Haque regime in mid-eighties, anyone can be charged claiming that s/he showed disrespect towards founder of Islam or Quranic scriptures. Although nobody has faced judicial execution under this law till date, many have been killed by reactionary forces after their acquittal by the court. The act has been freely used to terrorise minorities or used to settle personal scores.

Recently one Doctor Naushad had to spend few days behind bars as he had an argument with a medical representative and had thrown the said persons visiting card on the ground. The representative, whose first name happened to be Mohammad, went to the police and got the innocent man arrested under this law.

It is to the credit of the vibrancy of the civil society and presence of liberal voices in Pakistan that they not only opposed the judicial verdict

in Aasia Bibi's case but also demanded that the infamous law is either repealed or amended. Sherry Rehman, a former minister in the Cabinet has even moved a bill in the senate to that effect. Apart from sporadic protests and demonstrations there was a large meeting of civil society groups and political formations in December where they had planned joint actions in this month for its repeal / revision. As things stand today, these efforts to save Aasia Bibi's life and seek repeal/revisions in the controversial law have received a tremendous setback with the assassination of Salman Taseer, the Governor of Punjab Province, Pakistan, scion of the progressive intellectual/activist Dr M.O. Taseer and nephew of one of the legendary voices in this part of South Asia, Faiz Ahmad Faiz.

Salman Taseer had felt perturbed over the judicial verdict in Aasia Bibi's case and had even demanded that she be immediately freed. To show his solidarity with the hapless woman, he even personally went to meet her in jail with his wife and daughter and even demanded repeal of the law.

There is no denying the fact with growing belligerence of the fundamentalist forces in Pakistan, with few of the Mullahs even declaring Salman Taseer Wajib Ul Katl (worth to be killed) over his stand on the blasphemy law, few from the ruling dispensation gathered courage to support him. Despite his growing isolation within the party he refused to budge from his voice of conscience.

As already mentioned Pakistan stands at very crucial juncture in its journey. The manner in which his killer Malik Qadri was declared a 'Gazi of Islam' (warrior for Islam) by some fundos or the jubilation which awaited him when he was presented in the Islamabad court, with someone from the crowd even showering rose petals on him, just goes to show growing hold of extremism in the society.

The only silver lining to the otherwise grim scenario in Pakistan is that voices of sanity, voices of tolerance, voices of reason and protest have not given up their fight; they have held candlelight marches, organised rallies in different parts of Pakistan in memory of Salman Taseer, and declared their solidarity towards the*cause celebre* for which he faced martyrdom.

The developments in Pakistan have been witnessed with glee by Talibans of a different kind, namely the Hindutva Supremacists in India, which have similarly tried to pursue their very own agenda of majoritarianism. As the maxim goes, reactionaries / bigots grow together, any turn towards further Talibanisation of Pakistan would further augment the strength of these fanatics here in India. We should not forget that the

ascendance of these forces in India at the fag end of 20th century and the beginning of the 21st century was also the period when for the first time in Pakistan's history fundamentalist forces gained dominant position even at electoral level in two of its states.

Question naturally arises what needs to be done in this case?

It is of utmost importance at this juncture to declare our unconditional, unflinching support to voices of sanity, voices of tolerance in Pakistan. We should not forget that after Salman Taseer's assassination, Sherry Rehman is on their target and her life is in imminent danger.

We, at the New Socialist Initiative, sincerely feel that it may well be a very symbolic move but:

It is time to raise our voice for justice to Aasia Bibi.

It is time to demand that the infamous blasphemy law be repealed.

It is time to ask for speedy trial in the assassination of Salman Taseer and also bring to justice all those people who helped the killer Qadri.

Perhaps Martin Luther King' exhortation to the ordinary populace in one of his famous speeches is worth quoting here:

There comes a time comes when silence is betrayal... History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people.

In Solidarity with progressive voices of freedom, justice and equality of Pakistan,
New Socialist Initiative, Delhi Chapter,
Monday, January 10, 2011.

PHILIPPINES

Successful Asian Regional Conference Discusses Socialist Strategy

Partido Lakas ng Masa international desk

11 December 2010 — A successful “socialism conference” was held in Manila from November 27 to 28. The conference was organised by the socialist Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM, Party of the Labouring Masses) and the socialist-feminist regional network, Transform Asia. The conference was attended by 100 delegates, leaders of the PLM from Metro Manila and other leading socialists of the Philippine left, as well as 13 international guests.

The international organisations represented were the Malaysian Socialist Party (PSM); People's Democratic Party (PRD-Indonesia); Working People's Association (PRP-Indonesia); Political Committee of the Poor-People's Democratic Party (KPRM-PRD-Indonesia); Left Turn Thailand; Socialist Alliance (Australia); the Left Party (Sweden); the General Confederation of Nepalese Trade Unions (Gefont); the Vietnamese Union of Friendship Organisations; and the Centre for Environment and Community Asset Development (Vietnam).

Keynote speakers at the conference included the newly appointed Cuban ambassador to the Philippines, Juan Corrales. Greetings were also given by the representative of the Venezuelan embassy, Charge d'affaires Manuel Iturbe.

The aim of the conference was explained by the opening speaker Reihana Mohideen, chairperson of Transform Asia. “We need to go beyond anti-capitalism. We have no shortage of those criticising the horrors of capitalism today, including the capitalists themselves, such as George Soros and even former leaders of international finance institutions, such as Joseph Stiglitz... to NGOs, who are also critics of the system. [But] anti-capitalism is not enough today. We need to put forward alternatives to the capitalist system and we need to name these alternatives, as socialism. This is what this conference aims to do.”

Conference highlights included panels and discussions on socialist strategy, the capitalist economic crisis and socialist alternatives to the environmental crisis. Sonny Melencio, chairperson of PLM, argued that “there's no strategy for all seasons” and that strategy is “not something constant, fixed, once and for all”. “Strategy becomes a key

question during historic turning points, when there is intensification in the class struggle and during political crises... [Otherwise] we face periods of protracted organising and the preparation of the forces of the working class.”

Melencio gave some examples of such historic turning points: “While Lenin did not use the term strategy, the question of strategy was posed in the 1905 and the 1917 Russian revolutions, when the capture of political power by the working class was resolved through insurrection... The second world war gave rise to national liberation movements and the strategy of Mao’s people’s war or protracted people’s war [emerged] in China... Gramsci put forward the idea of ‘war of positions and war of manoeuvres’, which was in the context of the structure of the state in western countries.”

Melencio outlined the strategy pursued by PLM as a “combination of uprising or people’s power action and electoral intervention”, also drawing from the lessons of the revolutions in Venezuela and Bolivia that involved insurrectionary uprisings and electoral victories.

Bui Ba Binh, from the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations, described the situation in Vietnam today under the “socialist-oriented market economy”. He explained that the key features of this orientation was “to consider the market as a means to achieve social development objectives... to rationally use the market space... and to harmoniously link the market space with public, non-market, space in other fields.” According to Binh, the “socialist-oriented market economy” has brought about real positive changes in Vietnam.

The final plenary session included a discussion on socialist internationalism and the call made by Venezuela’s president Hugo Chavez and the United Socialist Party of Venezuela for the formation of a Fifth Socialist International. Speaking on the proposal, Arul Arutchelvan, from the Socialist Party of Malaysia, explained the importance of the proposal. “Hugo Chavez and Venezuela have the moral authority to call for the Fifth International because of their commitment to building socialism in the 21st century. It’s also a non-sectarian position taken by Chavez. This is not a rigid [structure] it calls upon all left parties and anti-imperialist groupings to come together.”

The conference concluded with a performance by the PLM cultural group Teatro Pabrik and the singing of the “Internationale”.

Militant Salute to The Nestlé Workers’ 9th Year Struggle

PAMANTI-KMU

13 January 2011

Pagkakaisa ng Manggagawa sa Timog Katagalugan (PAMANTI-KMU) wishes to convey its highest militant salute to the Nestlé workers marking their 9th year of strike this January 14, 2011.

There is no straight and easy path in establishing reason, rights, and justice. Since the capitalists and state will not grant these by themselves, resolute commitment and untiring struggle bound the Nestlé workers and their families in the 9-year strike which is now considered one of the long-running active strikes in the region’s trade union history.

We also pay high respect to the martyred Nestlé union president Diosdado “Ka Fort” Fortuna and 42 unyielding Nestlé workers who died in the course of the struggle.

The more than 200 remaining striking workers deserve recognition for their uncompromising stance and defence for the genuine, militant, and anti-imperialist unionism.

The workers were pushed to strike on 2002 when the management excluded the item of Retirement Benefits and used it as pre-condition in the collective bargaining negotiation. The Retirement Benefits, however, was a hard-won issue during their first strike in 1989. The Supreme Court resolved in its decision in 1991 that the Retirement Benefits is a valid CBA item. The Supreme Court again reaffirmed on August 22, 2006 its earlier decision.

The Nestlé management used all means just so its workers would not benefit from the rule of law. Nestlé, in fact, outrightly violates the Supreme Court decisions. It intends and behaves to stand above the law.

Using its influences in the different government agencies, courts, and the mercenary police and military, foreign monopoly capitalist Nestlé suppressed the workers’ strike. Scores of workers, families, and supporters were hurt in the series of dispersals and harassments. Hundreds were slapped with trumped-up charges to cripple the workers’ will to fight.

In the event of the centennial celebration of its business presence in the Philippines this coming March 2011, no amount of ads promotion and commercial blitz shall wipe off Nestlé’s blood debts to the Filipino working class.

Forty Nobel Laureates Including Venkatraman Ramakrishnan In Support of Binayak Sen

Free Binayak Campaign

Following the lead of Prof. Amartya Sen, India's only living Nobel laureate, an informal group of 40 other Nobel laureates from twelve different countries has raised their powerful voices on behalf Dr. Binayak Sen whom they refer to as "an exceptional, courageous and selfless colleague, dedicated to helping those in India who are least able to help themselves". The Appeal spells out how one of them personally verified the facts about the Binayak Sen case, visiting the place of Sen's work, and meeting government officials and Sen himself in prison. With 91 year old French scientist François Jacob (Nobel Prize 1965) as the seniormost laureate among them, this group includes laureates of various years since then down to Dr. Venkatraman Ramakrishnan (2009). They are overwhelmingly scientists and medical laureates, which itself seems to be a demonstration of the legitimacy of the engagement of scientists and physicians in social and political issues, as exemplified by Binayak Sen himself.

The group includes Joseph Murray who pioneered kidney transplantation and Samuel Blumberg who discovered the hepatitis B virus and devised both the diagnostic test for and the vaccine against it. They "entreat those leaders to act now, to urge Dr. Sen's immediate release on bail, and insist that this time his appeal is heard without delay under the highest standards of Indian law."

On behalf of Free Binayak Campaign,
Vellore P. Zachariah
February 8, 2011

Appeal for Indian Medical Doctor, Binayak Sen

We, the 38* undersigned Nobel Laureates, respectfully express our astonishment and dismay at the unjust life sentence handed down last month in India to a fellow scientist and human rights advocate, 61-year-old Dr. Binayak Sen.

We note that, when Dr. Sen was on trial in 2008 and many of us appealed for his release on bail, a year later the Supreme Court of India concurred with our opinion and ordered his immediate release. Several months after voicing our concern about Dr. Sen's detention, one of us traveled to Chhattisgarh; met government officials; consulted Dr. Sen's family, lawyers, and colleagues; visited his remote clinic to learn more about his selfless work with the Adivasis; and, after a few days and many hours spent waiting in the Raipur prison yard, finally met with Dr. Sen himself in the presence of the prison warden.

We have seen that Dr. Sen is an exceptional, courageous, and selfless colleague, dedicated to helping those in India who are least able to help themselves. Yet his recompense has been two years in prison under difficult conditions, a blatantly unfair trial lasting two years in the so-called "Fast Track" Sessions Court, an unjust conviction of sedition and conspiracy, and condemnation to life imprisonment.

We earnestly hope that our renewed appeal is heard. We know that there are leaders in India who have the power, humanity, patriotism, and decency to speak out against this injustice. We entreat those leaders to act now, to urge Dr. Sen's immediate release on bail, and insist that this time his appeal is heard without delay under the highest standards of Indian law.

Surely, those who would see the largest democracy in the world survive and thrive can do no less at this crucial time for both Dr. Sen and for the future of justice in India.

Respectfully,

Peter Agre, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2003; Kenneth J. Arrow, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, 1972; Richard Axel, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 2004; David Baltimore, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1975; Martin Chalfie, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2008; Claude Cohen-Tannoudji, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1997; Robert Curl, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1996; Johann Deisenhofer, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1988; Richard R. Ernst, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1991; Edmond H. Fischer, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1992; Walter Gilbert, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1980; Roy J. Glauber, Nobel Prize in Physics, 2005; Paul Greengard, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 2000; David J. Gross, Nobel Prize in Physics, 2004; Roger Guillemin, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1977; Dudley Herschbach, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1986;

Antony Hewish, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1974; H. Robert Horvitz, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 2002; François Jacob, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1965; Daniel Kahneman, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, 2002; Eric R. Kandel, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 2000; Lawrence R. Klein, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, 1980; Roger D. Kornberg, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2006; Sir Harold W. Kroto, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1996; Finn E. Kydland, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, 2004; Yuan T. Lee, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1986; Rita Levi-Montalcini, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1986; Roderick MacKinnon, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2003; Sir James Mirrlees, Nobel Memorial Prize in Economic Sciences, 1996; Joseph E. Murray, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1990; Douglas D. Osheroff, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1996; John C. Polanyi, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1986; V. Ramakrishnan, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 2009; Sir Richard Roberts, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1993; Jens C. Skou, Nobel Prize in Chemistry, 1998; Jack Steinberger, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1988; Sir John Sulston, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 2002; Charles H. Townes, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1964; Klaus von Klitzing, Nobel Prize in Physics, 1985 and; Torsten N. Wiesel, Nobel Prize in Physiology or Medicine, 1981.

*After this appeal was released two additional Nobel Laureates requested to sign it, bringing the total number of signatories to 40 as of 18h EST on Tuesday, February 8. Their names are included above.

Statement of the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners In solidarity with the Political Prisoners in Medinipur Central Jail, West Bengal, India who has started their Indefinite Hunger Strike on 10th December 2010!

Nearly 150 political prisoners—mostly under trail incarcerated in the Medinipur Central Jail in the state of West Bengal which the Indian government calls 'Correctional Home'—will start hunger strike from 10th December 2010 on the Human Rights Day for an indefinite period, true to the long tradition of hunger strikes organized by political prisoners in Medinipur as also other jails of West Bengal and outside in near and distant past.

The prisoners include those arrested on the charge of having Maoist links, or becoming members of the People's Committee Against Police Atrocities (PCAPA) that spearheaded the Lalgarh (Jangalmahal) movement in the state of West Bengal from November 2008, or common villagers standing by the cause. Many of these prisoners have been languishing in jail for years together in abysmal conditions virtually without trial. Some other prisoners arrested in Maoist connections will also join the hunger strike in Krishnagar Jail, Nadia, Alipur Central Jail and Presidency Jail in Kolkata. Among the prisoners spearheading the hunger strike are Chhatradhar Mahato, Sukhshanti Baskey, Prasun Chatterjee and Raja Sarkhel in Medinipur Central Jail, Chandi Sarkar, Sabyasachi Goswami, Zakir Hosen and Pradip Chatterjee in Krishnagar Jail, Gour Chakrabarti in Presidency Jail and Telugu Dipak in Alipur Central Jail.

Ever since its inception it has been a constant demand of the Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners [CRPP] for the unconditional release of all political prisoners in the Indian subcontinent. It had in this regard also stressed the need to completely do away with all draconian laws like the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), Public Safety Act (PSA) and all similar acts meant to suppress and stifle political dissent and hence the most oppressed and exploited people of the subcontinent.

The present call for the indefinite hunger strike by the political prisoners in various prisons in the state of West Bengal in India is growing sign of the worsening conditions in prisons all over the subcontinent. It once again is a call to all democratic minded and freedom loving people of the subcontinent and the world at large to take note of the nature of incarceration of political dissent and the cold manipulation of ensuring the withering away of political dissent within the four walls of the prison through innumerable cases which will take several lives to finish as well as inhuman conditions of stay which negate all norms of the declared jail manual.

The Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners (CRPP) expresses wholehearted support to the striking prisoners and urges all democratic forces throughout India and other parts of the world to raise their voice in support of their just demands.

On this occasion of the International Human Rights Day, the CRPP extends its solidarity to all such voices which has been forcefully silenced through incarceration and other oppressive and exploitative methods for their struggle to be heard and also to their fundamental right to freedom of expression and the inalienable right to dignified existence.

The demands placed by the political prisoners in various prisons in the state of West Bengal in India before the authorities are as follows:

1. The joint forces should be withdrawn and the 'Operation Green-hunt' stopped immediately and the government should sit for a dialogue with the PCAPA without delay.
2. Section 144 should be immediately withdrawn, and there should be unrestricted entry of all newspersons, intellectuals and other people in the Jungle Mahal area.
3. Legal proceedings should be initiated against the criminal gangs of the CPI (Marxist) known as the *hermads*.
4. Judicial enquiry should be initiated for the murder of all leaders, members and supporters of the People's Committee including Lalmohan Tudu, Sidhu and Umakanto Mahato, and offenders should be brought to book.
5. The cooked up charges against all the prisoners incarcerated in the jails of West Bengal on political grounds, including those arrested from Jungle Mahal should be withdrawn and the prisoners released unconditionally.
6. Repeal all draconian acts including the UAPA and the AFSPA.
7. Prisoners imprisoned on political grounds should be given the status of political prisoners and the government should have to bear the cost of maintaining their families.
8. Prisoners should be given opportunity to meet the members of their families and receive necessary articles from them in Medinipur court.
9. After arrest, no participant in a movement should be made to "disappear" illegally. Everyone should be produced in court within 24 hours.
10. Nobody should be 'shown arrested' by tagging in one false case after another.
11. Judicial enquiry should be initiated in all cases of rape including those in Sonamukhi and the offenders brought to book.
12. Old men and women in the Jungle Mahal should be given adequate old-age pension and widows given widow-pension, and all in this connection should be paid off immediately.
13. All surplus grain kept in the FCI go-downs should be immediately distributed among the poor people of Jungle Mahal, and not to be allowed to either rot or be burnt.
14. Stop biased investigation into the Jnaneswari Express sabotage and initiate neutral investigation; a neutral investigation team should be formed with people from cross-sections of society and actual culprits should be punished.

15. Indian army in Kashmir should be immediately withdrawn. The hopes and aspirations of the people of the land should be honoured.
16. Persons involved in the destruction of Babri Masjid and subsequent riots should be given exemplary punishment.
17. Prisoners confined in the cells should be allowed to meet other prisoners. The illegal system that segregates one prisoner from another should be immediately stopped.
18. Those among the life-convict prisoners who have already passed 14 years of incarceration should be set free immediately.
19. Telephone service should be introduced inside jails and every prisoner be allowed to avail of this opportunity.
20. Instead of every prisoner being forced to have his beard cut with one common razor, each prisoner should be allowed to have a separate arrangement of his own.
21. Arrangement should be made for the supply of water inside the cells for 24 hours and the inhuman custom of carrying water drums over shoulders should be stopped immediately.
22. Arrangement should be made for political prisoners to take political classes inside prisons. No political literature can be seized by the jail authority.
23. Political prisoners should be allowed to contact media persons outside and they should be allowed the right to have their political writings published in different newspapers.
24. Intellectuals coming to meet political prisoners should be allowed to have table interview with them.
25. The newly-proposed system of payment of daily wage @ Rs.100.00 to convicts should be implemented immediately; wages should not be kept due.
26. Prisoners seeking a copy each of West Bengal Correctional Services Act and the Jail Code should be provided one copy each.
27. Canteens should be introduced inside Medinipur Jail.
28. Political prisoners should be provided with all the daily newspapers at government expense.
29. Proper infrastructure for treatment in Medinipur Jail Hospital should be made and necessary machines installed.

In Solidarity,
Committee for the Release of Political Prisoners

Enforced Disappearance of Anthony Shing, Head of Foreign Affairs of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM)

Naga People's Movement for Human Rights
17 January 2011

Anthony Shing, known among his people as Ningkhan Shimray, is the Head of Foreign Affairs of the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM). NSCN-IM has been holding peace talks with the Government of India since 1997. Anthony Shing went missing on **27 September 2010**.

Anthony Shing disappeared after he landed at Kathmandu international airport on 27th from Bangkok with Royal Nepal Airlines flight number RA 402 at 5:55 pm. He was to take a flight to New Delhi on the morning of 28th September 2010 to attend the next round of peace talks between Government of India (GOI) and NSCN-IM scheduled to start on 29 September 2010 at New Delhi. Two acquaintances and the driver of the hotel's pick-up service waited for him at the airport for hours since they were informed that he had departed from Bangkok, but he did not appear nor did he get in touch with the hotel or anyone else of his contacts in Kathmandu. The airport in Kathmandu is relatively small with only one exit gate for the general passengers.

Anthony Shing was traveling with his Bangladesh passport. Although he was issued an Indian passport he was compelled to continue using his old Bangladesh passport that was issued by the authority of Bangladesh since he had faced harassment by immigration authorities of various countries whenever he travelled with Indian passport.

Preliminary investigations initiated by a human rights group in Kathmandu on the same day shed some light on what happened. When the airport immigration was contacted they were informed that he had arrived, that he had filled in his arrival including the hotel address, and he passed immigration. The immigration further mentioned that there was no problem at immigration on that day.

On the following day, **28 September**, the human rights group inquired at the police at Tribhuvan International Airport whether Anthony Shing had been arrested or detained, but were told that this was not the case. Queries at the Police Office, Hanuman Dhoka Kathmandu, and the Tourist Police at Bhrikuti Mandap, Kathmandu, also did not lead to any result.

On the same day the human rights group sought the help of a Member of Parliament to inquire again at the airport immigration what had happened. Immigration confirmed its earlier statement that Anthony Shing had arrived and passed immigration. The Member of Parliament then requested the Home Minister's Personal Assistant to help with the case. In the afternoon the Personal Assistant got back to the Member of Parliament that he cannot provide much information but advised that it is better to stay away from this matter since it was related to international affairs.

On **29 September** the Police Superintendent, on request by the human rights group, issued a circular to the subordinated authorities to submit any record on Anthony Shing, but none was found. Inquiry was also made with the Deputy Superintendent of Police at the airport, who responded that he knew nothing and added that it was better to stay away from such cases.

Later that day, the human rights group came to learn from a reliable source within the government that Anthony Shing was arrested right after crossing immigration and taken to the departure gate. There are also eyewitnesses to this, who however have requested anonymity to the extent possible for security reasons.

On **2nd October** Anthony Shing's wife was informed through the NSCN secretariat in Delhi that her husband was picked up from Kathmandu airport and brought to Patna (Bihar) by National Investigation Agency (NIA); a federal agency of Indian government to combat terrorism. The same day he was allowed to call his wife without revealing his whereabouts. In her appeal letter to NPMHR she mentioned that he sounded weak but he told his wife that he was not tortured. However they were not allowed to communicate in their dialect but speak only in English.

On the **3rd of October** as NSCN was preparing to go to Patna they were informed that Anthony Shing has been brought to Delhi. Yet no information was given as to where he was kept.

On the **7th of October** Anthony's wife received another call from a number from India and her husband was put on line. She was told that his detainers would allow one of his family members to come and visit him and said that the time and place would be confirmed the next day.

On the **8th of October** no communication whatsoever was received as informed the previous day.

On the **9th** it was learnt that he was to be produced on the **12th** in Patiala House; a district court in Delhi.

On the **12th of October** members of NPMHR along with the student community and some Naga law professionals went to Patiala house for

the hearing. There were policeman stationed in front of the magistrate's court. They asked some of the students 'what have you come here for? Are you all from Nagaland waiting for the Naga person to be brought?'. From time to time the policeman tried to talk to the students. They also informed that he (Anthony shing) was to be produced at 11.00am but he has not been brought yet. As they saw women who had also come for the court hearing reinforcement were sent including policewomen who were not present earlier.

His lawyer who was appointed by the state came at around 11.30 am and he had no clue as to what the case was all about. He asked the law professionals who had come for the hearing to brief him. He also said he had not met the accused yet.

Anthony shing was brought at around 2.00pm amidst tight security. The NIA personnel did not allow any communication. However the lawyer who was to replace the former got the vakalatnama signed and the NIA personnel insisted that they speak in English only.

Two cases were heard before Anthony's. However when it was his turn the court ordered everyone out. Later NPMHR was informed by his lawyer that the court refused judicial custody and that he was remanded for another 14 days and that he is to be produced two weeks later on the 25th of October.

The charges against him as told by the lawyer was 'procuring arms to wage war against the state' (read India)

The **First Information Report** (FIR) against him is dated 1 January 2010. He was produced thrice in different courts without any intimation to his family.

2/10/2010: Produced before chief judicial magistrate in Patna (Bihar) and granted 3 days transit remand

4/10/2010: Brought to Delhi and produced before special court of NIA

5/10/2010: Produced in Patiala court and remanded to 7 days of police custody

Based on the evidence collected it is believed that Anthony Shing was abducted by the Indian Government's intelligence service from Nepal International airport. There is no arrest warrant against him in Nepal.

It is important to note that no case has been filed against Anthony Shing in any court in India and that there was no arrest warrant by the Indian authorities.

However after he was abducted from Kathmandu airport he was produced in Patna court on 2nd of October 2010.

The Indian government therefore has not only violated its own laws and the national sovereignty and the law in Nepal with its unlawful abduction/arrest of Anthony Shing on Nepalese soil, but has also clearly violated international law, i.e. the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, to which India is a signatory.

Furthermore, the enforced disappearance of one of the leaders of NSCN-IM while the peace talks are ongoing and shortly before a new round of negotiations was to start raises the question whether India is genuinely committed to finding a peaceful and lasting solution to the India-Naga conflict.

OUR CALL

1. India is a signatory to International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance.
2. The Government of India must take the responsibility and be accountable to the enforced disappearance of Mr. Anthony Shing and his subsequent detention in the custody of Indian Agency NIA.
3. As the incident occurred within the sovereign territory of Nepal, the Government of Nepal is also responsible for collaborating with the Government of India in the enforced disappearance of Mr. Anthony Shing.
4. The Government of India as a democratic country must be answerable to its citizens and the Naga people for breach of trust, and terms and conditions of the peace talks.

OUR APPEAL

Send communications to the Government of India and Nepal at the addresses given below with the following demands:

1. Allow Anthony Shing to receive medical services.
2. Grant family members and colleagues access to Anthony Shing.
3. Respect the terms of ceasefire agreement between the National Socialist Council of Nagaland (NSCN-IM) and the Government of India, which includes free movement of the parties involved to facilitate the peace talks.

Resolution Passed at the National Convention on the Legal and Political Implications of the Abduction of Sanayaima Alias RK Meghen

Imphal, 4 November 2010

The National Convention¹ on the Legal and Political Implications of the Abduction of Mr. Sanayaima alias R.K. Meghen held on 4 November 2010 at Manipur Dramatic Union Hall, Imphal, after thorough deliberation on the subject:

Takes note of the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) news of 13 October 2010 reporting the arrest of Mr. Sanayaima, Chairman of the United National Liberation Front (UNLF) by Bangladeshi police and subsequently flown out in an Indian aircraft; the news is further confirmed by a statement of the UNLF on 16 October 2010 that he had been abducted from Lalmatia Area under Mohammadpur Police Station near Dhaka in Bangladesh on 29 September 2010 by a joint team of the Research and Analysis Wing (RAW) of the Government of India (GoI) and security forces of the Government of Bangladesh (GoB);

Is deeply disturbed by the continued denial of custody of Mr. Sanayaima by the GoI despite petitions by his family to the Union Home Ministry, the National Human Rights Commission and even a Habeas Corpus petition to the Gauhati High Court² and despite sustained public protest demanding to reveal his whereabouts;

Is gravely concerned about his physical and mental integrity during this prolonged incommunicado detention and the intense agony caused by concealing the truth of his arrest, detention and his subsequent fate from his family in particular and the people of Manipur in general;

Is affirming that both GoI and GoB as State Parties to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR) are legally obliged to respect and to ensure to all individuals within its territory and subject to its jurisdiction the rights recognized in the Covenant, without distinction of any kind, such as race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, property, birth or other status;³

Is affirming that the right to life and the right not to be tortured are nonderogable rights and the state cannot abdicate its obligation to respect and protect them even during states of emergency;⁴

Denounces GoI and GoB's flagrant flaunting of the due process of their own domestic laws applicable while arresting and detaining a

person, deporting a person across international borders and rendering even the cardinal principles of the rule of law meaningless;

Emphasizes GoI's obligation not to subject any person to enforced disappearance as a signatory to the International Convention on the Protection of All Persons from Forced Disappearance, since 6 February 2007 while still awaiting its ratification;⁵

Calls attention to the firm position of the UN Special Rapporteur on the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms while countering terrorism, the Special Rapporteur on torture and other cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment or punishment, the Working Group on Arbitrary Detention and the Working Group on Enforced or Involuntary Disappearances in their joint study on global practices in relation to secret detention in the context of countering terrorism,⁶ that, the practices of secret detention is irreconcilable with international human rights law and international humanitarian law, as it amounts to manifold human rights violation that cannot be justified under any circumstances, including during states of emergency or armed conflict;

Reiterates that "enforced disappearance of persons" is a crime against humanity according to Article 7 of the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court when it is committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population, with knowledge of the attack⁷

Unanimously resolve and declare as follows:

1. That, the abduction and secret detention of Mr. Sanayaima, violates the domestic laws of Bangladesh, the domestic laws of India, international human rights law, international humanitarian law and even the established international criminal law.
2. That, Mr. Sanayaima, who is a leader of the long struggle for the right to self-determination of the people of Manipur and demanding to freely determine Manipur's political status through a plebiscite under the aegis of the United Nations,⁸ is a human rights defender within the purview of the UN Declaration on the Rights and Responsibility of Individuals, Groups and Organs of Society to Promote and Protect Universally Recognized Human Rights and Fundamental Freedom;⁹
3. That, Mr. Sanayaima is entitled to all the universally recognized human rights. Therefore GoB and GoI should immediately disclose his whereabouts, he should be promptly produced before a court of law; if there are charges leveled against him, he and his family

members should be duly informed of the same. He is entitled to a right to fair trial within a reasonable time including the right to defend himself. If there is no charge against him he should be promptly released.

4. That, GoI and GoB should recognise the historical and political nature of the half-a-century-old Manipur-India conflict, which has ravaged Manipur society and also have demonized the armed forces of union operating under the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958. As recommended by the UN Human Rights Committee in 1997¹⁰ a peaceful solution should be sought through political means by respecting the right to selfdetermination of the peoples, the right to freedom of expression and the right to participation in governance;
5. That, there is a serious apprehension that the continued secret detention of Mr. Sanayaima will only serve to escalate and further deepen the Manipur-India conflict;
6. That, the Manipur Legislative Assembly pays urgent attention by calling a special session on the abduction and secret detention of Mr. Sanayaima alias R.K Meghen.
7. That, it is further resolved that this resolution be transmitted to all concerned authorities, national and international, including the nongovernmental organisations and civil societies of the world for their solidarity and support.

Endorsing Individuals and Organisations:

Advance Women Society, Manipur; All Manipur Bar Association (AMBA); All Manipur Progressive Farmers' Association (AMPFA); All Manipur United Clubs Organisation (AMUCO); All Manipur Women's Social Reformation & Dev. Samaj (Nupi Samaj); All Manipur Tami Chingmi Apunba Nupi Lup (Tami Chingmi); All Manipur Students Union (AMSU); AMRPSWA, Manipur; Apunba Loumi Lup (ALL), Thoubal District; Apunba Manipur Kanba Ima Lup (AMKIL); Chanura Lamchinglen Kangleipak (CLK); Civil Liberties and Human Rights Organisation (CLAHRO); Centre for Organisation Research & Education (CORE); Coalition Against Drugs and Alcohol (CADA); Committee on Human Rights (COHR), Manipur; Ereibak Eanat Chanura Loinsinlon (EECHAL); Extrajudicial Execution Victims' Families Association Manipur (EEVFAM); Families of Involuntary Disappearances Association Manipur (FIDAM); The Federation of Regional Indigenous Societies (FRIENDS); Ethno-

Heritage Council (HERICOUN); Human Rights Alert (HRA); Human Rights Initiative (HRI); International Peace and Social Advancement (IPSA); Kangchup Lam Meira Paibi Apunba Lup, Imphal West District; Loumee-Sinmee Apunba Lup (LAL), Bishnupur District; Manipur Chanura Leishem Marup (MACHA LEIMA); Manipur Peace & Integrity Council (MAPI Council); Man League (MALEM) Manipur; Meetei Eeyek Eerol Lonnasilol Apunba Lup (MEELAL); Meetei Society Churachandpur; Meitei Union, Sardar Hills District; Momnu Erikkhombi Lup (MEEKHOL); National Identity Protection Committee (NIPCO); Nongchup Imphal Loumee-Sinmee Chaokhat Thourang Lup (NILSCTL), Imphal West District; Nongchup Imphal Meira Paibi Apunba Lup (NIMPAL), Imphal West District; Nongpok Imphal Loumee-Sinmee Apunba Lup (NILSAL), Imphal East District; Poirei Leimarol Meira Paibi Apunba Nupi Lup; Rongmei Lu Phuam (RLP), Manipur; Rural Academy of Law, Oinam; Threatened Indigenous Peoples' Society (TIPS); United Committee Manipur (UCM); United Manipuri Muslim Women's Association (AMMWA); United Peoples Front (UPF), Manipur; Thoubal District United Women's Development Organization; Universal Mothers Organization (UMO); United Peoples' Administrative Council (UPACO); WMWSR&S, Imphal; Chanambam Upendra, Retired District and Sessions Judge; Dilip Yumnamcha, President, United Committee Manipur; Dr. Chungkham Sheelaramani, Lecturer, DM College of Arts; Dr. Dhanabir Laishram, Political Science, Manipur University; Henri Tiphagne, Executive Director, People's Watch Tamilnadu; Irengbam Arun, Editor, the Ireibak; Kaka D Iralu, Freelance Journalist; Khaidem Mani, Former President All Manipur Bar Association; Khoirom Loyalakpa, Editor, the Naharolgi Thoudang; Kim Gangte, (Trinamool Congress) Former Member of Parliament (Lok Sabha); Kshetrimayum Shanta, Secretary, Communist Party of India (Marxist), Manipur; State Committee; Prof. Akoijam Bimol, CSSS, School of Social Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru Univ.; Radhabinod Kojiam, (NCP) Opposition Leader/Member of Legislative Assembly; Raj Kumar Anand, (MPP) Member of Legislative Assembly; Raj Kumar Rajendra, Former Member of Manipur Human Rights Commission and; Yambem Laba, Former Member of Manipur Human Rights Commission.

Endnotes:

¹Jointly organized by the Centre for Organisation Research & Education, Human Rights Alert, Human Rights Initiative and Threatened Indigenous Peoples' Society.

² Gauhati High Court Writ Petition (Criminal) no. 129 of 2010.

³ ICCPR Article 2.

⁴ ICCPR Article 4.

⁵ A/RES/61/177.

⁶ A/HRC/13/42 dated 26 January 2010.

⁷ See also *Prosecutor v. Kupreskic et al*, IT-95-16-A, judgement of trial chamber of the International.

Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, Para. 566 (14 January 2000).

⁸ Articles 1(2) and 55 of the Charter of the United Nations, 1945; Declaration of the Granting of Independence to Colonial Countries and Peoples, 1960; Common Article 1 of the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966; Articles 3 and 4 of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, 2006.

⁹ General Assembly resolution 53/144 of 9 December 1998.

¹⁰ CCPR/C/79/Add.81 dated 4 August 1997.

**Support 10-year Long Struggle of Sharmila!
Repeal AFSPA; Give Manipuri People
Right to Self-Determination**

All India Revolutionary Women Organisation

AS PROLETARIAN WOMEN from all over the world get ready to celebrate the centenary of the International Workingwomen's Day next year, Irom Sharmila Chanu, the epitome of resilience and indomitable courage, is on the verge of crossing another landmark in her prolonged struggle against the mighty and ruthless Indian state. On November 2, 2010,¹ Irom Sharmila, a Manipuri poet and human rights activist, will complete 10 years of hunger strike demanding the repeal of the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act, 1958 (AFSPA). An extraordinary struggle of an extraordinary woman! Withstanding the test of time, Sharmila's struggle exemplifies the triumph of democratic aspiration over the unbridled power of that stooge of world imperialism – the Indian State. Ten years since it began in 2000, Irom Sharmila Chanu's fast is unparalleled in the history of political protest.

Sharmila began her protest after 10 civilians were gunned down by the Armed Forces on November 1, 2000.² That day, in Malom, a town in the Imphal Valley of Manipur, 10 innocent people who were waiting for their buses at a bus stop were gunned down by the Assam Rifles, one of the Indian Paramilitary forces operating in the state. The dead included a 62-year-old woman, Leisangbam Ibetomi, and 18-year old Sinam Chandramani, a 1988 National Child Bravery Award winner! The incident, which came to be known as the 'Malom Massacre', affirmed the

continuation of the endless killings by the Indian armed forces in Manipur and inspired Sharmila, then only 28, to act. Thus she launched her historic hunger strike against the AFSPA in particular and the widespread repression unleashed against the people of Manipur by the Indian state in general.

The single most determined objective of Sharmila's protest then was the repeal of the AFSPA from the state of Manipur. However, over the last nine years, she has extended the scope of her demand to all regions of India's North-East where AFSPA has been imposed. The AFSPA provides special powers to arrest, detain, and even kill civilians on suspicion. The power to search and destroy properties on mere suspicion is granted to the Armed Forces of the Union in the 'disturbed areas' of the North East (and subsequently in Kashmir). Wherever the AFSPA is in operation, enforced 'disappearances', extrajudicial killings, torture, rape, arbitrary detention and unspeakable atrocities against women have been routinely reported. In 1958 when the Union Home Minister introduced the law in Parliament, he assured that the Act would be in operation for only 6 months. But it has dragged on for more than 52 years now!

The Indian state has persisted in its attempts to forcibly break Sharmila's hunger strike. She has been detained and arrested times without number. The Manipuri people and their struggle for self-determination have been subjected to brutal repression. Not only have they been denied the right to craft their own destiny, they have also been denied the basic fundamental rights of life and liberty enshrined in the Indian Constitution. The aggressive and expansionist Indian state acquired Manipur in 1949 under extremely disputed circumstances. This undemocratic and anti-people acquisition has remained the core reason of the dissatisfaction and unrest by the people of Manipur against the Indian state. Since then, Manipur has been witness to relentless struggles for self-determination, which have been met by violent military response by the Indian government.

The people of Manipur have done – and continue to do – their utmost to register their protest against AFSPA. There have been naked protests by mothers, self-immolation by students, mass demonstrations, petitions to the Supreme Court, complaints to the United Nations, etc. However, the Indian state has remained unrepentant. Notwithstanding the fact that the ills of the AFSPA stand totally exposed today, it is still the law of the land. On the other hand, Sharmila who has become the icon of the protest against this draconian law is treated as a petty criminal, charged for attempting to commit suicide and the Government of India continues her detention in isolation as a high security prisoner for a decade.

Sharmila's struggle lies not only in defending the most basic and fundamental human rights of her people, but also in questioning the very foundations of the 'world's biggest democracy', which resorts to fascist repression whenever and wherever people stand up for their rights. She is the symbol of protest against the ruling class, a beacon of hope for all people – from Dantewada to Kashmir, from Kalinganagar to Vidarbha –

valiantly confronting the might of the Indian state. It is significant that although many national and international civil rights organizations, NGOs and even the Indian Institute of Planning and Management have showered awards and accolades on Sharmila for her courage and 'non-violent' protest, none of these has spoken in defence of the Manipuri people's right to self-determination. Thus, these elite persons and organizations, while supposedly glorifying Sharmila, actually stand opposed to the very fountainhead of her struggle. It is only by building up a struggle in solidarity with the right to self-determination of peoples and nationalities across the country can we pay genuine tribute to Sharmila. It is only by unleashing a struggle to overthrow the rule of the present ruling classes and instituting a real people's democracy in its stead can we uphold the right of the Manipuri people to self-determination.

Thus, on the 10th anniversary of Sharmila's political fast, AIRWO pledges its solidarity with the people of Manipur and upholds their struggle against the Indian state. AIRWO calls upon all revolutionary and democratic-minded women to support Sharmila's demands and put pressure on the Indian state to repeal the AFSPA, withdraw the military from Manipur, other north-eastern states and Jammu & Kashmir, and recognize their right to self-determination. Only then can we hope to set up an effective resistance to the Indian state's atrocities against women and pave the way for true women's emancipation.

Source: *Red Star; Platform For Communist Revolutionaries, Central Organ of CPI(ML), Volume 11 November 2010 Issue 11 English Monthly, pp 49-51*

Endnotes:

¹ Sharmila began fasting on 5 November 2000.

² It was 2 November 2000.

PUNJAB

A Trail Of Blood Follows The Peasant Struggles In Punjab

Narinder Kumar Jeet

It was in Bhindi Aulakh, a small village in Amritsar District, on Indo-Pakistan Border, that Sh. Sadhu Singh Takhtupura, State Organizing Secretary of the Bharti Kisan Union Ekta (Ugrahan) was brutally attacked and killed on 16.1.2010, under a deep rooted conspiracy hatched by Veer Singh Lopoke an Ex-MLA and a powerful Akali leader and his henchmen. Sadhu Singh Takhtupura was murdered because he was mobilizing the abadkar peasants against illegal and forcible land-grabbing by a gang of powerful Akali leaders, police officials, contractors & anti-social elements. Under his leadership, the farmers rose in revolt against custodial deaths, illegal detentions and torture by the police, through which the above said gang used to terrorize the poor peasants. In adjoining Gurdaspur Districts the goons employed by the Shiromani Gurdwara Parbandhak Committee, controlled by the ruling Badal Akali Dal, had killed two tenant farmers and injured several others, when they were protesting against their illegal & forcible eviction from a Gurdwara land, which they have been tilling for the last many years as tenants.

Now in another gruesome assault on peasant's movement, against the expropriation of their lands by the money-lenders, the arhtiyas (Commission Agents) and their hired goons, gunned down another peasant leader- Pirthipal Singh Alisher, Block President of BKU (Dakonda) and injured several others at village Biroke Khurd near Budhlada in broad daylight on 11.10.2010, when they were protesting against the auction of the land of an indebted peasant. This bloody incident occurred in the presence of revenue and police officials.

As per initial reports, on 11.10.2010, the revenue officials went to auction the land of an indebted peasant, Bhola Singh to recover a loan outstanding against him. To protest against this, the peasants under the banner of BKU (Dakonda) held a peaceful Dharna at the auction venue and raised slogans. The peasant organizations have been successfully resisting such expropriation of peasant's lands since almost a decade. In view of the protest by the BKU, none came forward to bid for the land and the auction failed. The revenue officials went back. Most of the peasants gathered on the spot also went away and only a few activists of the BKU remained there, to discuss the further course of action. In a pre-planned

move, the revenue officials accompanied by arhtiyas, their hired armed goons, and a local Congress leader, came back and started the auction again. When the BKU activists protested, they attacked them firstly with brick bats etc., and thereafter fired upon them indiscriminately, killing Pritpal Singh Alisher on the spot and injuring several others.

Recently the Director General of Punjab Police has dubbed 17 organizations of peasants and farm laborers, including BKU Dakonda, as “Naxalite Organizations”. The police remaining silent spectator in this gory incident and conniving with the arhtiyas to perpetuate these heinous crimes indicates a new and dangerous strategy of the Punjab Govt to contain farmers’ organizations using private armed gangs of political and financial bigwigs.

The arhtiyas in Punjab are a powerful exploitative class. They are integral, but useless part of the farm produce marketing system. As Devender Sharma notes in an article on his blog ‘Ground Reality’, in the past decade about 20,000 arhtiyas have been paid a commission of Rs. 6400 Crores for doing nothing. In 2009-10 they got Rs. 783 Crores and in 2010-11 expect to get more than Rs. 800 Crores. The FCI, CCI, other procurement agencies and traders purchase wheat, paddy, cotton etc from the farmers through the arhtiyas, paying them 2.5 percent commission. The payment to the farmers is made through arhtiyas, whose main activity is infact money lending. In view of the seasonal nature of farmer’s income, they lend to them on exorbitant rate of interest, defraud them by manipulating account books, forging promotes and Agreements to Sell. Most of the arhtiyas get thumb impressions/signatures of the farmers joining their commission agencies on blank & undated promotes and stamp papers. Afterwards these documents are used to fabricate false promotes and Agreements to Sell, to expropriate the farmers’ lands, by obtaining decrees from the courts. The lands are got attached and auctioned under court orders obtained on the basis of forged and fabricated documents. According to BKU leaders, in the past decade, they have forced the authorities to cancel auction of indebted farmers’ land, and Dalit houses in thousands of cases in Bathinda & Mansa Districts.

Plunder by Arhtias (Commission Agents)

A team of economists led by Dr Sukh Pal Singh of the Punjab Agricultural University (PAU) has observed in a recent study that, “The main source of income of the commission agents is not the commission charged on the sale/purchase of crops but the interest taken on the credit advanced to the farmers. An average commission agent advances a loan

of Rs 65.74 lakhs to farmers. Out of a total debt of Rs 35,000-crores on Punjab farmers during 2008-09, it is estimated that Rs 13,300-crore (38 per cent) is advanced by the non-institutional credit agencies in which commission agent is the major source of finance.

“As per law, a person involved in money lending business must register himself as a money-lender. The Punjab Registration of Moneylenders Act 1938 states that the suits for the recovery of loan could be filed by registered moneylenders with a valid license. This law laid an obligation on the moneylender to regularly maintain an account for each debtor separately, of all transactions relating to any loan advanced to that debtor. The government prescribed the manner in which accounts had to be kept.

“Moreover, creditor had to furnish each debtor every six months, with a legible statement of accounts signed by the creditor or his agent of any balance or amount that may be outstanding on 30th June or 31st December. But practically, at all levels, there is a violation of this Act. As during our field survey we experienced that among the respondent commission agents not even a single commission agent was registered for the business of money lending.”

The study recommended doing away with the arhtiyas system.

Bowing to the pressure of farmers’ organizations, the FCI decided this year to make payment directly to the farmers for the paddy to be purchased this year. As Devender Sharma observes, “The arhtiyas were quick to react threatening boycott of the procurement process that was slated to begin in a few days. They then lobbied with the Punjab Govt and reportedly accompanied Chief Minister Parkash Singh Badal to New Delhi. After a couple of days of hectic parleys, the FCI was forced to withdraw the order.In other words, Punjab arhtiyas get an open license to loot the hapless farmers for another year.”

Besides the issue of farm loans, the farmers’ organizations have some other contentious issues with the arhtiyas. The arhtiyas control the fertilizer, pesticides and seeds market also. Taking advantage of the farmers’ illiteracy and financial dependence, they sell spurious fertilizers, pesticides and deeds to make big money. Resultantly the farmer is ruined. At many places, the arhtiyas under-weigh the farm produces to dupe the farmers. BKU has launched numerous struggles against such frauds and duping, often resulting in frayed tempers and clashes. The main political parties - the Akalis, BJP, and Congress etc mostly support the arhtiyas, being their important source of election funds. They generally plead that the arhtiyas and the farmers have a deep & inseparable relationship like the Siamese

twins. But the experience has shown that arhtiyas as a class are blood-suckers of the farmers. Killing of Pritpal Singh Alisher amply demonstrates it.

After the murder of Sadhu Singh Takhtupura, Lok Morcha Punjab has brought out a leaflet calling upon the farmers and their organization to give a serious consideration to the question of security of the movement and its activists. As the farmers' movement advances, it is sure to face the ire of those, whose main business is their exploitation. The security of the farmers' movement lies in mobilization of agri-labourers, employees, democratic minded persons, the rural poor and other struggling sections of the people, who are bearing the brunt of anti-people and anti-national, neo-liberal policies of the Govt. It is heartening that the farmers' organizations have taken very effective steps in this direction. They have lost no time & opportunity in coming to the support of struggling employees, unemployed youth, students etc.

All the 17 organizations of farmers & agri-laborers have decided to fight jointly against the challenge thrown by the money-lenders, their goons and political masters at Biroke Khurd. The struggle to save the lands & houses of indebted farmers & agricultural laborers from being expropriated by money-lenders, has entered a crucial phase. The money-lenders are now letting loose their hired goondas to silence the farmers organizations, with full backing of the rulers. But they are not going to succeed. The farmers and agricultural laborers will definitely defeat their evil designs and save their lands & homes.

Note: N.K.Jeet is an advocate and President of Lok Morcha Punjab, an anti-imperialist & anti-feudal mass political platform. Source: Countercurrent.Org

SRI LANKA

Communiqué on the 3rd General Assembly of the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC)

*Mr. Danilo Ramos,
APC Secretary General*

The 3rd General Assembly of the Asian Peasant Coalition (APC) was successfully held from January 23rd to 24th, 2011 in Hanwella, Sri Lanka. The event was hosted by Movement for Land and Agricultural Reform (MONLAR), VIKALPANI Women's Federation and National Farmers Assembly (NFA).

The assembly carried the theme *“Consolidate Our Gains and Strengthen Asian Peasants Unity! Persevere in the Struggle for Land and National Sovereignty! Intensify Resistance against Imperialist Globalization and War!”*

On the opening day on January 23rd, there are one hundred ninety (190) participants – thirty (30) are international participants while one hundred sixty (160) are local participants mostly members of MONLAR, VIKALPANI and NFA - representing eight (8) countries such as Pakistan, India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Philippines, Malaysia, Thailand and Sri Lanka.

Mr. Sarath Fernando gave the welcome remarks on behalf of MONLAR, VIKALPANI, NATIONAL FARMERS ASSEMBLY and all other farmer organizations, and other people's organizations in Sri Lanka. In his speech he said that, “This is a very important moment in the history of peasants' struggles in the world and in Asia that we have decided to meet, to assess what we have done, identify our strengths, weaknesses and also to strategize for the future. There are many achievements that we have made about which we can all feel very happy, but there are much bigger challenges that we are facing that need to be addressed....”

The Keynote Address entitled *“Consolidate Your Gains, Strengthen Asian Peasant Unity and Intensify the Struggle”* from Prof. Jose Maria Sison, Chairperson of the International League of Peoples Struggle (ILPS) was read by Ms. Irene Fernandez, APC Vice-chairperson for External Affairs. Prof Sison stressed, “... You are correct in pointing out that neo-liberal policies have inflicted extreme suffering on the people. These policies include the reduction of subsidies in food, agriculture and social services as part of Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs); the constraints imposed by the Trade Related Intellectual Property Rights (TRIPS) and Intellectual Property Rights (IPR) in favor of TNCs; the integration of agriculture under the World Trade Organization's (WTO)/

Agreement on Agriculture (AOA); and large-scale corporatization of agriculture.... We in the ILPS admire and highly appreciate the victories that the APC has achieved since 2003 in waging struggles for genuine land reform and defending human rights against repression, state terrorism and imperialist wars. You have accumulated strength by raising the level of consciousness, organization and mobilization of the peasant masses in Asia. You have acted effectively in a collective way as an alliance as well as individually in the different countries where your members are.”

The “*Regional Situation and Asian Peasant Resistance Against Imperialism*” from Mr. Erpan Faryadi, APC Vice-chairperson for Internal Affairs was read by Mr. Balram Banskota, APC Coordinating Council member. He said that, “Asian peasants through the APC have remained militant and steadfast in their fight for land, livelihoods, resources and justice. Peasants struggle in the countryside in different forms is strengthening and intensifying. Mass demonstrations continue to flood the streets, as the only effective way to voice out the peoples protests against the oppression they are experiencing. Through all these the APC has always been there to further strengthen and consolidate the ranks of peasant communities in Asia as well as linking with other peasant groups and organizations at the international level”.

This was followed by a country report from Saiful Huq (Bangladesh), P. Chennaiah (India), Balram Banskota (Nepal), Irene Fernandez (Malaysia), Azra Sayeed (Pakistan), Estrelita Mariano (Philippines) and Thilak Kandegama (Sri Lanka). The synthesis of the country report was done by Sarojeni Rengam (Malaysia).

Danilo Ramos, APC secretary general reported on the secretariat’s work from January 2007 until December 2010. He pointed out that, “the APC has grown from twenty one (21) organizational members coming from seven (7) countries in 2006 to twenty five (25) organizational members from nine (9) countries in 2010. During the last meeting of APC Coordinating Council on January 21, 2011, we approved the application for membership of five (5) organizations. At present, we have thirty (30) organizational members coming from nine (9) countries such as Bangladesh, India, Indonesia, Nepal, Malaysia, Mongolia, Pakistan, Philippines and Sri Lanka. There is a need to follow-up the peasant groups from Cambodia, South Korea, Thailand and Vietnam. It is essential to continue the exchange program within the APC members in order to learn from each experience and to strengthen our ranks.”

On January 24 (2nd day), 47 official delegates and participants attended the assembly. The general program of action and direction for 2011-2014 was approved in principle but there is an urgent need to revise it.

The assembly approved the following resolutions:

1. Resolution against government repression on peasants, dalits and ethnics and demand the immediate release of political prisoners;
2. Resolution to Stop Global Land grabbing;
3. Resolution on Tamils in Sri Lanka;
4. Resolution to condemn Dr Binayak Sen’s conviction and life sentence & demands his immediate release;
5. Resolution to demand an end to Operation Green Hunt in India;
6. Resolution: Recognizing the Significant Contribution of our Comrade, BIPLAP HALIM , in the Asian Peasant Coalition
7. Resolution Calling for Utmost Support to the Struggle of the Agricultural Workers of Hacienda Luisita
8. Resolution on: Unity with and Continuing Active Involvement and Participation in the International League of People’s Struggles
9. Resolution to support the peasantry of PANAMA in their struggle against the ‘Arugam Bay Special Tourism Promotion Zone’

Recognizing Comrade Biplab Halim:

A Resolution: Recognizing the Significant Contribution of Our Comrade, Biplab Halim, in the Building of the Asian Peasant Coalition proposed by Irene Fernandez was unanimously approved. It says, “Our fellow worker and staunch leader, Mr. Biplab Halim, has served as Chairperson since December 2006 to the present 3rd General Assembly of the APC, January 2011. In the almost five years of his leadership, he has actively and persistently been at the forefront of the struggles and mass campaigns of the whole peasantry in the APC. He has consistently and steadfastly implemented and stood for the objectives, program and principles of the APC on all fronts. Despite his physical limitation and medical condition, he has unwaveringly shown his deep commitment to serve the peasant masses and the people of India and Asia in general. As was his father, revolutionary blood is in Biplaps veins. As were his parents, he perseveres in the struggle for the liberation of the Indian people especially the peasant masses.””

A wooden plaque of recognition prepared by the APC secretariat was given to Biplab Halim. Everybody was surprised, teary-eyed and extremely happy. This moment will be forever remembered. Mr. Halim will always be an inspiration to us and we will continue to rely on his valuable guidance and service to carry-on the peasant and people's struggles.

Newly elected APC officers:

A newly set of Executive Committee members were elected such as Fatima Burnad (Chairperson, India), Irene Fernandez (Vice-chairperson for Internal Affairs, Malaysia), Badrul Alam (Vice-chairperson for External Affairs, Bangladesh), Danilo Ramos (Secretary General, Philippines), Erpan Faryadi (Deputy Secretary General, Indonesia), Balram Banskota (Treasurer, Nepal), and Saiful Huq (Internal Auditor, Bangladesh).

The members of the Coordinating Council (CC) members were also elected — for South Asia, P. Chennaiah (India) and Chandra (Sri Lanka) and for Southeast Asia, Estrelita Mariano (Philippines).

In appreciation:

With utmost appreciation, the APC officers gave a wooden plaque to thank the local organizations such as MONLAR, VIKALPANI and NFA that hosted the APC 3rd General Assembly in Sri Lanka. This was received by Mr. Sarath Fernando on behalf of MONLAR, Ms. Chandra on behalf of VIKALPANI and Mr. Thilak Kandegama on behalf of NFA. „We thank all the individuals behind these organizations who worked hard and experienced sleepless nights in performing their tasks. We likewise thank all other nameless individuals who gave their knowledge, strength and skills which brought this event very successful,” Ramos remarked.

Exchange Program:

Fourteen (14) international participants coming from Nepal, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Philippines together with six (6) local participants from MONLAR, VIKALPANI and NFA joined the Exchange Program from January 24 to 25 at Panama, a peasant village in the South-East of Sri Lanka, situated at a distance of about 350 km from Colombo on the Eastern coast struggling against the 'Arugam Bay Special Tourism Promotion Zone'.

The APC participants were warmly welcomed by Mr. Wijesiri. The Chief Incumbent Rev. Chandrarathana Thero of Shri Bodhirukkharama Temple, talked on the history of their struggle, "... by now, out of 03

villages (Panama west), 2,000 acres of land were cordoned off and people are chased away. Their plants were also destroyed. In another, 03 villages (Panama North) cordoning off has started to grab nearly 3,000 acres of lands....”

“We have here farmer-leaders from India, Nepal, Bangladesh, Pakistan and the Philippines to hear you out... We only play an activist role. It is the peoples' action that lead the way to win these demands...”, remarked Mr. Sunil shantha from MONLAR.

In front of 150 men and women farmers representing the Peasants Rights Protection Organization from Panama village, Balram Banskota, APC Treasurer, said, “ that the APC is here with you to extend our international solidarity in your struggle. This afternoon, the APC delegates coming from 8 countries in Asia approved a resolution to support the peasantry of PANAMA in their struggle against the 'Arugam Bay Special Tourism Promotion Zone'. This is our way of support...”

Representatives of the Panama peasant community, K. Kamal and H. Rooparathne, shared their stories and the current situation they are facing. They said. “since our lands were cordoned off, we were left hungry... We want our lands back.”

This was followed by a sharing of success land struggles from Pakistan, India, Bangladesh and the Philippines while Nepal participant reiterated their experience on the successful ouster of King Grayendra, which was a result of Nepali peoples' action.

Mr. Sunil closes the program. He said, “we cannot continue the dialogue because some of the international participants who are here will have their flight tonight.. We are requesting you to come again here on February 10 and let's continue the sharing..”

The hope and determination to continue their fight and regain their lands can be seen in the eyes of the Panama people. The international participants on the other hand, were very happy that they visited Panama and had shared some of their success stories which inspired the Panama people. They left with expectations that APC will bring the Panama peoples struggle at the international level.

THAILAND

Progressive Democracy Group and Red Shirts Write to Ban Ki-moon

The letter was addressed to Ban Ki-moon, Secretary General United Nations. There are several others posted at Thai E-News, including one from former detainee from Australia, Conor David Purcell:

Dear Sir,

We are writing to you on behalf of the Thai people who need a true democracy, equal treatment, and human rights the same as people in democratic countries across the world. As the United Nations Secretary General, we would appreciate your concern and actions about the undemocratic conditions and violations of human rights in Thailand by Mr. Abhisit Vejjajiva's government since his Democrat Party came to power in January 2009 through underhanded tactics with the support of the military.

In its one year and more in power, the Abhisit government has corrupted and distorted democratic principles, abused human rights, sacrificed freedom of speech and expression of the people, and destroyed the rule of law. The violent crackdown against red shirt demonstrators by the Abhisit government during April-May 2010 led to the tragedy of more than 91 deaths, thousands of injured, and hundreds of disappeared and imprisoned. In addition, many community radio stations and political web sites were closed down, and more innocents opposed to the current government have been charged and jailed without fair treatment.

The Abhisit government not only refuses to take responsibility for the massacre of red shirts but also uses the Thai media under its complete control to bombard Thai society with distorted information, suggesting without any evidence that the 91 deaths and thousands of injured might have been caused by terrorists who mingled with the red shirt protestors. The Abhisit government used the word "terrorists" to deceive society and justify the use of heavy weapons and live ammunition to kill and maim hundreds of peaceful demonstrators.

Hundreds of people have been imprisoned across the country since May 2010 without fair treatment or the possibility of release on bail. In contrast, the crimes against humanity done by the Abhisit government during April-May 2010 have not been transparently and honestly investigated by acceptable neutral agencies. Furthermore, the state

emergency decree that suppresses the basic rights of the people is still enforced in some provinces including Bangkok.

To stop the human rights violations and violence by the Abhisit government, we would like to ask the United Nations, as the representative of the world's nations, for immediate action to help save innocent lives and bring back basic rights to the Thai people.

With help from the United Nations, we believe that political prisoners could be freed or given bail. The state emergency decree should be lifted across Thailand; freedom of speech, press, and expression should be returned to all Thai people; and fair treatment with respect to human rights should be taken seriously by the current Thai government.

Sincerely,

Progressive Democracy Group

From the red shirts:

October 26, 2010

Source: <http://thaipoliticalprisoners.wordpress.com>

Challenges Facing the Red Shirt Movement Today

Giles Ji Ungpakorn

On November 19, 2010, thousands of Red Shirts remembered those killed six months earlier. As we approach the end of 2010, the pro-democracy movement, the Red Shirts, is at a crossroads. On the other side, the military junta and the royalists have not even begun to solve the political crisis or to stabilise their power. Since the royalist PAD protests and the military coup in 2006, the junta and the royalists have not only destroyed democracy, they have also destroyed the legitimacy of the monarchy, the military and the judiciary in the eyes of millions of Thais.

The deliberate killing of unarmed civilians, who were demonstrating for democracy in April and May this year, and the lies told by the government and the military, have not only discredited the Democrat Party and the military, but the king, the queen and the entire royal family are now hated by the majority of Thais because they are seen to have sided with the murderous junta.

The latest double standards by the judiciary, in refusing to consider electoral fraud by the Democrat Party, has destroyed the credibility

of the justice system. The Department of Special Investigation has become a laughing stock because of its lies about the April and May events. The continued mass censorship and the draconian use of lese majeste laws, computer crimes and emergency laws are plain for all to see. The Thai ruling class is clinging on to power only by force and the creation of a climate of fear. That is not a recipe for stability.

Challenges

But on the side of the Red Shirts there is confusion and there are some serious challenges.

1. There is the issue of “reconciliation”. For the junta, its definition of “reconciliation” really amounts to a total capitulation by the Red Shirts with all the junta’s authoritarian powers intact. Any backroom deal to form a “National Government” with the participation of Thaksin’s Peua Thai party will be just one form of this forced capitulation option. Such a National Government would not be democratically elected and it would not challenge the structures of dictatorial power. What it would do, however, is to provide jobs and roles for professional politicians in the Peua Thai Party [the For Thai Party, the third incarnation of Thaksin’s People Power Party, which was banned in 2008]. It might also be a first step towards a pardon for ousted PM Thaksin Shinawatra. What it will not be is a first step towards democracy and social justice.

2. The question for the millions of Red Shirts who hate the idea of such a dirty compromise is: Can they organise independently of Peua Thai and Thaksin? The Red Sunday events all over the country and the concept of “horizontal, grassroots, leadership” shows that independent organisation is possible. Can this be strengthened and developed further?

3. The junta has always needed a sham “democratic face”. That is why it has manoeuvred Abhisit Vejjajiva into office as prime minister instead of having a long-term military government. The junta will need to hold an election at some point, but it will be working hard to fix such an election. Burma and the other authoritarian states in South-East Asia provide many tricks by which a ruling class can “win” an election. Red Shirts have to take elections seriously, but that does not mean having illusions in the fairness of any election held under the present junta. The junta has already changed the constitution and used the judiciary to manipulate the democratic process.

4. Only those Red Shirts who continuously take part in activities in Thailand, like the Red Sunday events or those around the prisons, can

have a true understanding of the importance of mass movements in the struggle for democracy. They need to develop their political understanding in the Red Sunday schools which are now being organised. They need to think about spreading the struggle to the trade union movement and the lower ranks of the army. Strikes are an important weapon against military repression. Democracy and social justice in Thailand will only be won through such revolutionary struggles.

Debates in the movement

Some sections of the Red Shirts who call themselves “Red Siam” are playing at revolution. They talk about building an armed struggle without learning from the past mistakes of the Communist Party. They wear green army hats with red stars and feel tough. But they have turned their backs on the mass struggle. They criticised the original Red Shirt leadership while the mass movement was facing down the army. Some of them now want reconciliation. They know deep down that armed struggle is only a pipe dream.

Some Red Shirt leaders who are in exile abroad are out of touch with the movement on the ground. They talk about “armed struggle”, but they are demoralised. Their demoralisation means that they will capitulate.

The organisation which calls itself “The UDD in the USA” and their guru Chupong, continuously pump out anti-monarchy propaganda. This propaganda now cuts with the flow as millions of Red Shirts have changed to republicans. Their exaggerated claims that King Pumiwon Adunyadet [often spelled Bhumipol Adulyadej in the Western press] is the arch-manipulator of all events and lords over entire ruling class mean that they totally overlook the power of the military. This top-down view is shared by academics, both foreign and Thai.

This does not fit with history. The military took power soon after the 1932 revolution. It has never been overthrown by the Monarchy. Its power has only been dented by mass uprisings from below. Those who make claims about an all-powerful king have nothing to say about the struggle for democracy in practice. They are paralysed and demoralised in the face of the king’s “absolute power”. They bang away at attacking the monarchy and have nothing to say about social welfare, gender rights, trade union rights, or how to solve the civil war in the South of Thailand. All that they do is to protect the military from blame.

Real reconciliation

Any “reconciliation” which does not result in the immediate release of all Red Shirt political prisoners (include lese majeste prisoners) and the end of censorship and the emergency laws will be meaningless. “Reconciliation” must also include the scrapping of the military security command, which is running the country, the resignation of the government, immediate free and fair elections supervised by a new election committee made up of representatives of both sides, the promise of a new constitution to be drafted by mass participation, and the setting up of an investigation into the state crimes which resulted in more thanhs earlier this year.

Red Shirts need to combine such short-term demands with long-term aims. The two cannot be separated. Long-term Red Shirt aims are vital in continuing to win the hearts and minds of the population. Such long-term aims should include the building of a welfare state, the total overhaul of the military and judiciary and the abolition of the monarchy. Left-wing Red Shirts like myself will also be arguing for socialism.

Note: Giles Ji Ungpakorn is a political commentator and dissident. In February 2009 he had to leave Thailand for exile in Britain because he was charged with lèse majesté for writing a book criticising the 2006 military coup. He is a member of Left Turn Thailand, a socialist organisation. His latest book, Thailand’s Crisis and the Fight for Democracy, will be of interest to activists, academics and journalists who have an interest in Thai politics, democratisation and NGOs.

Source: [links international journal of socialist renewal](#)

WORKERS’ CHRONICLE

Workers’ Struggle in South & South East Asia

1

Court Issues Notices on Writ for Asbestos Mineworkers

(Times of India on 09 October 2010)

JAIPUR: The Jodhpur bench of the Rajasthan High Court on Friday issued notices to respondents in a writ petition demanding compensation and medical aid for asbestos mineworkers. The petition was filed on behalf of the Rajasthan State Mine Labour Union.

Asbestos mines are situated in the Udaipur and Ajmer-Beawar region in Rajasthan. Considering asbestos as a hazardous substance, the Centre has banned issue of new mining leases and extension or expansion of them in 1986. Recently various mine labourers who had worked in asbestos mines in that region were found with asbestosis symptoms.

After hearing the arguments on behalf of the Rajasthan State Mine Labour Union, Justice Govind Mathur issued notices to the respondents for a final disposal of the petition and called upon the mining, medical, labour departments and the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH), Ahmedabad to submit their replies on October 25.

Arguing on behalf of the Rajasthan State Mine Labour Union, advocate Sanjeet Purohit submitted that in 2006-07 the NIOH had made a health survey and found 80% of mineworkers in Ogana tehsil to be suffering from the deadly disease. Despite this, neither medical aid has been extended nor compensation granted to the kin of deceased workers. Purohit said, after the survey, 10 asbestos mineworkers died last year.

Recently, in pursuance of the campaign launched by the Mime Labour People’s Campaign regarding silicosis victims, the chief minister Ashok Gehlot offered help of Rs 1 lakh to 21 widows of silicosis victims

Fish Workers' Organizations Reject Draft CRZ Notification

The National Fish Workers' Forum (NFF) & Kerala Swathanthra Malsyathozhilaly Federation (KSMTF) rejects the Draft CRZ Notification 2010 notification in *Toto* for the following reasons:

Background

The current process to revise the CRZ 1991 notification is the result of (i) the understanding reached on July 2nd 2009 between the NFF and the Minister of Environment when he agreed to drop the controversial CMZ draft notification, and (ii) the Final Frontier, the report of the expert committee appointed by the Ministry of Environment and Forests under the Chairmanship of Dr.M.S.Swaminathan to go into the objections against the CMZ. The expert committee had recommended amendments to the CRZ 1991 with a view to (i) strengthen coastal protection and (ii) to strengthen provisions for fishermen housing and livelihoods.

Based on the understanding reached between NFF and the Minister, the MoEF organised public consultations in all Coastal States and the Union Territory of Pondicherry. Subsequently, the Ministry brought out a "pre-draft" notification in April 2010 to get feedback. Now the Ministry has brought out the draft notification on 15th September 2010, after supposedly taking into account the feedback given to the "pre-draft" notification.

Reasons for rejection of draft CRZ 2010

1. The draft notification is only marginally different from the pre-draft which was rejected by the fishing communities. The draft, as the pre-draft before it, has ignored most of the views expressed by the fishing community and environmentalists, as reflected in the CEE report published by the Ministry. It has failed to stick to the mandate given by the Swaminathan Committee and has used it simply as an opportunity to further tamper with the CRZ 1991 and accommodate other interests.

2. NFF had strongly argued in favour of going back to the basics of the original 1991 notification that was based on the fundamental principle that only activities that require the waterfront

and foreshore facilities should be permitted in the CRZ. Unfortunately, the draft continues to legitimise all the activities which do not have such a justification and have crept into the notification over the years. These include "non-polluting" industries in Special Economic Zones, Nuclear power plants, power generation by non-conventional energy sources, "green field airport" in Navi Mumbai, storage of petroleum products, fertilizers and chemicals, large-scale housing projects, generous exemptions to tourism projects, etc. It is worth noting that some of these activities including Nuclear power plants and the Navi Mumbai airport are permitted in CRZ-I areas that supposedly enjoy the highest level of protection in the CRZ notification.

3. In addition to retaining all past dilutions to the CRZ, the new draft also adds new activities that are permissible. Some of the new additions include "roads on stilts" (including in mangrove areas of CRZ-I), potentially a major exemption as plans are afoot in Mumbai and Chennai to use this provision in a big way. The Chennai proposal involves the construction of an elevated highway over famous beaches and fishing villages.

4. An important suggestion to strengthen the CRZ was to look into cumulative impacts of permissible projects before according sanction to new projects. The Swaminathan Committee recommended a cumulative impact study of ports and a moratorium till that is done. Unfortunately, the Ministry has not done any cumulative study and has come up with a peculiar formulation to permit ports in "stable coasts" that are not subject to erosion. Given that ports themselves have contributed to the erosion of many stable coasts, this measure will only mean the eventual spoiling of the entire coastline. The cumulative impacts of many other activities including foreshore facilities for thermal power plants (which pump in enormous quantities of sea water for their water requirements) also need to be studied, but the Ministry prefers to ignore cumulative impacts as this may be inconvenient to the ambitious "coastal invasion" plans of investors and ministries.

5. The sea up to 12 nautical miles from the shore has been included in the CRZ as CRZ-IV. This seems to make no sense as it contains no new provisions to regulate activities in the sea. While fishing activities will not be regulated by the CRZ and will be subject to other laws, the CRZ provides an opportunity to prohibit activities

like petroleum extraction and sea-bed mining in important fishing grounds.

6. The provision of certain “special considerations” to Greater Mumbai, Kerala and Goa is a new addition that threatens the very foundation of the CRZ regime. Instead of the CRZ being an All-India regulation based on common rules, this idea opens the door for special favours to individual states or areas. An analysis of the special considerations shows that with the exception of the favour shown to the builder lobby in Greater Mumbai, there is nothing very special about the so-called considerations. Like the “road on stilts”, some of these provisions are actually available to all, while provisions like protection of “Khazan” lands in Goa can be made applicable elsewhere also as other states like Karnataka and Kerala have similar eco-systems. Likewise mapping of fishing villages of Goa is no special consideration as it is going to be part of all Coastal Zone Management Plans as per guidelines given in the Appendix. The real problem that hundreds of Goan fishermen houses are facing demolition for violating CRZ is not being addressed at all. The concessions given for housing of coastal communities in the “backwater islands” in Kerala seem to make no sense as problems of its coastal dwellers do not lie in backwater islands, which are mainly un-inhabited or tourist destinations. Another danger posed by the section on special considerations is that concessions in housing are provided for “local residents” or “coastal communities”. This may mean the eventual ouster of fishing communities from the coast by others with better means.

7. Under special considerations, another category called “Critically Vulnerable Coastal Areas” is being introduced. While the need for making special concessions to people living in the mangrove areas of Sunderbans have been recognised through earlier amendments to the CRZ, the new draft wishes to include a number of locations along the coast (Gulf of Khambhat, Gulf of Kutch, Gulf of Mannar, Malvan, Vasai-Manori, Achra-Ratnagiri, Coondapur, Vembanad, Bhaitarkanika, Coringa and Krishna) for special consideration through the development of management plans that will substitute coastal regulations. There seems no strong logic for this as there is no evidence that in any of the areas that people are actually living in national parks or bio-sphere areas. Moreover, some of the regulations that hamper fishing in areas that house national parks and biosphere reserves cannot be solved by the CRZ notification and need changes in other laws like

the Forest Conservation Act or Wildlife Protection Act. This seems to be an attempt to bring back the CMZ, if only for some stretches of the coast.

8. Another attempt to bring the CMZ back through the backdoor is evident in the persistence of “hazard line” concept. While the Government and scientific institutions are welcome to work on studying the possible impact of sea level rise and coast line changes, it is unacceptable that a line that is yet to be drawn and no one is able to say where it will fall once it is drawn, is incorporated in a regulatory framework of this kind. The only logic we can discern at the moment is that the World Bank has agreed to fund the drawing of this line.

9. Some of the other important objections to the draft notification include:

- i. The provision for a fresh classification of the coast into zones that may provide an opportunity to conveniently reclassify CRZ-I areas as CRZ-II or III and so on. Equally risky is the provision to revise Coastal Zone Management Plans every five years giving the bureaucracy the scope to tamper with the zones and accommodate new interests from time to time.
- ii. The exclusion of the island territories (Andaman & Nicobar, Lakshadweep) from the purview of the CRZ with the intention of creating a separate Island Protection Zone (IPZ) notification for them. The IPZ is nothing but the CMZ for the islands and it will signal the de-regulation of the islands from the point of view of coastal regulations.
- iii. While an attempt has been made in the notification to improve the governance aspects, there are still many weaknesses. The composition of the State Coastal Zone Management Authorities and the National Coastal Zone Management Authorities is still left to the whims of the bureaucracy. The demand for enshrining the inclusion of fishing community representatives and environmentalists in bodies at all levels has been ignored. So has been the demand to create local monitoring committees at fishing village level to check the compliance with the CRZ notification.
- iv. The proposal to stop untreated effluents from reaching the sea is welcome, but it needs to be pointed out that similar deadlines were given in the 1991 notification and never enforced. The proposal to deal with all violations of the 1991

regulations is also welcome but is unlikely to make headway as the notification provides no relief to fishermen with regard to housing, with many fishermen still treated as illegal occupants of their traditional homeland.

10. Finally, one of the biggest objections to this draft notification is the way it has completely failed the fishing community. Despite talk of recognition of fishing community rights, the notification has not done justice to fishing community housing, social and cultural needs. All it does is to allow additional housing in the 200-500 m zone of CRZ-III, ignoring the fact that many fishing villages are entirely within the 200 m no-development zone in some states. The plight of fishing villages caught in urban areas coming under CRZ-II is also ignored. By treating all coastal inhabitants on par and failing to recognise the historical rights of fishing communities and the inevitability of their being on the coast, the MoEF is merely throwing crumbs at the fishing community while continuing to favour business interests. The NFF and the National Coastal Protection Campaign (NCPC) had proposed that fishermen should have the right to build beyond 50 m and that all existing fishermen houses in the entire 0-500 m zone should not be disturbed.

NFF & KSMTF rejects the CRZ 2010 draft notification and asked to the fishing communities to unite and fight for their rights and protection of the coast.

Sd/-
MATANHY SALDANHA (Chairperson, NFF)
RAMBAU PATIL (General Secretary, NFF)
T.PETER (President, KSMTF)

3

Asbestosis: Workers on a Sit-in For 'Affliction'

(Indian Express on 05 January 2011)

AHMEDABAD: Around 30 labourers from Rajasthan have resorted to a symbolic dharna for the past three days in front of the National Institute of Occupational Health (NIOH) in Ahmedabad with a demand for a report stating their status as asbestosis-afflicted. The

report will allow them to seek compensation and free medical treatment.

The labourers have gathered under the banner of the Rajasthan State Mine Labour Union, and all of them or their family members are suffering from asbestosis.

Raghunath Manwar from the union said that following a Supreme Court ruling, any person afflicted with asbestosis is entitled for a compensation of Rs 1 lakh along with free medical treatment at government hospitals.

"The SC, however, said that NIOH is the ultimate authority to ascertain whether a person is suffering from asbestosis or not to avail due benefits," he said.

4

Mid-day Meal Workers Protest

(The Times of India on 16 January 2011)

LUDHIANA: The education department is facing the heat. After the volunteers association, mid-day meal workers burned effigies of the state and central governments on Sunday. The protest against price rise was supported by Lok Sangharsh Samiti and National Trade Union of India (NTUI). They expressed solidarity with mid-day meal workers association.

President of National Trade Union of India (NTUI) Tarsem Jodhan said they will hold a meeting on February 27 to intensify the protest against rise in prices and corruption. He stated, 'We would be supporting all workers who are working with government departments on a contractual basis.'

The mid-day meal workers association demanded their minimum salary should be Rs 10,000. At present, their salary is Rs 1,000 and government holidays make for reduction in pay, it was stated. Members of the association also demanded that government should itself make arrangements for work required to prepare the mid-day meal. The association members sought appointment letters from government.

They further demanded that their appointment be made on a permanent basis. They should be provided facilities akin to those given to other government employees, they further stated. The mid-day meal workers association also said government should stop making

efforts to bring mid-day meal workers under private companies. Members of the association said if their demands were not fulfilled, they will intensify their protest. They would decide their further course of action on February 27.

Prakash Singh, member of the mid-day meal workers association, said government had been ignoring their demands for a long time. He said with the elections drawing near, government had been ignoring their demands.

5

State Lags Behind in MNREGS

(Indian Express on 04 February 2011)

KOLKATA: While the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) completed five years on February 2 this year in the state, the implementation of the scheme in the state remains poor and the state lags behind most of the states in the country.

In 2009-10, in comparison to national average of 54 work days per household, in West Bengal it was 45 days. This year, on the basis of the work generated so far during March 2010 to January 23, 2011, its performance is the worst among 20 large states in the country. In 2009-10, the state government generated 1551.67 lakh person days of work while till January 2011 it has generated 910.65 lakh person days of works. At this rate, the number of work days per household is not likely to cross 30.

Paschim Banga Khet Majoor Samity working at grassroots level observed February 2 as “Lajja divas” on account of the state’s poor performance in the matter. “The state has 9.2 per cent of the total job cards of the country but it has created 6.7 per cent employment in the past 5 years,” said Anuradha Talwar, the president of Paschim Banga Khet Majur Samity.

Talwar said the state government will slip from the ninth position in 2009-10 to bottom in the rank of 20 large states.

“In comparison to job cards to 30 lakh families in 2009-10, this year we have distributed job cards to 42 lakh families. So the number of work days per household will decrease, said Anisur Rehman, Panchayat and Rural Development Minister. He further said less employment per household suggests people are leaving the place.

“Under NREGS they have to open bank accounts and they get money after seven or more days,” said the minister.

Besides, the state also lags in the participation of women in the scheme. In comparison to national average of 50 per cent of women getting work under the scheme. In Bengal only so far only 31 per cent of women have got the work.

“There is no significant improvement in districts under administration of Congress or Trinamool which suggests all political parties lack the will to implement the scheme,” said Talwar.

6

Construction Workers Unite Under One Banner in Tamil Nadu

10 February 2011

CHENNAI: Setting aside political differences, AICCTU, AITUC, AIUTUC, BMS, HMS, INRLF, INTUC, MLF and TMKTS, PTS and NTUI and many other trade unions came together for the first time on 7 February 2010 to form the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Struggle Front to oppose and protest against the anti-labour policies of the DMK government that has been in power in the state since 2006 and put forward a 14 point charter of demands.

The Front held a state-wide protest on 9 February 2011 across 26 districts (all except Nilgiris, Perambalur and Ariyaloor). This front, has not just brought 25 unions together under one banner but also has broken new grounds at uniting workers, divided along political lines. The 9 February statewide dharnas saw a participation of more than 50,000 construction workers, both men and women, who picketed shops and blocked roads and courted arrest across the state in a show of their strength on the ground.

The 14-point Charter of Demand of the Tamil Nadu Construction Workers Struggle Front include demands for autonomous and tripartite functioning of the Board; enhancement of benefits such as accident insurance, death benefit, education, maternity benefit, including raise in pension from Rs. 500 to Rs. 3000 including medical facilities equivalent to ESI, housing subsidy, crèche facilities and implementation of Rashtriya Swasthya Bima Yojana; lowering the age of eligibility for pension from 60 to 55 years for women workers and

ensuring representation of women. The Front also demands a transparent, democratic, worker-friendly, tripartite Labour Welfare Board, one which ensures autonomy from political interference and workers right to participate in the process of decision making.

7

Binodini Shramik Union Holds Unorganised Labour Convention

21 February 2011

Binodini Shramik Union organised a state level unorganised labour convention on 21 February in Kolkata. The Convention was attended by around 35 Trade Unions and other organisations working among different section of unorganised labour. They unanimously decided to place a 'Charter of Demands' (listed below) to the policy makers.

Charter of Demands by the unorganized women labour of West Bengal

1. Each adult member of a family either salaried or self employed, should be recognized as "workers".
2. The unorganized or unprotected labour should get minimum wage determined by the Government.
3. Each section of unorganized labour should be divided into skilled, semi skilled and unskilled worker according to their capability and their wage rate should be determined accordingly.
4. The working condition, welfare provision and the social security of the workers should be protected (provided and maintained) according to the ILO guideline. Include maternity benefit for each and every women labourer.
5. In case of dispute the alleged women should get an interim to continue his/her work and would enjoy all rights and entitlements in line with the Prevention of Unfair Labour Practices Act 1971 introduced by Maharashtra.
6. Recruitment policy and social security provisions of the unorganized or unprotected sector should be determined by the tripartite welfare boards.

7. Those welfare boards where participation from the Government, employer and employee should be mandatory.
8. Separate welfare boards should be established for the domestic workers, sweepers, sex workers, zari workers.
9. This registration process should be simple and should be done at local level.
10. Proper system and infrastructure should be developed for registration of the workers in the welfare boards and the workers should be sensitized accordingly. In the sensitization process trade unions and Non Governmental organization should be involved. Government should provide and maintain proper Social security system for the unorganized sector.
11. Unorganized worker should get pension at the rate of half of their original salary just as the organized sector.
12. Instead of running separate health schemes for the unorganized sector the government should utilize existing ESI infrastructure for the health care facility.
13. The persons engaged in fish processing and fish vending should also be recognized as fisherman according to ILO convention 188 which is not ratified by India.
14. Sex work should be enlisted in the labour list and the sex workers should get workers recognition.
15. ITPA which criminalizes the sex workers should be repealed.
16. Provision for night stay in fair price should be provided and maintained by the Government for the goods transport workmen who lives out of station for a long period.
17. Entitlements and schemes for the unorganized sector should be displayed in public place in local languages for sensitization of the workers.
18. Help line should be introduced for the unorganized labour.

8

Thousands of Informal Workers March to Parliament Against Price Rise

23 February, 2011

DELHI: In a historic March to Parliament on 23 February 2011 hundreds of thousands of working people demanding control

on price rise, strict enforcement of labour laws, linkages of employment protection with the stimulus package, universalisation of social security, enhanced social security fund and to stop privatisation of central public sector enterprises.

The workers marched from different directions to converge at the rally site on Parliament Street. Those who had come a day or two earlier marched from the camps set up in Ramlila Maidan, New Delhi Railway Station, Rajghat and from other places where they were staying. Those who came on the day of the rally marched from the railway stations and bus terminuses of the city.

10

A Joint Statement by the Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union (IMWU) and the Filipino Migrant Workers' Union (FMWU) in Hong Kong.

We, migrant workers' unions in Hong Kong, vehemently denounce the cancelation of Michel Caturia's visa and her impending deportation by the South Korean government. We demand that her visa be reinstated and that she be allowed to stay and work and to freely exercise her freedom of association.

The cancellation of MTU President Caturia's visa is the latest in the South Korean government's systematic attack against migrant workers' right to be organized and to be unionized. It may be recalled that since 2007, MTU leaders have been targeted for surveillance, harassment and deportation, with the government exploiting their legal vulnerabilities despite strong local and international support for the MTU. The forcible deportation of MTU President Kajiman, Vice President Raju and General Secretary Masum in 2007 is no different from what Michel Caturia is experiencing now.

Even the International Labor Organization (ILO) has considered the arrest and deportation of MTU officers as acts of labor repression and has suggested that they be stopped immediately. The ILO has also affirmed the right of all migrant workers, regardless of visa status, to freedom of association and recommended that the South Korean government recognize MTU's legal union status.

However, the South Korean government has time and again proven its anti-workers character. Not only is it known for attacking

the rights of migrant workers, it is also well known in violating the rights of South Korean workers. Its adherence of neoliberal policies of globalization has led to violent suppression of workers' protest against wage reductions, loss of benefits and unemployment brought about by privatization of public utilities and enterprises, liberalization of the economy and deregulation of many key industries.

As migrants and as workers, we experience the same hardships, discrimination and attacks to our wage, livelihood and rights. And it is only through our unity – our unions and organizations – that we can truly protect and advance our cause. In this spirit, we extend our solidarity and strongest supports to our fellow migrant worker and fellow unionist Michel Caturia.

We again reiterate our demand to South Korean government to once and for all respect the rights of migrant workers in Korea and to immediately reinstate Michel Caturia's visa and stop her impending deportation. Allow her to stay and work in Korea and exercise her rightful union activities.

We also call on all grassroots organizations, NGOs and rights advocates to support the struggle of Michel Caturia to remain in Korea and continue her union activities. For her struggle is our struggle, her victory is our victory.

Defend the Rights of Michel Caturia!
Stop Michel's Deportation!
Stop the Crackdown on Migrant Workers in Korea!

2 March 2011
Hong Kong SAR

Endorse by:

AbraTinguian Ilocano Society, Hong Kong (ATIS); Asia Monitor Resource Center (AMRC); Asia Pacific Mission for Migrants (APMM); Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Hong Kong (ATKI-HK); Association of Indonesian Migrant Workers in Macau (ATKI-Macau); BAYAN Hong Kong; BAYAN USA; Bangladeshi Ovbasi Mohila Sramik Association (BOMSA); Cordillera Alliance in Hong Kong (CORALL-HK); Centre Communautaire des Femmes Sud-Asiatique, Quebec; Center for Japanese-Filipino Families (CJFF); Federation of Independence Trade Unions

(Gabungan Serikat Buruh Independen – GSBI, Indonesia); Filipina Circle of Advancement and Progress (FICAP), Japan; Filipino Migrant Center (FMC), Japan; GABRIELA Hong Kong; GABRIELA Japan; GABRIELA-Nagoya Chapter; Hong Kong confederation of Trade Unions (HKCTU); IMA Research Foundation, Bangladesh; Indonesian Migrant Workers' Union – Macau (IMWU Macau); KAFIN Migrant Center, Japan; KAFIN-Migrante Saitama, Japan; League of Filipino Seniors (LFS), Japan; MIGRANTE BC, Canada; MIGRANTE Denmark; MIGRANTE Europe; MIGRANTE International; MIGRANTE Japan; MIGRANTE-Nagoya Chapter; Mission for Migrant Workers (MFMW); Philippine Society in Japan (PSU); PINAY Quebec; Pinoy in Australian Society for Integrity, Reforms and Social Information (Pinas First); Trans Asia Sisters Association, Taiwan (TASAT); Tenaganita, Malaysia ; Thai Migrant Workers' Union, Hong Kong (TMWA); United Filipinos in Hong Kong (UNIFIL-MIGRANTE-HK) and; United Pangasinan in Hong Kong (UPHK).