

Proletarian Era

Volume 46 No. 17
April 15, 2013

Organ of the SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA (COMMUNIST)
Founder Editor-in-Chief : COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH

Price : Rs. 2.00

Long Live Historic 24th April



“Outwardly, though, there appears to be quite many contending forces in the arena of politics, and despite concerted efforts of news media to project all these many as mutually opposing, viewed however in the perspective of the ultimate struggle, I hold, only two contending forces are there in politics — one for revolution, the other against revolution, whatever the name it may assume. One is the politics to counter revolution — maybe it is being engineered by the Congress, by the politics of the Congress to be more specific. Maybe it is through recourse to trickeries falsely stamped as leftism, or through recourse to deceptive slogans of democratic socialism or recourse to varied weaving of right reactionary slogans and politics of flaunts of stunts. The other is the politics of organizing revolution ...

The strategies which the battery of opposing political parties pursue in the mass movements — the trickeries with which they confound their ranks and supporters who are not politically conscious, and with which they confuse the masses of people, too, are ultimately creating obstacles on way to developing the revolutionary mass movement. Through all these activities, they are only strengthening the election-oriented politics. This politics of theirs in no way can, and goes to, weaken capitalism,...

All the parties, even those with leftist labels, are in collusion to isolate the SUCI....jointly push the SUCI into the corner. They want the SUCI to submit to their totally election-oriented evil politics, the politics of stunt, the politics of grabbing ministerial positions and power, politics which degrade their political workers to being opportunists and cowards. We cannot, can never, submit to their combined pressure...the SUCI stands out as the living protest and challenge to this politics... to take up the challenge of confronting this very politics.... expose this politics thoroughly to the people...take up a real challenge against the totally election-oriented politics of trickery and deception of the people....”

— Shibdas Ghosh

(*Mass Movement in India and Tasks of the Youth, Speech delivered in 1975*)

Observe SUCI(C) Foundation Day on 24 April with due solemnity

National Food Security Bill

How far it ensures people's food security

In December 2011 a National Food Security Bill (herein referred as NFSB or the Bill) was introduced by the present Congress-led UPA government in Parliament. The Bill attracted criticisms and was referred to the Standing Committee on Food, Consumer Affairs and Public Distribution (2012-13) which submitted its report to the Lok Sabha on 11 January 2013. Thereafter the Bill is being re-introduced in Parliament after Cabinet approval and incorporating the *viable* suggestions made by the Standing Committee.

The Bill was introduced and re-introduced at a time when in the

highly powerful Indian capitalist country, a nuclear power in fact, unemployment has become menacing for each and every family of common men, industry is bogged down into slowdown hardly showing any signs of recovery and belying all claims of the people-in-power, economic growth is becoming a mirage, poverty reigns supreme, price soars sky-high, in result purchasing power of people slides down fast and fearfully to a hopeless doom, not just the poorest of poor face starvation-illiteracy-lack of medical attention- lack of shelter, even the farmers of the middle rung are pushed to the brink

and commit suicide from irreconcilable debt-trap, exorbitant charges of education for their children or medical attention for their family, and the likes. These maladies of the crisis-ridden capitalist system plague people's life unceasingly. Resentment in people, in turn, goes on mounting; people in thousands, from their disgust and wrath, are coming to the streets in protest on this and that issue in this or that part of the country. Among others, demands are being raised for supplying food and other essential commodities at fair price. On the face of these and with the forthcoming parliamentary

election in view, the government has taken it as the opportune moment to toy with the issue of food security of people. Naturally it evokes some expectation in people towards ensuring the basic need of their life, and apprehension as well, if like many other measures this too would go in vain. It thus requires a probe to look through what does the NFSB contain and propose in reality.

What the Bill contains

In its preamble the Bill submits that it is supposed to be in pursuance of the *Constitutional* obligations and *international*

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NFSB proposes food security, but fails to concretely define target population

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conventions. It aims at providing for food and nutritional security by ensuring access to adequate quantity of food at affordable prices to people to live a life with dignity, which has been the focus of the government's planning and policy. It also aims at changing from a current welfare approach to a right based approach. (emphasis ours)

It then claims that upto 75% of rural population and upto 50% of the urban population will be covered under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS). And who are these beneficiaries for whom the government needs to ensure food security? Obviously they are the poorest of poor, call them BPL or whatsoever, whose number instead of reducing are increasing even after more than six decades of independence of the country and who do not have the purchasing power to procure square meals for themselves so much so that the government has to make arrangements to ensure food security for them. In the original draft there were two categories recognized, viz., priority households and general households. In amendments suggested, the category 'eligible households' replaces those; once the 'eligible' includes households under the priority households and the Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) (Section 15 subsection 2 and subsection(1) of section 3); elsewhere (Section 19 subsection(1)) it includes both priority households and general households. The Bill also casts special focus on women during pregnancy and six months after the child birth, on children, on destitutes and homeless, or those, if any, living in starvation.

In any case, the NFSB holds that persons under the priority households will be entitled to receive 7 kilograms and those under the general households 3kg of food-grains per person per month at subsidised prices of Rs.3,2 and 1 per kg for rice, wheat and coarse grains respectively. In an amendment, these amounts have been changed to 5kg, for every person per month belonging to the priority households whereas those under the AAY would be entitled to 35 kilograms per household per month at subsidised prices. Apparently this follows the suggestions of the Standing Committee, which found 7kg per person per month 'beyond the realm of feasibility' as the requirement to

meet the commitment of the Bill has been lower or just marginally higher than the amount the government procures from the producers, that is the farmers, and long-term procurement has generally been lower, in average annually slightly above 30% of production. So it recommended 5kg per person per month for all the covered population as 'manageable'.

It may be recalled, as we pointed out earlier on the pages of *Proletarian Era*, that an average man performing light to average amount of activities need at least 2,300 calories per day, for medium amount of work he would need a minimum of 2,800 calories daily, for heavy work 3,500 calories; a woman on the other hand would need 1800, 2250 and 2700 calories a day respectively for light, medium and heavy work. The 7kg per person per month quota comes down to 230 gms per day which amount of wheat could produce about 750 calorie, while rice of the same measure could make about 250 calorie. Both, however, fall well below the desired calorie output mark.

As envisaged, the food will be distributed by the government through what was known as the PDS, redesignated in the Bill as TPDS. And the NFSB submits that "The Central and State Governments shall endeavour to progressively undertake necessary reforms in the Targeted Public Distribution System" (emphasis ours). The text of the Bill enlists at least 8 such reform measures including doorstep delivery, application of IT tools, leveraging "aadhaar", introducing schemes like cash transfer, full transparency of records etc. The text further covers at least 7 out of 17 pages on Grievance Redressal Mechanism, on procedures for forming and the composition of a State Food Commission for each state and a National Food Commission for the country, on "Obligations" of the central and state governments for food security, on "Obligations of local authorities", and on "Transparency and Accountability" etc. But the Bill does not say a single word on rampant ubiquitous corruption that pervades the total system from production-procurement-distribution and letting out foodgrains to consumers at the outlets of the PDS and makes the system PDS infamous all over the country.

Lastly the Clause 9 of the Bill says: "The State Government shall,

if it is of the opinion that an emergency or disaster situation exists, provide to affected households, two meals, free of charge, for a period upto three months from the date of disaster in accordance with such scheme including cost sharing as may be prescribed by the Central Government." (emphasis added) On the contrary in the concluding Clause 52 the Bill says: "the Central Government, or as the case may be the State Government, shall not be liable for any claim by persons belonging to the priority households or general households or other groups entitled under this Act for loss, damage, or compensation, whatsoever, arising out of failure of supply of foodgrains or meals when such failure of supply is due, either directly or indirectly, to force majeure conditions, such as, war, flood, drought, fire, cyclone, earthquake or any act of God." (emphasis ours)

What the announcements and provisions signify: commitments and their fulfillment

Such being the essence of the content of the Bill, different parts of it may be seen separately through.

First, one may wonder why, after more than six decades of independence today it has prompted the government to take up afresh the tasks of going by 'the Constitutional obligations and international conventions'. Does it not then mean that the powers-that-be did fail in fulfilling the tasks? But why? Did not they think of people or whom did they think of then?

It may also appear intriguing why in a country which boasts of fostering several richest persons (monopolists or industrialists) of the world, people cannot meet the demands of their livelihood on the strength of their own income, so that its government has to raise the issue of ensuring food security of its people. Is it not also striking that a country which spends several thousands of crores of rupees in maintaining a military and a bureaucracy, or in providing stimulus to the crisis-ridden monopolists, is also currently ranked at 15th among 81 countries with its Global Hunger Index (GHI) going up from 22.9 to 23.7 between 1996 and 2011, as calculated on the proportion of undernourished among the population, the prevalence of underweight children and the mortality rate of children

and cannot pull up its resources to get rid of the curse of hunger from the shoulder of its poor people?

What the announcements and provisions signify: confusing eligibility criteria for determining who suffer from humiliating life and need gratitude

Next, as said above, the NFSB covers the poorest of poor of the country. But the number of poor in the country has been a sore throat to the governments as the larger figure implies more poverty demanding greater commitments and an embarrassment for the governments to the world in these days of globalization when Indian rulers would like to pose themselves as formidable force and thus help the Indian capital in its search for global market. Thus, while the government-constituted Arjun Sengupta Committee report shows that around 78% of Indian population cannot spend more than Rs 20 a day and should be considered to be below poverty line, the Planning Commission lowers the limit of spending to Rs 15 in rural areas and Rs 20 in urban areas to mark the poverty line and straightaway brings the total number of poor to just 400 million or roughly 33% of the population. While BPL beneficiaries are stated to be 56% of the population, the NFSB reduces it to 46% for the rural population and 28 % of the urban population. It means even by government data, not all rural and urban households would be covered in the NFSB. However under pressure of criticisms all those categories of priority and general households have been replaced by 'eligible' households and the target entitlement figures for coverage under TPDS have been fixed at upto 75% of rural population and upto 50% of the urban population.

Whatever it be, the truths are : Number one, the NFSB leaves identification or categorization of beneficiaries far from being clearly defined, leaves it in a grey area. Number two, nevertheless and unquestionably these beneficiaries constitute a vast population of the poorest of poor existing (at least 75% rural and 50% urban population) even after more than six decades of independence who are left, not to speak of elevating their living standard by any measure, without purchasing power to procure basic requirements of their life, even the requirement of food, by themselves. A question

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Karnataka Assembly Elections

Need for electing tested soldiers of democratic movement to stem the ongoing rot

Political arena in the state of Karnataka is totally polluted. Anti-people policies, misrule, corruption and illegalities are attaining newer and newer dimensions. Their reach is growing wider and deeper with each passing day. Each party is competing with the other in corruption. In the milieu of bickering, mudslinging, toppling, etc., among the parties, not one is in sight to stand by the interest of the 'common man'. People have gone deaf listening to the oft-repeated word 'development'. Common people, be it rural or urban are pushed to a life of utter penury and misery. There has virtually been a 'musical chair' centring on the seat of the chief minister. It is in this background that polls to the Karnataka state assembly are slated to be held on the 5th of May 2013. People have become restless; mass mind is in intense turmoil bogged by the dilemma of whom to choose and whom to reject.

All 'big's are tainted

It is not a Herculean task for the people of the state to realize that the onus of the bad state of affairs in their life squarely lies on the Congress, BJP and JD(S), the so called big bourgeois parties serving the monopolists. This is truth number one! All these three 'Big' parties or their combinations at some point of time have ruled the state. As fallout of their misrule, there have been widespread loot and plunder, corruption, misappropriation, nepotism, mal-administration causing increased plight of the people. These three parties primarily bear the responsibility for skyrocketing price rise, corruption, privatization of public enterprises, destruction of lakhs and lakhs of jobs, suicide of farmers, dismal rise in crimes against women, propagation of degraded culture, etc. In other words, in every sphere — economic-political-cultural-social — life of the common people has become hell. That these three parties are basically no different from each other is the truth number two! Just the colours of their flags differ! In everything else viz., formulation and implementation of policies, pattern of governance, scrambling over share in the booty, attitude towards people's movement, etc. they are one and the same. There is not an iota of difference among them in pursuing the staunch pro-capitalist, anti-people policies of globalization, liberalization and privatization. A slew of scandalous cases that rocked the state of late have been illegal mining, smuggling of granite, bribery for surety, denotifications and illegal property acquisition, land grabbing, KIADB scams. Facts would bear out how the ruling parties are involved in such shady deals and defalcation of funds.

Illegal mining and misappropriation of irrigation project funds

The state has earned the distinction of being in the headline

of late for the high level corruption involving the chief minister, other ministers and ruling party figureheads. There has been a split in the ruling BJP with former chief minister floating his separate outfit. Both BJP and Congress, two most trusted political parties of the ruling class, are trying to rope in this or that faction of each other, woo the regional parties controlling caste-based votes in some parts of the state and even making every attempt to engineer defection. These splits, tie-ins, grouping and regrouping are not based on any ideology but solely purported to ride to power. In fact, each and every party is tainted. Illegal mining, smuggling of granite, scandalous case of bribery for surety, denotifications and illegal property acquisition cases, land grabbing, KIADB (Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board) scandals — innumerable such cases involving the political kingpins are there for dime a dozen in the state and are still going on.

For example, in Belikeri scandal, in spite of direction of the High Court, around 35 lakh metric tons of confiscated ore was stolen right under the nose of the authorities and illegally exported. Its estimated cost is Rs 60000 crores! The offenders are still at large. Janardan Reddy, one of the then MLCs accused that then Chief minister "Kumaraswamy (now belonging to Janta Dal-Secular) had received a bribe of Rs 150 crores from the mine lords." The Lokayukta report on illegal mining tabled in July 2011 exposed the colossal loot by the Bellary mining lords with full backing of the state BJP government. In fact, all the chief ministers irrespective of political affiliations like S.M.Krishna (Congress), Dharam Singh (Congress), Kumaraswamy and Yeddyurappa (BJP) who have ruled the state are alleged to have sucked the honey; they are all partakers in the loot. Now the same fellows are trading charge against

each other and projecting a 'clean' image of the self.

Another glaring example is the upper Bhadra lift irrigation project. The initial cost of Rs 550 crore escalated to Rs 1032 crore when the contract was given to RNS (R.N.Shetty) Infrastructure Company. This is because the Murudeshwar Ceramic Company owned by R.N.Shetty had donated Rs 13 crore to Dhavalagiri Property Developers, Prerana developers and Sahyadri Health Care Centres owned by Yeddyurappa, his sons and son-in-law! Similarly, it is an open secret that the upper Krishna project inaugurated way back in 1964 with the estimated cost of Rs 120 crores is yet to be completed though the cost has escalated to a whopping Rs 17,000 crores! Though the planned 15.36 lakh acre of land is not yet irrigated, 'powerful' politicians of all the major parties figure on the list of those enriched illegally by this project in the past 5 decades.

'Denotification' — a plan hatched to loot

Next is the denotification case. That the people of the state are facing severe problem of housing is a known fact. But during the past one decade the properties earmarked for public utility in different cities in the state are illegally handed over to those close to the power that be. Only a few cases which were exposed and registered in Lokayukta court, indicated that S. M. Krishna, Dharam Singh, Kumaraswamy, Yeddyurappa, Sadananda Gowda, etc., all having been the chief ministers of the state, had cornered the sites either to their names or in the names of their near and dear ones under the 'G' Category. Reports of two enquiry committees revealed that the land in the city limits viz., revenue land, 'Gomala' land, forest land — all adding upto lakhs of acres of land in the state have been grabbed! As per the reports gone public, Yeddyurappa had denotified 221.34 acres of land between 2008 and 2010 causing a loss to the tune of Rs 3768 crores to the government treasury. Similarly Kumaraswamy is accused of denotifying 275 acres of land causing a loss of Rs 2000 crores to the government exchequer during the period 2006-2007. In fact a public interest litigation (PIL) filed in February 2013 in the Karnataka High Court quoted a CAG Report

which stated that there have been 126 cases of denotification causing loss of thousands of crores of rupees to the treasury! There are also allegations that Justice Padmaraj Committee appointed to hold enquiry about the misuse of 'G' Category has itself landed in controversy for alleged receipt of largesse obviously for holding back revelation of truth.

Corruption galore

The BJP stalwarts who are facing grave charges of land grab are — ex-BJP CM Yeddyurappa (now leader of the KGP formed by split), deputy CMs Eswarappa and R.Ashok, Ex minister Katta Subramanya Naidu, Industries Minister Murugesw Nirani, Housing Minister V.Somanna, Minister for Energy Shobha Karandlaje, Social Welfare Minister A.Narayana Swamy, Ex Mujarayi Minister Krishnaiah Shetty, Higher Education Minister C.T.Ravi, Law Minister Suresh Kumar, Ex Medical Education Minister Ramachandre Gowda, Reddy brothers, Export Minister Krishna Palemar, Forest Minister C.P.Yogeshwar, Agriculture Minister Umesh Katti, Excise Minister Renukacharya, Fisheries Minister Anand Asnotikar, Food Minister D.N.Jeevaraj, Environmental Minister Sogudu Shivanna, the list is endless. Many more BJP ministers and MLAs are facing criminal charges. S.M.Krishna, K.Rehman Khan, K.H..Muniyappa, D.K.Shivakumar and others of Congress are also facing charges of corruption and illegal deals. Starting from H. D. Devegowda and Kumaraswamy, the leaders of JD(S), upto some MLAs are facing grave charges. According to a recent statistics 40 political leaders of all bourgeois parties are facing charges of corruption. The deals which have stained the hands of all parties are — NICE project which has grabbed 21000 acres of land, misappropriation of Wakf properties, illegal land grab in the name of 'development' in Nandagudi and by POSCO, grab of 400 acres land of Bangalore palace which has come to light recently. The list is long.

Drought and floods — both are welcome!

How these satraps of ruling bourgeois parties trade in the destitution and devastation of millions of poor and have-nots are

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Karnataka Assembly Elections

Stench of rotten bourgeois vote-politics spreads menacingly

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glaringly manifest in the way they shamelessly squandered away funds meant for drought and flood relief as well. The government is reported to have spent Rs 2500 crores for drought relief from 2008 to date. But this expenditure is not subjected to accounting by the auditors. The organizations who have spent the money have not even submitted the details of spending. Neither the district administration nor the Taluka Panchayat or the Gram Panchayat has accounted for the money spent, while the drought hit victims are waiting in vain. It is clear that corrupt nexus of ruling party-government-administration has gulped the entire sum.

In October 2009, more than 20 lakhs of people in 15 districts were affected in the torrential rains which hit the state. More than 200 lives were lost. Instead of taking recourse to flood relief measures, BJP and Congress whiled away their time in taking pot-shot against each other. Groupism in ruling BJP was at its zenith at the time and nobody cared for the victims. Public collection worth of Rs 600 crores and grant of Rs 2000 crores from the drought relief fund have just been swindled. Lakhs of people lost their homes, properties and came to the streets with literally nothing due to the floods are still languishing at roadside sheds. But, even after the passage of four years, the promise of 'building 60000 houses for the homeless' by the then CM Yeddyurappa remains in the books only.

Job or unemployment dole – both are mirages!

While such loot and plunder of public fund is continuing unabated and unemployment soaring sky high, the state government is in no mood to either provide jobs. Existing vacancies in the government departments are either not filled up or straightaway abolished citing shortage of funds. BJP assured in its election manifesto last time that if returned to power, it "will create jobs or will give unemployment dole". Neither was done. Despite over 30,000 vacancies of primary school teachers, no recruitment has taken place during the last 4 years. For the past 8 months the recruitment process for 1764 pre university lecturer posts and 3406 high school teachers is mired in controversy. Graduates with doctoral degrees are running around for a small job in the schools for a paltry sum to eke out a living.

The situation in the industrial sector is equally dismal, if not harrowing. One after another, factories are being shut down throwing thousands of workers out of job. There has been no initiative on the part of the government to reopen these industries. Rather, responding to the demand of exploiting employers for 'reforms' of labour laws, the government is allowing contract labour at 1/10th or 1/12th of the regular wage in almost every sector including government sector. 50% of the lecturers in degree colleges and universities are made to work on contract basis. Outsourcing of permanent jobs is also permitted. Workers are being systematically robbed of their hard earned rights like entitlement to minimum wages, 8 hours of work, bonus, PF, pension, ESI benefits, etc. While the profits of the employers are reaching sky-high, workers languish in abject poverty, pauperization and sub-human life condition. While the government showcases the IT hubs as signs of progress, the workers and employees are inching towards the precipice of doom.

The fraud of Global Investors Meet (GIM)

But the Congress, BJP or their associates are unfazed, busy in self-aggrandizement and working out electoral arithmetic. Whenever confronted with the question of jobs, they only parrot figures of prospective investment in the state as if investment and job creation are synonymous— a hoax that is already exposed. In the current phase of decadent moribund capitalism ridden with insurmountable crisis endemic of the system, whatever few industries are set up are predominantly capital-intensive technology-based sophisticated units which offer limited or practically no job. In the Western capitalist world, the coinage 'job-less growth' is quite well-known. But, like in other states, the ruling parties in Karnataka too dangle the carrot of investment to dupe people, particularly the job-seeking youth.

In July 2012, before the exit of CM Sadananda Gowda of BJP, one GIM was held with all fanfare. There was a massive propaganda in the media that agreement has already been signed for a huge investment of Rs 7.6 lakh crore in the state. State government boasted that this would create more than 10 lakhs of jobs. But what is the reality? State industrial minister Murugesh Nirani had declared that

3.92 lakh crores were invested in a similar meet in 2010. But, the government remained conspicuously silent on the number of either new industries established or new job created. But, GIM indeed paved way for liberal "donation" of land under this or that plea to giant corporate houses.

Spree of privatization

Buttressing the agenda of capitalist globalization wreaking havoc in people's life round the world, all bourgeois outfits are creating a halo that rapid privatization and liberalization are warranted for 'growth' and 'good governance'. So, whether BJP or Congress or JD(S) —all are supporting and pursuing large scale privatization of the government departments. Privatization is pervading all sectors and spreading.

The ground has been getting ready to privatize power sector for the last 2 decades. The public industry of power production, transmission and distribution is being continuously changed from 1997 onwards in the name of 'Reforms in power sector'. Karnataka power reform bill was implemented in May 1999. In July 1990 KEB was split into KPTCL and VVNL. In August 1999 Karnataka power reform bill became an act. In 1999, October, Karnataka Electrical Regulatory Commission (KERC) came into being. KPTCL was further split into BESCOM, MESCOM, HESCOM and GESCOM. Again, by 2006, about 80% posts in the state power sector were handed over to the private sector. It is said that ESCOMS are in the red; particularly HESCOM and GESCOM are the worst hit.

After power, now it's the turn of water. The process of privatization and corporatization of water has been accelerated since 1996 itself with liberal loans from Asian Development Bank and the World Bank on the condition that all consumers should have water meters, no free supply of water, all public taps to be pulled out and there should be a system for allowing use of water after paying user fees, etc. These conditions laid the foundation stone of eventual privatization and run water supply on commercial basis for filling the coffer of private houses. In the past 17 years water tariff has gone up by a minimum of 300%.

Likewise, in the colourful smokescreen of Public-Private Partnership, the citizens are forced to pay fee for using 'private' roads

built by PWD of the government and Indian Highway authority with the tax amount collected from the people. It is known to all that all vehicles pay road tax before it takes on the road. Yet this extra fee is slapped on the travellers who do not know how much user fee is to be paid for which highway and how long? In fact, crores of rupees are being squandered through Karnataka State Highway Improvement Project (KSHIP) implemented in league with the World Bank. There are no details of receipt or spending. It seems the government has taken up the job of robbing the people in this area.

Plight of the peasants

Like other sections of the toiling masses, the sufferings of the vast multitude of peasants also know no bounds. They are in perpetual misery and poverty because of increasing cost of agricultural inputs, non-availability of remunerative price of the produces, no protection against natural calamities affecting crop production, lack of proper irrigation facilities, tightening noose of debt and so forth. Added to these is forcible snatching of agricultural land. An institution named Karnataka Industrial Area Development Board (KIADB) has been floated only to grab land of the farmers. This KIADB, corrupt to the backbone, has already gulped down lakhs of acres of agricultural land, opened a 'land bank' and is ready to gift the land to the domestic and foreign monopolists. Arcellor, Mittal, POSCO, Tata, Honda, Jindal, MSCL, Brahmini steels are waiting in siege to pounce on their prey like hungry wolves. On the other hand, thousands and thousands of peasants are evicted from their land and hearth only to be transformed into street beggars. Similarly, the rural poor are cruelly deprived of whatever meagre they can earn from the much trumpeted National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (NREGS). After the scheme was implemented in 2005, the state got Rs 4500 crores. But no one knows how the allocation was utilized. There are records of Rs 2200 crores having been spent under NREGA out of Rs 2400 crores allotted to the state in the last financial year 2012-2013. 56 lakh job cards were distributed. But the fact is that only 45, 000 people and that too mostly those close to the MLAs, panchayat heads or contractors got job for 100 days as per the scheme. It is alleged that lakhs of bogus job cards have

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Convention on use of Nuclear Energy in Chennai

The People's Committee for Safe Energy (PECOSE) and Breakthrough Science Society (BSS) jointly organized an All India Convention on "APPROACH TO THE POWER QUESTION IN THE COUNTRY" at Chennai on Saturday, April 6, 2013. The objective of the Convention was to facilitate a free and open discussion on the issue of the existing power shortages in the country and to explore the various solutions to the problem including the viability of nuclear energy today, especially in light of the sustained people's movement against the Koodankulam Nuclear Power Plant and people's opposition to the setting up of nuclear plants in Jaitapur in Maharashtra, Kovada in Andhra Pradesh and Mithi Virdi in Gujarat. Prior to the Convention a campaign was carried out with an Appeal signed by the eminent jurist V. K. Krishna Iyer, former Judge, Supreme Court of India, and other men of conscience including, Dr. A Gopala-

krishnan, Former Chairman, Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB), M G Devasahayam, IAS (Retd), Former Chairman, Haryana State Electricity Board, Shankar Sharma, Power Policy Analyst, Dr M V Ramana, Physicist, Princeton Univ, USA, Prof J R Laxman Rao, Science Writer & Founder, KRVP, Karnataka, Nityanand Jayaraman, Writer & Journalist, Chennai, Prof A Krishna Bhat, Popular Science Writer, Karnataka, Dr Abhee K Dutta Mazumder, Prof, Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics, Dr Patibandla Srikant, Institute for Social & Economic Change, Prakashbhai N Shah, well-known social activist and journalist, Jagdish Shah, freedom fighter and Sarvodaya activist, Gautam Thakar, General Secretary, PUCL Gujarat, Dhiru Mistry, documentary filmmaker, Dinesh Shukla, Retd Prof, Gujarat University, Kapilbhai Shah, Tanushree Gangopadhy, activist and journalist, and social activists Dilip Chandulal and Himmat Shah.

Welcoming the distinguished speakers and delegates, Dr. Dhruvajyoti Mukherjee, Retired Professor of Geology, University of Calcutta, suggested that the house should attempt to evolve a guideline in framing our future energy policy based on comparative assessment of resource position, hazards and cost. While the pro-nuclear advocates claim that nuclear energy is indispensable for addressing the existing power shortage and that nuclear power is cheap, safe and

environment friendly, those holding counter opinion hinge their arguments on the long-term effects of nuclear radiation, the hazards stemming from the radioactive waste product, and the possibility of disastrous nuclear accidents, despite taking safety precautions. They also question the need as well as the actual potential of nuclear energy in tackling the nation's electricity deficit.

Dr. A Gopalakrishnan, Former Chairman, Atomic Energy

perspective of overall welfare of our communities.

Shri S Gandhi, President, Power Engineers Society of Tamilnadu (PESOT), explained that inadequate generation capacity in government sector is the main cause of the present crisis of supply. When the recent changes in electricity policy were introduced, the Government of India denied permission for new generation addition in public sector and mandated and amended the act to invite private generators. Power

is high.

Messages from the eminent jurist V R Krishna Iyer, Dr. E A S Sharma, former Secretary (Power), Government of India and former Adviser (Energy), Planning Commission, Major General (Retd) S G Vombatkere, Justice Suresh Hosbet, former Judge, Bombay High Court, and Prof Sujay Bose, former Head, School of Energy Studies, Jadavpur University, and the protesters against nuclear plant at Haripur, West Bengal, were read out. Justice Iyer made a fervent appeal that "all nuclear projects be abandoned forthwith, all genuine concerns of the people be addressed and their legitimate demands conceded, and that care be taken to ensure people's participation in all policy decisions involving their lives and livelihoods."

This was followed by a Question and Answer session in which several members of the sizeable audience that had gathered put questions to the different speakers, the answers



Seated on the dais at Chennai Convention are Sarbhashree S. Gandhi, MG Devasahayam, A Gopalakrishnan, Dhruvajyoti Mukherjee, Shankar Sharma and Soumitro Banerjee

Regulatory Board (AERB) said in course of his penetrating speech that the Indian nuclear power program is being guided along a reckless track and Bhabha's plan of indigenization of this sector has been thrown to the winds. He said that corporate interests dictate the nuclear policy framing in India and that the current nexus between the government, the corporates and the politicians needs to be broken. He expressed serious doubts about the safety of the Russia-built Koodankulam reactor. That in recent weeks there had been a few critical failures of plant equipment during 'hot testing' in the run up to its commissioning, and several disturbing revelations had come in from abroad regarding the quality of Russian nuclear supplies. He drew attention to the arrest of the director of Zio-Podolsk, a subsidiary of Russian public sector company Rosatom, on charges of corruption, fraud and supplying of cheap components in VVER nuclear reactors, two of which are being set up at Kudankulam. He declared that the opposition coming from the protesters, concerned as they were about safety, was totally justifiable.

Shri Shankar Sharma, Power Policy Analyst, advocated that a Cost-Benefit Analysis should be used as a decision-making tool in the Indian power sector. He emphasised that this approach would help us to arrive at an optimal set of solutions from the

is now purchased at a huge cost from private generators.

Shri M G Devasahayam, IAS (Retd), Former Chairman, Haryana State Electricity Board explained the necessity for a 'Prudential management paradigm' in approaching the power question in India. He observed that as a result massive privatization began in every sector including the Coal sector and that led to the collapse of power sector. In essence he said that we cannot keep going in the darkness without a thorough diagnosis and prudential management of the power sector.

Dr Soumitro Banerjee, Professor & Dean of Students, IISER, Kolkata, made a lucid presentation on alternate sources of energy and highlighted the hazards associated with the nuclear power generation, from the stage of uranium mining, the waste disposal and the reactor safety issues. Presenting an analysis of the cost of power production he showed that the cost of nuclear power generation

to which threw much light in bringing about clarity on the complex issue of the power question in the country. Activists from Kovada in Andhra Pradesh and Mithi Virdi in Gujarat narrated the history of their struggles. At the conclusion, a Resolution was adopted by the house stating that nuclear power generation is not suitable for the country today in view of the various hazards associated with the entire nuclear fuel cycle, calling for greater reliance on renewable and sustainable resources including sun and wind, and evolving all policy decisions through consultations with the concerned people. Prof Dhruvajyoti Mukherjee closed the day's discussions with a call to make this the first in a series of discussions around the country to create awareness among the general public of the approach to be adopted to the issue of power generation in the country, keeping the interests of the people and the environment always in mind.

Women's Day observation by AIMSS at Allahabad

On the occasion of International Women's Day on 8th March last, women enthusiastically took part in a programme of badge bearing organized by Allahabad unit of AIMSS. The badges were worn as a token of taking firm resolve to carry on the struggle of women against growing rate of crime and atrocity, spread of obscenity and liquor culture as well as to uphold honour, dignity and real course of emancipation of womenfolk. During the programme many women took membership of AIMSS. Those who addressed the participants included Comrade Rashmi Malaviya, convener, AIMSS, Allahabad, and others.

NFSB-proposed quantum of food falls far below minimum calorie output required

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arises as to how could those people be brought to such a subhuman condition. Number three, so the government has to come out as their benevolent messiah to help them live with dignity! Better late than never! But the way it approaches the issue already gives rise to serious questions as to whether use of such varied terms for identifying the poor is a deliberate ploy on the part of the government, or not, to create confusion and leave an escape route open to evade the responsibility.

The government poses unsure of whether there is any person living in starvation, but the stark reality would bluntly provide ample instances of starvation, even starvation death across the country. However, it is better late than never, if they are paid attention to! But, what kind of civilized society the aspirant superpower harbours where more than six decades after independence, a Bill has to be adopted to ensure that pregnant women and lactating mothers or children live on the gratitude or gracious benevolence of the state for food whereas that should have been their birthright. If their present life is without dignity, who put them into it and why? Who kept them as a vast army of hapless 'creatures' for the governments to show off their benevolence from time to time to earn allegiance or support from them in lieu and reap benefits for themselves and the major political parties running them, for power and pelf, for vote-catching? If the NFSB cherishes the same approach, the simple doles it offers are not going to bring dignity to these people, nor going to meet other basic needs of life.

In the NFSB the government proposes changeover from a welfare to *right* based approach (emphasis ours). Now people from their experiences from other walks of life, for instance education, have seen how the government from behind the smoke-screen of high-sounding words and pronouncements has shed off its responsibility and transferred it to people themselves {educating a child is the responsibility of the parents, not the government : vide DPEP, SSA, RTE} and has virtually snatched away the right while chanting the slogan of granting the right {most evident with the Right to Education Act which virtually demolishes education of common people}. One should remember that the NFSB- referred right- based approach is also nothing more than

a misnomer, a ploy to hoodwink people. It is not the constitutionally enforceable or *justiciable* right. And so to achieve its precise realization, successfully, the government has to create proper condition and has to guarantee its implementation. The government's solemn declaration on welfare to right-based approach in the NFSB may evoke apprehension if the question of right to secure food would or would not meet the same end. Would it then turn out to be a plea for the government to wash its hands off ensuring food for people?

What the announcements and provisions signify: *the Bill rests itself on a rickety foundation working perfectly for powerful food lobby*

In any case for the target population, the poorest of poor, the government fixes a quantum (7kg per person per month) of foodgrains. By that, it does not assume the responsibility of providing the quantum of food a person needs as desirable quantity, but simply thinks of how much is feasible for the government to procure and it can manage to procure from production in fields. So we have three aspects on which the quantum is fixed, viz., production in field, government procurement and requirement as per entitlement vide NFSB.

On the average in recent years the government procures around 30% of production. But what about production? At one stage after independence the governments were busy in claiming self-sufficiency in food-grain production. In the seventies of the last century a semblance of self-sufficiency might have been reached with an upward growth in rural economy and increase in rural wages and reduction in rural poverty. But from 1990 Indian agricultural growth slumped frighteningly (as was admitted, for instance, to the Press by the Prime Minister himself in 2009) along with rapid increase in rural poverty. A few of its constituent states of India recorded the least possible growth rate, even a negative one. The governments, union or state, claimed drought and bad monsoon as the main factors for slower growth, but themselves spent less on agricultural infrastructure and more on subsidy. The latter was and is skewed towards few richest farmers and their powerful lobbies. These trends are amply indicated in relevant government and World Bank

reports. Besides, a vicious concerted campaign is generated that in these days of globalization food security is not about self-sufficiency as food has become a global commodity and a major force in that market. So despite general slowdown of agricultural growth, India may reach record production in some food grains (for instance last year there was a record wheat production of 94.88 million tonnes, which may have been surpassed this year) and despite internal demand and requirement may export the same to earn dollars for the food barons and food sharks (India is the world's largest exporter of rice of 9.5 million tonnes this past calendar year). Instead it may import food stuffs it is unlikely to ever produce enough of, such as pulses that may be best left to machine harvested drylands in Canada and the US. The truths then are : number one, the myth of self-sufficiency in food is shattered; number two, production is now being oriented towards earning profits from the internal and world markets and not towards the needs of country's people; number three, with such orientation there may even be record production of this or that produce; despite that agricultural growth as a whole is menacingly slumping down; number four, here planning and its execution help only the powerful lobby of food barons and food sharks on the fields or in the markets; number five, in the NFSB the government proposes to feed its people on around 30% of this anarchic and falling production which is skewed in favour of the rich and dismal for the poor.

What the announcements and provisions signify: *feasibility and manageability prescribes a quantum short of desirability*

So much about production. The NFSB does not spend a word on how this slumping agricultural growth rate may and should be reversed. Rather as the Standing Committee reveals, only one-third of this falling production the government procures for ensuring food for its people. The rest two-third of production is left to the food-barons and food sharks to reap their harvest. The requirement for the NFSB is however more. So even the Standing Committee suggests what is feasible and manageable, a 5 kg quantum for all ! The NFSB does not propose any pull-up of procurement level and requirement level as well! Rather it acts on

feasible and manageable criteria of the Standing Committee. How much and in what way the NFSB will then provide food security to people, it can be well guessed! It can be argued that after all the NFSB entitles the poor with some assured quantum of food. So we must see how effective the quantum is to serve as a viable source of food for the poor human beings.

In this connection, the figures, mentioned earlier may be repeated once more. 2,300 calories per day, 2,800 and 3,500 are the desired calorie levels for an adult man to perform respectively light to average amount, medium amount and heavy amount of work. For an adult woman the figures are 1,800, 2,250 and 2,700 calories per day respectively for light, medium and heavy work. 7kg wheat per person per month, that is nearly 230 gms wheat per day produces about 750 calories, while the same amount of rice would make about 250 calories. Can these figures be called anywhere near the desired level by any standard? And if the quantum is further reduced to 5 kg per month per person what amount of calorie would be derived from it. So the amount of foodgrains the NFSB ensures for poor people, the NFSB quantum figures have no bearing with the calorie requirement of individuals for even the lightest work for which they take food. They are fixed only on the criteria of 'feasibility' and 'manageability' for the government. In such a situation, how befitting the title of the Bill namely National Food Security becomes, people may judge themselves. Rather, it amply makes clear how debase and degraded the bourgeois rulers of our country have become as to claim to be ensuring people's security and offering a quantum of food that is far below what they require in minimum for sustenance. Hence it turns out to be a simply ploy to allure poor helpless people with a pose of benevolence and thereby secure a vote-bank, at the same time create hurdle on the way of developing people's movement in a correct path.

If it is assumed that the ruling capitalist class and the governments serving them are serious and sincere in implementing the NFSB they must answer the following questions. First, by implementing this NFSB to provide dole in the name of ensuring food security of an overwhelmingly large section of population of the country, is not the

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Corruption in PDS left untouched in the Bill

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government pushing those people to a condemned life, a doom for ever from where they can never stand up on their own? If they really mean ensuring food security of people, should not they also ensure sufficient production of food? Should not they ensure enhancement of the purchasing power of poor people to the extent at least to such level that they can buy food from their own income? And, last but not the least, should not they ensure that corrupt private players do not find a scope to get hold of the process from production-procurement to distribution and to that end should not they introduce and ensure all-out state trading of food along with other essential commodities? Otherwise, the whole process would be reduced to squandering hundreds of crores of rupees of state exchequer built up on nothing but people's hard-earned money collected through taxes, for the corrupt rich to reap their harvest.

What the announcements and provisions signify: *government looking the other way from corruption*

The prescribed amount of food will be delivered to the target population through the TPDS. What is the present experience of people with the PDS? After a long wait for a week, they may find a drab notice or dry words from the PDS outlets that there is no supply; when they are fortunate to get hold of the supply, they may find that the foodstuff is rotten not even fit for human consumption. They helplessly see before their eyes who are all involved in the nexus of corruption centring around PDS or food business. The nexus includes dishonest middlemen, brokers, hoarders and blackmarketeers acting in league with the corrupt government officials, even staff at the government godowns, ruling party members and their associates that often include local dealers and ration-shop, that is PDS outlet, owners, branded notorious local goons and others. They take hold of the produce right from the cultivation field, tamper with it to their wish and benefit, and recycle it in the open market at exorbitant price. The manifold result is also well-known: The PDS which was introduced under pressure of popular movement is in shambles and mired in all-pervasive corruption; fake cards are galore which help diverting the lion's share of the supply from the PDS to the open market; genuine card-holders

have to remain satisfied with whatever they get, in quantity never to be questioned and in quality substandard, even going below the level of being fit for human consumption; food stuff rot to such condition right inside government godowns. Obviously the real beneficiaries are the members of the nexus; benefits may accrue to a vulgar show of wealth of these beneficiaries amidst horrible display of destitution and deprivation of common people even in remotest hamlets. These latter, the genuine poor card-holders have only their fate to curse.

The NFSB spends quite a few pages on reforms of these TPDS, as it calls it. It enlists all the shall-dos and must-dos put on black and white. But it does not spend a single word on this issue of corruption; any reference to the nexus mentioned above is very carefully avoided; no commitment towards taking stringent measures against the corrupt officials and other malevolent constituents of the PDS, now TPDS. Does the government really mean that even without these the TPDS would work properly and to the benefit of the target population beyond the long-reach of the nexus? In fact, when every cog and screw of the nexus belongs to the same flock as the bourgeois rulers, including those who adorn the governments, even a verbose assurance against corruption and the nexus, without any concrete effective steps may really mean nothing more than a deceitful and thus hypocritical propaganda.

Incidentally, it may be mentioned that in the last decade or two not less than 18 schemes have been launched purportedly for the benefit of people. Those include the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) or Antyodaya Anna Yojana (AAY) and such others. None of these have touched even the fringe of the problem, largely for the same reasons. In no case benefits percolated to the lowest level, to the people in need; one may rest assured that with every part of the administrative, bureaucratic and government machinery remaining the same, how the fate of the NFSB could be different. Even the much-hyped Midday meal for a large section of school students has become a farce for them with its meager substandard food and a lucrative source of income for those running it. Leave aside providing wholesome food for students it has miserably disturbed the basic exercise of schools, namely, teaching and learning. The

controversial "aadhaar", or cash transfer would also not be able to get rid of the grip of all-powerful, all-pervasive middlemen who reign supreme as the government looks the other way; the proponents of the NFSB may dream of applying IT tools to the remotest outlets of the TPDS to bring benefit to the poor; but anybody conversant with the reality would always question its feasibility, where every modern gadget comes to the benefit of the rich with the poor to look with awe and disgust from a distance. That the situation is well-known to the highest echelons of power in the country becomes evident when truth slips out of this or that member of theirs as they comment: Out of a rupee granted and released by the state for welfare of people, only a few paise reach the target population.

What the announcements and provisions signify: *government declines its responsibility towards disaster affected people*

False claims, confusing jugglery of words, criminal silence about corruption, all these reach a height in the heartless face of the government reflected in the NFSB, when it deals with the case of disaster affected people. The Clauses 9 and 52, quoted earlier stand opposing to each other. Which one is true: in one clause, Clause 9, the Bill confers some responsibility to the state governments to stand by people during disaster time, in another, Clause 52 it flatly refuses shouldering any responsibility in such situations. Unquestionably, such a preposterous anomaly must be removed and the government must take full and unqualified responsibility of ensuring food for disaster affected people.

Why people of an independent country are saddled to live with ignominy on charity

To summarize, if and when the government sets out to give effect to the NFSB, it must admit the truth that there exists a vast number of poor (whatever be the figure) in the country even after more than six decades of independence who do not have the purchasing power to procure square meals for themselves. Truly, there were poor during the days of the British rule in the country. These long years of independence could not bring majority of them out of their abject plight; a look at the tribals or remote villages would attest the truth; rather they have slid further down into the abyss of poverty-illiteracy-insecurity of life. Over and above,

independent India so flamboyant in holding colourful displays of its might and richness frequently on occasions, has produced another vast population of poor, who have lost and are losing fast whatever they had. The government or the powers-that-be may try frantically to rein in the rising number to put up a show of how efficiently they are in alleviating poverty. But the truth remains as their own acts attest to. The present NFSB would not have to be mooted had there been no sizeable section of population without the purchasing power to procure food from the open market.

The first question that arises naturally is why and how the situation has come to such a pass. Was it not the pledge of the glorious freedom struggle of the country and valiant freedom fighters to found an independent country where people will be constructively engaged in production of goods and services contributing his or her mite and in lieu will enjoy a decent living with basic amenities of life offered? Why then people even after more than six decades of independence have to look more and more for the charity and dole from the government for their minimum basic needs of sustenance? Is it really desirable or is it not a shame for the country to have a system, where people are forced to live for years together on *Langarkhana*, that is on charity and alms? Will such charity and dole ever help them live a life with dignity or will it make them fastened more tightly and with more ignominy to the shackles that have kept them in their present condition, thereby causing them to slump faster and more fearfully to total doom? Can simply an alms of 5 or 7 kg of foodgrain bring them out of their deprivation? Besides, do not these people as human beings have other basic needs of life to meet? Do they not need a roof above their head, firm four walls around to protect them? Do they need a decent, proper education for them and their children? Do they not need proper clothes and not just a torn-out cover barely enough to maintain their...? Can they meet these needs without a decent job, a proper source of income that would raise their purchasing power, would help them meet at least the minimum basic needs of life and livelihood? While prescribing provisions for pregnant women and lactating mothers the Bill categorically states that no pregnant women and lactating mothers in regular employment with the governments or PSUs must get

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Only conscious pressure and constant vigil can wrest the minimum benefit of the Bill

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this help. So it admits, *ipso facto*, that there is a vast army of pregnant women and lactating mothers who are not employed and thus cannot sustain themselves without the government's benevolence. Have the governments through all these years of independence, including the present one, taken any concrete step towards providing them with jobs to bring out these hapless womenfolk from their misery and make them stand on their own legs to live a life of real dignity? Whose responsibility is it other than the government's to provide people of the country with such means of livelihood as to help them meet their needs out of their earnings? Or is it the duty of the government to simply drain out thousands of crores of people's money as stimulus to the monopolists-businessmen-corporate and such others of the lot to save them from the crisis that their own system of capitalism is producing every day every moment?

The questions have a singular answer. It is the capitalist system of the country that stands at the root. Unemployment, poverty, lack of

education- proper medical facilities-shelter all these go hand in hand with the relentless capitalist exploitation. The governments that rise to power one after another chose to serve their master, the capitalist class, the monopolists, for the sake of their own power and pelf. They adopt policies that only help continue this system. Thus, albeit in different jargons, different governments of independent India pledged to provide food to its people in *adequate quantity* and at *affordable prices* to help people live a *life with dignity*. But it appears that the more they expressed these wishes, the worse has become the situation, the more the rich, the food barons and their henchmen and associates reaped their benefit.

In fact, so long as this system will prevail, there cannot be permanent solution to any of the basic problems of life however acute, ignominious or painful those may be. People must not lose sight of this truth, while also noting that this won't happen quite soon or without difficulty. Rather capitalist exploitation and oppression will relentlessly intensify. So, with the

ultimate goal of overthrowing the capitalist system kept steadily before them, people would have to launch and strengthen democratic mass movements on problems of their life making those struggles conducive to the struggle for reaching the ultimate goal, that is guiding those towards making people conscious of the necessity and inevitability of that goal of overthrowing the system. This way people will have to keep the pressure of public opinion and movement upon the governments. Under pressure of those movements, the rulers, the governments may be forced to concede to this or that demand of people. Though they would always try to fight shy of their responsibility and the full and actual benefits would hardly ever reach people.

The NFSB has been introduced in this background and the Bill, as discussed above, turns out to be an utterly insincere move. Only powerful and organized movements can help people correctly comprehend the weaknesses and limitations of the Bill.

In those movements one important aspect will be to force the

government to take measures for ensuring people's means of livelihood in such a manner that poor people instead of being dependent on charity and doles for their food security can stand on their own on the strength of their own hard-earned money, can buy enough food for them with it. This is not going to happen in a day and till then it is necessary that the government take steps like those envisaged in the NFSB or the AAY. But here too, it must ensure that the moves do not turn into cruel jokes or hoodwinking measures for poor people.

For that, people's vigilance committees as many as there could be across the country are to be founded and kept alive to see that the present provisions of the Bill reach people without being tampered or mutilated by the corrupt nexus that pervades the system. The more people will be equipped with the awareness of what to do and organized with their instruments for vigilance, the easier it will be to build up the required pressure on the government on the issue of the NFSB and ensure the minimum benefit that may be acquired from it.

SUCI(C) MLA Comrade Tarun Naskar in West Bengal Assembly

Comrade Tarun Naskar, SUCI(C), Member of the Legislative Assembly of West Bengal, has been raising all pertinent and important people's issues whenever he is getting a chance to do so in a House which sees more of acrimony, charges and counter-charges and mud-slinging even fury of fists and brawls than meaningful debates and discussions on genuine matters and issues concerning people's interest. Here are a few issues Comrade Naskar had raised in the House.

On state budget

Strongly opposing the state budget, he said on the Assembly floor on March 13 that the very proposal of raising the rate of VAT with a view to raising revenue would directly affect the consumers. He pointed out that it was the former CPI (M) finance minister Ashim Dasgupta who introduced VAT and claimed that it would bring down the price level — a hoax corroborated by subsequent experience. The TMC Government is treading the same path and thus triggering further increase in spiralling price line. He also indicated that the proposed reforms

in tax determination system and dissolution of the stock register system would only benefit the tax-evaders. He also observed that while the government is keen on presenting expected figure of investment in the state, there has been no concrete proposal to open the 56,000 odd closed factories.

Claim of starting an employment bank and providing 10,24,521 jobs is also not backed by facts. Equally vague is the idea of providing employment to 13, 14,000 next year, since employment means not just work on contract or on daily wage basis but permanent work throughout the year against the appropriate salary. He also questioned why the government instead of depending on the private owners, is not coming forward to open industries in state sector and open up scope for jobs? He pointed out certain anomalies in the figures of budget deficit. He also expressed concern about ever-increasing incidents of crime and atrocities against women.

Lowering electricity charges

He showed that the present TMC government has surpassed even the erstwhile CPI (M) government by

hiking power tariff 7 times in 13 months on the same false pretext of increase in coal price as was the plea of the CPI (M). This periodic rise in electricity charges is wreaking havoc in people's life particularly of the poor peasants. He urged the government to take steps to bring down the charges.

On deteriorating law and order

Participating in the debate over the governor's speech in the Assembly, he was very critical on the fast deteriorating law and order situation and regretted that like previous CPI (M) government, the present TMC government is also denying published reports of growing crime rate, increase in women trafficking, violation of human rights and news of starvation deaths. What is the use of increasing the number of police commissariats if crimes soar, he asked. Why are recommendations of State Human Right Commission fragrantly ignored, he questioned.

On blaming strike and workers' struggle

Pointing at the statistics provided by the labour minister that

while 5, 76, 574 man-days were lost due to lockout, only 9,592 man-days were lost due to strikes in the last one year, he said that the very claim of strike and hartal being at the root of all evils, as contended by the TMC government, is thus proved baseless and infructuous. He also raised the issue of providing security to the hawkers somehow managing to earn a livelihood.

On education and health

Comrade Naskar also expressed grave concern at the way there is colossal wastage of human blood due to inadequate preservation in the blood banks. He also highlighted the plight of the para-teachers of secondary, higher secondary schools and Madrasas who work for a paltry monthly honorarium of Rs. 500-2500 and that too on a temporary basis. He deplored the callous and insensitive attitude of the government towards this huge number of teaching persons. Series of incidents including instances of heckling teachers and professors within academic premises, among other things, reveals that the present administration like previous regime is not at all free from the control of ruling party, overtly or covertly.

Karnataka Assembly Elections

Corruption, factional feuds, greed for power engulf all contesting bourgeois outfits

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been issued to allow embezzlement of the allotted funds by the corrupt nexus of ruling party-administration-contractors. The farmers who grow sugarcane, paddy, toor dal are on the verge of extinction. The announced support prices for the produces are not made available. Erstwhile CM Yeddyurappa proudly called his last budget as "Farmers' Budget" and announced a cheap agricultural loan with 1% interest. But the hapless peasants in dire need have not received even a penny. In 2011 the central government reduced the import duty on silk from 31% to 5%. Following that, silk cocoon price fell from Rs 350/Kg to Rs 100/Kg in the state. But the state government did precious little to prevent the collapse of lakhs of silk farmers.

Saga of self-aggrandizement

Though the poor peasants, workers and other sections of toiling people are in the midst of immense suffering and are virtually denied the basic right to live, there is windfall on the legislators claiming to be 'people's representatives'. Two bills unanimously approved in the assembly on June 7, 2011 doubled the salary and allowances of all the ministers and MLAs of the state. The burden on the state treasury due to this is Rs 25.50 crore per year! Besides pay hike, perks are also increased substantially like 750 litres of petrol per month for their vehicles, Rs 15,000 towards telephone allowance per month, Rs 2 lakhs per year for railway and other transport fares, Rs 1.5 lakhs per year as guest allowance, house rent allowances, daily allowances - the list is endless! Both ruling and opposition parties are equal beneficiaries and hence there has not even been a semblance of resentment over this criminal drain on public exchequer.

Disrupting social peace

Though feeling not even an iota of concern for the suffering people, the ruling BJP, true to its credential of being ardent proponent of Hindu communalism, has been, in compliance with the sinister class design of ruling capitalism to keep people divided along casteist-communal line so as to thwart crystallization of united people's movement against growing ruthless capitalist oppression, has been keeping the atmosphere surcharged

with communal tension and persecution as well as attacks on religious minorities particularly Muslims. Casteist-communal sentiments are openly incited to derive electoral mileage. Polarization of people along casteist-communal line is sought by the bourgeois parties, whether in power or in opposition, for nurturing vote-bank politics. The peace and tolerance naturally existing among people of different communities inhabiting the state are thus set afire only for electoral gains and capturing power. From the same ulterior motive, in the name of fighting Western culture and combating forcible religious conversion, armed criminals are engaged in acts of vandalizing churches and homestays, harassing and physically assaulting young boys and girls locked in love relationship overcoming religious-casteist barriers. There have been many attacks in Mangalore, Udipi, Kolar and Chikmagalur districts. Criminals taking law into their hands have gone unpunished. Instead of hauling and punishing the culprits, the government has been found patronizing the criminals by justifying such heinous acts, overtly or covertly.

Election scenario in the country

The scenario of Karnataka is no different from the rest of the country. Come elections and the bourgeois media immediately swing into action, of course at the behest of the ruling Indian monopolists, to project the mainstream bourgeois parties or combinations within whom, it ensures, the choice of the electorates remains confined. Every Indian citizen knows from their experience that polls today in the rotten parliamentary politics ruling the roost are virtually manipulated through crafty use of money, media and mafia powers and hence reduced to nothing but a farce. In fact, exercise of adult franchise based on necessary political consciousness and total freedom to vote as per conscience has become a thing of the past, almost akin to an antic piece in the museum. The political parties subservient to the ruling capitalist class are neck-deep in corruption, ridden with internal squabbles, factional feuds, splits, dissensions and vying with each other only for grabbing pelf and power riding on the crest of false promises, pretentious concern for the suffering people and

mudslinging against each other only surface as contenders. All people's issues are sent to the backburner and instead certain manufactured issues are brought to the fore for diverting people's attention. Every care is taken on the part of the ruling class and its pliant administrative and propaganda machinery that forces upholding people's voice, espousing people's cause and struggling against the prevailing current of utterly corrupt deceptive vote-based nasty bourgeois politics never surface as contestant, never get any chance to reach out to the electorates with their alternative political line, approach and programme. Even electoral rules, norms and procedures are merrily changed, even bent to ensure that the electoral arena is kept to the extent possible secluded from the genuine representatives of the people and made exclusive preserve of the political sharks and vultures whose sole aim is to be saddled in power or at least be in the corridor of power by hook or crook and thrive on duping, denying and exploiting the toiling masses reeling under ruthless capitalist exploitation.

Time for people to act decisively

This is the backdrop in which the state is going to the polls. While every bourgeois party, be it the Congress or BJP or other regional outfits like KJP, JD (S) BSR, is, as usual, dangling carrots of 'development', showering plethora of hollow promises and selling wild dreams, people have to realize that whoever of them, either singly or in alliance, is saddled in power, the situation would worsen further as those wedded to the task of sustaining and defending the the exploitative and utterly corrupt capitalist system, the root of all evils, cannot deliver goods, cannot remain free from corruption and

cannot but act against people's interest. Till the time this oppressive capitalist rule is overthrown by revolution, the only course left to the people is to develop united organized sustained powerful democratic movement based on higher culture and morality to press for the burning demands of life. It is only under pressure of democratic movement that they can wrest some of their demands and keep corruption and other features of maladministration under some check. The voice of this movement must also reverberate inside the legislature. That is why, it is a historic need that genuine representative of the oppressed people, tested soldiers of democratic movement are elected in maximum number and thus co-ordinate parliamentary battle with extra-parliamentary struggle. From experience, the people have seen that while all other parties including the pseudo-Marxists like CPI (M), CPI have deserted the path of movement to secure a berth in the narrow sectarian bourgeois vote-politics, it is only SUCI(C), guided by the ennobling ideology of Marxism-Leninism-Shibdas Ghosh Thought which is single-handedly trying to build up people's movements, be it against corruption, forcible land grab, illegal construction, communal-casteist fury, attack on education, denial of healthcare or for upholding the right of the workers and peasants, protecting honour of women, or taking up cudgels against incessant spread of obscenity, indecency and deliberate attempt to dehumanize the youth. SUCI(C) in Karnataka is known as the Party of movement. Our fervent appeal to the electorates is to rise against the dominant trend of deceptive bourgeois politics and make SUCI (C) candidates victorious to reflect people's voice inside the assembly house.

Make SUCI(C) Candidates Victorious in Karnataka Assembly Elections

<u>Constituency</u>	<u>Candidate</u>
Malleswaram	Comrade M S Prakash
Rajajainagar	Comrade B S Prathibhakumari
Basavanagudi	Comrade N Ravi
Bijapur	Comrade H T Mallikarjun
Bellary City	Comrade D Nagalakshmi
Bellary Rural	Comrade A Devadas
Dharwar	Comrade H G Desai
Chamaraja	Comrade M Umadevi
Gulbarga South	Comrade V Nagamma
Gulbarga Rural	Comrade Ninganna
Raichur	Comrade B R Aparna

SUCI (C) vehemently condemns decision to decontrol sugar price and calls upon the people to rise in protest

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), issued the following statement on 05-04-2013 :

We vehemently condemn the decision of the Congress-led UPA II government to decontrol sugar price and withdraw the regulated release mechanism which empowered the government to fix the quota to be released in the open market and the levy to be imposed for procurement for sale through ration shops under Public Distribution System. This bears eloquent testimony to the fact that the government in its vile subservience to the sinister class interest of the ruling Indian monopolists is not only placating the powerful sugar lobby by unshackling the sugar industry but is rolling out the process of increased multi-pronged attack on the common people who would now find prices soaring on several counts like price manipulation, rise in transportation by rail or road, imposition of various taxes including inter-state goods movement duties and so forth. It is disquieting to find the central cabinet despotically commenting that "the consumers would get habituated to it with time" thereby unmasking the real character of the much-trumpeted economic reforms it is so keen to carry out.

We are of the firm opinion that the government is getting licence to pursue such draconian policies with despotic overture because of absence of powerful organized democratic movement in the country because of desertion of democratic movement by the pseudo-Marxists. We call upon the suffering countrymen to realize the dangerous portent of the so-called economic reforms, close their rank and assert their power through united sustained conscious movement under correct leadership which is the only way to thwart such pernicious moves of the oppressive bourgeois government.

International Anti-imperialist Coordinating Committee reiterates to stand by socialist North Korea (DPRK) in its valiant resistance against imperialist machination and aggression

Comrade Manik Mukherjee, Member, Polit Bureau, SUCI(C) and General Secretary, IACC sent the following communiqué to Comrade Kim Jong Un, Supreme Leader of DPRK, on 02-04-2013 :

Supreme Leader Comrade Kim Jong Un
First Secretary of Workers' Party of Korea
Supreme Commander of the Korean People's Army
Marshall of DPRK

Dear Comrade Kim Jong Un,

The peace-loving people of the world are roundly condemning the latest US conspiracy of heightening tension on the Korean Peninsula through joint US-South Korea military drills and deploying US Stealth Bombers with nuclear capability. The design is for South Korea to launch attack on DPRK with the avowed purpose of bringing down the present DPRK Government, demolish the socialist state and wipe off socialism. The peace-loving people of the whole world are in solidarity with the heroic resistance of the DPRK State and of the Korean people to any aggression and defend socialism. We endorse the sovereign right of DPRK to defend itself from US-South Korean aggression and, if attacked, to employ all possible means in self-defence. The sole responsibility of the consequences of such an act of aggression would entirely lie with the regimes of South Korea and USA. Along with the people of the whole world we reiterate that we stand by the side of DPRK in this struggle.

With revolutionary greetings,
Manik Mukherjee
Member, Polit Bureau
Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) (SUCI(C))
and
General Secretary
International Anti-imperialist Coordinating Committee (IACC)

SUCI(C) expresses grave concern at the deteriorating health condition of Medha Patkar, now on indefinite fast to uphold just cause of evicted Mumbai slum-dwellers, extends full support to the demands of the movement and calls upon the countrymen to boldly stand by the movement

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), issued the following statement on 13-04-2013 :

We are gravely concerned at the deteriorating health condition of Medha Patkar, eminent social and human right activist, who alongwith Madhuri Shivkar has been on an indefinite fast for last seven days at Golabar, Mumbai, in protest against the unholy nexus between the Congress-led Government of Maharashtra and the powerful realty mafia which, under the cover of the Slum Rehabilitation Authority (SRA) in Mumbai, has been illegally handing over vast slum land to private builders for free sale in the property market and denying the slum-dwellers not only right to proper rehabilitation but basic right to shelter by citing a slew of untenable reasons and are also freely resorting to large scale extortion, fraud and forgery to grab the slum land. It is a matter of deep indignation that despite repeated protests, deputations to the authorities and even assurances of remedy from the concerned authorities, the powerful builder lobby alongwith the police continues to raze the habitats of the slum dwellers to the ground with bulldozer without making any alternative accommodation to the evicted slum-dwellers.

We vehemently condemn the criminal connivance of the Government of Maharashtra with the utterly corrupt builder lobby-police-administration nexus in meting out inhuman treatment to the hapless slum-dwellers and observe that this high-handedness of the realty mafia in league with the corrupt government machinery and power-mad political parties has become hallmark of the despotic capitalist rule in the country. It is from this perspective that this protest movement of Medhaji and her co-fighters has wider national significance.

We extend our total solidarity with the just movement launched by Medhaji and her followers. We also strongly support the 11-point charter of demands of the movement which, *inter alia*, want immediate suspension of all project works till the report of the enquiry of irregularities in the 6 SRA projects is completed, implementation of 'Rajeev Awas Yojana' in the slums of Mumbai instead of SRA to ensure some relief to the displaced persons and ensuring availability of civic amenities like water, toilets, nallahs, roads to the slum dwellers. We also call upon the countrymen to boldly come out in support of the legitimate movement of Medhaji and her followers and force the Government of Maharashtra to accede to the demands of the movement without any further loss of time.

Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh Day at Yavatmal

On 23 March 2013, Bhagat Singh Martyr day was held at Darda Nagar square in Yavatmal in Maharashtra. Comrade Sangitrao Bari, the main organizer of AIDYO, Yavatmal district, in his presidential address, emphasized that cultivation of the life and struggle of Bhagat Singh is of immense importance in the present situation when students and youths are being made to plunge in the dungeon of cultural degeneration and emasculation.

Comrade Juber Rabbani, Vice-President, AIDSO, as the main speaker, showed that Bhagat Singh was accepted as one of the finest exponents of the revolutionary struggle of India's freedom struggle by

the whole country at that time and hence the compromising Congress leadership and the aspirant Indian capitalist class had spurned him and his followers. In the struggle for revolutionary overthrow of capitalism with which is inseparably linked with the question of true emancipation, struggling life of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh will continue to act as a fountain of inspiration. Dignitaries like advocate Deepak Chambhare Palshikar, M.K. Kodape, President of the confederation of the SC/ST Organization, Mr. Arun Jog, president of Yavatmal district Journalist Organization were also present in the programme.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH