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Ariel Sharon's Visit — A Sinister Portent

The Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon arrived in New Delhi on September 8 with a high-powered, large delegation including three cabinet ministers and about 30 heads of defence and business organizations. The object of the visit, as officially stated, was to further strengthen the bilateral ties between India and Israel. To achieve this, discussions were held at various levels between the two sides. Six agreements were signed on issues ranging from environment to educational and cultural exchange programmes. At the end of the visit, the two countries, in a joint statement, expressed the common resolve to fight terrorism unitedly. Although the statement skipped a mention of the key area of growing military cooperation between India and Israel, it "expressed satisfaction over the growth of bilateral economic and commercial relations".

The basic point that has emerged is that the two countries would henceforth cooperate in fighting "terrorism". No doubt, by terrorism, the Indian side means what it calls cross border terrorism originating in Pakistan. Israel, of course, seeks Indian co-operation in its fight against Palestinian "terrorism"

Long History of Israel's Terrorism on Palestinians.

What terrorism ? The charge of terrorism levelled at the Palestinians is a blatant lie, and the whole world knows it. The state of Israel was carved out of Palestine, which was under British rule, after the Second World War. The Jews inhabited the Palestine area in the distant past.

But with the rise of Islam, those areas were captured by Muslim rulers when the Jews were driven out. Came the great exodus and the Jews fled and spread out over many countries of the world and lived there for centuries. They were persecuted from country to country over the ages, the mass persecution and genocide of Jews under Hitlerite rule being the horrible climax. So, they had the urge and demand of long-standing for their own state, for regaining their original homeland. But when Israel was formed, it was not on the basis of a negotiated



Calcutta, 19.09.2003 : All India Anti-Imperialist Forum Protests against Israeli threat to deport Arafat. Prof. Gouri Shankar Ghatak, secretary, West Bengal State Committee, addressing gathering

settlement between all concerned on a just and equitable basis but by forcibly evicting the millions of Palestinian Arabs who had been living there for centuries. And from

the very beginning, the ruling class of the new state of Israel, instigated and backed by imperialist countries, especially the USA, embarked upon

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Supreme Court on Capitation Fee Ban or Sanction ?

The recent judgment of the Supreme Court which claimed to have mandated that the private unaided professional institutions cannot charge arbitrary capitation and tuition fees, was much highlighted in the media. The Apex Court, it was reported, strongly argued that such institutions could not indulge in profiteering – purportedly a moral reference articulated by the constitutional head of the country in his pre-independence day speech which coincided with the day of pronouncement of the judgement by the Apex Court.

There has been cause for deep concern among the general public and the student community in particular in the last many years over capitation fees for admission to private professional and other institutions in several states and the

exorbitantly enhanced tuition and other fees at all levels and in all types of institutions all over the country. The governments at the Centre and in the states have not only been onlookers to education becoming a commodity for profitable business, but are disowning their responsibility stage by stage for education of the citizens, on the plea of cash-crunch, creating a deep social discrimination to open the door wide to commercialization in the realm of education and deny at once access of the common people to education at all levels. In the southern states, capitation fees for medical and engineering colleges run into tens and twenties of lakhs. Recently, the CPI(M)-led West Bengal Government, under the garb of enhanced tuition fee, introduced capitation fees even in government

medical colleges. In this backdrop, the Apex Court verdict might seem as a flash of the hand of justice and a hope for redressal. But is it really so? Does this judgement bear upon people's aspiration and legitimate rights in education as enshrined in the Constitution ? Would this work in the direction of ensuring the principle of equality of access to education and of merit as the principal criterion for admission ?

To seek an answer, we must have a look at the cardinal points of the judgment and also trace the course following which it was delivered. TA Foundation of Manipal, Karnataka, a private education body filed a case against Karnataka government to get a judicial opinion, inter alia, on the disputed issue of power of a private educational institution to adopt its own method of selection and fee structure. An eleven member Bench judgement of the Apex Court headed by the then Chief Justice of India pronounced their judgment on

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Decades of Israeli Terrorism on Palestinians

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violent Zionist expansionism. Since then, Israel has an unbroken record of coercion, open warfare and state terrorism directed against not only the Palestinian Arabs evicted to make space for Israel who had spread out in the remaining areas of Palestine and in the adjoining Arab states, but also against the Arab people in general and the Arab states in the region, blatantly infringing upon their sovereignty. Israel launched two major wars of invasion, in 1948 and 1967. Through these, the Golan Heights were captured from Syria, West Jerusalem snatched from the control of Jordan and East Jerusalem from the Palestinians; the West Bank and the Gaza strip within Palestine were captured and some areas of Egypt and Lebanon were also occupied temporarily; Palestinian refugee camps inside Lebanon were attacked by Israel killing and wounding a very large number of inmates.

The UNO declared the Israeli occupations illegal and demanded withdrawal of Israeli forces from the occupied areas. But over the years, successive Israeli governments, flouting the UN resolution, have gone on building numerous Jewish settlements in the illegally occupied areas -- near Jerusalem, in the West Bank and Gaza strip in a bid to change the demographic character of these areas, ruthlessly pursuing the objective of illegal expansion of Israel in the occupied areas. They stepped up persecution of the Palestinians and intensified savage repression of their protests and struggle for their legitimate, internationally recognized and UN-endorsed rights.

In this situation, the demand and the movement for a new Palestinian state emerged and gained ground. For long years, the Palestinians, spread out over a number of countries, have been conducting struggle under the leadership of Yasser Arafat. The need of a Palestinian state, a homeland for the Palestinian people, has been widely recognized internationally. Arafat emerged as the leader of the Palestinians, as the de-facto Head of the Palestinian state, which did not exist as yet.

The Oslo Accord, which the Palestinians were forced to accept through US pressure in 1993 while Clinton was the US President, did not fulfil the Palestinian aspiration

for full statehood. Nevertheless, the Palestinians, by dint of the long years of struggle, secured some advantages through the Accord. In terms of the Accord, Israel was to vacate some of the areas occupied by it, vacate the illegal Jewish settlements put up by it and the Palestinian areas were to be given a semi-autonomous status with the

enclaves in the West Bank, denying the Palestinians free exit and entry from and to their own semi-autonomous enclaves! In protest against the persistent denial of the demand for a Palestinian state, continuous incursions into and armed attacks on the Palestinian areas and Israeli brutality, the all-out Palestinian freedom struggle

killing about 18,000 Palestinians and Lebanese, wounding over 30,000 and destroying over 40,000 houses; the massacre of Palestinians in the Sabra and Shatila camps directed by him in September, 1982, killing an estimated 3,500.

Present Intensification of Attacks on Palestinians

It is but natural that the Israeli attacks on the Palestinians further intensified when Sharon took over as the prime minister. Israeli troops have put up road blocks round the Palestinian cities in the West Bank, isolating them economically and socially from the surrounding villages. In early August this year, Sharon government announced the expansion of a major Gaza settlement. In Gaza, 40 percent of the land is allocated for the Israeli settlers numbering less than 5000, while more than 1.25 million Palestinians live in extremely overcrowded refugee camps and towns. In execution of a sinister plan, Sharon government completed in late July this year construction of the first phase of a 25-foot fencing between Israel and West Bank territory, not along the border laid down in 1967, but well within the Palestinian land, intended to cut the West Bank area in half and annex 58 per cent of its territory to Israel. Without any prior notice, the affected Palestinians were suddenly deprived of their farmlands and olive orchards, of their livelihood. In many places, the fence cuts off access among neighbouring villages. Through passage is refused to the Palestinians at the gates, thus denying access even to hospitals and permanently separating relatives. On the other hand, even on the slightest suspicion, Israeli army is attacking, destroying and demolishing homes, police outposts, administrative buildings, etc., and even whole towns in Palestinian-administered areas at will with tanks, bombs, rockets, helicopter gunships and bulldozers. A number of towns have been ravaged in this way and occupied, including Beit Jala and Jenin. To hide up its misdeeds, Israel refused to permit the UN Fact Finding Mission to visit the Jenin area. During the past two years, over 1500 died and about 20,000 were wounded in the Israeli attacks, many of them permanently disabled. The Israeli army has been carrying on

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AIR STRIKE ON PALESTINE OPPOSED Israeli Pilots Revolt

JERUSALUM, Sept. 25 — A group of air force pilots have refused to carry out air strikes in Palestinian territories, the first such protest from pilots, who are revered in Israel as the country's highest quality citizens.

The declaration by 27 pilots yesterday in the reserves — who regularly carry out combat missions — was likely to deal a blow to military morale because of their elite standing.

Also, it reinforced a small but vocal movement among soldiers who refuse to serve in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, where three years of Israeli-Palestinian violence shows no sign of ending.

Reacting strongly in interviews on all three Israeli TV channels, Maj. Gen. Dan Halutz, the air force commander, charged that the pilots were indulging in politics.

The frequent Israeli air strikes aimed at killing Palestinian militants in the West Bank and Gaza Strip are being discussed. Israel calls the operations "targeted killings", but Palestinians and human rights groups criticise them as assassinations, noting that innocent civilians have often been killed in the raids.

In the past, Halutz has dismissed such criticism.

In June, Halutz acknowledged that the air force had dropped a one-ton bomb on the house of a Hamas militant, even though they knew his family was with him at the time. The bombing killed the militant, Salah Shehadeh, his wife and 16 other people. *(The Statesman, 26.09.03)*

right to conduct their internal administration, to form a sort of nascent state in order to move towards full statehood.

But Israel was determined to nullify in practice whatever limited gains the Palestinians made at Oslo. Instead of dismantling the illegal Jewish settlements in West Bank and Gaza strip, Israel has increasingly gone on building newer settlements, including a string of new settlements surrounding Jerusalem, in a bid to squeeze and hound out the Palestinians from their own areas. Israel has turned many of these settlements into military outposts connected to Israel by highways bypassing the Palestinian areas, seized hill tops, most fertile lands and orchards and denied water to the Palestinians by controlling the water sources and diverting the water to irrigate lands in Israel. Israeli troops have been patrolling the borders of the Palestinian-administered areas in Gaza strip and the Palestinian

intensified. USA and Israel called this legitimate freedom struggle terrorism.

Past Criminal Record of Ariel Sharon

The present Israeli prime minister Ariel Sharon is a worthy continuator of the expansionist, terrorist Israeli policies. In 2000, when he was in the Opposition, he accused the labour government of Israel of being too soft with the Palestinians! His "heroic" exploits, carried out at the behest of Israeli ruling class, include the following. During 1969-71, leading the Israeli Defence Force (IDF), the operation "Pacification of Gaza", a brutal policy of repression in Gaza strip blowing up houses, bulldozing Palestinian refugee camps, imposing severe collective punishments, killing and imprisoning numerous Palestinians; between June and September, 1982, as the Israeli defence minister, directing the IDF in the "Operation Peace in Galilee",

Dirty Game by BJP-Congress in the name of Reservation-Extension

Very recently the Congress-led government in Rajasthan announced 14% reservation on jobs and services for the economically backward upper castes namely Kshatriya or Rajput, Brahmin and Vaishyas. The BJP, caught unaware, which is basically the advocates of the upper castes, jumped into action and lost no time to ask their party-led central government to institute a commission for consideration of recommendation to bring a constitutional amendment to this direction. They have also proposed to enact a law, as declared by the Prime Minister, only the other day at the Jaipur rally, by amending the Constitution. And to this not only the Congress but even the CPI(M) has readily lent their support. Notably, the BJP and the Congress have already started campaign with the promise in Rajasthan and other states which are on the card of imminent elections. The BJP government at the Centre has further taken this opportunity to expand the list of OBCs even. They have included Julaha Ansaris, Idrisis, Nadfas and Mansoor in Delhi, Silwats together with Somparas and Murthikals in Rajasthan, Tarupa Kapu and also the respective OBCs in Haryana and Orissa. The BJP's aim is obviously to record their credibility among the upper caste and those OBCs to gain in the elections.

The question obviously is why this sudden thrust on reservation by these parties? Is it going to benefit in any way the lot of the people coming afresh under reservation quota via their birth credentials? What has been the net outcome of the reservation policy hitherto pursued? How well poised is the economy to generate enough job to provide employment to the youths who might get carried by the passion of reservation?

We take up the economy first and look at both agricultural and industrial sectors. Following the capitalist law that is operative in agriculture, most of the land has been concentrated in the hands of the rural bourgeoisie rendering the poor and the marginal peasants landless. Unable to maintain growing family size from the pittance they might earn from the small piece of land they hold most of the peasants are disposing of their

holdings. Even the agricultural labours are not having work for even 200 days a year. Since the attempt is to employ as less number of workers as possible to keep the cost down, there is harrowing unemployment in rural India compelling the people to throng into the cities for work.

But where is the work? The industries are in the grip of severe crises — the crisis of market. Decades of worst capitalist rule have brought down the purchasing power of the people to a very low level. And in capitalism, production is for maximum profit which in turn depends on market — or in other words, the capability of the people to purchase the goods, notwithstanding the need. On one hand, the factories are either being closed or going into lock outs because of falling demands and on the other, millions of workers and employees are facing retrenchment, termination or VRS causing further shrinkage of the market. This is a vicious circle — inevitable in capitalism which is fraught with contradiction from within. Having no domestic market, the Indian bourgeoisie is trying to venture abroad and compete with highly industrialized imperialist countries like UK, USA etc. To do that, it is trying to introduce sophisticated technology, switching from labour-intensive projects to capital-intensive sophisticated productions and so require to drastically reduce manpower in the name of downsizing. And to enter into foreign market through alliance and collaboration with the imperialist powers as envisaged in the so-called doctrine of globalization and market economy, it needs to open the domestic market to these tycoons who exploit the cheap labour and raw material available here to further pauperize the people. This is the much clamoured multilateral business process.

Accumulated effect of all these is causing loss of work in alarming proportion. To this, we need to add the increasing number of unemployed youths in the urban area. Over and above this, the peasants and agricultural workers, uprooted from rural economy, are joining the army of unemployed in the urban sector. A realistic estimate puts over 50% of the Indian population as unemployed with the

balance 50%, though categorized as employed segment, consists of a sizeable portion of semi-employed and disguised unemployed. This is the horrifying spectacle clearly showing how inextricably and inconceivably the Indian capitalism is now plagued by an insoluble crisis the entire burden of which is being shifted on to the shoulder of the toiling millions raising the so-called bogey of labour unrest, mounting wage-bill, productivity-crunch, unavailability of skilled hands and all such rubbish. This recession and crisis are not peculiar to capitalist India but have become the hallmark of the entire capitalist world. With so much of fanfare, the concept of globalization was brought in to fight recession. It was argued that once the world market is forced open to all, all such maladies of overproduction and recession would be wiped off.

But the crisis is getting further accentuated and the conflicts among the imperialist-capitalist powers over capturing the gradually diminishing market are surfacing with all ugliness. The recent failed summit of WTO in Cancun is a glaring example. The Indian bourgeoisie by joining the bandwagon of globalization to mitigate its crisis is in fact enmeshed in monstrous aggravation of the problems through intensification of privatization-commercialization-liberalization. As per the RBI Report, 5 lakhs industries got closed in the last 10 years while another 2.5 lakhs are awaiting closure. Despite a well-tuned propaganda machine, the Indian authorities could not obfuscate the fact that unemployment rate has fallen from 2.7% in 1983-94 to 1.07% in 1994-2000. The direct government jobs constitute only 0.8%. The BJP-led Central Government has already announced further 10% cut in jobs. There is moratorium on employment in government, banks and PSUs. Just in 2001-02, 5.22 lakhs of workers and employees, as per labour ministry report, were shown exit through VRS; job opportunities in PSUs have declined from 1.52% in 1983-94 to 0.3% in 1994-2000. Emboldened by the anti-labour policies of the government, the private owners are on a job-reduction spree. Such is, in fact, a global phenomena today. In the

USA itself, there is 6.4% unemployment in a population of over 250 million. So while the government is talking of tiding over recession, job opportunities are getting progressively diminished in all central, state, semi-government and public sector units. So even if the government enforces 100% reservation, no job would be available to any of the target groups as every job opportunity is getting scuttled in this moribund capitalist system.

Next we proceed to see what has been the outcome of the five decade long reservation policy for the scheduled caste and tribes that had been highlighted as a laudable measure for ameliorating the miserable plight of these down-trodden poverty-stricken people and help them catch up the mainstream of socio-political and economic development, whatever of it might take place, in the country within the given time-frame. The exponents of the reservation policy realized that if such is continued for an indefinite period, it might bring some serious harmful effect from the point of view of overall development of the Dalit masses. It was expected that this time limit of 10 years should be enough for the Dalits upto the grass root level to recover from their abysmal and utterly shattered state of existence and join the mainstream after wiping out their backwardness. But what is inevitable in capitalist system, has happened in this case also. The dalits alongwith other down-trodden people were more and more devastated by the mounting capitalist exploitation; their standard of living diminished consistently.

Rather in keeping with the laws of capitalism, there is further stratification in the society and the gap between the rich and the poor is widened much more. In spite of reservation, there was no respite. This is bound to be the case with the capitalist system. All over the world, this is happening in the capitalist countries. Instead, taking advantage of this policy, there has emerged a privileged creamy layer representing a microscopic section among the Dalits, hardly 2 - 3%, who at the cost of the overwhelming majority of that segment, cornered all the benefits whatsoever accrued from this policy. So this so-called reservation turned out to be a cruel joke on the vast Dalit populace groaning, alongwith all other poor and oppressed people, under the

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Indian Bid For Hegemony In South Asia

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“targeted killing”, meaning assassination, of scores of Palestinian freedom fighters and leaders selectively, employing missiles, helicopters and 1000-pound bombs in attacks on their homes, cars and offices. Only a few months back, the PLO leader Yasser Arafat’s Headquarters was blockaded for days on end by the Israeli army, virtually turning him into a prisoner.

Despite Arafat’s weaknesses, he symbolizes the Palestinian aspiration for freedom and justice and is a thorn in the flesh for the USA. So, immediately after capturing Iraq, the US ruling class, in its bid to restructure the Middle East in its favour, turned its attention to the Palestinian movement, perceiving it to be a major obstacle to its imperialist design in the area. The USA announced a “Road Map” on 30 April, 2003, an evil plan for dismantling the Palestinian resistance organizations, creating rifts within the Palestinian movement, weakening it and reducing Arafat to a nonentity stage by stage in conjunction with Israel to move towards a Palestinian state independent only in name but in reality virtually a colony, putting an end to the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Unholy and Shameful Indo-Israel Nexus

Faced with gross and forcible violations of the Oslo Accord, continued Israeli repression, attacks and savagery and the US-Israeli sinister design, what could the Palestinian liberation fighters do but try to retaliate and resist? Not possessing the sophisticated weaponry that Israel has, the Palestinians rose up in resistance movement, took to the streets with whatever they had to resist tanks, helicopters and missiles. The Palestinian intifada developed as natural reaction to Israeli terrorism. But Israel calls this Palestinian terrorism and seeks to drown it in blood. And now the Indian prime minister Vajpayee, too, calls this terrorism!

Facing all-out attacks, weakened by the absence of Soviet Union by their side as the trusted friend, the Palestinian liberation fighters battle on heroically.

We like to ask prime minister Vajpayee: Is the Palestinian liberation struggle terrorism? Is it

not Israel that is the arch terrorist state practising state terrorism against the Palestinian liberation fighters and the surrounding states of the Middle East? By calling the Palestinian struggle terrorism, Vajpayee, representing the Indian government, becomes a party to the US-Israeli bid to close the door to a negotiated settlement in Palestine and smash into bits the anti-imperialist struggle of the Palestinians through the steamroller of terror and oppression. By clasping the hands of Ariel Sharon dripping with Palestinian blood, prime minister Vajpayee has smeared his hands with the blood of those freedom fighters.

The Background: Growing Aspiration of Indian Ruling Class

How could this happen? This has happened because the Indian government, its policies, have nothing to do with the interest, hopes and aspirations of the Indian people. It should be realized that the governments in New Delhi, serving the ruling Indian capitalist class, have to adopt and implement policies in the interest of this class, have to reflect its class-aspirations. For long years after the independence, the best means of achieving the freest possible growth of Indian capitalism under the given circumstances was to take up a neutral position between the Socialist camp headed by the Soviet Union and the Imperialist camp headed by the USA to exploit the contradiction between the two to gain advantages and concessions from both. That is why the successive Congress governments at the Centre, starting with those led by Jawaharlal Nehru, pursued the policy of non-alignment with either camp. During those years, there was the necessity for the Indian capitalist state to have the support of the newly independent capitalist countries to strengthen India’s position on the world scene as a leader of the non-aligned movement. The Indian governments championed the cause of the resurgent Afro-Asian countries and the national liberation movements for this purpose. They supported the Palestinian liberation movement and developed closeness with the PLO. Naturally, the relation with Tel Aviv was one of animosity.

But with the dismantling of the

Socialist camp, the policy of non-alignment lost its very basis in the unipolar world where the USA, as the sole superpower, called the shots. In the mean while, Indian capitalism had grown and matured to acquire distinctive and pronounced imperialistic traits. The aspiration of the Indian ruling class now was to emerge as the dominant power in South Asia. With this in view, Indian monopoly capital welcomed globalization and liberalization. The governments subservient to it, particularly the recent BJP-led ones, reflecting this class aspiration, opened the large Indian market to imperialist monopoly capital, the multinationals, in exchange for participation of Indian capital in imperialist multinationals as junior partner to bring about emergence of India as a major player on the world economic scene. They have been cultivating close relationship with the USA economically and militarily for the last few years to facilitate the rise of India as the regional super power. The growing military collaboration has been reflected in the numerous joint Indo-US military exercises on land, sea and air, not only in India but in other countries as well.

The Present Situation

When the US imperialist rulers, taking advantage of the 11 September, 2001 terrorist attacks in the USA, took upon themselves the “right” to attack any country, to launch onslaught on anti-imperialist struggle in any part of the world in the name of global fight against terrorism but in reality to strengthen the world-wide US imperialist hegemony and artificially boost up the crisis-ridden US economy, the BJP-led Indian government declared common cause with this US “fight against terrorism”. It did this to ingratiate itself with the US rulers, with a view to securing US support, diplomatic and military, to strengthen the Indian bid for ascendancy in South Asia, especially vis-a-vis Pakistan. When the USA invaded, laid waste and captured Afghanistan first and then Iraq, the Indian government, by not condemning these attacks, virtually condoned these imperialist invasions and still maintains the pretence of participating in the US-led global “fight against terrorism.”

But the problem is, US help to

gain decisive military superiority over Pakistan has not been forthcoming. Although there has been a growing Indo-US closeness in recent times and perception and appreciation in the US Administration of India’s leading role as the regional superpower and although the USA would like close Indo-US relation as a counter to the strong Russian and Chinese presence in the neighbouring regions, that is but one of the many considerations of the USA in its global design. The USA cannot just now enhance the Indian weapons capability to lend it preponderance over Pakistan’s, in view of the wholesale support that Pakistan has been able to provide to the US invasion of Afghanistan, taking advantage of its geographical proximity to that country.

Why the Indo-Israel Nexus?

So, side by side with a competition with Pakistan to curry US favour, New Delhi has been busy mending fences with Israel and rapidly developing ties with it for the past few years. There are several obvious advantages to be had from this. Firstly, Israel, though a small country, has, through all-out US help, developed an advanced industrial base and possesses a large arsenal of sophisticated weapons, either provided by the USA or produced by it, on its own or with US collaboration. Thus, advanced industrial and military know-how is available with it. Secondly, Israel is inimical to Pakistan and vice versa. Therefore, it has no compunction in providing advanced industrial and military technology and weapons system to India. India’s row about cross border terrorism from Pakistan to justify its militarization spree naturally falls on sympathetic ears in the Israeli ruling circles. Thirdly, through developing closeness with Israel, a close ally and accomplice of the USA, New Delhi may hope to make Washington better disposed to it, strengthening it vis-a-vis Pakistan.

For Israel, long considered a pariah by most of the Third World countries, it is something of a diplomatic breakthrough to develop closeness with India, a leading Third World country and a leader of the NAM. And if India’s support can be secured for Israel’s “fight against terrorism”, it would be all the

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Whither the Bank Employees Movement !

Bank employees are under severe attack. But there is no resistance. Not only the leaderships of established unions remain onlookers but in most of the cases the managements, in connivance with the leaderships, bring down the attack. Let us see why the situation changed so.

New Economic Policy

All know that the policy of liberalization, privatization and globalization is being pursued by the central government to serve the interest of monopoly houses, both national and foreign. The banking sector reform started in our country with the implementation of recommendations of Narasimham Committee as a part of the new economic policy. Narasimham Committee was appointed first in 1991 by the then central government led by the Congress(I). Despite knowing its disastrous recommendations, United Front Government appointed Narasimham Committee in 1997 for the 2nd time to bring in further reforms (meaning pruning of staff) in the banking sector. Major recommendations of the Committee in the above two spells are as follows :

1. Total number of nationalized banks to be reduced by the process of merger and closures, viz., there would be 3/4 multinational banks and 8/10 national banks.
2. Privatization of the banks through the process of dilution of the government stake in the public sector banks.
3. Loss making branches of banks to be closed down.
4. Routine works to be computerised in phases.
5. VRS to be introduced to remove 'surplus' staff of the banks.
6. Bank-wise settlement in banks is to be introduced according to the paying capacity of individual banks.
7. Deployment of staff.
8. No recruitment of workmen staff.
9. Stringent disciplinary measures.

The prime objective of the recommendations is to increase the capital base of the merged entity (newly formed banks) to enable them to compete with their foreign counterparts and export capital in the interest of the Indian monopoly houses.

Recommendations of the Narasimham Committee have already been implemented excepting two. The merger process through which public sector banks are to be reduced drastically is yet to be

started in full swing, although initiated. Bank-wise settlement, if not implemented in ongoing 8th bipartite settlement, would surely come in future to break the national level and state level bank employees' organizations and ultimately leading to deunionization of the employees.

The outcome of the reforms in the banks is drastic reduction of employees. In the first spell, more than a lakh bank employees were thrown out via VRS. Normal retirement, death, resignation have reduced more than one lakh employees as there was virtually no recruitment in the last two decades. Another 5/6 lakhs are to leave the banks via VRS/ERS/CRS. Once 13 lakh jobs in banks had been created, which would be reduced to 3/4 lakh in the days to come.

Disastrous SBI Agreement

Recent agreement between SBI management and SBI staff federation, agreeing to 100% computerization and deployment virtually without any bar for a paltry increase in pay will have two disastrous impacts on the employees.

* One lakh employees in SBI alone would become surplus, who would be thrown out through the process of VRS/ERS/CRS.

* Deployment — There will be forceful and as such punitive transfer of the employees as refusal may bring removal from service. Such agreement will be followed in other banks too and this will be done through the 8th bipartite settlement.

Role of AIBEA, NCBE, BEFI, etc.

When the 1st set of recommendations of Narasimham Committee was published in 1991, which, inter alia, recommended to reduce the government shareholding in public sector banks, Late Tarakeswar Chakraborty, the then General Secretary of AIBEA reacted "If any bank issues share, it will be rebuffed by strike action programme in the bank within 48 hours of the issue." Within 3/4 years about 8 banks issued shares to the public and no effective programme was taken to counter it, let alone strike action programme. When this was mentioned, Chakraborty uttered "What can be done — when the leaders were rushing to buy shares?" What the bank employees have seen during the last 10/12 years in the era

of new economic policy? One after another the recommendations viz., closure of branches. merger, computerization, issue of shares, VRS, deployment (i.e. vindictive transfer) have been implemented without any effective resistance. One after another, hard earned rights have been snatched away viz., right of agitation and strike; increase in business hour, clubbing of duties, working beyond duty hours without compensation have been thrust upon. All these have been done either through tacit understanding with the established unions in as much as banks were implementing all these while the union leaderships were continuing bipartite talks or the unions agreeing to these in writing. The most painful experience was the appalling rise in NPAs because of the government's political patronage to defaulting corporate houses and the leaderships' urging employees to ensure that profits of banks increase.

In the cases where employees feel aggrieved, the leadership goes for a fight, only a mock fight. Hence after one or two days strike, the movement is called off, resulting in deep frustration. Recent decision of UFBU to fight privatization (decision taken in August, 2003 in UFBU meeting) would similarly be a mock fight. If the leaderships really wanted to fight privatization, they would have done it in 1992/1993, when new private banks started working or the government started diluting its shareholding in banks. They did not do so. Instead some sporadic strike action programmes against privatization have been taken in the recent past.

UFBU leadership headed by AIBEA, NCBE, BEFI cannot fight recommendations of Narasimham Committee

Narasimham Committee was re-appointed by the UF government in 1997. CPI was within the UF government and CPI(M) supported it. Then how AIBEA controlled by CPI leadership and BEFI headed by CPI(M) leadership can fight the recommendations of Narasimham Committee? So when recommendations of the Narasimham Committee were being implemented, there was no resistance, but some sporadic agitation. Do not all these point at the political reality that the bank unions controlled or influenced by political parties like Congress, BJP, CPI, CPI(M) are

collaborators in globalization?

IDBI employees in a heroic battle against dismantling of IDBI

When the trade unions of all the banks including that in RBI are meekly surrendering to the attacks of the respective management, IDBI employees built up rocklike resistance against the combined move of the government and management to dismantle IDBI. The government conspired to dismantle IDBI in 1991, the very year when New Economic Policy was introduced, but had to retreat because of valiant and protracted fight by the IDBI employees. The fight is still continuing against deep-rooted conspiracy of dismantling of IDBI.

Call of the All India Bank Employees Unity Forum

Exposing the compromising role of the established unions viz., AIBEA, BEFI, NCBE, All India Bank Employees Unity Forum (AIBEUF) emerged to uphold the cause of the employees. Analyzing the motive behind each and every attack of ruling class and its subservient government, bank employees guided by UTUC-Lenin Sarani released campaign programme to unite all the bank employees to resist the attacks let loose on them. They have exposed thoroughly the compromising the surrendering role of the established unions and showed that the present leaderships cannot fight the attacks of IBA and the government. In the process of massive and intensive campaign of movement throughout the country, AIBEUF emerged through a Conference at Ghaziabad, Uttar Pradesh, to uphold the cause of the bank employees. Bank Employees Unity Forum has stood and still stands resolutely by the bank employees to defend and fight for their cause when all others have betrayed. This is because of its working class approach, superior logic and unflinching devotion to the cause of the employees and working people in general of our country. We, therefore, urge the bank employees to come forward and strengthen AIBEUF to resist the mounting attacks of IBA and the government subservient to the ruling capitalist class, bring back the glorious days of bank employees' movement.

Projected Unholy Indo-US-Israel Axis

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better. The prospect of trading in the large Indian market is a bonus.

For the past few years, both the sides have been cultivating close relationship. And results have been forthcoming. Indo-Israeli trade, which was earlier negligible, has swiftly reached the annual value of \$1.6 billion for civilian items only. Though a multi-billion dollar defence agreement, India has been receiving sophisticated weapons and military know-how from Israel. There has been regular exchange of expertise in fighting "terrorism". Sometime back, none other than the BJP deputy prime minister LK Advani paid a visit to Israel.

Thus, the time had ripened for firming up and formalizing the Indo-Israeli unholy nexus and taking it to a higher stage. This has now been accomplished through the New Delhi visit of Ariel Sharon.

Emerging Indo-US-Israel Axis : Ominous Portent

During this visit, Israel agreed to sell some sophisticated military equipment to India and joint Indo-Israeli production of some other advanced military equipment was discussed. There is no doubt that more such developments are in the offing. But of grave import was the Israeli deputy prime minister Yosef Lapid's utterance in New Delhi at the end of the meet that an "unwritten and abstract" axis with India and the USA had been created to combat international terrorism. "There is a mutual interest of the three countries in making the world a more secure place for all. There is American support for this unwritten axis". (The Statesman, 11.9.2003)

This is ominous. There is no reason to think that Lapid's utterance was unauthorized or without US approval. This cannot but be of the gravest concern to all patriotic Indians. The projected Indo-US-Israel axis has a sinister portent. The avowed objective of fighting terrorism will convince no one. We have seen how, in the name of destroying Osama bin Laden and his terrorist outfit Al Quaida, the USA ravaged and occupied Afghanistan. We have also seen how the USA, in the name of removing the threat to the world Saddam Hussain was allegedly posing with his stockpile of WMD, has invaded and occupied Iraq but no trace of the WMD stockpile has been found.

And Iraq may not be the last instance in the current spate of international gangsterism resorted to by the USA. It is no secret that Cuba, Iran and North Korea are in the US hit list.

The attacks on Palestinian liberation struggle continue unabated. On 11 September, immediately on return from New Delhi, Ariel Sharon chaired a meeting of the Israeli Security Cabinet which decided to expel the Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat from his own country! On September 14, Israel announced that killing of Arafat was an option that was being considered. On 17 September, the USA vetoed a Syrian resolution in the UN Security Council, supported by majority of the UNSC members, asking Israel not to harm or deport Yasser Arafat.

Such is the character of the rogue states with which an Indian tie

up is projected. New Delhi's continuing assurances that India remains committed to the Palestinian cause should deceive nobody. These are mere lip services designed to preserve the considerable business and trading interest of Indian capital in the Arab world, and the support of the Arab and other countries of the Middle East that India wishes to continue to enjoy at the international fora like the NAM and the WTO.

The proposed Indo-US-Israel axis tramples upon the long-standing anti-imperialist sentiment and tradition of the Indian people. It will be a blow to the fraternal bond of the Indian people with the on-going anti-imperialist struggle from country to country of the Arab world against US overlordism and hegemonism, a bid to alienate the Indian people from the mainstream of worldwide anti-imperialist

struggle to weaken it.

All Parliamentary Parties in Conspiracy Against People

It is not that just the BJP-led central government that is engaged in this conspiracy against the people. It is moving on this path along with the parliamentary Opposition parties, in tacit understanding with them.

The principal Opposition party Congress, aspiring to come to power through the coming Lok Sabha poll, to be entrusted with pursuing the same anti-people policies of the Indian ruling class that the BJP is implementing being in government, did not protest the unholy Indo-Israeli nexus. Instead, its leader Sonia Gandhi paid a courtesy call to Ariel Sharon while he was in New Delhi, to strike a rapport with him in advance. On September 24, while on a visit to the USA, prime minister Vajpayee publicly praised Sonia Gandhi for this proper

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Shun Strifes, Uphold Unity

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yoke of capitalist exploitation. There would be no exception to this even if there is a fresh dose of reservation in favour of Dalits or any other segment of the people. The privileged creamy layer would continue to usurp all the benefits leaving the rest of the people to languish. Vast section of the hapless people would continue to be used as pawn by the power-hungry unscrupulous politicians to win elections.

After the Mondal Commission of mid-eighties that saw blood of innocent aspirants for job soaking the streets, the reservation for the identified backward rose from original 22.5% to a whopping 70%. Besides, SCs and STs, many other segments under OBC category were included in the list. But how far was their lot improved? How many from these identified down-trodden people could secure jobs to look after their families? Let us cite some statistics from the published data from government sources. Most of these people living on agriculture are still groaning under abject poverty, deprivation, unemployment and utter neglect. They practically live on starvation diet. The newspapers carry news items of tribal poor eating poisonous mango seeds and the like to embrace death or permanent disablement. Officially, 65% of them are

illiterates. Unofficial authentic sources put the number over 90%. About 10.3% of SCs and 11.7% STs hold some land, most of which is in category of uneconomic holding, while the rest are landless bonded labourers living a sub-human life. As per an estimate, way back in 1993-94, 86.24% and 82.27% of the adult rural SC & ST population respectively have no daily earning from agriculture. The per capita income per annum is between Rs.3237/- to Rs.3500/- or in other words less than Rs.10/- a day. Over 70% of these wretched have no house except a dilapidated hutment of mud which collapse during rainy season to render them shelterless. 73% of these people have no access to supplied safe water. 94.65% of them are deprived of electricity.

From this, it is clear as daylight that the much-trumpeted reservation policy has in reality not benefited the common people of the target segment.

So it can be easily understood that to derive benefits of reservation, if any, for the down-trodden people, the economy of the country must come out of stagnation, be vibrant and in a position to offer jobs. Surely, the Indian condition is no such an ideal one.

Such being the situation, crying need of the hour is to force the power that be to reverse the policy

of closing the industries in the name of globalization. The government must retrace from the path of privatization and employment-shrinkage in government departments, semi-government and public sector undertakings. It must set up more industries in the public sector. Only the pressure of democratic mass movement can compel the government to do all these. There is no other course. This movement demands that toiling people must remain alert so as to thwart any attempt by the government serving the class-interest of ruling capitalists, to bring any division, any cleavage between Dalits and non-Dalits, Hindus and Muslims, upper caste and lower caste. If such movement can be built up — the possibility of which is very much on the cards — then only there could be some employment opportunity through removal of moratorium on government and semi-government jobs and creation of new jobs. In that event, the Dalits might get their legitimate dues through reservation route. Then only, one can hope of seeing some improvement in this respect. We call upon both the Dalits and all other down-trodden people to close their ranks and take upon them the task of developing such a countrywide mighty democratic movement. That is the need of the hour.

Legal Hurdle Cleared from Commercialization of Education

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31st October, 2002 that such institutions would fix their own fee structure which could include "a reasonable revenue surplus" so long as "there was no profiteering or charging of capitation fees" and right to admit students based on 'principles of merit' by adopting or evolving a rational and transparent method of admission. It also fixed a 25% quota for the management in such admission meaning thereby that 75% students could be taken based on merit through the government-decided route while balance 25% could come through any such separate mode of admission as decided by the management. Acting on the said judgement based on their own interpretation, the Karnataka government appointed a committee which recommended the following fees structure for the private institutions :

Medical Course (MBBS)

— Rs.2.90 lakhs per annum

Medical Course (Dental)

— Rs.2.10 lakhs per annum

Engineering

— Rs.0.55 lakhs per annum

Being dissatisfied with this recommendation, which was quite expected, the management of the private educational institutions, formed a consortium and moved the Karnataka High Court which after hearing both the parties revised the quantum of fees from Rs.2.90 lakhs, Rs.1.90 lakhs and Rs.0.50 lakhs to Rs.1.90 lakhs, Rs.1.10 lakhs and Rs.0.36 lakhs respectively. It also upheld the 75:25 ratio of quota of admission as per the Supreme Court verdict.

The consortium of private management was frustrated at this ruling of the High Court and again made an appeal to the Apex Court which then formed a 5-judge bench headed by present Chief Justice, Mr V. J. Khare to consider in the main, the following three questions :

(i) whether the educational institutions are entitled to fix their own fee structure ;

(ii) whether private unaided professional colleges are entitled to fill in their seats to the extent of 100%, and if not to what extent, and

(iii) whether private unaided professional colleges are entitled to admit students evolving their own method of admission.

Among the Left Students' Organizations, only All India

Democratic Students' Organization (AIDSO) through its Karnataka Unit intervened in the case and made the following submission :

(a) Medical profession in all countries and in all ages has been considered a noble profession. To acquire excellence in this profession demands a very high calibre, which can be satisfied only by the meritorious students. If we want to achieve very high standard, equivalent to the best world standard, then merit and merit alone should be the basis of selection for the candidates ;

(b) Not only to maintain a high standard of education, but also to maintain uniformity of standard, the right of selection of candidates for any course cannot be left to the discretion of any individual management. There should be one single standard for all colleges ;

(c) To ensure high standard of education and for that purpose to ensure admission of the most eligible candidates on merit basis, in a poor country like ours, the tuition and other fees should be within the reach of common people;

(d) Naturally allowing any quota to the private management and thereby permitting them to have their own devices for selection of candidates cannot but lower the standard of education. Because, such quotas, as all available facts establish, will be sold out to students having no merit but money even if the private management may claim such devices to be rational. If such a system is allowed that will no doubt produce academically qualified physicians most of whom will be capable of not saving but endangering the lives of patients. This is true for engineering education as well, on which depends the development of technological and hence the socio-economic standard of the country.

With this, AIDSO appealed to the Supreme Court not to sanction any quota nor the right to determine the eligibility criterion for admission to any private management and to bring down the already hiked tuition fees within the reach of the common people. Some private college management from Kerala and Tamilnadu also intervened and submitted their views.

The recent judgement of the Apex Court has been delivered after all these issues and submissions were placed before the Hon'ble 5-

judge bench. The Apex Court ruling does not pave way for any circumvention of the problems or amelioration of the apprehensions. The judgement says :

1. The fees to be charged must necessarily be left to the private educational institutions that do not seek and which are not dependent upon any funds from the government. Such institutions must also be able to generate surplus which must be used for the betterment and growth of that institution. The fee structure for each of such institutions must be fixed keeping in mind the infrastructure and facilities available, the investment made, salaries paid to the teachers and staff, future plans for expansion and/or betterment of the institutions, etc. However, there should be no profiteering and capitation fee cannot be charged. Profits/surplus cannot be diverted for any other use or purpose, for personal gain, for any other business or enterprise. However, to vet the justifiability of the fee-structure proposed by each of these institutions on the parameters given above, the concerned state government will appoint a 5-member committee to be headed by a retired High Court judge to be appointed by the Chief Justice of India, and four other nominees from Technical and Medical Councils, Chartered Accountancy profession and independent persons of repute.

2. It would be unfair to apply the same rules and regulations regulating admission to both aided and unaided professional institutions. What is necessary is a practical approach keeping in mind the need for a merit based selection. The management could select students, of their quota, either on the basis of the common entrance tests conducted by the State or by an association of all colleges of a particular type in that state, e.g. medical, engineering or technical, etc. This also would be under scrutiny by the 5-member committee to be appointed at state level. And the direction for seats to be filled up by the institution and the state governments is in the ratio of 50:50. Order issued by the High Court requiring the fee-structure was maintained by the Apex Court which, we have already seen, was beyond the reach of common people.

So, what is clear that the private institutions do not need conceit or tricks to charge exorbitant fees. They are now, so to say, licensed to fix a tariff based on the parameters given by the Apex Court. AIDSO requested the fees to be within reach of the common people while the judicial pronouncement is to give a free hand to the private management as to how much would they, depending upon future investment, extract from the students. If the basis was to keep the fees within the affordable limits of the common people, the benchmark would have been the average income of the common masses with the responsibility of the government to bear the gap, if any, between the fees payable by the students and the cost for imparting the education.

The judgement stipulates setting up of committees, in each state, to monitor fee structure and ensure fair and transparent admission procedure. Where the issues before the court arose from a contradiction and conflict of interests of common people on the one side and the private managements and the governments on the other, how can bodies with state representatives on them but without the voice of general students and common people heard, be fair to the needs and interest of people and students at large ? Moreover even if is assumed, that the committee members are keen to provide the desired check and balance, they would be helpless in view of the parameters i.e. investment made, salaries paid to the teachers and staff, future development, fixed by the Apex Court for deciding the course and other fee, as well as the autonomy given to the private management in structuring admission procedure. These committees would thus be reduced to the status of a 'rubber stamp' to what the private managements decide.

Though the judgement talks of giving merit the priority, the admission, it has raised the management quota from earlier limit of 25% to 50% and reserved the right of the private management to admit through their own private arrangement through whatever form of entrance test. Do these two provisions go together ? How can in such a prescription, merit retain a singular common meaning for all

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Capitation Fee

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categories of students ? It is bound to be differentiated to acquire one meaning for those privileged with money and social status to enter through private arrangement route and quota and quite another meaning for the general community of students who can only try to prove academic merit without gift of privilege in any form whatsoever. Discrimination striking stronger roots to make victim of general students and common people is the inevitable result.

The judgement absolves the government from having any obligation or responsibility whatsoever insofar as imparting education through unaided private institutions is concerned. This is in keeping with the prescription of globalization or 'new world' which views education and health care not as essential welfare measures to be provided by the government of a 'welfare state' but as commodities for being transacted on commercial basis and handed over to private houses for profit-making. It may be argued that the Supreme Court has put a caveat against using surplus/profit generated for personal gains. But any student of Economics knows that the very motive of production or investment in capitalism is to earn maximum profit. Surplus is nothing but profit. Plunged in indissoluble crisis, moribund capitalism today is desperately seeking market, avenues for profitable investment as capital cannot afford to remain idle. So education and medical fields are being opened up in the name of 'new economy' for the capitalist owners for investment of their idle capital which today find no other field. Those who understand capitalist economy and the laws of its operation also know that no capitalist earns profit for personal consumption but for redeployment to harvest further profits. Or what is called profit maximization. So banning surplus/profit, which has been allowed to generate in private education business, from making way into personal gains is a misnomer. All these private institutions would now go on increasing seats, auction their quota of seats to the creamy layers and amass wealth at the cost of falling standard of academic competence.

So the vested interest might rejoice but the social justice to the people stand bulldozed. It is here that we find the real impart of the saying 'justice is the means by which established injustices are sanctioned'.

The Apex Court and for that matter the judicial system and judicature, has its own basis of examining a case, its own concept of evaluating the substance of a case. But these are palpably at variance with the needs, interests and aspirations of the masses of people, hence both the basis of requirement, concept and outlook of people at large. In a society like ours, that is, in a society divided into classes with the property owning capitalist class and vested interests on the one side and the exploited and oppressed working people on the other side, law and judicature are designed on the concept, values and interests of the property owning class who are the rulers, thereby going against the concept, values and interests of the downtrodden, working masses. Law and judiciary cannot at once serve both the classes and as an inseparable organ of the capitalist state, seeks to serve the class interest of the rulers in the name of law in force.

In this connection, we would like to point out the double-standard of the pseudo-lefts like CPI(M), CPI etc. In West Bengal and Tripura, where they run the governments, the prescriptions of the BJP-led Central government like privatization, commercialization and imposing of capitation fees in various forms are being implemented with all care. People are rising in protest against their anti-education policies. But in other states where these sham Marxists are not in power, they are showing opposition to the BJP governments' education policy surely to take advantage of the people's discontent to harvest election benefits. These pseudo-lefts and their students' wings, notwithstanding their so-called slogan-raising denouncing the central education policies, can therefore be no force to depend on in fighting the menacing anti-education policies including



On 28 August, 'All Orissa Protest Day' students marched against fee hike all over Orissa state

imposition of capitation fees.

Once more, the people are left in the lurch. In the face of acute all-out crisis of capitalism, the vaunted facade of bourgeois welfare state is fast falling apart, privatization and commercializations are taking grip in every sphere including education. This judgment once again shows it is futile to seek judicial remedy to any of the burning problems of life. People's needs and interests, their urge for survival require them to build their own and only course of united legitimate mass movement moving one step ahead to rebuild the character, to resist exploitation, to forestall attempts towards denying the basic rights to education and to realize the needs, the demands for education to all included. That is also the road to bring home to the judiciary what the

people of the land need, desire and look for.

So there ought to be a sustained people's movement to keep education away from the tentacles of commercialization and privatization. All attempts to convert education into a commodity need to be thwarted through pressure of movement. Particularly the students' community must raise in protest throughout the country to force the state and central governments give up the anti-education policies. We appeal to all the students to come forward and build up such a mighty united movement. History bestows this task on them. Only through this course, one can hope to stop introduction of capitation fee, in different forms and under different names.

Only People Can Foil Conspiracy

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discharge of her duty as the leader of the Opposition.

What about the CPI(M) and the CPI ? Do they not swear by anti-imperialism day in day out ? Could not they have risen up in vehement protest inside the Lok Sabha and the Rajya Sabha, stall their proceedings and link up such protest with a countrywide protest movement ? They did nothing of the sort but kept themselves limited to only a token protest because they do not really mean the anti-capitalism, anti-imperialism they profess. They protest, not for building up movements on the issues but for keeping their leftist image in tact to make gain in election politics. Enjoying power in a couple of states with the backing of the ruling Indian monopolists, they have become part of the capitalist political establishment. Need we remind the people that in the year 2000, the CPI(M) leaders Jyoti Basu (the

then chief minister of West Bengal) and Somnath Chatterjee visited Israel to woo the Israeli capitalists for investing in West Bengal ?

The People Must Rise Up and Resist!

The parliamentary Opposition parties will do nothing effective to foil the conspiracy against the people. But the people cannot let it go unresisted. The proposed Indo-US-Israel axis is not an isolated development, it represents a drift towards US imperialism engineered by Indian monopolists in the hope of reaping more profit in the world market as partners of US monopoly capital. This dangerous trend must be resisted at all costs, must be resisted now. Countrywide protracted mass movement is the only deterrent in the hands of the people for forcing the rulers to turn back from the dangerous path they are treading.

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