

Proletarian Era

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Declaring reintroduction of examination at classes V and VIII

Plainly a cunning move to foil movements for reintroduction of pass-fail from class I

Media of 3 June and later, reported the Union HRD Minister announcing that the No Detention Policy pertaining to school education up to the end of class VIII, would be discussed in the coming 2018 monsoon session of Parliament. He added that the states would have the choice of fixing from which class they would like to reintroduce pass-fail. Prior to this announcement in July, 2017 the same Union HRDM said that the Union government was going to introduce examinations only in Classes V and VIII. This decision was not going to act in any way to change and improve the general ambience in schools totally apathetic to teaching-learning which has been created by the No Detention Policy. Rather creating confusion it will only foil any movement for reintroduction of the pass-fail system right from class I. And above all, it will ultimately lead failed students to drop out at

these two stages, thus acting as a powerful prong towards curtailment of education for common students from poorer families who study in government-run and government-aided schools. We will come to details later. Here it is only added that taken together, all this turn out to be a hoax to cover-up the motive of not withdrawing the policy.

No Detention Policy : brief lookback into a far-reaching design

Mooted and implemented nearly thirty seven years back by the CPI(M), known as the big left party leading the then Front government in the state of West Bengal, the No-Detention Policy (alternatively called: automatic promotion or abolition of pass-fail system) was clamped in the primary stage (that is from class I to class IV) of school education. It was argued that in our

examination oriented education system students do not learn, they only cram. For kids in primary, fear of failure and the cost of repeating in the same class lead to large scale drop-outs. Taking up the cue from this in the National Policy on Education (NPE'86) framed by the Congress a few years later, abolition of pass-fail system was prescribed for the primary stage in one of its sections and up to class VIII in another. So from behind the deliberate ambiguity, primary or secondary, abolition of pass-fail was endorsed. The motive became clear when in 2009 the Congress-led UPA government at the Centre introduced the RTE Act with much fanfare to make education compulsory along with compulsory No Detention Policy till class VIII, for government-run and government-aided schools. The situation turned from bad to worse

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Memorial Meeting of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya

Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya, Member Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretariat of the Party, and the Secretary of Purulia District Committee breathed her last on 23 May at Calcutta Heart Clinic and Hospital. On 4 June there was a memorial meeting at Sarat Sadan Howrah under the auspices of the Central Committee. A few thousand of the Party workers, supporters and sympathisers from all over the state of West Bengal came with heavy heart to attend the meeting. Comrade Provash Ghosh, the

General Secretary of the Party was the main speaker and Comrade Saumen Basu, Member, Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretary presided over the memorial meeting. Polit Bureau members Comrade Ranjit Dhar and Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya were present in the meeting. Comrade Saumen Basu read out the homage of the Central Committee to the audience. A homage from Comrade Mubinul Haider Choudhury, the General secretary of Bangladesher Samajtantrik Dal (Marxist) was

read out by Comrade Naima Khaled Manika, the President of the Socialist Student Front of Bangladesh. Before the meeting floral tributes were paid to the portrait of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya kept outside the auditorium. Wreaths were laid by the General Secretary Comrade Provash Ghosh as well as the Polit Bureau and Central Committee members present to the portrait of the departed leader placed on the dais. Comrade Rabin Samajpati, Jharkhand State Secretary and Comrade Arun Kumar Singh, Bihar State Secretary also placed wreaths.

A memorial meeting with a massive participation from different parts of Purulia and Bankura was also held in Purulia on 10 June 2018 which was addressed by Comrade Saumen Basu, Member Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretary and presided over by Comrade Swapan Ghosh, Member, West Bengal State Secretariat.

The 4 June address of Comrade Provash Ghosh delivered at the memorial meeting of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya is given elsewhere in this issue. Also included is the condolence message from the BASAD (M) General Secretary Comrade Mubinul Haider Choudhury.



A part of the gathering on 4 June memorial meeting at Sarat Sadan, Howrah

Governments irrespective of political banner keep No Detention Policy alive

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and continues to remain in the same shape even with the BJP-led government taking over in 2014. The latest position is given at the beginning.

No Detention Policy inalienable part of capitalist design of all-out attack on education

At this stage it must first be understood that the No Detention Policy is never an isolated issue. It is an inalienable part of the so-called educational reforms that the governments, irrespective of their political brand and banner, have tried to implement since independence, obviously at the behest of the ruling capitalist class, who they serve to remain in power and enjoy pelf. Whatever be the verbiage, these so-called reforms have primarily and in essence been directed towards curtailment of education for the vast masses of poor and middle class people, ostensibly to keep educated unemployed at minimum. Dearth of adequate number of educational institutions and of adequate number of seats in them for eligible students, the government openly disowning its responsibility towards education, instead opening scope for private investment which like investment in health provided a unique opportunity to bring desired returns in an otherwise faltering economy, resulting in exorbitant rise in cost of education: all these factors have only made it difficult for poorer masses to avail of a decent education. Added to these, the recent trends towards destruction of secular, scientific education, instead promoting bigotry, prejudice, superstition etc., unscientific subjective view of history and even overt and covert communal tinge in education are robbing education of its man-making character- building role which helps students grow into rational courageous humans. And to prevent any resistance from growing, the governments are relentlessly curbing autonomy of education, educational institutions and students-teachers and employees bodies.

The No Detention Policy adds fuel to the fire, serving the same game plan as other so-called reforms do in this all-out attack on education. In the nearly four decade-long tenure of the tottering policy, the CPI(M) set the ball rolling in West Bengal, the Congress

brought it at the level of the entire country and now the BJP is carrying the mantle. Even the state governments under other parties do not fail to follow suit. The present TMC government West Bengal was a vehement critic of the No Detention Policy introduced by the CPI(M). But saddled in power it extended no pass-fail up to class VIII on the plea of following the RTE Act 2009. Now, under criticism it agrees to bring back pass-fail from class I. At the next breath it changes its stand to raise the level to class III and then to class V. Hence the No Detention Policy must be recognized as the policy brought in the interest of the rulers which acts clearly against the interest of common people.

People protested, governments admitted policy was wrong, yet it remained in vogue

Since introduced 37 years back the No Detention Policy has always remained at the centre of controversy. The rulers and policymakers have continuously tried to keep the policy in operation. They do have a section of intellectuals who try in vain to hold brief for the policy. Super-rich, rich and affluent sections of population whose children study in private schools at high costs, remain unattached, the policy being no concern for them. But the guardians coming from poor and middle class families, their children who study in government-run or government aided schools, an overwhelmingly large section of teachers with minimum conscience, and lastly, anybody and everybody with the minimum concern for education of the country and its people, are struck by the devastating effects the policy has brought about since its introduction. It has virtually ravaged what is known as the teaching-learning processes in the said schools which form an overwhelmingly large section of schools of the country. Vocal or silent, they have only wanted immediate withdrawal of the policy and reintroduction of the traditional examination system accompanied by pass-fail system right from class I which was now and then expressed in their protest movements.

Under pressure of these movements the governments, both at the Centre and in the states, had to admit that the policy had failed.

But instead of withdrawing the policy, the governments constantly changed their positions and arguments. When the CPI(M) came under fire of people's criticism, right from the early eighties of the last century, the then CPI (M) chief minister of West Bengal tried to take refuge behind the argument that they were simply implementing the provisions of the NPE'86 of the Union government, suppressing the fact that it was them who had created the precedence. In 2013 the review report of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on HRD during the Congress-led UPA regime categorically recommended the reintroduction of the pass-fail system for students being not 'motivated to work hard to learn if he/she is aware that promotion to the next grade is guaranteed'. Yet the Policy remained in force.

Later in 2015, during the present BJP-led rule, representatives of different states pleaded with the union HRDM frantically to do away with the no-detention policy till class VIII. They submitted helplessly "We do not fail children till Class VIII and they cannot pass Class IX". In the August 2015 CABE (Central Advisory Board on Education) meeting attended by Union and state ministers it was unanimously decided that the No Detention Policy should be withdrawn. But then the 64th CABE meeting in 25 October 2016 backtracked to decide 'that no child will be failed till Class V'. Even in the Draft National Education Policy, the present BJP government clearly maintained that the no-detention policy 'has seriously affected the academic performance of students'. Yet as mentioned earlier here, the BJP-led Union government is presently toying with the idea of introducing pass-fail only in classes V and VIII, which is clearly a cover-up hoax. So the entire course was full of trickeries and treacheries.

Arguments for and against

Now what is the rationale on which the policy is framed and how far is it tenable? Proponents hold that in our education system with wide-spaced examinations, students have to cram for those. This hampers their learning in real sense. Instead, for fear of failure and resulting detention, they abhor examination, suffer from 'non-

learning' and finally drop out. Failure of their children adds also a burden to the parents to act as an additional cause of drop-out. The remedy they found in doing away with pass-fail system, instead holding comprehensive continuous evaluation (CCE) method with grade system (instead of number system) as practiced in many foreign countries.

Let us examine their arguments. On the pages of *Proletarian Era* (15 April 2015) and elsewhere our Party firmly held that notwithstanding its defects, the present examination system is time-tested evaluation method of not just what students have learnt but whether and how far teaching has been successful and effective. So this is a check to find defects and gaps if there is any, and remedies for them in both learning and teaching. Continuous automatic promotion from class I to VIII will take away all chances for identifying deficiencies and rectifying them and in course of time surely wipe out any urge for progress. Teachers denied of the scope to check how far he is successful, will have his initiative dampened and will be himself disheartened to carry on meaningless, purposeless exercise for days, months and years. The less committed members of both the communities, students and teachers, will be the only beneficiaries, finding easy means to evade what they are supposed to do: be it to study or to teach. Certainly it will tell upon the standard and quality of both learning and teaching. This is exactly the countrywide experience of teachers-students-guardians and others concerned, and is reflected in the following observations.

Reality confirms our apprehensions were correct

An article in *International Journal of Humanities and Social Science Studies* said about the students: "Having progressed through the automatic promotion system up to class VIII, the students develop a carefree and easy-going attitude. In standard IX they are unable to change their attitude suddenly. Naturally they fail to cope up with the academic pressure and collapse. Even in Board Exams they do badly." [No Detention Policy: Rationale and

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The Constant Struggle to Mould Herself Following the Teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Helped Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya Acquire the Higher Qualities of a Revolutionary Character

Comrade Provash Ghosh's speech at the Memorial Meeting on 4 June, 2018

I have to speak with a heavy heart burdened with the deep pain of losing a dear comrade. This is a difficult task. Particularly, when we, who are old in age, face the pain of the demise of a younger comrade it is all the more unbearable. But I have resolved to strictly control and restrain my emotion and shall try to place a few points before you.

You know that our party is not just a political organization. The great Marxist thinker Comrade Shibdas Ghosh built up this party with revolutionary objective and following a further developed method on the basis of Marxism-Leninism-Proletarian Internationalism and a higher revolutionary culture, with the object of creating a completely new band of men. Amidst the encircling environment of darkness he had illumined for us the new path to acquire a true human character. It is his teaching that this is a task reflecting to higher emotion of the heart, and a work of love. The revolutionary struggle of our Party is for the emancipation of the exploited people, and it flows from the love for the people. Today, when due to the acute crisis in social values family life and social life are breaking down, when love and finer emotions are getting destroyed, our Party is growing up like a family bound together by the bonds of a new type of love, based on a higher form of proletarian culture. In this family when some younger member who had still much to contribute to revolutionary movement passes away, that causes even greater pain.

I think that all of you know Pranati Bhattacharya by name. You also know about the post she held in the party and the responsibility that she discharged. But except for very few leaders and party workers, the rest of you had no opportunity to directly know her. I own to that onus and am deeply sorry for it. A junior comrade Sushmita on first hearing a brief discussion by her at the Shibpur Party Centre asked me after her demise, "Why didn't you send Pranati for discussions to different places? She explains the matter in such a simple and easy way that it touches the heart." This is my remorse also. I was contemplating to send her to different districts, different states, so that others would come to know and appreciate such a character. Just then her killer disease was diagnosed. So I did not have the opportunity. I repent, why did I not take this step earlier!

I shall say a few words to make you acquainted with Pranati Bhattacharya who is not known to many of you. I am in full agreement with the points mentioned in the condolence resolution, and in the touching tribute of the revolutionary leader from Bangladesh, Comrade Mobinul Haider Chowdhury. What I shall speak about is based on my impressions about her; I have also collected information from others who intimately knew her and concluded my impressions are correct and I have also come to know some new facts about her which were not

known earlier. I do not know whether I shall be able to cover everything in this talk, but I shall try. I need to mention that I used to visit Purulia District only seldom. I saw Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya sitting with many others in the



Comrade Provash Ghosh addressing

students' meetings. It took me some time to know and appreciate qualities of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya. The leaders who preceded me and used to go there regularly did love her and had affection for her. May be, her qualities had not developed then, or were not apparent to them.

The childhood, adolescence and youth of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya were spent in West Bengal in a different environment. The world socialist camp was in existence, there was a strong influence of the international communist movement, the current of anti-imperialist movement was strong, and in West Bengal the influence of leftism existed. I am talking about 1967-68 period. Comrade Ranjitda has reminded me to mention that she was born in a poor, non-descript rural family in the backward and unknown village in the poorest and most backward district of Purulia. Whatever be the reason, the influence of the Renaissance, the freedom movement and religious values was working within the family. Pranati Bhattacharya had deep respect for her parents. They had higher taste and culture. There was an atmosphere of cultivation of literature and music in the family. Her mental make-up was built up in this environment. The party organization in Purulia was built up by the departed leader Comrade Pritish Chanda. On one hand he established contacts among the railways workers at Adra, and on the other hand he was also building up party organization at Arsha and Bagmundi. Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya came in contact with Comrade Pritish Chanda through Comrade Nirmal Mandal, former Purulia District Secretary of our party. I first met Comrade Pranati in 1968. I went to Jiaganj in Murshidabad District for a students' meeting of DSO. Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya brought a few students to that meeting. Because of financial hardship she was sent to her elder sister's home for studies.

From her expressions I could feel her dedication and a desire to do something, but could not sense anything more than that. In those days the party organization in Jiaganj was very weak. I told the then District Secretary of Murshidabad, Comrade Prangour Basak, to nurture her, because the local party organization would not be able to do it. Soon after, Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya went back to Purulia. From time to time I saw her in the students' programmes. My visits were very few. Then departed leader Comrade Sukomal Dasgupta used to look after the Purulia District. Comrade Ranjit Dhar also went from time to time; so did departed leader Comrade Ashutosh Banerjee. For her characteristic quality all looked at her as a dedicated party worker, loved her, had affection for her. There is one class of comrades who like to come close to the leadership, have many talks with them, and want to be intimate with them. But Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya used to attend the meetings, listened intently and worked dedicatedly. But it was not in her habit to come close to the leaders, to become intimate – probably because of this all her qualities escaped the notice of the then leaders. When I was elected as the State Secretary, Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya was elected as a member of the Purulia District Committee. Comrades know that being the State Secretary I did not move in the different districts as much as I did earlier. Since Comrade Nihar Mukherjee became the General Secretary, almost from the beginning he was stricken with illness. Continuous mass movements were going on one after another in West Bengal; many comrades became martyrs to the CPI(M) violence. In the midst of all these I became largely Calcutta-centric. In 2002-03 I attended a Purulia District Committee meeting on some organizational problems, and I noticed for the first time her grasp of the objective reality on organizational matters, her concern for the junior comrades and being at the same time polite but logically forceful while expressing differences with senior comrades. This was the first time I got attracted observing all these. And I developed expectations about her. At that time the Purulia District Committee was beset with many problems. The then District Secretary was suffering from illness. We, the leaders, were thinking about what to do. In 2006 I proposed that let Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya be given the responsibility of the district. Our senior leadership loved her very much, had great affection for her. But they had doubts whether as a junior comrade she could discharge the responsibility as the leader of other senior comrades under whom she worked earlier. In the end I sought the opinion of departed respected General Secretary Comrade Nihar Mukherjee. After listening to the details Comrade Nihar Mukherjee gave his consent. The work she did as District Secretary after this, winning over the senior and junior comrades, is praiseworthy and exemplary. Earlier there was no

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With her knowledge blended with finer emotions and higher culture, her discussions were simple and touching

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coordination in the work of two parts of the Purulia district. When Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya became the Secretary, for the first time under the leadership of a united District Committee combining the two parts started the organizational work in a coordinated way. Earlier there was a deficiency in keeping regular contacts among the comrades and there was a longing among the comrades for mutual love and respect. Now they got a secretary who shared their joys and sorrows of daily life and who won over all by love and compassion and became like a mother to the party workers of the district. Those who were her seniors under whom she had worked earlier also had no hesitation in accepting her leadership. They looked upon her with affection and trust. I have heard that in the District Committee meetings she would give recognition as colleagues to those who were like her sons or daughters and would behave with the seniors like their younger sister and would listen to everybody before coming to a decision. This is not an easy matter. She carried the revolutionary teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh in her heart, expressed unquestioned allegiance to the party and the leadership, and on her own initiative started working for building up the organization and mass movements; with boundless love for all the party comrades and the oppressed people, and through her dedication, smooth flowing work style, and by her firm, strong personality, dignity and courteous behaviour reflecting a high standard of culture she won over many both inside the party and outside.

I want to stress one point here. She is a very educative example for you and also for us who are sitting on the dais. Many comrades have said, and it is my observation also, that a great quality of her character was that by looking at her no one could perceive that she was a District Secretary, a State Committee member, a State Secretariat member, and later a staff member. There was no change in her behaviour, demeanour, actions and life-style before and after becoming a leader. She was near and dear to one and all, a person with whom they could share their joys and sorrows, to whom they could unburden all their feelings. This was a great side of her character. We should all learn from



The dais on 4 June Memorial Meeting with Comrade Provas Ghosh addressing

this. She never wanted to be a leader, never thought about which Committee she was in, never had any question about who was getting importance and who not. She was immersed in her work. This is the quality of a true leader. It is a fact that when she was first included in the State Committee she asked, "Am I qualified for this?" I told her, "You have to prove that you are qualified." I saw tears in her eyes when her staff membership was announced in the Second Party Congress at Delhi. Comrade Nihar Mukherjee made the decision that some of the then existing staff members had lost their qualification to be staff members any more. Late Comrade Protiva Mukherjee lost her staff membership. When her name was announced as a staff member Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya was found piteously weeping holding Protiva Mukherjee in an embrace. I observed it from the dais. Later Comrade Protiva Mukherjee also told me. On this issue I want to tell that who among the existing staff members would retain the membership and who would lose was decided by Comrade Nihar Mukherjee himself. He asked for some new names from us. Regarding some of the names he raised questions and did not agree. When Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya's name came up his face lit up. This is still vivid to me. He only said, "Call her here, I want to see her." I realized that she had a place in his heart also. There was not a trace of ego, vanity or self-projection in her, boasting "I am a leader." This is the sign of a true leader. When she was bedridden, she was included in the Central Committee. Hesitantly she told Comrade Saumen Basu, "Why have you made this decision? What qualification do I have? What more will I be able to give to the party?"

What I want to stress is that no leader of our level nurtured her, looked after her, gave her daily

guidance to build her up. Her own constant struggle to mould herself on the basis of the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh elevated her to this stature. We all know that both internal contradiction and external contradiction act for the development of everybody. External contradiction acts successfully if the internal contradiction responds. Many times it is seen that that one whose qualities I am trying to improve is not responding properly even though the person is very close to me. On the contrary there are some who are far from us, meaning from the leaders, but have read the works of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh or heard his speech, have heard valuable discussions by the leaders, have culled from them and have thoroughly assimilated them. Such a struggle to build oneself up also helps one to achieve higher standard. This is what happened in the case of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya. "To know one thing, but to behave otherwise, talk otherwise" – she was not like that. It is not that she did not make any mistake. Mistakes do happen with everybody. But there was no negligence on her part for rectification, when she by herself recognized the mistake or when someone else pointed it out to her. This is another educative point for all.

I had the opportunity to closely interact with her since 2006. It is true that afterwards she became very close to me. She had a great thirst for knowledge. In the beginning she did not do much reading. Later she read very thoroughly and carefully. When she had any queries she used to ask over telephone or would come to Calcutta. When she could not come to Calcutta, 2-3 times a week she would surely telephone me and inform me about many developments, would seek my advice or would want to know about some theoretical topics. She had a

deep understanding about philosophy, politics, national and international situations, and all such topics. Her theoretical knowledge, being blended with finer emotions and higher culture, was expressed in such a simple way that the theory did not dazzle. She could penetrate deeply into a person's innermost recesses. All have remarked about her simplicity and her easy effortless style. Many have the mistaken notion that if one is simple, that means that he or she is a simpleton. This is not at all correct. If one is less intelligent, he or she has one type of simplicity. But a wise, highly intelligent man is also simple, of a different type. Intelligence is not an inborn quality. Intelligence is an acquired ability to judge logically. If intelligence is guided by the correct ideology, then it is creative and beneficial. But if intelligence is led astray, is guided by personal interest, then it is nothing but shrewdness or cleverness and is harmful or evil. If one is very intelligent and simple then he can grasp a complex matter in a simple way and can express it also in a simple manner. She had this ability, though she was not usually vocal in presence of higher leadership, senior comrades. She listened carefully with an attitude of learning. That is why many senior leaders could not gauge her level of knowledge. To the juniors she would explain the essential points in a simple way with very few words.

It does not always happen that one who is a party leader is also a mass leader. If that happens the roles of both of them become more effective. A party leader provides guidance to the party workers, directs them, conducts committee work, throws up programmes, looks after the inner life of the party, maintains the party discipline. A mass leader mobilizes the people, builds up mass movements. Hence not all party leaders become mass leaders. On the other hand a mass leader may not automatically acquire the ability to be a party leader. A mass leader may be a trade union leader, a women's leader, a youth leader, a students' leader, the President or Secretary of a mass organization – but they are all proclaimed leaders. Another type of leaders intimately mixes with the masses, becomes one with the poor people, shares their joys and sorrows, gets accepted almost as a family member, mobilizes them to

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With boundless love for the masses and comrades, with exemplary revolutionary character she was a true leader of the people

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launch various protest movements, and in this way wins their heart and thereby evolves as their leader. This is not an easy matter. This is how Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya became a leader of the people of Purulia District. Hence when her cortege reached Purulia thousands of people assembled with tears in their eyes. She had open entry into any household, in the slums, in tribal quarters, in Muslim quarters. People felt she was one of them. In Purulia District she was held in high esteem by all – the poor, the educated and the illiterate. The leaders and workers of other parties also had respect for her in spite of political differences. In times of adversity or trouble she would rush to them. Whenever there was any injustice or oppression she would jump to protest, irrespective of whether she had anyone with her or not, whether anyone called her or not, whether instructions came or not. Some such protest movements are mentioned in the condolence resolution, but these are not enough.

The common people of all strata rushed unhesitatingly to her with their problems, be it family distress, or deep pain in women's life, or problems between husband and wife, or problems with children. She had won a permanent place in the hearts of countless such people. During train journey, or bus journey, or morning walk, or while waiting at the railway station and sipping tea, - everywhere she would enter into discussions with the public on diverse topics. Through all her discussions, the party SUCI (Communist) would be carried to the people, her teacher and guide Comrade Shibdas Ghosh would be carried to the people. There are many comrades who mix with the public, conduct movements and gain personal popularity, but in a natural way the party and the leadership would not become popular. Only they can do it for the party for whom revolution and revolutionary party is the only life; they do not have any separate sense of self-identity. I can say with conviction that in Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya at least I did not find any sense of personal desire or want.

She criticized the lapses or defects of comrades, but many comrades have tearfully written to me that they did not feel the slightest sense of hurt from such criticisms. Her criticism was blended with love

and affection. And she herself was ready to accept criticisms from others. She would easily own up her mistakes even to the juniors. She would learn from seniors and juniors alike. If someone talked hurting her, it was not in her character to hit back. On the contrary with love she drew that person closer. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh wanted such qualities for a revolutionary character, and Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya did acquire many of these qualities through unwavering struggle, and these became an integral part of her character in a natural and effortless manner. It is not an easy task to conduct such a struggle to totally remould oneself. Wherever she went she left a lasting impression. In Bankura District there were many problems, there were problems of understanding between the leaders and between the party workers. Those who were earlier in the responsibility could not resolve all the problems. Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya was given the responsibility. Here she played a very important and effective role. Her sphere of activities was limited to Bankura and Purulia Districts. Working within this small area she proved her great ability. No speech or writing of hers was published in party organs. She was not known through these. But the glow of her sparkling high character spread beyond the boundaries of the two districts.

Comrade Shibdas Ghosh wanted that the women in our party should not develop as feminine persons, but as true and worthy human beings. Being fettered by the male-dominated society, women suffer from inferiority complex, subservience to the male, lack of self confidence, weakness towards husband and children, and narrow-mindedness – Comrade Ghosh wanted women to come out of these and develop themselves as strong and powerful characters. This was his dream. I am sad that Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya knew Comrade Shibdas Ghosh only from a distance. Comrade Ghosh did not know Comrade Pranati intimately. There were a few women comrades in the Purulia District in those days who outwardly appeared to be promising. The leaders of those days brought them to meet Comrade Ghosh. But they could not advance very far in the difficult revolutionary struggle. But Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya did not get this opportunity. I have already told you

the reason. She used to work silently with low profile. Outwardly it was difficult to gauge her promise; moreover she was somewhat shy at that time. Had Comrade Ghosh met her he would have been very happy and delighted. She was a woman but there was no trace of the so-called feminine traits. With kindness and firmness she possessed a humane attractive personality.

At that time Comrade Swapan Ghosh left his job and became a whole-timer. The party centre was going through great hardship; the party also did not have the financial strength. The neighbours helped a bit. Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya used to move through the whole town on foot. I have heard from the comrades that throughout the day Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya would move from locality to locality doing party work. After returning to

the centre, as the only female comrade she would do the household work at the centre. There was privation and penury, but these did not affect her in the least. Singing songs, reciting poems, with great joy she worked without break.

Comrade Bulbul Aich has wonderfully expressed the beauty she witnessed in the married life of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya – it was not possible to guess who was her husband, who was her child. I fully agree with her thought. Pranati Bhattacharya's approach to married life and to her child was exemplary. She brought up her child by leaving him in others' homes in the slums, in the locality, while she was going out for party work. I want to tell you in this context that she was fighting the killer disease for two years, but not for once did she say that she wanted

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Condolence Message from the BASAD (M) General Secretary Comrade Mubinul Haider Choudhury

At the death of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya, the revolutionary movement in India has met with an irreparable loss. Carrying a deep realization of Marxism-Leninism-Shibdas Ghosh Thought in her heart, she had engaged herself lifelong in building up revolutionary movement in India.

I came to know Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya personally and closely during my repeated visits to Kolkata. The way she had built herself up as a revolutionary character even without the scope to avail of direct association with Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, or the kind of sweetness, simplicity and modesty that found expression in her character, particularly drew my attention. With deep emotion, empathy and affection she had developed the Party organization in two districts of West Bengal. She was a mass leader. She launched movements with common people, led them, won their immense love and support. During the movements she was distinguished by her firmness and boldness.

She assimilated the quintessence of revolutionary politics and ideology expressed in her character and life-style. Whenever I met her, I enjoyed the warmth of her association beaming with respect and love. She had reared up a host of young boys and girls in the fields she worked, imbuing them with revolutionary politics and the ideal of accepting life of revolutionaries. By this she had become their leader in the true sense. Later, those comrades picked up significant role in Party activities. For them, one and all, her absence will come out as a heart-rending event. I am sure armed with Shibdas Ghosh Thoughts they would transform their pain into firm resolve.

Towards the end of her life she fought bravely against cancer, Never, even amidst terrible pain, the smile on her lips did fade out, her face always expressing satisfaction, calm and conviction of a life of a revolutionary. It was only because she had been a worthy student of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. This struggle of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya has inspired me even at the fag end of my life to engage myself in revolutionary struggle with still more dedication.

We, in our country, are trying to develop and establish the revolutionary politics with thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh as our beacon. In that struggle, characters like Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya add fresh impetus. I express my deepest love for her. From afar, I join you with heavy heart in paying respectful tribute to her.

Red Salute Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya

She fought killer cancer with true revolutionary determination, never expressing her sufferings

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to see her son. She called other comrades to meet her and enquired about the party work. She knew that death was knocking at the door, and she prepared the comrades mentally and organizationally to face that eventuality. But she never said, "I would like to meet my son." It would not have been wrong had she asked for it. This would have been natural. One day I asked her, "Shall I call for your son?" She replied, "No, he is doing party work, let him learn how to work. What will he do here?" What a splendid example is such a mental attitude for a mother on the death bed. This is an invaluable treasure, a creation of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's teaching. Her child is also like that. He also did never say, "I want to be with my mother." I summoned him twice. He came to meet her and went back. Two days before her death I called him. He came, met her and said, "I am going back, I have to look after the comrades there; the funeral arrangements have to be made." I hope that the son would live up to the dream of his mother, become great in character. She has reared up a number of such young children with mother's love. Sometimes a child became wayward, and the parents felt helpless and worried; there are instances when such a child was sent to Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya; through her magical healing touch of love and affection the child was totally transformed. I hope that such children will honour her love and will shoulder big responsibilities for the party. Comrade Shibdas Ghosh wanted such impersonal, ethical motherhood. His call to the women was, "Be like Bindu and Narayani of Saratchandra's literature." Such ethical motherhood was personified in Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya. I tell it with conviction. Nowhere did she make any self-projection that she did all these things. Only a few days before her death she met and provided a valuable guideline to a newly married couple to whom she was close and affectionate. They told me about it. I hope that they also would honour her guideline.

I am touching upon another point. I have noticed that she never complained about any comrade. Her only complains were against herself, "Why can't I work in a better way? Comrade Shibdas Ghosh taught so many great lessons, made so many valuable discussions; you also have made

many discussions. Why can't I work accordingly?" Such was her complaint against herself. Here I want to say something. Once I had hurt her. I knew that she loved all comrades with all her heart. She did not differentiate between the comrades in giving her love. Yet a comrade once came and told me that he was noticing some partiality in Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya. I did not believe it, still I conveyed this to her. She looked at me partly surprised, partly sad, and said, "I have to reflect on why he said this." She did not say anything else. Next day she went back to Purulia. I was also somewhat feeling bad. Next day I called her over phone. I shall now read from her diary about the incident. On 1 January, 2015 she wrote, "My mind is disturbed. Questions have been raised about me. It seems that there has been some mistake somewhere. I do not know whether the truth will be revealed on some day". The next day she wrote, "Provashda telephoned in the morning. He asked me 'Why are you sad?' He understood that my mind is disturbed. He said, 'Many problems will come in life. Wrong criticisms will also come. But don't let that disturb your mind.' I felt better after talking with him." Listen carefully what I am reading next. She wrote, **"I do not have any particular person dear to me. I love everybody very much.** I am sad, why that comrade could not discern it?" Such was Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya. Let me relate another incident. There was a study class for DSO and DY0 at Medinipur. It was very hot. She wanted to attend, but she broke her leg. She telephoned that she could not come. I decided to go and visit her. Comrade Haider was with me. We went to Purulia. In that hot weather she came rushing to look after us in spite of her injury. As a result the pain in her legs became worse and I scolded her. She wrote in the diary, **"Others cannot comprehend the relation that we have with our leaders. Our main concern becomes how to create a little bit of comfort for them. We cannot think of anything else then. We can give up our lives to make them comfortable.** Is my love a bit unreasonable? I do not know. Haiderda is a sick man. He has suffered very much in the travel. Provashda is also wrecked by the travel for such distance in

this high heat." Such feelings and emotions for the leaders are another aspect of her character. Again if some comrade is falling back in the struggle, she thought that the comrade has to be helped so that he can advance. Instead of holding the particular comrade responsible she was thinking why couldn't she help him – it was her own failure. She had deep respect for comrades who were active earlier, but are now held back by age or illness or family entanglements. She always highlighted the good qualities of others. When someone pointed out the deficiency of another she would immediately show the respective comrade's good qualities. She gave respect to all, young and old. Many comrades wrote to me about these, I also personally know about these characteristics. I have myself observed that she became happy when someone was praised, and when she was praised she became embarrassed. Spirit of competition, irritation, jealousy, malice that are products of the bourgeois system – I did not see even a trace of any of these on her.

Also note how she fought with the killer disease. Dr. Tarun Mandal is sitting here; he told that when she was first diagnosed with cancer in Delhi, he was worried how to convey the information to Pranati. Dr Mandal told that he did not need to convey the news to Pranati, she herself understood it, and accepted it quite easily. All the doctors have told that she never asked anything about the disease. She never raised any question about the disease or the treatment. She thought that the party is looking after the matter, the party would decide what to do. Why should she think about it? This detachment in the face of sure death – what a great example is that! Dr. Tarun Mandal told that he did not realize the severity of her pain at first, because there was no outward expression. This was at the last stage of her life. This is also an extraordinary example. Those who have witnessed it know how unbearable the pains of cancer patients are. Even when she was in acute pain, we did not see in her any tears, restlessness, remorse or outward expression of pain. She silently endured everything. When asked, she would reply that there is only a little bit of pain. She said 'a little bit', but in reality it was unbearable. She told this with a smiling face. Such was her conduct

till the moment of death. Her concern was not to distress others by expressing her suffering, or letting them know about it. What a strength of character, what a noble mentality is this! She could not sleep throughout the night, but if those who were looking after her wanted to remain awake, she did not let them. As long as she was able she somehow tottered to the bathroom, did not call others. With those who went to visit her, she discussed about party work, gave many suggestions. But even with the severe pain she had great attraction to music. Almost every day she arranged singing sessions with the comrades. She listened to music cassettes; once in a while she also lent her voice. In her young days she was interested in music, she had a good voice and she wanted to be a singer. When she got associated with the party she accepted revolutionary life to be object of her music. Her musical life was intermingled with her revolutionary life. In the last stage of her life she made every visitor to sing whether they had the ability or not. She used to listen to old-time music, classical music, music of Rabindranath and Nazrul. I heard that two days before her death she asked Comrade Kumkum, who is in this house, to sing; she is a good singer, but if she missed a tune, or forgot the lyric, Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya prompted her. Such was her mentality. She spent her days of illness not worrying about her disease, but with thoughts and contemplation about party work, reading different books or having the books read to her and cultivating music.

She stayed at the Shibpur Centre. During day time I could not usually meet her. She could not sleep at night, and she lied down during the day. I did not disturb her. I visited her when I returned from the Party Office at 8.30-9 p.m. She eagerly waited for this time. She was stricken with an incurable disease, was suffering from severe pain and was facing imminent death; what could I say to console her! I only asked her, "Are you feeling any pain?" Her reply with a smiling face was always, "Only slightly." After her death two comrades told me that till I came she used to lie on bed suffering. Before my arrival time, she would get up and spruce herself up a little bit; just to show me with a smiling face that everything was all right with her – perhaps from the

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Only sustained organized people's movement can reintroduce pass-fail from class I

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Reality—An Appraisal. IHSSS, vol. II, issue I, pp. 257 -261, July 2015]

The Annual Status of Education Report (ASER) accumulating data at national level, has repeatedly shown that less than half of Class V students can read a paragraph or do a simple arithmetic sum from a Class II text. It says that one-fourth of class X students turn equivalent to class IV level. (Times of India, 27 September 2015).

The policy documents of the Draft National Education Policy 2016 proposed by the BJP-led Union government recognized that 'children are not learning the basic skills'; even at grade (class) V children 'cannot read simple texts and cannot do simple arithmetic calculations'. The cause of such seriously affected academic performances is fixed on no detention policy itself.

Coming to teachers, the National Sample Survey Reports 2015 from the Union government's Ministry of Statistics and Programme implementation, held that: "The No Detention Policy have made the teachers non-serious, if not all, certainly many of them. ... they lose all the motivation to teach when they realize that all the students even the one who did not study at all will go to the next class. In a class where the students hardly have any desire to study seriously the teachers cannot do much. Hence they grow unwilling and non-serious." And the same ASER referred above also says that only 4% of teachers pass the Teacher Eligibility Tests (TETs) and three in four teachers cannot do percentage sums from a Class V text in at least two states.

Next, "From the observed results we can say that No Detention Policy has really created a havoc. In terms of quality, students are deteriorating day by day. Government schools are decreasing in importance. are becoming studentless schools.... Teachers are totally against this faulty education policy." [No Detention Policy An Immediate Threat to Quality Primary Education in Jammu and Kashmir: Kumar Mohd. Haneef, JN Bliya and Mohd. Mayem Lone, International Journal of Social Science and Humanities Research, ISSN 2348-3164 (online), Vol 3, issue 3, pp. 348-352, July-Sept.

2015]. With this we may add that India now has the largest percentage of children in private schools, owing to the fact that more than 150000 government schools are closed over the country in five years time, as a 26 December 2017 report shows. So people are being forced to go for high-cost private schools even going beyond their pecuniary capabilities with the simple dream of getting their children educated. Let us forget bothering about another vast masses of our fellow countrymen to whom eking out two square meals a day is a problem, finding a habitable shelter is a luxury! Based on MHRD statistics it was noted in a survey by TNN, Kolkata in July 2015 that even six years since the RTE Act, around 60 lakh children between ages 6 and 13 remained unschooled in the country. Even these figures include children marked present in schools but really working as labourers. Obviously, the RTE Act forces the parents to send their children to schools. Teachers, for the sake of keeping their position and livelihood safe, mark these children present. But stark reality drags them out of school to earn for the family and themselves. It may be mentioned here that the CABE made a proposal in early 2018 for punitive measures against guardians whose children fail to attend schools. Even print media, largely controlled by the corporate houses, could not but criticise it on the ground that the major cause of drop out is engaging children to earning or maintaining household with both parents working outdoors. This was the argument, that we had hammered in our earlier discourses in reply to the logic expressed by proponents of the No Detention Policy that students drop-out for fear of examination and failure. That they ignore the pathetic reality of all-pervading poverty forcing parents to engage their children in earning or looking after domestic chores, is once more proved from this admission in the media.

In this regard, one more point needs a few words. If students at large come to abhor examinations, who should be held responsible? Hundreds of teaching posts lie vacant in schools and colleges; to add to it, often on trivial matters teaching is hampered from disruption of class-routines; syllabus is left uncovered. Premises lack

enough class rooms, even proper buildings and other facilities, including toilet, particularly for girl students. Libraries and laboratories are ill-equipped and poorly manned. Any resentment on even legitimate grounds is dealt with a heavy hand. And particularly with days passing autonomy, academic or functional, even in day to day affairs is being severely curbed with interventions from the ruling dispensations, whatever be their colour. All these contribute more or less to vitiate the ambience in educational institutions, which in turn shatter the teaching-learning process. So, if there is any fear of examination among students, the cause lies in these for which the government and the authority they appoint, can only be held responsible. The disease must be diagnosed before the patient is condemned.

Unrealistic misleading remedy for condemned patient

The remedy suggested for the condemned patient, is also unrealistic, rather deliberately misleading. It includes Comprehensive Continuous Evaluation (CCE) as it works well in many foreign countries and evaluation on grades fixed on percentiles instead of percentages of marks. In a vast country like ours, with conditions varying widely and students coming from varied social-cultural-even family backgrounds, with most schools running with a miserably low teacher-student ratio, even a single teacher managing a number of classes, measures like CCE or grade systems are not just cosmetic, those are impractical too. Besides, CCE and grades depend on one-to-one relations between teacher and students. Where the system itself is plagued with nepotism and other vices emanating from rampant corruption and political interference, both the palliatives, are sure to turn into miserable flops producing vicious results; pliant students will be rewarded; protesting ones victimized. Without going into more details, we may look at the two following quotes. The first is Indian, and from the Yashpal Committee Report 2009. It says: "In many private educational institutions, the appointment of teachers is made at the lowest possible cost. They are treated with scant dignity ... compelling them to award pass marks in the internal examination to

the 'favourites' and fail marks for students who protest illegal collections and so on." (p. 33) And in the second a professor, former Chairman of the Academic Council, London University, lamented: 'Degree standard in many British universities are in danger of collapsing because lecturers are under pressure to 'provide more marks' and turn a blind eye to plagiarism; universities have been particularly lenient with overseas students because they rely on them so heavily for fee income – so much so that they turn a blind eye to plagiarism and cheating.' (Richard Garner, Education Editor, The Independent, London, 17 June, 2008). This is how smooth CCE runs. A decade has passed since. We refrain from making any further comment, excepting that conditions in every capitalist country have only worsened in all respects with the system plunging deeper and deeper into all-out crisis.

Powerful organized sustained movement is the only remedy to wrest demand

Under the circumstances, irrefutable is the fact that the education system is in peril from an all-out attack. The No Detention Policy is meant to drive the last nails in to the coffin. The immediate victims are none but the overwhelming majority of common poorer families and their children. But the all-out attack on education is going to affect the coming generations of the entire country as well. So people are left with a single choice. As it has been proved in West Bengal, it was only the sustained organized movement of people led by the SUCI (C) that forced the then CPI(M) government to 'unsettle' what they had taken as settled; a movement for 19 years could bring back English in the primary stage of school education. Now again, it is high time that people of the country decided 'enough is enough with trickeries and treacheries' and step out to launch powerful united sustained movement against attacks on education. And most obviously, the No Detention Policy must be set as one of the prime targets of the movements. In unequivocal voice, people need to raise the demand that the policy be immediately withdrawn and pass-fail system reintroduced right from class I. There can be no two words on this.

Even on death bed her sole concern was the party, well-being of her leaders and comrades

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happiness of meeting me, perhaps not to cause any distress for me. I am astounded when I think about these things. It is amazing how she could behave in such a natural manner when she was stricken with such a disease which inflicts so severe pains in the patients that they toss and turn in pain, some even ask for poison to end their life. All this is the result of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's teaching; she set an example of how a revolutionary wages a fight when faced with certain death accompanied by unbearable pain. We shall also have to pass through such a test.

Hospital sources have informed what relations she had with all the doctors, medical staff, nurses and attendants who came in touch with her – some had problems with their children, some had problems in their married life, some had problems of understanding between themselves – she used to discuss with them, counsel them, give them guidance. She used to imbibe them with party teachings, inspired them to live like a real human being. Just two days before her death she enquired with a nurse what was the status of her problem, that is, whether the guidance that she gave helped solving it. These are invaluable lessons for all of us. Does everyone who gets admitted to the hospital be the guardian of all? Till the moment of her last breath she tried to impart some teaching of Comrade Ghosh in everyone she came in contact with.

That was the sole aim of her life. When she went for the last time to the Hospital from the Shibpur centre, I knew that she would not come back. I went to her room to meet her, and again met her at the gate. Even with that state of her health she admonished me, "Why have you come here?" I held her hands and told her that I would visit her at the hospital. She replied, "No, you must not come!" Doctor Subhash Dasgupta told me that she repeatedly told him that Provasda must not come; there would be danger of infection. Just the day before her death she told Dr. Dasgupta in a firm voice, "**Subhash, you have nothing more to do. Now give it up.**" For the last time she asked, "**How is Provasda?**" Subhash informed that I am all right. In other words, her last thoughts were, let Provasda and others, the leaders, be in good health and live long to do and guide party work. At night taking my permission Subhash let an injection for sleeping to be administered to her. The doctors, nurses and staff were in tears. Subhash later told me that not only us, but the whole hospital wept at her death. So close she became to everybody!

We are all conducting life struggle as students of our great teacher Comrade Shibdas Ghosh. To attain higher communist character we are learning from each other how far each has been able to apply in life this invaluable revolutionary

teaching. In this memorial meeting I placed before you some chapters from the life struggle of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya, so that we who are living can comprehend and be inspired by the example of how starting from a very ordinary stage it is possible to elevate oneself to an extraordinary level through conducting constant struggle based on Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's teachings.

From 1950 I am in the party. I have witnessed so many martyrs' death, the passing away of so many young comrades – I ask myself, how many more such deaths I have to witness! But then I recall and gather strength from the words of pledge that Comrade Stalin uttered after great Comrade Lenin's demise. Comrade Mao Zedong said after the demise of great Stalin, "Turn grief into strength". And I recall the words of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh after the demise of Comrade Subodh Banerjee, "...politics calls for noble feelings of heart. Nobler still is the feeling that

spurs on to revolutionary politics. Tender as it is in one way, inherent in it are stern reality, strict discipline, and steadfast sense of duty. Our work cannot suffer because of our grief. Outwardly, the conduct of this politics appears so heartless. But it is here, in what appears so heartless, that the significance of true realization of grief lies... Even death of the most beloved, a profound loss or an event leading to deep emotional upsurge cannot make them oblivious their duty." Every time I am confronted with the death of a comrade, I recall these teachings of the great leaders and derive strength. I would ask you to gather strength in the same way. When we are no more there you will have to move on the basis of these teachings. I am ending here

Long Live Revolution!

**Red Salute to
Comrade Pranati Bhattacharya!**

**Red Salute to the Great Leader
of the Proletariat
Comrade Shibdas Ghosh!**

SUCI(C) calls for immediate release of a countrywide powerful movement to force the BJP government put a rein on the spiralling fuel price

Comrade Provas Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), has issued the following statement on 2 June 2018 :

The monstrous rise in the retail prices of petrol-diesel systematically over the past few weeks and the recent announcement of a hefty rise of Rs 50 in LPG cylinder price have virtually robbed the common people — already back-broken by the growing economic assault perpetrated by ruling capitalist class and its servitor governments including the BJP-led central government — of the capacity of bearing the burden anymore. Despite countrywide demand for slashing the tax component on fuel price — which is roughly 100% if one takes the base price of refined oil — for giving some relief to the countrymen, the central government in keeping with its anti-people character is refusing to accept that on the plea of concomitant depletion in revenue collection. Moreover, while the government has been giving a false excuse of this price spiral being attributed to spurt in the international crude price which, it is known to all, is artificially manipulated by the major imperialist forces led by the US imperialists, there is no initiative on the part of the government to mobilize global opinion against them and use all diplomatic channels to force them to dissuade from this nasty game of manipulation.

Under the circumstances, suffering people have no alternative but to close their rank in right earnest and release a powerful organized protest movement throughout the country to force the government to reduce the taxes imposed on petrol-diesel and thereby bring down the retail tariff and also roll back the phenomenal escalation in LPG price. We call upon the people to develop this movement with all their might.

Central government must reintroduce pass-fail system from class I

Comrade Provas Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following statement on 3 June 2018:

The no detention policy up to class VIII introduced by the central and state governments has caused severe and serious damage to the learning process of millions of students in India. Our party and various organizations guided by our party for long have been demanding that the disastrous 'no detention' policy be scrapped and pass-fail system be reintroduced from class I itself with full support of the teachers, guardians and students at large. Under pressure of this protracted mass movement the central education minister has recently announced pass-fail system would come back in class V and VIII. This is undoubtedly a partial victory of the movement and a defeat to the no-detention policy of the governments, but it will not cure the basic problem in learning and for that pass-fail must be reintroduced from class I.

We demand that the central & state government must reintroduce pass-fail system from class I. We appeal to the millions of teachers-guardians and students to continue their movement on this demand in every nook and corner of our country.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH