

Proletarian Era

Volume 38 No. 8
December 1, 2004

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

Price : Rs. 2.00

SUCCESSFUL BANGLA BANDH ON 17 NOVEMBER PEOPLE CREATE HISTORY

The historic success of 24-hour Bangla bandh on 17 November, 2004, at the call of our party, the SUCI added yet another glorious chapter in the annals of the democratic mass movement in India. Besides hefty increase in price of petro-products, the bandh was called against 12-point pressing issues in people's life including steep hike in power tariff and other anti-people policies and measures of the Central and the West Bengal governments. The Calcutta High Court declared the bandh illegal, the CPI(M)-led West Bengal government made elaborate arrangements

including deployment of massive police force, RAF and stormtroopers. Order was issued for a day's salary-cut in case the government employees remained absent from duty. Bourgeois media unleashed a barrage of anti-bandh propaganda. But nothing deterred people from making the bandh a total success reaffirming, once again, that when toiling people rise up with firm resolve in support of a movement at the call of a revolutionary party, defying all odds, threats and intimidations of all sorts, it could become an

Contd. on page 2



Minister admitted, he made transport arrangement but there was hardly any passenger

Arafat — icon of epic Palestinian struggle

The death of Yasser Arafat, the chairman of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and President of Palestine Authority has been mourned by freedom loving people throughout the world. He was the living symbol of the Palestine struggle for statehood: he symbolized the aspirations of a deprived people to live with dignity and honour in their own homeland. What could be a more poignant pointer to the tragic Palestine situation than his official military funeral in Cairo — a funeral of a head of state without a state, attended by heads of states and dignitaries from many countries. And what could more eloquently express his standing among the Palestinian people than the mass outpouring of grief not only in Ramallah where he was later buried, but among millions of Palestinian people scattered in West Bank, Gaza and refugee camps

in different countries.

The last ailment of Arafat or its diagnosis and treatment at the military hospital in Paris is shrouded in secrecy. Accusations have been raised even by his personal physician for 22 years that he was poisoned by Israel, that he was the victim of a stealth assassination. Right or wrong — the fact remains that reactionary Zionists in collusion with the US imperialists for whom the struggle by the PLO headed by Arafat, was a thorn in the flesh, had many times in the past tried to eliminate him. And one thing is clear: the three year confinement as virtual prisoner in a few rooms in his bombed out Ramallah headquarters under siege by Israeli military had shattered his health. Significantly Ariel Sharon, heading the fascist Zionist regime in Israel did not even try to hide his glee at the death of Arafat, decrying him as a terrorist and

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee pays tribute to Yasser Arafat

[Following is the text of the condolence letter sent to Mr. Mahmoud Abbas, Chairman, PLO on 12 November, 2004]

Dear Mr. Chairman,

We are deeply shocked at the news of passing away of Yasser Arafat, the great hero of the epoch-making Palestine liberation movement, who at a critical juncture of history, braving all odds, ventured to launch a fearless liberation movement against warmonger Zionist regime of Israel acting with the direct backing of the US imperialists. He raised the movement to such a height that the world can no longer deny the legitimacy of the demand of a sovereign independent Palestine state. We strongly believe that his unflinching loyalty to the Palestine liberation movement, his staunch anti-imperialist stance, his deep rooted patriotism — all will ever remain as a powerful source of inspiration to all people fighting for national liberation, equality and justice and struggling against imperialist brigandage.

Mr. Chairman, in this hour of profound grief of the people of Palestine, we firmly stand by them and through you convey to them our heartfelt condolences. We once more assure them of our determined support to their just struggle for national liberation. Please also convey our heartfelt condolences to the bereaved members of his family.

With revolutionary greetings
Nihar Mukherjee
General Secretary
S U C I

proclaimed — in tune with US imperialist approach — that the death of Arafat was a significant moment in the History of Palestine, and expressed his hope that peace negotiations would advance under a new leadership. Thus they pose as if the present violence was Arafat's fault and not due to the terrorist activities of Zionist Israel regime in robbing the Palestinians of their homeland: driving them out, destroying their homes, assassinating their leaders and resorting to indiscriminate killing of civilians.

Agony of Palestinian people: history of imperialist crimes

To see things in the right perspective let us turn a few pages of history. It may be recalled that the

Contd. on page 4

Court Order, threat, media propaganda fail to contain legitimate people's struggle

Contd. from page 1
dauntless struggle. In the face of this indomitable courage, spirit and initiative, the combined power of the exploiting ruling class — judiciary, autocratic administration, police-military, subservient political parties, reduced to nothingness.

Our beloved General Secretary, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee while condemning the latest steep hike in the prices of petrol, diesel and liquefied petroleum gas (LPG), third in a row, after the Congress-led UPA government assumed power at the Centre five months back, called upon all sections of the people, "...to launch an organized sustained resistance movement to compel the government rescind the highly anti-people decision." It was, therefore, decided to observe an all-India protest day on November 17, the historic November Revolution Day, through organizing meetings, rallies, dharnas and even bandhs wherever

November 17, needs to be understood in its proper context. Here, the bandh call was given in the course of a sustained movement against various anti-people policies of both the central and state governments. Centre's decision to raise price of petro-products and the mock opposition of the CPI(M), CPI, so infuriated the people that they repeatedly urged upon our party, the SUCI, whom they consider as the only political force fighting for their cause, to heighten the pitch of protest. This caused alarm in the camp of reaction, and the Congress, through one of its trusted agents, filed a Public Interest Litigation (PIL) at Calcutta High Court to declare the bandh illegal. The court upheld the prayer and directed the state government to take appropriate measures to maintain, what it called, "normalcy" on the bandh day. It also directed the state government to effect a day's



Howrah Bridge on the Bandh day at noon



Not just police and RAF, even mounted police was deployed to break the bandh possible. Accordingly, people of different states gave a strong rebuff by holding massive protest demonstrations against the hikes and along with West Bengal, bandhs were called on the same day in the districts of Cachhar, Karimgunge, Hailakandi in the Barak valley and Goalpara district of Assam and capital Agartala and Udaypur in the state of Tripura. Everywhere the bandh call received tremendous response ignoring the coercive measures and onslaughts of the respective state governments aided by the Central government.

Court declared Bangla bandh illegal

Significance of this resounding success of Bangla bandh of

salary cut for the government employees abstaining from duty on that day — a ruling that violates the government service rule which stipulated forfeiture of a day's leave. Betraying a rare sense of obedience to the court directive, the CPI(M)-led state government lined up all its arsenal with unusual haste and perfection, to foil the bandh. Not a single question was raised by the CPI(M), CPI, who clamour for democratic rights, against this court verdict which clearly infringed upon the fundamental right to oppose, enshrined in the code of bourgeois democracy. Anyone conversant with the knowledge of history knows that in a class-divided society like ours, judiciary is no supra-class institution, but an inseparable organ

of the capitalist state machine. Naturally the judiciary is bound to function within the limits of bourgeois legal framework and its rulings cannot but protect the bourgeois class interest. The bourgeoisie, mortally afraid of anti-capitalist proletarian revolution, is now desperate to contain and crush legitimate democratic movements, and throttle the voice of justice and legitimacy. So judiciary is also active in putting fetters on democratic rights and hence declaring bandhs and strikes illegal, restraining processions, meetings and rallies. The history of emergence of mass and class struggles including general strike, right to revolt and right to self-determination of nations teaches us that all these never started following any decree or dictum of any formal legal authority. They evolved in the process of transformation of the society from the existing obsolete form to the emerging higher one and such would continue till there is emancipation from the yoke of exploitation of man by man, once for all. Rightly remarked Romain Rolland, "When order is injustice, disorder is the beginning of justice." So, the issue is to be viewed from the angle of legitimacy and not just formal legality. Our party, the SUCI, also responded to the Court verdict banning the bandh by exhorting upon the people to judge the legitimacy of the call. So, the SUCI sought verdict of the people's court.

Roll back of taxes could prevent hike in petro-products
People also could see the point

and correctly wanted to know why the judiciary, so keen to muzzle the voice of dissent, was not coming forward to give any relief to the vast multitude of teeming millions bleeding white because of these repeated bouts of price escalation of essential products. We showed in the pages of Proletarian Era (November 15, 2004 issue) that at the existing level of international oil price, the domestic tariff of a litre of petrol, after factoring in the cost of transport and refinery as well as import duty at the rate of 20%, should not exceed Rs. 15.55 while the price fixed had been as high as Rs.42.10. The huge difference is owing to the hefty taxes and cess imposed by the central and the state governments and in consequence of this pricing policy, the oil companies are amassing huge profits in thousands of crores of rupees while the common people went on being pauperized. So came the demand for withdrawal of these taxes and cess and since the governments, both central and the state, refused to listen, people had to escalate the pitch of the protest movement through observing bandh. Then, who has been safeguarding the interest of the vast majority of people — the judiciary by its pronouncement or the masses by their protest action? This is the pertinent question.

Double standard of CPI(M)-CPI

It is understandable that the known bourgeois parties like the Congress or the BJP would brazenly

Contd. on page 6

Protest Day observed on November 17, round the country

Successful bandhs in parts of Assam and Tripura

Assam

Responding to the call of the Central Committee, the Assam State Committee of our party observed the 17 November All India Protest Day through bandh and demonstrations. Against the petro-product price hike made by the central government and the state government's support to it, our party called for bandh in three districts of Barak valley — Cachar, Karimgunj and Hailakandi and in Goalpara district of Brahmaputra valley. Bandh in four districts was total. Supported by common people this bandh against price rise as also in demand of development of dilapidated roads of the Barak valley was a total success. On that day everywhere in Barak valley and Goalpara district, in villages and towns, government offices, courts, banks, insurance, schools, colleges, markets were closed. At some places people foiled forcible attempts to open shops. Even no tea stalls were seen open. In a few places when CRPF started hot exchanges with SUCI workers, general people came forward in support of our workers. Motorcycle riding anti-socials belonging to the ruling Congress and CRPF tried to open some shops, but noticing growing support of the people they left. In other parts of Assam protest demonstrations, rallies were organized.

unions made it a complete bandh. Workers and supporters of the CPI(M) wholeheartedly supported this bandh. The CPI(M) leadership and government administration compelled some employees to join work, even municipal vice-chairperson himself, councillor and some local CPI(M) leaders forcibly tried to open shops, markets and run auto-rickshaws. Despite all these, most of the markets and shops were closed. Roads were almost without traffic. Our party congratulated people for the successful band and appealed to them to build up sustained powerful movements against the anti-people economic, educational and other policies of the Central and state governments.

Delhi

At Jantar Mantar SUCI held a dharna on 17 November against price rise of cooking gas, petrol, diesel, etc. The dharna was addressed by Comrades Pratap Samal, Secretary, and A. K. Majumder, J. Sinha and R. K. Sharma, Members, of Delhi State Organizing Committee. A delegation submitted a memorandum to the prime minister demanding immediate withdrawal of the price hike.

Sagar - MP

On behalf of the District Organizing Committee of Sagar, Madhya Pradesh, a meeting was organized to protest recent hike in price of petrol, diesel and cooking gas. The meeting was addressed by Comrades Ramavatar Sharma, Secretary, District Organizing Committee, Sagar, Shibaprosad Patel and S.K. Prasad.

Tripura

In response to the call of the Central Committee, SUCI called 12-hour greater Agartala and Udaypur Bandh on 17 November against the price hike of petrol and petroleum products. Despite CPI(M) government's opposition and threats workers, employees, small traders, bus, jeep, auto-rickshaw, Maruti, Syndicate and different traders'

Contd. on page 8



Agartala, Tripura on Bandh Day

From top : Protest Day observed in Tamil Nadu, Maharashtra, Kerala and Bihar

PLO under Arafat stood firm against worst imperialist machination

Contd. from page 1

formation of the Jewish State of Israel was proclaimed in the land of Palestinian people where Jewish settlers constituted only a minority in 1948. Till then Palestine was under British mandate though the Arabs had been promised independence during the First World War for their help in driving out the Ottoman empire from the region. But in a two-faced way at the same time through the Balfour declaration (1917) Britain had made it clear that it favoured the establishment of a Jewish state in Palestine, and from then on the Zionists vigorously followed a policy of sending Jewish settlers there both legally and illegally, with support and connivance of the British imperialists. The establishment of a Jewish state and the partition plan proposed by the UN in 1947 at the instance of the British imperialists, whereby there would be two states side by side was opposed by Arab Palestinians who wanted one single state where both Jews and Arabs lived together. The very day the British mandate ended and they withdrew all their troops. In the name of a Jewish state, Israel proclaimed a Zionist state and thereby betrayed the cause of its own common people and fighting broke out. In this war of 1948 Israeli Zionists who had been armed with sophisticated weapons for years by Anglo-US imperialists, grabbed much more territory than that allotted to Israel under UN partition plan, driving out through terror and massacres hundreds of thousands of Palestinian people who had lived there for centuries. Palestine people have been living since then as refugees in neighbouring lands and Israel has stubbornly refused their right to return to their homelands. After that through successive wars in 1956, 1967 and 1973 Israeli rulers have aggressively and illegally annexed more and more territories and have brazenly defied the world opinion to vacate the occupied lands, with full support of the USA and other imperialist powers. The barbaric aggressive policy of Israel has driven practically a whole people out of their homeland and forced millions to a life of untold misery in sordid refugee camps, depriving them of all political, economic, social and cultural rights. Thus to this day the Israeli Zionists under US patronage are violating all international laws and norms and

have flouted all UN resolutions with impunity. To mention but the UN resolution calling upon the Arab states to recognize the existence of Israel and demanding that Israel recognize the right of Palestinians to self-determination, for an independent state of their own. While PLO and Arab states have long ago extended this recognition to Israel, yet till today Israel is viciously denying the Palestine people a state on their homeland. But Israel should also remember that as long as it does not accede to the very legitimate and just demand for an independent Palestine state, its own state will carry no legitimacy in the eyes of freedom loving people throughout the world.

From above it is amply clear that the Jewish state of Israel was planned and created in collusion with and open support of the imperialists to act as a springboard, as an advance outpost for them to establish control over the rich petroleum resources of the Arab countries in the Middle East, by launching imperialist attack on the resurgent Arab nationalists whose anti-imperialist mental make up stood as stumbling block before achieving this vile objective. The imperialists knew that after worst persecution under Hitler and the killing of millions of Jewish people in the gas chambers, the Jews had the sympathy of the world people. So in order to implement their nefarious design of committing unpardonable crime against the Palestine people, they cunningly exploited people's sympathy for the Jewish people and sought to confuse world opinion.

Arafat — great leader of Palestinian anti-imperialist struggle

It is against this historic wrong and persecution of their entire people that the Palestine resistance struggle grew and Arafat emerged as a leader who attained iconic status. Already in early youth in 1949 in Cairo in Egypt, while studying engineering, Yasser Arafat organized the students to come forward in movement with the demand for an independent



Palestine. Inspired by his father who was a freedom fighter, and lost his life during the war with the Israeli army, Arafat learned to love the land and the people and dedicated himself to the liberation struggle. In 1959 giving up his career as an

engineer, Arafat founded the Al-Fatah — an underground group of just 5 people and went on building up armed struggle. Such was the great patriotism and heroism with which he was able to imbue this armed resistance that their great battles became legendary and inspired the Palestinian people and refugees to join in the resistance movement and to become death-defying commandoes. In the course of time was created the PLO, an umbrella organization of different resistance groups — including the Al Fatah — and associations of doctors, lawyers, students, teachers, women and workers. Later Arafat became the chairman of the PLO. In this daunting anti-imperialist struggle Arafat emerged as a leader, capable of unifying the Palestinian people, he became the very embodiment of their struggle, their aspiration to live with dignity and honour in their own homeland. Such were the achievements of PLO under the leadership of Arafat in political, diplomatic and military fields that it could successfully project the nationhood of Palestine and draw worldwide support of people for the cause of Palestine. In 1974 the Arab states gave PLO official recognition as authentic representative of the Palestine people. That is to say they recognized Palestine as a nation with Arafat as its head. This was followed by the official recognition by 120 States. Later that same year the UN also recognized PLO and allowed Arafat to address the General Assembly in 1974.

Arab rulers curbing influence of PLO

It may be recalled in this context that after the second World War, under the leadership of Stalin, liberation movements throughout the world were flourishing. It is a teaching of Lenin, though, that in

this era of imperialism and proletarian revolution such anti-imperialist liberation movement unless organized under the genuine revolutionary leadership of the working class cannot beget the desired emancipation from the yoke of exploitation. Because the bourgeoisie has become historically a compromising force and hence cannot lead such struggles to logical culmination. But it is found that in many countries the bourgeoisie was providing leadership to these anti-imperialist liberation struggles, which obviously meant that such struggles were destined to end in a half-baked and truncated way to establish resurgent bourgeois states where capitalist exploitation would continue. Be that as it may, under the leadership and correct policies of Stalin at that time, unity among anti-imperialist Arab nationalist forces got cemented and Pan Arabism swept the entire region. It is in this background that first the British imperialists and later the US imperialists who snatched the leading position in the region, hatched one conspiracy after another, using Israel as a springboard to carry out their nefarious imperialist design. Today the US imperialists are posing as if they were fighting against terrorism. But it is they in collusion with Britain that actually armed and supported the secret Zionist-terrorist death squads guilty of such acts of terror against and massacres of Palestinians as could drive a whole people into exile. Many leading figures of the US supported Israeli government including Ben-Gurion, Begin and Ariel Sharon were members or organizers one time or the other of such terrorist squads.

And so powerful was the imperialist backed and equipped modern army of Israel that in a mere six days of war against the PLO and different Arab armies Israel could occupy Gaza Strip, West Bank, Golan heights and Sinai in the 1967 war. It is against such powerful enemies, against such seemingly insurmountable odds that Arafat led the Palestinian people in their anti-imperialist resistance struggle, in the fight for their just cause. In this epic anti-imperialist struggle, for long many years, he was able to imbue them with indomitable courage, self-sacrifice and perseverance even in the midst of persecution, massacre and treachery, setting a unique and

Contd. on page 7

Comrade Krishna Chakraborty Attends Third National Conference of Nepal Trade Union Federation

The 3rd National Conference of NTUF was successfully held on 6 and 7 November 2004 in Kathmandu. Representatives from Indian Trade Unions, namely UTUC-LS, AITUC, CITU, TUCC, and BTUC from Bangladesh as well as representatives from WFTU (World Federation of Trade Unions) and FISE (a Federation of Teachers) attended the National Conference.

Several Trade Unions from Nepal, namely ANTUC, NTUC, FENEPT, ANSA greeted the conference.

Trade Union organizations from Bangladesh, Pakistan, Guyana sent messages wishing the conference all success. Comrade Mahadevan, Deputy General Secretary of WFTU also sent his message.

The National Conference appealed to stand firmly against neo-liberal policy of imperialism as well as against WTO, IMF, and World Bank's anti-working class policies.

The open session of the conference was followed by a mass rally. At the end of the National Conference a joint statement of Trade Unions of Nepal, Bangladesh and India was released expressing, among others, their solidarity with the democratic movement of Nepal.

Comrade Krishna Chakraborty's speech

In his speech, Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, Vice-President, UTUC-LS, at the outset referred to the outcome of the recently held elections of USA and said, "You all know at what a critical international situation your National Conference is taking place; it is when George W. Bush, the greatest enemy of world peace and mankind, who should have been tried and punished as a war criminal, has returned to power. And you can well guess how dark days are lying before the whole world. But this surely does not mean that if Mr. Kerry were elected, there would have been any basic change in the war design of US imperialism. The Republican and Democratic parties which they respectively belong to are the parties of the same ruling monopoly class of America, which cannot but defend the interest of the ruling class there." He further pointed out, "It is more than clear to the whole world today that the war against Iraq was not because she allegedly possessed weapons of mass destruction. It was just a pretext. But it is also not fully correct to conclude that the cause of war was Iraq's oil. That of course is a reason, rather than an extra gain if they won the war, but surely not the main cause of the war. The working class and the peace-loving people of the world will have to deeply understand that as Lenin pointed out long back, today's wars are imperialist wars, their cause has to be found in the imperialist economy itself. At the very beginning of the last century, Lenin pointed out that by reaching its highest stage, imperialism, world capitalism had

become moribund and entered into the period of crisis. To resolve this market crisis, which sharpens the competition and contradiction between the imperialist-capitalist countries, at times, under given conditions, to redivide the already divided world market, the imperialists go for war. Today, world capitalism is passing through an intense and prolonged recession from which it can never come out. Before resolving one crisis, it enters into many more and graver crises."

Comrade Chakraborty cited out from history, "In the Second World War, when the Soviet power under the leadership of great leader Comrade Stalin defeated the fascist axis of Germany-Italy-Japan, it not only weakened this axis militarily, it weakened and cornered imperialism-capitalism as a whole. During the war itself, Eastern European countries were liberated by the Red Army along with the fighting people of Poland, Romania, Germany, Czechoslovakia, Bulgaria, Hungary etc., while after the war, the emergence of a socialist peace camp under the leadership of the former Soviet Union created such a favourable situation that liberation struggles in most of the colonies and semi-colonies started achieving victory one after the other. People's democratic revolutions became victorious in China, North Korea, Vietnam, Cambodia, Laos and Cuba, strengthening the socialist peace camp all the more, weakening and cornering world imperialism further. That boosted the working class movement of the world unprecedentedly." Comrade Chakraborty pointed out that such a situation only deepened

the crisis of world capitalism to the extreme and created the most favourable condition for the victory of the world socialist revolution.

Elaborating further, Comrade Chakraborty pointed out, "Now when socialism has fallen down in erstwhile socialist countries of Eastern Europe and particularly in the former Soviet Union, and the socialist peace camp has been dismantled — not because of the slanderous campaign or conspiracies of the imperialist-capitalists from outside, but precisely because of deviation from Marxism-Leninism and the socialist path by the Khrushchevite revisionists from within — the imperialists, with the hope of regaining their lost markets and resolving their crisis, could and did introduce the policy of globalisation. But to their dismay, globalisation could neither resolve their crisis nor could lessen the contradiction between the imperialist-capitalist countries. Rather, both are intensified still further."

In continuation, Comrade Chakraborty said: "Critically examining the character of imperialist economy, Lenin pointed out that imperialism generates war, and so long as imperialism exists, the possibility of war also exists. This historic teaching of Lenin is being proved again and again. The present war design of America is the reflection of this very truth. The American economy is entirely depending on war economy." Quoting from Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the founder General Secretary of the Socialist Unity Centre of India and an outstanding Marxist thinker of this era, Comrade Chakraborty said, "Peace is death for America'. But today in absence of the mighty socialist peace camp, there is no power other than the consciously organized militant anti-

imperialist peace movement to put a check on the war designs of the imperialists, particularly the US imperialists. So one of the most important tasks before the working classes of different countries is to build up mighty peace movement in their respective countries by mobilising all anti-imperialist and patriotic forces and build up a mighty international militant peace movement."

Making a fervent appeal to the delegates, Comrade Chakraborty pointed out, "Building up of today's worldwide anti-imperialist peace movement with Communist forces at its core is no doubt the immediate task of the working class of all countries. But the conscious proletariat can never forget that lasting peace can be established only with the victory of the proletarian revolution in all the countries by overthrowing capitalist class from power in each of them and thus by disintegrating imperialism as a system. So, while building up peace movement, the conscious proletariat can never forget their main aim of building up a real revolutionary party of the proletariat to develop revolutionary movements and give leadership to it. And I hope you will always remember the great teaching of Lenin that without a revolutionary party there will be no revolution."

Welcoming invitations that the Nepal Trade Union Federations extended to fraternal organisations of other countries, Comrade Chakraborty said, "This move of yours is highly welcome. We assure our full co-operation and solidarity with your efforts." Wishing the conference a great success and once more extending revolutionary greetings to the delegates, Comrade Chakraborty ended his speech

Electric light boycott in West Bengal

At the call of All Bengal Electricity Consumers' Association, millions of people overcoming all threats by the CPI(M) goons, boycotted electric light from 6 to 6.30 P.M. on 25th November, to protest against steep hike in power tariff. The whole of state plunged into a pitch darkness. This is a new form of agitation in the history of democratic mass movement.

The SUCI gave full support to this boycott and included this in the array of programmes of movements following the historic bandh. Under pressure of movement the government has announced slashing of duty on electricity.

Historic Bangla Bandh

Contd. from page 2

act against the interest of the people and nakedly serve the ruling class. So while the BJP raised the domestic fuel tariff five times during its rule, the Congress was also on the same spree having already inflicted three doses of further hikes. But the double-speak of the CPI(M), CPI, the committed supporters to the present Congress-led government at the Centre, has been of the highest order. The Congress leaders told the press that the hike had been announced after consulting the CPI(M)-CPI in the consultative body meetings. Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the CPI(M) chief minister of West Bengal said in an open public meeting in Calcutta that the central government would stand up if the CPI(M) so orders and would sit down if that is desired by Shri Bhattacharjee and his colleagues. People's Democracy, the CPI(M)'s central organ, in its issue dated 11-17 October, 2004, clearly stated in the editorial column published in the first page that the party and its associates are providing, "content and character for the UPA government policies". But the CPI(M) leaders feigned as if the Congress government took such decisions bypassing them and lest they get alienated further from the people, even talked of some show of opposition in the form of meetings. However, they made it abundantly clear that such opposition would not in any way embarrass the central government nor disturb its stability and the CPI(M) is pledge-bound to provide support to it for full 5-year term. But when the SUCI gave the bandh call, the CPI(M) leaders joined the chorus with the bourgeois camp in branding the bandh as "child's play", "one day cricket", "attempt to create anarchy", "exploiting the prevalent democratic environment" and "a ploy to denigrate the CPI(M)-led government." The bandh was branded as "anti-development" and "anti-prosperity" by the CPI(M) leaders who must have felt happy to find that similar views were shared by the spokespersons of national and foreign capital as also the US consulate general. One could very well guess whose development and prosperity they were talking about and at whose cost.

When asked as to why the state government, which has imposed as high as 25% tax on petrol-diesel and over that a cess of Re.1/- per litre,

does not reduce the tax rate to lessen the burden on the people, Anil Biswas, the West Bengal state secretary and politburo member of the CPI(M) bluntly replied, "Wherefrom would then the government mobilize its resources?" However, the CPI(M) leaders are, seemingly for public consumption, asking their friendly central government to bring down the tax rate. How would one reconcile between the two? Another argument put forth by the CPI(M) leaders against the bandh was that when the central government had increased the price, what was the logic behind calling a bandh in the state of West Bengal? Strangely enough, CITU, the trade union arm of the CPI(M) joined other trade unions to give a call of transport bandh on the same issue in Kerala on November 24. Similarly while the CPI(M)-led government is increasing the power tariff in the state in compliance with the provisions of Electricity Regulation Bill, 2003, the CPI(M) leaders are organizing demonstrations against Congress-led Delhi state government for effecting similar hikes in electricity charges. What else it is other than political hypocrisy and expression of double standard?

Anti-people character of CPI(M) exposed from its strike-breaking measures

People's movements spearheaded by the SUCI are not only exposing the anti-people character of the Congress, the BJP and their associates but also laying bare the compromising social-democratic character of the CPI(M). The CPI(M) leadership is further disturbed to find its honest rank and file gradually tilting towards the revolutionary politics of the SUCI and wholeheartedly supporting various programmes of people's struggles organized by the SUCI including the bandh calls. Hence, it was so desperate to frustrate the bandh call on November 17.

Apart from massive deployment of police, RAF and strike-breaking anti-socials and criminals, police raids were made at the SUCI communes and residences of party leaders and leading organizers for pre-emptive arrests. Even the commune where ailing Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, our beloved General Secretary stayed with other

comrades, was not spared. CPI(M) leadership also asked its local units and trade unions to prepare lists of the supporters and workers of their party who failed to report for duties on the bandh day at their respective work places. The SUCI dared the CPI(M) — let it withdraw its police and hooligan brigade and stop all threats and intimidation. The SUCI would also withdraw its workers and volunteers. Let the people decide if they would observe the bandh or not. But the CPI(M) did not accept the challenge. Rather, so low it sank, that the police was let loose on peaceful processions of the SUCI volunteers in support of the bandh — an act not sanctioned even in the existing law; they beat them mercilessly and took them into custody. 1450 SUCI workers including a good number of female workers were arrested. Many sustained grievous injuries at this unprovoked baton charge by the police. Yet they failed miserably to break the general strike since people were with the SUCI. People ensured that the stubborn vindictiveness of the CPI(M) leadership, befriending the Congress at the Centre, drew blank.

Bourgeois media pressed into action

The pliant media too was pressed into action to spread anti-bandh canard. As usual, it was sought to project the bandh as a means to disturb normalcy, inimical to progress and development, and disruption of normal working. Stories were cooked up, tutored interviews arranged, figures doctored, tailored photographs released but nothing cut ice with the determined people. Those who otherwise never enquired how the have-nots, the downtrodden eked out a living, how the daily wage-earners managed to survive, suddenly became so concerned about their losing a day's work. But they received a thrashing from the poorest strata of the people who ignored such shedding of crocodile tears and rallied behind the bandh call en masse to give vent to their ire against the system that forces them to live in starvation, deprivation and utter distress. Ultimately, the all-India TV channels like Aaj Tak, Star News, and NDTV had to admit in their round the day telecast that it was a complete bandh. A leading Bengali daily in its editorial

wondered that there was no picketing, no squatting, no forcible prevention. There was no apprehension of any violence as the SUCI did never indulge in vandalism. Yet the people stayed indoors. The state transport minister of the CPI(M) lamented that the government made every arrangement for running public transport but there were hardly any passenger. He also confessed that all schools and colleges were closed. TV cameras also showed that shops were closed, markets had their shutters down, all major thoroughfares and streets wore a deserted look. So much so that the CPI(M) government who issued circular of wage cut had to blow cold after the bandh by saying that the absentee government employees would forfeit a day's leave. It had no other way, because a sizeable number of members of the CPI(M)-led State Government employees' union did not report for duty.

Battle of two lines

The battle line was thus clearly drawn between legitimacy and legality, just and unjust, the vested interest and the people's cause. In other words, on one side was the reactionary combination of the ruling class and the political outfits subserving it, the government-administration and coercive state apparatus and the other side was constituted of the SUCI, the toiling people, the conscious and conscientious public opinion. Ultimately, it was a triumph of the people. And a milestone was achieved in the history of democratic mass movement in the country, inspiring everyone round the country to close their rank and build up higher movements in the days to come.

The task ahead is to take this movement to further heights. What is necessary is united and sustained mass movement under correct revolutionary leadership based on correct political line. People's power must be organized and released. For that, people's committees have to be formed in various offices, factories, localities, villages to conduct protracted movements on the burning issues of people's life and against the repeated attacks of the power that be on the various walks of life. Vibrant youths must come forward and enroll themselves as volunteers to respond to the need of the hour. Only the fighting people will write the new history.

Arafat's death enjoins : Stand by Palestine people

Contd. from page 4

glowing example before the world. In this context it may be recalled that even though the ruling Arab regimes supported the PLO under Arafat they did not hesitate to betray and backstab the Arafat, the PLO on several occasions. To mention but the eviction of Palestinian people and PLO from Jordan in 1970 as King Hassan set his soldiers on them in the 'Black September massacre'; or the fact that in a total reversal of stand Syria under President Assad, sr. suddenly came to the help of imperialist-Zionist-backed Phalangists in the 1976 Lebanese civil war resulting in the defeat of the Palestinians, leftists and poor masses who had been fighting side by side and had been on the verge of victory. This culminated finally in the forced exile of Arafat and later massacre of thousands of refugees when Israel had invaded Lebanon in the early 80s. Even in Tunisia where Arafat set up PLO headquarters he was not safe from Israeli state terrorist aggression and missed being assassinated by a hair in an Israeli launched missile attack that killed many people.

It can be seen that despite their overall support for Palestine cause, under the overall impact of Pan-Arabism, the Arab ruling regimes did not hesitate to stab the PLO in the back, in collusion with imperialism or succumbing to pressure and intrigue. The rulers of the Arab countries also apprehended that the impact of the PLO movement on their own people — whose legitimate left-democratic movements they crushed and just aspirations they curbed for perpetrating their exploitive rule — could turn the table against them and endanger their own rule. Hence they did not hesitate to betray and backstab the PLO in order to curb its influence on their own people who supported the PLO always.

Role of former Soviet revisionist leadership

In this situation, the role played by former Soviet revisionist leadership standing in stark contrast to the correct revolutionary politics and handling of contradictions by Stalin during his lifetime, helped to tilt the odds more heavily against the PLO. The former Soviet revisionist leadership wrongly handled the contradictions in the region, being guided more and more by nuclear

war phobia and hegemonistic considerations, characterized by less and less effective support for liberation movements. To take but the example of the 1973 Israel-Arab war when the Arab armies were on the verge of victory, the revisionist leadership of former USSR pressurized them to accept a cease-fire resolution it sponsored in collusion with the US imperialists. This proved detrimental to the interest of Arab countries and helped the US imperialists to boost their prestige and get a firmer hold in the region. Again during the Lebanese civil war when Syria trained its guns against the Palestinians and Lebanese leftists fearing the effect of their imminent victory on its own people, the revisionist Soviet leadership armed Syria, instead of putting pressure and denying arms. This dealt a heavy blow to Palestine cause. Despite all these the former Soviet revisionist leadership did give some support to the PLO.

Imperialists-Zionists step up aggression

When the socialist camp had collapsed, whatever support it had given to the Palestine cause, fell away. Despite deviations whatever restraining effect the socialist camp had had on the imperialists — with that gone the US imperialism emerged as sole superpower in its term-dictating role in the international field. World communist movement was then in total disarray, and the Palestinians had incurred the disdain of several Arab regimes for their support to Saddam Hussein — even in this most perilous international situation, in the face of overwhelming odds Arafat succeeded to keep the Palestinian people firm and united, raising their just demands for an independent state of their own on Gaza Strip and West Bank with Jerusalem, or parts of it, as their capital. Thus, under Arafat the PLO held aloft the banner of anti-imperialist struggle unwaveringly all alone when even China did not come forward in support. It is at that juncture that US imperialists apprehensive of the international impact of the Palestine struggle, that acted as a source of inspirations to the people worldwide groaning under capitalist-imperialist oppression, in the name of peace-maker arm-twisted the Israeli terrorist state to give some concessions to Palestine. Under the

Oslo agreement of 1993 Israel was to grant autonomy in the Gaza Strip and the West Bank town of Jericho to begin with, to be followed by autonomy over the West Bank. The right of return of refugees was not dealt with at all and the status of Jerusalem, among others, was left to be decided upon in later phases.

To say that Israel has not kept its promises and fulfilled even the limited concessions made is an understatement. Far from withdrawing troops from the West Bank, Israel has increased military checkpoints and unleashed a policy of unhindered aggression. And take the example of Jerusalem, to forestall its negotiation the Zionist regime has gone on evicting Palestinian people from Palestinian East Jerusalem, demolished their houses and building settlements surrounding Jerusalem to cut off its access to the West Bank, declaring Jerusalem the capital of Israel. Since the time of the peace accord Israel has been increasing fortress-like settlements, especially in West Bank, raising the number of settlers to 400000 or double their number. And finally to lock in the Palestinians into their scattered cities and villages in the West Bank over which they have civic control, and which are fragmented through Israeli settlements, Israel has built a complex of fences, concrete walls, trenches and razor wire completely fencing in the Palestinian cities and villages from the rest of the West Bank and Gaza, disrupting the lives of thousands of Palestinians, separating them from jobs, schools and their farmland, etc. in a way that has no parallel anywhere in the world. No wonder the international World Court or Court of Justice in The Hague (not to be confused with the Kangaroo Court set up by USA in the same place to try its enemies) called on Israel to dismantle these illegal fences. But as usual under US patronage Israeli regime has brazenly defied international law and world opinion.

Not content with this, Israel has unleashed a campaign of provocation, and terror especially under Ariel Sharon. For this they have blamed Arafat since Camp David talks in 2000 ended in a flop when Arafat stood firm in his demands for Israeli withdrawal of settlements except for some powerful Israeli pockets in one place and demanded control over parts of Jerusalem as well as a settlement of

refugee question. While the Israeli fascist Zionists have refused to budge on any question, they have through concerted media campaign spread lies and canards about Arafat's and Palestinian people's stand and gone on a continuous campaign of provocation and humiliation of Palestinian people. Moreover they have since gone on assassinating one Palestinian leader after another through missile attacks as well as killing indiscriminately civilians, including women and children, demolishing houses, ruining Palestinian orchards, closing its borders on and off, diverting water resources in the West Bank, in short, seeing to it that the semi-autonomous areas under Palestine authority have no economic viability — after all this they call the Palestinian people who began to revolt against such criminal treatment — often fighting the modern Israeli army with nothing but stones — as terrorists and demanded of Arafat that he contain the revolt, kill, torture and arrest them. Yet all the Palestinian people want is peace and dignity on an equal footing with Israel.

Arafat — symbol of epic Palestinian struggle

For over 50 years Arafat remained in the thick of battle and spearheaded the struggle against imperialist-Zionist terrorism, a battle of ups and downs — savouring victories and suffering defeats, but never losing heart. He remained as the very symbol of Palestinian aspiration and struggle for their own independent state. Even when he was kept a prisoner in his headquarters in Ramallah bombed and under siege of Israeli terrorist regime, with no regular supply even of food, water and medical care, he remained steadfast to his last.

Arafat's death has left a void and beckons to the conscience of anti-imperialist forces, freedom loving people and working class throughout the world to come forward and stand in active solidarity at the side of the Palestinian people in their hour of grief and in their just and legitimate struggle that will continue. Having pledged to continue the struggle, the heroic Palestine people need to remain united and unflinching in their resolve to carry forward the just movement drawing inspiration and lessons from Arafat's life and struggle. History, justice and world opinion are on their side and one day, sooner or later Palestinian struggle is bound to meet with success.

Protest Day round the country

Contd. from page 3
Gujarat

In solidarity with the Bangla Bandh called by the SUCI, West Bengal State Committee on 17th November, the Gujarat State Organizing Committee organized a protest meeting in Ahmedabad. The demonstration was led and addressed by Comrades Joyce Patel and Tapan Dasgupta, members, Gujarat State Organizing Committee and Comrade Mukesh Semval. This programme was in addition to protest demonstrations organized earlier at Ahmedabad, Vadodara and Surat on 5th November.

Tamil Nadu

Different districts in Tamil Nadu observed the call given by the Central Committee of the party to observe 17th November as all India Protest Day. The protest demonstrations held in Chennai on November 12 was followed by street corner meetings in the city on November 17. In Neyveli, people demonstrated in large numbers. In Theni district too, people came out on November 16 to protest against hike in price of petrol, diesel, cooking gas etc.

Bihar

In Bihar, massive protest demonstrations were organized on 17th November against the price hike of petrol, diesel, and cooking gas at Patna, Muzaffarpur, Begusarai, Vaishali etc. At Muzaffarpur, the demonstration started from the party office and proceeded along Jawaharlal Nehru Road via Tilak Maidan, etc. It was led by Comrades Ramsurath Thakur, Lokichandra Rai, B. Prasant, Kashinath Sahani, Tarkeswar Giri, Umesh Mahato and others. At Vaishali, the demonstration was organized at Lalgunj Gandhi Chowk. At Begusarai, the protest demonstration was held on 20th November.

Jaunpur

A big protest demonstration against the price hike of cooking gas, petrol and diesel by the CPI(M) supported Congress-I led UPA government at the Centre was organized on 18th November before the office of the district magistrate Jaunpur. A

stay-in demonstration was held there, which was addressed by Comrades Surendranath Maurya, Sripal Dubey, Dinesh Kant Dubey, Arup Singh, Ramjatan Maurya, Indu Singh, Jayprokash Pandey, Jay Singh Bahadur and others, who severely condemned the hike in price of petro-products. A memorandum addressed to the Prime Minister was also submitted to the District Magistrate.

Jharkhand

Immediately following the hike of petroleum product prices protest marches were held and effigies burnt in Ranchi, Jamshedpur, Bokaro and Dhanbad. Following it, meetings, processions, etc. were organized throughout the state. On 16th and 17th November programmes were taken up protesting Calcutta High Court's declaration of SUCI's bandh call in West Bengal as illegal. The series of protests culminated in a state level rally before the Governor of Jharkhand on 24 November. Citing a government - promoted BJP rally involving crores of rupees on 24th, police refused to allow any other procession on that day. But our party's procession came out and when it reached Ekka Chowk hundreds of police and RAF started barbaric lathicharge. Senior leaders, women comrades and others were manhandled and beaten up. Some comrades lost consciousness. Public and particularly shopkeepers came to their rescue. Police made indiscriminate arrests.

A statewide protest day was observed the next day. An effigy of Chief Minister was burnt at Birsia Chowk, the state capital. A big meeting was held there. Party organized protests at Jamshedpur, Ghatsila, Bokaro, Dhanbad and Nagar Untari. Everywhere the lathicharge was severely criticized.



Protest Day rally in Ranchi, Jharkhand

SUCI strongly deplores increase in Railway freight charges and Tatkal passenger fare

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on 26 November, 2004 strongly deplored the steep rise in railway freight charges for several items on the plea of surge in domestic fuel prices, which will cause further spurt in the prices of other essential commodities and, in the context of spiraling inflation, increase the sufferings of the people manifold. He also recalled in this connection that just a few days back, the railway minister, in a swift backdoor operation, hiked the passenger fare by almost doubling the levy on 'Tatkal' booking of seats and also removed the requirement for producing bonafide identity of 'Tatkal' passengers to widen the scope for manipulation and racketing in this category of reservation which is now extended to many more trains. Though the central government and its railway minister pretended to be passenger friendly by not announcing any fare hike during annual budget, they are now surreptitiously resorting to administered price increases in a most undemocratic way, bypassing Parliament.

Comrade Mukherjee called upon the people of the country to build up strong resistance movement against this anti-people hike in passenger and freight tariff.

'Bharat Bandh' opposed

Strongly opposing the Viswa Hindu Parisad called 'Bharat Bandh' on 22 November 2004, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in course of a statement on 21 November warned the people of the country of the hidden design of the Sangh Parivar to once again whip up religious fanaticism and inflame communal passions using as pretext the arrest of Kanchi Sankaracharyya who is under detention on the charge of complicity in the murder of an old employee of the Kanchi Math. Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, therefore, called upon all sections of the people to be on vigil against the evil design of RSS and Sangh Parivar.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of AIDS

All India Students' Rally

28 December : 1 pm

Saheed Minar Maidan, Calcutta

Main Speaker : Comrade Provash Ghosh

Member, Central Committee of SUCI, Advisor AIDS

Other speakers : Central AIDS Leaders and delegates from abroad

29 December : 9 am

Reunion of former and present AIDS workers

Salt Lake Stadium, Calcutta

29 - 30 December : Exhibition

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE