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Women's March to Parliament AIMSS creates history

The capital city witnessed a magnificent spectacle on 1st December, the opening day of the winter session of Parliament, when thousands of determined women from all parts of the country marched to Parliament under the banner of All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangathan. "Stop atrocities on women, obscenity on mass media, withdraw Supreme Court's verdict on arrest of women", proclaimed the giant lead banner of the March, which was led by AIMSS President Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee, General Secretary Comrade H.G. Jayalakshmi, and a host of other leaders of the organisation. Behind the leaders was row upon row of women from Punjab, Haryana, Rajasthan, UP, Delhi, MP, Bihar, Jharkhand, Orissa, West Bengal, Assam, Tripura, Gujarat, Maharashtra, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, each state with its own banner. In one voice, the disciplined cadres raised slogans, "Strengthen women's emancipation

movement", "Build up mighty movement against atrocities on women", "Spread out the thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh", and "Uphold higher culture and ethics". Colourful banners and placards proclaimed the aims of the March in an eye-catching manner.

Starting outside Ramlila Maidan at 11 AM, the March wound its way through the most important commercial areas of New Delhi and reached Parliament Street, which was heavily barricaded. Then the demonstrators settled down and Parliament Street was instantly converted into a sea of women. Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee presided over the meeting held there. In her rousing speech Comrade Mukherjee said, "This is not the end of our protest, but just the beginning. Our demand is that Government severely punishes perpetrators of crime against women. Similarly, we demand of the Government to take

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Comrade Nihar Mukherjee expresses deep concern at railway disaster

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on 14 December strongly expressed deep shock and sorrow over the incident of a serious train accident that occurred this morning at Mukerian near Hoshiarpur of Punjab when Ahmedabad-Jammu Tawai Express collided with Pathankot-Jullandhar DMU Passenger, in which, as per official figures declared so far, 50 people have died and around 150 sustained grievous injury. Strongly criticizing the abject failure of the railway authorities to ensure minimum safety to the passengers, Comrade Mukherjee said that while this Congress-led UPA government like the previous BJP-led NDA government is making tall claims of improving the safety measures and on that pretext imposing additional cess on the passengers, the swelling number of accidents prove that no effective step has so far been taken in this regard.

Comrade Mukherjee expressed his heartfelt condolences to the bereaved families, conveyed sympathy to the families of the injured and demanded of the railway authorities adequate compensation for them. He also demanded immediate measures to ensure full safety of train travel.

AIMSS leaders meet Prime Minister

On 8th December 2004, a delegation led by AIMSS All India President Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee, and three other members — Comrade Subodh Sharma (President, Delhi State Committee), Kusum Singh (All India Committee member) and Rachana Agarwal (All India Council member) met Prime Minister Manmohan Singh at his residence and handed over the memorandum in person. Briefing him in short about the contents of the memorandum, Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee gave a picture of the alarming growth of crimes against women, not only by criminals and degraded elements, but also by men in uniform, and even in custody. Listening to it, the Prime Minister said, "I fully agree". Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee requested him to take stern

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A front view of the women's march in Delhi on 1 December, 2004

Roads of Delhi reverberate with women's march

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firm steps to stop the spread of obscenity in the media. To add to the woes of women has come the most dangerous judgement of the Division Bench of the Supreme Court regarding the arrest of accused women. After bitter and painful experiences of custodial rapes, violence and torture of women, the practice of arrest and detention of women in the absence of women constables and between sunset and sunrise, was prohibited by the Mumbai High Court in 1993. But this has now been overturned by the Supreme Court in 2003, even though custodial rape and violence continue to rise. The recent brutal murder of Thangjam Manorama Devi of Manipur by personnel of Assam Rifles, the rape of two women by police constables in West Bengal, the abduction of a couple and rape of the woman by a police constable in Delhi, and the most recent brutal rape of a mother and her 10-year old daughter by an Army officer in Kashmir laugh in the face of this judgement. We demand of the Supreme Court to immediately revoke this judgement. Because of growing crimes on women, pain and grievances are growing in society and are trying to burst forth. As a result the overall situation is becoming highly explosive. We have seen the outburst of Manipuri women in the form of nude protest, the mass outrage of four hundred women of Nagpur killing a serial rapist who went unpunished, in the court premises itself. We have to prepare women for organised struggles everywhere, and take struggles to a higher plane."

A message from Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary,

SUCI on the occasion of the March was read out by Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee and translated into Hindi by Comrade Sadhana Mishra, the State Secretary of the Bihar State unit. In his message Comrade Nihar Mukherjee said, inter alia, "Women have to protect their self-dignity. And for that, the need is well organized and sustained movement on the edifice of higher proletarian ethics and culture, which should have before it the programme of building up movement on each and every burning problem of womenfolk. As the crisis is further deepening, the ruling capitalist class is shifting its entire burden on to the common people. In order to prevent the women from taking to the path of mass movement, the ruling capitalist class is hatching a heinous conspiracy. It is making desperate attempts to destroy the sense of honour and dignity and moral backbone of the exploited people, irrespective of sex. And if this conspiracy succeeds, that will destroy moral strength and higher culture, the source and inspiration of all movements. So, it should be resisted tooth and nail, by consolidating all might. The womenfolk have to build up all their movements in a manner conducive to women's emancipation and side by side with this, the greatest stress should be laid on bringing about a countrywide awakening of womenfolk, based on the noble ideology of Communism that would act conducive to the revolutionary transformation of the exploitative capitalist rule in India organized under the leadership of the working class to establish the socialist system."

A message from eminent jurist Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer was read

out by Comrade Sadhana Choudhury. In it he, inter alia, said, "The vulgarity and criminality and shameless brutality must and will surrender to the manliness and burning courage which defends the heritage of the inviolable human right, unity which is our pride. This great assembly of womanhood before Parliament today on 1st December 2004, in great fighting spirit under a great organisation AIMSS will no doubt make clear before the ruling classes the real message of awakening women of the land."

The memorandum submitted to the Prime Minister provided statistics and examples of growing crimes against women, and details of increasing depiction of obscenity and vulgarity in the media. "With the full patronage of Central and State Governments, there is a rapidly increasing trend of vulgar advertisements, pornography, and TV serials and films based on extremely dehumanising sex and violence, along with the promotion of alcoholism and drug addiction" and this, in turn, is leading to increased crime against women. Details about the judgement of the Division Bench of the Supreme Court regarding arrest of women were provided. Examples of crimes against women by men in uniform were given and the dangers inherent in the Court's judgement highlighted. Comrade Chhaya Mukherji read out the demands listed in the memorandum, "(1) Ensure stringent punishment to the criminals responsible for crimes against women (2) Ensure exemplary punishment to flesh traders and traffickers of women (3) Impose a strict ban on indecent portrayal of women in mass media

(4) Check the naked exposition of sex and violence in mass media (5) Ban sale of liquor and crack down on sale of drugs (6) Take appropriate measures to nullify the retrograde Supreme Court judgement on arrest and detention of women in the absence of women police, and after sunset and before sunrise"

Comrade H.G. Jayalakshmi read out the memorandum that was to be submitted to the Chief Justice of India. The memorandum provided details of the Mumbai High Court judgement that prohibited arrest of women between sunset and sunrise under any circumstances, and mandated the presence of female police personnel during the arrest of women. It then gave the reasoning provided by the Division Bench of the Supreme Court while overturning the Mumbai High Court judgement, that it may not always be possible and practical to have the presence of a lady constable when the necessity for arrest arises. Providing examples of recent crimes against women by men in uniform like the rape of three tribal women by police in AP during combing operations, the memorandum expressed grave concern about the impact of the judgement on custodial crimes against women. In support of its concern, it cited a very recent judgement of a two-Judge Bench of the Supreme Court itself expressing concern about the growing trend of custodial torture and death while dealing with such a case from Madhya Pradesh. Pointing out that this judgement directly contradicted the Division Bench judgement of the Supreme Court regarding arrest of women, the memorandum requested the Chief Justice to immediately revoke

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Comrade H. Jayalakshmi, General Secretary, AIMSS addressing the women's rally and Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee, President of the organization sitting at her right

Proposed National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill — a cruel joke

A National Rural Employment Guarantee Bill is on the anvil of the Parliament. Already there is much fanfare centring round that, as if it is going to open a new vista in the employment horizon of the country. But on a careful observation, it will be found that it is nothing but a big hoax akin to committing a fraud on the teeming millions languishing in abject poverty, deprivation and bereft of any gainful engagement.

On the eve of the polls, all the vote-seeking bourgeois parties joined by the pseudo-lefts showered a lot of enchanting promises couched in mellifluous language. The issue of guaranteeing employment to rural poor was one of such items in the cosmetic agenda of the Congress and its allies including the CPI(M), CPI. The Common Minimum Programme (CMP) adopted by the Congress-led UPA and duly endorsed by its sham Marxist friends also has a mention of this. But then things went to the backburner. It may be recalled that sometime, when the issue was raked up, it was the CPI(M), which is committed to provide stability to the Congress-led government for full 5-year term and is running the West Bengal state government eliciting lot of accolades from the big monopoly houses and foreign imperial capital, vehemently opposed introduction of the bill on the ground that depleted coffer of state government cannot bear the stipulated 25% cost of its implementation. Reportedly, the objection was made on the ground that such a guarantee, if provided through enactment, would empower the eligible poor to go to court if they were denied the benefits for whatsoever reason.

But when there was a lot of criticisms from the public and in the press, the central government, as a face saving measure, revived the proposal and as all indications suggest, at the instance of the CPI(M) who was receiving flaks for having shelved the scheme and hence needed to save its skin as well. But what is that the Congress-CPI(M) combination prescribes now? The draft of the current proposal, on perusal, is found to be a complete farce, if not a cruel joke.

Firstly, the bill will not be applicable to the whole country, but will be applied to only certain

places, that the central government would notify from time to time. Secondly, 100 days' employment per year is proposed for one member from every poor household, and a household is defined to comprise all the people that inhabit a dwelling. For example, if the families of several brothers inhabit a dwelling as is quite common in rural joint families, only one member from among members of all those families will be eligible for employment under the proposed scheme. Thirdly, the bill proposes that the existing Minimum Wages Act will not apply to the wages for work to be provided under the proposed bill. It is well known that compliance to the Minimum Wages Act by the employers is already an exception rather than the rule, particularly in rural areas and the

enforcement of this scheme is one of the major demands of the working people's movement. So, the proposed provision of the Employment Guarantee bill will provide legal sanction to violation of the Minimum Wages Act and encourage more such violations by the rural employers. And even the few who may be benefited by the employment guaranteed by the proposed bill, will be given starvation level wages for less than one third of the year!

And of course the provision that the state governments would have to meet 30% of the cost, would remain as a permanent area of dispute and hence a readymade excuse for non-implementation.

So hypocritical is the proposal that even the bourgeois press cannot but ridicule it in words like "slated

for political boondocks" and like "a set of statements regularly let off in hot air balloons." Apart from all deceits and mockeries, it is really not known how do these political parties, craving for pelf and power, think that they can take the people for granted? Rural Development minister Raghuvansh Singh, incidentally from Laloo's RJD, thought the best way to tackle reality is to undermine it when he said, "We are serious but let's be real." The CPI(M) leaders, who the other day sarcastically remarked that the Congress must know the CPI(M) "is not a lapdog but a bull dog... and can bite as well", now declare to have derived comfort to find the Congress "responding to their shouts" and hence there is "no need to bite any more".

While there should be a massive resistance movement to stall the bill in the present form, it is also to be seen how the people treat these shrewd political leaders who so merrily and audaciously play with their lives.

Fee hike in Utkal University

AIDSO launches powerful students' movement

Recently Utkal University of Orissa enhanced examination fee with other fees, which is 3 to 4 times more than previous ones. Against this unjust anti-student fee hike, the students of Utkal University came to street with strong voice of protest under the leadership of AIDSO. On September 4th and 15th two students' demonstrations were held before University office. Again on 19th and 20th November students gheraoed the V. C. Office, boycotting form fill-up. The University was totally paralysed on these two days. With full support of the teachers and staffs none didn't join their work. The students burnt the effigy of V.C.. The students of other affiliated colleges of Utkal University responded the call of D.S.O. and joined in the movement. The movement gained momentum and spread vigorously to the other part of state. But surprisingly, without any talk with students, the University authority in a most undemocratic and unjust way declared sinedie closure of University hostels and surrendered the University campus to police administration. But the movement

was not stopped; rather it got lot of mass support and spread in a militant form. On 22nd November, a Dharana was staged before the Governor's house and a memorandum was submitted to him.

On 23rd a memorandum was submitted to higher education minister. Extensive signature campaign was organised in different colleges and submitted to Government through the respective principals. A.I.D.S.O State council called an All Orissa Protest Day on 1st December. Thousands of students responded to the call emotionally, wore black badges, boycotted classes and joined the movement on that day.

This movement was not confined in Utkal University or Bhubaneswar city only. Similar and more militant student movement has spread out throughout the whole state of Orissa starting from Ravenshaw College, Cuttack to Chowdwar, Kendapara, Pattamundi, Kaniha, Keonjhar and other places. Remarkable is that all other student organizations like ABVP, SFI, AISE, NSUI etc are totally silent on this issue.

AIBEUF flays black deal by UFBU

In a press conference held in Bangalore on 2.12.04 Comrade J. Ray Mondal General Secretary, All India Bank Employees Unity Forum (AIBEUF) said inter alia: Bank employees have again been betrayed by United Forum of Bank Unions (UFBU) leadership headed by AIBEA and BEFI. In the Memorandum of understanding (MOU) signed on 23rd November 2004 the UBEF leadership agreed to the management's proposal of deploying employees anywhere within a distance of 100 Km from the present place of posting. This distance might be extended further. In exchange thereof, a meager 13.25% wage increase has been accepted. Needless to mention that deployment along with merger of banks, outsourcing of regular jobs, core banking would drastically reduce the employee's strength and ultimately kill trade union movement in the banking sector.

It is unfortunate that the unions belonging to UFBU even while professing to oppose the Narasimhan Committee recommendations thrust on the bank employees in the name of 'reforms' have connived with the managements and thus betrayed the cause of employees and people at large. This is to say the least a 'black deal'.

US brigands annihilates Iraqi civilians in face of valiant resistance

The intense historic fight that the Iraqi liberation forces fought with the US invaders in Falluja in last November, has no doubt, sent a deadly message to the latter, that the freedom loving Iraqi people shall never allow the attackers to grab Iraq as expected by them. It has also exposed before the world that in committing savagery the US imperialism does not by any means lag behind the Hitlerite fascists, rather they exceed them thousand times.

Emboldened with the winning of presidential election for the second term, Bush and his cohorts launched attack on the Iraqi people with renewed ferocity. On the one hand the US government, posing itself as the champion of democracy, is trying to hold the so-called election in Iraq in January '05 and on the other hand, engaged itself in pulverizing Falluja, the out of the biggest stronghold of the Iraqi liberation fighters. The US gangsters led by Bush thought that they would win people's admiration for the US as the almighty in the world. But, on the contrary, freedom loving people all over the world have vehemently expressed their hatred for them. Even journalists embedded by none other than the Pentagon have sent out pictures showing the US marines shooting an unarmed and wounded Iraqi at point blank range. In retaliation to the savagery in Falluja, fierce counter-attacks by the Iraqi militia on the US aggressors have been launched in Baiji, Bakouba, Ramadi, Samara and Mossul. On the second day of attack on Falluja, resistance forces launched attacks at least in 130 places outside Falluja. Faced with such unimaginable resistance and counter-attack, the US soldiers have become panic-stricken and gone on a rampage. Associated Press has reported that the US forces mercilessly killed 3 more Iraqi prisoners of war in the same manner. Such is the way of their 'freeing' Falluja. The murderous Bush and his military are now killing not only liberation fighters, they are now indiscriminately killing also the Iraqi civilians to spread panic among the whole masses and razing residential houses, schools and colleges and even hospitals and creches to the ground bombing them flouting all international cannons of war. Not only the invader US forces, puppet Iraqi government also

resorted to savagery on their own people. Washington Post reports that half of the 120 mosques there have been severely damaged by the third day of US operation and finally, so far as the daily reports trickling out in the media goes, the number is much higher. All these are quite natural for Lt. Col. Gym Ramy in Falluja is reported to have urged on the attackers saying, "Destroy everything you can destroy... kill everything you can kill" (Jeremy Seabrook in The Statesman, 14.11.04) Thus they killed indiscriminately the elder and the infirm, the weak and the sick, women and children in Falluja and the operation was suitably named 'Fantom Fury' with divine and ghostly vengeance. Mass killings and mass destructions are pre-planned and well-calculated. Even the American and Iraqi authorities put the death toll at 1,400 Iraqis most of whom are innocent civilians. Top United Nations official have demanded an investigation into this large-scale massacre. The International Committee of Red Cross (ICRC) have also expressed concern over this mass killing in Falluja.

Mass protests against such barbarity and in support of the resistance struggle burst forth in America and different countries. Thousands of common people of the neighbouring Arab countries organized protest movements in solidarity with the Iraqi people, victims of American barbarity in Falluja and elsewhere.

The whole of Iraq is now really a battlefield. Each and every family in every part of Iraq has turned to be a barricade of the resistance forces. Similarity of this Iraqi fighting with the Vietnam war is very much evident. Falluja was a city with a meagre population of 2,50,000 to 3,00,000. But the mightiest military in the world with its enormous fire power and 20,000 troops took no less than two weeks to take over the city, whereas a day or two could have been normally enough to run the city over. This shows what a valiant resistance with mighty people's support the liberation

forces built up against the invaders. The US forces had to admit that in Falluja they witnessed one of the most intense urban guerrilla wars in the history of modern warfare. Nearabout 100 American soldiers died and more than 1000 grievously injured according to the US official version.

The November '04 issue of the 'Vanguard', the mouthpiece of the Socialist Party of Bangladesh has published an interview with an important leader of the Baath Party, through the 'Iraq Committee' in Brussels. (Internet : www.free-iraq.org). That Baath leader said

with death defying devotion and are maintaining full coordination among themselves. He informed that Baath Party, Iraqi Army, Republican Guards, security agencies, Fidayeens of Saddam Hussain and the Al-kurds Army form the bullwork of this heroic struggle. He asserted they made all-out endeavour to build up the resistance struggle with a greater strength embracing different nationalist forces and they are constantly extending their circle for escalating the war to far off corners of the country. And to that end a unified national front is



People of Otowa, Canada are protesting against the visit of US President Bush on 30.11.04

that this brutal war has been thrust upon the Iraqi people by the US aggressors; but to the Baathists and the common people of Iraq this aggression was nothing unexpected. And they were prepared for it much ahead. Among the plans the most important one was mass resistance; and there is no instance in the history of building up a mighty people's resistance within such a short period. He said, in every Iraqi cities and towns, the Baath party leadership has been organized anew and a great number of party members has plunged into a historic national liberation struggle under this leadership. The legendary fight in Falluja vindicates this truth.

While answering to the question : what is the effect of arresting the top leadership of Baath Party including Saddam Hussain on this liberation struggle, he said that they were not at all astonished at the fate of Saddam Hussain and other top leaders. They were well-prepared for such an eventuality and now leaders of all the provinces are accomplishing their responsibilities

working. Indomitable liberation struggle is going on from Jako in the north to Fao in the south and from the eastern border to the western, everywhere. Falluja is not alone.

What is remarkable is that the Iraqi freedom fighters are carrying on this tremendous liberation war without any material help from outside. Let alone such helps from any foreign government, what the Vietnam liberation war got from the then USSR and China, whatever might be the limitations, they are not getting even any unofficial help in the form of volunteer forces or arms from any corner. In such a situation the urgent need of the hour is to develop mighty militant peace movement in all countries against imperialism headed by the US imperialism and in support of the Iraqi liberation struggle to compel respective governments to voice protest against the imperialist brigandage on Iraq and help the liberation fighters materially. Today humanity demands it most.

Arrest of Kanchi Sankaracharya on murder charge

Unravels "religion" trade and traders

That news probably went unnoticed when everyone glanced over the pages of newspapers on September 3, last. A Sankararaman, a former functionary of Kanchi Kankoti Peetam (Kanchi Math), high profile affluent religious shrine that has lot of clouts among the bourgeois politicians, administration and the Hindu priestcraft, and a manager of Varadarajaperimal temple of Kancheepuram, was bludgeoned to death in the temple premises. But a chilly flutter was created on November 11, the Deepavali day, when Jayendra Saraswati, the Sankaracharya or the chief of Kanchi Math, was arrested on the charge of having masterminded the brutal murder of Sankararaman who reportedly fell out with the pontiff and threatened to expose his murky deals. The Kanchi seer was charged with offences like murder, causing disappearance of evidence, giving false information and taking gifts, etc. to screen an offender from punishment and criminal conspiracy. Subsequently, the seer was also served an arrest warrant in another case of attempt to murder of one Radhakrishnan, another former official of Kanchi Math, and two others in September, 2002. Police sources talked of a third arrest warrant being prepared for the seer in a case of assault on one Madhavan, a temple priest at Thirukottiyur near Tirunelveli. In a related development, police has also, of late, begun probing into the mysterious death of a vedic scholar and devotee of Kanchi Math, Ayyappa Sharma, whose body was found in a temple tank there a couple of years back. The bail petitions of the pontiff have been rejected by the court, and he is in the judicial custody at Vellore jail.

HYPERACTIVITY OF SANGH PARIVAR AND BJP

On hearing the news of his arrest, the entire Sangh Parivar of RSS-VHP-Bajrang Dal and its political front, the BJP, began to raise hue and cry claiming that Sankaracharya's arrest was "an affront to Hinduism". The Parivar and the BJP were also quick to launch agitation demanding his release. The BJP bigwigs like Vajpayee, Advani sat in dharna. Murl Manohar Joshi, rushed to Vellore jail to meet the pontiff.

Sushma Swaraj found it to be sad that "one of the tallest dharmagurus has been arrested and kept in jail." The BJP and Shiv Sena members also raised the issue in both houses of the Parliament, resorted to intemperate languages that the speaker had to expunge later. Vajpayee wanted the government to ensure, among other things, that the seer is provided with all facilities for performing Puja inside the jail. Advani compared the legal action against the seer with the imposition of emergency and announced continuation with the protests till the Kanchi Math head is released. All of them sought to create an impression that a priest can do no wrong and is not subject to the law of the land.

ALLEGATIONS LEVELLED AGAINST THE SEER

Incidentally, the slain Sankararaman in a series of letters brought out the "moral and financial decrepitude" of the Math, malfeasance, political chicanery and nepotism of the seer and the "materialistic and physical pleasure" including "being closeted for long hours with certain women" Jayendra and his deputy Vijayendra were getting used to. This visibly caused lot of embarrassment for Jayendra who in an interview to Nakkheeram, a Tamil bimonthly, said, "Even if my toe-nails were to develop pain, there are devotees who would shed tears. Sankararaman ... continued to trouble me. ... My devotees who could not tolerate Sankararaman's harassment, could be the reason for Sankararaman's end (murder)". It is alleged that he hired three assassins and paid them Rs.40 lakhs for killing Sankararaman. The currency notes recovered from one of the alleged killers were found to have been withdrawn by the seer from the Math's bank account. Calls were also made to the alleged killer from the cell phone used exclusively by him. When the police arrested him from Mehboobanagar, he was reportedly planning to flee to Nepal in a copter arranged by an industrialist.

ANTECEDENTS OF THE KANCHI SEER

What have been the antecedents of Jayendra Saraswati whom spokespersons of Sangh Parivar hold as "incarnate of God"? He has

been one of the most powerful religious gurus wielding enough clout among prominent bourgeois politicians, cabinet ministers, bureaucrats, judges, industrialists and even persons like autocratic king Gyanendra of Nepal, and known to be very close to particularly those endorsing the cry of Hindutva fanaticism. His national ascendance coincided with the ascension of Sangh Parivar's Hindutva. He did not condemn Babari Masjid demolition, openly supported the demand of Kashi, Mathura, Ayodhya for being "handed over to Hindu fanatics", on receiving "Lord's message" launched a "national movement for spiritual awakening" in line with the familiar theme of the Sangh Parivar, got nominated by the former BJP government to mediate between the Hindu and Muslim fundamentalists over the Ram mandir issue and in the process managed to secure a position of informal authority to speak on behalf of the Hindutva camp. His growing political profile and his inclination to grab political limelight brought him to the centre stage so much so that at one point of time, he made no secret of his ambition to emerge as a Pope-like head of pan-Indian Hindutva.

MURKY DEALS BEHIND "RELIGIOUS" CLOAK

While he was being pitchforked by the quarters of vested interest as a saint devoted to religion, muck had been accumulating within the Kanchi Math walls and scandalous stories of sleaze, debauchery, greed, sex and embezzlement of fund were doing the rounds. Not only with Kanchi Math and the Sankaracharya, such allegations have been against many a religious shrines and the self-styled "godmen". Once Neemchand Jain, alias Chandraswamy dominated the corridors of power only to be exposed later as a fraud, swindler of fund violater of foreign exchange rules and broker of arms dealing. He is also being suspected of having had a hand in the assassination of late Rajiv Gandhi. Premananda, another dharmaguru, is serving life-term for murder, rape and other crimes. Some of the priests of famous Swaminathan Temple of Gujarat were found enjoying the company of call girls. Swami Sadachari, a Sadhubaba, was

arrested a few years back for blackmailing businessmen and running women rackets. There has been a court case against Mumbai's wellknown Siddhi Vinayak temple for financial irregularity. Puttapparth Saibaba Trust is also shrouded in controversies. UNESCO cancelled a conference scheduled there because of allegation of sexual harassment. Anandmargis were main suspects in the Purulia Arms dropping case. According to Rev. Valson Thampu, a priest in a North Indian Church, corruption in the church is as bad as in temples and gurdwaras. The so-called Moulavis and Muslim clerics are often caught on the wrong foot, accused of moral turpitude and lavish life style. Most of the religious shrines and organizations have institutionalized a system of overflowing coffer and zero accountability. A recent study reveals that even government controlled Tirumala Tirupati Devasthanam Trust spends just 10 to 17% of its whopping annual collection of around Rs.600 crores while the rest, people are made to believe, "is given to god" or in other words it is not difficult to make out, turned into black money. Turning religion into a multi-billion industry under the aegis of some self-proclaimed contractors between the worshippers and god is what the country witnesses today.

RELIGION HAS OUTLIVED SOCIAL UTILITY

But this is no isolated a phenomenon. Throughout the world, such instances are visible. Appeal of religion works no more, no more it binds people for positive action, provides them a moral structure. This, once again, vindicates what the Marxists have been saying for long that religion, as a principle of life, and religious values as a moral system have outlived their utility. Religion has now become a prop in the hands of the forces of reaction to dupe and fleece people. On the one hand, religious bigotry, blind faith, superstitions foster backward thinking, regiment the thought-process and plunge people into the dungeon of fruitless pursuit of divine grace, a myth and fiction estranged from the reality. And on the other, the communalists-fundamentalists, taking advantage of this lack of consciousness of the people, go on fomenting religious fanaticism and hatred to disrupt the

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For the businessmen — not for common people

CPI(M) bent upon turning West Bengal into a land of milk and honey

When asked to comment on the apparent dichotomy that exists between the CPI(M) leaders' belligerent utterances in Delhi against FDI in telecom and insurance and red carpet to foreign monopolists in West Bengal, Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee, the CPI(M) Chief Minister and Politburo member made no secret of his view: "we are all for FDI ... let me assure you that the world is changing, the country is changing and we are also changing". So he renews his pledge to "crack down on militant trade unionism" and turn West Bengal into a "land of milk and honey for businessmen".

He received thunderous applause from the chieftains of Indian and foreign capital. US Consul General has confessed that in his entire career he had never seen the sort of change that he has witnessed in just two and a half years of stay in Calcutta. Japanese Ambassador made no efforts to hide his unabashed admiration for the CPI(M) Chief Minister, "He is now the most able Chief Minister". And to lend credence to what Bhattacharjee boastfully claimed

and the big business and imperial capital reciprocated with alacrity, Anil Biswas, CPI(M) State Secretary and Politburo member recently commented — "We do believe globalization is the apotheosis of the capitalists... we want to take advantage of the good components of globalization, as we can't wish away this process."

So alongside open invitation and unlimited concession to FDI, the CPI(M) government is also on a privatization spree. Recent addition to the list of privatization is the rural healthcare. 12000 primary and block level health centres and rural hospitals will now be handed over to private owners "on lease", under what the CPI(M) leadership proudly calls, "private-public partnership". As a result, the present government employees engaged in this sector will be replaced by private employees, whose number, remuneration and efficiency would be decided by such lessee of course, keeping in mind the objective of earning maximum profit through investment of capital in such a lucrative sector like healthcare. And the less said the better about the plight of rural

poor, who will be deprived of even a semblance, of the last vestiges of health care. Moreover, this would also deprive around 10000 trained nurses of receiving employment. But the state health minister, Surya Kanta Mishra, an ardent follower of his Politburo leaders in offering red carpet to private capital in healthcare — an essential public service and who considers "health, education, service" as commercial commodities in the present time, had a real good piece of advice for these unemployed nurses - "Do not languish in your mother's lap ... Learn foreign language and go abroad" because he can not "provide employment to them here". How would one reconcile this to what M.K. Pandhe, CPI(M) Politburo member, President, CITU and a member of the Rajya Sabha, said the other day in Delhi, "we must increase our pressure (on the central government) against all these policies of globalization and privatization"?

(Source — The Statesman, December 8, 2004, Anandabazar Patrika, December 8,9,12, 2004 and Times of India, December 12, 2004)

Murder charge against Sankaracharya

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unity of the people. Both these suit the ruling bourgeoisie so desperate to provide extra lease of life to its moribund exploitative class-rule. Hence are the characters of priestcraft so indispensable for the class and its servitors in politics and other fields. Barring a handful of genuine believers most of the religious priests and preachers, in the name of religion, indulge in the politics of the bourgeoisie in connivance with the class and the government.

DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT AND IDEOLOGICAL STRUGGLE CAN ONLY STEM THE ROT

That is why the Sangh Parivar and the BJP are creating all these ruckus and fracas over the Sankaracharya's arrest. After having lost both parliamentary and

Maharashtra Assembly elections, the squabble-ridden BJP had been running out of issues to suppress dissent within. In this incident of Kanchi seer, it found a potent political issue, a golden opportunity to communalise the national atmosphere and better its poll prospects riding the communal wave so generated. That is why, it is so shameless to defend the accused, trying to pose as if these seers and godmen are above law, licensed to do whatever they want. Of course after the reported confession of the seer and the truth being gradually unraveled before the people, the Sangh Parivar-BJP are trying to slowly move away from the contemplated grand design. That does not mean that they will give up the issue. The ploy to hoodwink the masses over such issues will continue to be in the agenda of the traders of religion.

Women's March

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the Division Bench judgement by issuing a fresh judgement.

At this point in the meeting, a delegation led by Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee, and consisting of Comrades Swayamprabha Naik, G. Lalita, Nagammal and others, went to the Prime Minister's Office to submit the memorandum. Another delegation led by Comrade Jayalakshmi and consisting of Comrades Sadhana Choudhury, Krishna Sen, Anita Mukherji and Chandralekha Das went to the Supreme Court to submit the letter and the lakhs of signatures collected in the campaign to the Chief Justice. Meanwhile, the protest meeting continued at Parliament Street, with AIMSS Vice-President Comrade Binapani Das presiding in the absence of Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee.

Comrade Pratap Samal, Secretary of the Delhi State Committee of the Socialist Unity Centre of India (SUCI), conveyed his revolutionary greetings to AIMSS, calling the Parliament March one of the most significant events in the recent political landscape of Delhi. He hailed the nationwide struggle of AIMSS against rising crimes as well as growing obscenity and vulgarity in the media.

A number of State leaders of AIMSS addressed the gathering thereafter.

Former Chief Justice of Delhi High Court Shri Rajinder Sachar addressed the gathering and called it the largest gathering of women he had ever seen in Delhi. Strongly endorsing AIMSS' protest against the Supreme Court judgement on arrest of women, Shri Sachar urged AIMSS to be fearless. "For centuries, the ideal of Indian womanhood held up before society has been of the silent suffering woman. With your actions, you are shattering that image, changing it to one of militancy and protest. This is the need of the hour."

Finally ended a landmark symbolic event in the history of the women's emancipation movement in India. And here begins a new and higher phase of movement in States all over the country.

is expressly manifest in this establishment of foreign military base.

Indian military base in foreign country

India has started extending its military base permanently in foreign countries also. According to a report published in the Times of India (1.10.04) India has established its first military outpost at Farkhor in Tajikistan about 10 km from the capital Dushanbe, which will be ready for operations in this year end with at least two squadrons of Indian Air Force to be stationed there. This foreign air base will give Indian armed forces a longer strategic reach, particularly in Central Asia and sources describe it as a "modern" military base where 95% of the infrastructure is ready. A bilateral agreement between the government of India and Tajikistan was signed in 2002 during the visit of the then Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee to Tajikistan.

The hegemonistic aspiration of the Indian bourgeoisie who has already acquired imperialist character by way of export of capital

Hyderabad District Students' Conference

The 3rd Hyderabad District Students' Conference was held on 24th and 25th of November, 2004. Open session of the conference was held on 24th November at Press Club, Basheerbagh, Hyderabad. A Quotation Exhibition was arranged at the entrance of the conference hall. Observing 50th Anniversary of our organization A.I.D.S.O. flag was hoisted by Comrade N. Sriram, All India Committee Vice President, AIDS0, amidst slogans raised against commercialization, privatization and communalisation of Education.

Smt. Sarada Ashoka Vardhan, renowned writer inaugurated the conference.

Comrade Ch. Murahari, Hyderabad District Secretary, SUCI, the Chief Guest of the Conference, in his speech explained thoroughly the devastating effects of globalisation, liberalisation and privatization.

The main speaker in open session Comrade M. N. Sriram, described the outcome of various policies adopted since 1986 by

different Governments. He said the Governments are changing but anti-education policies are not changing

In conclusion of the session, Comrade S. Govindarajulu, AIDS0, Andhra Pradesh State President, addressed the gathering.

On 25th November 2004 delegate session was organized. Before the session starts, the portrait of Great Marxist Philosopher Comrade Shibdas Ghosh was garlanded. Speaking on this occasion Comrade K. Sridhar, SUCI, State Secretary, who attended as the Chief Guest, explained the students about historical development of Marxism, Leninism and Comrade Shibdas Ghosh thoughts.

A new district committee was elected with Comrade K. Bharath as President, Comrade P. Dasu as Vice-President, Comrade P. Teja, as Secretary, Comrade S. Siva Kumar, Comrade P. Devanna, Comrade Shyam, Comrade Ramu as Joint Secretaries was unanimously elected.

All India Anti-Imperialist Forum Condemns UPA Government's Support of US Imperialism

The Delhi unit of the All India Anti-Imperialist Forum strongly condemns the Government of India for allowing war criminal US Defence Secretary Donald Rumsfeld to set foot on Indian soil. The common people of this country, who remember the uncompromising anti-imperialist trend in our freedom struggle, are shocked that Rumsfeld, the mastermind behind the inhuman and vicious imperialist attack on Afghanistan and Iraq, and the barbaric policy of torture of prisoners captured by US troops, is having face-to-face talks with Prime Minister Manmohan Singh. It is even more reprehensible that the chieftain of US imperialism, war criminal George W. Bush, has been invited to India by the Prime Minister. This shows that there is no basic difference between the earlier NDA Government and the present Congress-led UPA Government supported by the CPI(M) and CPI. US imperialism is keen to take the

help of the Indian bourgeoisie in its plan for world domination, on the pretext of fighting terrorism. In particular, the Rumsfeld visit is intended to secure Indian Government co-operation in conducting a wholly illegal election in Iraq. US imperialism is desperately seeking to escape from the quagmire that Iraq has become for its troops, thanks to the courageous freedom struggle of the Iraqi people. It is the bounden duty of the Government of India to assist the anti-imperialist freedom struggle of the Iraqi people. But the UPA Government, is doing exactly the opposite.

We call upon the democratic-minded and anti-imperialist people of India to launch strong movements to force the Indian government to abandon military and strategic co-operation with US imperialism in general and to abandon any plans to assist the heinous designs of US imperialism in Iraq.

Human Rights Day observed in Gujarat

For last seven years Movement for Secular Democracy (MSD) has been observing Human Rights Day. The 10th. December the Human Rights Day has assumed a lot of importance in the changed situation of the state. These year's programmes have lot of significance.

A meeting was held in Mehendi Nawab Jung Hall, Himavan, Paldi, Ahmedabad. The meeting was presided over by the convener of MSD and noted journalist, Sri Prakash N. Shah. The meeting was addressed by Sri D.N. Pathak the president of P.U.C.L. of Gujarat, women activist Ms. Ila behn Pathak of AWAG, the Ex speaker of Gujarat Assembly, Sri Kundanlal Dholokia, eminent human right activists, advocate Sri Girish bhai Patel, Sri Kirit bhai Bhatt the working President of P.U.C.L of Gujarat, Sri Mohammed Safi Madni of Jamaite-Islam-Hind, Sri Indukumar Jani of Janpath, Dalit activist Sri Ramesh Chandar Parmar, Educationist Prof. Dinesh Shukla, Prof. Ramesh bhai Shah, labour activist, Sri K.P. Mishra, Sri Joyanti bhai Panchal and others.

The discussion ranged from POTA, GUJCO, Rights of the Minorities, Custodian Deaths,

Atrocities on Women, Atrocities on Dalits, Female Foeticides, Workers right is Human Right, Rule of Law in the State, Hindutva and Human Rights, CBI enquiry of all riot related cases as per NHRC's recommendation, Migrant Workers Right, on Slought on Education, Common University Act to Family Suicides in the state.

All the speakers expressed concerned about the violation of human rights in increasing pace and reiterated about the absence of rule of law in the state of Gujarat. It was felt to combat the incoming danger of fascism unitedly.

After the meeting a very impressive demonstration of hundreds of women, workers, students and youths, teachers and people from all walk of lives was held for more than an hour near Town Hall at 4 P.M. Placards demanding scrapping of POTA, GUJCO, restoration of rule of law, handing over of all riot related cases to CBI etc. were displayed and slogan were raised. Speakers addressed the public gathering near the Town Hall calling to raise up to uphold the human rights, the democratic rights and our Constitutional rights. Songs were presented by women and students.

General Strike in Italy

Italy was paralysed by a general strike on November 30, last in protest against the new tax policy announced by the Berlusconi-led government — which would further intensify the trend of the rich getting richer and the people becoming impoverished that the economic policies of globalization has brought about also in developed countries. On that day trains and buses stopped running during the hours of the general strike — transport grounded to a halt. Both national and international flights were crippled, as Alitalia, Italy's largest airline, for example, cancelled 70 national flights and 66 international flights. Shops, banks and factories closed down with millions of workers participating. Government employees, doctors and postal workers extended the strike to eight hours.

During the general strike a meeting of 35000 workers was held in Venice braving heavy rain and floodwaters. In Milan 100,000 workers came out in a demonstration to voice their protest, 60,000 marched in Turin and 50,000 in Rome. And in 70 other towns protest demonstrators took out processions. But there was no outcry in the media of how blunt the weapon of strike or bandh had become, nobody calculated how much economic damage accrued to people out of this strike, because the employees of the media themselves went on strike.

What is worth mentioning is that with the demand to scrap certain policies of economic reforms this is the fifth time that such a general strike has crippled Italy. In the meantime the Berlusconi-led government was compelled to announce deferment of the new tax policy till 2006.

Eminent citizens uphold right to call 'Bandh'

Calcutta showed its class again ! It has been an increasing trend of legal interference on rights to protest and launch democratic movement, which was out to create a stifling situation in the state. The very fundamental right that the people have earned through a long tradition of hard-fought battles is sought to be curtailed through judicial process. And to raise voice against such moves, eminent citizens participated in a largely attended convention on 13th December at the Yuva Kendra, Calcutta. What a rank of luminaries gathered on the podium to register their protest! President of the convention was Prof. Sushil Kumar Mukhopadhyay, the renowned scientist and former Vice-chancellor of the University of Calcutta. The speakers were the eminent law personalities like Prithish Bagchi, Biswanath Bajpai, Partha Sarathi Sengupta and a former Justice of Calcutta High Court Abani Mohan

Sinha, a former Commissioner of Police Tushar Talukdar, social activists and educationists like Prof. Tarun Sanyal, Gitesh Sharma, Manik Mukherjee, Mubarak Karim Jawahar and others. Dr. R. K. Dasgupta, noted educationist sent a written message.

In an unanimously accepted resolution, the convention held : in course of social development, often there arose contradiction between legality and legitimacy. The ruling class has always tried to use prevailing laws to keep their system intact, whereas fighters for social progress and humanity have unflinchingly stood for legitimacy. Even laws and sense of legality have changed to make way for social progress in course of this battle for legitimacy over legality. In the present context of legal interference on right to legitimate democratic movement we should be guided by this view only.

Brutal killings and indefinite curfew in towns of Rajasthan condemned

Peasants of Rajasthan have been fighting for long on the demand of supply of water for irrigation. After making severe lathicharge and taking other suppressive measures against the agitating peasants the BJP government in Rajasthan had clamped indefinite curfew in the towns of Anoopgarh, Ghadsana and Rawala. Besides one more peasant has been reported to be killed during the fresh agitation after five peasants were killed previously in police firing while they were agitating for supply of canal water

for irrigation. Comrade Satyawan, All India Secretary, AIKKMS has in a statement issued on 6.12.04 severely condemned the brutal killings of five agitators, other suppressive measures and indefinite curfew in the town of Anoopgarh, Ghadsana and Rawala by the BJP-led Rajasthan government to curb the legitimate movement of the peasants there in demand of supply of water and demanded immediate withdrawal of curfew and to provide canal water to the peasants for irrigation.

AIMSS leader meet Prime Minister

Contd. from page 1
measures to check these growing crimes, and also pointed out the growing trend of vulgar, obscene and pornographic pictures in advertising and the media, particularly the electronic media, which in turn were contributing to growth of crime in general and crimes against women in particular. Responding to this, the Prime Minister said that the social mind had to be changed. Comrade Chhaya Mukherjee said that AIMSS had been conducting such socio-cultural movements throughout the

country, but along with it, some strict governmental measures were required. She also drew the attention of the Prime Minister to the recent very damaging judgement of the Supreme Court, which permitted the arrest of women accused after sunset and before sunrise, and at any time without the presence of a lady constable, which had earlier been prohibited by the Mumbai High Court in 1993. The Prime Minister assured the delegation that he would look into the matter.

Central Committee strongly protests puppet Iraqi government's foreign minister's visit to India

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on 4 December strongly protested against the reported endorsement by the Congress-led UPA government to a proposed visit of India by Hashiyar Zebari, foreign minister of the US puppet government of Iraq, on December 19, 2004. This clearly shows, he said, that the Congress-led central government, in utter disregard of the world public opinion against the illegal imperialist invasion of Iraq and in shameless disdain for the glorious anti-imperialist tradition of the Indian people, is, like the previous BJP-led NDA government, giving defacto recognition to the client regime of the US brigands in Iraq and thus openly opposing the legitimate heroic battle of the brave Iraqi people to free their motherland from foreign aggression and occupation.

Comrade Mukherjee called upon all the peace-loving people and anti-imperialist forces to build up a strong united resistance movement to compel the central government to reverse its decision to allow such a stooge of US imperialism to enter our country.

Mass demonstration in Sultanpur, UP

Under the auspices of the Sultanpur District Committee of the SUCI and AIKKMS a mass demonstration was organized before the BDO and SDM offices of Lambhua of Sultanpur district of UP on 1 December last to press for the demands like withdrawal of price hike of petrol,

diesel and cooking gas, electricity, issuance of ration cards to the people and introduction of public distribution system, drought relief to drought affected people. The demonstration was led and addressed by Comrade J. Verma District Secretary of SUCI Sultanpur District and others.

On the occasion of the 50th anniversary of AIDS

All India Students' Rally

27 - 30 December :

Exhibition on 50 years of struggle of AIDS
College Square, Calcutta

Inauguration on 27 December at 1 p.m. by
Comrade Krishna Chakraborty,
Member, Central Committee of SUCI

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 members
Salt Lake Stadium, Calcutta

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : NIHAR MUKHERJEE