

Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee passes away



Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee, Member, Central Committee and West Bengal State Secretariat and Secretary, Purulia District Committee of the Party, breathed her last on 23 May morning at the Calcutta Heart Clinic and Hospital after prolonged suffering for two years from extremely painful carcinoma. She was 67. At her demise, the Red Flag was kept half-mast at all the offices of the Party.

The same afternoon her mortal remains were brought to the Central Office of the Party at 48, Lenin Sarani, Kolkata. More than two hundred of leaders-cadres-supporters had by that time been waiting with heavy heart to pay their last tribute and parting salute to their beloved comrade. Comrade Provash Ghosh, our beloved General Secretary, first paid his floral tribute. Thereafter Comrades Ranjit Dhar and Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya, both Polit Bureau members, Comrades Sankar Saha, Saumen Basu and Chhaya Mukherjee, all Central Committee members, placed wreaths to mark their respectful tributes. Floral tributes were also paid by All India leaders of different mass organizations, representatives of the Party organs and different units of the Party and mass organizations. On behalf of CPI(M), Comrades Biman Basu, their Polit Bureau Member, Sukhendu Panigrahi, their State Secretariat member, and Pradip Roy, their Purulia District Secretary, also paid their fraternal tributes.

The mortal remains were kept in a mortuary for the night and were moved to Purulia on 24 May early morning, led by a 7-member team of the State Secretariat of the

Contd. on page 8

Tuticorin People's Militant Upsurge Shows the Way

Stream of people, peaceful, unarmed, were marching towards the District Collectorate of Tuticorin town of south Tamil Nadu on 22 May last voicing their protest against persistent threat posed to their life by the emission and dumping of toxic material by the Vedanta Sterlite Copper Smelting factory in total violation of the basic environment protection laws. It was no spontaneous rally but was a well-organized one. And the demand was legitimate. But, the authorities were not ready to be on the side of legitimacy. To them, protecting the sinister commercial interest of the Vedanta group, a London-based giant Indian corporate, was more important than to prevent the serious threat posed to the life and livelihood of thousands of poor people. So, the district administration, obviously at the behest of the AIADMK-led state government, imposed section 144 in the area with a view to banning the proposed rally. Not only that. A huge contingent of police force armed with sophisticated weapons including specially-trained snipers were mobilized to take on the protesting people. This visibly enraged the several thousand people who assembled there in demand for guaranteeing safety and security of their life. So, they decided to defy the prohibitory order and proceed towards the collectorate to give vent to their grievance. Immediately, the administration let loose snipers and armed police on them without any hesitation. Bestial savagery raved wild. Within moments, 13 innocent lives were snuffed out and hundreds inflicted with grievous injuries. Unofficial sources put the casualty figures to be much higher. Among the dead were the four chief coordinators of the movement — just what the Vedanta group would have wanted to break the agitation. The videos went viral showing official assassins targeting their telescopic guns at the demonstrators from the rooftop of police vehicles and a few trigger-happy policemen brutally kicking a dead victim for 'staging theatrics'. Laid bare was the despotic face of the government-administration wedded to serve the capitalist class in power. Rightly was commented in the editorial of an English daily that "The responsibility for the shooting lies with, other than the police and the district administration, the Tamil Nadu government, Union Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change, the Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board and the judiciary siding with the management." (The Statesman 26-05-18) The just struggle

and sacrifice of the martyrs have not gone abortive. Bending before the pressure of powerful people's movement and countrywide protests and condemnations from all sections of conscientious people, the AIADMK-run Tamil Nadu government was compelled to order for permanent closure of the unit.

Significance of this victory of Tuticorin people's militant upsurge is immense in the prevailing situation of the country where the ruling capitalist class, its pliant governments and servitor political parties have been arraying all their arsenal to dissuade people from the path of struggle—the path which only can thwart the growing economic-political-cultural assault of ruthlessly oppressive capitalist rule on them. So are fostered all kinds of divisive mentalities riding on the venomous prescripts of communalism-casteism-religious fanaticism-obscurantism-revivalism with a view to disrupting the struggling unity of the various sections of the toiling masses, wrecking their fraternity, precipitating mutual hatred, distrust and suspicion among them and embroiling them in fratricidal feuds and bloodbaths. Alongside there is a well-knit ploy to blunt the thinking process and purge rationality so that the oppressed people are not dawned upon necessary socio-political consciousness, are stripped of human essence, emasculated from within, robbed of the spirit to boldly rise against the oppressive rulers and instead remain arrested within the blind alley of bourgeois vote politics as vote-banks of the parliamentarian parties of different hues. Even parties like the CPI (M), CPI who call themselves leftists-Marxists have long abandoned the path of struggle to stay afloat in the corridor of power and are spurning any step that might displease the ruling bourgeoisie.

Overcoming all such hurdles posed before building up legitimate democratic movement, the brave Tuticorin people took positive initiative, developed fighting unity rising above all divisiveness and launched a massive agitation against the devilry of a corporate house which is well-connected with the power that be and has clearly been enjoying endorsement and support of the entire establishment. Certain facts would show how the Vedanta group wield clout among the ruling political circle and the regulatory as well as controlling authorities. The Vedanta group has a track record of systematically flouting environmental rules causing serious health hazard to both its own employees as well as

Contd. on page 2

Countrywide united movement needed to support the cause of Tuticorin people

Contd. from page 1

the people in the neighbourhood of the industrial projects they have set up so far, both in the country and abroad. Human rights codes have all along been subordinate to its noxious commercial interest and greed. The group has also been accused of forced eviction of poor villagers for grabbing land for mining. Such a tainted corporate house was invited in 1993 by late J Jayalalithaa, the then AIADMK chief minister of Tamil Nadu, to set up the controversial copper smelting unit in Tuticorin. While she laid the foundation stone, K Karunanadhi, her *bete noir* and DMK supremo inaugurated the plant during his tenure as chief minister. Events from 1996 bear testimony to the fact that right from the central government, state government, Tamil Nadu Pollution Control Board (TPCB) to the Central Ministry of Environment & Forests (MoEF) have been in league to bail out the company every time it was found a defaulter of compliance with environmental laws. There has been more than one occasion when not only Madras High Court but even Supreme Court came to the rescue of the company. Even when there was serious gas leak from the plant in 2013 making people of the adjacent areas suffer from suffocation, coughing, eye irritation, miscarriages and severe other discomforts, the Vedanta management escaped punitive action as the concerned authorities were reported to have 'failed' to gather conclusive evidence against them. Consequent on unbridled operation of such a hazardous plant, the extent of air, water and ground pollution has been so severe that Tuticorin as per anecdotal reports from the local people has been fast becoming the cancer capital of Tamil Nadu. Though as an eyewash, a moratorium was imposed on further expansion of the plant, all available indications were that disdaining the long-standing legitimate demand of the victimized local populace, the BJP-led central government, AIADMK-run state government, the TPCB and the MoEF were all working in favour of Vedanta's interests and actively considering extending the licence for expansion of the unit. The apprehensions were not unfounded given the proximity of the Vedanta group with the ruling parties and their satraps. Besides the two regional bourgeois parties of Tamil Nadu who share governmental power by turn in the state, the Vedanta group owner also cherishes extremely cordial relationship with

both the Congress and the BJP, two most trusted political representatives of the ruling Indian monopolists. While the finance minister of the erstwhile Congress-led UPA government was part of Vedanta's legal team, was on its board till 2004 and was also accused of implementing fiscal policies to suit the business interest of the group, the Vedanta group is now found to be devoted supporter of the ruling BJP and its prime minister Narendra Modi. The Vedanta group chief is a key person of Modi's campaign management team, both in the country and abroad, and an integral part of the BJP government's private-public partnership ventures.

Given this background, the valiant struggle of the Tuticorin people has indeed been spectacular and an epitome of light in the abyss of dark and gloom, a source of inspiration for the suffering people in other parts of the country and an example worth emulating in the desired growth and development of powerful organized death-defying people's movement throughout the land. That is the reason, the conscientious people of the country, the suffering have-nots have been applauding and hailing the movement so much so that the authorities were forced to look for a face saving and declare closure of the poison-emitting plant. But where is the organized outburst of people's wrath and protest across the country against such a barbaric incident of naked state terrorism which reminded one and all about the horrific carnages perpetrated by the British imperialist rulers to suppress our freedom movement? Surely, no one expects the bourgeois parties to come forward and give an organized shape to people's protest and indignation round the country. But the people of the country particularly the left-minded section found with utter disquiet that even the CPI (M), CPI who claim to have mass following in the state of Tamil Nadu and noticeable presence in the parliament did not take any initiative to back the movement let alone creating a stir at all India level including inside the parliament. When the need was to articulate people's reproach and rage in the form of an organized movement and then step up that movement to a united massive countrywide movement on the burning problems of people's life along leftist line, the CPI (M) ended its responsibility by issuing a benedict statement. Earlier also, when a powerful movement was developed by the local people against the

Kudankulam Nuclear Power Project in Tamil Nadu which compelled the then Congress government to beat retreat and halt the proposed expansion of the plant, the CPI (M), CPI refrained from making any effort to spread the message of the movement in every nook and corner of the country with the objective of spearheading torrents of mass struggles against the growing plight and penury of the toiling masses.

Why is it so? Because, like all other bourgeois petty-bourgeois parties, the CPI (M) and its associates like CPI have not only shun the path of struggle but also, when and where in power, crushed democratic movement by pressing police-administration into action. And when out of government, they, in order to be in the race for pelf and power, carefully choose their moves so that they do not incur displeasure of the ruling capitalist class and thereby fall from the grace of the kingmakers. Because of this compromising and capitulate politics of theirs, a golden opportunity for creating a tidal waves of united left-democratic movement drawing inspiration from the Tuticorin people's struggle is frittering away causing serious damage to people's cause.

On the other hand, this is the path of struggle which the genuine revolutionaries staunchly uphold as against the politics of capitulation, deception, deprivation and compromise. From this perspective, Tuticorin movement has kindled a new hope. It has proved beyond doubt that if mass struggles are built up unwaveringly, demands can be achieved. But to sustain such struggle, channelize them along the right track and elevate them to higher rungs is needed a correct revolutionary leadership. Otherwise, many stirring movements which would surge forth with so much of promise and prospect would fizzle out in the midway entailing frustration. History has shown that once people are dawned upon by social consciousness, the valour, the indomitable spirit, the firm determination and the resolute will of theirs to change the decrepit order send shiver down the spine of the vested interest. Once the struggling spirit is firmly rooted, it becomes irresistible and cannot be cowed down by any number of savage onslaughts. Four leading organizers, the rulers may shoot down, but that will give birth to eight, sixteen or more. That is why, the servitors of ruling capitalism hold back people from embracing the path of struggle while the genuine

revolutionaries committed to the task of bringing about fundamental transformation of the society by overthrowing capitalism and accelerating the course of eventual abolition of exploitation of man by man, always champion the imperativeness of developing, conducting and intensifying people's struggles based on correct ideology, higher culture and ethics.

In order to ensure that the desired movement crystallizes right from the grass-root level and gradually assumes the shape of a well-knit protracted movement involving all sections of the toiling people and with a conducive cultural ambience, our Party based on the teachings of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era, has been repeatedly giving call for building up people's committees as instruments of struggle right from grass-root level and creating volunteer crops to shoulder the responsibility of conducting the struggles. These struggle committees themselves would act as source of people's power to stand against powerful enemies. While in the midst of movement, people might not initially have the desired political wisdom. But they would have excellent fighting fervour and, in the process, develop clarity of thought and outlook. In course of such united struggles, due political consciousness would germinate in them. They would be able to identify the correct revolutionary leadership and would themselves come forward to establish that leadership on the movement by isolating all other compromising forces. Once conducted along right track under correct revolutionary leadership, these mass struggles would gradually foster class struggles and lead to their logical culmination. The immense significance of the glorious Tuticorin struggle lies here. Once again, we reiterate that need is to draw inspiration from these path-breaking struggles, and release a tide of united broad-based organized militant movement involving all sections of toiling people against the ruthlessly oppressive capitalist system and its protectors and servitors. Our fervent call to people is to realize how the victory of Tuticorin movement has shown that need of the hour is to come out of parliamentary illusion, shake off all inertia, overcome all hurdles, derive spunk and demonstrate struggling spirit to stand firmly and united against the economic-political-social onslaughts brought down on them by ruling capitalism and its lackeys. It is only under pressure of movement that they can wrest their legitimate demands from the ruling class and its governments.

Horrific rise in Petrol-Diesel-LPG prices

All-out Resistance is the call of the hour

Nero fiddled when Rome was burning. One finds re-enactment of the saga in our country today. 95% of the country's population mostly the toiling millions, already bled white because of ruthless economic onslaught mounted on them on an increasing scale with every passing hour, are now victims of another monstrous fiscal savagery in the form of astronomical rise in the retail prices of petrol-diesel-LPG cascading effect which is destined to spark higher prices of every essential commodity. But, the BJP-led central government is vulgarly apathetic to the enormous suffering of the common people. Instead of taking immediate measure to stem this price spiral, the ruling party leaders and ministers as well as a bunch of bourgeois economists-columnists on their pay-roll are busy providing 'economic logic' to this wanton fleecing and squeezing. Incredible indeed! Knowing full well that this barbaric bulldozing of the people is not because of any cogent reason but triggered by an artificially stimulated fuel pricing mechanism to suit the class interest of the domestic and foreign monopolists, they are now raising the bogey of an 'economic logic' with a view to diverting attention from the real cause and conspiracy. They think they would get away with such a cunning manoeuvring. But, sorry gentlemen! It is not that easy. Despite arraying your entire arsenal for blunting the rational thought process and fostering regimentation, the truth has not been elusive from the thinking mind and conscious vanguard of the oppressed myriads. So, it is a futile exercise to strive for hiding the truth in a superficial way.

So-called "economic logic"

We begin with the so-called 'economic logic' of harrowing spurt in fuel prices. First is, of course, raking up the old story of soaring international crude price and invoking the so called 'trade parity pricing methodology' which stipulates fluctuation of retail fuel prices in tandem with the ups and downs in the global crude cost. What is the crude price today? It is reported to be hovering around US\$80 per barrel. What was the crude price on 11 July 2008? It was US\$ 147.02 per barrel. What was the price of petrol on 11 July 2008? Around Rs 48 per litre. What is the price of petrol now in retail market? It is over Rs 80 per litre. So, when international crude price is down by around 80%, the retail price of petrol is up by around 87%. Then where was the parity? Rather it was

found to be inversely proportional. The day Narendra Modi government assumed office in May 2014, international crude price was US\$ 106.85 per barrel. In February 2016, it fell to US\$ 29.80 per barrel. So, it was nearly a 70% dip. But what were the corresponding retail prices? Rs 71.41 and Rs 59.95 respectively meaning a fall of around 16%. Then how could it be a proportional fall in retail prices? Clearly, the so called theory of 'parity pricing' is a bunkum.

The bubble of rising international crude price would be further bust if one calculates basic cost of fuel after refining. As on 17 January 2018, the price for import of a litre crude was Rs. 26.13 and the basic price after refining was Rs 33.14 per litre for petrol and Rs 35.05 per litre for diesel. What was the retail tariff then? Around Rs 74 per litre of petrol and Rs 65 per litre for diesel. The huge difference of over 100 percent is attributable to central and state taxes and dealers' commission. It is thus clear that the main culprit is not the fluctuating international crude market per se. It is the taxation policy of the government which is forcing people to shell out almost double the price of refined oil while procuring fuel in retail market. What is the 'economic logic' of this high taxation? 'Logic' is that by taxing fuel at astronomically high rate, the governments can easily make windfall gain without facing any hassles of collection and complexity of computation, no matter if it entails immense, if not unbearable, hardship to the common man. This windfall also comes handy in offsetting the huge loss the exchequer incurs by way of offering plethora of tax concessions and waivers granted to the large industrial houses and corporate houses as well as gala evasion of tax by the 'rich and influential' in connivance with utterly corrupt tax collection machinery. A simple calculation taking into account the revenue foregone, deduction of export profits of units located in SEZs, deduction of profits of undertakings engaged in generation, transmission and distribution of power as well as profits of industrial undertakings derived from production of mineral oil and natural gas and non-recovery of direct tax as given in the Union Budget of 2017 showed that the figure of such tax exemptions and evasions was a whopping Rs 9,38,827 crores (Rs 9.38 trillion). According to a very conservative estimate of World Bank, black money in India is 23.2% of GDP. If GDP is estimated to be Rs 150 lakh crore (as in 2015-16) and

25% of that is roughly assumed to be black money, the quantum comes to Rs 37.5 lakh crores. While these are the contributory factors for shortfall in revenue collection, a sum of Rs 2,579 lakh crore is expected to be mopped up this fiscal year by levying huge taxes on the petroleum products. What does it show? It shows showering amnesty on the defaulting rich and striking the hapless poor with sharp-edged sword. Impeccable 'economic logic' indeed!

Let us now come to the second part of the 'economic logic'. Throughout the country, there is a cry for immediate cut in taxes and cesses imposed on the oil and LPG prices so as to offer some relief to the countrymen who have been bearing the brunt of the hoax of demonetization, implementation of GST and such other fleecing economic and fiscal measures. But how can either the central government or the state governments pay any heed to this as it would, as opined by the central and state ministers, impede 'developmental' work. Who knows what 'development' is that which is marked by the fast deteriorating standard of life and appalling poverty of the 90-95% population! To justify the standpoint of the government, last Economic Survey provided a calculation that every US\$10 per barrel rise in crude prices slows economic growth by 0.2-0.3 percentage points and fuels Whole Sale Price (WPI) inflation by 1.7 per cent. Since this is perceived to be a 'big risk to the Indian economy' by the policy makers, the government decided not to alter the tax component in diesel, petrol and LPG prices, no matter if that means sucking out even the last drop of blood from the pauperized countrymen through galloping hike in the retail tariff. Once again, the 'economic logic' provided is that building up revenue pool is more important than the growing predicament of the masses. But even if one goes by the basics of bourgeois economics, there is a glaring anomaly. Higher inflation will erode the purchase capacity of both government as well as public at large. In a way, it will reduce the value of the revenue earned. Yet, the government refrains from lowering the taxes because in dying capitalism, not an iota of consideration in favour of the oppressed masses is viewed as 'logical'.

Origin of this 'economic logic'

Everyone knows that after independence, under public pressure, the practice was of having administered pricing for petrol-

diesel-kerosene and later cooking gas. What did it mean? It meant that the government subsidized the prices. But after implementation of the ruinous prescripts of globalization-liberalization-privatization, the buzzword has been 'market-economy'. A 'market economy' as defined by the bourgeois pundits in the current decadent moribund phase of capitalism as an economic system in which economic decisions and the pricing of goods and services are guided solely by the aggregate interactions of a country's individual citizens and businesses. There is either no or little intervention of the government or central planning. Advocates of market economy claim that forces like supply and demand are the best determinants of aggregate well-being. This is the opposite of a centrally planned economy, in which government decisions drive most aspects of a country's economic activity. In a shrewd attempt to distort facts and confuse people, the apologists of 'market economy' argue that its theoretical basis was developed by classical bourgeois economists, such as Adam Smith, David Ricardo, and Jean-Baptiste Say in the late 19th and early 20th centuries. They claim that the said proponents of classical liberal free market believed that protectionism and government intervention tended to lead to economic inefficiencies that actually made people worse off. But what these cunning vendors suppress is the fact that Smith, Ricardo and others proposed *laissez faire* or free competition economy during the period of rising capitalism when they viewed that the individual was the basic unit and mover of the economy and new form of governance as envisaged in bourgeois parliamentary democracy would protect individual rights and freedom. During the last third of the nineteenth century, bourgeois economy transited from pre-monopoly to monopoly capitalism. Monopoly capitalism finally took shape towards the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries and assumed the character of imperialism marked by the replacement of free competition with the dominance of monopolies as its fundamental distinguishing feature. Imperialism, as shown by great Lenin, is the highest and last stage of capitalism. So, the concept of *laissez faire* in rising capitalism and doctrine of 'market economy' in the era of imperialism are fundamentally different. It is pertinent to mention here that even John Maynard Keynes, another well-known bourgeois economist, in his essay *The End of Laissez-faire* penned in the years

Contd. on page 4

Petrol-Diesel-LPG price rise

Revenue pool and not people's growing misery constitute 'economic logic' of monstrous price rise

Contd. from page 3

immediately before onset of Great Depression of the 1930s said that the market could no more regulate everything and the government ought to intervene to rescue capitalist economy. So, it is clear that under the camouflage of 'market economy', the servitors of imperialist-capitalist economy are actually firming up total control of the monopolists on the market thereby granting unbridled right of these profit-hungry sharks to fleece and squeeze people at will with their pliant government in tow.

Saga of mega-scale fleecing and defrauding of common people

Coming back to the issue of petrol-diesel LPG pricing, the seeds of switching from administered or government-regulated pricing were clearly sown by the previous Congress-led UPA government. In June 2010, it deregulated petrol prices. But diesel prices continued to be regulated. But despite regulation, the price of diesel was increased when global crude price soared up based on so called principle of parity pricing. But even that much relief to people was perceived to be defying the much-argued 'economic logic'. Hence the final nail in the coffin was struck by the present BJP-led NDA government when it immediately after ascending to power deregulated diesel prices and increased natural gas prices in October 2014 in the name of "business-friendly" reforms. From then onwards, prices were being revised on a fortnightly basis. But that too seemed inadequate for 'meeting the need of the market-driven economy'. Hence, the BJP government under the garb of 'dynamic fuel pricing' announced daily revision of the retail tariff of petrol-diesel with effect from 16 June 2017 and claimed that this would ensure passing on the benefit of even the smallest change in international oil prices down the line to the dealers and the consumers. But has that happened? No, that has not. The BJP government had raised excise duty nine times between November 2014 and January 2016 to take away gains arising from plummeting international oil price which once went below US\$30 a barrel in 2014-15. Even when the government as a gimmick lowered the tax just once by 6% in October last year, it immediately imposed 8% cess to offset the cut.

Moreover, one of the longest

global oil gluts in 2015-16 allowed Indian government to save close to Rs 1.50 lakh crore. If put in perspective, it would have been enough to cover the centre's school education, health, women and child development budgets and pay for the rural jobs scheme. But, the people of India received no such benefits. Instead, the central government was stated to have added to its coffer a sum of over Rs10 lakh crore from levies on petrol and diesel between 2014-15 and 2018-19 by way of increasing central excise duty on diesel and petrol by more than 380%, and 120% respectively over the last three years. A similar calculation would show that the accretion to the kitties of the state governments during the same period had been around Rs 7 lakh crores because of state levies on fuel. Along with the oil behemoths, private operators in retail fuel sale also reaped an oil bonanza to their heart's content. Private fuel retailers like Essar Oil and Reliance Industries have doubled their market share in last three years. With proposed disinvestment of the PSU oil companies, these industrial houses would soon be the dominant player in retailing of petrol-diesel. So, the accountability of the government is glaringly to the corporate sector and not the people.

The economists belonging to the stable of the ruling monopolists also go on arguing that even though people are pushed to the precipice of total ruination, taxes cannot be reduced. Why? Because, the central government has an oil-revenue dependence and 40% of its revenue comes from oil. Oil along with alcohol are the mainstay for the revenue earning of the state governments. Oil accounts for 60% of our imports. So, a duty cut on oil would not only lower revenue collection but boost domestic consumption entailing increase in oil imports and thus cause trade imbalance. What could be a better immaculate 'economic logic' and concomitant 'prudent' fiscal management! How correct is the proverbial saying that the wicked is never starved of subterfuges.

BJP is only extending the policies of previous Congress government

One cannot but chuckle in amused disbelief when one finds that the Congress leaders including the erstwhile finance minister of the Congress government are pretending

not to be a party to this 'prudent fiscal management and economic logic' advanced by the incumbent BJP government in justifying this murderous onslaught on common people through deregulation of fuel pricing. What was the argument put forth by the erstwhile Congress government when it rolled out the policy? One of its major arguments was that the move was urgently needed to stem the bleeding losses of the Public Sector Oil companies because of upswing in the international crude price. Manmohan Singh, the then Congress Prime Minister, in his televised address to the nation 4 June 2008, justified steep hike in the prices of petroleum products claiming that the Oil companies were incurring a loss of about Rs.2,45,000 crore and the government cannot compensate them by way of subsidy. But, did the Oil companies make any loss? Not at all. What Manmohan Singh talked of was 'under-recovery' and not outright loss. Under-recovery is no real a term but just a notional sum. Without avoiding the details, it can be simply put as this: India imports crude oil from outside and gets it refined in the country. Suppose, the sale price of 1 litre of refined oil in the international market is Rs 100. But since refining cost in India is much lower, even after keeping the same margin of profit as in the international market, the refined oil is sold at Rs 70 per litre in domestic market. But the Oil marketing companies argue that as per 'import parity pricing principle', they are denied opportunity to earn Rs 30 (100-70). This Rs 30 is 'under recovery'. The then Congress government was keen to compensate for this 'imaginary loss' of the Oil behemoths by extracting higher price from the poverty-stricken wretched people through deregulation of petrol prices.

Secondly, the Congress government shielded another fact. An oil fund was started in 1975 with a two-fold objective. The first was to supply oil and oil products throughout the country at a uniform price (excluding local levy and surcharge imposed by the state governments). The other objective was to sell petrol and gasoline at a profitable price and utilize the money for giving some subsidy to diesel, kerosene and cooking gas. Till 1989, this account always ran in surplus. The amount of surplus was Rs 8,900 crores (Would have been around Rs 75,000 crores at present including accrued

interest). But, instead of using this fund for the declared objective, a slew of manipulations was indulged in by successive governments from 1989 onwards to use it for financing budget deficits. Secondly, right from 1975, the central government in the name of developing oil industry began imposing a special cess on domestic oil production. The resource raised by the central government on this account reportedly stood at around Rs 1 lakh crore of rupees including interest in 2008. But only 902 crores of rupees was stated to have been used from that till 2008. What happened to that fund? Is it that the successive central governments have usurped Rs 98,000 thousand crores violating all norms and regulations? Had it been so, right from the Congress to BJP-led NDA and subsequent UPA governments — everyone is guilty of this embezzlement. All these reveal the dirty secret of the petrol-diesel pricing policy of capitalist India which records a saga of abject betrayal to people's cause. But no party other than the SUCI(C) did highlight these facts before people.

All vote-based parliamentary parties follow same pro-capitalist anti-people policies

Notably, all these vote-based parliamentary parties blame each other for policy paralysis or policy slide and pretend to be so concerned for the people's interest. The mock-fight is pronounced when one finds that the party in power seeks to shift entire blame of any rot or wrong on its predecessor while the party earlier in power and now in opposition criticizes the current incumbent of the same faults which it itself committed during its rule. The Congress is now taking potshot at the BJP for not reining in the murderous run of retail tariff. But it itself paved the way for that. The BJP, while in opposition, slammed the erstwhile Congress government for rise in petrol-diesel prices and being insensitive to people's plight. Arun Jaitley and Sushma Swaraj, now cabinet ministers in the BJP government, were found to be sitting in dharanas in the state capital with LPG cylinders on 11 October 2012. Even during the election campaign in 2014, the BJP had displayed posters saying that "enough has been the assault of rising petrol-diesel prices—so it ought to be a Modi government now". But, now people find how

Contd. on page 5

Petrol-Diesel-LPG price rise

Price spiral is principally due to overdose of taxation

Contd. from page 4

hypocritical and cunning the BJP had been for riding to power. Many of the regional parties running the state governments have also been upping the ante against the BJP government and demanding cut in central tax. But when it comes to the question of a similar step on their part, they advance the same argument of consequent dip in the state revenue. On the other hand, the central BJP government is asking the states to reduce state taxes and cesses to give relief to the people. Even the CPI (M) which was backing the Congress government when the deregulation of fuel pricing was initiated, is now asking both the BJP-led central government and TMC-run West Bengal governments to slash duties. But the same CPI (M), when in power in West Bengal, had imposed as hefty as 27.78% sales tax on petrol and 17% tax on diesel. When the centre once reduced the excise duty on petrol by 4%, the CPI (M) led West Bengal government made no alteration in the then prevailing state tax structure. In fact, all of these parties are wedded to the task of serving the class interest of the ruling bourgeoisie. If saddled in power, they all follow the same set of anti-people policies and seek to curry favour with the ruling class for staying in power. This caricature of parliamentary vote politics is thus once more glaringly manifest in the case of petroleum pricing policy. All these parties subscribe to the 'economic logic' of ruling capitalism i.e. to arbitrarily raise fuel prices on a sustained basis under camouflage of parity pricing and ensure that the common people continue to bleed white more and more.

'Economic logic' or political compulsion?

The bluff of so called 'economic logic' has also been laid bare when the fuel prices were frozen for 19 days in the run-up to the Karnataka polls in May 2018 despite fluctuations in the international crude market. It was obvious that the ruling BJP had a 'political logic' behind this 19-day hiatus since it feared this monstrous price spiral could adversely affect its electoral fortune. But once the election was over, the prices of petrol and diesel increased by Rs 2.54 and Rs 2.41 respectively within a span of 10 days. Thus, after submitting to political compulsion of the ruling party for a brief period, 'economic logic' once again gained primacy. It is learnt that the oil marketing companies make on average a profit of Rs2.70 per litre of fuel. During the

19-day old status quo, their profit was less by Rs 500 crores. No sooner had Karnataka voted to elect a new state government, than the oil marketing companies were signalled to revert to the practice of changing rates on a daily basis and manipulate the price increase in such a way as to quickly return to the pre-Karnataka poll hiatus margin levels. We wonder what explanation about this administered pause of daily pricing policy would now be forthcoming from the economists-columnists who have been backing this blood-spilling fuel price hike as a measure conducive to 'sustaining growth trajectory' and 'lowering trade as well as fiscal deficits'. To stem the bloodshed to some extent, there is a suggestion from some bourgeois quarters to bring fuel under GST since even at a prohibitive 18 per cent GST, they argue, petrol would barely cost Rs 46 per litre. But the government and its obedient economists-columnists who had hitherto been championing GST as 'one country one tax' proposition are averse to this suggestion since it would reduce the government revenue from tax collected from fuel by nearly Rs 2 lakh crore. So strong is the 'economic logic' of running the steam-roller of fiscal assault on the pauperizing countrymen.

Why is the international crude price rising?

Next point is why is there a spurt in international crude price? It is alleged that the Oil Producing and Exporting Countries (OPEC) are whimsically increasing prices or cutting production to manipulate global crude tariff. This is not the whole truth. The OPEC comprising Algeria, Angola, Ecuador, Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, Nigeria, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, the UAE and Venezuela was formed in 1960 as a response to the domination of the international market by multinational companies based mostly in the US. In fact, to establish strangulating hold on the oil reserves of the middle east countries, the US imperialists in particular had long been pursuing a hegemonic agenda of bullying the oil producing countries to submission at gunpoint. In course of that, giant US oil companies* have established monopoly control over the refinement and distribution of oil there. Within US itself, allegations are being made that these big oil companies, grown bigger through constant mergers, are monopolizing the oil trade, and through a slew of sneaky measures

* like Exxon Mobil, Chevron Texaco and Conoco Phillips

creating artificial crisis and manipulating the market and prices to mint huge profits. Also, the US imperialists, undeterred in the unipolar world after sad dismantling of the socialist camp, could succeed in driving a wedge among the OPEC countries by winning over Saudi Arabia and its allies to their side. The international price rise has come about through an artificially manipulated heinous game by the US imperialist regime. Of late, the US government has been on a spree of imposing draconian economic sanctions on countries refusing to bend before their dictates. Iran, Venezuela and Syria, major oil producers or conduits, are victims of such sanctions. This is causing a supply bottleneck and countries like India who are dependent on such countries for oil are forced to shell out more money for oil import. To confuse the people and shield themselves against their wrath, the US imperialist rulers and their associates are blaming the OPEC for price hike.

But what is preventing the Indian government from taking initiative to vigorously mobilize global opinion against this handiwork of the US oil sharks and exert effective diplomatic pressure on the Pentagon regime to desist from launching such offensives against the people of the world? Instead, why is the Indian government, of both the Congress and the BJP, consistently been adopting a pro-US stand in international affairs thereby concurring to, among other things, this sinister design of manoeuvring global oil tariff? Obvious answer is that the ruling Indian monopolists are aspiring to emerge not only as a super-power in Asia but even as a dominant global power. So, they have opted to be a constituent of the pro-US bloc even if that be at the cost of economic bloodbath of the countrymen.

Inner story of India's import dependence in oil

But was this import-dependence in oil inevitable for India? First of all, till the 1970s, about 70% of the domestic need used to be produced within the country. But now domestic production is stated to be around 10-12% only of domestic consumption. In the name of progress and economic restitution followed by globalization-liberalization, the government in subservience to monopolists' interest deliberately switched to dominance of import to open up scope for super profit of the Oil sector including private operators. Thus, was laid the road map to

"imperativeness of import dependence." Thus, it is evident that cause of astronomical rise in petrol-diesel-LPG prices wreaking havoc in people's life are not that much due to spurt in international crude market as it is due to whopping taxation and planned shift to import dependence. It is not so called 'market' but the vile objective of profit maximization of the Oil behemoths which is determining the retail tariff with the bourgeois government as the facilitator.

People must resist

Obvious question is should the people bear this onslaught or rise up in protest and resist? It is because of the absence of a powerful people's movement against such ruthlessly oppressive policies of the bourgeois governments that the ministers-leaders of the ruling parties like the BJP bigwigs dare to say that this murderous run of escalating fuel price would continue. What is also noteworthy is that the BJP government and leaders in order to dodge the question of arresting spiralling rise of fuel prices had been talking of a vague 'long-term solution'. Curiously enough, central oil minister Dharmendra Pradhan has now said that his ministry has already given the nod to SEBI, the capital market regulator, for launching speculative futures trading on petrol and diesel claiming that it would arrest price volatility due to fluctuation in international crude price. Another big joke and indirect attestation to the doctrine of market-economy! Without going into details, it can be said without any doubt that such open speculation over fuel price would only trigger manipulation on a larger scale as the punters would then dictate the tariff.

There must a befitting reply to these power-mongers and vote-merchants who are spurning at the world in their audacity, despotism, and arrogance. If the capitalists, corporate bigwigs, their servitor governments and political agents have unbridled right to fleece and squeeze the oppressed common people, the latter also have unfettered right to revolt against the unjust moves and policies wreaking havoc in their lives. We call upon all sections of the suffering millions to brook no delay in closing their ranks, cement their unity and release a powerful organized movement under correct revolutionary leadership to thwart this criminal bourgeois conspiracy to hold them into ransom.

For want of space, a host of news remain pending to be included in coming issues

CPI(M)- CPI Party Congresses

Much-clamoured slogan of taking on RSS-BJP

— where it boils down to

The Party congresses of CPI (M) and CPI, still known in Indian politics as big left parties, were held recently in the second half of April last. The parties presented their respective approaches and views on issues at national and international planes, which they had picked up as important. Significance of those in the contemporary scenario was laid out enthusiastically also by a section of columnists and experts in print and electronic media. Considering the gravity of the situation arising out of the menacing growth of the RSS-BJP, endangering unity and amity of oppressed people, it requires a brief observation on how these party congresses took on the most vital issue presently confronting people of the country, namely the rule of the RSS-BJP combine at the Centre and in many states.

The backdrop of the two party congresses

These party congresses of CPI(M) and CPI were held at a time when the entire country is in the grip of a suffocating grave situation. The rule of the RSS-BJP combine turns out every minute to be serving the prevailing capitalist system in the best possible way. Ever-deepening crisis of the system embracing all fronts of societal activities, namely economic-political-social and cultural, is coming down heavily upon people, with no sign of respite. Amidst that, while monopolists and their corporate houses are rejoicing at each and every policy and step of the BJP-led governments, common people face yawning gap between rich and poor, unemployment crossing all limits, prices sky-rocketing and the government adding fuel to the fire. Hard-earned trade union and democratic rights of working people are snatched away. Farmers commit suicide under pressure of debts, face bullets of government and police when they protest. Women and children are trafficked- brutally raped and then murdered. Protesting voices are gagged by killing radical thinkers, by branding protestors as anti-national. Even judiciary is not being spared. And surpassing all these, the ruling RSS-BJP combine has unleashed a vicious campaign of most communal posture, Hindutwavadi in its brand, which entails a spectre of ominous agenda including rabid anti-minority communalism, anti-Dalit casteist hate campaign, creation of a cultural-educational ambience through rewriting history in subjective distorted way and through shattering whatever extent of scientific, secular and democratic education is there as well as through vitiation of the mass-

mind with obscurantist, superstitious, blind faith-based views and opinions. Last, but not the least, there is relentless attempts at bringing national cultural-educational institutions even government offices of the rank of governor of states and president of the country under total control by placing yes-men of the ruling RSS-BJP combine at their heads. All this, add up to vertically cleavage common people thus breaking any united movement to grow up against the government.

Naturally such a situation, such a menacing growth of the RSS-BJP cannot but cause grave concern among people, all over the country. All sections of people with a minimum sense of concern for the land and its people, anxiously look out for a political line to forestall further growth of this venomous force. The left-leaning people with an annoyed mindset, including the rank and file of leftist political parties and forces also yearn for a correct line. This is the context upon which the two party congresses stand. And what lines do they leave out for people to consume?

What do the congresses say?

The political resolution of the CPI(M) party congress warns people of a vicious attack, through 'aggressive neo-liberal economic policies', the 'onset of a right-wing authoritarian-communal regime coming down on parliamentary democracy and institutions' and 'cementing India to the status of a junior strategic partner of USA and imperialism'. Elsewhere it says of a 'concerted effort to implement the RSS's Hindutva agenda which threatens the secular democratic framework of the State, attacks on minorities and dalits and the emergence of fascist trends', the rule proving itself as 'blueprint of the RSS utilising State power to infiltrate RSS personnel'. So, people are warned of the reality, they identify. Then comes, what to do. 'We must intervene in the situation to take forward the various struggles of the working people'. A general statement no leftist would disagree. And next, it identifies the system as 'dominated by the big bourgeois-landlord classes', so 'Our tactics must be directed towards weakening the big bourgeois-landlord domination'. The old wine in the same old bottle. The one side of reality, the attack, is outlined, the other side is blurred. What about the Indian monopolists and their corporate houses which have now grown their economy to among the topmost fast growing economies with themselves grown among some of the most powerful

finance capital owners of the world! They are no longer satisfied even with their status of a junior partner of the imperialist camp, but aspire to become a regional super-power with the tentacles of their finance capital spreading out not just to the neighbourhood, but even among remote continents of Europe, Africa, Latin America, for example and with their military might carving out military alliances with imperialist forces like the USA, Israel, Japan, etc. with an eye to containing other contestant imperialist powers around. Inside the country, from where do the RSS-BJP combine acquire their strength and venom other than without playing efficient subservient to the ruling monopolists and thus being ensured of the power and pelf they enjoy? What does the big phrase of the CPI(M) political resolution viz., "big bourgeois-landlord" signify in class angularity? Are they anything but the all-powerful capitalists-monopolists of the country? Then what is the system prevailing other than a well-consolidated capitalist system, ferociously armed with evident administrative fascist trend? Both the congresses, however, never mention about the ruling monopolists, nor about the capitalist system which breeds all evils and the necessary mass and class struggles on people's problems making them conducive to the ultimate anti-capitalist revolutionary struggle.

What line the congresses suggest for fight against RSS-BJP?

And how do they propose to weaken even the system 'dominated by big bourgeois-landlord classes' as they call it? The resolution says: 'The Congress party has the same class character as that of the BJP.... The Congress professes to be secular but it has proved to be incapable of consistently fighting the communal forces, there cannot be a line of treating both the BJP and the Congress as equal dangers'. Sitaram Yechury, the CPI(M) General Secretary, elaborates this further saying that the challenge posed by BJP has to be faced by not having any political alliance with the Congress party. However, there can be an understanding with all secular parties including the Congress.

The CPI, in its turn, identifies the danger of fascism looming large over the nation, hung on a single horse-hair of the RSS ideology. Calling for a broader Left unity it concluded that the CPI was open to forming an alliance with the Congress party in the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. To them also, the Congress is a secular party

which has a role to play in the struggle against the RSS and BJP.

As mentioned, right-thinking people with a minimum sense of democratic norms and values are horror-struck with the menacing rise of the RSS-BJP and are helplessly craving for immediate efforts to forestall its further ramification and growth. Even a section of the media has been focussing it as a burning issue, virtually dominant among the many the country is facing. On this backdrop, the two parties, known as big lefts, spill out bundles of venomous words only to come down to the above prescription. Is it what the people was looking for? Does it fit the reality? Is it at all adequate to meet the demands of time?

After all the words on fascist danger of RSS, struggle for working people and so on, both the party congresses boil down to the real intent. The BJP is to be defeated. But where and how? In the coming election by 'an understanding with all secular parties including the Congress' (CPIM) or by 'forming an alliance with the Congress party' (CPI).

Was Congress ever secular?

So crux of the matter is, as outlined in the party congresses of CPI(M) and CPI, hinges on premise that the RSS- BJP being arch-communal a fight against them should include Congress which is 'secular' though CPI(M) took a guard by inserting a qualification 'not consistently'. To be truthful, CPI(M) took much strain to decide whether it should be an 'alliance' or an 'electoral understanding' with the Congress. But the crux remained the same in identifying Congress as 'secular' with which leftists can safely join hands. Naturally the first point to judge how far this claim about the Congress party is tenable. Needless to say that the Congress evolved as the party of the Indian national bourgeoisie, that is the Indian capitalists, which was initially at the forefront of the anti-British imperialist freedom struggle. However, it was the era of imperialism and proletarian revolution and like the bourgeoisie of other countries, the Indian national bourgeoisie suffered from the fear-complex of that revolution. Hence they compromised with imperialism, feudalism, feudal ideas, practices and ways of life so that after attaining power they could exploit these divisiveness to perpetuate their rule. As a result of these, though politically India emerged as an independent nation, it remained divided on religion, caste, ethnicity, and what not. Thus even during the independence movement,

Contd. on page 7

CPI(M)-CPI party congresses

RSS-BJP emerge as faithful subservient force of the monopolists and corporate houses

Contd. from page 6

the Congress did not grow into a secular force; rather the nationalism it stood for was largely Hindu-religion oriented. At that time forces trumpeting for Hindutwa like the Hindu Mahasabha or the RSS could not find much ground in the masses; in fact, they went against the anti-British imperialist independence movement, their leaders, like Golwalkar, designating it as reactionary. In fact, forces upholding secularism had become powerful under the leadership of Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose, particularly in the later part of the independence movement.

Finally the Congress formed the government in independent India and ruled continuously for decades over the country, serving the ruling Indian capitalist class in their best possible way. As the pro-capitalist policies of the Congress made it more and more unpopular, the RSS took advantage of people's resentment against the Congress and silently spread out its network. The Congress, in its turn, did not disturb the RSS much. Once it banned the RSS, but soon afterwards it lifted the ban. As the RSS continued fomenting communal feelings that could and did lead to communal flare-ups against the minority community, the Congress used those in the interest of its own vote bank politics, either by tacitly looking the other way to gain dominant majority community support or, in cases where it suited otherwise, posing saviour of the minorities. It even engineered communal clashes as and when it suited its needs. In summation, the Congress instead of dealing with the RSS threat firmly, even connived with its communal design cunningly. Both the Congress and the RSS or the Jansangh, its political outfit or the RSS-BJP combine after the latter was formed replacing Jansangh in the later parts of the last century, served the ruling capitalist class well particularly whenever in power, by driving the wedge between exploited people on religious community feelings and thus preventing them from standing united against the capitalist rule. How can such a party be called secular, that too by parties which claim themselves as leftists? This is the biggest question that emerges after the party congresses of the CPI(M) and CPI conclude with their proceedings.

But even this big question is shrouded with several other more dangerous aspects. As mentioned above, in the political resolutions of the CPI(M) party congress, as also that of the CPI, fairly strong words

are used against the vicious 'neo-liberal' attacks or 'fascist' attack of the RSS. But nowhere does it care to point out the capitalist system of the country bringing down all attacks, nor does it spell out that the attack of the RSS-BJP is really serving the interest of the ruling capitalist class by creating disunity among the toiling masses. They speak of 'intervening in the situation to take forward the various struggles of the working people'. Innocuous words, but they conceal a motive, otherwise. Do not they suggest that intervention relates to dislodging the BJP government, so that struggles may be 'taken forward'? And for that, even though "the Congress party has the same class character as that of the BJP", both being major representatives of the monopolists and major contestants for power, the CPI(M) holds that, they cannot be treated at par with each other. So, the Congress is identified by the CPI(M) - CPI as 'secular'. It is shown above that during its long history, the Congress never emerged as a secular party. Then what is this all about. Are not these words simple trickeries and deceptions to confuse people and even their own rank and file who are craving for a genuine leftist struggle against the BJP? Serving the capitalist class in the most faithful way as the Congress became an extremely unpopular force, its image was totally whitewashed. Do not these words refurbish that, adding freshness to the blurred image of the Congress? Why do parties known as lefts are taking it upon themselves to refurbish the image of a bourgeois party rejected by people?

Can RSS-BJP really be isolated from people merely through election battles?

Besides, while the RSS-BJP unleash a virulent campaign on their rabid communal thoughts to capture the imaginations of and make a dent into the mass-mind, were not the people eagerly expecting the genuine leftists to come out with a formidable ideological battle to free the mass-mind from the crippling toxicity of RSS-BJP thoughts? Even increasingly larger sections of people were coming to realize that the main plank in confronting the RSS-BJP is to develop ideological struggle and in course of that to evolve a correct approach which will help unite all sections of toiling people to forestall the danger of growth and sustenance of the RSS-BJP. And obviously this approach cannot be evolved without recognizing the reality of capitalist rule and exploitation, because in the

ultimate analysis, it was the ruling capitalists and their system, which the RSS-BJP have been serving enthusiastically and fiercely. The resolutions speak so many words on the attacks of RSS. Why do not they contain a single effective mention of this immensely important ideological struggle? What they say in the resolutions are about the elections to come and how the forces are to be aligned. Then do they take it that, simply through elections, the RSS-BJP threat will be wiped out? Do they think, the vitiating effects of the RSS-BJP campaign will be wiped out simply through electoral slogans? Can that ever be? Do they really believe that? Or, is it that they play with the words on RSS attacks, alliance or understanding with secular Congress in election etc., simply to enliven people's parliamentary illusion on which they thrive? If it be so, is it not a blunt treachery towards people? Is it not a fact that absence of democratic movement of people centring round the burning problems of life embracing of all sections of oppressed people, irrespective of religion, caste, ethnicity, etc., is the basic cause to provide the fertile ground on which the RSS-BJP could grow to reach their present menacing form? Do not the CPI(M)-CPI realize that now without developing powerful united movement of all sections of people in every corner of the country, the RSS-BJP will remain unscathed? It is only such powerful united movement guided and directed,

that is led by the leftists, which can lead also to the required powerful ideological battle to combat the obnoxious RSS-BJP thoughts, free people from the vicious influence of those and thus bring focus upon the path for people to follow instead. It needs no reiteration that in developing such a movement against communalism the leadership must rest with the genuine leftists, as only the leftists can strengthen struggle not only in the extra-parliamentary fields, also within the arena of election and parliamentary forum, making both conducive to each other, though people's movement remains the prior. In no way, election and parliamentary battles can be considered the only means to fight the RSS-BJP. Only when massive united movements led by the leftists can be organized in every corner of the country those can also help regain their courage and zeal for movement and thus build up the organizational strength of people to overcome the dangerous set-up of the RSS-BJP that is relentlessly trying to spread their tentacles. It may be a difficult and arduous task. But any line without these, taken up on whatever pretext there may be, will only add fillip to the growing menace, will strengthen the hands of the RSS-BJP, the force every right minded person wants to thwart back. People will only be caught again in the whirlwind of fruitless election politics. Democratic minded people and the rank and file of the two parties will need to ponder over these seriously.

SUCI(C) vehemently condemns killing of 13 persons in police firing on protest movement against Vedanta Sterlite Copper Unit in Tuticorin

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), has issued the following statement on 23 May 2018 :

We vehemently condemn the most ghastly killing of 13 persons including two women and causing grievous injuries to many more when the police of the AIADMK-led Tamil Nadu government opened fire on the peaceful demonstrators legitimately demanding closure of pollution-creating Vedanta Sterlite Copper Unit in Tuticorin yesterday. There have been several allegations against the owners of the Vedanta group for carrying on the business violating basic air and ground pollution rules, illegal dumping of toxic waste as well as not preventing leakage of poisonous gas causing immense health hazard to the people of the surrounding areas. Though the plant was ordered to be shut down, the National Green Tribunal had ultimately allowed it to be reopened. This irked the suffering people of nearby villages and when they rallied in protest, the government despotically responded with bullets. This incident once again shows how the greedy monopoly houses have been filling their coffers at the cost of people's life, health and hygiene merrily giving a slip to the law in connivance with the bourgeois governments.

We demand permanent closure of the unit, exemplary punishment of the guilty police officers, adequate compensation to the families of the dead and injured and stringent enforcement of pollution regulations on the profit-hungry industrial houses playing sixes and sevens with people's life.

Red Salute Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee

Contd. from page 1

Party. Before reaching Purulia district, the heartland of Comrade Bhattacharjee's revolutionary activities, floral tributes were paid on the way at the Party offices of East Medinipur district at Mechheda, West Medinipur district at Medinipur town and Bankura district at Bankura town. Hundreds of Party activists and common people were waiting in Purulia with patience and solemnity to have a last glimpse of their most



Comrade Provas Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), paying floral tribute to the departed leader.

endearing comrade and leader and bid her adieu.

In 1968, Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee, then 17 years old, came in contact with AIDS, the student wing of the Party, while studying at Jagun College of Murshidabad district of West Bengal. She then was staying with her elder sister there. Prabhanjan Bhattacharyya, her elder brother, was a leading comrade of the Party in Purulia then and had a marked influence on their family. In 1970, Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee shifted to Purulia to take admission in Raghunathpur College. At that time, she came in touch with late Comrade Pritish Chanda, then a Polit Bureau member of the Party. The living association of and inspiration from Comrade Chanda helped her further to carry on with her Party work more devotedly. Soon she became the member of district secretariat of AIDS in course of her effective discharge of the responsibilities as in-charge of the unit at Raghunathpur College. She was also entrusted with important responsibilities in the mass organizations like AIKKMS, AIMSS, etc. as office-bearer. In the first Purulia district Party conference in 1987, she became a member of the Party district committee. In 2006, she

assumed the charge as Purulia District Secretary. In 2009, she rose to become a member of the West Bengal State Committee. At the Second Party Congress in 2009, the Central Committee conferred Staff membership to her. In 2018, she was included in the West Bengal State Secretariat and the Central Committee of the Party. She was also in charge of the Bankura district on behalf of the State Committee.

By way of skillfully organizing and leading innumerable movements on various pressing demands of life, particularly the mass movements over draught relief and against the menace of liquor, two perpetual problems of the district, she came to occupy an unshakable position of respect and love in the heart of poor, lower middle class and middle class people of Purulia district and emerge as a mass leader. In

course of these movements, she was thrown behind the bars several times. Her unflinching loyalty to Marxism-Leninism- Shirdas Ghosh Thought and exemplary life struggle imparted to her revolutionary character with a very high ethical and cultural standard that helped her defy all hurdles, disdain all tortures and oppressions and remain firm to her revolutionary commitment. Whoever had come in close touch with her, could feel her compassionate mind, tender feelings, immensely loving and sweet-hearted character. Younger comrades were all like her own children, whose pains and sorrows were often wiped clean with tender care of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee. This was evident from the unstoppable tears of those who assembled on 24 May to pay their last tribute to her.

Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee was admitted to Calcutta Heart Clinic and Hospital in 2016 with a complaint of recurring abdominal pains, which could be diagnosed as kidney problem. When Dr S K Sarin of the Institute of Liver and Biliary Sciences, Delhi was consulted, he found her suffering from cancer which had spread out by that time. Shell-shocked leaders and cadres of the Party tried to give her some relief

by providing all possible medical care and assistance. But, nothing could work ultimately and the deadly disease prevailed despite all efforts. However, Comrade Pranati remained unshaken in confronting the disease. Even when the comrades broke down before her, she stood up with a brave face and herself encouraged them. Her demise was not just a great loss to the Party, it is sure to prove a loss to the class and mass struggles of the toiling people.

On 24 May hundreds of people, coming from remote places of the district, even the neighbouring Jharkhand state, waited patiently with tearful eyes under the scorching sun at the SUCI (C) office at Nilkuthidanga in Purulia town. The gathering went on swelling till at around 1 pm, it was reported that the Hearse with her mortal remains was to reach in no time. The massive gathering instantaneously organized itself into files raising slogans: Red Salute Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee, a life-long revolutionary. Finally, the mortal remains of Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee reached the Purulia Party office at Nilkuthidanga which carried so many lively memories of hers. Here she spent so much of time with the comrades, discussed so many problems and issues with them in the light of the teachings of Shirdas Ghosh and sought to provide some comfort to the oppressed people of the district who used to come to her for help, advice and guidance in facing the vagaries of life. They felt relieved after talking to their beloved Pranati. Now, the leader lay mute beneath the portraits of the Marxist authorities on the wall. The KOMSOMOL members stood still with the Red Flag in hands around

their dear leader. Outside the room, the entire gathering was virtually sobbing. Among them were the militant women of the Cutting locality where they waged a brave struggle against the powerful liquor lobby under Comrade Pranati's leadership, the rickshaw pullers, female workers from tribal belts, peasants, workers, agricultural labourers, students, youths, office-goers, mothers carrying children and even sick old ladies. They all tried to maintain the discipline, to look after each other breaking down with grief and under the scorching sun. They all recalled how Comrade Pranati Bhattacharjee based on the teachings of Comrade Shirdas Ghosh used to console them at their hours of profound grief and helped them realize the true significance of the grief by showing steadfast sense of duty and allegiance to the revolutionary ideology and revolutionary work. Leaders of other political parties were also present.

First to offer floral tribute was Comrade Gopal Kundu, Member, Central Committee followed by the state leaders who accompanied the bier from Kolkata. Then all others assembled there paid their last respect. Even after long two hours and a half, her innumerable admirers and comrades could not complete having last glimpse of her body. Finally, amidst sad yet firm slogans, the gathering had to accept the bitter truth. The last journey began with revolutionary discipline and rendering of the song on Comrade Shirdas Ghosh and the *Internationale*. Thousands of fists were clamped in resolve when her mortal remains were consigned to flame.

**Red Salute
Comrade Pranati Bhattacharyya!**

SUCI(C) condemns central BJP's conspiracy in installing BJP government through backdoor

The Central Committee of Socialist Unity Centre of India (Communist) in a statement issued on 17 May 2018, severely condemned the most undemocratic way in which the central BJP government abused the office of the Governor to install the minority BJP government in power even when obviously Congress-JD(S) combine had the required numbers and staked claim to form government after the just concluded assembly polls in Karnataka. The Governor at the behest of the central Modi government, had violated all democratic norms, practices and even judicial verdicts to somehow install BJP in power, thus giving wide scope for horse trading to garner majority.

It's high time for all the left and democratic parties and forces to unite and develop mighty movement to pressurise the Centre to give up its fascist design of capturing power through backdoor in general and invite the parties who are able to form government with simple majority in Karnataka.

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH