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Recent developments in Pakistan

In the capitalist countries without exception people are the worst sufferers of exploitation, discrimination and oppression. In Pakistan, which is in addition a backward country in every socio-economic measure, people live in still worse plight. Poverty, unemployment, abjectly wretched condition of toiling people more so of peasants in the vast hinterland of the country, total insecurity of life and livelihood from a tottering economy, a political ambience filled out and out with corruption and power-greed and a tormenting society torn with thousand and one superstitious and obscurantist thoughts and ideas and all sorts of fundamentalist and divisive trends and constant fratricidal clashes among different sects and communities such as *shias*, *sunnis* etc., all these together have tended to create an explosively dangerous situation in that country.

To add more fuel to fire, of late there has been a series of political events, perpetrated by the government, notorious for its corruption and inefficiency and apprehensive of a military coup. Reportedly it sought help from the US imperialists, rather Pentagon to protect itself from the military of none other than its own country. In its sequel, the judiciary instigated and supported by the military has jumped upon the elected government virtually endangering its existence in power. Obviously these events have brought in their wake extreme political turmoil and uncertainty affecting the already shattered life of common people. It is true that in Pakistan military coups have recurred quite frequently in its history. The recent incidents only have once more vividly demonstrated the truth that has been time and again emphasized by the Marxists- Leninists that the military

and its associates, judiciary and bureaucracy are the last refuges for the class at times of crisis vis-à-vis which the elected governments stand helpless. It pertains to all capitalist countries. But the shameless manner in which the military, aided or not by its associates, has continuously dictated upon the elected governments, installed or brought them down since the birth of Pakistan is hardly to be found in any country of worth naming. The question is why and the answer, in the last analysis, lies in looking back at how nationalism and national independence struggle developed in India and how Pakistan emerged in the wake of it.

Indian freedom struggle and emergence of Pakistan on its background

The world knows that Pakistan was carved out of India as a theocratic, more particularly an Islamic state, when India earned independence in culmination of a prolonged anti-British imperialist freedom struggle. At certain stage of that colonial rule, when the British rulers introduced modern English education with obvious intention to equip the Indians to run their rule and administration, a section of the newly educated population was at the same time introduced to and imbued with the thoughts and concepts of Western Renaissance, the thoughts of democracy, democratization of society and nationalism. However, in India, for definite historical reasons, the main stream of renaissance movement was oriented towards Hindu revivalism, lacked the fervour and character of Western renaissance and to that extent was crippled from within. As a result, rising Indian nationalism instead of growing with uncompromising secular thought turned out to be a revivalist Hindu

religion-oriented nationalism. On the other hand, it was predominantly the Muslim kings and monarchies whom the invading British rulers had to fight for establishing their hold on India. It did not go well with the Muslim community which always made a sizeably large portion of the population in the country. From its hostility to the British rulers, the Muslim community for a considerable period largely kept themselves away also from the English-based modern education and remained cut off from the essence of advanced ideas of democracy or nationalism. They thus remained relatively backward in so far as the question of accepting democratic concepts and thoughts was concerned. And as rising nationalism in India became Hindu religion-oriented, it further pushed the Muslims away from it.

Nation, as it is well known from the precise definition by the great Proletarian leader Stalin, is a 'historically constituted, stable community of people, formed on the basis of a common language, territory, economic life, and psychological make-up manifested in a common culture'. Comrade



Comrade Ranjit Dhar, veteran member, Polit Bureau, SUCI (C), paying revolutionary tribute to great Lenin on Lenin Memorial Day on 21 January at Party's central office in Kolkata.

Shibdas Ghosh, the Founder General Secretary of SUCI(C) and an eminent Marxist thinker of the present era, elaborated this definition and pointed out that 'a nation is born as a product of a historical process' in course of which, 'from the strong urge of development of capitalism an economic centralization and an awareness of one centralized identity develops within a given geographical boundary' 'keeping language, culture, and all-round economic development in the forefront' and fighting against feudalism along with imperialism in colonies on the edifice of secular democratic thoughts and bringing about democratization of the society.

Growth of nation and nationalism, as history would bear out, is intimately connected with the growth of capitalism. But Indian capitalism grew in the era of imperialism and proletarian

Contd. on page 2



Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), addressing the meeting of Party activists of Assam State in Guwahati, on 20 January explaining the significance of the proposed Parliament March on 14 March



Pakistan of late

Born on weak foundation Pakistan relied on military to hold nation together and survive

Contd. from page 1

revolution, when internationally capitalism as a system had reached decadent and moribund stage and had been suffering from the fear complex of imminent proletarian revolution. So, it lacked the revolutionary fervour of Western renaissance during the days of the advent of the latter. Instead, Indian capitalism became compromising with imperialism on one hand and feudalism on the other. As in India bourgeois democratic and nationalist thoughts and ideas developed in this background, they could not develop and take root in the society free from the influence of and rising above religion and other feudal traits and infirmities, as it could be found in many countries, particularly of the West. Rather the Hindu revivalist trait which they bore from the beginning persisted consequent to which the aversion of the Muslim community towards Indian nationalist movement increased. The rising Indian bourgeoisie, from their keenness to usurp the power to rule and develop independently and from their fear-complex of working class revolution, not only compromised politically with the imperialists, they compromised culturally with feudalism. Instead of freeing nationalist and democratic thoughts from revivalist backwardness, it took up religion as a vehicle of propagating nationalist ideas. In consequence, that revivalist Hindu-religion-oriented Indian nationalism lacked the vigour that was required for unifying all sections of the people. The process in which modern nations developed in history was thus hampered in India and the democratisation of society bringing about unity of people into one nation cutting across all divisions centring round religion, caste, creed, community, ethnicity, language and such others was not fully accomplished. In regard to this feature of formation of Indian nationhood, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh showed, "Though we have developed politically as a nation, yet socially and culturally we are nothing but a conglomeration of different groups and communities, separated from one another by religion, language, race, caste." (*Scientific Approach to Education*).

This weakness of the nationalist movement not just persisted. Since Gandhiji was placed in the leadership of the Indian National

Congress which was leading the independence movement of the country, the compromise with religion as well as imperialism became still more pronounced. An uncompromising trend of freedom movement based upon true secularism was initiated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose which however could not reach its logical culmination and success and the compromising trend of Gandhi remained dominant.

Cashing upon this weakness of the leadership and the movement, the Muslim fundamentalists with overt and covert backing of the British imperialists had made their appearance and won over the Muslim masses who in absence of required consciousness fell easy prey to these fundamentalist forces. The British rulers in their turn, from their divide and rule policy of governance, fanned up this weakness of the nationalist movement, drove the Muslim leadership towards more and more fanatic and communalist ends to ultimately raise the slogan of a separate Muslim state. In such a condition, with the independence struggle being led by a compromising leadership on the strength of a distinct Hindu-religion-oriented nationalism and with the power-crazy Muslim leaders with overt and covert British support claiming a separate Muslim state, partition was imposed upon the country. Pakistan was born as a separate theocratic state.

And it was born with weakness right from the beginning. It was artificially born and held together through British manoeuvres and craze of a band of greedy power and privilege seeking politicians. It was a state with a weak foundation, formed with religion as its basis that could in no way make a modern nation. Even Muslim states of the world were seldom based solely upon religion. With this inherent weakness, democratisation of its society remained a far cry. And even such a state consisted of constituent parts that were loosely, even forcibly held. The question of partition of India was not received favourably even by people of all the regions now included in Pakistan. Among those, the North West Frontier Province with a strong current of freedom movement under the leadership of Khan Abdul Gaffar Khan, popularly known as the Frontier Gandhi was definitely against the partition and wanted a

united India. Baluchistan and a large portion of Sind too were not in favour of partition. The two major parts of the country, West and East Pakistan were separated by thousands of kilometres and existed with totally different language, culture and even psychological make-up of people. Of these, the former eastern part of Pakistan, now Bangladesh, was itself an integrated geographic territory far away and separated from West Pakistan (present Pakistan) and with a population of Bengali-speaking people. The situation there was somewhat relatively better. A certain extent of people's unity and democratisation of society could take place there, first on the strength of a massive democratic movement, demanding recognition of Bengali as one of the national languages of Pakistan and second, on the basis of a powerful freedom struggle developed as a continuation of this language movement against almost colonial exploitation and oppression of the West Pakistani bourgeois rulers that culminated in emergence of independent Bangladesh state on the basis of the newly developed Bengali nationalism.

Pakistani rulers hinged on military to hold together the nation formed on religion

In Pakistan, on the other hand, people of its different parts remained divided into different religious sects and communities, into different ethnic tribes, creeds with different cultural and linguistic traits. The only way that the rulers could and did hold these different even reluctant forces together artificially and forcibly was not only by religious fundamentalism but more particularly, by the military might of the state. The rulers, the capitalists and the feudal chieftains depended on that military might right from the beginning, ultimately making it all powerful. Parliamentary democracy even in simplest bourgeois terms could not develop in any coherent form. A semblance of democracy was set up; intermittently a parliament was installed; its elections were held and governments formed too. But behind all the processes the hand of military was active and decisive. The ruling class in conjunction with the military decided who would be in power; elections were manoeuvred and rigged to get the desired results; whenever the government slid down

from being in the good book of the military, it was brought down. Also as and when necessary, the military itself took over the rein. As it stood, Pakistan oscillated between short-lived spells of elected government and more entrenched military rule. Opposition was reduced to cosmetic parliamentary debates; minimum elementary democratic rights were denied; even leftist, not to speak of Marxist ideas and activities were totally restricted and banned; let alone any left movement, even democratic movements were crushed; threat-intimidation-political assassination became the order. Along with that, the rulers and the government, both civil or military, liberally encouraged and fomented all kinds of fundamentalist, divisive or separatist trends bringing people into bitter fratricidal clashes and preventing growth of unity of people against the exploitation and oppression by the rulers. Democratisation of society remained a far cry even in independent Pakistan. Not just that. Centring round the issue of Kashmir, the rulers raised a venomous anti-India bogey and fanned up religious fanaticism and encouraged and promoted innumerable armed gangs that were continuously engaged in mutual blood-shedding conflicts and wanton killing of innocent people. Disunity in people has reached such a state that there are almost constant clashes even among Shias- Sunnis and Ahmedias. Thus instead of setting up and strengthening a democratic society, Pakistan never had the taste of democracy and its people were devastated and disunited by fundamentalism-separatism and such other divisive traits continuously since the birth of their country and throughout its length and breadth, be it in the FATA (Federally Administered Tribal Areas) or some parts of Pakhtunkhwa Khyber (PK: much of it was included in the former North West Frontier Province), or in Baluchistan or Sind or even in cities like Karachi and others. The minimum cohesion a country should have seems to be eluding Pakistan. Taking advantage of this and associated abysmal economic slowdown with which Pakistan has become economically dependent upon the US to a great extent, certain interested circles are being found to even maliciously calling Pakistan a

Contd. on page 4

PROPOSED FOOD SECURITY BILL**HOW FAR EFFECTIVE OR COSMETIC**

With much fanfare, National Food Security Bill (NFSB) has been introduced in Parliament on December 23, 2011. As expected by many, the Bill instead of being debated on the floor of the House has been sent to the select committee for in-depth study. It is quite clear that the Congress-led central government thoroughly discredited and widely criticized for scuttling passage of a duly empowered strong Lokpal Bill through shrewd manipulation had to hurriedly place the Bill as a face-saver and somehow mollify the accumulated grievance among people. Notwithstanding the fact that the government circle, the bourgeois media and the academicians devoted to ruling capitalism are waxing eloquent about the Bill, a scrutiny of the provisions on the anvil of logic and in linkage with the obtaining delivery mechanism would prove the futility of the proposed legislature in no uncertain a term. And immediately, the deception sought to be suppressed beneath the hype would be glaring. Thus, the government's is an attempt to shield one bluff with another.

Backdrop in which the Bill has been brought

Before entering into detailed discussion over the proposed Bill, it is necessary to look very briefly at the backdrop in which the Bill has been brought. It is well known that abject poverty in which people live in our country, the great majority of them below poverty line, simply beggars description. With no effective social safety net in place, no government support or unemployment benefits worth the name, people are left to fend for themselves. Rather, it might perhaps be more appropriate to say that in our country people have been thrown to the wolves, as governments at the Centre, regardless of party colour, have been on a spree to dismantle subsidies for people, drastically slashing the already inexcusably low public spending on food, social security, healthcare, education, agriculture and housing, only to regale the ruling capitalist class with huge and hidden subsidies in various forms, as part of capitalist globalization policies. And all the while unemployment problem has grown unabated and price of food and other essential items kept soaring. This increasing assault on life and livelihood is causing the wretched people often burst out in protest,

giving vent to their grievance and discontent through agitations. Worldwide also, there is a surge of people's protest against capitalist-imperialist onslaught. The wave of the same is also causing ripples in our country. The outbursts of senseless violence, witnessed here and there, is not what is worrying the ruling class, or governments in power. What they are afraid of is crystallization of people's disavowal into long-drawn organized conscious people's movement which could shake the very foundation of the ruling capitalism, the root of all evils. Spontaneous response people gave to Anna Hazare's call to come out in protest against all-pervasive corruption has also caused wrinkles on their face. The image of the Congress-led central government has also been considerably dented following revelation of one after another mega scams. It is against this background that the central government has introduced the National Food Security Bill supposedly to guarantee nutritional security for all so that it could somehow salvage some of its lost image and at the same time pretend to be so concerned about the safety-net for the poor.

Salient features of the Bill

In chapter III of the Bill, it is said that "Every person shall have physical, economic and social access, at all times, either directly or by means of financial purchases, to quantitatively and qualitatively adequate, sufficient and safe food, which ensures an active and healthy life." To realize this mission, the Bill proposes that

1. To the members of the Priority Group i.e. those who are in the BPL (Below Poverty Line) category, 7 kg grain per month per person would be made available at a subsidized prices— rice at Rs 3 per kg, wheat at Rs 2 per kg and millets (coarse grain) at Rs 1 per kg.

2. For the General Group who are in the APL (above poverty line) category, the quota available would be 3 kg per person per month at half of minimum support price given to farmers.

3. Beneficiaries under Priority Group would be —Minimum 46% of rural population and 28% of urban population

Besides, the Bill talks of providing the Priority Group and General Group 'single member households' a minimum of 14 kg and 8 Kg of grain respectively per month at the same prices. It has also mentioned of special take-home

rations or nutritious and freshly cooked meals, free of charge, during pregnancy and 6 months thereafter through the local anganwadi, maternity benefits of Rs. 1000 per month for a period of six months. Similar supply of nutritious take-home rations and/or local and freshly cooked meals throughout the year through the local anganwadi have been stipulated for 0-6 year old children. Special packages have also been announced for persons, households, groups or communities living in starvation or conditions akin to starvation. Apparently, all these look to be so gratifying. But, there are some caveats as well. It is stated that this subsidized entitlement is assuming BPL status to just 46 % of the rural population and 28 % of the urban population. In other words, not all rural and urban households would be covered. The percentage would remain confined to the estimated BPL and APL categories by the National Advisory Council headed by Sonia Gandhi. Secondly, apart from BPL and APL categories, the Bill has brought a third category under the nomenclature 'excluded section' which obviously indicate people not falling within the official classification of BPL and APL. It is also worth noting that while at present, BPL beneficiaries are stated to be 56% of the population, the NFSB reduces it to 46%. One is already aware that even on categorization of BPL and APL, different official Committees have provided widely divergent assessments of poverty level, which ranged from 23 per cent to 40, 50 and 77 per cent, and estimates of BPL households ranging between 6.25, to 8, to 10 to even 20 crore. Report of the Arjun Sengupta Committee constituted by the government, it may be recalled, showed that around 78% of Indian population cannot spend more than Rs 20 a day and hence they should be considered to be below poverty line. While the reality is so, the Planning Commission, of late, defined a spending of more than Rs 15 in rural areas and Rs 20 in urban areas by a person to be above poverty line. This invited flak not only from the people at large but even wrath of the Apex court of the country. Snubbed by the highest judicial institution and ridiculed by the people at large for such a stipulation ostensibly to peg down the number of the poor for evading larger commitment in the NFSB, it revised the limits to Rs. 32 in cities and Rs. 26 in villages. Even

with the revision in the BPL criteria, Planning Commission straightaway brought the total number of poor to just 400 million or roughly 33% of the population. The NFSB has also been so carefully worded that the number of poor i.e. the deemed beneficiaries do not go above the figure so manipulated by the Planning Commission. In other words, the so called food security is also going to elude more than 60% of the poor as per estimation of an empowered government committee.

Mockery of quota fixing

Next is the question of the quantity stipulated for rural and urban households. In reality the term 'food security' is basically deceptive. For what food does it promise to secure? Foodgrains — but of these merely rice or wheat, no pulses, not to speak of oil, or other essentials. In fact, the Bill actually reduces the entitlement of foodgrains by switching to individual linked low quotas as against the Supreme Court's order of 35 kg foodgrains entitlement under the existing PDS scheme. Secondly, allotment of 7 kg of grains per person per month translates into 230 gms per day. Food produces calorie and calorie intake is essential for strength and energy in any situation. In 1978, it was stipulated that the calorie standard for a typical individual in rural areas was 2400 calorie and was 2100 calorie in urban areas. On a very rough estimate, 450 gms of wheat contain about 1,500 calories while same amount of cooked rice gives on average 500 calories. An adult man undertaking a light to average amount of activity need at least 2,300 calories per day, and preferably a few more, especially if he is tall or naturally stocky. Today, as per studies reported, if one is walking a lot or carrying out medium work, he need a minimum of 2,800 calories daily; heavy work raises the requirement to 3,500 calories. An adult woman needs a minimum of about 1,800 calories daily, assuming normal height, 2,250 calories with walking and/or medium work, and 2,700 calories for heavy work. The Planning Commission itself prescribes a minimum in-take of 2,400 calories daily to sustain oneself. Does the allotted quota of NFSB meet even the bare necessity? Is it not that judicable right to nutrition is denied by merely distribution of foodgrains upto a restricted quota? Even there is escalation in price. When many of

Contd. on page 5

Pakistan of late**Marxist prognosis of military-judiciary-bureaucracy nexus standing all powerful in capitalism vindicated***Contd. from page 2*

‘failed state’.

To add to the woe of people, today when the totally decadent world capitalist-imperialist system is tottering from its all-out crisis, neo-colonial aggression and domination of imperialist powers, particularly of the US imperialism, are becoming more and more evident even in politically independent countries. In Pakistan this has been particularly true and in the bitterest way. Though Pakistan was a politically independent country, from the very beginning of its history it remained very much under the neo colonial dictation and domination of the US imperialists and was shattered by its exploitation and intrigues. At that time it was the period of Cold War when the US imperialism was setting up military bases and different military combinations like the NATO (North Atlantic Treaty Organization), SEATO (South East Asia Treaty Organization) or CENTO (Central Treaty Organization) etc., to encircle the countries of the world socialist camp, particularly the Soviet Union and China. Playing upon the rabid anti-Indian stand of the Pakistani rulers, the US imperialists could successfully rope in Pakistan into its designs, brought it into the SEATO and CENTO and set up military base in that country particularly against the then Soviet Union and socialist China, and in the process also exerting pressure upon India. On the other hand, during that period, India and some other newly independent capitalist countries used to pursue a non-aligned policy to bargain between the then imperialist and socialist camps and wrest maximum possible benefit and concession from them with a view to consolidating their own newly independent capitalist economy; in course of that they developed tilt towards the socialist camp as well as played a role in preventing outbreak of imperialist world war. The ruling class of Pakistan haunted by their rabid anti-India feelings failed to choose this course of non-alignment and could not make use of the bargaining position between the two camps, thus adding more woes to the already tottering economy. The US imperialists took advantage of the situation and stepped up their neo-colonial domination severely on Pakistan. The latter became more and more dependent upon the US imperialists, a position from which they could never bring out their

country. The US imperialists manoeuvred the antagonism and controversy between India and Pakistan particularly centring round Kashmir to keep alive an ambience fraught with bitterness, even war and war cry. As the Indian monopolists in their bid to stave off mounting market crisis took to the path of more and more militarization of the Indian economy and increasingly armed itself with lethal arms and weapons, including nuclear weapons, the US imperialists liberally armed Pakistan with counter-posing military aids and assistances, thereby contributing to keeping a war-frenzy alive in this subcontinent. The Pakistani rulers greedily and readily danced to the tunes to fan up anti-India feelings in the country. Even in a dire strait of their economy, raising this bogey of the threat from India the Pakistani rulers too militarised their economy, spending abnormally high on military and defence budgets to keep the staggering economy run artificially. The more staggered was economy, more deprived were the people. The rulers in their turn took up more virulent anti-Indian bogey to divert people’s attention from the exploitative system of their country, in the same manner as their counterparts in India who, in their turn, made use of the situation to foment anti-Pakistan craze to dope people with and to keep their military-industry complex running. Nevertheless, the US imperialist dictation and designs drove vicious tentacles deeper into the economic-political-social fabric of Pakistan shattering the life of its common people. The US imperialists in collusion with Pakistan, created, fostered and nurtured the Taliban of Afghanistan to fight against the Republic of Afghanistan backed by the erstwhile Soviet Union. These Taliban were rabid fundamentalist forces devoid of the slightest shreds of democratic attitude and later they became Frankensteins for the US rulers and engaged themselves in anti-US fight to reinstall their own regime. And when to conduct that fight they made bases in Pakistan along its border with Afghanistan, it was the same US imperialist rulers with their fresh instigation and machination compelled Pakistan to send 80,000 strong troops to its FATA regions at the Afghan border to crush the Taliban in Afghanistan as also those of Pakistan sympathetic to their counterparts across the border. Even as late as the present series of events that are creating

turmoil in Pakistan, the US influence and handiwork manifest themselves as bitter truths. These imperialist, more so US imperialist, machinations have generated tremendous anti-US imperialist sentiment and mood among the people of Pakistan. But in absence of powerful left and democratic movement with a secular democratic outlook even this anti-imperialist feeling has been malevolently used by the fundamentalist-separatist forces in various ways to drag people into their fold. At the same time with passage of time, this mounting anti-US imperialist sentiment and mood of people has worked upon the arrogant extroverted way in which the US imperialism used to deal with Pakistan. On the contrary, India has emerged as an imperialist power with strong expansionist and hegemonic approach as a regional superpower. Meanwhile in the latest international situation after the debacle of the World Socialist Camp, everlasting and increasing economic-political crisis of the US imperialist power compelled it to develop more and more economic, political and particularly military closeness with India recognizing it as a regional superpower. In the context of this realignment of the US position in the subcontinent, China after it had become capitalist through counter-revolution is also coming out with its expansionist and hegemonic design to make use of Pakistan. Even between themselves, while Pakistan instigated terrorist activities rent the air time and often in this or that region of India, Pakistan raises allegations of India instigating separatist movement in parts of Pakistan, such as in Baluchistan even supplying arms, with US hand working latently behind these. Pakistan has thus always remained a hot bed giving its military and the US imperialist and others a fertile ground to play and its people to face increasingly greater plight.

Amidst such a situation, the present crisis, it may be said, sprouted in May 2011 when US Special forces stormed the hideout of Osama Bin Laden and killed him in Abbottabad of Pakistan. Involving bin Laden or not, it was an act of shameless violation of Pakistan’s sovereignty, evoking strong adverse opinion in people, which drove both the government and the military of Pakistan also into embarrassment. The army preferred to claim that it had been taken by

surprise. Subsequently it became apparent that the Pakistan government had been fully aware of an impending raid and was thus being complicit. In the face of mounting anti-American mood of people and increasing pressure upon the government, the President and the Prime Minister blamed the army and the nation’s intelligence service – the ISI, for security failures. Reportedly, soon after that the Pakistan government in a memo sent through an emissary approached the White House national security officials rather than the Pentagon, bypassing Pakistan’s military and intelligence channels. In the memo, the government from its fear of a military takeover, asked for US help to move against the military and the ISI, with commitment of concessions to the US in return for cooperation. In an embarrassment for the government, the memo was made public giving way to what was called the Memogate scandal and the army and the ISI briefed. The two latter approached the judiciary, filed affidavits to the Supreme Court (SC) of Pakistan without caring for the government’s approval and requesting the apex court for a probe into the matter, while the government contended that the issue should be investigated by a parliamentary panel, obviously easier to keep it under its control. The apex court obliged the military, rejected the government’s contention and appointed a judicial commission for investigation. Tensions mounted; the government branded the army and ISI moves “unconstitutional and illegal”, while the latter spat venom with the threat that the premier’s remarks could have “grievous consequences”.

Meanwhile in late November 2011, the US drones attacked two Pakistani patrol posts on the Pakistan-Afghanistan border at Salalah for hours leaving 24 dead. Though both the government and the military apparently made protests, yet the dastardly act of the US imperialists gave birth to uproars from different quarters in the country, and even the army leadership faced huge dissent from within its ranks for its cooperation with the US.

The Supreme Court of Pakistan, in its turn, had already been after the government, as it had struck down in 2009 the National Reconciliation Ordinance (NRO) issued by the former military ruler Pervez
Contd. on page 6

Food Security Bill**Bill reduces entitlement to less than half of poor and promises not even 10% of basic requirement***Contd. from page 3*

the state governments are running schemes of giving rice at Rs. 2 per kg to the BPL families, NFSB raises it to Rs.3.

NFSB also promises special treatment to people suffering from starvation or near starvation situation. This is another big and cruel hoax. "The fundamental right of everyone to be free from hunger" is established in Article 11 of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, the branch of international law inspired by the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. India is currently ranked at 15th on this list of 81 countries as per the Global Hunger Index (GHI) compiled by the International Food Policy Research Institute based on three interlinked indicators — the proportion of undernourished among the population, the prevalence of underweight children and the mortality rate of children. Moreover, India's GHI has gone up from 22.9 to 23.7 between 1996 and 2011. There is an unacceptable extent of under-nutrition and malnutrition in India, which occupies a shameful position in all indices relating to hunger. A large segment of the chronically undernourished belongs to families of small and marginal farmers and landless labour. The position is serious in the case of women and children. Because of maternal and foetal under-nutrition and malnutrition, nearly every fourth child born is under-weight. Such low birth weight children suffer many handicaps including impaired cognitive ability. A report prepared by some NGOs and corporates and released by the country's Prime Minister shows that 42% of the children under 5 suffer underweight and 59% are stunted. Half of India's children under the age of three are malnourished. National Family Health Survey (NFHS-3) shows that compared to NFHS-2 finding, percentages of married women and children between 6 years and 35 months suffering from anemia have gone up from 49.7% to 57.9% and from 74.2% to 79.2% respectively. For pregnant women in the same age group, the incidence of anemia rose from 49.7% to 57.9%. Thus, poor children are denied even at birth an opportunity for the full expression of their innate genetic potential for mental and physical development while their mothers languish in acute blood deficiency. Alas! After

63 years of independence, starvation, half-starvation and malnutrition plague most of the populace. However, if one goes through NFSB, it would appear as if starvation or near-starvation conditions are not the general feature but only few and far between and hence needing special addressing.

Delivery Mechanism

Now let us focus on the issue of distribution of the stipulated quota of foodgrains to BPL and APL categories. In the Bill, the central government has only reiterated what should be the Public Distribution System right from procurement, storage, quality control to final delivery through fair price shops at stipulated tariff. But, despite all these sermon preachings and delineation of 'Dos' and 'Don'ts', what is the actual state of affairs? Hardly the government procures the targeted quota as a racket of dishonest middlemen, brokers, hoarders and blackmarketers in league with the corrupt government officials and ruling party members and associates corner the produce for recycling to the open market at exorbitant price. Even the storage facility in government godowns is horrible. Government granaries have become abode of rats and other insects. Every year thousands of tons of foodgrains are wasted because of lack of adequate storage facility. Next is reaching out the stock to the eligible ration card holders. As is experienced by people, the PDS which was introduced under pressure of popular movement is in shambles and mired in all-pervasive corruption throughout the country today forcing the poverty-stricken people to go to open market for purchasing whatever little pulses or cereals they need to survive at higher prices. The modus operandi of decimating the PDS is no doubt unique. Deliberately, sub-standard and even rotten stuff is being supplied. Progressively, the quantity is being cut. Also the number of items to be distributed through rationing is being systematically reduced. Often, the ration card holders are harassed on the plea that since there is no stock or replenishment has not been received; the stipulated quota cannot be distributed. Above all, though the PDS outlets are called fair price shops, there is a steady escalation in the ration prices so much so as to be

almost on par with open market. The objective is very clear. Apart from other dissuading measures, planfully and subtly, a situation is created whereby people themselves out of disgust stop coming to the ration shops. Once the consumers are thus driven away, the due quota of rice, wheat, cereals, kerosene and other essential items are merrily diverted to the open market by the aforesaid racket. Widespread speculation on foodgrain pricing by a ring of stock market operators also play a significant role in price manipulation. In fact, there is a concerted effort on the part of the governments, both central and in the states, to gradually dismantle the system and shirk off the responsibility of providing essential foodgrains and other items to people at affordable rates. The whole purpose is to make way for the big business and moneybags to reap bumper profit by open market deal on foodgrains, kerosene and such other items of extreme need just the way there is a move afoot to handover the retail sector to the domestic and foreign monopolists. NFSB has not uttered a single word about stemming this rot, nor has it spoken of toning up the administration or taking stringent measures against the corrupt officials and other malevolent constituents of PDS. Only, it has talked of creating National and State Food Commissions and overseeing by a vigilance department. While creation of these Commissions would be a drain on the public exchequer and provide career opportunities to certain people in the good books of the government, vigilance as ever would remain a mute spectator to large scale malpractices and pilferages as it is today.

It may be recalled that not less than 18 schemes for the benefit of people have been launched in the last decade or two, including the National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA) or JRY scheme (providing 100 days of employment for unemployed rural poor per year at minimum wage of Rs. 100) that was launched by the UPA government with great fanfare, besides the AAY (Antyodaya Anna Yojana), meant to provide subsidized food to the destitute, primitive tribes, disabled and old and increase the quota of foodgrains to 35 kg for families under the existing PDS scheme. Besides, there have been integrated child

development schemes and a host of others. But what has been the result of all these? They haven't even touched the fringe of the problem. Because, the delivery mechanism is not only faulty, but full of loopholes which benefitted the pilferers and middlemen while the targeted beneficiaries were left high and dry. What then is the guarantee that even what is being promised under NFSB would reach out to the targeted group? In other words, there is no reason to believe that overnight the Public Distribution System would be purged of all its shortcomings and deep-rooted corruption and start delivering goods to the suffering people.

There is another aspect. As already seen, the quota fixed under NFSB is far short of requirement. Also the coverage of the poor is selective and skewed. So, the poor people would be forced to go to the open market for balance purchase. This open food market is entirely left to the private businessmen and large traders for minting super-profits. Anytime under any pretext, they can jack up the price. So, whatever little price support the poor people might get from NFSB—assuming it is made operative—would be eaten up by the soaring price line in the open market. There is no move to contain this artificial price hike by profit-greedy businessmen. So even if it is assumed that NFSB guarantees availability of 10 to 20% of the necessity, the poor people would have to buy the balance in the open market where prices are soaring every day by leaps and bounds. So the minuscule relief that NFSB talks of providing would be eaten up by this spiralling price in the open market placed at the disposal of private operators. Where is the benefit then to the impoverished millions?

Hoodwinking arguments of bourgeois quarters

Even the bourgeois quarters are well aware of the state of affairs. What is worth noting is that instead of prevailing upon the government to steer clear the PDS of all its aberrations by adopting correct remedial measures involving people, a section of the apologists of the existing oppressive capitalist system is strongly arguing in favour of privatization of the delivery mechanism. The operational rollout of the scheme, they contend

Contd. on page 7

Pakistan of late

Regular US neo-colonial intervention also worked behind the present crisis

Contd. from page 4

Musharraf in 2007. The NRO was in fact a deal between Musharraf and Zardari, the present President that provided amnesty to Zardari and a host of others from graft charges, particularly money laundering to Switzerland by Zardari. The government refused to comply with the SC order to write to the Swiss authorities to reopen the cases on the ground that the President of Pakistan enjoyed immunity under the Constitution as also the Vienna Conventions. Amidst the scuffling centring round the present Memogate scandal, the SC resumed hearing on reopening of the said corruption cases and slapped Gilani, the Prime Minister with a contempt of court notice. Gilani managed to win a morale-boosting support from his colleagues of parliamentary politics, from his party, PPP and its alliance partners, namely PMQ, Awami National Party and MQM. But he had to appear in person to the SC to reiterate the government position of standing by Zardari to claim his constitutional immunity. Till to date, the cat and mouse game seems to have been kept in abeyance. But the threat from the army and the judiciary to the government remains a fact. It is also a fact that both inside and outside the court, the government and the bourgeois party leaders, the support-frame of the fragile parliamentary system of Pakistan appeared keen on establishing how respectful they were towards other institutions of the state, namely the military and the judiciary. As it appears from different reports there are also behind the screen talks on a 'give and take' basis to put pressures and counter pressures.

However, to reiterate, the series

of events once more prove that whatever may the bourgeois politicians claim, the Parliament and the elected government enjoying the power on the strength of it, are the most fragile and temporary means of governance; at best they are the political managers of the class appointed from time to time to keep the order and run the system. There may be variations. Sometimes the army, the bureaucracy and the judiciary may act from the same boat; at others they may lock horns with each other. But in case of any serious stand-off between the government and any of these permanent organs of state, it is the latter that spell the last word vindicating the prognosis of Marx that it is the military and other permanent organs of the state that actually holds the power with the elected government acting as pawns in their hand. And in such an ambience where military becomes all-powerful, it is the people who have to suffer as it becomes impossible to develop any kind of democratic movement in protest against exploitation and oppression of the ruling class and its appendages.

People of Pakistan must daunt the ruling nexus led by military to wrest democratic rights

So the question that people must face in Pakistan is why are such phenomena recurring in their country, and in increasingly virulent form. Utterly corrupt and abominably power crazy industrialists, business houses, politicians, civil or military both, rule the roost. The bureaucracy and the judiciary too do not fall much behind. In a totally anarchic

ambience virtually the same sad sequence of political scenario of losing and gaining power recur at intervals. In league with these enemies of people within the country, US imperialism, the worst enemy of mankind today join the band-wagon of killers and looters and come out with newer and newer designs of neo-colonial exploitation and domination. People continue to remain confined to their dungeon with ever-increasing all-out crisis engulfing their life more and more. Capitalism keeps on driving its root of cruel exploitation and oppression deeper and deeper, consequent to it disparity and discrimination between rich and poor keeps on widening, fundamentalism-separatism goes on thriving under the patronage of capitalism. Should not the people of Pakistan, particularly those who bear the slightest sense of rational progressive thinking then ask themselves: Should this continue? Or must they strive to develop massive and powerful movement of toiling people united across all divisions of religion, ethnicity, community or such others on the demand for establishing, preserving and extending democratic rights, must they work to develop movement in protest against any attempt of toppling the elected government through military coup giving the all-powerful military free hand for continuing its demonic rule as also against any interference and intervention of the military and ISI in the political activities and proceedings of the country, must they stand firm to develop powerful movement to demand immediate termination of any and every kind of US intervention? Certainly it is an uphill task, and no movement

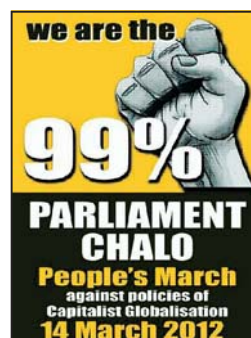
worthwhile can be developed without the people tearing the vicious shackle of fundamentalism-separatism on the strength of a secular democratic approach as also without coming out of the domination of bourgeois-petty bourgeois parties. They will have to build up new leadership to launch and carry on this invincible secular democratic movement. They need to realize the truth that so long as fundamentalism – separatism will dominate to keep them bound with these divisive traits, corrupt, power-hungry politicians of their country as well as the ruling capitalists and the imperialists, particularly the US imperialists will have a free ground to play upon divisions and disunity among people to give effect to their own nefarious designs. It must be recognized, too, that today the bulwark, the lifeline of any progressive movement is Marxism-Leninism. People of Pakistan, particularly those who strongly feel and desire that things must change towards progress and peace, will need to recognize this truth and work for the growth and development of Marxism-Leninism as the ideology to guide their struggle. People of the world will look eagerly at the people of Pakistan to see them take up these tasks with all earnestness and promptness.



Comrade K Radhakrishna, inaugurating the Jatha at Manjerswaram, Kasaragod on 23 January, 2012. Seated (from right) are Comrade C K Lukose (left), Dr D Surendranath, President of the inaugural meeting and Comrade V Venugopal, State Secretariat member.

State level Jatha in Kerala heralding March to Parliament

Heralding mass signature campaign and people's march to parliament called by our Party, the Kerala state committee has set out on a Jatha under the captaincy of Comrade C K Lukose, member, Central Committee, with the clarion call to build up mighty people's movement. This Jatha which was flagged off by Comrade K Radhakrishna, member, Central Committee and Secretary Karnataka State Committee of our Party on 23 January, will cover the entire state.



In all the districts reception will be accorded to the Jatha at different centres. District level and local level reception committees have been formed for the purpose in the presence of leaders of mass movements and other distinguished persons. The Jatha will culminate at Thiruvananthapuram, in a massive demonstration and rally on 25 February 2012. Comrade Provas Ghosh, General Secretary SUCI(C) will address the mass meeting at Gandhi Park Maidan, that day.



Comrade C K Lukose addressing

Food Security Bill**No mention of cleansing the delivery mechanism from pilferage and corruption***Contd. from page 5*

obviously to serve their hidden agenda of privatization, is a bigger challenge than the financial aspect, and if not handled with due diligence well in advance, it might well lead to a major fiasco on the food management front. So, allowing innovations, they say, is critical to promote efficiency, plug leakages and save precious resources. And what they precisely mean by the word 'innovations'? It means, according to them, bringing in multiple players in each of the functions of procurement, stocking and distribution of grains, including some hybrid models in between. In their words, "unbundling the food security complex into procurement, stocking and distribution, and introducing competition and transparency at each stage could bring in more accountability and efficiency in each function and reduce costs. The government can decide what functions can be completely privatized and where it needs to maintain a degree of control. Foodgrains can be procured by anyone who offers the service at least cost while ensuring MSP - why pre-empt anyone and go against the spirit of competition policy of India? Rather than creating a monopoly of the state, FCI (Food Corporation of India) can create a multitude of potential service providers or aggregators (e.g., producer companies, corporates, NGOs and Self Help Groups) who would then charge a fee to FCI, innovate and compete to bring down the operational costs....large warehousing companies can be encouraged to take over the FCI facilities through a public-private partnership programme." (Economic Times—12-01-12) The scheme of the things is, thus, quite clear. Under the pretext of the government machinery being flawed and inefficient and relieving the government of shouldering this huge responsibility of feeding 70% of the populace, private operators would gradually grip the entire system and 'food security' would ultimately become a 'secured profit and unbridled scope for misappropriation of public funds' by shady dealers and agencies backed by large corporates and monopoly giants. People will also be loser on another count. While the government can be straightaway held accountable in case of lapses and could be forced under pressure

of people's movement to yield to genuine demands including commitment to effective operation of food distribution mechanism, it is not that easy if the operation is in private hands.

Proposal of cash transfer

It is also relevant to mention in this connection that in the original draft bill finalized by the empowered Group of Ministers, there was a provision of cash transfer instead of foodgrains supply. Cash transfer means paying cash or issuing exchangeable coupons to the targeted groups for amount equivalent to the difference between market price and the proposed issue price under NFSB. In Chapter 13 Section 3 (g) of the said draft, it was stated "Introducing scheme for cash transfer to the targeted beneficiaries in lieu of their foodgrain entitlements... in areas and manner to be prescribed by the central government." One would recall that in the Economic Survey 2008-09 circulated before placing central budget, an idea of issuing 'food coupons' to the targeted beneficiaries was mooted. Subsequently, the idea was incorporated in the budget speech of the union finance minister in February, 2010. Under the food coupon system, instead of grain being supplied at subsidized rates to PDS shops, the ration card-holder will get a food coupon worth the subsidy amount which he or she can redeem from the PDS shop. It is argued that in the current PDS, producer subsidy is conflated with consumer subsidy—grain is procured at a 'remunerative' price, stored, transported and sold to the consumers at a steep discount to the cost of carrying out these operations, inflated by wastage, spoilage and pilferage en route. Food coupons would separate producer subsidy from consumption subsidy though both would stay linked, reduce operational hassles, bring efficiencies to private trade and ensure direct transfer of subsidies to the actual beneficiaries. This great (!) idea was stated to be the brainchild of the economic adviser of the government. However, this proposal was subsequently shelved. Though the revised draft of NFSB placed in Parliament does not have any mention of 'cash transfer', the concept is being subtly revived by the interested quarters. The protagonists of cash transfer are

arguing that this model would save the government from the embarrassment in times of drought and other calamities when supplies would be affected and PDS might be in jeopardy. States, they say, could decide whether they want to go for cash transfers, food coupons or distribution of grains or adopt other hybrid methods. Bihar government, it is learnt, has expressed the desire to adopt cash transfers. It appears all these views are floated to facilitate a backdoor entry of the provision in the form of recommendations by the parliament select committee. World Bank, an organization of international monopoly houses, also advised that "In the light of various constraints and given the fundamental nature of such a reform it would be advisable to experiment with a cash-based PDS focusing on more food secure states/districts first." Needless to reiterate that poor people pressed under the grinding wheel of increasing poverty and pauperization can hardly hold money in hand. So, there is all likelihood that impoverished poor people would convert these coupons into cash by selling them at a discount to the unscrupulous touts and middlemen who, in turn, would lift the foodgrain quota from the ration shop by tendering those coupons and sell the lifted items in the open market at higher price. Thus any such scheme would only open floodgate of misappropriation of subsidy amount. Hence, government must ensure delivery of food articles to the targeted beneficiaries. If the government has rudimentary will and sincerity, it can do that.

So-called concern for additional economic burden on government

It is also found that some economists and columnists are too worried about the huge financial burden the government would have to shoulder on account of NFSB. They estimate that once the scheme is implemented, the food subsidy bill would rise to about Rs. 95,000

crore from Rs. 63,000 crore. The government, they find from calculation, would also need an investment of 1.1 trillion rupees to boost farm output over next few years as NFSB would require 61 million tonnes of foodgrains as against 55 million tonnes procured under the current public distribution system (PDS). Alongwith the self-proclaimed economic experts, a section of the bourgeois media is also engaged in a cost-benefit analysis even on matters relating to hunger of the myriads. These self-styled economists-columnists-media houses either maintained an eerie silence over or lent support to the government decision of providing a hooping sum of Rs 4 lakh crores (Rs. 4 trillion) to the monopolists in the name of fiscal stimulus. In fact, here in the case of NFSB also, the aim is to build up a justification in favour of privatization of the operation. As everyone knows, the much-trumpeted midday meal scheme for school students has already been privatized through PPP model as a result of which, sub-standard food and that too of much less quantity is being served in most of the schools. In some cases, the meal quality is so horrible that even hungry kids refuse to have it. In a country like India where millions of people live on the margins of subsistence, guaranteed access to healthy food in sufficient quantity is vital. Hungry stomach has to be filled, whatever is the monetary cost involved. Let us put it plain and simple—the primary duty of any civilized government is to ensure food to the countrymen if it really honours the basic right to live.

Ensuring proper delivery mechanism

In order to improve the delivery system and insulate to the extent possible the common people from the incessant spurt in prices of foodgrains and other essential items, our Party, right from the 1950s, has been demanding all-out state trading

*Contd. on page 8***CONTRIBUTE TO PARTY CENTRAL OFFICE BUILDING FUND**

In culmination of a long search for an appropriate premise for the central office of the Party, a definite possibility has come up of late creating urgent need of funds. The Party makes a fervent appeal to all its leaders-workers-supporters-sympathizers and well-wishers for liberal contributions to this Building Fund.

**Debaprosad Sarkar
Office Secretary, Central Committee
48 Lenin Sarani, Kolkata-13 Phone : 033 2265-3234**

Food Security Bill**Relief must be wrested under pressure of people's movement***Contd. from page 7*

in foodgrains and other essential items under which there would be no private trading in these items. The government would procure the foodgrains and other essential items directly from the producers at fair price and undertake distribution of the same to people at affordable price through its own network of fair price shops. There should be no infiltration of any private agency into any stage of the entire operation. The government must tone up the administration, revive the virtually collapsing PDS and ensure its proper operation free from corruption and encumbrance of private parties at any level. This alone can provide true relief to the people. In the case of NFSB also, we reiterate the same. If all-out state trading is in place, the government can ensure both procurement and delivery of the stipulated quota, create necessary buffer stock to meet any eventuality and be spared of so called embarrassment the advocates of handing over NFSB to private hands are apprehensive of. But at the same time we also know that *suo motto* the government would not agree to this legitimate demand. The only way this unwilling government could be forced to bend before people's will is by way of exerting people's pressure in the form of developing sustained organized democratic movement involving the masses right from the grassroots level through formation of people's struggle committees and volunteer corps. This alone can keep a check on corruption and malfunctioning as well. Without complete ban on private trading in food, any promise of food security would only turn out to be hoax as has happened with NREGA and such other poverty alleviation schemes.

People's perspective and task

Lastly, we would like to deal with another vital aspect in this connection. Why should the vast masses of the people be forced to survive on pity and benevolence? Why should not they live on their own earning and lead a life of

honour and dignity? Instead why their subsistence should hinge on gratis? Is it not humiliating for them? The normal course should have been that they are helped to stand on their own legs and fend for themselves. In a civilized society, there ought not to be any obstacle to this course. But, instead, they are doomed to dishonour and humiliation because of the obtaining socio-political system—the oppressive capitalist order—where the handful of capitalist owners are cornering all wealth and prosperity by exploiting the toiling millions, expropriating their labour and depriving them of all their legitimate dues by sheer force. The right to work has come to naught. Unemployment is mounting; job loss and retrenchment are rampant. Not only there is no means of earning, even whatever little is earned is fast losing its value because of spiralling inflation. To ensure right to work and necessary means of income to eke out a decent living, what is required is all-out industrialization and modernization of agriculture. But it is decadent moribund capitalist system which is obstructing the process. It is this exploitative system wedded to protect the vested class interest of the exploiting capitalist rulers which is breeding poverty and giving birth to thousands of paupers and wretched day in and day out. In this system, any talk of people's welfare by any government subservient to the ruling class is bound to be hoax and couched in deception. This dire truth must be realized by the suffering millions and emancipation from the shackles of this ruthless capitalist exploitation must be achieved by overthrowing the capitalist order by revolution as expediently as possible. Till the time this objective is not accomplished, people must develop powerful organized long-drawn movements conducive to anti-capitalist movement and wrest some relief. In the process, people must build up their own political power and give birth to necessary revolutionary leadership to take the movements to their logical culmination.

SUCI(C) extends full support to countrywide General Strike on 28 February, called by Central Trade Unions

While extending the Party's full support to the call of countrywide General Strike on 28 February as given by all the Central Trade Union Organizations to press their long-pending Charter of Demands that *inter alia* includes adoption of concrete measures to contain price rise of essential commodities, adequate funding for social security measures for unorganized Sector workers, strict enforcement of labour Laws, halt in disinvestment process in Central and State Public Sector Units, no contractorisation of perennial nature of work, universal coverage of Statutory Minimum Wage irrespective of scheduled employments and assured pension for all etc., Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (C) in course of his interaction with the media on 19 January, 2012 said :

"We have already asked our Party organizations at all levels to stand in firm solidarity with the Countrywide General Strike scheduled on 28 February, 2012. As a consequence to the brazen anti-people anti-working class policies pursued by the ruling capitalist class and its subservient governments, the life of the toiling masses have been brought to the brink of total disaster. The situation has become further worse and aggravated with the introduction of capitalist

globalization the policies which are being aggressively pursued by the central and all the state governments for over two decades. That has really caused havoc in all walks of socio-economic and politico-cultural life of our people. Attacks on jobs, job-opportunities and hard-won rights are going on unabated. Government-sponsored policy of 'Hire & Fire' in the interest of corporate houses is dominating the entire employment scenario. Social Security System whatever little has been there, is at stake. Right to Non-Contributory and Defined Benefit-based Pension System has been snatched away. Price rise, unemployment and poverty are increasing in geometric progression. In this alarming backdrop, we call upon all sections of our people to make the ensuing strike of 28 February, 2012 an all-out success and intensify their struggle further on the demands of Right to Work as a Fundamental Right, Social Security entirely financed by the State and employers, scrapping the speculative New Pension System, all-out state-trading of essential commodities, roll back of the process of all forms of privatization and disinvestment and regularization of millions of workers engaged on contract and through contractors in all sectors."

Countrywide massive response to signature campaign and fighting fund collection for ensuing Parliament March



Ranchi, Jharkhand



Chennai, Tamilnadu



Guna, Madhya Pradesh



Delhi

Please give your valued signature in support of the Charter of Demands, liberally donate to the fighting fund and join en masse the Parliament March on 14 March, 2012

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH