

# Proletarian Era

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“... The emancipation of the people from the capitalist yoke and the oppressive capitalist system will be impossible to achieve through change of government a thousand times, through elections, or through attempts to rewrite the letters of the laws. The only way to achieve emancipation is to gradually build up the invincible revolutionary united strength of the people through conduct of democratic movements on the correct base political line and to accomplish socialist revolution under the leadership of the revolutionary working class party. There is no other way for emancipation of the people besides this. All other ways entail only wastage of time and self-deception.” (SW, Vol. III, p 67)

### On Nuclear Power Generation

## How people should approach the issue

The question of setting up of nuclear power plants, ostensibly for cheaper and cleaner power, has once again taken the centre stage. While finalizing the infamous Indo-US nuclear deal, the former Congress-led UPA government at the Centre decided to install more nuclear power plants in Gujarat, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, Haryana, Maharashtra and West Bengal. Not only the Congress and many of its allies in UPA, but the BJP, and the CPI(M) also are wholeheartedly endorsing the proposals. But the common people in Gujarat, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh, West Bengal, and many other places are registering their protests against setting up of nuclear power plants and are preparing for building up massive resistance movements as the projects would encroach upon vast stretches of agricultural land, rob thousands of fishermen of their livelihood, oust the tribal people from the forest lands, and destroy the ecosystem entailing disaster in the life of the local inhabitants as well as of the surrounding population. Our party has been in the forefront of this just struggle of toiling people.

The government authorities are arguing that since thermal power plants are causing large scale environmental pollution through emission of greenhouse gases and since other sources of generation of power are grossly inadequate to meet the growing demand of electricity, setting up nuclear power plants is the only option. They aver that opposing nuclear power generation is infantile and in a sense, refusal to reap benefit from latest scientific inventions. In view of this, it is imperative to understand how the issue should be viewed from people's perspective and as Marxists how we need to approach the problem.

### **Growing need and available sources of energy**

Since the days man first learnt to harness fire for his own benefit, as civilization progressed mankind's demand for energy as an instrument for economic and social development has increased by leaps and bounds, particularly after the Industrial Revolution. Man has now learnt to produce energy in many new ways and to use it for building up industry, to manufacture goods, to improve the quality of life in general of the populace. Discovery of nuclear fission (splitting of nucleus of atom) in the first half of the 20th century has given mankind access to a new, abundant and powerful source of energy. In addition, if the scientists can find out a way of controlled nuclear fusion (fusing together two atoms), it might solve mankind's energy requirements for all time to come. But does it mean that nuclear source is the answer right now to meet mankind's ever increasing demand for energy? We know that use of nuclear fission led to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and later to the arms race and the stockpiling of nuclear armaments by several countries. Don't a host of associated issues and problems need to be addressed before we decide to go for large scale nuclear power

*Contd. on page 2*

## Nuclear Power Generation

# Fraught with immense hazards

*Contd. from page 1*

generation? Can any use of science or technology be examined in isolation from the given socio-economic context? These are the fundamental questions that are to be answered on the anvil of facts and scientific reasoning in order to arrive at the correct conclusion and the correct line of approach.

At the outset, we briefly state the relevant factual position. During 1950-2000 the world's energy consumption has nearly quadrupled. For electricity generation coal is still the major source, and nuclear power's share is still very little (5.5% of the total in 2008). In the coming decades, even allowing for the increase in energy efficiency, the total world's consumption is projected to rise more than threefold, and in the developing nations the ratio would be even more. A proper energy planning is necessary to meet this demand.

### **In search of an integrated composite utilization of energy resources**

Every mode of power generation has both advantages and disadvantages. So what should be the governing attitude towards the all important issue of formulating a plan for augmenting power generation? To have a correct answer, a correct understanding about the existing socio-economic system and the historic course of social development is imperative. Otherwise, we shall remain confined to the technical aspects of power generation methodologies and seek to determine right or wrong purely based on that and estranged from the prevailing socio-economic system that governs all productions including the production of power as well. We know that in a capitalist state, the political system and structure is geared to protect the capitalist economic system and to serve the vested interest of the capitalist class. People's needs cannot be met within the framework of capitalist system. When we approach any question from the people's point of view, we cannot afford to be guided by the bourgeois thought process or influenced by the economic-political interest of the reactionary exploitative bourgeois class. This is equally true for resolving issues of science and technology and for utilization of

scientific discoveries for the benefit of mankind as a whole. In this backdrop, if we approach the issue of generation of power, we cannot take a one-sided view about a specific mode of production or just decide on the monetary cost-effectiveness of a particular method. We ought to take an integrated approach keeping in mind people's needs and not the need of the capitalist market. In a capitalist society the production of power, like production of everything else, is governed by the motive of profit maximization, and because a higher cost of production eats into the profits, the capitalist owners are always after cost-cutting measures. Hence it is futile to expect that the capitalist rulers will take any initiative in adopting hazard-free scientifically tested production processes. Rather, they will under this or that plea persist with the production processes that fetch them maximum profit, no matter what adverse impact those have on the life and livelihood of the common people. So, people's movements would have to raise the demand for the adoption of an energy plan that will bring maximum benefit to them with the least hazard.

Power can be generated from various sources : (i) fossil fuels: coal, oil and gas, (ii) water power, (iii) nuclear energy, (iv) renewable sources like solar energy, wind power, tidal energy, geothermal energy, etc. A concern is expressed that the fossil fuel resource of the world is limited and is going to be exhausted soon. Secondly, the burning of them causes the emission of green house gases which is leading to global warming and, if unchecked, may ultimately result in an environmental catastrophe. In addition, they cause air pollution and damage our health; the ash from burning pollutes the environment with various toxic substances. Hydroelectricity does not cause atmospheric pollution, but it poses other problems, like eviction of vast masses of people, submergence of large tracts of land, disturbance to the hydrological cycle and all these have adverse impact on human society. The proponents of nuclear power generation argue that the nuclear fuels have vast or even unlimited reserve, involve very little green house gas emission and nuclear fuels produce thousands of

times more energy per kilogram of material than coal, petroleum or natural gas. Typically 1 tonne of natural uranium would produce 44 gigawatt-hours of electricity (1 gigawatt is thousand megawatt). The production of the same amount of electrical power from fossil fuels would require the burning of over 20,000 tonnes of black coal or 8.5 million cubic metres of gas. But we have to also remember that the amount of fissionable material like uranium occurs in very small quantity in natural rocks and a very large quantity of ore will have to be mined and processed. Mining such huge quantities poses environmental problems. Nuclear power generation has also some serious problems associated with it. Unless effective and workable solution to the hazards associated with nuclear power are found and implemented, setting up many nuclear power plants would do more harm than good

### **Hazards of Nuclear Power Generation**

#### **(i) Hazards of Uranium Mining**

The problem of hazard starts with the mining of uranium ore. In addition to the harmful effects of any mining, like degradation of land from quarrying and waste dumping and contamination of ground water by mine effluents, uranium mining poses special hazards to the miners and the communities living nearby because of the radioactive nature of rocks and minerals. According to reports by the International Commission for Radiological Protection (ICRP), work-related deaths in uranium mines are estimated at 5,500 to 37,500 deaths per million workers in a year. In comparison, the deaths in the general manufacturing industry are estimated at 110 deaths per year per million workers and for the construction industry at 164 deaths per million workers per year. The mine workers are exposed to the radiation from radioactive uranium and radium, and radon gas emitted from the rocks and ores.

At the mine site after the uranium is chemically removed, the leftover piles of materials or uranium tailings still contain radioactive products. If this radioactive waste is left on the surface and is allowed to dry out, it can blow in the wind and be deposited on vegetation far away,

entering the food chain. Or it can wash into rivers and lakes and contaminate them. There is no executable technological method to store millions of tonnes of this radioactive tailings safely forever, and keep it out of the environment. The tailings, most of which are in the form of a slurry, are dumped in large surface impoundments ("tailings dams"). The embankments forming these impoundments are earth-fill dams. Dam failure would pose a great danger of radioactive contamination of the environment. There have been many uranium tailings disasters in Australia, Canada and the US.

In India, within 5 km of the Jaduguda uranium mine in Jharkhand, environmental scientists fear that 30,000 people are being exposed to radiation. Not much documentation is available on the radiation levels in the Jaduguda mines, the tailings pond or in the neighbouring villages. Hence it is almost impossible to gauge how much radioactive material is circulating within the environment and how it is entering into the food chain. The limited data available indicate that though the people of Jaduguda may not be exposed to 'high' levels of radiation, they have lived here for more than 30 years with low-level radiation, which acts in subtle and not fully understood ways. The mine authorities display a most irresponsible and careless attitude towards handling or storing the radioactive materials. The uranium ores are transported in open trucks. The mine tailings lie unprotected at several places and the villagers live close to the tailings ponds. Roads and buildings are being built with tailings, thereby spreading contamination. Water from the main tailings pond travels in open channels through the town, ultimately flowing into the river and contaminating it. Mr. H. Koide, a Japanese researcher from the Research Reactor Institute, Kyoto University found high radioactive contamination around the tailings pond. At some places the strength of pollution is 10 to 100 times higher compared to a place without contamination. The permissible limit for radiation exposure is 1mSv per year. At the tailings pond the air-gamma dose exceeds 10mSv/year, and in the villages it exceeds 1mSv/

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## Nuclear Power Generation

# Why is government so secretive on safety-security concerns

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year. The soil surrounding the tailings ponds is contaminated by uranium. The radon value in tailings ponds is 12 times the value in the normal environment, and it seems that the contamination of radon has spread from the tailing pond into villages. An environment committee of Bihar Legislative Council, headed by Gautam Sagar Rana, had pointed out in its report the health hazards to which miners working in the uranium mines and the tribals residing close to the tailings ponds are exposed. Children in the 15 villages surrounding the uranium mines show congenital deformities and over 60 per cent of the workers in the mines and manning the tailings ponds are afflicted with serious ailments like chronic skin disease, cancers, TB, bone and brain damage, kidney damage, nervous system disorders, congenital deformities, nausea, blood disorders and other chronic diseases. A health survey in 1998 indicated that in seven villages within 1km of the tailings dams 47% of the women reported disruptions to their menstrual cycle, and 18% said they had suffered miscarriages or given birth to stillborn babies in the last 5 years. 30% reported some sort of fertility problem. This is how workers interests are sacrificed to mine the uranium ore.

### (ii) *Problems of Radioactive Waste Disposal*

The disposal of the highly radioactive spent fuels in nuclear power plants is a big problem. A large nuclear reactor produces 3 cubic metres (25-30 tonnes) of spent fuel (high level waste) each year. The waste contains materials which show both short-term radioactivity and long-term radioactivity lasting for hundreds of thousands of years. So far no country has been able to provide a satisfactory solution to the problem of long-term storing of this high level radioactive waste. Leaking of radioactivity from the spent fuel would have disastrous consequences for the people living in the surrounding areas and the effect would persist for many generations. Most of the current proposals for dealing with highly radioactive nuclear waste involve burying it in deep underground sites. But it is impossible to predict whether the storage containers, the

store itself, or the surrounding rocks will offer enough protection to stop radioactivity from escaping into the surroundings in the long term. In France which has gone for nuclear power generation in a big way there have been incidents of leakages from storage dumps into the ground water and contaminating the latter. In Washington State of USA highly radioactive nuclear waste from an old nuclear reactor site at Hanford had seeped into the ground over several decades and polluted the Columbia river at a point which is more than 30 miles away.

In addition to the above, there is a volume of low-level radioactive waste in the form of contaminated items like clothing, hand tools, water purifier resins etc. There are numerous examples of low level waste leaking radiation into the environment. Drigg in the UK and CSM in Le Hague, France are just two examples. It has been suggested that in the future 4th generation reactors the radioactive waste would be burnt in the reactor itself and this would minimize the problem of waste disposal. But this has still to see the light of the day.

Decommissioning nuclear facilities will also create large amounts of radioactive wastes. This is an additional worry. Many of the world's nuclear sites will require monitoring and protection for centuries after they are closed down. But no serious thought is given to it.

In India the radioactive waste disposal is a particularly worrying problem, because of a soft attitude of the administration to enforcing statutory norms and regulations, and paying scanty heed to the harmful effects on the people. This makes the issue of radioactive waste disposal at nuclear power plants a matter of such serious concern.

### (iii) *Safety and Security Concerns*

The nuclear power generation process produces radioactive radiation, and contrary to the vocabulary of the proponents of nuclear power, there is no "safe" dose of radiation. Even the lowest level of radiation exposure may cause biological damage and genetic mutation. It is true that reactors are so designed that radiation is not leaked out. But like all machines nuclear reactors are and will always be vulnerable to accidents resulting in meltdown of the core or other

large radiation releases. Accidents in nuclear power plants may and do happen due to malfunctioning of machine components, worn out or defective parts, accidents in transporting of radioactive materials, human error, etc. Some reactors have design defects which make them prone to malfunctioning of components. Similarly ageing reactors are vulnerable to failure of some component or the other. Further, as the nuclear power generating process is complex with many interconnected components, all possible accident modes cannot be predicted. A study by academicians at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), USA, concluded that with the global growth scenario of 1000 GW nuclear power generation by 2050, during the period 2005-2055, both the historical and the Probability Risk Assessment (PRA) data show that the expected number of core damage accidents with current technology is four. B. Smith, in a study sponsored by the Institute of Energy and Environment Research (USA) found that for the 2,500 reactors projected to be online in 2050, there would be nearly a 50-50 chance that three or more accidents will have occurred around the world by mid-century.

The devastation caused by nuclear accidents is enormous. The nuclear accidents at Three Mile Island in 1979, USA and at Chernobyl in Soviet Russia in 1986 are well known. Apart from these two well known incidents near disaster situations happened several times in reactors in Japan and other countries. In March, 2006, safety reviews found that several nuclear plants in the United States have been leaking water contaminated with tritium into the ground, which would eventually drain into rivers and contaminate them.

The safety situation in Indian reactors is shocking. India is the only country in the world where nuclear research and plutonium production occur inside or near heavily populated areas. The radiation doses borne by personnel working in Indian nuclear establishments are often 10 times greater than those in the United States, Europe, Japan and most other places in the world, and our nuclear establishment is quite nonchalant about it. Serious accidents and shortcomings have been reported

starting from 1969 at all the atomic power stations. There have been allegations that unscrupulous manufacturers with strong political connections sell defective parts for building or repairing reactors (*Asia Times Online*). The safety violations in the Indian nuclear programme range from hazardous mining practices, near meltdowns, heavy water leaks, turbine-blade failures, moderator system malfunctions, inoperable emergency core cooling systems, coolant pumps catching fires, structure failures, to flooding incidents and nuclear reactor exhausts adversely affecting aquatic ecosystems. An Indian atomic-power expert, Dharendra Sharma, estimates that Indian nuclear industry has suffered from "300 incidents of a serious nature... causing radiation leaks and physical damage to workers." The Atomic Energy Regulatory Board (AERB) under the chairmanship of Dr. Gopalakrishnan had compiled more than 130 nuclear issues affecting the safety of the nuclear establishments in the country. So far any major disaster has been averted, but there is no guarantee that this will not happen in future.

The Indian government is conspicuously secretive about leaks and accidents from the reactors—a fact resented by even top nuclear scientists of the country. In the establishments of the DAE everything is shrouded in a veil of secrecy and kept out of the public eye. So we are not sure how strictly safety requirements are followed. Dr A. Gopalakrishnan, former Chairman of the AERB said, "The DAE wants the government and the people to believe that all is well with our nuclear installations. I have documentary evidence to prove that this is not so. A national debate is needed." In 2001, S P Sukhatme, another former Chairman of the Atomic Energy Regulatory Board had warned after an accident in which tritium-contaminated coolant leaked from a reactor, that unless the very design of some of the nuclear reactors is drastically modified, India must be ready for the worst to come. His warning has been ignored.

We should remember that in a capitalist society like ours, earning profit is an overriding motive for production. From their urge of

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# Nuclear power generation is not inexpensive either

Contd. from page 3

earning maximum profit the owners, be they the state or private individuals, often compromise with safety, and find various ways and excuses for not spending money on safety measures. The agencies which are supposed to enforce the regulations delay or deny the enforcement to protect the financial interests of nuclear plant owners and operators. The Bhopal disaster, where 25000 people were directly killed and lakhs suffered and are still suffering from the aftermath, has once again brought out the culpability of the owners in causing the disaster, but it is the people who have to bear the brunt. The Government, instead of providing succour to the afflicted people, totally succumbed to the interest of the corporate house, and allowed the perpetrators responsible for the heinous crime of mass murder to go scot-free. The same attitude is reflected in the Civil Nuclear Liability Bill (*details of which we shall take up in a later article*) which would protect the foreign suppliers in case of a nuclear

disaster, even if there is gross negligence or design defect on their part.

Another point is that nuclear reactors are highly vulnerable to deliberate acts of sabotage, terrorist attack or attacks by missiles or bombs. An incident of tritium contamination alleged to be sabotage has recently happened in Kaiga in Karnataka. Even if for arguments' sake it is conceded that adequate safeguards can be instituted to prevent any catastrophic outcome from accident, negligence, mismanagement or natural disaster, vulnerability to hostile action still has to be taken into account. A successful attack on a nuclear plant can be incalculably catastrophic. Plutonium is a highly hazardous radioactive material, and if we go for breeder reactors in a big way, it would be transported in increasing quantities around the country. The potential diversion of even a small fraction of this material would significantly increase the threat of nuclear terrorism. The more capitalism is becoming decadent, moribund, and crisis-ridden, the more aggravated becomes

the penury and misery, wretchedness and destitution of the people. In the absence of proper political understanding and direction, people's wrath and indignation are often being channelized along the track of mindless destructive fury. Even big imperialist powers are sponsoring terrorism to disorient people, and to prevent them from uniting on the basis of correct anti-capitalist revolutionary line, and are thus perpetuating a climate of panic. With imperialism-capitalism unbridled in a world marked by the absence of mighty socialist peace camp and weakened revolutionary working class movement, terrorism would persist and so would vulnerability of the nuclear plants to terrorist strike.

## Economics of Nuclear Power Generation

In taking recourse to nuclear power generation a main hurdle relates to hazards including waste disposal, but at the same time it needs also to be stated that the claim that its generation is cheapest is not at all true. Nuclear power plants may be cheap to run but are very expensive to build. In 2003 and 2004 MIT and University of Chicago respectively sponsored projects to evaluate the real cost of electricity from nuclear power versus pulverized coal plants and natural gas combined cycle plants. The figures for 40-year economic life of the plants and 85% capacity factor are as chart below :

Contd. on page 7

Peak levelled cost of electricity		
	MIT (2003)	University of Chicago (2004)
Nuclear	6.7 US cents/KW-hr*	6.2 US cents/KW-hr*
Pulverised coal	4.2 "	4.1 "
Combined Cycle Gas Turbine :		
Low Gas price	3.8 "	3.5 "
High Gas price	5.6 "	4.5 "

\* Overnight capital cost \$ 2000/KW in MIT study and \$ 1500/KW in Chicago study

## Netaji Centre for Socio-cultural Studies inaugurated in Kerala



Netaji Centre for Socio-cultural Studies was inaugurated at Harippad, Alapuzha District in Kerala on 8 July 2010. The study centre under the auspices of Kerala State Committee of SUCI(C) is meant to function as a centre of socio-cultural studies and researches. There will be facilities to hold workshops, seminars, study classes, etc. by not only organizations related to SUCI(C) but all progressive organizations. Action committees or struggle committees of different mass movements and similar platforms can avail of the facilities of this centre. The inaugural meeting was addressed by

Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, Member, Polit Bureau, SUCI(C). It had Comrade C. K. Lukose, Central Committee member and Secretary, Kerala State Committee, SUCI(C) in the chair. Dr.N.A. Karim, renowned educationist and former Pro-VC, Kerala University, Dr. Geevarghese Mar Kurilose Metrapolita, a leading figure in the movements of downtrodden people of the state, Kanayi Kunhiraman, famous sculptor, Laha Gopalan, leader of the historic Chengara movement by landless agricultural workers for cultivable land and Prof. Ambalapuzha Gopakumar, writer, were the distinguished guests of the

programme. Comrades M.N. Sreeram, member, Karnataka State Committee of SUCI(C), Rengasamy, Secretary, Tamilnadu State Organizing Committee and C.H. Murahari, member, Andhra Pradesh State Organizing Committee of SUCI(C) were also present as guests. Many prominent personalities who are in the forefront of different people's movements in the state participated and they made felicitations. After the inaugural meeting, started the "Sarga Sangamam", a meet of creative writers, presided over by Comrade Parthasarathi Varma. It was inaugurated by Prof. Ettumanoor

Somadasan, well known poet. Poet Kureepuzha Sreekumar was the guest in chief in the programme. Manarkadu Sasikumar, M.M. Kemal, M. Krishanakumar, K. Prasannakumar and Ms Mymoon took part in the programme. Then there was a seminar on "Renaissance in Kerala: History and present day tasks" presided over by Dr. V. Venugopal. Dr.Rajan Gurukkal, Vice Chancellor, Mahatma Gandhi University and a well known historian delivered the keynote address. K.Bhaskaran and G. S. Padmakumar took part in the discussion on the topic. Mass songs were presented by Kerala AIDYO music squad.

## Mindless Killings by Khap Panchayats

# Rise up to resist the barbarism

While it is expected that as the society progresses, the thinking of the human beings will be moulded and refined towards increased rationality to make life better and higher, spate of events in the country which those saddled in power often boast of as the “biggest democracy”, points exactly opposite to that. Of late, right thinking, progressive people are much aggrieved and concerned over the way irrationalism and blindness are gripping people’s mind. A large section of the populace – both in urban and rural areas, and illiterate or educated, notwithstanding – seems to regress to the dark medieval days of the past. In face of mounting problems in every walk of life and in the name of religious obligations though completely bereft of any moral values and ethics, that religion once gave birth to, there is a growing tendency among people to believe in occult and obscure thoughts and practices such as are manifest in putting on sacred threads and amulets or in tending to rely on the weird and irrational practices like witchcraft or sorcery to ward off the evil and deal with life’s problems rather than on logic and reasoning; in resorting to palmistry and astrology – leaving aside the cult of science that should have characterized a modern life! People in tens of thousands are rushing to this or that temple to offer money, material even their hair in the hope of blessings of god or goddess, are running in a frenzy to witness ‘milk being drunk’ by the image of ‘deity’ Ganesh or assembling to witness and hail a witch-hunt or *sati*, eulogizing revival of the bestial “practice of *sati*”, so on and so forth.

Along with such irrational practices, the saner section of people cannot but be alarmed at an increasing erosion of values and human qualities among the people. Every other day, murder, rape, battery, domestic violence – all such crimes are being perpetrated particularly against women – perpetrators often being the near and dear ones. Brothers are killing sisters, parents are killing their own progenies. A couple was electrocuted by the girls’ parents and tortured to death because they married against the wishes of their parents. A Delhi boy shot to death his sister, her husband and another

cousin reportedly on account of marriage and love – relations disapproved by the family. At Jhumri Tilaiya-Koderma in Jharkhand state, a mother was reported to have strangled her educated journalist daughter to death because she, being a Brahmin, developed a love relationship with a non-Brahmin boy. Female foeticide cases are rising at alarming proportion. Children not even in their teens, were alleged to have molested an even smaller girl and killed her later to suppress evidence. A host of such other incidents of gross violation of humanity meted out by kith and kin may be cited to no end.

The worst of such savagery is manifested in the growing menace of khap-panchayats and their heinous execution of so-called ‘honour killing’. Singling out couples, who seek to marry in the same ‘gotra’ – out of ‘gotra’ or caste – citing protection of ‘caste’, ‘community’ or ‘village’ honour and customs as the pretext – verdicts are passed in ‘kangaroo’ courts constituted by the ‘panchayats’ on their own design – the so-called ‘errant’ couples are condemned to death and execution carried on. If necessary, they are hounded across the states, captured and killed right there or are brought back to the native place to face their ordeal. A Haryana couple who belonged to the same ‘gotra’ were shot to death, as they had incurred the wrath of the khap-panchayat of their village. In another incident – a medical practitioner, was brutally beaten to death, since he had married a girl from the adjacent village. Considered to be ‘siblings’, the Kangaroo court set up by the panchayat pronounced death sentence upon him in March 2009 and his execution took place in June. Again on 21st April, 2009, 20 houses of Dalits belonging to the *Balmiki* community of Mirchpur, Haryana were burnt down, allegedly by upper caste hoodlums at the beckoning of khap panchayat resulting in the death of a handicapped girl of 18 and her aged ailing father.

No longer limited to upper-caste *jats* of Northern India (of states like Haryana, Rajasthan, Western UP, Punjab, etc) as it was to begin with, khap panchayats are responsible for many of these honour-killings as

they are ostentatiously termed. They are now erupting like wild-fire in other parts of India as well – southern and eastern states inclusive (not excluding states like West Bengal, ruled by so-called Marxist parties like the CPI (M)). These khap-panchayats, unconstitutional as they are, are even challenging the laws of the land – demanding perpetrators when booked, be released; are getting mobilized against court orders adverse to their interests and are even raising their audacious voice in demand of changes in Acts to suit their own caste or ‘gotra’ norms (e.g. a change in the Hindu Marriage Act to have, same-‘gotra’ marriages banned).

Such brutality and blindness on any pretext – be it preservation of ‘caste’ ‘family’ or ‘village honour’ – threatening people’s life and dignity, are robbing the saner section of people of their nights’ sleep. They are led to question why, even 63 years after independence should such be the plight of people in India? What then is our government doing in such a situation? Why do we find government executives inactive when such horrifying experiences stun the people and pose serious challenges to their safety and security? Isn’t it a criminal act, too, not to take required drastic measures against the perpetrators, but just to limit governmental responsibility to making some formal protests? Not only that, tacit support, even open support is reportedly extended by those in power. Members of legislative bodies, Parliament of the Assemblies, politicians, firebrand inside legislative houses or in election campaigns, or local social elites are shamelessly standing for the perpetrators of these crimes, obviously with their eyes to keeping their power base, that is their vote banks, in tact. Thus, Congress MP from Kurukshetra – Navin Jindal has reportedly volunteered to mediate between khap panchayats and the government to ‘carry the message and sentiments’ of these bodies to his party and the parliament. He was even reported to have praised them for their ‘yeomen service’ to the society! Haryana chief minister Bhupinder Singh Hooda, earlier diplomatically reticent on issues like ‘same gotra’ marriages, was later reported to remark that he was also opposed to

the same. Mr Hooda re-iterated that the Khaps had been doing social work for centuries and people there are by and large happy with their functioning! Is this attitude anything else than a criminal indulgence to a heinous social crime where innocent persons are murdered in cool brain? As to the Judiciary – it too is, as of now, content to limit its concern to issuing some lukewarm warnings only!

Things taking such a turn, move, those concerned to ask, why should our social life be overcast with such acts of reaction and revivalism even now, well into the 21st century? Should we have not rid ourselves of all those social evils which might have been typical features of dark ages of feudal society in pre-independence India fraught with blindness, superstitions, occultism and obscurantism?

A glimpse back into the past shows that, it was with the aim of uprooting these social maladies, thereby cleansing the society of these and freeing people from their shackles, as well as the aim of establishing bourgeois humanist thoughts and values, democratic norms that upheld equality of man irrespective caste, creed, religion, language etc., that the stalwart luminaries of Renaissance movement of India – Raja Rammohan, Vidyasagar, Vivekananda, Jyotirao Phule, Rabindranath, Subraminya Bharati, Premchand, Jyotiprosad Agarwal, Saratchandra, Nazrul and others of different states fought in their own respective ways through their life to generate movements within the society. Literature was replete with pathetic tales of wretched condition of people falling victims of these feudal oppression and torture; they were meant to create an urge in readers to rise up to end with a society that nurtured and held such crimes, though symptoms of maladies generating from these prevailed very much in the then society. The freedom movement of our country against the British imperialist rule that looked ahead for a free, democratic India followed and ran side by side with this current of Renaissance and the great freedom fighters like Netaji Subhaschandra Bose, Bhagat Singh and the revolutionaries making supreme sacrifice at the altar of freedom movement

*Contd. on page 6*

## Khap Panchayat rulings

# Moribund capitalism abetting this horrendous crime on humanity

*Contd. from page 5*

envisioned India to develop as a modern nation, where the dignity and honour of humanity would be recognized; everyone would be known by his or her own worth as a human being irrespective of caste, creed or religion. The question that hovers around then is that: More than six decades after independence, the same maladies, the heinous cruelties, the same irrationality putting blind faith on outdated inhuman custom and practices raise their ugly head, take innocent lives and keep on spreading out in the country with social and moral support of a section of people including both commoners and people in power.

The answer must be sought in the course of the Indian freedom movement and the accompanying cultural movement, which were directed against feudalism and imperialism, yet could not establish humanism and democracy firmly in the society.

In his brilliant analyses made on several occasions, Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, one of the eminent Marxist thinkers of the present era, delineated this course elaborately. He made it clear that in India, the process of formation of nation had started at a time, when capitalism, as a world social force had not only entered into its moribund stage and had lost its revolutionary character, but also had become definitely anti-revolution. The proponents of democracy were then curbing democracy for people of other countries to establish their colonies in the latter. The Indian national capital, too, was a part and parcel of this decadent world capitalist system. Also it grew under the tutelage and domination of foreign finance capital with feudal relations surrounding it. As a result, it had a stunted growth. The nationalist section of the Indian bourgeoisie was naturally stirred into the freedom movement and came to the lead the latter, because, the imperialist rule stood as an obstacle in the path of establishing its class rule based, in any case, upon exploitation of the Indian people. At the same time, it lacked the revolutionary fervour the bourgeoisie had during the early days of democratic revolution in western countries. Rather, in this era of imperialism and proletarian

revolution, the same bourgeoisie were mortally afraid of revolutionary mass struggles against imperialism, as that would also remove the bourgeoisie from the leadership of the freedom movement and would thus shatter all possibilities of establishing a capitalist rule in independent India. Antagonism with imperialism and mortal fear of people's revolutionary struggle, made the bourgeoisie play a reformist oppositional role against both imperialism and feudalism marked with compromise to anyhow wrest power. Thus, the Indian bourgeoisie could not and did not carry out the tasks of social and cultural revolutions essential for the democratization of society and complete merger of people into one single modern nation, cutting across religion, caste, creed, language, race and all such other divisive traits. The uncompromising fight against feudalism and also imperialism that were initiated by the stalwarts of the Indian in the early days and were reflected in the later years through petty bourgeois revolutionary trends of armed struggles in politics and truly secular humanist thoughts and values upheld by people like Saratchandra, Nazrul and others, could not gain dominance over the leading bourgeois compromising trend. Thus, Indian people emerged into nation politically, but, for failure on the part of the leadership remained socially and culturally divided into different communities based upon those divisive traits.

The imperialist rulers fully aware of this weakness and compromising role of the Indian bourgeoisie further played upon it to serve their interest of prolonging their rule. What was more pathetic for the nation was that the Indian capitalist class which assumed power after independence did not take the task of unifying people cutting across the deadly divisive traits. On the contrary, faced with their unassailable crisis brought about from ruthless capitalist exploitation, and manifest through ever-increasing poverty, unemployment, social and cultural degeneration, rampant corruption, political instability, the ruling class and the political parties subservient to them, kept these divisive traits alive with tacit moral and social support and even with direct

indulgence and fomentation, incited people into fratricidal communal clashes, caste conflicts, and now these heinous honour killings. The big bourgeois parliamentary parties or their regional counterparts or offshoots, and not excluding the social democratic parties wearing a Marxist cloak like CPI-CPI(M) all filed up to serve this class design of the Indian capitalists with a view to meeting, none else than, their petty parliamentary ends and greed for power and pelf. The net result is the pathetic scenario, where innocent couples are brutally killed, even butchered under the very nose of the rule of law prevailing in the country, and with tacit social and moral support extended from even those in power. Their only fault was that they had loved each other and wanted to lead a happy married life, even though they had belonged to different religions or castes, or in many of the present cases, to the same 'gotras', that the self-styled guardians of the Khap Panchayats hold as immoral.

The situation can not but cause deep anguish and pain in right-thinking and democratic-minded people. They must demand of the government to get out of its inaction to mete out exemplary heavy punishment to the offenders taking a toll of human lives from these honour killings and other caste or religion related issues. At the same time, they must not fail to note that this spate of criminal affront on humanity and life comes over and above the ever-deepening all-out social-cultural-economic-

political crisis of the Indian capitalist system, the burden of which the ruling class and their subservient governments, always push on to the common people of all walks of life to bear. It is pulverizing them to the ground, making them bleed white and breeding all social evils and maladies like the present ones of honour killing. So, people, in their turn, face no alternative but to develop and strengthen massive countrywide united movements of people from all walks of life and irrespective of caste, creed and religion on each and every burning problems of their life, under correct leadership that would make them aware that it is capitalism which is breeding all these evils and need be overthrown, a leadership that would imbibe them with an ideology and culture that do not seek to end in earning parliamentary gains and change in government, in petty immediate gains centring round their immediate demands but help them fight a sustained mass struggle on the edifice of higher culture, morality and ethics against a mighty enemy. The long arduous course of that sustained struggle notwithstanding, people cannot keep their eyes shut and their conscience mute at the grievous honour killings. It should dawn upon every right thinking people that even one single incidence of such a shameful event not just takes lives, it brings a disgrace to the nation that wipes out the century-long efforts of the stalwarts of our past for whom we feel real pride and honour.

## **School of Politics at Tamilnadu**

The Tamilnadu State Organising Committee organised a 3-day State level School of Politics at the Vaigai Dam from June 26 to 28. The School was conducted by Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, Politburo and Central Committee member of the Party.

Comrades from the various districts of Tamilnadu participated in the School. Comrade Chakraborty laid down the fundamentals of Dialectical and Historical Materialism over the first two days in a way that all found to be very lucid and understandable. On the last day he dealt with the questions of organisation and various aspects of life struggle. He ended by explaining to the house the urgent need for comrades to equip themselves

ideologically, politically and culturally so as to work for speedy building up of Party and its mass organisations in order to discharge our historical responsibility, as the genuine communist party in India, of leading the working class and toiling masses of the country to the overthrow of the present rotting and exploitative capitalist system through anti-capitalist socialist revolution in the country, and in that process, discharging our role in the international communist movement against imperialism. Comrade A Rengasamy presided, with Comrade A Anavarathan translating Comrade Chakraborty's talk into Tamil over the first two days, and Comrade R Jeyapaul on the last day.



## Ulterior motive of Nuclear weaponisation cleverly suppressed

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These costs do not include the very substantial waste disposal and decommissioning costs for the nuclear power plants. A later study in 2007 fixes a higher cost for nuclear power generation. The figures in the above table would be different in other countries depending upon the prices of coal, construction cost etc.

In India at 1997-98 price level, a nuclear plant would cost about Rs. 5.232 crore/MW, compared to Rs. 3.75 crore/MW for a thermal plant. M. V. Ramana and his associates compared the actual costs of generating electricity at the Kaiga atomic power station and the Raichur Thermal Power Station (RTPS) VII – both plants having similar size and vintage – using the standard discounted cash flow methodology. They showed that for a wide range of realistic parameters, nuclear power is significantly more expensive than thermal power. The atomic energy establishment claims that the Prototype Fast Breeder Reactor (PFBR) which requires Rs. 3500 crore investment, would supply electricity at Rs 3.22 per unit (KWhr) to the power grid. Even then thermal power would be cheaper. The NTPC renovated a 20-year old thermal plant of the Orissa SEB near Talcher to give power to the grid at Rs. 1.30 per unit.

A further disadvantage of a nuclear power plant is that its lead time for construction is at least 7-10 years as against 4 years for coal, 2 years for natural gas, and 8-12 months for a wind farm. Not only that, nuclear power plants in India have an infamous history of construction delay, cost overruns, frequent breakdowns and stoppages. As an example, the Kaiga I and II plants were to start production in 1994 with an investment of Rs. 730.72 crore. Production actually started in 1999, with the cost having overrun to Rs. 2896 crore. A report from 1998 states that the Indian nuclear plants are operating at less than 40 per cent of their combined designed capacity. That means, with an installed capacity of 2180 MW in 1998, less than 872 MW of power was actually produced (B. K. Subbarao, *Manushi*, Issue 10). Yet India had already invested more than Rs. 80,000 crore on nuclear power plants.

### Rational Energy Planning

In India the predominant mode of power generation today is thermal followed by hydel. India has seven per cent of global reserves of coal, providing 56 per cent of India's commercial energy supply. It is true that in the context of the hazard of global warming coal based power plants emit the greenhouse gas CO<sub>2</sub>, while the nuclear reactors emit very little CO<sub>2</sub>. But it is now possible to considerably reduce CO<sub>2</sub> emission in coal-fueled electricity generation by adopting clean technology, like combined cycle gas turbine etc. India is also well endowed with renewable sources of energy. A 2006 estimate gives the potential for wind power at 46,000 MW; small hydro-power at 15,000 MW; biomass power/co-generation at 19,500 MW and waste-to-energy at 4,200 MW, making a total of 83,700 MW (Figures from Global Energy Network Institute). Of these, only 13 per cent has been exploited so far. India has unlimited solar power and ocean energy, but is unable to exploit these due to lack of sufficient Research and Development.

However, the Indian bourgeois government without paying due attention to any other source is bent upon setting up nuclear power plants. It has already invested more than Rs. 80,000 crore on nuclear power plants. At present, 25 percent of our energy budget goes to the Department of Atomic Energy (DAE) which runs the nuclear power plants, but these account for far less than 3 per cent of total power output. Even if the targets are met, nuclear power would contribute only about 8-10% of the projected electricity capacity in 2020, and about 20% in 2052. There is thus little chance of nuclear electricity becoming a significant source of power for India anytime over the next several decades. The present hype about going for nuclear power to meet the country's energy requirements is merely to hoodwink the people and divert their attention from the real issues in the energy scenario and the nuclear industry.

All governments (Congress, Janata, BJP, at the Centre and even the CPI (M) which rules in three states) have favoured nuclear energy and the DAE's budgets have always been high. After the 1998 nuclear weapons tests the DAE's budget has

increased from Rs. 18.4 billions in 1997-98 to Rs. 55 billions in 2006-07, i.e., more than doubled even in real terms. The high allocations for the DAE have come at the cost of promoting other, more sustainable, sources of power. In 2002-03, for example, the DAE was allocated Rs. 33.5 billions, in comparison to a mere Rs. 4.7 billions allocated to the Ministry of Non-conventional Energy Sources (MNES). There has been no intention, let on any move towards, evolving an integrated composite plan of energy production. If the Government was really serious about meeting the country's energy requirements it should have effectively pursued the policy of employing clean technology in thermal plants to significantly reduce pollution, and aggressively promoted research on developing and improving the technologies for utilizing renewable sources, like wind power, solar energy etc. In Denmark wind turbines generate more than 20% of the total electricity production. In Germany the installed capacity of wind power generation is more than 22000 MW in 2007, and wind power is about 6% of Germany's total power production. The successive governments in India, on the contrary spend mind-boggling sums on nuclear reactors, but do not make even remotely comparable investment in developing and promoting other sources of power.

### Why the rulers' insistence on nuclear power?

What is the reason for this governmental emphasis of nuclear power generation, even though it is clear there are less hazardous and economically more viable options for power generation? While country after country has abandoned breeder reactors as unsafe and uneconomical, why is the DAE stubbornly insisting on the same technology for power generation? To seek an answer to the question, one has to keep in mind the link between nuclear reactors and nuclear armaments production and the character of the Indian bourgeois state controlling the production process.

Every state that has a nuclear power capability has the wherewithal to obtain nuclear material usable in a nuclear weapon. Almost all countries use the reactors for nuclear weapons production.

Many capitalist-imperialist states that have active commercial nuclear power programmes, began their research with two objectives - electricity generation and the option to develop nuclear weapons. Expansion of nuclear power generation means opening up the way for large-scale nuclear armament.

India's nuclear programme has long been linked with nuclear weaponization. In fact, no less a person than Dr. Gopalakrishnan, former Chairman of Atomic Energy Research Board (AERB), maintains that the main motive of the programme is not to generate nuclear energy, but to obtain the by-product of the nuclear reactions - plutonium - which according to him is siphoned off for use in India's nuclear weapons. The plutonium for Pokhran I and Pokhran II came from Bhaba Atomic Research Centre (BARC) reactors, and the U-233 was produced in India's fast breeder reactor. India has indigenously developed a cost effective advanced technology to produce tritium which is used in the construction of fusion bombs and to boost the fission yields of thermonuclear weapons. But the nuclear establishment in India is thwarted in its grandiose plans for expansion because of the scarcity of nuclear fuels. The domestic uranium production is not enough to meet the needs of even the existing reactors. So, on the one hand the Government is desperately trying to open up new mines, set up new reactors, riding roughshod over the public protests, and on the other it is negotiating for an assured fuel supply through the recently concluded infamous Indo-US nuclear deal. The corporate interests in USA favour this deal because they see in it a possibility of huge and lucrative nuclear trade and armaments sale. As the construction of nuclear power plants is declining in the developed countries, that industry is turning its attention to markets like India for selling its technology. On the other hand, through this deal the Indian ruling class is aiming to gain access to the international nuclear market to develop its nuclear industry. The deal would permit India to retain a substantial capacity to produce fissile materials for use in nuclear weapons. The Indian ruling class has sought strenuously to keep as large a part of the nuclear complex as

*Contd. on page 8*

## Thwart sinister bourgeois class design

Contd. from page 7

possible outside the safeguards. Their intention is to ensure the international supply of nuclear fuels to run its existing and planned reactors for power generation, which would free its domestic uranium to be used in the reactors devoid of required safeguards for production of weapons grade fissile material, and allow a significant and rapid expansion in India's nuclear arsenal. This is clear from Prime Minister Manmohan Singh's statement in the Lok Sabha that the supply of nuclear fuel, technology, and reactors would serve to "enhance nuclear power production rapidly", but "there is nothing in the joint statement that amounts to limiting or inhibiting our strategic nuclear weapons program."

### Sinister class design of Indian bourgeoisie

So it is abundantly clear that thrust on nuclear power generation is not in any way aimed at mitigating the problems of power generation, nor is driven by any urge whatsoever for meeting people's need of energy. Rather, under the subterfuge of responding to growing need of power, it is a

sinister bourgeois design to boost nuclear armament development programme. The ruling Indian capitalist class has already attained imperialist character and is now a junior member in the imperialist camp. Its aspiration is to enhance its economic and military might and emerge as a regional superpower in South and Southeast Asia. From this stems its desire to develop nuclear weapons. With the Indo-US deal enabling Indian bourgeoisie to have access to international nuclear market, it is now keen on going full throttle on its nuclear armament programme, without caring a fig about the hazards for life and environment. Indian nuclear weaponization will not bring any benefit to the common people. It will heighten war tension, exacerbate conflicts between nations and trigger an arms race in the subcontinent. The ruling class will use these as excuses to increase the military budget and pass the economic burden on to the starving people. The need of the hour today is therefore to raise the demand of total nuclear disarmament by all countries for ushering in a nuclear-free world.

## SUCI (C) strongly condemns and demands immediate stoppage of US military exercise in Korean peninsula

Condemning the US military exercise in Korean peninsula, Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C) in a statement issued on 27 July, 2010 said :

US military manoeuvres with 8000 US and South Korean troops, 20 ships and submarines and 200 aircraft and Japanese observers off Korean peninsula, is an open threat to the North Korean Government to compel it to surrender to the dictates of US-South Korea-Japan axis. Everybody knows that North Korea's military preparations are absolutely for self-defence in view of the US imperialists' repeated aggressive threats to attack that country if it does not bow down to the conditions of US and US-backed South Korean regime. Even the recent warning from North Korea to this joint military exercises is nothing but a response to the war machinations of US-South Korea-Japan axis. The world knows that even the South Korean people are against US war threat and the continuation of US military bases in their country. They want peace and mutual respectful relations between North and South. Then for whose interest USA, defying the North and South Korean people's opinion against it, is provoking war tensions in that region ?

We strongly demand that this military exercise be immediately stopped and the contentious issues are resolved through North-South dialogue and discussions.

The Indian people should see through the sinister design of the Indian bourgeoisie. The so-called opposition of the CPI(M), CPI and their partners diverts attention from this crucial issue. All of them have openly declared that they are not against nuclear power but only against the Indo-US deal. They know very well the hollowness of this stand because domestic uranium

production is not enough to run the current reactors, not to speak of any expansion of nuclear power generating capacity. Support for nuclear power generation takes the plank away from their so-called opposition to the nuclear deal. Their deception is to be thoroughly exposed.

The people of India will have to decide on the issue of nuclear power generation keeping all these points in mind. There is no question of opposition for opposition's sake. However, today when there is no satisfactory solution to the problems of the very grave hazard from radioactive contamination at all stages of production from mining to generation and waste disposal, the proposals of indiscriminate setting up of nuclear power plants will have to be regarded as detrimental to the people's interest and therefore will have to be vigorously opposed, exposing at the same time the ulterior motive of the bourgeoisie to go for nuclear weaponization under the cloak of nuclear power generation. The situation calls for organized powerful people's movements throughout the country, thereby forcing the government to give up its attempt to undertake such moves against the people's expressed will.

## Huge rally and protest meeting in Bhopal



On various demands including immediate arrest of rising price line, withdrawal of increase in fuel tariff, stopping privatization and commercialization of education and health, continuation of government subsidy in power and agriculture, adequate compensation for the Bhopal Gas disaster victims and in denouncement of the despicable role of the government in the Bhopal Gas catastrophe, a big protest meeting was held at Neelam Park in Bhopal on 9 July last. Comrade Satyawar, Member, Central Committee, SUCI (C) was the main speaker. Other speakers included Comrades Uma Prasad, Madhya Pradesh State secretary, J. C Baroi, Bhopal district secretary and Pratap Samal, Delhi State secretary, Sunil Gopal, Ramavtar Sharma, Lokesh Sharma, Pradeep R. B., Rachna Agarwal, Chandra Patra, Mohan Patel and others. A delegation led by Comrade J C Baroi met the State Chief Minister and gave him a memorandum seeking immediate fulfilment of the demands.

Prior to the meeting, a big procession was taken out from Shahjani Park to the venue. People of Bhopal were inspired to see such a big protest rally under the auspices of the SUCI (C), the party making all-out efforts to channelize their genuine grievances and wrath along correct line of organized united democratic movement on a protracted basis.

## Observe 5th August Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Memorial Day in a befitting manner

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