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Special Economic Zone

Sinister bourgeois design for despotic exploitation of labour

After dismantling of socialist camp in early nineties following revisionist conspiracy aided and abetted by blood-sucking imperialist powers headed by US imperialists, the testament prescribed for 'spurt in economy' along the capitalist line had been the canorous formulation of Globalization-Liberalization-Privatization. In the unipolar world, the imperialist-capitalist rulers, in a botched effort to stimulate the effete capitalist system shivering on a tottering base and pretend to the people that everything was hunky-dory for them, went whole hog in zealous championing of this newly fangled doctrine. But now when the ugly underside of the formulation is no more remaining hidden from public cognition, a second buzzword 'Special Economic Zone' (SEZ) is made to strut about in finery.

Ruling bourgeoisie's ongoing fascination with SEZs

It is contended by the bourgeois propagandists that these SEZs are slated to be conclaves of excellence giving economy the desired boost and the precipitated prosperity would percolate to the pauperized millions bringing glitters to their fledgling life. Continuously the fables of the economic miracles SEZs are capable of bringing about are being dinned into the ear. The ruling Indian bourgeoisie, as inalienable part of world imperialism-capitalism is also on to the same mission. In fact, both the central as well as various state governments including those run by the pseudo-Marxists are on a spree to set up SEZs. A reference is made to the 'meteoric success' China achieved through extensive promotion of SEZs that attracted oodles of Foreign Direct Investment (FDI) and made that country one of the top most exporting countries of the world. The globalization lobby promoting the luscious dream of SEZs has their agents planted in all levels of administration as well as sanctum of vote-based political parties including those masquerading as Marxists and hence almost all the state governments

irrespective of hues and spurred by the policies of the central government have jumped on the wagon of SEZ. In fact they are vying with each other as to who could offer better facilities and concessions to the domestic as well as foreign monopoly capital in vending their respective states as the most sought after SEZ destination.

What is SEZ?

Before we proceed to find out the motive of the ruling bourgeois class and its henchmen in being so euphoric about the SEZs, we need to know what exactly an SEZ is. The first known instance of something like an SEZ was when Puerto Rico in 1947 set up industrial parks to attract investment from the US mainland. Ireland and Taiwan established their first SEZs in 1960s. But it was only after China under revisionist Deng Xiaoping leadership in the course of subverting socialism and bringing back capitalism set up mega SEZs in the 1980 that the concept gained global currency and now picked up pace of implementation. In essence, an SEZ is an enclave within a country that is treated as foreign territory for the purpose of tariff and duties. The units and realty

development within this enclave are provided with a host of tax exemptions and other financial as well as commercial benefits.

The governments run by the political parties devoted to serve the class interest of the ruling bourgeoisie are unleashing a concerted propaganda in the monopoly-controlled media that this much-trumpeted scheme of SEZ is poised to provide desired thrust to industrialization that in turn would bring about growth and prosperity of the common people. A rosy picture is being painted about generation of sizeable employment.

Existing labour laws are not applicable in the SEZs. So the employers in SEZs are under no obligation to stick to 8-hour duty, payment of minimum wage, grant of weekly rest or leave, guarantee of certain minimal civilized service conditions. Merrily they can appoint labour on contract. 'Hire and fire' is the cardinal principal. Even the workers are debarred from exercising their trade union rights. It is argued by the protagonists of SEZs that unless the capitalist investors and entrepreneurs are given all these fiscal and other relief, assured of 'congenial industrial environment free from labour unrest' and complete autonomy in regard to employment as well as disengagement of labour so as to guarantee the desired level of profit, they will not be motivated to set up industries particularly export-oriented industries or promote real estate. And not only that. Further pleading on the part of the governments is that since the

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SUCI severely criticizes central government for not lowering the petrol-diesel prices to the extent of fall in international oil tariff

Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement issued on 30-11-06 severely criticized the Congress-led UPA government for not lowering the retail prices of petrol and diesel to the extent the international oil tariff has recorded a fall. The meager reduction in domestic prices of petrol and diesel by 4% and 2% respectively when the international oil tariff has come down by 25% and that too after waiting so long since the global tariff recorded appreciable fall so as to enable the oil behemoths mint super profit in the intervening period, is nothing but an eyewash, observed Comrade Mukherjee. He added that this has been clearly done with an eye on the ensuing assembly elections in some of the states and expressed surprise at the sudden feel of concern on the part of the Congress supremeo for the plight of the poor. Comrade Mukherjee also regretted the despicable role of the CPI(M), CPI in endorsing this palpable stunt and called upon the people to organize democratic movement to force the central government bring down the domestic tariff to the bearing level of the people and compel the various state governments to lower the transport fare that had been substantially increased on the plea of spurt in the international oil price.

Crisis-ridden moribund capitalism is the stumbling block before Industrialization

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monopolists are investing capital to reap profits, they will naturally want the project sites to be in 'market friendly' locations and so if arable multi-crop lands are being demanded, those will have to be handed over to them at the cost of agriculture and by displacing the peasants.

Current SEZ scenario in India

In India, set up of Export Promotion Zones (EPZs), a precursor to present form of SEZ, started in 1965 under Congress regime with Kandla port in Gujarat. Subsequently, the new Export-Import policy introduced by the BJP-led NDA government in 2000 allowed creation of SEZs in the private and joint sectors. Eight of the existing EPZs were converted into SEZs and twelve more have come so far. Thereafter, permits for SEZs are being distributed like confetti. As many as 267 have so far received either formal or in-principle approval. Maharashtra, Karnataka, Andhra Pradesh, Haryana, Tamil Nadu and Gujarat account for more than two-thirds of all the SEZs approved so far. The CPI (M)-ruled West Bengal is planning to have six such SEZs with Indonesia-based infamous Salim group as investors in bulk of them.

A unit located in an SEZ in India, as per legislation passed in May 2005 and given effect to from February 2006, pays no service tax, no central excise tax, no customs duties on goods they import and no income tax for five years. Income tax payable in the next two years is only half of the total liability. Supplies to such units from domestic market are treated as exports, not just deemed exports, and get benefits like duty drawback scheme. There will be no routine custom shipment inspection, no licensing for production reserved for small-scale industries. Government ensures that electricity, water and such other requirement are made available to the SEZ units at nominal or no expense. Realty developers of SEZ also enjoy a 10-year tax holiday as well as 100% exemption on profits ploughed back. They are also permitted to seek without any string attached foreign investment for building satellite cities and allowed to sell plots on commercial basis. It is envisaged that on account of this plethora of waivers and concessions,

the government which often points at a cash-strapped exchequer for not being able to undertake public welfare measures at the desired scale and has already raised the amount of domestic public debt to Rs 30 trillion (Rs. 30 lakh crore), will lose around Rs 17,50,000 million of revenue. It is also apprehended that since SEZs are treated as foreign territory, companies in domestic areas, in absence of any appropriate legal embargo, could siphon off their profits to their related companies in the zones to earn tax breaks causing further loss of government revenue. An opinion is also aired by certain quarters that availability of so many fiscal exemptions and other benefits would also provoke many of the existing business units and industries to down shutters and shift to SEZs.

Hoax of industrialization

Let us now proceed to analyze the genesis of the SEZs from people's perspective. The fundamental question getting suppressed under this high-pitched propaganda is that is unfettered industrialization possible in the current third phase of intense general crisis of capitalism? If so, why is the industrial scenario so grim throughout the world with recession and stagnation assuming alarming proportion even in advanced imperialist-capitalist G-7 countries? Why the existing factories and establishments are getting closed throwing out millions out of job? Is it not that the situation has further worsened after introduction of capitalist globalization? While a few hundreds of skilled hands might have managed to secure jobs and that too mostly under stringent service conditions in some scattered capital-intensive units being established here and there, why is the number of unemployed now running into several millions, taking into account both the fresh job-seekers as well as those having lost jobs, swelling in geometric progression? The truth sought to be obfuscated is that crisis-plagued worn out stinking capitalist system is posing the stumbling block. It is this gasping capitalism that is breeding unemployment, precipitating all plight and penury, malaise and misery in the life of the people. Sunk in insoluble market crisis endemic of the system, the bourgeoisie, in desperate attempt to

stem the rot and somehow sustain its exploitative rule is bringing out one after another device to increasingly shift the burden on the toiling people and make them bleed white. The SEZ is its latest innovation in this regard. It is only the bootlickers and hirelings of the ruling bourgeoisie who can shamelessly dupe the people by saying that set up of SEZs, there can be amelioration of unemployment and improvement of life conditions of the common masses. So long capitalism is there, there can be no respite from this stifling situation. Experience shows that the erstwhile EPZs in Maharashtra or West Bengal did not see even a whit of industrialization or spurt in job creation.

Myth of employment generation in SEZs

Another big hoax is the story of huge employment potential in the SEZs. Most of the realtors want to set up IT and IT-enabled services in their SEZs. Even the multi-product SEZs would comprise capital-intensive industries like pharmaceuticals etc. where employment opportunity is extremely limited and that too for the skilled sophisticated hands only. Moreover, this much publicized IT boom is a bubble. Most of the IT firms are engaged in BPO (Business Process Outsourcing) business which is solely dependent on the orders from the rich imperialist countries. These large BPO clients like giant monopoly houses and MNCs outsource jobs to locations offering them cheapest labour and raw material at a particular point of time. If tomorrow any other country is found to be cheaper than India in handling this technology-driven operation, overnight the entire BPO jobs will migrate out of India turning the currently sprawling hubs into deserts. This is the harsh truth and instances are not in short supply either in the history of BPO sector. So the much ado about IT doing havoc in SEZs is a myth.

SEZs—a devise for most diabolic exploitation of labour

Next is the issue of keeping the SEZs out of the purview of labour laws. With the terms of engagement in units within SEZs running afoul of all established norms of employment including applicability of trade union rules, the workers are debarred from voicing protest by

statute and thereby subject to worst form of exploitation. So it is a calculated move on the part of the ruling bourgeoisie to freeze the trade union rights in this zone on the pretext of 'industrial peace'.

It may be recalled that as the international working class struggle grew and developed based on the invincible ideology of Marxism-Leninism, trade union movements got new content, new direction. Trade unions became platforms of intensifying class struggle against the ruling bourgeoisie. The workers in the course of legitimate trade union movements earned many legitimate rights. After Russian revolution, international working class movement got a fillip, forcing the owners to concede more and more rights to the workers. When socialist camp came into existence, this movement went to the peak and emancipation from the ruthless capitalist exploitation almost began to knock at the door. But then with the revisionists, the agents of the bourgeoisie, usurping the leadership of the international communist movement, the trend was reversed. These revisionist leaders instead of intensifying class struggles, charted out a course of tame surrender to the ruling capitalists, preached the theory of class-collaboration and class harmony and backstabbed the cause of the working people. So the working class struggle lost the fervour, became emasculated from within. There was further set back when as a sequel to this revisionist treachery and intrigue, the mighty socialist camp, the bulwark of international working class movement ceased to be in existence. Taking full advantage of this set back of international working class movement, the exploitative bourgeoisie pounced upon the workers and tore them apart. One after another the hard-earned trade union and other rights were being taken away to render the workers completely helpless before the totting gun of accentuated capitalist exploitation.

But the ruling bourgeoisie, extremely shrewd as it is, is aware that too much use of brutal force in snatching the workers' rights might trigger resistance. So it is better to create SEZ like hubs where existing labour laws will be made inoperative. Gradually, the number of SEZs will be increased to extend

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Wages for CPI(M) party whole-timers — Is fighting for a cause a venal ?

The CPI(M) leaders are worried. They complain of not getting required number of cadres for their party activities across the country. As the media report, they themselves admit that in the states where they are in governmental power, they manage the shortfall by arranging for employment for the cadres or the members of their families, using, or precisely misusing, the governmental power or resources. This has proven alluring and so sufficient number of cadres or supporters are seen to enlist themselves in the rank of the party or throng around it in these states! But in states where they are not in the government, providing employment is one form or the other remains largely out of scope. So, the party is in short supply of cadres there! To meet this crisis(!), the Central Committee of CPI(M) has reportedly sought out a solution in enhancing wages or remuneration for their cadres in different states. For, such are the feelings of the Central Committee, these days one cannot expect any service for the party in exchange of a nominal allowance of Rs.400-500 per month. So the Committee has proposed that the remuneration of whole-time cadres would be increased to between Rs.2500 and Rs.8000 per month in accordance with the different ranks of cadres (Source: *Ananda Bazar Patrika*, October 15, 2006 and *Hindustan Times*, October 30, 2006). Even in the states where they are in power, the same privilege would be extended to cadres, who could not be provided outright with jobs; they, too, would enjoy enhanced wages. All these cadres would also be given money for daily sundry expenses or contingencies, over and above any medical expenses incurred by them.

Obviously such an idea of enhancing wage or allowance for cadres to obtain their service, may claim novelty in communist movement, but certainly not respectability, because it is nothing different from the attitude of an employer, a capitalist who recruits his employees against higher wages for better returns. It has nothing to do with either patriotism, or fighting for communist cause. Rather, it smacks of grave concern for anybody who has the slightest feelings for people's movement. So, it demands that we give the issue a

brief, yet serious consideration.

We shall come later to how Marxists should look at this issue. For the present, let us recall that even in the days of democratic revolution, when the concept of democracy emerged in human society and political parties were formed to protect and serve interest of this or that section of people, the political activists were not the career seekers. On the contrary, those who engaged themselves in the democratic political activities, did it as self-less acts. Even the political parties did choose activists on this trait of their character. They selected their representatives for legislative, municipal or local bodies, not by offering them remuneration, but on the strength of their commitment to democracy. In every major struggle for democracy on the earth, be it in the French Revolution or the American War of Independence or elsewhere, we will find ample instances of this. Of course, there were deviations, betrayals or deceptions. But they were looked down upon, as they should have been. It was because the fight for democracy, for democratisation of society then stood for the progress of society as against the arch reactionary feudal autocracy. It was because the struggle for democracy was governed by the ideology of bourgeois humanism which accepted all men to be equal. Politics then was held as a noble profession. It was based on ideology; it was practised as a mission to fulfil. Thus, the same political ideology carried ingrained in it the coveted trait of patriotism, love for the country, the land, the people and the society. The self-less mission for democracy also meant a self-less service to the motherland. And, in all these cases, it was the ideology that acted as the drive that prompted people to fight for the cause. It was the course along which the ideology of humanism or nationalism made man move out of the narrow confines of his own self.

In India, too, it was no exception during the period of nationalist movement. Thousands of political activists joined the freedom movement. To fight for independence of the country, ungrudgingly and happily they forsook their educational or professional careers; they even left home, parting with their beloved

parents, spouse, children, relatives and friends. To them it was for a noble cause. To them, it was their sacred duty to dedicate themselves to this cause of the motherland. For this, they even sacrificed their lives, embraced gallows of the British imperialist rulers with a smiling face, raising the slogan of *Vande Mataram* in firm, unquivering voice. Did they ever do this for money? Could they even think of it? Impossible, it was debasing for them. They knew, they would have to give up everything for the freedom of their soil; to expect anything in return was sheer disgrace to them. The best elements of the land joined that freedom struggle for a cause, and for that only. They might have faced extreme hardship, penury and poverty, sufferings and privations. Still they kept on, engaged solidly in mobilizing people, organising movement and participating in them with joy and happiness, without expecting anything in return. They lived among the people and the people themselves took care of them. Thus, not to speak of the political activists, at the call of the leaders at many critical hours, even the common people, simple housewives would rush out with their mite, their ornaments and other belongings to submit them for the freedom movement. Only the lackeys of the rulers, the imperialists, the underlings and agents of the foreign exploiters, who chose to join politics against the people and their own motherland, would seek for money for their act of betrayal.

Such was the scene during our nationalist movement, as it was in the democratic revolutions of any other country. To reiterate, we tried to emphasize that it was the ideology of nationalism and humanism, which made Indian people rise up for the cause of independence of the country. Now, those who can think of employing cadres for a party against enhanced wages for better service, may come to argue that in those days it was possible to make people work for ideology, since there was the goal of achieving independence set before them. Independence achieved, now the same method does not work any more. Ideology has lost its role, it is exhausted. This speaks of ignorance of human history; it is a

totally wrong idea, if not a wilful distortion. At every point in history there was one or the other progressive ideology, that could set the society for the struggle for a progressive change. During the independence struggle, it was humanism and nationalism that ushered in progress. It is equally true now; ideology remains the crux even now. Only that we will have to search for the ideology of the day, on the basis of correct scientific thoughts and analysis.

Things started to change the other way round from the days of democratic revolutions, as capitalism in different countries gave birth to monopoly and then consolidated into imperialism. In the process, the exploitative system of capitalism became acutely crisis-ridden, utterly reactionary and thus decadent. The same bourgeoisie, which had once fought for freedom and democracy, for equality, liberty and fraternity, were then pouncing upon weaker countries, turning them into colonies and subjugating their people to cruel discriminatory autocratic colonial rule. At the same time, in their own countries, in fact, in one and all capitalist countries the bourgeois democracy itself degenerated as the capitalist system fast slid into decadence. Power became the privilege; corruption turned out to be the means to attain it. Money changed hands as vehicles for reaching power or throwing one out of it. Working for political parties meant amassing money and wealth, meant filling of coffers with illicit pelf. Ideology was pushed to the backseat. In fact, the ideology which once gave birth to the best sons of the soil, the bourgeois morality and ethics, the bourgeois politics and the political representatives, its parties, their leaders and activists, all became decomposed and degraded. Nationalism of the victors, the imperialists, came to be regarded as privilege, with nationalism of the vanquished being looked down upon as trouble-shooter.

It was at this stage that Marxism emerged as the progressive ideology of the working class, the weapon for the oppressed people. It envisages a society where exploitation of man by man will end forever and in full, covering all aspects of life; it fights for

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Advantaged at lull in working class movement ruling bourgeoisie is running amok

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the sphere of ban and ultimately the whole country might become a mega-SEZ to freeze all rights of the workers. This is where the SEZs fit so perfectly in the model of capitalist globalization, the last ditch attempt of moribund decadent crisis-stricken stinking corrupt capitalism to prolong its oppressive class rule by maximizing suppression and coercion of the workers and toiling masses. SEZ, from that context is the latest blue print of ruthless exploitation of labour under capitalism.

Indian SEZs will be equally exploitative of labour

The experience in India so far has been no different. The employees in the few SEZs in operation are in the shackles of a worst kind of wage-slavery. In fact a glimpse of the state of affairs in the Indian SEZs can be had from the way working conditions are being stipulated in the IT sector aided and abetted by the central as well as state governments. There is no limit of working hours, no security of service, no avenue for resenting any dereliction on the part of the management in providing suitable working environment. It is revealed that those working in this sector are developing both physical as well as psychic diseases like epilepsy, cancer, spondylitis, schizophrenia, depression and so forth. Even in the report prepared by the Central Labour Institute at the instance of central labour ministry, the IT workers have been compared with the nineteenth century prisoners and the chained slaves of Roman Empire. For all intent and purpose, this new generation or sunshine industry, as the authors of capitalist globalization like to call the IT sector, symbolizes worst form of exploitation akin to medieval enslavement. Indian SEZs in tandem with the global practice are to be conclaves of such enslavement.

Ruinous impact on peasants and agriculture

To build such conclaves on a massive scale, the sponsors require land. So the phenomenon of forcible acquisition of land including fertile farmland by displacing peasants is common. This land grabbing has taken a worst form in India. In the issue of *Proletarian Era* dated 15-09-06, we had elaborately discussed

the ruinous impact this is having on agriculture and rural poor. As per prevailing law in India, only 50% of the SEZ land is required to be used for establishment of industries while the balance could be developed as realty to have residential complexes, multiplexes, shopping malls, hotels, restaurants, bars, discotheques, night clubs, health-hubs and so forth—in other words, for realty development for the rich. The SEZs have already proved to be treasure troves for realty sector. 13 of the 26 SEZ proposals sanctioned during mid-October last have been from real estate developers. As soon as the SEZs have been on a rollout, there is a scrambling for acquiring land by the industrial houses and developers lobby mostly owned or backed by domestic or foreign monopoly capital. Big monopoly houses are floating real estate companies and venturing into development of new SEZs spread over tens of thousands hectares of land (100 hectares= 1 sq. km, 1 hectare= 2.48 acres). These realtors are also dazzling interested quarters with their SEZ plan. Just 9 months ago, the central government envisaged that only 48 SEZs would cover as much as 1,40,000 hectares of land. Though it was said that such SEZs should be on fallow and vested land, in reality it is most fertile multi-crop agricultural land that is being grabbed for the purpose by the private monopolists at a throwaway price with the respective state governments working as brokers to make some quick bucks in the process. Bureaucrats and politicians subserving bourgeois class interest are also seizing the opportunity to merrily aggrandize themselves. It has been revealed by a top MNC executive that one of the front line leaders of ruling party in a state has been gifted a private aircraft by a business tycoon in exchange of allotment of 1000 acres of land for set up of an SEZ. (*Ananda Bazar Patrika*, 09-11-06) Instances of exchange of such favour and such other grafts are not in short supply in any of the states riding SEZ wave.

The indent placed by the monopolists is of so supreme an importance that the question of survival of the vast majority of rural poor like *bargadars* (share-croppers), landless agricultural labourers, tenants, craftsmen and artisans who are not land-owners

but make out a living out of the land has been relegated to inconsequence. Hundreds of thousands of peasants are thus being forcibly uprooted from their habitations, dispossessed of whatever little cultivable land they hold as means of their survival to plunge their future into the abyss of a complete doom and darkness.

In Jamnagar in Gujarat, 90% of the 10,000 acres of land allotted to the Reliance group of Ambanis flouting all prescribed acquisition laws has been arable land. When the affected peasants knocked at the door of judiciary, the apex court of the country, an organ of the bourgeois state machine, came out with a ruling that there ought not to be any interference in set up of SEZs and action of the BJP-led state government in this regard was absolutely correct. No public interest litigation in the matter would be entertained. In Amritsar, the Congress-run Punjab state government is alleged to be snatching 1218 acres of fertile land for SEZ earmarked for DLF, a large builder group. In Kalinganagar, the BJP-BLD coalition government of Orissa did not hesitate to open fire on poor adivasi farmers killing 13 on the spot when they resented snatching of their land for the avaricious Tata group. Similarly the Mulayam Singh government of UP came down heavily on the farmers in Dadri near Delhi- UP border when they were protesting against grabbing of agricultural land for the Reliance group's power plant. And it is not that the Congress, the BJP or such other known bourgeois governments are so eager to compel farmers to surrender arable land for establishment of SEZs. The CPI(M)-led West Bengal government has also arrayed its entire coercive arsenal to acquire extremely fertile multi-crop land under the garb of so-called industrialization including set up of SEZs. Those who lost land for accommodating the existing SEZs or the much hyped IT parks and ultra-modern real estates are languishing in abject poverty and utter misery.

Assurance of the government about absorption of the displaced persons in the upcoming SEZs or so-called industrial projects has also proved to be cruel jokes. The experience of Maharashtra shows that hardly anyone who lost land for accommodating SEZs was gainfully engaged in the so-called sprawling export-oriented industries. Aware of

this, the CPI (M) leaders are propagating that the peasants who would be so dispossessed in West Bengal would find engagement as domestic hands, gardeners, barbers and washermen in the multiplexes and residential complexes. What a unique prescription of alternative employment generation! Peasants for the sake of sham development would dole out their cultivable land to the exploiting monopolists to become domestic hands and gardeners.

There is another ruinous consequence of this indiscriminate extinguishing of rich farmland. It is, as apprehended by many agricultural scientists and experts, fraught with the danger of the country's people facing serious food crisis in future. Such mindless destruction of huge stretches of cultivable land might well lead to law of diminishing return setting in aggravating scarcity of basic food crop. On the other hand, at the behest of their masters, the central and various state governments including the CPI (M)-led West Bengal government have been gradually abandoning cultivation of cereals and instead concentrating on crops suited to food processing industry offering super-profit to its private owners. What a heavy price the people of the country have to pay to meet the profitability need of the private monopolists and MNCs.

One more serious question merits attention. Land, as we know, is a stable means of production. It does provide a source of permanent return not only to the present holder but to his future generation as well. With the kind of extreme insecurity and uncertainty posed before life in the present capitalist system, the desire of the poor peasants to hold on to whatever little agricultural land they does have a legitimacy. It is only under severe distress that poor peasants dispose of their land. Otherwise land is considered to be a permanent asset to them and its value is perceived to be in terms of meeting their need of subsistence over years. From that perspective, the right of the peasants including the bargadars and agricultural workers eking out a living from land can not be summarily dismissed by talking of compensation in terms of paper-money which is a nominal asset in a hyper-inflation prone economy with its value depreciating

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Protect hard-earned rights of the workers with last drop of blood

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consequent on its increase in supply, though the value of land, a real asset with fixed supply, will be increasing in such a situation. So the argument on the part of the government that the evicted peasants and farm-workers are being paid cash compensation on the basis of an average of the price of the last few years is being viewed by many as outright cheating in a situation of inflationary spiralling of the prices of essential commodities.

Moreover, even the ruling market price is not paid to those being dispossessed of land. For Mumbai SEZ, the Congress-led Maharashtra government has been compensating the land owners at Rs 1.5 to 2.5 lakhs per acre and handing over the same to the Reliance group at Rs 3 to 4 lakhs per acre while the market price is estimated at as high as Rs. 30 to 40 lakhs per acre. For DLF SEZ, Punjab government has paid at Rs.10 lakh per acre whereas the market rate is 10 times higher. Thus while the impoverished rural poor is not only subjected to forced eviction to languish under the sky, they are also denied the legitimate due. On the other hand, realtors, promoters and industry barons slated to make fortunes in the SEZs are having a field day.

So in every respect the SEZs under the smokescreen of development and industrialization are having in store a harrowing future for the toiling masses. The workers and peasants will be giving so much but receive nothing but deception, destitution and devastation.

Treacherous role of the pseudo-Marxists

While known bourgeois outfits are expected to clamour for SEZs, the role being played by the pseudo-Marxists in this regard is indeed treacherous. Creating a smokescreen of 'development and industrialization', the CPI (M) and its associates in West Bengal are vigorously pursuing their agenda of setting up SEZs for catering to the order of giant domestic and foreign monopolists like Salim of Indonesia, Tatas and Ambanis. And for that, they have already made it their prime mission to grab as much of fertile multi-crop agricultural land as possible by evicting poor peasants on the strength of flexing muscle. Throwing aside the slogan of 'land to the tillers' and 'operation barga', the West Bengal government is

going to introduce a Bill that would deny the *bargadars* (sharecroppers) the right to till the land at par with the ownership rights that they earned in the fifties and sixties after prolonged blood-shedding struggle. The CPI(M)-led government is also removing land ceiling to enable the corporate houses and MNCs acquire as much as contiguous land as they want. The CPI(M) has also strongly opposed the central government's proposal that more than 10% of cultivable land should not be acquired for SEZs. In fact, the CPI(M) top brass has become principal adviser to the Congress-led central government running on their unstinted support in deciding the best SEZ model for the country. The central government is also gratefully acknowledging the service rendered by the CPI(M) in this regard and assuring all help in setting up the SEZs in West Bengal.

But one ought to be flabbergasted at the amount of hypocrisy these pseudo-Marxists are capable of indulging in. While they themselves are on full steam in creating SEZs and displacing peasants in West Bengal, the CPI(M) and its associates in a note sent to the central government says that "Agricultural land is being acquired for the setting up of SEZs in several cases resulting in displacement of farmers and other sections of people, which have serious implications." In the same note they also mentioned that "...private entities are being involved in developing the SEZ infrastructure. Land is being acquired by the State and handed over to private developers. Some of the proposed SEZs involve huge tracts of land, over 10,000 hectares in some cases. If private entities are allowed to own such huge tracts of land, it would amount to the reestablishment of the *zamindari* (landlord) system sixty years after independence. This is totally unacceptable". "We shall go on protesting against the SEZs here in Bengal and all over India according to our capacities" adds Benoy Konar, CPI(M) central committee member in his article in *People's Democracy* dated 15-10-2006.

Clearly this palpable doubletalk is meant for hoodwinking the people of the state they are not in power so that they could pose there to be champions of peasants' cause and reap electoral benefits.

In West Bengal, they are telling the people that since capitalist globalization is a reality there is no way that one can remain out of its ambit. So it is imperative that monopolists be appeased to invest capital in the state. It is only under such benevolent patronage of the monopolists that there will be resurgence of industrialization generating abundant employment opportunity. But these monopolists can not be so initiated unless the workers shun the path of agitation, collaborate with the management,

move or adopt brazen anti-working class policy, does it make obligatory on the part of a Marxist party to follow the suit? Then where is the difference? Marxism teaches the workers to valiantly fight against the ongoing oppression and suppression of the bourgeoisie, thwart all its sinister moves and designs by intensifying class and mass struggles, defend and realize their legitimate rights through struggle. Instead, if in the name of preserving working class interest, the counseling is to slacken this struggle alluding to some situational compulsion, will not that be tantamount to kill the fighting spirit of the workers, disarm them from within, lead them to a supine surrender before the aggressive posture of the owners and ultimately strengthen the bourgeoisie in its tyrannical pursuit? Can that by any stretch of imagination be called Marxism or it is vulgarization of Marxism much to the glee of the imperialists-capitalists designing SEZs to suck out the last drop of blood from the workers?



Village women offering resistance to police intervention in grabbing their agricultural land in Singur, West Bengal

concentrate on increasing productivity and maintain industrial peace. Otherwise, a 'wrong signal' would be sent to the industrialists and the thumping development will elude the people of the state. That is why, despite the working condition in the IT sector being so harrowing as mentioned above, the CPI(M) chief minister and his drum beaters are so keen to ensure that no strike or such other kind of agitations are allowed there. The attitude of the CPI(M) leaders towards labour in the SEZs is also commensurate with this approach. "...if the other states of Maharashtra, Gujarat, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu etc, announce that they will not follow labour laws in their SEZs and if the working class there cannot stop them, what should our state do? Then how do we safeguard the interests of the labour? ...It must be remembered that if we do not allow the setting up of industries in Bengal, the question of protecting the interest of the workers becomes an absurdity" (Benoy Konar, *ibid*).

Only the CPI(M) leaders can say what kind of Marxism it is. If the bourgeois parties from their class position support a heinous bourgeois

SEZs in capitalist China devastated the working millions

As mentioned earlier, the protagonists of SEZs in India are banding the example of China to justify themselves. Particularly the CPI (M) leaders are taking a lead in this regard. SEZ is no model of socialism. China began treading this path when the revisionist Deng leadership usurped power following Mao's death and opted for market-economy on the capitalist model, gradually embarked upon dismantling the socialist economic structure and encouraging the private capitalists to take the rein in their hands. Statistically, the five large scale SEZs set up in coastal areas catalyzed deluge of foreign investment there and boosted export. But what price the Chinese society and Chinese people had to pay for that and for whom? The SEZs besides offering bountiful concessions to private capitalists including foreign monopolists opened floodgate of roaring trade to real estate operators and generated limitless corruption "In 1987, China amended its laws to permit the transfer of the right to use the land to private, or at least non-State entities. This set on a frenzy of land acquisition by provincial, county, municipal and township

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More Wage for party workers : CPI(M) exposes total subservience to capitalism

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emancipation of the entire mankind. It realizes that the real fight for ending with exploitation knows no bounds of nation. The soldier of this struggle, the communist stands on the same deck, whether he comes from an imperialist nation or a colony. He is identified with the cause of the exploited and oppressed class, the toiling people anywhere and everywhere on this earth. This identification means to him identification of his personal, individual interest with the social interest, with the revolution of the working class and with the revolutionary party which has to lead the class in its struggle. And this struggle for identification on the strength of the highest ever ideology in the annals of history of mankind, loftier than any ideology including humanism in its culture, ethics and values, helps him acquire the communist character, freed from the private property mental complex. Thus personal sufferings and pains, starvation, lack of shelter and clothes, make no flutter in his struggle; his sense of ethics and values guide him to realize that he has chosen a nobler social life in this communist movement, forsaking the petty, commonplace and thus filthy personal life. So it is no sacrifice to him; it has elevated him to a loftier goal of life, in which he has his everything, his self to offer for the cause of society and the oppressed people without demanding or expecting anything in return for his own self. And as these selfless communist cadres remain with the toiling people, love them, depend on them and be one with them, while organizing and imbibing them, it is the toiling masses, who provide such cadres their needs for survival as revolutionary. This has been proved in all the successful revolutionary movements in different countries that have been carried out under the leadership of genuine communist parties.

Coming to the present context, in class-divided societies, without exception, we find two distinct trends of political activities, two distinct modes of existence of political parties. There are the bourgeois and petit-bourgeois parties which survive on the bourgeois parliamentary democracy and cannot think beyond that. The all-pervading crisis and decadence of the capitalist system swamp these parliamentary parties into the quagmire of corruption and degeneration.

Subservient to the ruling capitalist class and the system, they derive sustenance from the capitalists themselves. Unable to attract people, including the vibrant youth on the strength of any ideology, they allure them with career making offers, even by engaging them in lieu of money. In opposition to it, there are the revolutionary forces, that survive on people's love and support and inspire them to fight for the cause, imbibing them with Marxism-Leninism, the progressive ideology of the day. Thus, there may be scores of political parties professing different ideologies and shouting various slogans. In reality, however, there exist two opposite camps, two opposite kinds of politics – one the politics of the oppressors, and the other the politics of the oppressed : taught Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era, and the founder General Secretary of our party, the SUCI. The bourgeois-petty bourgeois parties, part and parcel of the system itself, stinking with corruption and degeneration in their pattern of work, finding of resources, or even in their recruiting cadres, thus come to stand for the politics of the oppressors, the rulers, the capitalists. The revolutionaries, the genuine Marxist-Leninists stand singular amidst the vast sea of decadence and degeneration, fighting for the emancipation of all the oppressed classes, for the end of one and every kind of exploitation. They thus stand out toweringly with a qualitatively different ideology, culture and ethics in defence of the politics of the oppressed people. There cannot be any exception to this bare truth.

CPI(M), and for that matter also the CPI, which were once united in a single party and since then both bore the communist signboard, did never develop as genuine communist party in character. Right from their formation, they developed with all traits and characters of social democratic parties, the compromising forces between labour and capital, with Marxist vocabularies, but basically confined to bourgeois parliamentary politics. Yet, they saw light in the days of freedom movement, during which the society beamed with ideological fervour. There was also the prestigious influence of the victorious proletarian movement, that had brought about the successful November Revolution. Under impact of all this, things

were not the same with them at that time as they are now. In a sense, they were then on the side of the oppressed; the politics they practiced, with all their limitations and motives, served as the politics of the oppressed. But as the parliamentary system of our country degenerated, in consonance with the total decadence of the capitalist system itself, these parties found it hard to survive on their petty-bourgeois social democratic politics, bereft of any living ideology. They chose the shortest and natural route for them with their own brand of politics. They changed the side : from the side of the oppressed, they switched over to the side of the oppressors. They aligned with the ruling capitalists and the capitalist system itself, cunningly to start with, but now as things have become more and more difficult for them, openly and shamelessly. The minimum struggle their parties undertook in the past has evaporated in thin air. And for these deserters of people's camp, even the bourgeois ideologies of humanism-nationalism do not make any impact or influence, since these have already lost any progressive role they played in the past and have become privileges amidst this all pervading crisis of the capitalist system. Naturally, these parties can no longer attract people, young or old, on the strength of ideology. Those who reach them, simply do it for favour or for privilege. Those who remain with them, are fast falling victims of all sorts of bourgeois petty bourgeois vices. The parties now face this stark reality, the CPI(M) Central Committee admits that. But they have bogged so deep down the decadence, that they cannot think of any remedy other than taking recourse to, rather

revamping the very same trend of career-making, privilege seeking attitude of their would-be cadres. So, they decide to enhance the allowances for their whole-timers. Those who were supposed to work whole time for the party and the people, for the cause of the noble ideology of communism, will now be employed against enhanced remuneration and perquisites. They expect to rope in sufficient number of cadres with those 'carrots'; after all, in these days of acute unemployment, their offer may appear lucrative to some. But by that, the Central Committee of CPI(M) has made it clear once more how far the party has deviated from any ideological commitment, leave aside the commitment to communism. Rather, the CPI(M) leaders must now answer : do not they make their cadres wage slaves by this act of theirs and stand in fraternity with the capitalists, who exploit their workers, the wage-earning slaves? Do not they strike at the very root of the nobility of the communist ideology, which they still have to take refuge to as their cloak and signboard with a view to hoodwinking people? We urge upon the honest cadres of that party, who still expect their party to serve poor people, to ponder over these questions. We urge upon them, further, to ponder over wherefrom the huge amount of money will come to foot this enhanced wage bill. Has the alignment of CPI(M) with the capitalists been so close and intimate, that the leaders do not feel any worries about where to find the money from ? Will the honest cadres who still bear the love for communism, able to stand this downfall of their leaders? How long will they bear with this deception and betrayal to the cause?



Comrade Dwarika Nath Rath, secretary, Gujarat state organizing committee addressing Surat public meeting on 17th November to commemorate anniversary of Great November Revolution (News on page 8)

89th anniversary of Great November Revolution observed

In the last issue of Proletarian Era we had published reports of observance of Great November Revolution throughout the Country. Some more reports are appended :

Orissa

A state level mass rally and public meeting were organized on 17th November, 2006 in the state capital, Bhubaneswar. Comrade Tapas Dutta, Veteran member of the Central Committee and state Secretary, SUCI addressed the meeting as the main speaker. Comrade Jagabandhu Baral, state committee member presided over the meeting. Two resolutions on the present national and international situations were moved and adopted.

Addressing the huge gathering the main speaker Comrade Tapas Dutta said that the significance of the November socialist revolution was not confined merely within the territorial boundary of former



Comrade Tapas Dutta paying tribute to Lenin

USSR; rather it illumined the path of world revolutionary movements throughout the world to emancipate

mankind from all sorts of exploitation. He showed how following the teachings of Comrade Lenin, Comrade Stalin played a pivotal and commendable role in steering a backward Russia to a powerful Socialist country and how, after his demise, the revisionists usurped power and paved the path of counter revolution to restore capitalism in Russia and eventual dismantling of socialist camp that has made the imperialist bloc headed by US imperialists unbridled in their brigandage. Comrade Dutta appealed to the people to develop conscious and organize mass movements against the anti-people and pro-capitalist policies and measures of the central and state governments and strengthen SUCI, the only genuine working class party in our soil based on Marxism-Leninism and Shibdas Ghosh thought.

Jharkhand

Jharkhand District Organizing Committee observed the occasion by convening a meeting on 17th November at Ranchi Vidayak club. Comrade Hem Chakraborty, state Secretary, presided over. Addressing the im-pressive gathering comprising workers-peasants-students-youths-women from all the corners of the state, Comrade Rabin Samajpati, member of the state Secretariat, in his speech as the main speaker dwelt at length on the teachings and significance of great November revolution and showed how Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, in the process of concretizing Marxism-Leninism on Indian soil to accomplish Indian revolution elaborated, enriched and developed this noble ideology and emerged as a foremost Marxist thinker of the era. The meeting ended with rendition of the *Internationale*.

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Special Economic Zone

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administrations, to set up 'economic development zones'. By 1992, they had set up 12,400 real estate development companies for this purpose. ... land grabbing reached a peak between 1991 and 1993...in 1992, one-tenth of the capital raised in the Hong Kong money market ended up in China's burgeoning real estate market... By March 1993, when the central government finally woke up to what was happening and clamped down, these 'companies' had set up more than 6,000 'development zones' and acquired 1.5 million hectares of land to do so. This was 160,000 hectares more than the entire urban area of China then...Chinese writers have described a host of ingenious schemes by which administration officials and their friends pocketed billions of Yuan (1 Yuan equals Rs5) in less than six years. The transfer of State land to private use, in fact, became the seed-bed of Chinese capitalism." (Don't as the Chinese do — Prem Shankar Jha — Hindustan Times, 3-11-06).

Not only this. The gap between China's richest and poorest citizens is approaching a dangerous level and could lead to social unrest; Chinese state media admitted citing a government study. The most affluent one-fifth of China's population earn 50 percent of total income, with the bottom one-fifth taking home only

4.7 percent, said a report by the official Xinhua News Agency. "The income gap, which has exceeded reasonable limits, exhibits a further widening trend. If it continues this way for a long time, the phenomenon may give rise to various sorts of social instability," it said... "Today, as privatization is officially promoted by the authorities, and peasants confront rural officials and entrepreneurs, who conspire to rob them of their lands, each week brings news of at least one or two incidents, with thousands of villagers in a pitched battle with the police, or bloody crackdowns in which hundreds of protesters are tear-gassed and clubbed during roundups by the police.

Also these SEZs became hubs of fiercest oppression of the workers. The conditions of the workers in private businesses of either domestic or foreign investment are even worse, insufferable, and without any guarantee. Most of the labour laws enunciated in the socialist system were reversed so that in the name of 'flexibility' the foreign monopolists could be allowed to exploit the workers almost in the medieval manner in the SEZs". (Source : To be Attacked by the Enemy is a Good Thing by Robert Weil) In the latter part of 1986, the Contract Labor Law was passed. Since the passage of the law, all newly hired workers

are required to sign contracts with the enterprises that employ them. The terms of the contracts are usually limited to one year. At the end of the contract term, either party has the right to unilaterally terminate the contract (not renew it for another year.) The reformers hope that the enforcement of the new law will first reduce and eventually eliminate permanent employment status for state employees. (Deng-Yuan Hsu and Pao-Yu Ching, ChingKang Mountains Institute Rethinking Socialism, *What is socialist transition*)

Reports of simmering discontent as well as violent protest demonstrations of workers against capitalist exploitations in the 'reform era' have also been pouring in. These demonstrations have extended into the very heart of the "market reform" regions, such as downtown Shanghai, the new center of Chinese commercial capital. Some of the largest working class protests anywhere in the world are taking place on a virtually daily basis across China, from the strikes in foreign owned export factories of the southern coastal areas and demonstrations in the industrial "rust belts" of the central and northeastern provinces, to revolts against corrupt officials and environmental disasters in suburbs around eastern cities and isolated villages in western rural regions. In these struggles, workers and peasants alike often contrast the

ideas Mao advanced and the socialist policies he helped to introduce with the degraded conditions of their lives today." (Source : *To be Attacked by the Enemy is a Good Thing* by Robert Weil)

Resist SEZs — Defend workers' rights

It is clear from the discussion made above that set up of the SEZs is a heinous conspiracy on the part of crisis-ridden decaying capitalism to prolong its moribund class rule by fleecing and enslaving the workers. Under the slogan of so-called economic development, it is planned move to promote realty and a few capital-intensive technology-driven sophisticated industries to enable monopolists and MNCs mint super profit squeezing the workers and rendering millions of poor peasants displaced from land to be doomed to a most uncertain future. Hence this sinister move to establish SEZs ought to be resisted at any cost. The hard-earned trade union and other rights of the workers, the very right of the toiling millions to live must be protected with last drop of blood. Working people from all sections of the society must come forward, close their rank and give rise to a mighty united resistance movement to frustrate the ulterior machination of the oppressing bourgeois class and deal a telling blow to all its hirelings of different hues. We fervently appeal to all to respond to this call of the hour.

Dr. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee is no more

Dr. Sushil Kumar Mukherjee, internationally acclaimed scientist, eminent educationist, former vice-chancellor of Calcutta and Kalyani Universities and above all, a great humanist, breathed his last on 18th November last at his Calcutta residence. He was 93. Dr. Mukherjee was member of the Presidium of All India Save Education Committee, General Secretary of All India Anti-Imperialist Forum and Chairperson of Primary Education Development Board till his last breath. He also occupied various prestigious posts in renowned organizations like Indian Association for the Cultivation of Science, Asiatic Society, and Indian Agricultural Commission and was a member of the high level international scientist group which went to Vietnam to ascertain the immense harm caused to that soil following incessant hurling of napalm bomb by the US imperialists.

But it was not his high level of erudition or the distinguished positions he held but his exemplary devotion and dedication to the cause of mankind that made him such a venerated personality, loved and respected by one to all who came in his contact. Right from his childhood, the selfless character of the revolutionary leaders of Indian freedom

movement made a lasting impression on him. Inspired by them, he made it a mission of life to serve the need of the countrymen by embracing the noble profession of teaching. In the course of pursuance of this objective with a living humanist mind, he was initiated to the historic language movement that swept West Bengal for over two decades when the state government adopted an out and out anti-people education policy including abolition of English at primary level. Since then, there was no looking back. Braving ill health and old age he was in the forefront of many historic democratic mass movements. His contributions in developing Primary Education Development Board as a model organization, developing a countrywide movement in demand of a true scientific secular democratic education system and rolling out a well-knit anti-imperialist movement in the country and integrating it with the international anti-imperialist struggles will remain enshrined in gold. And in course of these movements, he was greatly attracted by the illuminating thoughts of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, one of the foremost Marxist thinkers of the era and came in close contact of the SUCI, the revolutionary party of the proletariat, founded, reared and steered by Comrade Ghosh. When West Bengal State Committee of AIDSO, as a mark of respect to his invaluable contribution and exemplary character, organized a meet of his innumerable students and admirers on 1st January, 2004 in Calcutta to felicitate him on his 91st birthday, Dr. Mukherjee in course of his brief but emotional and heart-touching speech said: "I have always felt that unless we are in a position to protect

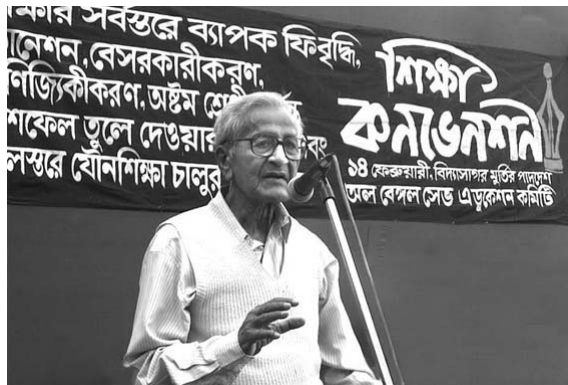
ourselves from the slide of human essence that has been so pronounced in the post-independence days, we can not call ourselves MAN. Had we not fought against injustice, we would not have seen bloom of human qualities, development of character in us. I shall admit that I have not seen a political party like the SUCI. It does not scramble for power but struggles for realizing the rights of the people to live a human life worth the name. I do not hesitate to give my life for this party. I have received a totally different appeal in the works of Shibdas Ghosh, guide of the SUCI and that is why I have inseparably linked myself with the party. Let it never go out my life."

Expressing profound grief at the demise of Dr. Mukherjee, Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, General Secretary, SUCI, in a statement said that in his death, the country has lost a great humanist and protagonist of people's cause, an honest, fearless voice of protest

against injustice and a fighting soldier of democratic mass movement. Comrade Nina Andreyeva, General Secretary, All Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) in her respectful condolence message said that Dr. Mukherjee was known throughout the world as an active organizer of people's

movement against imperialist aggression and oppression on the people and their struggle for democracy. As a real 'Man' he dedicated his life to the fight for peace for the working people of India. Comrade Khalequjjaman, convener of the central committee of Socialist Party of Bangladesh in his message called him an uncompromising determined fighter for universal scientific secular education whose life is a great source of inspiration to the people of Bangladesh in their struggle against imperialism and communalism.

His mortal remains were brought to college square at the foot of the statue of Vidyasagar, opposite to Calcutta University main building where many distinguished personalities, educationists, scientists, teachers, professors, doctors, lawyers, intellectuals and various organizations and institutes paid their last tribute. However, no one turned out from either the state government or Calcutta University or Kalyani University. Even the official protocol was not maintained. Monopoly-controlled media also betrayed utter disrespect to such a noble soul by not carrying out his death news, leave apart any column of obituary. On behalf of Comrade Nihar Mukherjee, Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya, member, Central Committee, SUCI, placed a floral wreath on the pyre. Also Comrade Provash Ghosh, Central Committee member and state secretary of SUCI and Comrade Manik Mukherjee, vice-president, All India Anti-Imperialist Forum, offered floral tributes. Thereafter, started his last journey with thousands of mourners leading it in a solemn silence.



Peasants Conference in Bangalore

On 2nd November, Raitha Krushi Karmikara Sanghatane (RKS), the Karnataka unit of AIKMS organized in Bangalore a state level convention of Peasants and Agricultural Labourers who are driven to intense poverty, debt trap and consequently to suicide due to the pro capitalist, pro-MNC globalization policies of the central and state governments.

Comrade K. Radhakrishna, Secretary, SUCI Karnataka State Committee in his address as the main speaker, dwelt at length on how the peasants and agricultural labourers are devastated following the implementation of globalization, liberalization and privatization policies in capitalist India.

Summing up he said that the policies of all governments are framed to fill the coffers of the ruling capitalists. So while the rich is becoming richer, vast majority of the toiling people is crushed to destitution, poverty and helplessness. He called upon the peasants and agricultural labourers to build up mighty, militant movements on the burning problems of their life with the ultimate aim of overthrowing capitalism by revolution. Also speaking on the occasion were Comrades B. R. Manjunath, President, All India Democratic Youth Organization (AIDYO) Karnataka State Committee, and. H. V. Diwakar, Secretary, RKS Karnataka. Com. T. S. Sunith Kumar, President, RKS, Karnataka, presided over.

November Revolution observed

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Gujarat

On 7th November a meeting presided over by Comrade Jayesh Patel, member state organizing committee, was held in Ahmedabad Party office. On 8th November, another meeting was held in Baroda which had Comrade Tapan Dasgupta, State Organizing Committee member, on the chair. On 17th November a similar meeting was held in SUCI hall, Priyanka Township, in Surat. It was presided over by Comrade Rambharat Maurya, Secretary, Surat Unit. Comrade Dwarika Nath Rath, Secretary, Gujarat State Organizing Committee was the main speaker in all the three meetings.

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