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LONG
LIVE
MAY
DAY

WORKERS
UNITY
ZINDABAD



Mit der SED

gegen Kriegshetze, für Aufbau und Frieden

Whither Shining in Shipping Industry in India?

M K Pandhe

The multi-crore India Shining campaign launched by BJP-led NDA government is not applicable to the shipping industry because during its tenure the tonnage of Indian shipping industry is continuously showing a steep declining trend.

Drive Towards Privatisation

Indian Shipping industry made considerable progress after the formation of Shipping Corporation of India. During 1961 Indian Flag tonnage was only 9.5 lakh gross tonnes which went up to 6.6 million Gross tonnes in 1985. But, the NDA rule speeded up the decline of domestic shipping industry further. From the high level of 7.06 million gross tones in 2001, it sharply declined to 6.82 million gross tones in March 2002 and to 6.72 million gross tones in January 2004. Despite good profit earning by the Shipping Corporation of India, the NDA Govt. has decided to privatise it and the foreign shipping magnets are eying on the PSU to get it for a song through tie-up arrangement with Indian companies.

Internationally accepted Cabotage Law provides the coastal trade to be handled only by domestic carriers and not the foreign ships. But the Govt of India decided to do the opposite affecting Indian shipping industry in a big way.

The UNCTAD had decided that in international trade a minimum of 40 per cent of the cargo should be carried in domestic bottoms. But the MNC-bias of the Vajpayee regime could successfully push down the share of the Indian ships in international trade from around 30% in 1997-98 to 22.5 per cent in 2000-01 and to 17 per cent in 2001-02. The Government of India was earlier giving cargo support to Indian ship through Stanchart. This was withdrawn by the NDA Government and foreign shipping companies were given a free hand to operate in Indian waters resulting in further loss of cargo-handling to domestic ships. Even Indian shipping companies are now being permitted to chart out their vessels to foreign companies without prior Govt. approval. Complete liberalization of import of all types of ships under "open general license" scheme by

the NDA Government, pushed the Indian ship building industry in doldrums. All the 6 public sector shipyards and 3 defence shipyards, except the Cochin Shipyard, are running in serious crisis for want of orders and investment-support. They are running with only 20 to 50 per cent of their rated capacity. Some of the ship building shipyards are being converted into repair shops. Even Cochin Shipyard is earmarked for privatisation despite its good performance.

It was pointed out by M K Pandhe in the meeting of National Shipping Board held in February end that despite commendable performance of Hindustan Shipyard, Vishakhapatnam, the Defence Ministry has given the work of Navy at Port Blair to Singapore Technologies Marine which has no expertise in handling this type of work. Though Hindustan Shipyard completed all formalities, the Defence Ministry opened the tender in advance on November 10, 2003 without informing the public sector undertaking and the contract was given to Singapore company violating all the norms of tendering.

The Indian ship building industry is thus being threatened with closure at any moment or likely at throw away prices.

Neglect of Coastal Shipping

India has 7517 km of Coastal line which remains unutilised for coastal trade. In European Union, 43 per cent of the cargo is handled by coastal shipping ; in India it represents only 7 per cent of the domestic traffic. India's coastal fleet, excluding offshore supply vessels, increased marginally by 1 lakh tonne during the last 10 years!

During the last two decades despite repeated pointers by the National Shipping Board, the Govt. deliberately neglected the development of coastal shipping, having good employment potential.

75 per cent of the coastal cargo is handled by 12 major ports while 185 minor ports are not having adequate facilities for carrying commercial cargo. The Central Government has thrust the responsibility of developing minor ports to the

(Cont. on Page 243)

THE WORKING CLASS

CITU MONTHLY

MAY 2004

YOU SAID IT by Laxman



Want to feel good? Just have a look at the assets declared by politicians, ministers, movie stars, all in crores and lakhs, cars, estates. We are not a poor country after all!

Courtesy: The Times of India

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Cover page: May Day Poster,
Germany, 1950

EDITORIAL

MAY-DAY PLEDGE: PREPARE TO FIGHT FORTCOMING CHALLENGES

The May-Day this year is being observed by the toiling people of the country in the midst of the election-process.

This day of international solidarity of the working class, in tune with the spirit of assertions by the toiling people of Spain and France, Palestine, Iraq and in many other countries, enjoins upon the Indian working class, the task to assert itself against the most corrupt, anti-national and the most inhuman regime, the country has ever witnessed since independence.

The peoples' intervention in Venezuela and Brazil against neoliberalism and imperialism is still fresh in our mind. And this year, the Spanish people dethroned the pro-US regime paving way for withdrawal of Spanish Army from Iraq. In March last, the toiling people of France defeated the ruling conservative party in 20 out of 22 regions in the regional elections expressing their strong disapproval to its moves to introduce 'Pension-cuts' and 'hire & fire regime'. Indian working class must express similar resolve in this May-Day, in line with their brethren in Spain and France, Brazil and Venezuela.

The NDA regime represents a governance based on deceit and disruption, betraying utter disregard to human life and dignity for narrow partisan gains. All the institutions on which the whole democratic system thrives including the judiciary are being sought to be mutilated by the BJP led regime. Equally inhuman and cruel is their economic policy of neoliberalism which reigns in transferring prosperity to few at the cost of destitution for majority millions.

The Supreme Court's judgment on right to strike is a pointer to arrogance of the neoliberal regime against the millions of toilers at the behest of a handful of capitalists. The Best Bakery judgment of the same apex court is an unavoidable admission, in the face of assertion by democratic and secular forces, how the communal administration of a State can make even the judiciary move in complicity with the perpetrators of genocidal crime. And Govt funded multi-crore lie campaign on 'India shining' with Goeblesian precision reflects the deceitful ploy perpetrated on the people.

The major political forces vying for political power in the election process, except the left, have reconciled with the same neoliberal economic policy regime while competing with each other in showing their pro-reform credentials. Election will be over but the struggle against neoliberal policies will have to continue. In this background, to defeat the NDA regime is no doubt the prime task before the working class, in the process of strengthening the edge of resistance against the anti-people policies.

May-day 2004 calls upon the toiling people to assert themselves to defeat the worst enemy in their readiness to take on more effectively the forthcoming challenges.

May Day Manifesto of CITU – 2004

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) extends revolutionary greetings to the working class all over the world on May Day, 2004.

The CITU greets the working class and the people of the socialist countries, China, Cuba, Vietnam and DPRK for upholding the banner of socialism, braving attacks, subversion, blockades by imperialist forces.

The CITU also greets the working class and the people of the advanced capitalist countries who have raised the banner of resistance against neo-liberal economic globalisation and military hegemonism, against imperialist invasion and occupation of foreign lands by their own governments. A truly international unity of the working class is emerging through struggles.

The CITU warmly greets the working class of the developing countries for common struggle to fight back imperialist offensives on economic and political sovereignty and also the attacks of the ruling classes against the toiling masses.

The CITU specially greets the working class, the toiling people and the democratic masses of India for their exemplary record of resistance movements against the retrograde economic policies of the government, against the attacks by all state organs, including the judiciary, on our democratic

rights. A new era of intensified mass movements where unity is developing not from the top but from the grass-root level has begun.

The year since our last May Day has witnessed two distinct trends of developments that we must note. One, that the attack against the people, particularly the working class, their countries, their life and living has been intensified many times over by the imperialist forces and capitalist classes almost everywhere. The other, as a positive development, peoples' resistance has grown from strength to strength, all over the world. The disapproval of senseless globalisation and imperialist invasion is growing louder and having a profound impact on political and economic life in both developed and developing countries.

The brazen aggression in Iraq, defying world opinion, international laws and propriety has now been proved beyond doubt to have been based completely on lies and disinformation. The self-appointed global leaders now stand exposed, as no weapons of mass destruction have been found, no link with terrorists could be established, even one year after occupation. It was the lust for oil for which thousands of innocent men, women and children lost their lives, the country was devastated. Those alive are living in total anarchy,

untold misery and suffering. About the "War on Terror" the truth is coming out from within the coterie which champions the cause. It is now clear that George W Bush was actually waiting for 9/11 to happen to roll out his war machines and the grandiose plan to subjugate the world by superior military strength. The coterie has never concealed that after Afghanistan and Iraq, the targets are Iran and North Korea. Added to this is the continuing massacre and devastation arrogantly perpetrated on the Palestinian people by the Israeli forces, with the active support of the US Administration, defying all UN resolutions and ignoring worldwide protest and condemnation.

The tragedy is that most national governments have remained mute spectators of this international gangsterism. Some governments only made some harmless noises. In India the corporate leadership and the NDA government not only acquiesced to the crime but were salivating in the hope that Godfather America would throw some crumbs of the spoils in the name of contracts to rebuild Iraq.

However, people all over the world could not be hoodwinked by all this hype and fictitious propaganda. Rarely have we seen such unanimity of views about the criminal act of aggression against Iraq among

people along the length and breadth of the globe. More importantly, probably for the first time, people have started asserting themselves, rising above chauvinism, and defeating those political combines in national governments which joined the coalition of gangsters. The people are refusing to be accomplices in this crime. The trend set in Spain is likely to silence the other big guns, Bush, Blair and Howard, before our next May Day in 2005. Zapatero has declared that "you cannot start a war based on lies" which is an unconcealed indictment of Bush, Blair, Aznars as liars. This is the voice of the people of Spain, the people of the world. The CITU also hopes that the working class and people of the US, UK and Australia will give a similar rebuff to their respective rulers who have, so far, taken the world for granted.

On the economic front too, the neoliberal globalisation is failing to deliver even minimum relief to people. People are getting restless and raising their voice of protest as this brand of globalisation is bringing only hardships and sufferings to their lives. Fewer and fewer people are standing in defence of neoliberal globalisation.

In this background, the international corporate giants led by the American government and their cohorts became more aggressive, more violent in their attempt to dominate and control the entire world economy to their benefit. The CITU has always

maintained that neo-liberal imperialist globalisation is basically anti-people in character, a truth is more pronounced now than ever before. That is why the other trend, of peoples' resistance to globalization, is getting stronger every day. People in country after country including the United States are rising in revolt because their jobs are vanishing, living standards are falling, crimes, suicides are increasing and social unrest is growing. In the course of the last five or six years people have given their verdict against neoliberal globalisation in many ways, in many countries. The failure of the Cancun ministerial meet of WTO last September and the incidents both within and outside the WTO forum reflected the anger of mass of the toiling people the world over, and also their firm resolve not to kneel before the rabid mechanism of discrimination and arm-twisting by world monopoly capital, which is in-built in the WTO system. The blockade built up in the Cancun WTO meeting by a group of developing countries led by Brazil, South Africa and China drew strength from such widespread expression of peoples' anger.

We have also seen in many countries in Latin America, Asia and Europe that the governments ushering in neo-liberal globalisation have been dumped. The regime changes in Venezuela, Brazil, Ecuador and the last one in Spain are examples. But that also could not change the policies

fundamentally, not even could tilt their direction. And such developments are gradually bringing to the fore the utter inefficacy, rather bankruptcy of the capitalist system to address even the basic problems of mankind. And precisely in this backdrop, the immense popularity of the slogan of "Another World is Possible" raised loudly from the three successive meets of "World Social Forum" marks the beginning of a quest for an alternative to the most inhuman brutal face of the capitalist system. The World Social Forum held in Mumbai in January 2004 firmly declared its determination to carry forward the struggle with more determination.

The CITU apprehends that attacks will be intensified to subvert not only peoples rights and jobs but also the democratic systems. World monopoly capital is heading towards an intractable situation when there is no growth for them, no job or income growth for people, no political stability in most places as pro-monopolist, pro-nationalist opposite forces tear apart the systems to create chaos. The symptoms are already there and the situation enjoins upon the working class movement worldwide to take the plunge in heightening the resistance against all the facets of neoliberal imperialist globalisation, both on the economic and political front, against all its agencies, to rally the people from walks of life in the struggle, towards building a global unity against

globalisation, towards a more conscious mobilization for the fight for potential alternative to the capitalist system, the fight for socialism.

* * *

Within the country, the developments on the political and economic front are similar to the trends in the international arena. Toiling people in India have been confronting brutal attacks on their rights, life and livelihood by the ruling polity-employers' class combine, who are pursuing vigorously the neoliberal economic agenda dictated by and in the interest of international finance capital and Indian monopoly capital. Unfortunately, the main opposition party in the country is supporting the same economic policy regime on most of the vital issues. Simultaneously, with the intent of diverting peoples' discontent and to weaken the united resistance to this anti-people economic policy regime, the ruling political combine headed by the BJP has resorted to rousing communal passions to divide and disrupt the unity of the people. However, the united and organized assertion of the working class has been able to make the voice of opposition to the anti-people regime louder, throughout the country. The determined struggle against privatisation by the workers of NALCO along with the people from all walks of life has proved that the privatisation drive can be stopped by united movement of the working class.

The past year since May Day 2003 has witnessed two massive

countrywide general strikes by the working people of the country, one on 21st May 2003 and another on 24th February 2004, apart from numerous sectoral struggles reflecting the firm resolve of the working people to carry on the fight against these anti-people policies, defeating all disruptive ploys. The CITU congratulates the working class for its leading role in challenging this anti-national, anti-people regime.

The Vajpayee Government has pushed the country's economy onto the track of disaster and ruin through its pursuit of neoliberal economic policies. These economic policies are de-industrialising the economy and mortgaging the country's economic sovereignty to the imperialist powers. Rising joblessness and unemployment, aggravation of poverty, widespread sickness and closure of industries, unending corruption in contracts and purchases and even bigger privatisation-scams are the highlights of the BJP led misrule, which cannot be whitewashed by the Government campaign of "feel-good" or "India shining". All the lie campaigns cannot suppress the glaring facts of ruinous decline of the economy. Economic growth rates dipped consistently during the entire post-liberalisation period, compared to the pre-reform period, and the slowdown intensified during the Vajpayee regime in particular. Unemployment grew phenomenally in both cities and villages and starvation deaths and suicide are rising despite

godowns overflowing with food grains. Never before was the peasantry so vulnerable and pauperized as now - they die when the crop fails and they also die when there is a bumper crop and the prices crash to the ground. Banks are flush with funds but the investment rate is dipping. Side by side, the tax-evaders, the frauds, the cheats, the criminals enjoy all the goodies - they are "feeling good" and trying to convince the rest of India to feel good through a barrage of propaganda.

In the midst of all these, the working people are facing the most atrocious onslaught on their rights and livelihood. The militancy of the employers is actively encouraged by the Government at the centre and in most of the states, through non-enforcement of and liberal exemption from labour laws accompanied by an alarming rise in lock-outs, closures and shut-downs, and brazen defalcation of workers' dues by the employers. This has created the ground for drastic changes in labour laws, to impose conditions of slavery on the toiling people. The Second National Commission on Labour has already drawn the blueprint for the same. The change has already started with the introduction of 'fixed term employment' with the crooked aim of banishing the concept of permanent jobs from the workplace.

All the wings of the State machinery, including the judiciary, have come out with their fangs bared to assault the rights of collective assertion by

the workers. The perverse vindictiveness of the Tamilnadu Government towards its employees, the response of the apex court of the country in imposing a ban on 'right to strike', and the unqualified endorsement of all such misdeeds by the Vajpayee Government are a blatant expression of fascistic intolerance of the ruling class towards the right of organized expression of the working class. Despite all this, the working class movement of the country dared to organize a countrywide action in defiance of the prohibitive orders. The 24th February strike is the beginning of this phase of defiance through militant countrywide class actions in defence of democratic rights not only of the workers but of the entire people, as the attack on worker's rights is a prelude to an attack on democracy. These rights are to be defended by a more militant and organized assertion of those rights. That is the lesson of history. Further, the entire developments reiterate the truth that by sacrificing and trampling underfoot the rights and interests of the toiling people, neither the economy nor the society can advance. The biased effort to make only the capitalists and landlords 'feel good' can in no way lead to employment generation and all round sustained development. Let May Day 2004 carry this realization to the broadest section of the toiling people.

This year May Day will be observed by the working class

in the midst of a grim political battle—the General Election to the 14th Lok Sabha. The BJP led political combine which came to power by cheating the people and using the communal divisive route has been able to carry on for five years through the same trickery and communal ploys. Now, in the face of the forthcoming elections, they have resorted to again cheating the people through lie-campaigns and rousing communal passion, to get themselves back to political power.

The last five years of BJP led governance have witnessed an all round degeneration and perverse distortion of social, political and cultural values, accompanied by disaster on the economic front, thereby exposing the BJP-led combine as the enemy of the nation and enemy of the people.

On the social and political front, in the face of mounting discontent among the people against such pro-rich policies, the BJP bandwagon has, in a calculated manner, resorted to nasty tricks, putting human lives at stake, to create the ground for communal riots, to bring about a different divisive polarization among the electorates, just to retain themselves in power. The Gujarat riots, including their antecedent, the Godhra carnage, was the handiwork of the RSS outfits, just to retain the BJP in political power in Gujarat and help it to form governments in other states.

Now, in the run up to elections, the BJP bandwagon has been

working overtime to rouse communal frenzy. The Sangh Parivar outfits like the VHP, Bajrang Dal, etc are raising communal slogans, seeking to rebuild the frenzy over the Ram temple at Ayodhya, proudly proclaiming their so called Hindutva plank, while the leaders of its political outfit, the BJP, is assuming the role of moderator, to confuse and cheat the people and garner votes. The same trick is being played on economic policy issues where RSS outfits like the Swadeshi Jagaran Manch and BMS spit venom in public against the economic policy of liberalization and globalization while staying away from any concrete action against those policies.

The working class and the toiling people must not allow themselves to be cheated again by the BJP led combine. They must teach this number one enemy a lesson by decisively defeating the NDA combine in the forthcoming election.

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May Day 2004 places before us the task of strengthening the countrywide united struggle against neoliberal imperialist globalisation and its protagonists in the social and political arena. Pro-neoliberalism will take the country to ruin and only an anti-liberalisation struggle can save the country from disaster. The working class must pledge to unite itself, defeat the communal and divisive forces and lead the struggle to save the country by exposing our enemies and their policies.

(Cont. on page 237)

ATTACK ON GOVT SERVICES UNDER NDA REGIME

The mass-scale privatisation of the govt services, particularly in the public utility services sector is the main theme of the of the neoliberal policy regime being vigorously pursued by the BJP led NDA regime. Putting all public utility services under private hands through desperate privatisation and contractorisation has become the obsession of the ruling polity. A vigorous process is under way to dismantle various central govt services and departments to pave the way for private tycoons to suck the blood of common people in vital and essential public utility services and also in the sectors having strategic importance for the national economy and financial administration. Certain examples are cited hereunder.

POSTAL SERVICES

The crooked ploy to privatize the postal services in a phased manner is already underway. Postal Bill 2002 has already been introduced in Parliament which seeks to replace the existing Postal Act and envisages phased privatisation of various postal services. Private agencies will be allowed to undertake postal services, Remunerative prime services like Speed Post, Business Post etc will be corporatised to pave the way for privatisation and a large portion of the traditional postal services, particularly the remunerative ones will be outsourced in a big way. But even before enactment of the Postal Bill, steps are being taken by the central govt to create such a condition in the postal services, through large scale downsizing that private agencies already active in the postal and communication sector get more business and advantages to the detriment of the interest of the postal deptt. Till date, more than 17000 posts were abolished in the postal deptt though there is acute shortage of staff to manage the countrywide postal network. Decision has been taken to further slash down the workforce by bringing down the number of extra-departmental employees from 3 lakh to 1 lakh. Mail Motor Services in RMS and the Railway Mail Services itself are being sought to be dismantled

systematically by introducing private agencies. On the whole, a calculated move is underway to render the govt postal services withdrawn and/or rendered ineffective to make way for private agencies to take over. Postal employees will lose jobs and postal services will be costlier to common people and in remotest areas of the country, it will be non-existent as a result.

TELECOMMUNICATION

Department of Telecommunication has been corporatised into BSNL in 2000 to pave the way for its privatisation. Private sector including big multinational companies have already been allowed in the telecommunication sector with heavy dose of concessions and incentive who are active only in the highly remunerative areas and the comparatively unremunerative task of rural telephony is practically left with the BSNL only affecting its profitability. The Govt is now planning to introduce Compulsory Retirement and VRS as a preparatory prelude to the privatisation move of BSNL. VSNL has already been sold to the Tatas for a song.

INCOME TAX DEPARTMENT

Income tax department is going to hand-over a large part of its main functions like PAN card, Annual Returns, Tax Collection etc to outside agencies which will adversely affect the ordinary people and the nation besides rendering about 30000 employees out of total 55000 redundant.

OTHERS

Main functions of the Geological Survey of India like coal-exploration, off-shore exploration etc have been abandoned and the rest of the functions are going to be handed over to private agencies. As a result, 4500 employees are going to be redundant and declared surplus. Govt of India Mints, Security Presses, Security Paper Mills are being corporatised to facilitate privatisation. Govt of India Presses are being restructured leading to loss of jobs for 2000 employees. A considerable section of work of the National Library is going to be contractorised for which the tenders have already been floated. This will also

lead to redundancy and job losses. National Savings Organisation has been dismantled throwing out 1100 employees. GOI forms Store, the Office of the Development Commissioner for Iron & Steel, Asstt Director Outside Printing, Deptt of Supply office located at Kolkata etc have been ordered for outright closure and more than 700 employees are declared surplus. The GOI stationary Office employing about 800 employees is going to be closed down from September 2004. Prestigious Marine Engineering and Research Institutes are going to be handed over to a Society controlled by private shipping barons and employees are being forced to opt in favour of joining the Society without even knowing the service conditions. Drastic downsizing is going on in the offices of DGS&D, BSI and many other departments in line with recommendations of Expenditure Reforms Commission (Geethakrishnan Commission).

Added to this is the drastic reduction of the interest rate on GPF and introduction of a new contributory pension scheme for the employees joining services on or after 1-1-2004. All these are being done in the name of wiping out so called surplus

manpower in public services and reducing expenditures.

The NDA Govt during its five years tenure has doled out liberal concessions and incentives to the corporate and big-business groups, both domestic and foreign amounting to at least Rs 20000 crore each year despite the fact that those big-business lobby has already usurped around Rs 1,25,000 crore of bank-money through NPA and around Rs 1,00,000 crore from govt exchequer through non-payment/evasion of tax payment. Hence, the workers, employees and common people are the only targets for the Vajpayee Govt for cost-cutting and expenditure reduction.

And the very idea of reducing surplus manpower is totally devilish. The manpower deployment in public services in India is the lowest in the world. The ratio public employees per 1000 population is more than 6 on the average in USA and other western countries and the said ratio in other developing countries is around 4. In India the ratio of public employees per 1000 population is well below 2. This position clearly exposes the anti-employee, anti-people face of the NDA Govt.

(Source: Coordination Committee of Central Govt Employees, West Bengal)

NON-PERFORMING ASSETS OF BANKS: SWEEPED UNDER THE CARPET

In the shining India's banking sector, the banks are practicing the art of reducing NPAs without actually recovering loans from the corporate borrowers. Recovering loans from the corporate borrowers is an extremely difficult task. Hence bankers have innovated ingenious ways of reducing NPAs.

1. Corporate Debt Restructuring(CDR): CDR enables banks to revive major corporate NPA accumulations through reduction in interest rates, waiver of penal interest, elongation of duration of the loan etc. During 2003-04, about Rs 52000 crore worth of NPA(default of loan payment by corporates) in corporate account were estimated to undergo CDR....
2. Asset Reconstruction Corporation of India(ARCIL): another method used to reduce NPAs(without recovering the loan) is the transfer of the NPAs to the ARCIL with a discount, for further selling the NPA to others with a margin....
3. One Time Settlement: This has helped banks to recover funds stuck up in difficult accounts.... However the ratio of recovery to outstanding NPAs is kept secret. The Debt Recovery Tribunals(DRT) counselors and recovery agents indicate that not more than 20-30 per cent of NPAs are actually recovered, the remaining is written off....

(Economic Times, 7-04-2004)

Govt of the Manipulators, for the Manipulators

Dipankar Mukherjee

The spring of 2004 has witnessed a sordid drama and an unparalleled crafting of corruption that should come back again and again for public scrutiny because of the sheer magnitude of the crime and the people involved in it. In January 2004, the caretaker NDA Government announced its decision to sell shares of 6 public sector undertakings including ONGC, GAIL and IBP. At that time ONGC scrip touched a peak of Rs 994 a share, GAIL at Rs 297 a share, and IBP share rose to Rs 886. It was the time for the government to fix the offer price of those shares. But a strange story unfolded soon after, a murky behind the scene act of manipulation started—by whom? Only Arun Shourie, Union Minister of Disinvestment, knows all about that but refuses to divulge or take action. But why? That too when he had kept Prime Minister and Dy Prime Minister informed about the whole episode.

Bear Cartel

Story started with the sudden fall in Bombay Stock Exchange Sensitive Index, and ONGC, IBP, GAIL shares literally crashed. When BSE Index fell by 8% from 6194 to 5700 points, ONG, GAIL, IBP shares fell sharply by 20-30%. Ultimately Government fixed the offer price of IBP at Rs 620 per share, 30% lower than the peak price and that of GAIL at Rs 185, lower by 37% and in case of ONGC the range was

fixed at Rs 685 to Rs 750, a whopping 32% down from the peak price of January 2004. On 24th February, Shourie publicly proclaimed that some manipulators had formed a bear cartel to hammer down the share market to bring down share prices of ONGC, GAIL and IBP, and they had been identified. On 25th February, after consulting Prime Minister, and Deputy Prime Minister, he sat with merchant bankers and a few of the 'manipulators' to give them what the media termed as "a good dressing down." On 27th February, the market reportedly "showed exuberance from despondency". So Arun Shourie along with Vajpayee shines because the offer price of the shares which were already under priced did not go further down to erode the budgetary target of Rs 14000 crore. The following emerged from Shourie's press briefings:

- ◆ the market was being manipulated by a bear cartel

- ◆ that Shourie knew them and met a few of them with the knowledge of Prime Minister and Dy Prime Minister

- ◆ and the market rebumped after his intervention. Shourie, while participating in the 10th anniversary celebration of Business Line, an economic daily, has been quoted as saying, "We should first find out the market. How is that these stocks go up and down with just

10 fellows? If only 10 chaps are manipulating it then why not manipulate those 10 fellows," (*Business Line*, dt 25.3.2004).

Who are the ten fellows?

When confronted with query on the identity of the bear cartel manipulators who had tried to outshine the shining Shourie, Shourie refuses to reveal the names on the plea "they realized what they are doing was not right. We should just look at the result." (Interview in Outlook) This comes from some one who as an investigating journalist had used tonnes of newsprint in an effort to get the names of the recipients of commission of Bofors deal. Did he "look at the result," i.e the performance of Bofors guns on the border before seeking the names from the then Rajiv Government? Shourie himself says in the same interview "I am not saying anything more. A very big thing has been prevented." If a minister in course of preventing an economic crime can get away with such explanation, tomorrow a police inspector after foiling an attempt of robbery by a gang before the robbery takes place, can release the gang members without filing an FIR! Police can in Shourian style exclaim "A big robbery has been prevented". Can there be more farcical explanation to hide and protect ten economic offenders, who, as per the Minister, have been manipulating the market which

has witnessed repeated share market scams. Shourie, as a crusader journalist has been in the past in the forefront for the right to information of the citizens. What about the right to this information for a small investor who is investing his hard-earned money in the share market euphemistically glorified as "market forces" by market fundamentalists like Shourie and his fellow-travellers in corporate and media? The people of this country through whose tax the public sector has been built, have the right to know as to how their assets are being bartered in a market manipulated by a few manipulators and as to why they are being allowed to roam freely, when their identity is known to the Government. If market manipulators like Harshad Mehta or Ketan Parikh could be sent to jail and some others can be debarred from operating in stock market why

the Government shirks to name ten manipulators and take action against them? Why this protection?

What prevents the govt to name the ten - *Bhaya* or *Bhrastachar*? (Fear or Corruption)

Shourie says the market will collapse if the names are revealed. Does he want the people to believe that three Big of BJP comprising Vajpayee, the "*Aarpaar-fighter*", Advani, the "*Louha Purush*" and Shourie, the "firebrand investigative journalist cum Minister," are afraid of 10 share market operators who can make the market collapse in spite their presence at the helm of affairs? Is the Govt as fragile as the so-called market forces? Or are they afraid of something else — spilling of beans by these ten fellows. Is it "*Bhaya*" or "*Bhrastachaar*". *Bhrastachaar* has become

"*Shistachar*" in NDA-raj. Rumours are agog that share market brokers are contributing hundreds of crores to BJP's election fund. Non-revelation of the names gives credence to this nexus. The whole operation of fixing merchant bankers (who are reportedly, part of the bear cartel), as adviser for disinvestments, and a media-managed show by Shourie of Govt's intervention in share market correction, appears to be a cover up for sale of under-priced public sector assets of ONGC, GAIL & IBP. Vajpayee wants to cash on Team India's cricket victory for election. Would he try to catch on their slogan "*Hum Me Hai Dum?*" Would he and his Govt. have the "*Dum*,"- the courage - to name the 10 fellows. Obviously courage and manipulation cannot go together. Who knows it better than the Govt of the manipulators, for the manipulators.....

NOISE ON GROWTH RATES ! FIGURES SPEAK.....

Much noise is being made on 10.4 per cent growth in GDP in the third quarter(Q3) OF 2003-04. The growth rate in agriculture of 16.9 per cent in Q-3 this year corresponding to a negative growth rate of minus 9.8 per cent in Q-3 last year has pushed up the overall growth figure in Q-3, 2003-04. It is a good monsoon following a year of extreme drought that should get the credit. Despite that the agricultural production is expected not to cross the previous peak attained sometimes in 1996-97.

If looked into sectorwise, particularly in the real economy sectors, the picture is not that bright as being sought to be painted. The mining sector witnessed a sharp decline in growth rates to 2.2 to 4 per cent in all the three quarters of 2003-04 as compared to the first three quarters of previous year(7.6 to 11.8 per cent). In manufacturing, the growth rate declined in the first quarter by around 0.5 per cent and in the second and third quarters it increased marginally by almost the same percentage compared to corresponding quarters last year. In Services sector, while the trade and hotel services recorded a respectable rise growth rates, in financial services, the growth rates consistently declined in all the three quarters and the community and social services witnessed decline in growth rates in two out three quarters in 2003-04 compared to corresponding period last year...

(Source: tables published in Business Line, Economic Times , 01-04-2004)

NO 'FEEL GOOD' WHEN BAD GUYS ARE AT THE HELM THEY DESERVE ONLY CONTEMPT

There can be nothing to feel good when the bad, rather the worst guys are at the helm of governance in the country, crime, arsons, murders and rapes are engineered by the administration and justice is compromised in complicity. The BJP brand administration exemplifies the type of such governance where human life is bartered lavishly in the ploy to retain the seats of power. Recent observation by the highest judiciary of the country on such BJP governance and the editorial comments on the same by the leading National Dailies lay bare the ugly face of the ruling polity. They deserve contempt and condemnation, nothing else !

The Times of India dated 14-04-2004 observed: "The BJP's much trumpeted feel good factor has taken a body-blow... First, a resounding slap from the judiciary, which ordered a fresh trial in the Best-Bakery case and outside Gujarat at that....For the BJP and Narendra Modi, the apex court's indictment is a dishonour, the like of which has never visited a political party or government. Indeed, never before has the highest judiciary so strongly expressed its lack of confidence in the administration as well as the justice system of a state...As such the BEST-Bakery verdict is without precedent in independent India. Quashing the Gujarat High Court's acquittal of everyone of the 21 accused in the case, the judges said, "The modern day 'Neros' were looking elsewhere when innocent children and helpless women were burning, and were probably deliberating how the perpetrators of the crime could be protected." Further that, "the justice system was literally allowed to be abused, misused and mutilated by subterfuge. It is anybody's guess whether the scathing indictment will impel the BJP to seek Modi's ouster. The Party's past record does not give us reason to harbour such illusions....Just how does Vajpayee's moderate(?) worldview square with Modi's undisguised pursuit of aggressive sectarianism?...."

Another National Daily, The Hindu dated 14-04-

2004 commented editorially:

"...The Best Bakery case, where the lower court and Gujarat High Court acquitted 21 persons accused of killing 14, including two small children, in the genocidal riots that followed the Godhra carnage, has come to represent for all of civilized India what Justices Doraiswamy Raju and Arijit Pasayat characterized as the " travesty of truth and fraud on the legal process." In an unprecedented move, the Supreme Court also ordered the Gujarat Government to consult the victims and the witnesses before appointing a public prosecutor. This ought to be viewed as the severest indictment of the insolence of the Narendra Modi regime in dispensing justice to the victims of the 2002 carnage. As significant is the Court's criticism and expunction of the remarks made by Gujarat High Court against social activist Teesta Setalvad and the National Human Rights Commission. The trial court fared even worse: it stood as a "silent spectator, mute to the manipulations and preferred to be indifferent to sacrilege being committed to justice...."

Despite the damning judgment, political reaction from the ruling camp have been predictable...The law minister, Arun Jaitley does not perceive the judgment as a comment on either Chief Minister Modi or Gujarat Government....This insouciance comes in the face of the characterization of the State administration by the judges as 'Modern day Neros' - choosing to look the other way while women and children were being burnt with a premeditated purpose and systematically targeted....But it is unlikely that the Supreme Court's indictment will produce any real expression of remorse or contrition....Justice still waits to be done on an extensive scale in Gujarat. Consider the statistics of the post Godhra riots: Naroda Patiya— 91-200 killed, women raped; Chamanpura, Gulberg Society-40-65 killed, including ex-MP Ehsan Jaffrey; Odh village-29 burnt alive in one incident; Radhikpur village-20 known dead, several women raped and killed;

Fatehpura-women raped and forced to walk naked to the police station; Sardarpura village-33 dead, 29 in one house; Anjanwa village-11 known dead, women and children thrown into a well; and finally Geetaben, whose only crime was to have tried to save a Muslim. These are just a

few examples. As long as justice is not done in all such cases, the events of February-March 2002 in Mahatma Gandhi's home State will weigh on the conscience of every responsible Indian citizen. Until then, there is no question of India shining."

9.5 PER CENT INTEREST RATE ON EPF FOR LAST YEAR NOT CLEARED BY GOVT. OF INDIA

The BJP led government has been cutting down the interest rate on small savings and provident fund every successive years. It brought down the interest on small savings from 13 per cent to 8 per cent and the interest on employees provident fund (EPF) from 12 per cent to 9.5 per cent. Last year, the Finance Ministry was insisting that the EPF interest also be brought down to 8 per cent in line with that applicable for small savings and the general provident fund (GPF) of government employees. But, the Union Minister for Labour, Sahib Singh Verma, who is also the Chairman of the Central Board of Trustees (CBT) of the EPF had announced that the interest rate on EPF for the year 2003 - 04 would be maintained at 9.5 per cent, with interest as 9 per cent plus 0.5 per cent as golden jubilee bonus. Now, the Employees Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) has directed all its regional offices not to issue the annual statement of accounts for 2003 -04 to the subscribers of the EPF, which is due for issue from 1st April, 2004, 'until further instructions'. The EPFO instructions explicitly state: "the recommendation of the CBT - EPF on declaration of interest at 9 % and 0.5 % bonus interest to all the members of the EPF Scheme for 2003 - 04 was sent to Government of India and their decision in this regard is still awaited". This is only a clever ploy in view of the forthcoming elections and the NDA government has only postponed further slashing down the interest rate until elections are over, while at the same time putting under question mark even the 9.5% interest payable on 2002-03 account. The EPFO instructions to its regional offices clearly exposed this deceitful tactics adopted by the Labour Minister. Besides, a further cut awaits the small saving community and EPF members, if the people commit the grave mistake of returning the NDA to power.

In a statement issued on 8th April 2004, CITU Secretariat condemned such deceptive game of the NDA Govt. The CITU denounces the ugly tactics indulged in by the Labour Minister and the EPFO, taking the EPF members for a ride. The Labour Minister had chosen to deny CITU and AITUC their due representation in the CBT only because their representatives resisted such arbitrary and fraudulent measures indulged in by him. The CITU demands the Labour Minister to own up the responsibility for this deception of the EPF subscribers and tender immediate resignation.

(May Day cont. from page 231)

This struggle is gaining momentum worldwide and on this day of international solidarity, let us pledge to unify the entire toiling and democratic people in the ongoing struggle through the broadest possible mobilization. May Day 2004 has one unified call all over the world - "We want jobs for all", "A decent living for all" which neoliberalism can never provide. Hence the slogan for another world, not a neoliberal one. We have the confidence that it is possible to achieve "another world".

We pledge on this day, as we join the world struggle with all our might to secure what is needed most - a secure job for all and a decent life for all — in another world.

Let us march forward to defend the interests of our great country and its people!

Long live working class unity!

Long live international solidarity of the working class!

Down with imperialism! Long live socialism!

ECONOMY DERAILED ...

FOREIGNERS HOLD 30 PER CENT SHARES IN TOP INDIAN COS

Foreign hands control 30 per cent of India's top companies. We aren't xenophobic.

If you look at the ownership of Indian companies, you might wonder if East India Company syndrome - a sort of creeping acquisition of effective control and wealth - is under way. The shareholding pattern of the top Indian companies is increasingly acquiring a global hue.

On an average, foreign entities held 30 per cent of India's top 50 companies (Nifty 50) shares at the end of 2003. It has increased from 23 per cent at the end of December 2002 and 17 per cent at the end of 2001.

In terms of wealth, foreigners now control a third of the market capitalisation of the Nifty companies. An analysis of the shareholding pattern of the 50 companies shows that the increase in foreign

holding in sectors such as energy (oil & gas, petrochemicals, power) and auto has been dramatic. The increase in shareholding in 2003 has, however, been largely restricted to companies in which foreigners already held a sizable stake. The number of companies with more than 25 per cent foreign shareholding rose only by one to 26 in 2003.

Twenty of them are companies promoted by Indians, which include Grasim, Hindalco, Reliance Industries, HDFC Bank and ICICI Bank, and six are affiliates of multinational companies. For instance, in the banking sector, the existing regulation, too, favours higher foreign investor holding. Foreign direct investment in this sector is permitted up to 74 per cent; on the contrary, the Indian promoter can hold only up to 49 per cent....

(Business Line, 28-03-2004)

WHERE DO WE STAND ?

....72.21 per cent of one billion population in India live in 6.38 lakh villages....What is the situation here—5 per cent of villagers do not have pucca houses, 25 per cent have no safe drinking water, 35 per cent no electricity in their homes and 85 per cent no sanitation facilities. If these statistics are fleshed in human terms, it is not a picture that can make any Indian feel proud..... A look in the budgetary provisions shows that the allocation for rural sanitation and safe drinking water does not exceed 2 per cent of total plan expenditure....

And what about education—the one major factor that makes such a vast difference ? Hardly 60

per cent of rural population is literate and the drop-out rate for children is as high as 50 per cent well before they reach the fifth standard. Nearly 65 per cent of villages do not have a proper school and even where there are 'schools', horror stories of the teacher coming thrice a year just for the record or of the school 'shed' being used to store grain and cattle feed are common in media.

A more depressing picture emerges if one looks at tribal areas and hamlets. Denundation of forests and extreme malnutrition force the tribals to seasonally migrate to work in slave like conditions for unscrupulous labour contractors...

(The Hindu, 29-03-2004)

EMPLOYMENT LOSES SHINE....

In the India shining record, employment is a weak issue for the NDA Govt... In a reform era, it is unrealistic to expect employment creation in government sector, which accounts for 20 million

jobs. Nor is it realistic to harp about rigid labour laws as deterrents to employment....More important is the 394 million workers in the unorganised sector and this includes agriculture

DOWN THE DISASTER LANE !

and allied activities. More than one study has now highlighted the failure of agriculture to create jobs. Not only has unorganised sector job creation slackened, the composition of such jobs has moved from agriculture to construction and trade...Both the primary and tertiary sectors show reduced employment growth in 1990s....Once the regional dimension is factored in, the situation

looks much worse. Most of the new entrants in the labour force are in states where employment creation has been low...Notwithstanding the euphoria over call centers and business process outsourcing, India's poverty and unemployment problems cannot be resolved until the rural sector thrives...

(Editorial : The Financial Express, 14-04-2004)

WHITHER RESEARCH & DEVELOPMENT (R&D)

....against a global annual expenditure on R&D m(Uf \$500-600 billion , India spends a mere \$2.5 billion, which is slightly above what Merck, a US based pharmaceutical firm spent(\$2.1 billion) in 1999....As a percentage of GDP, R&D expenditure in India is hardly 0.87 per cent in 1999-2000...

(The Hindu, 29-03-2004)

REALITY OR HYPE ?

...since 1996-97, GDP has been declining despite "feel good" dose administers every year by yashwant Sinha in three successive budgets. It came down to a miserable 4.2 per cent in 2001-02. The average annual growth from 1997-98 to 2002-03 stands at 5.9 per cent which is lower than the rate recorded in the first five years of reforms.....The investment rate has fallen from a peak of 27 per cent of GDP a few years ago to 23 per cent in 2003-04. Investment in

manufacturing sector has been consistently falling and stood at 11 year low in 2003-04. This real state of economy stands in sharp contrast to the "feel good" and "India shinning" hype being served to the unsuspecting people by the present govt for electoral gains....In the light of all this, the conclusion is inescapable: the current "feel good" and "India shinning" slogans are more rhetoric than factual statements.....

(The Statesman, 31-03-2004)

POWER GENERATION GROWTH: DARK SPOTS IN THE SHINE !

....Eventhoughwe continue to add power-generation-capacities and have touched 1,10,000 mw of capacity, data on generation growth plotted since 1975 shows that the growth of power generation over the last three decades started coming down since mid-90s and continues to come down further over the last few years. Yearly growth in power generation which has seen yearly fluctuations since 1975, has, on the average, remained around 8 per cent. However, since the mid-90s, and closer to the late 90s to the current

year, this growth has come down to around 5 per cent....The power generation during the first ten months of 2003-04 recorded a massive decline of 13 per cent and if this is included, the average growth comes down to around 3 per cent. The position is not likely to be better during the next couple of years because the capacity addition has been about 3 per cent or less per annum and is likely to remain on the same order in the coming years....

(The Financial Express, 02-04-2004)

REPUBLIC OF HUNGER

(Excerpts from a booklet written by Dr Utsa Patnaik, Professor of Economics, Jawaharlal Nehru University)

In the course of last five years (1998 to 2003), the population of the republic of India has been sliding down towards sharply lowered level of per-capita foodgrains absorption, levels so low in particular years that they have not been seen for the last half century.... from an average annual level of 174.3 kg in the three years ending in 1997-98 to only 151 kg by the pre-drought year 2000-01, an abysmally low level last seen during the early years of the second world war, which included the years of terrible Bengal famine. Thus in 2000-01, the average Indian family of four members was absorbing 93 kg less of foodgrains compared to a mere four years earlier—a massive and unprecedented drop, entailing a fall in average daily intake by 64 grams per head, or a fall in calorie intake by 250 calories (from foodgrains which accounts for 65 to 70 per cent of the food budget of the poor). Since the richest one-sixth to one-fifth of the population, mainly urban, has been improving and diversifying diets, the nutritional decline for the poorer three-fifths of the population, mainly rural, has been much greater than the average fall indicates.

What lies behind the decline in absorption of foodgrains and consequent spread of hunger all around? This massive decline is the result of an unprecedented decline in

purchasing power in rural areas following directly from neoliberal economic reform—the deflationary policies at the macro-economic level combined with trade liberalization.... The continuous decline in purchasing power and hence decline in foodgrains absorption, has been reflected in a continuous build-up of the public food stocks year after year starting from 1998, reaching 63.1 million tons by the end of July 2002—despite declining per capita foodgrains output and continuing export.... Last year, the worst drought year for over a decade, between June 2002 and June 2003, the NDA Govt exported a record 12 million tons of foodgrains out of stocks and continued to export a million tons a month bringing the declared total exports to over 17 million tons by November 2003. Independent India has never seen such huge exports (of foodgrains), only made possible by more and more empty stomachs over the preceding years. It is an utter scandal that at the same time more millions of rural poor were going hungry and those already hungry were being pushed into starvation; the government, rather than undertaking widespread food for work programmes preferred to feed foreigners and their cattle, that too at a heavily subsidized price...

Often the argument is heard

that since per capita income is rising, it is to be expected that people would consume less cereals and pulses which become inferior goods and consume more high value foods, in short people would diversify their diets.... This is total misconception about the concerned law of economics. The absorption of foodgrains per capita is always found to rise, not fall, as the consumer's average income rises. The figures of availability of foodgrains, given here, as indeed the official figures, refer to absorption of grain for all purposes. Availability or absorption of foodgrains includes not only direct consumption (as roti, boiled rice and so on) but also indirect use as feed for livestock, to produce milk, eggs, meat and so on as well as indirect use as industrial raw materials. The availability or absorption of foodgrains per head always rises as a nation's per capita income rises. This is a very well known fact and supported by FAO data covering virtually every country. China, with about double India's per capita income absorbed 325 kg per capita of foodgrains in the mid 1990s, Mexico absorbed 375 kg per capita, Europe absorbed over 650 kg per capita and USA absorbed the maximum, 850 kg per capita, of which less than a quarter was directly consumed and the rest converted to animal products,

processed or put to industrial use....

Moreover, in the context of our country, which has been seeing sharp deceleration of agricultural growth in the nineties, falling per capita foodgrains output and sharply rising rural unemployment, these arguments on voluntary diversification of diets for all rural population segments are illogical to the point of being foolish....With income distribution shifting sharply in their favour, the top one sixth of the population has certainly been voluntarily diversifying their diets, but the poorer majority of the population cannot afford to do so except crying for bread and going hungry, partially or fully.....

Today in India, in the middle of rising rural unemployment, falling per head grain intake and a rise in absolute and relative numbers in nutritional deficit, we find that those who make policy are talking of declining rural poverty on the basis of unreasonable estimation procedures and by ignoring all other trends. Posterity will remember them too for their remarkable conceptual blindness, but for the present the prognosis is bleak. Where the diagnosis of the problem of hunger itself is incorrect and a worsening situation is being interpreted as betterment, no remedial measures can be expected of the policy advisers and the rulers, of this country which was once a developing economy, but has turned into the Republic of Hunger.

Bharat Petroleum Trade Unions Decide One-day Strike

The trade unions functioning in the Refinery and Marketing Divisions of Bharat Petroleum Corporation Limited (BPCL) irrespective of affiliations have jointly decided to go for one-day strike throughout the country on 8th June, 2004 to protest the unilateral steps of the management to increase the employees' contribution in pension fund and reduce the pensionary benefits. The decision for the strike was taken in a meeting of the representatives of the trade unions held at Mumbai on the 17th April, 2004. Trade Unions affiliated to AITUC, CITU, INTUC, SHIV SENA, Maharashtra General Kamgar Union and the all the unaffiliated unions participated in the meeting. It is important to note that this is for the first time the Refinery and Marketing unions have come together on the common issue to organise united resistance against the highhandedness of the management.

Due to anti-people changes in the interest regime and introduction of other hostile policy decision with regard to pension schemes by the NDA Government the trade unions in BPCL have been requesting the management to convene a meeting of the national bilateral forum to discuss the impact of such developments on the Superannuation Scheme of BPCL. But the management refused to convene such meeting. On the contrary they (the BPCL management) have taken steps to unilaterally increase the employees' contribution to the scheme and reduce the pensionary benefits. The present percentile deduction ranging from 1.5 percent to 5 per cent of pay is going to be increased to 3 percent to 10 percent pay.

It is shocking to note that totally deviating from the normal practice of running Pension Trusts with equal representations from the employer and employees, the BPCL management refused to grant representation to the employees in the Trust. The BPCL Pension Trust is run with the management's representatives only.

The strike notice shall be served on 21st May'04 and on 8th June'04 the total workers of the BPCL working in the refineries and marketing divisions all over the country shall go for one day's strike. Towards preparation of the strike, demonstration, badge wearing etc. shall be organized.

US OUT OF IRAQ!

The Iraqi people have risen en masse against the neo-colonial occupation of their country by the US imperialist forces and its allies. The US deceives itself and seeks to deceive the world when it claims that the occupation forces are dealing only with small groups of miscreants who are determined to thwart the democratic aspirations of the Iraqi people. The Bush administration refuses to acknowledge the reality that an overwhelmingly large portion of the Iraqi people sympathises with the resistance and provides assistance whenever able to do so. Even those who welcomed the ouster of the regime of Saddam Hussein and those who fear that conditions in the country will become chaotic if foreign troops depart have expressed their opposition to the occupation. Even sectarian differences has not stopped the Iraqis from uniting behind a common cause. Despite all the US efforts to divide the Iraqis on religious lines and claims that a civil war is imminent in Iraq, Shias and Sunnis are both fighting against the US occupation of their country.

During the second half of April, the uprising is spreading throughout the country as the colonial force attempts to hold the country in a tight grip. The number of casualties has mounted, as Iraqi cities are besieged and bombed by missile and tanks. Street fighting is raging throughout the country.

The Pentagon is reacting with a murderous iron fist that is making the popular Iraqi position increasingly clear to the world: that the occupation forces are indeed an enemy - not liberators.

In a classic demonstration of colonial practices, the US is conducting a widespread reign of terror. The US and its allies are now conducting military operations in Ramadi, Baghdad, Basra, Mosul, Sadr and other cities. The city of Fallujah has been exceptionally targeted. This is the same city where in the first week of the occupation US troops took over a local school and killed 15 residents who were protesting against the takeover of the facility.

Yet, this is not exactly George Bush's Vietnam. During Vietnam, it took years for the majority of the people and most soldiers to turn against the war. This time, the people of the United States have learned within the span of only one year that the war against Iraq is based only on outright fabrications and lies. One year after the occupation, and even before, the people of this country and the world are and have been turning against the occupation and the war-mongers.

Although the mass uprising has been described as an isolated "trouble" spot within a "Sunni Triangle", the revolt is in reality over an entire Iraqi rectangle encompassing nearly all the areas from north to south. Over the past few days, the previously simmering rejection of foreign occupation has evolved into a near full-scale revolt that has spread to many cities in the south of Iraq.

Despite that, the Bush Administration is posing a unperturbed and demonstrating arrogance over its continuance of occupation on Iraq. This is where the oil is. Not just in Iraq, but also throughout the Gulf region where two thirds of the world's known petroleum reserves are located. This region is also the gateway to the rapidly expanding economies of East and Southeast Asia, the northern entrance to the African continent from Europe and where several strategic waterways are located, the Suez Canal, Gibraltar Strait, the Red Sea, and the Gulf. The Arab portion of that region is also simmering with a popular notion of unity and desire for full sovereignty spanning northern Africa and Western Asia. It is where the Palestinian struggle anchors a populist anti colonial sentiment and where imposed proxy regimes are dependent for their existence directly on the US. In the heart of that region there is Israel, the US's most important ally and power broker functioning as a spearhead that simultaneously requires a political economic and diplomatic cover and support from the US. Absolute control-military control-over these highly strategic resources is the key to the exercise of hegemony in the world capitalist

economy.

Tens of thousands of Iraqis have died already since their country was invaded and occupied. It is clear from the events of the recent days that so many Iraqis are enraged and disgusted with the occupation of their country that thousands and thousands of people are prepared to give their lives rather than be colonial subjects under foreign domination.

Unable to prevent the spread of the rebellion by other means, the US military is carrying out more murderous repression against the people, which in turn will inflame the situation in Iraq and throughout the region. Under these conditions

(Shipping Industry Cont. from Page 226)

state governments without any concurrent financial support, thereby paving way for privatisation.

Non-Development of Inland Water Transport

Out of approximately 15,000 km of navigable waterways in the country consisting of varieties of river systems, canals, backwaters, etc., only 2700 km is being used to some extent. The share of Inland Water Transport in the total cargo traffic is only 0.15 per cent. Due to absence of infrastructure development, this important mode of transport remains unutilised. The public sector Central Inland Water Transport Corporation is made deliberately a sick unit by the Govt by neglecting timely investment and expansion projects. Despite recommendation of the National Transport Policy Committee no attention has been paid so far to this mode of transport despite the fact that development of this sector can give considerable boost to the rural economy.

The Hoax of Sagar Mala Programme

To cover up the failure of the NDA government to develop shipping industry on a self-reliant basis, the NDA government has now embarked upon so called Sagar Mala Programme just on the eve of the elections.

The programme visualises privatisation of all ports with full freedom to the foreign companies to control the operation of all the ports. Already the Vallarpadam Terminal at Cochi is handed over to a MNC as a landlord port with full power to run the container terminal. A part of Jawaharlal Nehru

there is no actual exit or withdrawal strategy in site. The superpower is stuck in a desperate situation since it cannot either advance towards its political objectives or retreat from the country it invaded.

The people of the world have created an unprecedented mass movement in the last 18 months, opposing Bush's war and subsequent occupation of Iraq. On March 20, one year after the US and UK attacked Iraq, millions of people in 275 cities and in more than 60 countries over the world, including all the major cities in India, took to the streets to demand: US Out of Iraq. The movement must continue, until Iraq is freed of neocolonial domination.

Port Trust (JNPT) has already been handed over to P&O, an Australian MNC which is operating completely on contractual employment at extremely low rate of wages. This Australian company has already been given facility at Kandla Port. A proposal is being mooted by the government to give the status of export processing zones to the newly developed landlord ports in the private sector with accompanying tax-holidays, besides promoting and provoking several smuggling activities consequent upon withdrawal of control and checks by the Govt machinery. The programme visualises nearly 1 lakh crore of investment in the next 8-10 years, of which the investment for basic infrastructure will have to be made by the government but the operating control will rest with the private sector.

The government totally ignored the security aspect in allowing the port operation to be handled by foreign private sector companies. Foreign companies will have access to all information about the naval movements through ports which will put national security in jeopardy. The Sagar Mala project, in the name of rationalisation of labour practices, allow the private sector operators to adopt anti-labour policies and exploit the workers on a big scale.

The Sagar Mala programme is a programme of handing over the control of the entire water-front to private capital, both Indian and foreign.

Therefore, the BJP government's waterfront policy has to be totally opposed by democratic forces and trade union movement in the country.

REPORTS & EVENTS

BIHAR

ANTI-IMPERIALIST DEMONSTRATION

Patna, 20th March 2004, at the call of World Social Forum to observe the anti-imperialist day worldwide, a massive demonstration of workers and employees was held at Patna demanding immediate withdrawal of all foreign troops from Iraq and condemning the US occupation over Iraq. The Demonstration was organized jointly by the Central Trade Unions viz., CITU, AITUC,

State Govt. Employees Union, AIBEA, BEFI along with the coordination of the left political parties. Demonstrators assembled near the Bhagat Singh Statue near Gandhi Maidan at Patna wherefrom a huge procession of workers and employees started and traveled through the main areas of the city to converge in a big mass rally near the Railway Station. The rally was addressed

by Arun Kumar Mishra, General Secretary, Bihar State CITU, Manjul Kumar Das, General Secretary, State Govt Employees Federation, Ganesh Shankar Vidyarthi, Secretary, Bihar State CPI(M), Narayan Purbe of AITUC among others. The speakers denounced the US invasion in Iraq and demanded immediate withdrawal of all foreign forces from Iraq.

HIMACHAL PRADESH

PWD WORKERS' STRUGGLE AGAINST RETRENCHMENT

True to its real colour, the Congress Govt in Himachal Pradesh decided to go in for mass scale retrenchment of daily-wage workers in its various departments as a part of the World Bank-authored scheme of downsizing tied up with the financial assistance. In the first phase, 1858 daily wage workers of the Dharampur division of PWD were served retrenchment order two months back. Majority of the workers were under the influence of BMS union and only a minority section were the members of the CITU led Himachal Pradesh Lok Nirman Mazdoor Ekta Union. The BMS leadership, true to their real character, hobnobbed with the management and did not oppose the enmasse-retrenchment through

concrete action programme except issuing some statement. The workers enmasse came to CITU. Immediately following retrenchment massive demonstration was organized before the office of the Executive Engineer, Dharampur division under the leadership of CITU union followed by relay hunger-strike by the retrenched workers along with the workers of other sectors in solidarity from 10th March onward. CITU carried on intensive campaign among the people against such mass-scale retrenchment and the conspiracy to hand over the entire work to contractors in the surrounding villages of the Dharampur division which could create resentment among the people and the solidarity actions by

the common people in support of the retrenched workers in the form of rallies, demonstrations and blockade of the PWD offices gained momentum. In such a background, the management had to call the union for a negotiation. After protracted negotiation, the Govt had to agree for withdrawal of all retrenchment orders and reinstatement of all the 1858 workers in a phased manner within 16th April. An agreement was signed on 29th March 2004 between the Himachal Pradesh Lok Nirman Mazdoor Ekta Union (CITU) and the Executive Engineer of PWD, Dharampur in the presence of the Chief Engineer and the Superintending Engineer which also envisages continuity of service and seniority of all the

REPORTS & EVENTS

reinstated daily-wage workers. Ravinder Kumar and Kashmir Singh Thakur, The President and General Secretary of Himachal

State CITU were signatory to the agreement on behalf of the union. The victory of the workers in the struggle against retrenchment has

generated enthusiasm against the mass of the toiling people in that area.

Jammu & Kashmir

HYDEL PROJECT WORKERS' STRIKE STRUGGLE

The construction workers of the Sewa hydel project(NHPC) under construction located at Kathua district of Jammu had been on continuous strike since 14th March 2004 demanding issuance of appointment letters, identity cards and introduction of PF and ESI benefits etc, which the employers refused to concede despite prolonged persuasion by the CITU union there. The management and the contractor tried to break the strike through police repression and the striking workers boldly resisted the onslaught. The management also dismissed the four leaders of the SEWA Hydel Project Workers Union(CITU) in order to terrorise the workers and disrupt the united

strike action but in vain. The involvement of the police administration with the contractors and the management were so much that the policemen were deployed to serve the dismissal orders to the concerned employees and obtain their signature of receipt through threat of arrest. The leadership of the union were also arrested by the police from the project site but the striking workers resisted the arrest and compelled the police-force to leave the place after release of the leadership.

The strike continued for 11 days. The CITU leaders organized campaign among the common people of the surrounding villages and the local peasantry came out

openly in support of the striking workers and organized solidarity demonstrations in support of the strike. Ultimately the contractors and the management were forced to come forward for negotiation but they tried to involve the INTUC leaders in the negotiation which the striking workers flatly refused. In such a situation the management had to concede to most of the demands of the workers viz., issuance of appointment letter and identity cards to each workers, increase in wages, medical benefits and introduction of PF. The management had also to agree for introduction of incentive scheme for the workers.

KERALA

WORKING WOMEN WORKSHOP ON ORGANISATION

The Kerala state Coordination Committee of Working Women held a state level workshop in BT Ranadive Bhawan, the office of the Kerala State Electricity Employees union in Thiruvananthapuram, on 25th March, 2004. 40 activists of the

CCWW representing several organisations like NGO's Association, Water Authority, Electricity Employees union, Anganwadi Workers and Helpers Association, Coir Employees union, etc, participated in the workshop.

Bhanumathy, President of the Kerala state CCWW, presided over the meeting. Kamalamma, Secretary of the state CCWW presented a note which emphasized the importance of organising women in the traditional industries and unorganised sector,

REPORTS & EVENTS

and forming women's sub committees in the CITU affiliated unions. Representatives from all the districts and industries present participated in the discussions. While appreciating the efforts of CITU in organizing working women, several speakers reported that the same concern was not evident at the local level. They said that representatives of several CITU-affiliated unions in the district do not attend CCWW meetings regularly.

Intervening in the discussion, Hemalata, Secretary, All India

Coordination Committee of Working Women (CITU), explained the tasks of the CCWWs at different levels and the women's sub committees at the union level, as envisaged by the CITU. She said that the state coordination committees should take more initiative to ensure that CITU decisions in relation to its activities among working women, election as delegates to conferences, etc., are implemented properly.

In his concluding remarks, K O Habeeb, Secretary, Kerala State

Committee of CITU, traced the role of the Coordination Committee in the state since its inception. He said that the initiative of CITU in forming the Coordination Committee and its active intervention had helped in the formation of women's wings or women's sub committees in various service organisations. He promised that the State Committee of CITU would pay more attention to ensure that the district committees implement properly the tasks related to CITU's activities among working women.

EVENTS WORLDWIDE

REGIONAL ELECTION IN FRANCE:

A REFERENDUM AGAINST ANTI-WORKER 'REFORM' !

On March 28, voters in France dealt the French President, Jaques Chirac's ruling conservative party, the UMP, a stunning defeat in regional elections. So great was the voters' discontent that 20 of France's 22 regions went to the opposition left wing alliance led by Socialists....this time, the vote became a referendum on the

government's performance in the last two years since it assumed power. And the answer was a resounding "non".

It was a frank disapproval of the French Govt's "reformist" policies that aim to restructure a generous but costly health care and pension system while allowing the employers greater room to hire and fire at will....Unemployment

continues to hover at over nine per cent of the active population... Social and racial tensions are high and 2003 was marked by a series of strikes and demonstrations in the public sector, including threats by country's top scientists to resign unless government gave more money for research.....

(The Hindu, 08-04-2004)

BRITISH RAILWAYS: BACKTRACKING FROM PRIVATISATION !

British Railway was privatized many years back. The company was dismantled in 6-7

different companies separating maintenance, train operation, track-management and other

related operations were sold out. British rail privatisation got wide publicity through out the world as

REPORTS & EVENTS

an example of the boldest step to make railways efficient, more service oriented and profitable.

But almost a decade long experience of privatized railway service in UK has started compelling the British authority to make a retreat and leak its own spittoons. In the background of increasing incidence of accidents, late running and gross financial mismanagement in British Railway system leading to popular resentment, the British authority fell a victim of gradual withdrawal-syndrome in respect of their own misdeed called railway privatisation. "Rail privatisation has introduced enormous inefficiencies and major safety problems into once-proud British Rail system"

observed 'Multinational Monitor', January/February 2002.

About a year back, the train operation was taken over from the private control of a French Company, Connex by Strategic Rail Authority (SRA) run under Govt control. And very recently, decision has been taken to bring the "rail-maintenance" jobs "in-house" by "Network Rail" a 'non-profit' company under the UK Govt, responsible for overseeing Britain's railway system, which were so long being done by seven private companies. The biggest of those seven private maintenance contract holders, M/s Jarvis was already indicted by the authorities concerned for allegedly falsifying maintenance records.

British authorities, a victim of guilty-consciousness for their own earlier doings in privatizing British Rail, refused to admit that they are on the track of renationalizing British Railways, but they are no doubt silently taking back the control of British Railways from private hands, segment by segment. First the train operation had been taken over and now the maintenance work has been taken back in-house.

The National Union of Rail, Maritime and Transport Workers (RMT) maintained that that still now many work of railways are in private hands and renationalisation is the only way to find a solution to the emerging problems.

(Source: Multinational Monitor Vol-24, Number 12, December 2003)

COUNTRYWIDE STRIKE IN ITALY

In March 2004, all the three Trade Union Centres of Italian workers, the CGIL, CISL and UIL joined together to plan for a countrywide strike action against the economic and social policies of the centre-right government of Italy, which according to them are "disastrotis". On 6th March 2004 around 6000 workers delegates from all the three Trade Union Centres joined in a General Assembly in Rome and decided to

go in for countrywide general strike for four hours on 26th March 2004. The joint document adopted by the General Assembly which stressed on the urgent 'necessity of united countrywide action to oppose the government's policy' which led to "a stagnating economy, uncertain employment, decreased investments, consumption freeze and worsened material conditions for employees and retired people"

The Trade Union Centres jointly put forth alternative policy proposals to government.

The general strike of 26th March 2004 has drawn participation of overwhelming majority of workers and employees throughout Italy. The strike day also witnessed massive demonstration by the striking workers in which more than 10 lakh workers participated.

(Source: EURO online, April 2004)

TRADE UNION ACTIONS IN EUROPE

A range of actions including mass demonstrations,

meetings and information campaigns were staged in the

beginning of April 2004 by trade unions around Europe. The

REPORTS & EVENTS

European Trade Union Confederation (ETUC) coordinated the programme of 'joint action days' by the trade unions throughout Europe to be observed on 2nd and 3rd April, 2004. The demands of the trade unions are for a "stronger social dimension" for the economic and social policies in the European Union in the background of downward pressure on the workers' rights, social benefits, employment security etc under the globalised policy regime. These actions and campaign are being

launched in the run up to the elections of the European Parliament in next June 2004 and the ETUC is anxious to ensure that its voice is heard in support of the employment and social rights of European workers and citizens in the context of the enlargement of European Union(EU) from 15 to 25 member states and negotiations on the new EU Constitutional Treaty. The campaign called for a 'Social Constitution' to be put into place to ensure that social and employment rights are not eroded. In particular, the trade unions are

calling for the promotion of employment, the defence of social rights and the maintenance of high-quality public services.

A wide variety of actions took place throughout Europe on 2-3 April 2004 including mass demonstrations, meetings, rallies and campaigns involving several millions of workers. In Brussels, the ETUC and its Belgian affiliate organizations held a mass delegation of trade unions to EU authority on 2nd April.

(Source: EURO online, April 2004)

CIVIL SERVICE EMPLOYEES' STRIKE IN BRITAIN

Almost 1,00,000 civil servants in three government departments have gone on strike on April 13, which is expected to be the biggest civil services industrial action in last ten years. Some 90,000 staff in jobcentres and benefit-offices in England, Wales and Scotland walked out for 48 hours in an acrimonious dispute

over pay. They were joined by 4500 workers from the prison service in England and Wales and by 1500 workers from the Office of National Statistics who staged a 24 hours strike-the first in the Office's history.

This industrial action came less than two months after 90000 employees from the department for

Work and Pensions (DWP) went on strike leading to closure of many job-centres and benefit-offices. The DWP workers are fighting against imposition of a New Pay-Performance Scheme which is aimed at keeping the wages of civil services low and discriminatory.

(Soucre: The Guardian, 13-04-2004)

U.S.A

ORGANISED LABOR FIGHTS FOR BUSH'S DEFEAT

Organized labor is in the fight of its life to remain relevant to workers as it struggles to rebound from setbacks in organizing and politics.

Labor leaders meeting this week at a seaside resort are revving up for the largest Effort to mobilize

their members to defeat President Bush. John Kerry, the Democrats' presumptive nominee, addressed the AFL-CIO meeting by satellite Wednesday.

"George Bush is running on the same-old Republican tactics of fear - and they're already getting

tired," Kerry said. "The Massachusetts senator won the labor federation's endorsement last month and hopes to use labor's organizational support to boost his campaign.

While labor's share of the work force has declined over the years,

REPORTS & EVENTS

union members are reliable voters, with 26 percent of those casting ballots in the 2000 election coming from union households.

Union chiefs also are promising to do more to organize new workers to overcome steep losses in manufacturing and the current flood of white-collar-jobs going overseas.

"The fact is that union membership hasn't kept up with job loss," AFL-CIO President John Sweeney said.

"The jobs drain and the steady

assault by the Bush administration has made a hard challenge harder. Manufacturing job losses in particular have socked not only our members but our industrial-unions."

About 400,000 new members were organized last year, he said. The nation's factories have lost 2.8 million jobs since Bush took office in January 2001. Overall, after job gains in other fields are added in, total job losses in the U.S. economy have reached 2.2 million.

Ultimately, union leaders view Bush as the main barrier to growth. They will vote Wednesday on a new assessment of 4 cents per member per month for each affiliate union to help fund a \$45 million political mobilization program to elect Kerry in November.

The US labour movement got united in the effort to defeat Bush in the forthcoming presidential election.

(Source: Associated Press, March 10, 2004)

FOURTH VIMAL RANADIVE MEMORIAL LECTURE

Professor Aijaz Ahmad, noted Marxist intellectual and historian, delivered the fourth Vimal Ranadive memorial lecture on "The Offensive of Communal and Fundamentalist Forces" on 10th April 2004 in the full auditorium of BT Ranadive Bhawan, New Delhi. 10th April is the birth anniversary day of Com Vimal Ranadive. M.K. Pandhe, President, CITU presided over the meeting. The meeting was attended by members of trade unions, student and youth organisations.

Swadesh Dev Roye, Secretary, CITU, who welcomed the guests, said that the topic, which is most relevant for the present day situation, was selected particularly as the country is facing elections. M.K. Pandhe cautioned the working class on the danger of communalism and referred to how it affects the unity of the working class. He emphasised the need for the working class to be ideologically well equipped.

Aijaz Ahmed explained that whenever there is an upsurge of the working class movement the fascist forces try to counter it. He narrated the similarities between the Nazis and the Hindutva forces, both ideologically and in their functioning. He also explained how, when these forces come to power, they change the very character of the government, and subsequently society, and are therefore extremely dangerous. He said that the BJP is not a normal political party but only the front of a fascist organisation, the RSS. He also stated that the collapse of the liberal centre has helped the communal forces to come up. He emphasised the importance of the working class conducting militant struggles not only against the communal forces but simultaneously against the anti people policies of the government led by the communal party, which is essential in effectively strengthening and broadening the platform of struggle against the communal forces. He stressed the imperative of having a long term strategy to counter the offensive.

Ranjana Nirula, from the CITU centre, gave the vote of thanks.

An exhibition of posters against communalism, by SAHMAT, was put up at the venue of the meeting.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX NUMBERS FOR INDUSTRIAL WORKERS ON BASE 1982=100

State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month		State	Sr. No.	Centre	Month	
			Jan.' 04	Feb.'04				Jan.' 04	Feb.'04
Andhra Pradesh	1	Gudur	475	472	Maharashtra	38	Mumbai	593	594
	2	Guntur	503	505		39	Nagpur	509	508
	3	Hyderabad	499	506		40	Nasik	543	542
	4	Visakhapatnam	493	492		41	Pune	568	564
	5	Warangal	512	519		42	Solapur	528	530
Assam	6	D.D.Tinsukia	427	428	Orissa	43	Barbil	442	440
	7	Guwahati	501	508		44	Rourkela	442	441
	8	Labac-Silchar	396	398	Punjab	45	Amritsar	448	442
	9	Mariani-Jorhat	439	439		46	Ludhiana	449	452
	10	Rangapara-Tezpur	432	426	Rajasthan	47	Ajmer	492	491
Bihar	11	Monghyr	485	476		48	Jaipur	459	460
Chhattisgarh	12	Bhillai	446	447	Tamil Nadu	49	Chennai	539	538
Gujarat	13	Ahmedabad	494	494		50	Coimbatore	504	503
	14	Bhavnagar	506	503		51	Coonoor	498	497
	15	Rajkot	453	454		52	Madurai	486	489
	16	Surat	478	477		53	Salem	480	482
	17	Vadodra	468	470		54	Tiruchirapally	548	535
Haryana	18	Faridabad	510	524	Uttar Pradesh	55	Agra	469	472
	19	Yamunanagar	463	468		56	Ghaziabad	500	506
J & K	20	Srinagar	595	593		57	Kanpur	480	480
Jharkhand	21	Jamshedpur	466	472		58	Saharanpur	462	461
	22	Jharia	402	405		59	Varanasi	516	516
	23	Kodarma	411	413	West Bengal	60	Asansol	484	481
	24	Noamundi	451	450		61	Darjeeling	426	419
	25	Ranchi-Hatia	456	457		62	Durgapur	573	565
Karnataka	26	Bangalore	485	492		63	Haldia	600	602
	27	Belgaum	554	557		64	Howrah	573	564
	28	Hubli-Dharwar	510	506		65	Jalpaiguri	436	435
	29	Mercara	482	480		66	Kolkata	552	555
Kerala	30	Alwaye	504	500		67	Raniganj	441	438
	31	Mundakayam	492	493	Chandigarh	68	Chandigarh	543	545
	32	Quilon	529	531	Delhi	69	Delhi	579	581
	33	Thiruvananthapuram	578	573	Pondicherry	70	Pondicherry	549	540
Madhya Pradesh	34	Balaghat	451	449					
	35	Bhopal	534	535					
	36	Indore	517	519					
	37	Jabalpur	492	494					
ALL-INDIA								504	504

Additional Series of Labour Bureau

State	Centre	January 2004	February 2004
Andhra Pradesh	1 Kethgudem	494	495
Himachal Pradesh	2 Himachal Pradesh	476	477
Rajasthan	3 Bhilwara	492	494
Madhya Pradesh	4 Chhindwara	456	455
Tripura	5 Tripura	446	449
Goa	6 Goa	611	608

EXPOSURE OF UGLY FACES OF VOTE-CATCHERS

April 12, 2004, Lucknow, the capital city of UP, from where the venerable PM is contesting, witnessed the tragic death owing to stampede of 22 women including two children in a meeting organized for celebration of birthday of Lalji Tandon, the top leader of BJP in UP. Number of BJP leaders including Tandon were present in the function. Crowd was brought from different parts of Lucknow and adjoining villages promising distribution Sarees in the election-eve birthday celebration of Tandon.

One Brijendra Murari Yadav, better known for involvement in numerous criminal cases, with 13 criminal cases of murder, attempt to murder, riots and illegal possession of arms etc., along with his brother, Yogendra Yadav with 22 cases pending against him, were stated to be the sponsors for Saree-distribution in BJP leader's birthday ceremony. As the meeting started on that fateful day at Chandrasekhar Park at Lucknow decorated by BJP flags all around, lavish praise were also showered on the Yadav brothers for their generosity (?) by the BJP leaders of the city while praying for a longer life and 'many happy returns of the day' for Lalji Tandon.

And after the speeches and praises etc, all with electioneering tune no doubt, when the time for Saree distribution came, Sarees were being thrown by the organizers from the dais on the crowd just like pack of biscuits thrown to the dogs, as described by an eye-witness, Kalavati of Pani Gaon who was also present in the meeting. This naturally led to rush and chaos in the crowd in getting hold of the Sarees being thrown on them leading to stampede death of 22 women and children.

Such tragic incident, as well as the heinous act of the BJP bandwagon demonstrating utter disregard to human dignity and lives, evoked anger and condemnation throughout the country.

The All India Democratic Women's Association(AIDWA) organised spontaneous demonstrations on 13th itself at Lucknow and Delhi besides other places. On the following days almost in all the states protest demonstrations by various mass organizations took place. The Election Commission, on the basis of complaints lodged by various political parties against the violation of code of conduct by BJP in organizing a bribing/allurement function in the garb of Tandon's birthday celebration, has ordered the State Govt to institute case and hurled a show-cause to BJP.

But besides whatever the Election Commission has ordered, there are something more to be taken serious note of. The Tandon-birthday drama exposed the real face of the ruling polity or in that matter the ruling class of our country. It unveiled their ploy to cheat the people and get their votes by bribing, giving away doles and more than that by false promises.

The whole saree-distribution drama has also brought to light as to what lowly level, these vote-catchers undermine the dignity of the poor folk. And their complicity with criminals and mafias also stood exposed in the whole episode. Throwing Sarees like crumbs on the crowd as has happened on 12th April at Chandrasekhar Park leading to chaotic rush and stampede and loss of 22 lives, had been the naked manifestation of a kind of sadist criminal instinct synonymous to BJP brand of politics, which has also found expression in the Supreme Court's characterization as "modern day Neros" in the Best Bakery Case only few days before the Lucknow episode.

And last but not least, is this the India shining where 22 died in a stampede for collecting a Saree hardly worth Rs 40/- ?

B T R CENTENARY

B T RANADIVE ON REVOLUTIONARY TRADITIONS OF MAY DAY

The revolutionary tradition of May Day always combined partial demands with declarations of the international solidarity of the working class and a firm faith and determination to end the capitalist system ...

This combination of struggle for partial demands with proletarian internationalism and deposing the capitalist class from political power combined the immediate practical struggle of the working class with its ultimate objective of social emancipation, its objective of socialism.

The trend in the working class movement which confined itself to the immediate struggle only ... diverted the working class movement from its revolutionary objectives, and ending of capitalist rule and establishing socialism and working class power.

The social transformation in the world in the course of hundred years from the observance of the first May day, with one third of the world going over to socialism is the direct achievement of the revolutionary traditions of May Day... the old imperialist system has been liquidated; formerly enslaved countries like India have been liberated; the world has seen the great socialist revolutions... ; it further saw a complete smashing of the fascist force by the Red Army, the working class and the people of the Soviet Union, it saw the success of the great Chinese revolution and socialist revolutions in a number of countries in Europe, in Cuba, in Korea, and the unimaginable and unparalleled victory of the working class and the people of Vietnam ...

These victories were the direct result of the revolutionary line of the world working class movement which was embodied in Marxism and Leninism. The observance of the first May Day, the economic demands raised and the political demands put forward were all in consonance with what the first International guided by Marx has taught the working class movement.

It is no accident either that those who strayed away from the revolutionary understanding guiding earlier May Day observance.... not only turned a back on revolution but also on the international unity of the working class. On all crucial occasions this reformist trend betrayed international solidarity and deserted the banner of proletarian internationalism.

The three components of the revolutionary traditions of May Day

One, partial demands carrying revolutionary significance and capable of creating class consciousness to fight the existing order. Two, immediate tasks facing the revolutionary movement in India. Three, fight against war and protection of the international unity of the working class ...

On May Day the working class must unitedly voice its protest against the economic policy of the government and protest against the freedom given to multinationals to penetrate our economy.

The working class must demand a halt to attacks on trade union rights... Calling for immediate opening of all closed factories and concerns, it must demand immediate adequate unemployment relief and also that the right to work should be embodied in the Constitution as a fundamental right.

The working class must announce its preparedness and determination to champion the cause of the people and the peasants and agricultural workers. It must demand complete overhauling of agrarian relations, break up of concentration of land and distribution of the land to the tillers.

On May Day the working class must proclaim its determination to fight the forces of communalism, defend and expand the democratic rights of the people and work for the state of people's democracy to open the way to socialism. It must declare its resolve to fight imperialist conspiracies which are undermining the unity of our country, the secessionist and divisive forces which are unleashing forces of disintegration, and communal and obscurantist agencies which disrupt the unity of the toilers. ... International unity of the working class and opposition to all militarist, imperialist and aggressive wars is an integral part of the revolutionary heritage of May Day struggle.

(The Working Class, April 1986)