

ML Update: 11-17 Jan. 2011

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Massacre by CPIM's Armed Brigade at Lalgarh: CPIM Learns No Lessons from Nandigram

The CPI(M) in West Bengal has blood on its hands once again. In a horrific massacre in Netai village, Lalgarh, at least 7 people including 2 women have been shot dead by the CPI(M)'s private armed brigade (harmad vahini) while they were protesting against the harmad vahini's attempt to force young men from their village to join the armed brigade.

This is not the first time the CPIM and WB Govt. have attacked and massacred villagers who resist corporate land grab and state repression. The attack by CPIM cadres on the people of Singur and the firing by police accompanied by CPIM cadres in Nandigram shocked the entire country. Progressive voices and intellectuals across the country were appalled that a Left government could thus assault the poor. The people of West Bengal taught the CPIM a severe lesson in severe electoral setbacks in the erstwhile CPIM bastion. Far from any introspection or course-correction, the CPIM Govt. then indulged in severe repression at Lalgarh, sparking off a remarkable people's resistance there. The region became an arena for Operation Green Hunt sponsored by the Central Government and the West Bengal State Government together. The latest attack by the 'harmad vahini' bears a disturbing resemblance to the Salwa Judum modus operandi in another Green Hunt arena - BJP-ruled Chhattisgarh.

Salwa Judum brigades have forced thousands of villagers into camps in Chhattisgarh, terrorizing those who refuse to join the camps and chasing them out of their villages. Much like the Salwa Judum, the harmad vahinis justify themselves as 'people's resistance' to 'Maoist violence.' Like the Salwa Judum, they demand that villagers join their harmad camps, and if villagers refuse, they are 'punished' with massacres. Like the Salwa Judum, the harmad vahinis enjoy the tacit support of the state and ruling party. The harmad vahinis in Lalgarh function in close collusion with the Joint forces which are conducting Operation Green Hunt.

The West Bengal Government is now attempting to divert attention from CPIM's role in the attack by claiming that the massacre in Netai was perpetrated by 'Maoists.' Even this is a leaf taken from the Chhattisgarh book: when the Salwa Judum (now metamorphosed into SPOs - special police officers) massacred villagers at Gompad in Bastar, the Chhattisgarh police attempted to intimidate and pressurise witnesses to blame Maoists for the attack.

In the week preceding the Netai massacre, West Bengal CM Buddhadeb Bhattacharya's

correspondence with Home Minister P Chidambaram was much in the news, with Chidambaram raising the issue of harmad vahinis and Buddha alleging Mamata's links with Maoists. The Home Minister's stance smacks of doublespeak and diversionary tactics. The harmad vahinis in West Bengal, much like the Salwa Judum in Chhattisgarh, are very much part of Green Hunt agenda over which he himself presides, and the harmads carry out their intimidatory agenda complementary to the Joint Forces in the area. If 'harmad vahinis' are 'unacceptable' to the UPA Government, why does the Home Ministry and Central Government continue to support the SPOs in Chhattisgarh? Mamata Banerjee poses as the champion of the people of Lalgahar against CPIM's harmad vahinis, while remaining a Minister in the same Central Government that, along with the State Government, is conducting the war on adivasis in Lalgahar.

The West Bengal Chief Minister counters all talk of the harmad vahini's role by pointing to Mamata Banerjee's collusion with the Maoist violence in the region. It must be reminded that the Maoists found space in Lalgahar only in the wake of people's resistance to severe state repression. The State Government and Central Government together are conducting their military operation in the area in the name of upholding rule of law and defending the constitution - even as they resort to the unconstitutional and illegal practices like setting up a private militia to intimidate people.

The Binayak Sen verdict has galvanised a countrywide outrage against the war on people and crackdown on dissent in the name of combating Maoists. With the widespread recognition that Binayak Sen was targeted for taking on the Salwa Judum, the demand for an end to unconstitutional practices like private armies has grown in determination and strength. Be it Chhattisgarh or Lalgahar, there can be no place for Salwa Judums, SPOs and harmad vahinis!

Srikrishna Committee Report: Further Complicating the Telangana Question

Far from resolving the vexed Telangana question, the Srikrishna Committee report has further complicated it. The various options seem to have been invoked by it with the singular aim of delegitimising the Telangana demand and preventing the bifurcation of Andhra Pradesh.

The Srikrishna Committee recognises the validity of the feeling of "discrimination and domination" experienced by the people of Telangana, and while using various parameters to suggest that the ground of 'backwardness' was unjustified, the Committee recognises that the longstanding demand for Telangana has some merit. However, it opines against bifurcation as the best option, citing the reactions in the rest of the state and the fact that it may give "a fillip to other similar demands" of separate statehood. Given these arguments used by the Committee against Telangana, perhaps neither Jharkhand nor Chhattisgarh would seem to have any rationale. The Committee's recommendations of a Telangana Regional Council in its 'best option scenario' as an adequate measure to address the grievances and desire for empowerment of the people of Telangana seems out of date and out of step with reality, given that an identical proposal had been mooted as far back as 1956, and never acted upon.

The Congress-led UPA-II, having politically conceded Telangana, has now taken an 'expert' route to backtrack and prevent the formation of Telangana. A more honest approach would have been to recommend, in the first place itself, a Second States Reorganisation Commission for a holistic treatment of all statehood demands. The Srikrishna Committee's ambivalent position on Telangana and playing with the regional/social divides in Andhra to manufacture such a long list of options

betrays a non-serious approach in the guise of a rigorous academic exercise. The dishonesty in the tactics of the UPA-II and the Congress is bound to add to the sense of the betrayal and injustice felt by the people of Telangana, and to add greatly to the confusion on the issue.

Kapil Sibal's Denial of 2G Scam and SC Report on Bellary

With Kapil Sibal's attempt to deny and debunk the CAG report's assessment of the loss to the exchequer thanks to 2G scam, the UPA Government and the Congress has dropped all pretence of investigating the scam or penalising the guilty. Sibal's claims that the 1.76 lakh crore as "erroneous" and merely "presumptive" are nothing but an attempt to protect the interests of corporate beneficiaries of the scam that gifted away spectrum at throwaway prices in 2008, and also to prevent any serious enquiry into the involvement of UPA ministers in the scam.

Meanwhile the expert panel set up by the Supreme Court to look into the illegal mining scenario in Karnataka's Bellary district has recommended scrapping of the mining leases of the influential Reddy brothers who constitute a powerful mining mafia and are also Ministers in the BJP Government in Karnataka enjoying the full patronage and protection of the central leadership of the BJP party. The panel also points towards the collusion of the Congress-ruled Andhra Government as well as Karnataka's BJP Government in enabling the Reddy's illegal mining empire. The Bellary brothers' mining mafia is a shameful and worst example of corporate loot and subversion of democratic norms and laws of the land. Not only must the SC panel's recommendations be complied with forthwith and the illegal leases cancelled, action must be initiated against the corrupt Reddy brothers and the officials and leaders in both Karnataka and AP who patronised this loot of precious resources and environmental and social devastation of the Bellary region.

Swami Aseemanand's Confession: Sanghi Terror and Minority Scapegoats

The confession of Swami Aseemanand reveals the wide web of Sanghi terror whose hand is implicated in a range of bomb blasts all over the country, including Mecca Masjid, Ajmer Sharif, Malegaon, and the Samjhauta Express blasts. The confession exposes the bias inherent hitherto in the investigative agencies' approach to these blasts; in their obstinate refusal to probe Sanghi terror links and their widespread witch-hunt and torture of minority youth instead. A large number of innocent youth from the minorities have been subjected to grievous torture, unjust incarceration and tarnishing of reputation as a result. Not only must the Union Home Ministry now take up a full-fledged investigation into the entire network of Sanghi terror, it must reveal the entire list of those wrongfully arrested or charged for these blasts, unconditionally release those still in custody and apologise to and compensate all such wrongfully arrested individuals. It must also ensure that those responsible for torture of such minority youths are prosecuted and punished.

Protest against misleading and slanderous story regarding CPI(ML) Liberation

On 6 January, there appeared in various news papers (especially Uttar Pradesh edition), news channels and on web portals on 5 January a false news regarding our Party. This news claimed that CPI(ML) supporters killed a SI in Gazipur. The 'news' in question was produced and circulated by the Additional DG (police) of UP Mr. Brajlal and various newspapers and channels lent themselves to the disinformation campaign by unquestioningly parroting the ADG's malicious version intended to mislead and confuse the respective readers and viewers of those media. The story, regarding an

incident in Gazipur, UP, is a piece of police-inspired fiction through and through.

The story circulated by an official press release (issued by the Information and Public Relations department, UP Govt) on the incident claims that a CPI(ML) Liberation mob attacked a police post in eastern Uttar Pradesh and killed an SI while attempting to storm the court since three Liberation supporters were to be produced in the court on a charge of theft.

In particular, The Telegraph story quotes a "Liberation spokesperson in Ghazipur, Saroj Singh." The story also claims "Liberation leader Santosh Sahar recently told party workers in Uttar Pradesh to work among the state's Dalits and backwards with an eye on the 2012 state polls. Even the official press release issued by the UP Govt is unable to say that the CPI(ML) Liberation committed this act under its own banner, but the Telegraph makes the absurd claim"that all the demonstrators were of CPI(ML) Liberation but were demonstrating under the banner of Shoshit Samaj Dal."

The facts however, are as follows. The CPI(ML) Liberation did not hold any demonstration in Gazipur on the said date i.e. 5 January, that the CPI(ML) Liberation would never demonstrate on the banner of another party/organisation, CPI(ML) Liberation has no spokesperson in Gazipur by the name Saroj Singh. Those wrongly arrested for theft by Gazipur police are not Liberation activists or even members, but poor youths of the extremely backward Bind caste. Our party had indeed protested the wrongful arrest - in a peaceful dharna held on 3 January. The people protesting on 5 January were not Maoists or CPI(ML) Liberation activists - they were poor people from the Bind community. It is unlikely even that the Shoshit Samaj Dal held the said demonstration; a local Dainik Jagran correspondent reports in that paper that the demo was organised by the Pragatisheel Manav Samaj Party, a well-known party in the region with a following among the Bind community. The post mortem report has established that the SI did not die of bullet wounds as claimed in the Telegraph story and the police press release - he succumbed to wounds inflicted by the enraged crowd when it beat him up.

The statement attributed to Santosh Sahar (that the party should work amongst dalits and backwards in UP towards polls) is absurd since the party has ever since its inception worked among those sections in UP and no leader of our party would ever need to 'instruct' party workers to work among such sections!

The entire official UP Government and police version is a deliberate attempt to manufacture a 'Maoist/naxalite' bogey in order to target CPI(ML) Liberation, active in mobilising the poor in Eastern UP. The newspapers are merely acting as a stenographer to the police and reproducing absurd and delusive concoctions of this kind without bothering even a bit to verify the facts from fiction. In a protest letter to one of the papers we have asked for its apology and retraction from the printed story.

CPI(ML) begins 3-day Dharna in UP in Protest: Demanding high level enquiry of the Jamania incident, retraction of ADG Brajlal's malicious and misleading statement regarding our party and immediate stop on repression of people, eighty members and leaders of the CPI(ML) began a three day long dharna on 10 January at Saryu Park in Gazipur despite severe cold conditions and opposition from the District Administration. CPI(ML)'s State Standing Committee member Comrade Ishwari Prasad Kushwaha and SCM and District Secretary Comrade Rampyare Ram are leading the dharna.

Protests in Patna, Purnea, Delhi & elsewhere against Inaction in Rape Cases in Bihar, Punjab and UP

“Inaction in Rape Cases Forces Women like Rupam Pathak to Take Desperate Steps; Govts and Police in Bihar, UP and Punjab are Protecting Powerful Rapists and Punishing the Victims” – AIPWA

CPI(ML), All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) and All India Students' Association (AISA) held militant protest demonstrations in Delhi, Patna, Purnea and elsewhere against the deluge of rape incidents perpetrated by ruling party MLAs in Bihar and UP and police either being participant (as in Punjab) or on the side of the rapists.

Delhi: In a demonstration organised by the AIPWA and AISA and joined by several other women's groups in New Delhi, members protesting the rape and blatant police action in which rape victims themselves are being victimized raised the question- “Why is the Nitish Kumar Govt. giving character certificates to rape-accused BJP MLA of Purnea and slandering the rape victim? Why is Mayawati's police jailing the gang rape victim and protecting the accused BSP MLA? Why are rapists of a dalit girl being protected and woman activist jailed in Punjab?”

The demonstrators, including students and women workers, demanded justice for Rupam Pathak, a school teacher who stabbed the BJP MLA of Purnea to death recently. She had accused the MLA and his PA of rape and molestation some months ago only to be forced to withdraw the case on the eve of the elections. Protestors said Rupam's attack on the MLA was clearly an act of despair because she failed to secure justice. Rupam Pathak is now in Katihar jail where an AIPWA high level team headed by AIPWA General Secretary Meena Tiwary and including State secretary Shashi Yadav and State Vice President Madhwi Sarkar met her on January 7.

They demanded action against the rape accused as well as against the BJP activists who beat up Rupam Pathak. The protestors said, “BJP activists made an attempt on her life, and now the Bihar Govt. is assassinating her character.” Bihar Deputy CM Sushil Kr. Modi has publicly slandered the rape victim, accusing her of being a blackmailer of poor moral character, while hailing the MLA who was killed as a man of great moral stature. Modi also instructed the media not to sensationalise the issue meaning not to write more about it. Protesters said such an attack on a woman's character did not befit a Deputy CM, and demanded that Sushil Modi resign.

Holding that a police investigation was bound to be influenced by the Deputy CM who has already given his biased character certificates to the woman and the rape accused BJP MLA, the protestors demanded a judicial enquiry into the incident. The enquiry must probe why the police did not act on the rape charges made by Rupam Pathak in May, and what pressures caused her to withdraw her charges on the eve of the Bihar Assembly polls. Protestors also demanded protection for Rupam Pathak since her life is in danger.

Protestors also demanded action in the case in Uttar Pradesh, where a 17-year-old OBC girl who accused the BSP MLA of Naraini (Banda district) Purushottam Narain Dwivedi of rape is in jail on charges of ‘theft.’ They said the fact that no medical report was made in spite of the fact that the girl was bleeding severely, and that she continues to remain in Banda jail, is a shame in a state ruled by a dalit woman CM.

Protestors also demanded action in a rape case of a minor dalit girl in Mansa district, Punjab, where the AIPWA activist who raised the rape case has been jailed on false charges of ‘attempt to murder.’ The details of this incident were published in the previous issue of this newsletter. This is the same area of Punjab where some years ago, the dalit activist and singer Bant Singh had his limbs chopped off for supporting his daughter to pursue a rape case.

The protest march and gathering were addressed by Kavita Krishnan, National Secretary, AIPWA among others.

Bihar: In Patna, the CPI(ML) members held a militant protest march and demonstration at the Dakbungalow crossing on 4 January against the assault on Rupam Pathak by BJP workers and her subsequent arrest. Party has demanded guarantee of Rupam Pathak's security and adequate compensation, arrest of MLA's PA Bipin Rai and in the light of Bihar Dy.CM trying to influence the police investigation by his accusatory statements against Rupam Pathak, Party demanded judicial probe into the charges of rape and continued sexual exploitation. Nitish Govt. has recently asked the CBI to take up the probe.

The march was led by AIPWA's National GS Com. Meena Tiwary, CPI(ML) state committee member and AIPWA State Secretary Shashi Yadav, CPI(ML) leaders Pradeep Jha, Kamlesh Sharma, RYA leader Naveen, AISA's State VP Markandeya Pathak, Patna CPI(ML) leader Tota Chaudhary, Murtaza Ali, Pannalal, Anuradha and others.

On 6 January, the Patna Sahib area committee of CPI(ML) held a protest march and burnt an effigy of Dy. CM Sushil Modi and CM Nitish Kumar. The protesters demanded Modi tender an apology to all the women of Bihar.

On 8 January dharnas were held at several places to demand security for Rupam Pathak and judicial probe into the incident. At Naugachhia, a large demonstration was held and also participated by the close family members of Rupam Pathak. It was a big and militant mobilization and the protesters demanded immediate arrest of MLA's PA Bipin Rai who was an accomplice in rape, adequate compensation for Ms. Rupam and high level probe into the incident.

AISA's National Campaign 11-19 January against Corruption, State Repression

For Immediate Release of Dr. Binayak Sen

The All India Students' Association (AISA) launched a National campaign on 11 January to galvanise students and youth across the Country in action for pressurising the Government to arrest and punish those involved in the 2G and other massive scams. The National campaign is also calling out to the students to unite against rising state repression and throttling democratic rights and dissent by labelling the dissenters as seditious. The campaign is uniting the students for strongly demanding the release of Dr. Binayak Sen.

Kickstarting the campaign in Delhi, AISA burnt the effigy of Kapil Sibal at Kranti Chowk in Delhi University's main Campus, opposing his recent attempts to shield the culprits of the multi crore 2-G Spectrum Scam through fabricated facts and reports. Here, a protest march was organised by AISA activists to demand immediate release of Dr. Binayak Sen and oppose such moves of Kapil Sibal, aimed at shielding the corrupt ministers of his govt. The March started from the Vivekananda Statue at Arts Faculty, and moving through the colleges of the campus, culminated at the Kranti Chowk(Ramjas Chauraha), where an effigy of Kapil Sibal Was Burnt. Student leaders said that all tainted ministers of different governments, belonging to NDA and UPA must be booked under sedition charges, for they are actually betraying the nation, by devouring the money and resources of the Nation.

Similar programmes were also held at JNU, Jamia Millia Islamia and Indian Institute of Mass Communications in Delhi. AISA National General Secretary Ravi Rai said that in the current scenario, all govts. and all ruling parties are neck-deep involved in corruption and scams, be it the UPA govt involved in 2-G and CWG scams, the Yedurappa Govt. of BJP involvrd in Land Scams and illegal Mining scam of its MLAs Reddy Brothers, or the Maharashtra Govt. involved in Adarsh Society Scam. He said that the country needs a fresh students-youth assertion to oppose such loot of nation's resources, and the current Nationwide Campaign is aimed for the same.

Tamil Nadu: responding to the AISA's call for boycott of classes against the arrest of Dr. Binayak Sen and involvement of UPA ministers in various scams, two thousand students of two colleges in Kumbakonam of Tanjore district Government Arts College (1500 students) and Sankara Private College (more than 500 students) boycotted classes for the whole day on 11th January. The teachers too cooperated with the students as they welcomed this move of AISA. Student leaders Rameshwar Prasad and Michael led the campaign here.

Tributes: Comrade Ramnath Yadav

Comrade Ramnath Yadav, who was active in Party's trade union front in Bhilai (Chhattisgarh) and had been member of the party since 1995, breathed his last on 6 December 2010 at the age of 75. Comrade Ramnath had come in contact with the party when he was in Bokaro Steel. In 1977 he was transferred from Bokaro to Bhilai.

Red salute to Comrade Ramnath Yadav.

P.S.

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