

## ML Update: 9-15 October 2007

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### The Obnoxious Nexus that Killed Rizwanur in 'Secular and Progressive' Bengal

We all know how caste panchayats try to stop inter-caste marriages in the interiors of North-Western India. They hold kangaroo courts and deliver instant and exemplary 'justice' hoping such brutal acts would deter all potential 'deviants' to try and cross caste boundaries. We also know how freedom of expression often attracts lethal fatwas. But we always tend to think that such incidents happen beyond the realm of our liberal and democratic 'mainstream' – either in some remote feudal badland or only in a fundamentalist culture! And we are told such fundamentalism flourishes only in Madrasas and Masjids. But what happens when a young Muslim man from the world of computers and graphics designing decides to marry a Hindu girl he loves? And that too in progressive cosmopolitan Kolkata, the capital of Left-ruled West Bengal?

Well, as Rizwanur Rahman discovered and we all have discovered through his experience, such a marriage is considered a taboo by the rich and the powerful, a 'crime' which needs to be punished with nothing short of murder. It is perhaps not difficult to understand that industrialist Ashok Todi, whose daughter Priyanka had legally married Rizwanur in the month of August, could never agree to this marriage. But what is really shocking is that the police took it upon itself to do Todi's bidding and 'free' Priyanka. And imagine the extent to which the top brass of Kolkata police went in its mission! They repeatedly threatened Rizwanur, even calling him and Priyanka over to the police headquarters and 'advising' them to part ways. In spite of their full knowledge of the marriage having been legally registered on August 18, they filed a case of abduction against Rizwanur. And finally when Rizwanur's battered body was discovered on railway tracks on September 21, the Police Commissioner of Kolkata promptly described his death as an unfortunate case of 'suicide'!

Rizwanur has of course left behind ample evidence of his will to live – he gave intimation to the police and to many of his friends regarding the threat to his life. Instead of saving Rizwanur's life and marriage why are the police trying to legitimise his murder as a case of suicide? The Police Commissioner's role becomes perfectly understandable when one realises that he is also the President of Cricket Association of Bengal; that Todi, apart from being the managing director of Lux Hosieries, is also the kingpin of a betting mafia, and that Todi had 'facilitated' the election of the Police Commissioner Mr. Prasun Mukherjee as the CAB chief. What we see here in action is however not at all a 'private' relation between the top cop and a city business baron, it is a veritable nexus between the police top brass, big moneybags and the underworld.

But there is more to the nexus than mere financial muscle and licensed and unlicensed gunpower – what enables the nexus to have a free reign is political blessings from the powers that be. Have we forgotten how Chief Minister Buddhadeb Bhattacharjee had thrown his entire weight behind

Mr. Mukherjee's candidature (he however lost the first time he contested before being elected unopposed on the second occasion)? Even as the whole of Kolkata is crying out for justice, the Chief Minister does not see it fit to take any action against the Commissioner and his senior officials. Nor does he see any merit in the demand for a CBI enquiry into the murder and all its disturbing dimensions. Is it just the government's 'compulsion' to keep the police top brass in good humour? The Todis and Sardas (Govind Sarada, the infamous jute baron, who is a prime accused in the notorious blood kit scam) are of course all 'esteemed investors' in the eyes of the Left Front government and it does not have the will to take any action against them even if they habitually steal the provident fund of their employees.

If Kolkata is insisting on stern action against the police-business-politician nexus, rural Bengal is witnessing a growing revolt against another hated nexus - the nexus between the party (CPI(M)), panchayat and corrupt 'ration' (public distribution system) dealers. The PDS is notoriously non-functional in West Bengal with the state topping the list in terms of pilferage of food grains meant for the poor. Thirty years ago the CPI(M) had come to power promising to empower the worker-peasant alliance and the middle classes. But all over the state it is the rich and the corrupt who have gained in power while workers, peasants and the middle classes are at the receiving end of the obnoxious nexus that is increasingly perceived as a shorthand for the CPI(M)'s record stay in power for an uninterrupted stretch of thirty years. All sections of the progressive opinion must be worried about the tell-tale signs of the rot in West Bengal. Now is the time to unite and act against this rot before it is too late.

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## **Condemn the Ruthless Custodial Killing of Comrade Ashok Sah in Sitamarhi**

### **Punish the Perpetrators of This Cold Blooded Murder in Police Custody**

Comrade Ashok Sah, a popular leader of CPI(ML) in Runni-Saidpur of Sitamarhi district was brutally killed by policemen inside the thana after arresting him on fake charges in the mid-night of 4 October. He was a popular leader and always remained on the forefront of people's struggles and recently he was involved in the movement for providing relief to the flood victims in the district. And this infuriated the authorities to such an extent that they went to annihilate him. He was arrested in the midnight on fake charges for which an investigation has already been ordered by the DIG Mujaffarpur range. His arrest was made in presence of the local BDO.

The wife of deceased leader, Manju Devi, who had also lost one of her legs in the police firing during a protest for relief to flood victims, when reached to the thana immediately after the arrest she witnessed a brutal beating of her husband by the thana in-charge and other policemen. Seeing her in sight, the thana incharge retorted menacingly "Let us see which DM or CM now comes to save the life of this bastard, who keeps on sending petitions against us. Today we will end his game." The police remained unmoved by the requests of crying Manju Devi to release her innocent husband. They started beating her up also and later forcibly thrown her in a van and sent her back home. The ruthless beating of comrade Ashok continued inside the thana.

The crying Manju then woke up the neighbours and apprised them of the plight of her husband. She gathered 25-30 people and again went back to thana, but her husband was not there. She was told that he has been sent to Sitamarhi. The thana is merely at half a kilo meter distance from Ashok Sah's home.

When Comrade Vijay Singh, who lives in a nearby village, heard of this news he immediately rushed to the police station fearing that the police in nexus with the criminals and mafia in the area could kill him. He and many other people organised a road blockade in protest, immediately. This forced the police to hand over the mutilated body to the kith and kin. The whole body was soaked in blood, the tongue was bulging out of his mouth.

Hundreds of women, men and social activists said this is a cold blooded murder to quieten a voice, forever, against loot and crime.

A Party investigating team collected many documents from Comrade Ashok Sah's home which clearly indicate the involvement of local politicians with mafia connections, BDO and thana incharge in this crime. They also explain the callousness and height of insensitivity by district administration as well as of Nitish Govt.

Comrade Ashok Sah told the Chief Minister in latter's Janta Durbar on 24 Sept. that his life is in danger and he has been implicated in fake cases involving the charges of even murder and rape by the politician-police-mafia nexus. He also sent a copy of this petition to the DGP and DIG. He sent a letter to the Home Secretary demanding security as he was being threatened of his life. He demanded to withdraw false charges. He also, in clear terms, told the involvement of the husband of local JD(U) MLA Guddi Devi and his gang, as well as of the fact that the police is working on the instructions of this nexus.

On 6 July, he gave an application to the DM of Sitamarhi and told him that his life is under threat because he exposed some politicians and officers in the scam appropriating the flood relief fund. Six months back, an attempt was made on his life by the police as it tried for a fake encounter after propagating that he is a "Maobaadi". But this was foiled as massive protests were organised condemning the crime-police-politician nexus in the district headquarters.

He again met the DIG and asked him to either arrest him on the charges levelled against him, if found correct, or make an inquiry himself. He also apprised him of the threat to his life. The DIG stopped any further action on the case and ordered a special inquiry. The DIG himself accepted this fact in front of thousands of people who came to attend the funeral of Comrade Ashok.

Comrade Ashok joined CPI(ML) in 2003 along with dozens of other activists and thousands of supporters. He became an eye-sore for the criminal gangs and corrupt politicians due to his increased initiatives and struggles. His was an ideal voice against loot and crime in Runni-Saidpur block. His repeated use of Right to Information Act infuriated the politicians, officers, police and feudals of the area. He successfully fought the struggle to rehabilitate 256 parcha-holders and stopped the eviction of Bangar Scheduled Caste people from their lands. He also fought against the corruption in PDS, in MLA local area development fund, and for the rights of vendors working on footpaths.

Comrade Ashok Sah was currently the District Convenor of AIALA and Block Secretary of CPI(ML).

We demand the immediate arrests of the thana in-charge, BDO and relatives of local MLA Guddi Devi. We also demand strong action against DM and SP of Sitamarhi. CPI(ML) is launching a statewide movement for these demands.

We will carry forward the struggles which Comrade Ashok led and will work hard to punish the killer nexus that took his life.

Red Salute to Comrade Ashok Sah!

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## **Assam State Conference of CPI(ML)**

7<sup>th</sup> Assam State Conference of CPI(ML) was successfully held at Tinsukia on 23-25 Sept. An impressive protest procession of around 2 thousand people from different tea gardens and other areas of Tinsuka and Dibrugarh districts was held on 23 Sept., at the beginning of the Conference demanding immediate withdrawal of US-India Nuclear Deal, was brought out on the main roads of the town. All State Committee members and Central Committee members present as guests led the procession. After the procession a mass meeting was held at Dohotia Bihutoli which was presided over by Com Gangaram Kol (Asom Sangrami Chah Sramik Sangha (ASCSS) State President) and addressed by Central Committee Member and Ex-MP Jayanta Rongpi, State Secretary Rubul Sarma, Vibek Das (ASCSS Gen. Secy), Kanak Lata Dutta (State Secy, AIPWA) and Arup Mahanta (State Secy Gramin Sramik Santha). Speakers also called upon the people to unitedly fight against the rampant corruption, total failure and anarchy of Tarun Gogoi Government and to defeat the Congress in the forthcoming Panchayat polls.

Earlier in the morning Party's flag was hoisted by Com. Harendra Nath Barthakur, member of Central Control Commission, and homage to the martyrs was paid. The Town (Tinsukia) was named after Martyr Comrade Anil Kr. Baruah and the Conference Hall (Durgabari Hall) as Khitipati Das hall.

150 delegates and guests participated in the conference which adopted a Political-Organizational report and elected a 15-member new State Committee unanimously. Rubul Sarma was re-elected as State Secretary. Central Committee Member Jayanta Rongpi and Chandra Kanta Terang from Hill Party Committee attended the conference as guests.

Party's PB member D.P. Buxi was the Central Observer and he called for a consolidated expansion of the party in Assam to capture growing space created through antipeople acts of Gogoi Govt. in face of the initiativeless position of various bourgeois opposition parties. He also stressed to revive party's initial gains achieved in organised working class sector, on the cultural front and to further expand the party organs along with consolidating and expanding present thrust on rural workers and tea-garden workers.

### **For the Rights Over the Land They Till**

Nearly 1000-1200 acres of land was redistributed in different blocks of Bhojpur district during 1992 to 2007 after launching various struggles. These lands earlier belonged to the Maths, ceiling surplus or banks of the Sone river. Although there is thousands of acres of land still under occupation of domineering feudals in the district. Some of the lands are owned by the absentee landlords and tensions with the bataaidars (share-croppers) still prevail. The rights of share-croppers are protected by the BT Act, and a number of share-croppers have applied for under this Act. But the administrative apathy always favours the landlords and many of the bataidaars have been thrown out of their land.

The CPI(ML) has been launching struggles for the rights of the share croppers for a long time, but the major hurdle being faced is the fact that many absentee landlords have deliberately sold their lands to the anti-party feudals of the area, to create obstacles in the legal process. Moreover, in nexus with the administration many party cadres are now facing false criminal charges and one of the activists was murdered by the landlords.

The Party has been demanding the rights of Sone-Diyara and other surplus lands to the landless occupants from the state government. Though some of lease-parchas have been distributed, most of the poor occupants still don't have the parchas for the land they till. On the contrary, the administration further tries to complicate the problem by deliberately issuing parchas to people other than original occupants like war widows and OBC families, etc. Though the occupant families have put in their hard labour to make these lands arable. The struggle with the governmental authorities as well as with feudal nexus continues.

#### **Killing of Workers in Industrial Fire**

CPI(ML) strongly condemns the death of 11 workers in a factory in Panipat terming it an outcome of the callous administrative neglect. A CPI(ML) team led by PS Gahwalat visited the affected factory and met the DC of Panipat. The team protested the violation of Factories Act and other labour laws in Panipat and demanded to implement the same besides paying appropriate compensation to the families of killed workers.

#### **Rural Bengal Stirs on PDS/Ration Fraud**

Now in the districts of west Bengal, people are on the streets protesting against the massive fraud with the public distribution system or rationing system. The people are agitating, along with the ration dealers, against local CPI(M) leaders also, because they maintain a close nexus with ration dealers and enjoy direct financial benefits. In many places condemned ration dealers are CPI(M)'s local leaders. CPI(M) leaders of the state are also acknowledging this fact owing to an immense social pressure created by this issue. CPI(ML) is with the movement in the districts like Birbhum, Bardhaman, Medinipur, Nadia, Mursidabad. CPI(ML) is protesting against this fraud in many blocks. On 4 October at baburghat, Jalpaiguri, on 5 October at Kundul, Kamarhati of Bardhaman, on 6 October at Khargram of Mursidabad, and on 7 October at Nachara of Nadia, massive protest rallies have been organised by the local party units. Mass Participations in these rallies was enormous. On 12 October Party will organise protests in front of food supply departments throughout the state.

#### **Protest on Rizwanur Death Controversy**

CPI(ML) and its mass organisations have organised protests against the killing of Razwanur Rahaman in Kolkata. On 3 October Kolkata Nagarik Samommay and AIPWA (All India Progressive Women Association) organised a protest at Tilzala, near Rizwanur's house. Prominent citizens and intellectuals of Kolkata like Nabarun Bhattacharya, Bivas Chakroborty, Sujato Bhadro, Meher Engineer along with CPI(ML) leaders Indrani Dutta, Amit Dasgupta, Animesh Chakroborty addressed a gathering. After Singur and Nandigram, the arrogance of LF Govt. is expressed through the case of Rizwanur's death. The meeting strongly demanded an unbiased investigation into the incident and punishment to those who perpetrated this crime. On 7 October, AISA and RYA organised a mass meeting at the same spot. RYA President Mohammad Salim and West Bengal State Secretary of AISA visited Rizwanur's home and met bereaved family members. Delegate team expressed their deep grief and promised to fight to punish the killers.

#### **AICCTU Protest in Dehradun**

The AICCTU organised protest march and mass meeting in front of Chief Minister's office in Dehradun on 9 October. This protest was organised to press for the demand to stop the continued state repression on the industrial workers of SIDCUL Pantnagar in Udham Singh Nagar District. The movement is going on there for the last few months against the illegal closure of Bhaskar Energy Ltd., forcible ouster of nearly 200 workers in ACME Telepower Ltd., forcible contractualisation and many other malpractices with regard to labour laws being carried with impunity under open administrative protection. Hundreds of workers have been victimised by the industrialists in this

industrial estate for 'crime' of the workers that they have started organising themselves against the anti-labour policies and continued oppression in this Estate. The protest was led by AICCTU National Vice President Tarsem Singh Jodha and CPI(ML) Central Committee member Prabhat Kumar, along with AISA's National President Indresh Maikhury and AICCTU State Convenor KK Bora. Workers from many factories travelled to the state capital to participate in the march.

The workers' representatives handed over a memorandum of demands addressed to the Chief Minister and talked to the Labour Secretary of Uttarakhand regarding various problems arising out of 'zeal' to implement the anti-labour policies in the name of 'development'. Though she assured of resolving some particular problems at factory level by organising talks between workers' leaders and managements, we have yet to see how the workers get justice unless a policy level reversal is not done by the government.

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**P.S.**

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