

National Convention Against WTO's Hong Kong Ministerial

Indian People's Basic Needs and Interests Are Not Negotiable

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The Indian People's Campaign against WTO organised a national Convention on Dec 3 in New Delhi. The Convention decided to organise countrywide protests against the WTO Ministerial round in Hong Kong to be held on 13-18 December. The convention warned against the disastrous implications of the current WTO agenda for the future of the Indian economy and for the livelihood options and prospects of the overwhelming majority of India's working people. The convention called upon the Indian government to reject the draconian provisions of the three main proposals that constitute the Hong Kong agenda, viz., the Agreement on Agriculture (AoA), the non-Agricultural Market Access (NAMA) and the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) and demanded a comprehensive review of the TRIPS agreement that has reinforced the monopolistic stranglehold of the MNCs and the developed countries.

Initiating the proceedings at the convention, Convenor SP Shukla presented a detailed preview of the Hong Kong Ministerial and the vac round vis-à-vis government of India's positions. Prominent among the speakers were CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, CPI(M) General Secretary Prakash Karat, former Prime Minister V. P. Singh, G. Devarajan of Forward Bloc, Manoj Bhattacharya of RSP, Socialist thinker Surendra Mohan, Samajwadi Party's Sunilam, Vandana Shiva and many others. The convention was chaired by CPI General Secretary AB Bardhan.

Speakers in the convention demanded that every issue related to WTO must be discussed in Parliament before going to the current round and government of India must show total transparency with regard to its positions in the WTO in the best interest of the people of India.

CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya began his address by paying tributes to the gas victims of the Bhopal genocide perpetrated by the Union Carbide exactly 21 years ago. He said that while successive governments over the last two decades have failed to punish the multinational company, Union Carbide, and secure proper compensation for the lakhs of victims of this tragedy, the last one decade has seen the reins of the entire economy being handed over to the MNCs in the name of honouring the WTO agreements. An effective resistance to the WTO's agenda calls first of all for a determined opposition to the governments which convert the WTO agenda into India's own policies and implements them at gunpoint. In this context, he underlined the need for organising massive nationwide protests on 13 December, the inaugural day of the Sixth WTO Ministerial in Hong Kong.

He said that trade is the field where the domestic economic policy of a country meets its foreign policy. A government which follows a pro-rich economic policy and a pro-US foreign policy can never uphold the interests of the nation or the working people in an international forum like the WTO. While for the sake of public consumption the government of India talks of making common cause with other developing countries through groupings like G-20 or G-33, Comrade Dipankar noted that in real life the UPA government was increasingly reducing India to the status of an appendage to G-1, the Unilateral State of America. The anti-WTO national campaign must therefore play an

instrumental role, stressed Comrade Dipankar, to build a powerful mass movement and assert that India was not for sale and that the basic interests of India's working people were not negotiable.

P.S.

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