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Comrade Ram Naresh Ram is no more

Veteran leader of historic struggles in Bhojpur, Central Committee Member and leader of the CPI(ML)'s legislative group in the Bihar Assembly from 1995-2010, Comrade Ram Naresh Ram passed away around 4 pm in PMCH, Patna, where he had been in a coma and battling a cerebral stroke for the past several days. 87-year old Comrade Ram Naresh Ram, popularly known as 'Parasji,' is among the tallest leaders of the revolutionary struggle and is an icon for the downtrodden and oppressed people, not only of Bhojpur and Bihar but the whole country.

Hailing from a dalit family of Shahabad (Bhojpur) region in Bihar, he became a full-time communist organizer in the 1940s, participating actively in the freedom struggle as an activist of the undivided CPI. When the CPI(M) was formed in 1964, he became one of its founding members in the Shahabad region. In 1967, he was elected mukhiya and then contested the Assembly election, during which Comrade Jagdish 'Master' was brutally attacked and Comrade Ram Naresh Ram himself was imprisoned by feudal goons. Inspired by the Naxalbari struggle, he became one of the founders of the CPI(ML) movement in Bihar, along with other legendary leaders like Jagdish 'Master.'

In the 1980s, he was the Secretary of the Bihar unit of the CPI(ML). Ever since 1995, he consistently represented the CPI(ML) in the Bihar Assembly, and was the leader of the party's legislative group. In 2003, when the founding conference of the All India Agricultural Labourers' Association (AIALA) was held in Ara, he was elected the founding President of the AIALA.

Sahajanand Saraswati galvanized the peasantry of central Bihar in militant anti-feudal and anti-colonial struggles during the pre-Independence period; Comrade Ram Naresh Ram played a comparable role along with others like Jagdish 'Master' in galvanizing the rural poor in the post-Independence period in anti-feudal and anti-imperialist struggles.

Comrade Ram Naresh Ram had a deep sense of respect for the legacy of the First War of Indian Independence of 1857 as well as for the freedom struggle. As a legislator, he had had a memorial to the 12 peasant martyrs of 1942 constructed at Lasarhi village in Bhojpur.

In his simplicity and his life-long organic link with people's struggles, combining both parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggles, he was a model for communist parliamentarians and people's representatives.

His abiding legacy will inspire the entire communist movement and the struggles of the oppressed for time to come.

Organise Country-wide Protests during Barack Obama's India Visit

(In lieu of Editorial)

US President Barack Obama's forthcoming visit to India this November will inaugurate a new chapter in the 'strategic partnership' between US imperialism and India's ruling class. As people of India, let us examine the interests that the US President represents and the implications of his visit for India.

Barack Obama became President of the United States because he represented, for the people of the US as well of the world, a promise of 'change' - change from the imperialist policies of the Bush regime that had imposed wars, occupation, and economic crisis on the world.

Two years later, both in the US as well as elsewhere in the world, that promise stands belied. Obama's regime has represented 'continuity' rather than 'change' with the policies of US imperialism and war-mongering. Any 'change' has remained cosmetic. Obama colluded in suppressing the UN's Goldstone Report indicting Israel for war crimes in Gaza. In the name of ending the occupation of Iraq, Obama has actually renamed 50, 000 US troops in Iraq as 'advise-and-assist brigades' rather than combat troops. The US war in Afghanistan continues unabated. And there has been no change whatsoever in the policies of US imperialism that force a grave economic crisis on the people of the world.

As Manmohan Singh's UPA-II Government rolls out the red carpet for US President Barack Obama this November, we will once again hear the familiar claims - that India's 'special' relationship with the US is a matter of pride and that being part of the US' strategic embrace protects India's economic and security interests. But bitter experience has taught us better.

It has been revealed recently that the US had information of the Mumbai terror attacks' mastermind David Headley's links with terrorist outfits as well of his plans to target Indian cities, but did not share the same with India. Not only that, the US is even now keeping its own secrets by protecting Headley from facing trial in India. In the Bhopal gas tragedy, we saw how India's rulers obliged the US by failing to make corporations like Union Carbide and Dow face the criminal consequences or even pay damages. The Indo-US Nuke Deal is designed to keep a US leash on India's foreign policy and increase India's dependence on the US, while the recently passed Nuke Liability Bill is scripted to protect the interests of the US nuclear industry. The Indo-US Knowledge Initiative on Agriculture and 'Obama-Singh 21st Century Knowledge Initiative' are all increasing the US stranglehold over India's self-reliance in education and agriculture.

Obama's visit to India will undoubtedly serve US interests in many ways - by further prising open key sectors of the Indian economy for US investment; by expanding the Indian market for the US military-industrial complex; and by further binding India to the US' imperialist strategies in the world. For the mass of Indian people, however, it is clear that India's growing ties with the US are inviting economic crisis and terrorism on Indian soil, and shamefully shackling India's independence and self-reliance to imperialist interests.

Barack Obama is coming to our country as the intelligent, democratic face of US imperialism; let all who stand for peace, justice and sovereignty greet him with protests all over the country with a loud welcome message:

US Imperialism Keep off from India, Keep Off from Asia!

Asia is not for US Meddling and Occupation!

Stop Outsourcing War, Terror, and Economic Crisis!

CPI(ML) Liberation

CPM Punjab

Left Coordination Committee (Kerala)

Lal Nishan Party (Leninist)

For All India Left Coordination

US hands off India, hands off Asia!

(Background Note prepared by Arindam Sen for the protests during Obama's India visit)

Barack Obama's journey to India in the first week of November promises to be remarkable on several counts. Not all US Presidents visited India; those who did came here only in their second terms in office. Obama will be coming here before completing his second year in the White House and the trip is expected to cover full four or five days - the longest on record. Generally speaking this is a measure of India's enhanced importance in the American dream of world domination. But perhaps more important are the current context and the immediate concerns on both sides.

Right on the eve of Presidential trip, the CNAS (Centre for a New American Security), a think tank headed by Richard Armitage and Nicholas Burns — both former Deputy Secretaries of State under George Bush Junior and key architects of the Indo-US Nuclear Deal - brought out a paper titled "Natural Allies: A Blueprint for the Future of U.S.-India Relations". Referring to the "rapid expansion of ties" during particularly the Bush years, the paper laments that now this progress has stalled. "Past projects remain incomplete, few new ideas have been embraced by both sides, and the forward momentum ... has subsided" - the paper observes, adding "it is critical to rejuvenate the U.S.-India partnership and put U.S. relations with India on a more solid foundation."

How does the Democratic administration propose to respond to this Republican pressure?

According to an official statement from the White House, the visit will focus on the situation in Afghanistan and Pakistan, bilateral business ties and the world economy. It is easy to guess that the second item would dominate the agenda, since this is crucial both for a recession-hit and debt-burdened US and for an India betting on an outward-looking rather than domestic demand-driven strategy of growth. The two sides will therefore focus on issues such as the easing of high-tech exports to India by removing Indian firms from the banned entities list, which is mainly a fallout of New Delhi not signing the NNPT and other security-related technology transfer agreements like CISMOA (Communications and Information Security Memorandum of Agreement) and BECA (Basic Exchange and Cooperation Agreement). If some success is achieved on this front, that will be used to project the visit as "historic". The principal beneficiaries will of course be the corporate lobbies in

both countries - particularly the military-industrial complex in the US. Firms like Boeing and Lockheed Martin Corp. expect to sell military-transport aircrafts, military jet engines, freight locomotives, reconnaissance aircrafts and other items worth tens of billions of dollars. As for the Indian establishment, it will be only too happy to show off its commitment to "national security" with the newly acquired state-of-the-art defence equipments and technologies.

Apart from the huge profits to be made from the sale of military hardware, arming India to the teeth is important for Washington also as part of its China containment policy. In the recent past, China-US relations took some severe beatings on issues like arms sale to Taiwan and Obama's meeting with the Dalai Lama while the perpetually simmering tensions in the Sino-Indian relations were also aggravated on more occasions than one. Naturally the Indian Government is a very willing accomplice in the American scheme of promoting "the world's biggest democracy" as a counterweight to "authoritarian China". Of course, this can happen only within a limit. For the Democratic administration also accepts China's crucial role in South Asia, as the Beijing joint statement - which, inter alia, had appeared to convey that China and the US would now keep a watch over differences between India and Pakistan - made clear a year ago.

A thorny issue that will be sought to be sorted out during Obama's visit is the teetering civil nuclear-energy partnership between the two countries. US sanctions against India ended with the signing of the nuclear deal a couple of years ago, but US firms like GE are not selling nuclear technology to India yet. They are not prepared to accept even the very limited liability placed on suppliers in the event of a nuclear accident under the Nuclear Liability Bill. India is hoping to assuage US firms that it will take care of their concerns through the rules to be framed under the law, while US officials and corporations want the law itself revised and the liability provision scrapped - which does not seem to be feasible in the given balance of political forces in India.

In the realm of world economy, the US wants India to support it in the currency war against China, blaming the latter for artificially devaluing the Chinese Yuan. But it has itself adopted a deliberate strategy to devalue the dollar, the principal means being quantitative easing (printing huge amounts of dollar for buying bonds and other financial assets from the market). A weaker dollar would help the President meet his avowed goal to double exports in five years, but this is not good omen for other nations. This explains why Pranab Mukherjee, during his recent visit to the US, refused to take the American side in this war against the Chinese, currently India's most important trading partner. Nor did he forget to voice India's disgruntlement with the Obama Administration's policy of discouraging outsourcing. During the impending visit of the US President, he is likely to raise this question again, and ask for liberalisation of the H-1B visa regime.

The Indian wish list would also include a clear commitment from the US to support its claim for permanent membership in an enlarged United Nations Security Council. India, too, would be required to make a number of commitments and policy changes. It will be under great pressure for removing whatever restrictive regulations are still there in sectors such as energy, technology, retail, health care and banking. On the diplomatic front, New Delhi will be urged to join the US in bullying Iran. As a signatory of the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty, Iran has an "inalienable right" to develop and use nuclear technology for peaceful purposes and according to the International Atomic Energy Agency there is no evidence to back up the charge that Iran is "planning to produce nuclear weapons". And yet the US, which lied about imaginary weapons of mass destruction in Iraq to manufacture the logic of aggression, is now portraying Iran as a threat to peace and resorting to escalating sanctions and threats of military intervention against that country. Washington has already named India's oil and gas flagship ONGC, IOC and three other firms among the 41 concerns worldwide having energy ties with Iran, an act for which it may impose sanctions on them and the pressure will now be further intensified.

Sending out a symbolic message of Indo-US partnership in the fight against terror, the US President

will begin his tour from Mumbai, sight of the 26/11 attack. But is America really a dependable ally in this struggle? Soon after the visit was finalized, ProPublica — an independent non-governmental organisation which was a recipient of this year's Pulitzer Prize for investigative reporting — gave out minute details showing that three years before the November 2008 terrorist attack on Mumbai, US officials knew that David Coleman Headley was undergoing training with the Lashkar-e-Toiba, which plotted the attack. Had this information and his photographs been shared with India at the time or even after the Obama administration took over, India would not have given a visa to Headley for his repeated visits and this could have prevented the terror strike. This point has been largely ignored by major sections of the Indian media, almost exclusively preoccupied as it is with exposing the role of Pakistan's ISI in the attack on Mumbai.

Among regional issues, the Af-Pak policy of US will also figure in the talks, though hardly any breakthrough is expected. In the "Afghanistan and Pakistan Regional Stabilization Strategy" released in January this year, the White House promised an "enhanced partnership" with Pakistan that would move far beyond the military funding the Bush administration had provided. This was followed up by a provision of \$7.5 billion to be given to Pakistan over five years. All this is not palatable to India, which never tires of complaining about US dollars being used by Pakistan in abetting cross-border terrorism. New Delhi is also eager to increase its stakes in Afghanistan and angry with President Karzai for talking to the Taliban. Pakistan on the other hand is reasonably aggrieved with the continuing US Drone attacks inside its territory. In a situation as complex as this, the visiting President will be hard put to balance relations between India and Pakistan — countries eternally at loggerheads, but both of which hold significant regional influence in American plans for a post-war Afghanistan.

The impending visit will have its interesting sidelights too. For a starter, the Tata Group has announced a \$ 50 million (Rs 220 crores) gift to Harvard Business School — the largest donation from an international donor in the school's history. The symbolism should not be lost on India's state guest, who is also a Harvard (law school) alumnus. But in terms of substance, how much will the trip actually yield? Given the maze of multiple pressures and pulls in Indo-US relations, no sensible observer will dare come up with a categorical answer at this stage.

The US President comes to India at a time when he is experiencing a steep fall from a peak of popularity in his own country and abroad for failing to deliver on any of his high promises. The Manmohan Singh Government too finds itself beleaguered by a host of nagging problems ranging from skyrocketing prices to the CWG scam. Both sides desperately need a face-lift and they will use the trip for that purpose too. With the range of economic, diplomatic and strategic issues to be covered, it is also evident that Obama's India sojourn aims at bolstering US interests well beyond this country. The point was driven home by Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs Robert Blake, one of the top diplomats coming to New Delhi on a ground preparation mission, when he said the centre of gravity of US foreign policy has shifted from Europe to Asia. The bottom line is clear. Barack Obama is coming to our country as the intelligent, democratic face of US imperialism; let all who stand for peace, justice and sovereignty greet him with a loud welcome message: US imperialism keep off from India, keep off from Asia!

Adieu Comrade Rajesh

With a heavy heart, we have to convey the tragic news of the untimely death of Comrade Rajesh Ranjan, an activist of AISA and CPI(ML), who passed away of a sudden cardiac arrest on the morning of 26 October 2010.

Rajesh joined the AISA as a student of BA Korean in JNU. Throughout his student days in JNU, he was actively involved in the revival of AISA in JNU - he was an AISA office bearer as well as the general secretary of the AISA JNU unit in 2007-08. He also contested JNUSU elections as a Councillor candidate.

Rajesh was actively involved in the student movement in JNU. He was rusticated by the JNU administration in 2007 for participating in the movement for minimum wages and workers' rights in JNU. In fact, he was one of the first students in JNU who established a close rapport with workers in the campus, and got to know of the large-scale violations in workers' rights in JNU. Students as well as mess workers in Mahi hostel (where he was a resident for many years) will remember the role Rajesh played in raising their issues. Rajesh was also part of the group of students who got involved in teaching and taking classes for the children of the construction workers in our campus.

Always an activist who was most serious and committed towards revolutionary politics, he remained active even after his student days as an activist of the CPI(ML). He was part of the AISA Headquarters unit in Delhi, and was also a member of CPI(ML)'s and AISA's publications team and the website unit, and was also involved in the publication work of AIPWA's Women's Voice and AICCTU's Shramik Solidarity. Comrades could always count on the solid, dependable, hard-working Rajesh at all hours of day and night. He would also render all kinds of help in organising a variety of people's protests and movements. His cheerful and simple nature easily won the affection of all the friends and comrades with whom he worked.

There is no measure to the grief of his family (including his parents and sisters), loved ones, as well his many friends and comrades. We are all yet to come to terms with his shocking and sudden loss. We bid him adieu with tears in our eyes and our hearts full.

Red Salute to Comrade Rajesh!

P.S.

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