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Above : Some of the victims of Gang rape incident (Tripura) with Com. Mangaleswari Deb & other members of AIDWA delegation.

Below : Tripura CM facing the irate JMS demonstrators at Tripura Bhavan, Delhi on 23rd June '88 (Courtesy: Times of India).



AIDWA Demands Judicial Inquiry on Molestation of women in Ujan Maidan

WE the undersigned members of a delegation of All India Democratic Women's Association came to Tripura on 17th instant on a fact finding mission on the shocking incidents of gangrape on the tribal women of Khowai and Amarpur sub-divisions of Tripura. On 17th we met some of the victims of Ujan Maidan and heard from them about the brutal atrocities perpetrated on them by the Jawans of Assam Rifles. Today we went to see the Chief Minister of Tripura Shri Sudhir Ranjan Majumdar to report our finding regarding the incidents and to give our suggestions for remedy. But we are astonished and disappointed to find the biased and unsympathetic attitude of the Chief Minister and the Home Minister who was also present there.

The Chief Minister, while admitting that there might have been one or two stray cases, said that there could not have been any gangrape as there was no evidence found by the police and the administration. He alleged that it was politically motivated propaganda of the CPI (M) to discredit the present govt and that tribal women could tell all lies for the sake of politics.

We strongly feel that it is great insult to the innocent tribal women, indeed, to womanhood, to allege that they could concoct the 'story' of atrocities and gangrape for political motive. Neither the Chief Minister nor the Home Minister took our submission about the heinous crime on women seriously. On the contrary they passed offensive remarks about our mission and sensed political motivation behind it. They totally refused to consider our suggestion of holding a judicial enquiry into the incidents and confirmed that their administration's enquiry has been enough. We appeal to all democratic people to take up the issue to see that justice is done and such incidents do not occur in future.

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Vice-President, AIDWA Vice-President,
AIDWA

Ila Bhattacharjee
Vice-President, AIDWA

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MLA, West Bengal

Shyamali Gupta
Joint Secretary,
AIDWA

Joint Conference of NFPTE — Kerala

V.V. Prasannakumari

THE 22nd Joint Conference of P & T unions (NFPTE) in Kerala was held at Calicut from 4th May to 8th May. Even though Government has divided P & T in two departments as postal and telecom. — in order to divide the unity among the employees — in Kerala, all unions conducted their circle conference jointly and state level co-ordinating committee functions as one union. Mahila Sub-Committee also functions co-ordinating all unions.

Com. Dipen Ghosh M.P. inaugurated the joint delegate session. A separate Mahila conference was held on 7th May. The special session was inaugurated by Com Vimal Ranadive and was presided by Com. Susheela Gopalan, Chairman of the circle co-ordinating committee.

In her inaugural address Com. Vimal stressed on the importance of such meetings of working women. Working Woman is to be organised as woman and as a worker. Women are the first to be thrown out when mechanisation and modernisation takes place. She gave many instances of women valiantly fighting against the mechanisation and winning their demands. Working Women have to come in the fore front of T.U. movement. Feminist movement helps only to create enmity between men and women. Rajiv Gandhi Govt. considers women as only vote banks. Both men and women have to fight against the anti-worker — anti-people policies of the ruling class and then victory will be ours.

Prof. Hymavathy Thayat, first woman Mayor of Calicut addressed the delegates. She in her speech asked the P & T women to take up the responsibilities and fight for a socialist future.

Com. Mercikutty Amma, MLA, spoke on the issues of mechanisation in India and explained as to how the same helps women in socialist countries. She pointed out the welfare measures taken by the left front Government for working women and women as a whole.

Com. Nandini (Idukki) explained how much difficulty working women are facing in Idukki for accommodation and transport. Women and Trade Union activists are transferred to remote places. Mahila subcommittee has interferred and settled some cases.

Com Indira from Wynad made it clear that in her district women going for social or T.U. work are normally looked down upon. Anti-socials often try even to physically attack. Women branch post masters have to work alone in remote places, and there is no protection. Union and women's movement has to take these problem seriously.

Com. Padmanabhan of Ernakulam explained the difference between Feminist Movement and the P & T union movement. 40 per cent of P & T employees are women and they have to come up and rally with other working class movement. Task before us is to achieve a classless society. Then alone women's rights will be preserved and P & T NFPTE alone can help us to achieve the goal.

Com. Leelamma from Trivandrum spoke as to how they were able to achieve the demands like creche. Four creches are working in Trivandrum city alone. Since 1978 the Mahila Committee was campaigning and struggling for demands like creche transport, accommodation etc. and we could achieve more good results. Now the entire P & T movement in Kerala has taken up these demands and we are quite confident of winning them.

Com. Susheela Gopalan in her presidential address pointed out that the ruling class policies neither help the women nor the nation.

Com. V.V. Prasannakumari, Convenor of the Mahila Sub Committee welcomed and Com Janaki Kutty gave vote of thanks.

The conference ended with a mammoth rally and a public meeting which was inaugurated by Com. K.R. Gouri Amma, the Hon'ble Minister of Kerala.

The conference elected Com. Susheela Gopalan as Chairman and Com. P. Balakrishnan as convenor of Circle coordinating Committee. In the Mahila Sub-Committee the following members were elected,

V.V. Prasannakumari — Convenor (Telecom III CC Leelamma — Jt. Convenor (Postal III K. Leelamma, V. Indira — (Telecom. III) C.P. Shobhana (Postal III) — C.K. Sumathy

(EIV) K.I. Thankamma (Postal IV) — P R Omana (RMS IV) Saramma Yacob (Telegraph II) — P K Kusumakumari (RMS III) V K Valsala (Telegraph IV)

The conference decided to fight against computerisation and for the absorption of RTP/ED Casual employees and conduct one day strike on September 19th, on the 20th anniversary day of 1968 struggle.

Formation of W.W.C.C. in Balaghat (M.P.)

Anagha Shinde

A convention of working women was held at Baraseoni in district Balaghat (M.P.) on 27th of May 1988. More than hundred women working in diverse areas came to participate in this convention.

They were from Manganese, mines, daily wage workers from P.W.D., forest and irrigation department, weavers and Beedi workers. The convention was presided by a four member presidium. Members of the presidium were Smt. Suman Bai, Kantabai, Jamnabai and Drupadabai.

The convention was inaugurated by CITU Secretary Com. Vimal Ranadive. She said that exploitation of women is double in comparison with the men folk. She said that CITU is the only trade union which is making deliberate efforts to organise working women and is fighting for their problems.

Com. S. Kumar, member of CITU State Secretariat and Anagha Shinde Secretary M.P. AIDWA greeted the convention. A charter of demands asking for jobs for all, implementation of equal wage act, legislation for workers in all sections, abolition of contractor system, maternity benefits to all working women, all facilities to the beedi workers according to the 'Beedi and Cigar Act', identity card, increase in the wages of weavers, creche, permanency in job, was passed.

Several women spoke on their problems.

Budhwara Bai, a beedi worker said that they are not given the identity card. Their wages are too low. They get Rs 9.50 for 1000 beedis. Women from forest department and P.W.D. said that they have been working as temporary daily wage workers for last eleven years but they are not being made permanent. Manturabai, a manganese mine worker said that they do not get leave even in casualities. If someone dies in their family they have to show the death certificate, or they do not get leave. Kamalabai, a weaver said that they do not get the yarn regularly from the Govt. Moreover the yarn supplied to them is of low quality which does not bring profit to the weaver.

A resolution was passed on the condition of the weavers, demanding regular supply of yarn, increase in their rate of wages (relating their wages with the minimum wage) maternity benefits to the women and opening of the Mendiwada Workshop.

In the end a district level ad hoc committee of W.W.C.C. was elected with Mrs. Ranjana Indulkar as convenor and Sakunbai, Chandrakanta, Deokibai, Parvatibai, Kamlabai, Bhagarti Bai, Manturbai, Madina Bai, Subhodrabai, Dayvanta Bai, Kishnabai as members of the adhoc committee. It was decided that a big convention at district level shall be called in the month of September 1988. The conference concluded with shouting slogans of CITU Zindabad, Kamgar Mahila Samanvaya Samiti Zindabad.

Purewal Factory Workers in H.P. Launch Courageous Struggle for 56 Days

A public meeting and women's convention was held at the factory gate of the Purewal Watch Factory, Jabbar, Distt Solan, Himachal Pradesh on 13th June 1988. Com. Vimal Ranadive Secretary, CITU, Com. D.N. Kapoor, General Secretary, State Himachal Pradesh, and Com. A.K. Sharma addressed the gathering. About 500 workers including 250 women are on strike since April 19 last for the demands of implementation of Minimum Wages, payment of overtime and for other demands. The management, who is in league with the Himachal Pradesh Congress Ministry is using all types of tactics to break the strike. Management goondas are let loose on the workers, women and men were lathicharged when 60 workers including 35 women were injured seriously. Twentynine workers, including 11 women were implicated in false cases. One day before the meeting on 13th Com. Nand Lal was beaten up by the goondas of the management so much so that he fractured his mouth and bled profusely. Despite all these harassment and the tactics of the local Congress (I) leaders and management and administration, workers are fighting courageously even after 56 days of the strike.

Com. Vimal Ranadive while congratulating the workers, and especially the militant sections of women who came in a procession to greet their leaders, said, while the minimum wages in H.P. are Rs. 350/- even these wage are not available for the workers. While workers are doing overtime, they are not paid accordingly. Even after working for 10 years, the workers are not made permanent. It was surprising that the management wants the workers to leave the CITU flag and join the INTUC so that the demands of the workers could be granted. Before the formation of CITU, the conditions of the workers were worse. Only after the workers hoisted the Red flag, the conditions improved somewhat. The management wants to break the strike. The workers have taken up the challenge to continue the strike till their demands are achieved under the CITU.

Com D.N. Kapoor and Com. Sharma while speaking demanded immediate settlement of

the Purewal Factory workers demands, and gave a call for the funds from Kisans and from other factory workers. Com. Sharma also demanded the arrest of the goonda before 5 P.M. that day who attacked the worker on 12th night.

Convention of Women Workers

A convention of women workers attended by 250 women, from watch factory and others from Chembraught and Parwanu as well as Anganwadi workers was held at the same place after the meeting. The militant mood of women workers could be noted from their speeches, who one after another came forward to narrate their experiences. While working in the factory, or in Anganwadi.

It was surprising that there is no creche for their children in any factory in Himachal Pradesh. Maternity benefit also is available only when the women is confirmed which is never done or done after 4-5 years. Some stated after the formation of CITU union, they started getting better wages but not medical bonus. Anganwadi women said they were getting only Rs. 225/- per month for 12 hours working while accomodation is not available.

Vimal Ranadive after explaining the working conditions of women in other states and giving a number of examples of their fight against the unequal wages, for maternity benefit etc. appealed to organise under the red flag so that the position of women would be much better.

A committee was elected at the end of the convention, with Com. Santosh as the convenor. Other members are Coms. Kanta, Lalita, (from M.I. Factory) Purewal, Asha Savitry, Pushwal (A B.C. Factory) Lunitra, Asha, Rupa, Raksha, Subhadra from Purewal Watch Factory and Bhoma Kumari from Anganwadi.

Various Mahila Mandals from villages attended the meeting to give their full support to the demands of the Purwal Watch Factory. The meeting ended with shout of slogans when they saw the goonda being taken by the police in a Car who attacked the comrade the previous night.

Inhuman Working Conditions in Anganwadis

MOST of the reports on the working conditions of women in Anganwadis received from the states speak about the inhuman conditions these women are working. The welfare of women and child Development Ministry appoints them as "social workers" on honorarium as sevikas and helpers, and as such a paltry amount of Rs 250-300 for the worker and Rs 75-110 for the helpers is paid. Thousands of women are working today in the states, in villages and in urban areas. The worker or the organiser has to visit a specific number of houses daily in the area allotted to her, record the weight of newborn children, take children to hospital for their ailments, hold meetings of mothers, teach children, educate women on family planning and so on. They have to keep records in the files numbering about 30. Helpers are to prepare food for children, serve it, clean the babies, put them to sleep collect the fuel etc. The timings to attend the duties are from 8 to 4 on an average in different state to state. In Karnataka it is 8 A.M. to 5 P.M. while in Maharashtra it is from 10.30 P.M. to 4 P.M. One important point to be noted is, the organisers and helpers have to work beyond what they are expected to.

Since the ICDS (Integrated Child Development Scheme) is meant mainly for rural areas, the Government is not bothered to look after for their minimum needs like drinking water or toilet facilities. At many places the angawadis are stationed at some rooms of the families despite the specific allocation of funds for accomodation in the budget. In many Anganwadis such as in Bihar there are no brooms to sweep the floor or there is no light arrangement.

One of the important demands of women in Anganwadis is that they should be recognised as employees of central Government and be given the same pay scales and amenities. They are prepared to work for 8 hours. Since these are in the category of social workers, there is no D.A., no regular casual leave or medical leave or even bonus. Maternity leave is only for one child at many places, and at many centres, even this is denied. There is no permanency in the job, or no promotional avenues. At some centres, even on Sundays

the workers and helpers are supposed to work. One is surprised to learn that graduates or even M. Com are employed as worker in Anganwadis, along with Matric or non-matric, getting the same scales, at some places getting Rs 25/ — more for graduates.

The most obnoxious part of service is if there are shortages in the ration, fuel or any other diet, it is recovered from the wages of the workers or helpers. In many states, the complaints are made the helpers are to spend money from their own pockets for the fuel for preparing the food. In many anganwadis these paltry wages also are not given in time and workers are to wait for 2-3 months. There are complains of sexual harrasement by the male supervisors who visit the anganwadis. In one of the cases, happened in Punjab, the male superwiser, completely drunk, misbahved with the woman worker and the union had to complain to the authorities and he was transferred.

The report published by the child and women development department states that the objective of the ICDS are to improve the nutritional and health status of children in the age group of 0-6 years, to enhance the capability of the mother. Through proper nutrition, and health education etc. The scheme provides the ICDS service in every village or a ward of an urban slum area. One anganwadi is situated for 1000 rural and urban population area and 700 in tribal area. As per the reports Bihar has 50,000 women, Tamilnadu 12,000, Himalchal Pradesh 2000 in Bengal and Kerala also there are thousands of women working in Anganwadis.

Though anganwadi projects come under the Ministry of Women and Child Development of the Ministry of Human Resources Development the programme is administered through the State Governments. It started in 1975-76. At present, 40 centrally sponsored and 39 state sector ICDS projects, number 1520 and 218 respectively. The entire expenditure is borne out by the Government of India in the form of grant-in-aid. The UNICEF assist the ICDS projects in various ways. There is a provision for training facilities for two

months. 22 lakhs Anganwadis are expected to be functioning by the end of 7th five year plan under the ICDS programme, 66 lakhs children belonging to low income group families in the country will be covered in the project of ICDS.

Considering the thrust of these projects for the rural areas when thousands of poor women are trying to get at the job as social workers on meagre wages, shows the present serious situation of unemployment in our country when crores of men and women want to join in the labour market. It also shows the attitude of the Congress rulers who want to exploit these sections who are below the poverty line and thrown out to unorganised sector in lakhs, and no legal protection whatsoever is given. Women have to work overtime to earn their daily wage of Rs 5 to 9 or even less when prices have gone at the highest.

The women in Anganwadis therefore demand that they should be recognised as the regular employees under the Central Govern-

ment, so that they would get D.A and other allowances, permanency in the jobs, maternity benefit and other amenities. In the meantime they should get Rs 600 as minimum wages and full time hours work.

It is a welcome feature that the Anganwadi women in Punjab, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Kerala, Bengal and in many other states, are being organised in the unions. In Bengal, the conditions of the women in Anganwadis were improved, because of the CITU taking up their issues with the help of the Left Front Govt. In Kerala, the AIDWA has helped to build up their organisation and was able to increase their wages. In Panjab, almost in every district, the union has been started and conferences were held. In many other states the anganwadis are being organised by trade unions or other federations. An All India convention of women in Anganwadis is being planned in near future which could bring the women together to fight for their common demands, so that their inhuman exploitation under the Congress rule will come to an end.

NGO-Women's Conference In Kerala

A Women Conference was organised in connection with the Silver Jubilee Celebration of Kerala N. G. O. Union at Sivaraman Nagar (V. J. T. Hall) Trivandrum. Com. K. V. Rajendran, President, Kerala N. G. O. Union presided over the Conference. About 1000 women participated in the Conference. The Conference started with the welcome speech by Com. T. K. Balan, General Secretary of Kerala N. G. O. Union.

The Conference was inaugurated by Smt. K. R. Gouri, Minister for Industries. In her inaugural speech Smt. Gouramma announced that a Women Statutory Commission will be constituted soon to study the problems peculiar to women, their problems would not be solved without raising the social and political consciousness of women. If that can be done, then they will understand the real forces that exploit them and they will rally in the fight against these forces.

Com. K. A. Parvathi, Vice-President of the Karnataka Government Employees' Association explained the experience in organising the women employees. Com. Josephine, Vice-President, Democratic Mahila Association, Kerala speaking on the occasion congratulated the Union for organising such a Conference. Com. Sukanya, Ex-Chairman of Kerala University Union appealed to the N. G. O. Union to utilise the growing membership of women to educate them politically and socially. Com. Bindu Mohan, Chairman, Kerala University also addressed the Conference.

A resolution on the demands of women employees was introduced in the Conference by Com. K. K. Shammathy, Convener, Women Sub-Committee Kerala N. G. O. Union.

Discrimination Against Air Hostesses

MS. RUHEEN R. KHAMBATTA and 1730 other air hostesses in Indian Airlines and Air India made the following petition to the Lok Sabha against discrimination against them on grounds of sex. Bibha Ghosh Goswami MP CPI(M) submitted the petition to the Lok Sabha on May 2, 1988.

The Petitioners are employed in the service of Air India & Indian Airlines (statutory Corporations formed under the Air Corporations Act, 1953) as Cabin Crew.

It is the submission of the Petitioners that though the age for retirement of all employees of these Corporation is 58 years, the Corporations retire women employees who work as Cabin Crew at the age of 45. Male members of the Cabin Crew in these Corporations are allowed to work upto the age of 58 years. Unlike their male counterparts, the female members of the Cabin Crew are also required to undergo medical examination every year after attaining the age of 35 years. Female Cabin Crew members who are employed by Air India and are foreign nationals and protected by the sex discrimination laws of their respective countries are not forced to retire on attaining the age of 45 years. The Petitioners are thus discriminated purely on grounds of sex and deprived of their means of livelihood on attaining the age of 45 years.

And accordingly the Petitioners pray that:

1. The female Cabin Crew members be given equal opportunity for work as their male counterparts and their retirement age be fixed on par with their male counterparts.

2. The Medical examination which the female Cabin Crew members are forced to undergo every year merely because they are women be abolished and the petitioners be put on par with their male counterparts in this regard.

3. The female Cabin Crew who have since been retired at the age of 45 years be granted relief by way of reinstatement with full service benefits, and

4. Any other relief that may be deemed essential to end their discrimination on

grounds of sex.

The Family Planning—the Congress Way

A meeting of Tribal Women held in Bhayyar, Balaghat Dist. M.P. on 28th May 1988 exposed the way the Family Planning policies are pursued by the Congress rulers there. About 50-60 women attended the meeting. The tribal women spoke about their experiences. After the introductory remarks and speeches by the organisers of AIDWA, one who was hesitating to speak ultimately got up and, said, "Why should doctor come to my house and demand that my daughter-in-law be sent for operation? He threatened that unless she was operated the ration would stop... and if she was ready for operation she would get 14 kilos of rice, 1 saree, and 1 kg of sugar..." One would not have believed her story. But many others then started speaking at the same time, on the same issue, which was so live for them. In Bhayyar, town, it seemed ration was not available for months and it was sold four times, its price in the black market. The women were sure it was due to non acceptance of the "operation." The anger against the doctor who visits the houses — because it seems the quota is given to the doctors as to the number of houses—was so much that one 45 year old widow got up and said "when he asked me to get operated upon, I told him point blank, first you get yourself operated then come to me..." Then another woman got up and said "my daughter was forcibly taken and operated upon—now she is suffering—how will she recover and when? and she started abusing those responsible for this. One would just recollect the year 1975 and the forcible sterilisation during the emergency rule: The Congress Governments make the Tribals a target for their Family Planning Programmes. Have they not learnt the lessons of 1975?

Working Women in Tamilnadu for Maternity Benefit

AS decided by the All India Coordination Committee of Working Women in its meeting held at Chandigarh on November 30, 1987 the Coordination Committees in several States made a signature campaign and submitted memoranda to the Central Government protesting against the recommendation of the Fourth Pay Commission to limit the maternity benefit to two children. A delegation from the Centre also met the Union Labour Minister on the issue. In Tamil Nadu, the State Coordination Committee of Working Women pursuing the matter consistently collected about two thousand signatures from working women in the following memorandum to the Prime Minister.

"It is with a sense of shock and deep concern we learn that the recommendation of the Fourth Pay Commission to limit maternity benefit to two children is being implemented in different states without any consideration for the genuine problems of the women concerned. We wish to express our protest at this recommendation and to advise the State Governments not to implement it.

"We learn that in Orissa orders have been passed to implement the Pay Commission's recommendation. In Punjab maternity leave has been made conditional on a certificate signed by a Civil Surgeon. And in Bihar, we believe that women employees are threatened with loss of promotion and increment benefits if they apply for maternity benefits for the third time. Such coercive measures adopted in different parts of the country go to prove that the Governments concerned have no qualms about making women and babies suffer, under the pretext of implementing the Government's norm of a small family.

"By denying leave privileges for the mother, the infant is also cruelly punished by forcing it to subsist on artificial food and without the mother's care at the most vulnerable stage of its life.

"It is not our intention to deny the need for family planning but we wish to point out that sustained and long term efforts are neces-

sary to make the people accept family planning voluntarily.

"We wish to reiterate our request that the Fourth Pay Commission's retrograde recommendation be rejected. We also request that the Central Government take effective measures to ensure that the State Governments do not deprive women employees of their existing privileges. We also urge the Central Government to consult the trade unions and Women's organisations about ways and means on making its employees, both men and women, accept the family norm for their own benefit. This in our view will be far more effective in making family planning schemes successful rather than coercive measures like the ones mentioned above."

Mass Petition of Anganwadi Women in Punjab

A deputation of Anganwadi Mulazam Union Punjab led by its convenor Mrs Darshan Kaur and Mrs Surinder Kaur, President Istri Mulazim Talmel Committee Punjab met the authorities of Social Welfare Dept., Punjab and submitted a Ten Point demand charter petition signed by more than 4000 Anganwadi workers and helpers. Through this mass petition they demanded scales, allowances, leave and other facilities equal to the Punjab Govt. Employees.

After the meeting, releasing the press note Mrs Darshan Kaur told that the authorities have agreed to make necessary provisions for promotion to Supervisors from amongst workers with 5 years experience, release of pay withheld for the maternity leave period, mutual transfers and transfers on vacant posts, Rs. 50 per month extra for dual charge, pay before or up to 7th of every months, and C.D.P.O.'s will visit Centres alongwith female supervisors only and necessary circulars regarding acceptance of above demands will be issued within a week.

It was also decided that to provide food and fire wood at the Centres, will be the responsibility of the C.D.P.O.'s and they will arrange buildings for the centres. The pay of Anganwadi staff of Batala Block of September, 1987 which was not paid due to dacoity will be released immediately.

A Scandal in HVF, AVADI Madras Harassment of School Teachers

THE Defence Ministry vide their order No 21 (12) 65/HVFC/147 dated 11.10.65 sanctioned a Nursery Section along with the Primary School in the Heavy Vehicles Factory Estate at Avadi, Madras. Smt. Thulasi Chakrapani along with four other teachers have been working there since then, Smt. Chakrapani functioning as Headmistress. But to the shock of these teachers the primary section was handed over to the Kendriya Vidyalaya without authorisation by either Ordinance Factory Board or by the Ministry. Ultimately the Nursery section was unilaterally handed over to a private body styling itself as 'Women's Welfare Association.' It is reported that the wife of the General Manager of the Factory was heading this Association. Since Smt. Chakrapani and four other teachers have been working since two decades under Govt service, this private body which usurped the school, decided to dispense with the services of these experienced teachers. With the help of H.V.F. Management they managed to transfer them to the Factory as clerks and even Peons. Teachers being converted into clerks and Peons is unheard of! These teachers very rightly approached the Supreme Court of India for justice. The Supreme Court ordered that the HVF Management should not interfere with the duties of the Govt. Teachers. But the HVF Management arrogantly did not comply with the judgement. At this point on the request of these teachers Com. Samar Mukherjee, M.P. wrote to the Defence Minister on 7th October, 1987 followed by series of letters. The Minister himself acknowledged the fact and informed Shri Samar Mukherjee that the decision of the Supreme Court will be complied with, without any delay vide his letter dated 5.1.88. Com. Samar Mukherjee raised this matter in Parliament also on 10.12.87 and the Govt. reiterated their stand that Supreme Court's orders would be complied with. Although as a result of the General Manager Shi Pandian who was responsible for this mess was transferred to Calcutta, but the fate of these five lady teachers continued to be in suspense. Having failed in their attempt to usurp the Govt school and having got

thoroughly exposed, the management became vindictive. They have issued transfer orders to all these five teachers directing them to report at Small Arms Factory, Tiruchy by 27.6.88 and striking their names from the rolls of HVF w.e.f. 15.6.88. They have been threatened that they would not receive their salaries until they join at Tiruchy. By closing the President sanctioned school after its 22 years existence, rendering the posts of teachers as surplus and transferring them to Tiruchy the management has acted arbitrarily and even went to the extent of violating the Supreme Court's orders that these teachers should not be disturbed. Above all it is beyond one's comprehension as to whether any person occupying responsible post can be so inhuman as to treat these old female teachers most of whom are at the fag end of their service! One of them is due to retire next year and others will follow quickly. There are orders of Govt. of India that no employee if he/she is on the verge of retirement, should be transferred. Particularly how can one indulge in transfer of female teachers having put on more than two decades of service and settled with their families in a place. One of the teachers has lost her husband. Husbands of others have retired from service. So, the responsibility of looking after the children rest on these women.

Only a couple of months ago the World celebrated 8th March International Women's day. Pious assurances of welfare of women were given by our Govt. also. But the plight of these 5 female teachers of HVF Avadi reveals that Govt. professes one thing but practices the contrary. May we hope that even at this stage the Hon'ble Defence Minister would personally look into the matter and save these five teachers from untold hardships?

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an amendment of the death sentence on Sharpeville Six, release of Nelson Mandela and other freedom fighters incarcerated in the racist jails. The meeting extended its closest solidarity with the struggles of women in Pakistan and Bangladesh.

We Will Continue to Fight Assures Tribal Women in Tripura

Vimal Ranadive

WE were listening to the ghastly stories of gang rapes and molestation on Tribal women in Ujan Maidan in Tripura by the Assam Rifles with anguish and hatred. Seven women including one girl aged 12 years were the victims of these jawans, who let loose their acts of barbarism on the 42 families of shift cultivation at Ujan Maidan, 15 k.m. from the town of Khowai. These things happened on 31st of May and June 1-2. The AIDWA delegation which visited the place, consisted of Kanak Mukherjee and Bibha Ghosh Goswami, both members of Parliament; Vimal Ranadive and Laxmi Saigal, Vice Presidents; Shymali Gupta, Joint Secretary of AIDWA and Kamal Sengupta, MLA, West Bengal Assembly.

We could meet 7 women who attended the public meeting at Panchnam, in the Community Hall. Others could not come to the place. The interviews were in camera and in Kak Barak language translated by Mangalshwari Deb in Bengali for us. It was really astonishing for us and courageous for them who boldly told us as to how the Assam soldiers molested them brutally.

Bidyalaxmi Debbarma (18), daughter of Mohammani Debbarma said, "It was Tuesday, 31st of May afternoon. Everybody had gone out and I was alone. Suddenly one jawan entered and caught hold of me while many others were standing at the door... I do not know what happened later, since I became unconscious." Bidyalaxmi is unmarried, and was in tears when narrating her horrible experience. Subhalaxmi Debbarma (25) was in the house along with some other people and relatives when a knock came at the door. As the door was opened, 4 Assam rifles Jawans entered. They drove out my husband. I tried to cry but was prevented by the cloth they put in my mouth forcefully. This was on 2nd June. Later on I lost my consciousness..." Subhalaxmi has two children. She was still dazed when she was trying to explain the

inhuman experience of gang rape by four soldiers. Radhika, 35 years old with one daughter of 10 years and another boy of 3 years, was working in "Jhoom" field when four jawans molested her. "Nobody was there to help me. This happened at 11 a.m." When asked, when and how did she return home she said, "I returned alone after I got back my consciousness. This was on 31st May. I told my husband what happened, in the field. He asked me to keep quiet..." She told us that for many days she was not able to go out to bring water. Such was the terror created by the jawans. Sonalaxmi, a 15 year young girl, unmarried, daughter of Tirik Kumar and a shifting cultivator was returning back from her sister's house at about 11 a.m. It was Tuesday, 31st May. "On the way, two Jawans caught hold of me and raped me. After I came round I returned home somehow and told my mother. Mother asked me to keep quiet." Panpati, 40 years old with 2 children — the son quite grown up and another daughter of 10 years wanted to tell us many things despite the language difficulties. She too was a shifting cultivator, said, "myself, my brother, his wife and others were sleeping in the house on 1st June night. Suddenly 4 Jawans entered the house. We all got frightened. Somehow all others escaped. I was threatened to keep quiet." What she wanted to convey what happened further, could be understood by flow of tears from her eyes. She was courageous and said "many people come and interview us... what is the use? I have lost honour, any way, it is not going to be returned. Yes, we protest... continue to fight...but the honour of a woman once gone is gone forever..." This was the sentiment in general of simple tribal women, however we all tried to convince them again and again.

Prabhathi, wife of Ukendra, 40 years old, was cooking in the house when two Jawans entered all of a sudden. Her husband had gone to Hatimara. "This was on 1st June when Jawans entered and molested me. My husband returned

after three days. When I told him what happened he said "just now you do not speak about this to anybody. We elders will meet and see what can be done." Panchalaxmi, just 12 years old girl, studying in the 5th Class in J.B. School, was going through the field with her younger brother. Her parents are dumb. One Jawan caught hold of her and molested. Brother got frightened and ran away. She was so innocent that she did not know what they did to her!

It was no doubt difficult for us to listen to the terrible stories of molestation by the Assam Rifles soldiers on young women and girls, many of whom were gang raped. Banapati said, "On June 2nd, the Minister asked us to file petition to the Minister. M. Debburman brought some of us to Agartala, to his quarters, took our statements, they were tape recorded. But what happened to that?" Another very disgusting story she told us that "they are trying to give money. Sudhir Mujumdar tries to purchase us by asking us to keep quiet. We will protest. We will not be purchased by the Ministers. Let him remember this! We will not sell our honour with money. We will tell the truth to the judges. We know these happenings are also shame for our husbands and our people... We are aware our honour which has gone and will not come back."

These simple minded tribal women never had such experiences, no doubt. Each one of us was moved by the shocking news of atrocities and gangrapes on tribal women in the Khowai and Amarpur subdivisions of Tripura by the jawans of Assam rifles. All the families belong to Jhoom families of Ujan Maidan Bari village. This village is a strong hold of CPI(M). All the families are the members of the Ganparishad. The Congress never got votes from the place. As the TUIS and Congress formed the Govt., the atrocities on women, on common people by Assam rifles, by TNV and police began. The atmosphere in Khowai and other areas was of terror.

In the public meeting held at Champahaur, Community Hall, immediately after the interviews were over, was attended in such a terror atmosphere by hundreds. Com. Kanak Mukherjee spoke on behalf of the delegation and condemned such atrocities saying that this was not only an insult to Tripura women but

also to the Indian womenhood. The gathering of tribals, men and women under such circumstances with slogans for struggle and fight against the Congress rule was encouraging.

We decided then and there to meet the SDO with our memorandum in Khowai. An Administrative Committee was declared by the Govt. a few days back. We met Miss Usha, SDO and informed her about our interviews with the victims and also requested her to go in detail to find out the truth especially when she was a woman. She said she would find out the truth.

On request from Com. Kanak Mukherjee, M.P. the Chief Minister, Sudhir Mujumdar granted an interview to the delegation on 18th morning. We tried to explain the various incidents with names and details. Surprisingly, the Chief Minister, started by saying that the women are telling a lies to us. We contradicted his statement by asking him whether it was possible for any woman, that too, a tribal woman to tell lies on such a delicate question?" He said "Yes Tripura tribal women can lie". By that time, the Home Minister Samir Ranjan Burman, Agricultural Minister Nagendra Jamatia and one or two ministers arrived there. The Home Minister was so arrogant and insulting that instead of the Chief Minister replying to the questions of delegation, he took the lead and said, nothing had happened and all reports of gang rapes are false." Both the Ministers stated that "Our delegation is politically motivated. The CPI(M) is responsible to bring the Assam Rifles Jawans..." It was surprising to the delegation even after so many days, nobody from the Govt. side visited the place to inquire into the matter.

That day only the report of the Administrative Committee had come out in which it was said that there were 3 cases which were being inquired into ... and there may be some truth. The Chief Minister said, "But how to prove it? Did they recognise them? Even I can wear the clothes of a soldier and go." While all these irresponsible remarks by both the Ministers were made, trying to hide the truth, Mr. Jamatiya said, "No, some incidents have taken place. Tribal women will not tell lies. Only because a murderer cannot be identified, does not exonerate him from the charge of

murder. The dead body itself is a proof that the man has been murdered." These words coming from the Agricultural Minister, Mr. Jamatia himself, the Home Minister and the Chief Minister had no words to deny the atrocities. But when the delegation insisted on the demand of judicial inquiry the Chief Minister was adamant so much so, that he refused to listen to any argument from us. The behaviour of the Home Minister was so arrogant that we had to remind him that we came to see the Chief Minister and we would talk to him only. The Chief Minister was told that an insulting experience with an all India delegation was never expected and therefore the delegation left the room.

The huge meeting at the Town Hall, Agartala was one more proof of the huge support for the Left Front. The hall had accommodation for 1300 people. But it was overflowed by people thronging to hear the leaders of AIDWA, even standing on the street outside. The meeting began with a song composed on tribal women in Ujan Maidan by Kalyan Roy. It moved the audience no doubt. Com. Mangaleshwari, leader of Nari Samiti and wife of Com. Dasarath Deb presided over the meeting. Com. Illa Bhattacharya introduced the delegation and spoke a few words. Com. Kanak Mukherjee explained in detail the horrible incidents of gang rape on women including on the young teenaged girls. She told the audience that the AIDWA would take it up on an all India level. Vimal Ranadive and Laxmi Saigal said that the present policies of the Congress Govt. at the Centre are responsible for the happenings in the Tripura State as well as in Congress ruled states. In Bihar, women were molested, in Rajasthan, Rup Kanwar was burnt to death, in Assam there were atrocities in Kokrajhar. Symali Gupta and Kamal Sengupta while speaking pointed to the Congress attacks on the Left Front in W. Bengal and Tripura. The importance of tribal and non-tribal unity was stressed by the speakers.

The delegation issued a statement after their visit to the place. The demands made by the delegation in the speeches and at the deputation were withdrawal of Assam Rifles, judicial inquiry, free ration to the people at Ujan Maidan and withdrawal of the promulgation of the Disturbed Area Act from Tripura, as well as restoration of normalcy in the area so

Joint Protest by Women's Organisations on Tripura

The All India Democratic Women's Association, the National Federation of Indian Women and The Mahila Dakshata Samity have issued the following joint statement:

We condemn in the strongest possible terms the gangrapes of over twenty five tribal women in Tripura on May 31, June 1 and June 2 by the Assam Rifles men. Earlier there had been gangrapes in other tribal areas also. In the name of search for TNV terrorists, the Congress Government in the State has given free licence to the paramilitary forces and the army to conduct house to house searches in tribal areas. While not a single TNV terrorist has been arrested tribal women are the special target of the forces. In Jagabandhupara, Rasanati Reang was dragged out of her house and repeatedly raped. In Ujan Maidan, sixteen tribal women including two young girls were gangraped. While even that TUJS a junior partner in the Congress Government has condemned the atrocities and demanded an enquiry, the State Minister for Home Samir Ranjan Burman has flatly denied the rapes and threatened action against those protesting under the "Disturbed Areas Act". It is significant that it is the tribal areas which had voted solidly against the Congress in the recent election.

We demand, immediate action against the personnel involved, withdrawal of the Assam Rifles Forces, judicial enquiry into all the cases of rape and immediate halt to the combing operations in the tribal areas.

that the people of Ujan Maidan can resume their normal work in Jhoom cultivation.

The mass gathering at Khowai headquarters, the big meeting at town Hall, the determination of men and women showed that the people will soon rise against the TUJ — Congress Govt. in Tripura.

Effect of Protective Legislative Provisions on Women's Employment

(From Socio-economic conditions of women workers-Published by Ministry of Labour)

LIKE the workers engaged in other segments of the organised industrial sector, women factory workers are also covered by certain protective legislation provisions which seek to provide them a certain degree of protection with regard to their wages, working conditions, welfare, etc. These provisions include the payment of equal remuneration to men and women engaged in same or similar occupations, prohibition of women employment night hours and in dangerous and heavy operations, extension of maternity benefits and the provision of separate welfare amenities like creche, toilets, etc. The compliance of some of these statutory provisions like extension of maternity benefits, creches facility, etc. involve slight additional financial burden on the part of the concerned employers whereas some others impose restrictions on the employment of women. With a view to studying the impact of the protective legislative provisions on women's employment, details regarding the actual additional expenditure incurred by the employers during the year 1983-84 by way of extension of special benefits to women workers together with their views regarding women's employment were collected. Table 2.13 gives average additional expenditure incurred per woman worker employed and the percentage additional expenditure to total wage bill during 1983-84.

Most of the Lamps, Radio and Television and Pen factories were found covered by the Employees' State Insurance Act. The Maternity Benefit Act was applicable to only some of those sampled factories which were either seasonal in nature or were located in rural areas. In the case of factories covered under the Employees' State Insurance Scheme, the provision of maternity benefit to women workers did not constitute any extra financial burden on the employers. In only one factory each covered under the industry groups Raw Leaf tobacco, Zarda and Tiles and in two

Television factories, women workers were reported to have received maternity benefits under the Maternity Benefit Act during the reference year and the average annual expenditure incurred per woman worker employed on this count worked out to be only Rs. 0.25, Rs. 56.76, Rs. 2.33 and Rs. 140.26, respectively.

The average expenditure incurred on the provision of separate welfare amenities like creches, separate washing and toilet facilities, etc. for women workers was also insignificant in relation to the total wage bill. No such expenditure was reported to have been incurred in the sampled Brick kilns, Zarda and Cigarettes, Tiles, Stone and Pen factories. Only some of the sampled Raw Leaf Tobacco, factories incurred expenditure on provision of the above welfare amenities for women. In most of the cases no expenditure on the provision of creche facility was reported as this facility existed in only some of the sampled factories. It would be seen from table 2.13 that in the case of sampled Raw Leaf Tobacco, Zarda and Cigarettes, Tiles, Lamps and Radio and Television factories, the average annual expenditure incurred on the provision of statutory facilities like creches, separate toilets, maternity benefits, etc. varied between Rs. 2.33 to Rs. 225.30 per woman worker employed and constituted only 0.02 per cent to 0.95 per cent of the total wage bill. No such expenditure was reported to have been incurred during the reference year in the sampled Brick Kilns and Stone and Pen factories.

The study revealed that in most of the cases the additional financial obligations on account of the protective legislative provisions did not have any adverse effect on women's employment. Most of the employers were not feeling any burden of the small additional expenditure which they were incurring on their women employees in providing separate statutory facilities.

ties for them. However, a few employers were found to be biased towards the employment of women and were not prepared to treat them at par with men. Some employers did not allow the women employment in their factories to exceed 30 so that they did not have to provide creche

facility. Some employers discouraged the employment of married females as they considered unmarried women more suitable for the jobs. However, many employers had a very good opinion about women and considered them more useful than men in certain jobs.

TABLE 2.13

Average additional expenditure incurred on women workers on account of the provision of separate welfare measures in the sampled factories during the year 1983-84.

Sl No	Industrial category	Average annual expenditure per Women worker employed in the sampled unit (Rs. 0.00)				Percentage of expenditure incurred to total wage bill			
		Maternity Benefit	Crech	Toilet facilities	Total	Maternity Benefit	Creche	Toilet facilities	Total
1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1.	Preparation of Raw Leaf Tobacco (Stemming Redrying and other connected operations)	0.25	10.83	0.40	11.48	0.01	0.44	0.02	0.47
2.	Manufacture of Zarda and Cigarettes	56.76	—	—	56.76	0.05	—	—	0.95
3.	Manufacture of Fire Bricks (Brick Kilns)	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
4.	Manufacture of Tiles	2.33	—	—	2.33	0.02	—	—	0.02
5.	Stone Dressing and Stone Crushing	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
6.	Manufacture of Ordinary Electric Lamps and Miniature Lamps	—	33.71	9.36	43.07	—	0.08	0.02	0.10
7.	Manufacture of Radios and Television Sets	140.26	82.17	2.87	235.30	0.00	0.23	0.01	0.64
8.	Manufacture of Fountain Pens and Ball Pens	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—

AIDWA Calls To Observe Tripura Day On July 13th '88

THE Central Executive Committee of the All India Democratic Women's Association held its meeting on June 25-26 which was attended by representatives from twelve States. The meeting had detailed discussion on the current situation in the country and the deteriorating condition of women. The meeting also reviewed the organizational position and the strength and weaknesses. At present the organization has a membership of 22.6 lakhs women throughout the country.

While congratulating women for their grand participation in different struggles including the peasants throughout the country as well as demanding the resignation of the Rajiv Government, the Central Executive Committee took serious note of the increasing attacks on women in different spheres.

It noted how the communalization of casteist forces, the continuing of terrorists, violence in Punjab has had serious repercussions on women. For instance the growth of the Shivsena in Maharashtra and its victory in the Aurangabad Municipal elections led to the ghastly Chandrapur incidents where Shivsena organised high caste women, went to the dalit area and stripped and paraded several dalit women because the Republican Party had refused to support its candidate in the Mayoral election. There is a new offensive against the rural poor and particularly in Bihar on Harijan and Adivasi women. The CEC strongly condemned the growing atrocities on the section—the Jahanabad massacre, the Purnea, Pararia and Ghatiaapur atrocities. It noted that rape has become a class weapon used by the landed interests with the full backing of the State—against the increasing struggles of the rural poor. The CEC called for a countrywide struggle against divisive, communal and casteist forces in support of the Harijan and Adivasi women. It called for joint struggle with different women's organisations for national unity and against religious fundamentalist forces.

The CEC strongly condemned the growing attacks on democracy by the ruling party symbolized by the subversion of the democratic process in Tripura. This was followed by the 59th amendment. The amendments to the

Industrial Disputes Act, the Hospitals Bill etc. It noted that the struggle for women's rights is intimately linked with the struggle for democracy. An increase in authoritarianism invariably results in a devaluation of women and rights as the experience of what is happening in Tripura clearly shows where gang rapes of Adivasi women are taking place. It called for observance of Tripura Day and save Democracy Day on July 13 throughout the Country.

The CEC noted the deplorable condition of the rural women where the drought relief works have had little effect on improving their condition because employment of women has been negligible. Even those employed have not been given their wages in many places. There is a sharp increase in the number of female headed families because of increased male migration in search of work, but they have remained miserable for this callous attitude of the Govt. All over the country whereas the increase in prices is phenomenal the public distribution system instead of being strengthened is actually being reduced and the demand to introduce more essential commodities in the public distribution system is not accepted. The meeting also expressed serious concern about the increasing retrenchment of working women and the attempt to push them into the unorganized sector.

Apart from these issues the CEC demanded (i) Monitoring committee at Central and States level in Doordarshan with women's representatives. (ii) A central ban on sex determination tests. (iii) Amendments to the anti-Sati Act and arrest of Shankaracharya. It strongly condemned the Central Government refusal to consult women's organisations and concerned groups before finalising the National Perspective Plan. It demanded a national debate before finalising it.

Observe July 18 as South Africa Day

Expressing serious concern at the aggressive actions of the racist regime in South Africa it called on its units throughout the Country to observe July 18 as South Africa Day to demand

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Let There Be a National Debate on the Perspective Plan

THE Seven All India women's organisations put forward the following arguments in the Seminars held on 28-29th of July on the National Perspective plan for women. The organisations were:

1. YWCA of India 2. National Federation of Indian Women. 3. Mahila Dakshata Samiti 4. Centre for Women's Development Studies 5. All India Coordination Committee of Working Women 6. All India Democratic Women's Association, and 7. AIWC

The National Perspective Plan for Women proposed by the Government of India is to be placed before Parliament during the monsoon session. The document has been prepared without any consultation with, or participation by the women's movement, which has been raising issues affecting women in the process of national development. Most of the positive steps taken by the government during the last few years have come after struggles by women's organisations and mounting evidence of women's oppression, discriminatory and unjust treatment leading to their marginalisation in the economy polity and society at large. It was the demand that resulted in the first inclusion of a Chapter on Women and Development in the 6th Five Year Plan and its continuation in the 7th Five Year Plan. Demands from the women's movement also led to some amendments in criminal law and the Dowry Prohibition Act, and forced the government to include women as a target group in certain development programmes.

On the other hand, some of the government's measures which affect women adversely, such as the Muslim Women's Act and the classification of Sati as suicide in the recent Act, were taken despite strong protests from the women's movement. Even now, many agencies of government resist acknowledging or expanding women's role and participation in all sectors of national development.

Despite years of struggle to sensitise the

government of the connections between some mainstream development policies, and the worsening situation of working women in rural and urban areas, the document is reported to be silent on this issue. A National Plan for Women was also formulated after the Committee on the Status of Women's Report. What happened to that document when the time came to formulate the Sixth Five Year Plan? Why was it necessary for women's organisation to repeatedly remind the government of new policies and strategies suggested by its own working groups, to wring out some attention to women's needs and aspiration everytime, at least to undo some of the damage by the Government's omissions and commissions?

It is also reported that the Plan observes that no additional allocation will be necessary. How then is any development to be achieved? Thirdly, the proposal to reserve seats for women in all elective bodies has legislative implications. Have these been worked out?

It is in this context that the women's organisations recorded their view that a perspective plan that could affect all policies for women's development and participation for years to come should not be finalised without wider dissemination and a nationwide debate involving organisations which have a wide popular base among women of different classes across the country, or have specialised in women's development concerns through study, action and networking.

The women's organisations have appealed to Parliament and all concerned citizens to support their demand for wide dissemination and a nation-wide debate on the Perspective Plan for Women. Whatever awareness that exists on women's problems and oppressions today has come from such informed discussions. A debate will also help to demonstrate and develop some political will in a democratic framework.

Inadequate Representation of Women in the Elected Governments

ACCORDING to figures released recently by the Geneva-based Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) women constitute only, around 15 per cent of the world's parliamentary assemblies, and an even smaller proportion of the upper chambers.

The IPU study, based on answers provided by 67 national parliaments, is the biggest ever undertaken on the subject of the nature and extent of women's participation in the representative bodies of their countries. The results of the survey contain a few surprises, document the occasional achievements by women, but are for the most part a dismal commentary on the failure of women to gain admission on to the political high ground.

In India, for instance, only 7.9 per cent of the seats of the Lok Sabha are occupied by women, while the percentage in the Rajya Sabha is marginally higher at 11.4 per cent. Pakistan manages a stronger female representation of 8.8 per cent in its National Assembly, though the figure is rather misleading, since of the 21 members, 20 are seats specially reserved for women.

The most striking feature of the study is the shockingly low representation of women in the parliaments of the supposedly liberated Western European countries. For all the dominance of Mrs Margaret Thatcher in British politics, the proportion of women in parliament in Britain is only 6.3 per cent. France and Spain have an identical meagre presence of 6.4 per cent women and are put to shame by some of the Nordic and Socialist countries, where up to a third of the seats are occupied by women. The Soviet Union heads the list with 34.5 per cent female membership of its Supreme Soviet, closely followed by Romania and East Germany.

For all the militancy of the women's movement in the US, the pathetic figure of just 5.3 per cent of women legislators demonstrates that Americans clearly prefer their women in the home than in the House of Representatives. And the Japanese, with their economic dynamism and progress, have no doubt that they would rather have their women supervise their diet in the kitchen than rule in

their national Diet, where an absurdly low 1.4 per cent are women.

Within the political machinery too, women play a minimal role. They are rarely appointed to important positions, such as Speakers of the House, nor are they leaders of parliamentary groups. While they do serve on committees, they are reported as not having a real influence.

The reason for the low female profile on the political landscape appears to be a combination of reluctance on the part of women to enter into the strife-torn political fray and an in built resistance within the system to their participation. A particularly disappointing aspect of the study's findings is that all the publicity and enthusiastic rhetoric attending the start of the United Nations Decade for Women in 1975 did not translate into greater decision and policy-making for women. In that decade, the proportion of women parliamentarians across the globe rose by only two per cent.

On the positive side, the report does challenge the widely held belief that women are most comfortable, once elected, with the so-called women's female concerns of health, social services and education. Women have been effectively involved, the study confirms, with a whole range of issues from defence to finance.

In order to facilitate greater female presence in parliament, the reservation of seats for women has been mentioned. Few countries have actually implemented this. This is, in fact, considerable opposition to such proposals, often by women activists, who maintain that the gains of equality between the sexes could be undermined if women are treated as a disadvantaged group, requiring special provisions. Others resist it on technical grounds such measures would be undemocratic or anti-constitutional and that legal guarantees and party rules provide for equal opportunity for all.

Whatever the reasons, there is clearly a tremendous dichotomy between the leadership roles commanded by the Gandhis and
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Release Nelson Mandela

NELSON Rolihlahla Mandela was born on 18th July, 1918 at Umtata, in the Transkei region of the Eastern Cape, south Africa. Related to the paramount Chiefs of Tembuland, in his early 20s Mandela renounced any hereditary tribal rights and prepared for a legal career.

Having been interested in the struggle of the South African people since boyhood, Nelson Mandela joined the African National Congress (ANC) at the age of 25.

By 1952, already showing strong leadership qualities, Mandela had been elected President of the Transvaal branch of the ANC and National Deputy President. Following this, he achieved even greater national prominence as 'Volunteer In Chief', during the Defiance of Unjust Laws Campaign, when thousands of people courted arrest by peacefully breaking the apartheid laws.

From 1952 onwards, Mandela was subjected to repeated banning orders which severely restricted his political activities. However, despite this, he continued to be the inspiration and force behind many different initiatives. And then, in June 1955, he played a key role in the convening of the Congress of the Peoples, where the world famous Freedom Charter was adopted. As a result of this, at dawn on 5th December 1956, the inevitable knock on the door came, when he was arrested and charged with High Treason. The Treason Trial began in earnest, in August 1958, however in June of that year, Nelson married Winnie Nomzamo Madikizala.

Nelson Mandela was one of the 156 people accused in the marathon Treason Trial, arising out of the adoption of the Freedom Charter. Eventually, all were acquitted, after a Trial which lasted until March 1961. However, during this relatively short period of time, South Africa had been transformed by the Sharpeville massacre on 21st March 1969, when 69 people were shot dead during a peaceful protest against the Pass Laws. The State of Emergency that followed, and the banning of the ANC and the breakaway PAC, forced

Mandela and other ANC leaders to review their strategy of non-violent opposition.

Under Mandela's leadership, in May 1961, a National Action Council was convened to protest at the establishment of the new white Republic of South Africa. The South African authorities went all out to suppress this action and so Mandela declared.

"If the government reaction is to crush by naked force our non-violent struggle, we will have to reconsider our tactics. In my mind we are closing a chapter on this question of a non-violent policy".

This was to happen, and Mandela was given the task of forming Umkhonto we Sizwe, of which he was the first Commander in Chief. Umkhonto we Sizwe's first acts of resistance were on December 16th 1961. Now operating underground, Mandela was able to slip out of the country, to visit heads of state in Africa, as well as to make short stay in Britain. Following his return later that year, on 5th August 1962, he was stopped on a road block and arrested.

First brought to trial and sentenced to 5 years imprisonment, for charges including leaving the country illegally, he was later brought from prison to reappear in Court. As Accused Number One in the Rivonia Trial, which opened on 9th October 1963. On April 20th 1964 he made his famous "I am prepared to die..." speech from the dock. On June 11th, together with 7 of his co-accused, he was found guilty of preparing to overthrow the apartheid state and the following day, June 12th he was sentenced to life imprisonment.

Mandela has spent over 25 years in prison; his stature as a symbol of resistance and as a leader of the people of South Africa has continued to grow throughout this time. It is now internationally recognised that there can be no meaningful solution in South Africa, without the unconditional release of Mandela and all other political prisoners.

In 1934, born Nomzamo Winnie Madikizala

in the Transkei region of the Eastern Cape South Africa, following secondary education Winnie was trained as a social worker.

In 1958 she married Nelson Mandela and while pregnant with her first child (Zenani) she was detained for participating in a demonstration against passes for African women.

In 1962 after just 4 years of marriage Nelson Mandela was imprisoned, leaving Winnie Madela and their two young daughters Zenani and Zindiswa behind. What was initially a five year sentence extended to life. He has not since been returned to his family.

In 1976 as a leading member of the Soweto Black Parent's Association she was detained under the Internal Security Act from October to December, following which she was banned from the organisation and restricted to Orlando.

In May 1977 she was confined to a house in Brandfort location from 6 a.m. to 6 p.m. and at weekends, so had no prospect of employment. The house had no sanitation or electricity. She defied the ban after the house was petrol-bombed and returned to Soweto, only to be charged in August with another suspended sentence. Whilst in Brandfort, Winnie tirelessly immersed herself in community work and, amongst other things, founded a number of self-help scheme, as well as a mobile clinic catering for hundreds of local people, many of whom had never seen the inside of a medical unit before.

In 1985 Winnie Mandela was forcibly removed from her Soweto house and despite the most draconian restrictions had continued to be at the forefront of the liberation struggle.

In July 1986, the South African Government confirmed that restrictions on Winnie, who was by now living in Johannesburg, had been lifted.

Throughout this time and to date, Winnie Mandela has almost continually been harrassed, and detained by the security police—resulting

in 66 banning orders, 13 court appearances, but only 2 convictions were proved, which resulted in six-month suspended sentences.

On this 70th Birthday, the entire world is remembering with reverence Comrade Nelson Mandela and demands his immediate unconditional release.

We send our heart felt greetings to Winnie Mandela on this occasion who stood firmly with Nelson Mandela in his fight for getting justice for the people against Apartheid system.

Release Three Women Victims of Apartheid

Sister Bernard Ncube, a Catholic nun and an exteacher, is President of the Federation of Transval Women, and has done work in support of detainees. She has been detained some six times in the last five years, and now, together with 13 others, is facing charges of sedition' and 'subversion'. The trial has been postponed three times. Energetic, dynamic and brave, she is known in Kagiso as 'Mama Rona' — 'our mother' — because of her leadership and her support for local people.

Theresa Ramashamola is one of the Sharpeville Six, sentenced to death for the killing of the 'community councillor', Sam Dlamini. She said in court that on the day of the demonstration she had gone home early, after being hit on the head by a rubber bullet, and had not even known that Dlamini was dead. In detention, she was tortured; during the trial she was physically assaulted again at least once. At the time of her arrest she was 24 years old. Now she is 27. Her mother has told the press: "How would you feel if you had to travel to Pretoria each week to visit your doomed child?"

Daisy Modise aged 25, is awaiting execution in Bophutatswana Central Prison. She was sentenced in May 1987, together with two other activists from the Stinkwater Youth Organisation, for "participation in necklace killings." As she is the only woman on death row in that prison, it is likely that she is being held in isolation.

Divorce, Bigamy to be Easier in Pakistan

UNDER the new dispensation in Pakistan, drastic changes are being made in the existing family laws which have been so far zealously guarded by many women's organisations as a source of protection against summary divorce and other forms of discrimination.

The proposed changes are intended to remove provisions repugnant to Islamic Shariat and are reportedly contained in a draft shariat ordinance expected to be promulgated shortly. It was finalised by a 20 member Ulema Committee formed by President Ziaul-Haq after the dismissal of the Junejo government. The draft ordinance is claimed, among other things, to bring matrimonial laws in conformity with the tenets of Islam.

For the past two years most women's organisations have agitated for retention of the existing family laws, which are in vogue for 27 years, against demands by Jamaat-i-Islami and other quasi religious groups for enforcement of shariat.

A scrutiny of the two sets of laws is revealing. The existing family laws provide for minimum marriageable age of 16 to 18 for girls and boys respectively. This is now considered violative of Shariat which stipulates no minimum age for marriage.

Under the proposed new ordinance registration of marriages and "talaq" (divorce) with the Union councils will not be mandatory while the existing law requires a complete record to be maintained by chairmen of union councils. Without such a record both marriage and divorce are at present considered invalid and the "couples" living without them are liable to attract the charge of adultery and similar other offences and punishment under Hudood.

Similarly, according to a report in the Karachi daily, "Dawn" under the new ordinance even pregnant women can be divorced while this is not possible under the existing law. According to Ulema, a divorce becomes effective after "talaq" is pronounced thrice in

three menstruation periods- "Oral divorce will also be effective and intimation to the concerned Union council, which is compulsory under existing provisions, will not be obligatory."

At present bigamy is not possible without a written permission from the wife while the proposed new ordinance is reported to permit polygamy under the conditions prescribed by Islam.

In the past two years there have been rival demonstrations before the parliament house and the Junejo government had been striving to steer clear of a controversial shariat Bill which had been passed by the Senate but, as Gen. Zia recently complained "had been put in cold storage by the national assembly." The Junejo ministry was trying to evolve a national consensus and avoid dividing the nation on the contentious issue. The former minister of state for foreign affairs, Mr Zain Noorani, observed last week in a forthright manner that Gen. Zia himself could not enforce the measure despite enjoying absolute power for eight years. If that was so, it should not be difficult for Gen. Zia to realise that the civilian government had also faced difficulties which did not admit a preemptory enforcement of Shariat, Mr. Noorani exclaimed.

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Thatchers and the vast majority of women who either make a peripheral contribution or no contribution at all to the processes by which their lives and those of their children are ruled. Till attitudes change and circumstances permit, the world continues to lose an immense fund of wisdom and astuteness by being denied an adequate representation of women in their elected governments.

[Tiloltama Tharoor, Telegraph]

Witches For Burning

NUMEROUS recent reports from eastern India on the lynching, torture and killing of women suspected of being witches should make all enlightened Indians sit up and take note. The spread of this barbaric practice, remarkable for the awesome levels of cruelty it involves, has evidently, acquired mind-boggling dimensions. Thus, in one district of Bihar's Chhotanagpur region alone, there are said to be as many as 200 cases of witch-killing each year. In West Benal too, Mr. Jyoti Basu admitted in the assembly last year, 20 women were killed in 14 months because they were thought to be witches. Although the incidence of witch-hunting is particularly high in the eastern tribal belt, it is by no means confined to it. What is even more frightening, it seems to be acquiring a certain sanction from powerful local interests including village ozhas (medicine men) and landowners. In most instances, the charge that a particular woman is a witch is provoked by little more than a relatively minor incident such as the untimely death of a child or animal. The charge carries its own substantiation in so far as it causes suspicion, distrust and threats that are enough to drive the concerned woman to distraction and to wayward behaviour that is taken to be proof that she is indeed a witch. Often, it needs no substantiation, just reiteration that the woman represents an evil force. Once so declared, she can be paraded naked through village streets, humiliated by being made to eat human excreta, branded, mutilated, tortured and ostracised and beaten or burnt to death.

It is not difficult to see that witch-hunting involves a combination of many elements: superstition, a widespread feeling of helplessness and despair, the need to look for victims to whom all misfortunes can be attributed, and conspiracy against a particularly vulnerable person. There is often a powerful economic motive at work too, e.g. robbing a widow of her land and other possessions. But invariably the victim is a woman, the object of the most virulent form of violence, comparable only to sati. Indeed sati is in some ways the obverse of witch-burning. Sati involves the burning of a woman considered pure and holy. Witches are killed because they are suspected to be evil and impure. Both are acts of mob violence.

But one (Sati) may involve more covert forms of coercion and appeals to religious sentiment, while the other is more overt and seeks to play upon irrational fears about black magic and shamanism and the presumed involvement of a woman in dark, evil forces. There can be no question that witch-hunting must be prevented as energetically as sati. The standard plea of governments and the police that they are helpless in preventing practices which enjoy social sanction represents the worst form of hypocrisy. There is simply no excuse for not acting with all the force at their command to prevent witch-hunting and to severely punish those guilty of it.

Times of India

Harrassment of Women Employees at the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner's Office at Chandigarh

IT is learnt, that the office of the Regional Provident Fund Commissioner Chandigarh is harrasing their employees, especially women employees by transferring them from one place to another, changing their departments and so on without any specific policy on the question of transfer. The so called trade union and their leaders also are conniving at these happenings and instead of protecting the interest of their employees, helps the regional commissioner in continuing the irregularities with the result employees suffer hardships.

Shreemati Pushpalata, about 40 years old employee had to fight against this for full 3 years, single handedly and lastly sought justice from the Supreme Court on 25.3.88 against the transfer to Shimla from Chandigarh. She had a disabled child suffering with polio to look after her and requested the Regional office to transfer her to Chandigarh on the humanitarian ground. Not getting an answer from the Regional Office, nor any help from the union she decided to go to the Supreme Court. The judgement said, "She may be continued in
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Convention of Balsevikas in Chandigarh Demand better Service Conditions

A Convention of Balsevikas/Ayaahs/Mais working in Child Welfare Council, Chandigarh and Women Workers of Indira Holiday Home was held in Gandhi Smaark Bhawan, Sector 16 on the 2nd July, 1988. More than a hundred women workers participated in the convention which was addressed by Smt Vimal Ranadive, Secretary of the All India Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, Smt Surinder Kaur, President, Punjab State Co-ordination Committee of Working Women, Shri R P Manchanda of Trade Unions Co-ordination Committee, Shri Hari Mohan, General Secretary, Co-ordination Committee of Central Government Employees and Workers and Shri Bhag Mal Rana, General Secretary of UT Employees and Workers.

The Convention discussed in detail the pitiable service conditions and pay structure of the women workers working in Child Welfare Council, Chandigarh which is running about 65 creches in the city. The Convention felt that it is deplorable that while all the buildings and substantial financial grant is provided by the Government besides fees/donation charged from the children, yet the Child Welfare Council neither framed any appropriate service conditions nor has determined pay structure of its work-force comprising of Balsevikas which are equal to Nursery Teachers and Ayaaha/Mais who should be granted the pay scales equivalent to their counterparts in Govt Service. Ms Brahm Kumari the President of the union, Kamlesh, Krishna and Haranjendra Kour General Secretary of Balsevika Union also participated in the discussion.

The Convention raised voice (1) against inhuman service conditions in the Govt. aided creches; (2) for demanding Equal Pay for Equal work; (3) betterment of service conditions and demanding take over of the Creches by Government and also (4) to raise voice on the problems of working women.

It supported the demand of Bal Bari Workers and demanded for the regularisation of their services and to implement the principle of Equal Pay for Equal work.

The Convention took note that the matters have been represented to the Finance Secretary

and to the Adviser to the Administrator, UT but the grievances have not yet been resolved. The Convention has decided that a protest Day will be observed by the women workers working in creches which will be followed by a Dharna in front of Bal Bhawan and if their genuine demands are still not met with then they will be forced to intensify their agitation about which appeal will be issued to the parents of the wards in which plight of the nursery teachers i.e. Balsevikas and those of Ayaahs/Mais shall be explained to get their sympathy and support. The Convention also decided to release the copies of the letters submitted to the Finance Secretary and the Adviser to the Administrator, to the press and will also be submitted to Mrs Margret Alva, Union Minister of Child, Women and Social Welfare.

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her present post for some time and thereafter she may be given an alternate post at Chandigarh..."

It is reported that whoever stick to the principles, accept the transfers on equality basis, are made to suffer, and those highly paid officers, who dance according to the tune of the union leaders and regional commissioner, are left out and not transferred at all. Some employees do suspect whether some fishy things are going on between some employees and the office. Whatever it might be, it is learnt that so many developments are taking place in Chandigarh. In fact the question of transfer for women to far off places do create many difficulties under the present social system with regard to the education of their children, old age parents etc. The Ministry of Personel, Public Greivances, Govt. of India has therefore issued a circular to their offices to consider such cases sympathetically.

The agrieved women employees do expect some justice from the Regional and Central Provident Fund Commissiner's office on equality basis and on principles. Do we expect these women who are suffering discrimination because of the absence of policy on the transfer will get justice in the near future?

Know More About Sharpeville Six

ON September 3rd 1984, the disenfranchised militants of South Africa exploded Botha's myth constitutional reform. On the very day he was inaugurated as State President in Cape Town, the struggle in the Vaal Triangle reached a new level. Marching through the streets of Sebokeng and Sharpeville, the residents rejected the rent increases, which most of them could not pay.

Following the example of the police (who had begun shooting people in the street that morning, before the march had even begun) the 'community councillor', Sam Dlamini, fired on the crowd. In indignation and anger, the crowd killed him. At the end of the day, two 'councillors' lay dead, and another lay dying. Altogether, 250 people were said to have been injured that day. The police admitted to having killed ten people, but forbade the hospitals to publish any figures.

Six people were arrested and charged with the killing the Dlamini — Mojalefa Reginald Sefatsa, Malebo Reid Mokoena, Oupa Moses Diniso, Duma Joshua Khumalo, Theresa Ramashamola and Francis Don Mokhesi. The case against them was always weak, relying on the uncorroborated evidence of unnamed state witness, and the coerced perjury of a former detainee.

The appeal judgement upheld the death sentences. The judge stated it was probably true that the case against Malebo Moloena and Theresa Ramashamola had not been proved. Of the other four, he said it was a "debatable" whether there was a casual connection between the conduct of each individual and the death of Dlamini.

He said: I shall therefore assume for the purpose of my judgment that it has not been proved in the case of any of the six accused convicted of murder that their conduct had contributed casually to the death of the deceased."

He added, that the six people: "...have been convicted of murder solely on the basis of common purpose.

All pretence at 'proof' has been dropped. According to this judgement, the Six are to be executed, not because they killed Dlamini, but because they shared a 'common purpose' with those who did.

The contempt for natural justice epitomised

by this judgement has sent shock waves round the world, giving new impetus to the international campaign to save the lives of all those on death row in South Africa.

The regime still tries new ways of suppressing resistance. Two states of emergency, thousands of detentions and the unleashing of vigilant murder squads have failed to quench an anger that only liberation can satisfy. Pretoria increasingly turns to the gallows to reinforce its tactics of terror.

The appeal judgement broadcast to the whole world a message long understood by the people of South Africa — that mass protest is a capital offence. In other words: Keep off the streets! the penalty for participation in protest is death!

To those who every day face the bullets and whips of the racists, the answer is equally predictable — the struggle continues! Victory is certain!

Raigarh JMS Deputation

Fatama Jaydullah

A 25 member delegation led by Vimal Ranadive and the General Secretary of the Madhya Pradesh State Committee of the AIDWA, Anagha Shinde met the District Magistrate of Raigarh on 25th May.

The delegation submitted to the D.M. a memorandum on the local problems which demanded, among other things, completion of the half-dug pond in Jangatpura, erection of tubewells at various points in the city to solve the water crisis, disposal of the cases of pension to the women having no support, completion of the half-dug drains in the jute mill areas, and commencement of anganwadis in all areas. The memorandum also highlighted the problems of the Adivasis, demanding allotment of pattas to them and stop encroachment on their land.

The conference held on May 25, was inaugurated by Smt. Vimal Ranadive, and Smt. Fatma Jaydullah delivered the General Secretary's report. The Conference adopted resolutions against the ever-increasing price rise and un-employment, against the Muslim Women Protection Act and the Sati epicode, for defence of national unity and against communalism.