

ALL IN THE BUSINESS

As price rise makes front page news almost everyday, Congress and its left allies worry unregulated market's chaos could worsen further. And with good reason both Congress and marxist left are really tasting the fall-out of their own crisis of confidence. No doubt panchayet election in a state is a minor affair in national politics. But it does not look so anymore. Of all persons Congress President Sonia Gandhi came all the way from New Delhi to minority-community dominated districts of Murshidabad and Malda in Bengal to address panchayet election rallies while lashing out at the CPM-led left front government over police high handedness in Nandigram. Strangely enough, it took more than a year for Congress President to become somewhat categorical about the plight of the people of bloody Nandigram. For all practical purposes, Nandigram means 'continuing conflict'. And hapless villagers have no respite from being terrorised by marxist party backed musclemen. As for price rise, and mounting inflationary pressure Sonia Gandhi had very little to offer in affirmative other than mentioning it as an all India phenomenon. And prime minister Manmohan Singh went a step further on another occasion at a high pitch meet of the Confederation of Indian Industry to blame it on international market for the wild behaviour of domestic market. He also urged the industry and trade to eschew the temptation of seeking short-term gains and assist the government in moderating inflationary expectations and maintaining the price level. Faced with the prospects of losing traditional constituency the marxist left too lost no time to grill Sonia Gandhi's Congress-led government for its indifferent attitudes to the unstable situation. But at the end of the day both Congress and Left decided not to rock the boat called united progressive alliance because of greater danger posed by the rise of communal right. But market does not follow secular rules or communal rules, it has its own rules to follow.

People cannot expect much from the mock-fight of political parties as all have only one-point programme—election, rather how to win election from local bodies to parliament. And marxists with their middle-class and lower middle class back-ground are too illiberal to lose even school managing committee elections. Compulsion to retain parliamentary privilege at any cost has criminalised India's political atmosphere to such an extent that even marxists deploy notorious criminals to silence their opponents because they cannot isolate them politically. Nor do they have any faith in their own political discourse.

It is unlikely that people will get some relief from the recently announced measures by the Reserve Bank of India. Fire-fighting is no answer to the adverse consequences globalisation has brought in. The continuing funeral procession of farmers speaks the bitter truth that it has already crippled India's main social-shock absorber—agriculture. In the past workers who had their roots in villages used to return to old shelters at the time of work-stoppage in industrial units because of lock-outs and strikes, to sustain themselves. But the rural scenario is completely different today. Rural India is teeming with jobless millions who are migrating to cities, somewhat aimlessly, with the hope they could escape hunger and crushing poverty.

Having lost regulatory power, Congress is now reiterating the Rs 60,000 crore farmloan waiver as their straw to reverse their declining electoral fortunes. Congress Party's promises for a better tomorrow and marxist left's noises to criticise those promises cannot really change the ground reality though inflationary pressure has already crossed the tolerable limits even as per Reserve Bank of India statement.

Given the prevailing economic culture, the idea of right to food now sounds funny. At the International Conference on Agrarian Reform and Rural Development held in Porto Alegre, Brazil in March 2006, 95 states recognised that one important way to ensure the fulfilment of the right to food was to establish appropriate land reform to secure access to land for marginalised and vulnerable groups, and to adopt adequate legal frameworks and policies to promote traditional and family farming. Both Congress and Left, particularly CPM, not to speak of communal right, are united to eliminate marginal and family agriculture to make room for corporate world. And yet they think food crisis will vanish automatically and market will stabilise to their satisfaction.

Whenever the crisis boils over, they say they will handle it firmly. But they couldn't or they wouldn't.□

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