

LETTERS

### 'DUMDUM DAWAI'

While addressing the national conference of All India Democratic Women's Organisation on 4th November 2007 in Dumdum, Kolkata Brinda Karat, a politburo member of CPM advised her party cadres to apply 'Dumdum Dawai' for restoration of peace in Nandigram, East Midnapur, West Bengal.

May be, Ms Karat is not aware of the historical origin of the phrase. During the decades of sixties, a ration dealer was attacked and severely beaten by left supporters in Dumdum for hoarding foodstuff. All democratic voices protested against such lawlessness at that point of time. Ms Karat reiterated the old left rhetoric (which actually means public beating) under a situation when the State of West Bengal was passing through a critical phase of protest over food distribution system. The ration dealers in FR shops in many parts of the state were attacked by the people and police swung into action in no time even resorting to firing killing persons to contain the movement. In connection with Nandigram issue, the party of Ms Karat mobilised goons and unleashed an unprecedented reign of terror on the poor peasants, who refused to part with their land.

Does Ms Karat prescribe the same 'Dumdum Dawai' to the Ration dealers of West Bengal?

**Kirity Roy**, President, Masum

### THE GROWTH DEBATE

India's five-year plans did aim at growth with social justice, but that remained an elusive goal.

Indian economy achieved an impressive annual growth rate in recent years. It was 5.6 percent in 1980-90, 7.0 percent in 1993-2001, 7.5 percent in 2003-04, 8.5 percent in 2004-05, 9.0 percent in 2005-06, and 9.2 percent in 2006-07. The Eleventh Five-Year Plan (2007-12) aims at 10 percent growth, at least by the plan end.

According to UNDP estimates, in India, the bottom 10 percent of the population got 3.9 percent of the total income in 1999-2000, and the bottom 20 percent got 8.9 percent of the total income. The share of the top 20 percent was 41.6 percent, and that of the top 10 percent was 27.4 percent. It is thus clear that inequalities are wide.

In any broad-based strategy of economic growth, agriculture should receive top priority. Indian agriculture should receive top priority. Indian agriculture in recent years has been experiencing stagnation. True, the share of agriculture in GDP fell from 59 percent in 1951 to 24 percent in 2001, and further to 18.5 percent in 2006-07. Still, around 58 percent of the population depends on this sector. Indian agriculture experienced a satisfactory growth rate of 3.2 percent during 1980 to 1997, but it came down to 2 percent during the Tenth Plan period, 2002-07.

In the rural areas, the share of landless families has been increasing. It was 35 percent in 1987, 45 percent in 1999, and 55 percent in 2005. Worsening performance of agricultural sector is an important cause of growing inequalities in the rural sector. The Economic Survey 2006-07 admitted (p.4): "... low agricultural growth has serious implications for the 'inclusiveness' of growth."

Another important factor contributing to inequalities is growing unemployment and under-employment both in rural and urban areas. The labour force increased by 2.62 percent in 1993-94, 2.78 percent in 1999-2000, and 3.06 percent in 2004-05. According to Economic Survey 2006-07, the number of unemployed was 13.10 million in 2004-05.

The annual growth rate of employment was 1.1 percent during 1993-2000, but this increased to 2.8 percent in 2000-05. However, unemployment rate increased from 7.3 percent in 1999-2000 to 8.3 percent in 2004-05.

The stress on globalisation has a tendency to increase inequalities. In a highly competitive world, the very powerful alone survive. The production pattern, the technological and even the foreign direct investment benefit only a few regions and sections of population, at least in the short-run.

**I Satya Sundaram**, Hyderabad