

## ‘Cuba Shinning’

Communists in India never really tried to assert their independent ideological stance, both nationally and internationally at any critical juncture of history. They either followed Moscow’s sermons or slavishly toed Beijing’s nationalist package. Ideological wilderness is the hallmark of Indian communist movement. Right, left, ultra-left—the legacy continues. For reasons best known to them they never seriously talk of Cuban Revolution or for that matter Cuban Communist Party led by Castro. CPM maintains party to party fraternal relationship with Cuban Party but even they, not to speak of other segments of left establishment, do hardly believe in Castro’s pragmatism and successful strategy to provide excellent social services despite the on-going US economic embargo. They think they have nothing to learn from Cuba’s experience. True, India is no Latin American jungle. Nor is it pre-liberated China. Even they are not interested in Vietnam’s strategic and tactical lines adopted during anti-American liberation struggle.

The UN Human Development Report 2009 released on October 5, 2009, illustrates among other things some of Cuba’s extra-ordinary achi-vements. The report is the most commonly referred source on development statistics and measures. It compares the development status and progress in every country.

In the all-encompassing UN exercise, Cuba, an impoverished small island subjected to a crippling economic blockade from the United States, stands out primarily in the areas of health and education of its people. It may sound incredible but Cuba’s education index is equal highest in the world, along with Australia, Finland, Denmark and New Zealand. It may be a puzzle to many in this biggest showpiece of democracy called India that Cuba’s education index as per UN statistics is 0.993 of a possible score of 1. Its adult literacy rate is 99.8 percent and school enrolments are 100 percent. In Cuba 14.2 percent of total budget is slated for education. This is higher than Australia (13.3 percent) and the US (13.7 percent).

“Gender empowerment” is another indicator listed in the UN report. The percentage of seats held by women in Parliament is another criteria to judge women’s status in society. Indian parliamentarians, left and right alike, have long been debating the issue of women’s reservation of 33 percent in all legislatures without any real goal to reach in the near future. But in Cuba, 43 percent of parliamentary seats are held by women, the third-highest level in the world after Rwanda (51 percent) and Sweden (47 percent). Australia is far behind—30 percent—while the US figure is just 17 percent.

The way Castro champions Latin American cause, diplomatically and morally leaves a long-lasting imprint on political scenario in the hemisphere. Powerful economic powers were contesting for the venue of the Olympic games 2016, including the two most industrialised nations of the planet : the United States of America and Japan. However Brazil won the contest. And Castro lost no time to congratulate Brazilians and hailed the event as a third world victory. The point at issue is not really sports. But Castro has been opposing American hegemonism in every possible way and it matters in the long run. □□□