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## Movement Against DPEP Attains Victory in Kerala

Anti-DPEP movement in Kerala has entered a new phase making some significant achievements

Ever since the previous LDF government introduced DPEP, voices of protest began to be heard sporadically from many parts in Kerala. The entire time-tested educational set up was overhauled and radically changed taking huge loans from the World Bank and under its stipulations District Primary Education Project (DPEP) of World Bank was part of a programme to restructure the entire educational set up in the third world countries in tune with the process of globalization. It was ironic that a 'Left and Democratic government headed by CPI(M) was to implement it.

The movement was spearheaded by Janakeeya Prathirodha Samithi (JPS), a people's platform for mass action against the anti-people policies of the rulers. The President of the Samithi is Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer and the General Secretary Dr. V. Venugopal, member, State Secretariat of SUCI. Many of the leading intellectuals and eminent personalities of the State have joined the Samithi as its leading figures.

University), Pavanan (renowned rationalist and writer), K. Panoor (a leading fighter for the cause of Adivasis), Adv. Manjeri Sunder Raj, K.P. Khosala Ramadas (a reputed trade union leader), Dr. Nandiyode Ramachandran, Dr. K. V. Surendranath, Adv. P.A. Pauran, Fr. Abraham Joseph and many other eminent personalities.

In spite of vehement and widespread protest, LDF government was stubborn to continue DPEP. In the recent Assembly polls, LDF government was defeated. Besides its misrule DPEP was one of the main reasons why the people voted out LDF. The new Congress-led UDF government headed by A.K. Antony, sensing the people's mood declared that the UDF government would bring drastic changes in the DPEP. The JPS promptly responded, by making it clear to the government that nothing short of total withdrawal of DPEP will be accepted by the people. Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer wrote a letter to the Chief Minister in clear terms that the DPEP is to be totally scrapped. The government called a panel of educationists led by Dr. N.A. Karim for discussions. On the basis of the suggestions made by the educationists the government announced the formation of an Expert Committee to critically review the

The first phase of the movement was on the ideological plane. The JPS organised hundreds of debates throughout the State. Both the pro and anti-DPEP speakers were invited in those debates. Around 50,000 people directly attended such debates held during the period of 1997-98. From these debates people have been well aware of the futility and anti-education character of the Project and finally rejected it by not sending their wards in DPEP schools. Notably, DPEP was introduced only in government-run or government aided schools. So, only the poor people were affected by DPEP.

People's protest against DPEP got converged and consolidated at a state level Convention organised by JPS in Trivandrum on 20th February 1999. Chaired by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer, the Convention was inaugurated by Dr. K. Soman, a renowned educationist and former Commissioner of SCERT (State Council for Education and Research Training). Attended by 1500 delegates representing Parent Organisations, JPS units and anti-DPEP Committees all over the state, the Convention demanded in clear terms "Withdraw DPEP totally".

On February 1st, 2001, thousands of parents rallied in a protest march to the State Secretariat Trivandrum, demanding the total withdrawal of DPEP. It was led by Justice V.R. Krishna Iyer himself who was joined by Dr. N. A. Karim (former pro- Vice Chancellor, Kerala )

-entire curriculum, syllabus, and textbooks and evaluation system of DPEP and place recommendations. The said 12-member Expert Committee headed by Dr. A. Sukumaran Nair, former Vice-Chancellor of M.G. University, included several members from JPS with its General Secretary, Dr. V. Venugopal. As demanded by JPS, the government declared to cancel the decision of the previous LDF government to extend DPEP curriculum to the 8th Standard

and withdrew the new DPEP textbooks and decided to continue the erstwhile textbooks as per previous curriculum and syllabus.

Curiously, CPI(M), SFI and other pro-CPI (M) organisations have meanwhile been preparing to move in defence of DPEP rejected by the people's movement organised by JPS.

The JPS has again started a state-wide educational campaign to carry on the people's movement for the total scrapping of DPEP.

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