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Corona Outbreak: Testing the System

Jumping from animal to human, Novel Coronavirus (nCorona) is testing not only the immune system of human beings but also the immunity of the system they are living in. It jumped into a world riven by deep contradictions of the imperialist system.

Govts, though slowly, are waking up to the challenge posed by nCorona. Prime Minister Modi has announced lockdown in the country for three weeks from 24th April midnight. On 19th he had called for one day lockdown on March 22 (Janata Curfew). Before that, the Govt. was not serious about realizing the challenge posed by the outbreak of nCorona. How serious this lapse of the Govt. is, will be shown by the trajectory of the disease (COVID19). The ruled as always, will pay for the follies of the rulers.

When the outbreak occurred in November 2019 it took some time for it to be recognized as an outbreak of a new variant (a mutant) of the Coronavirus. Some of this delay was due to time taken in recognizing that the symptoms complained of by the patients are due to a new pathogen. Science can and has minimized it, but has not altogether eliminated it. Some delay was definitely due to the commercial considerations of the Govt. of China, as the city initially affected, Wuhan, is a Centre of international trade. This delay was not inevitable but a product of the conditions of international trade and intense inter-imperialist rivalry. Worse, the doctors who initially raised questions about the new infection were prosecuted and one of them subsequently died due to this infection.

While some delay was attributable to the ruling establishment of China, the Govts. of most of the countries, particularly western countries did not take any measures. Rather they gloated in the discomfiture of their rival- China, enjoyed lecturing to it, pointing out the weakness of its state-controlled system, thinking it was the end of the challenge posed by China to their domination of the world economy.

Western media launched a campaign that the virus had leaked out of a biological weapon laboratory of China situated near the fish market in Wuhan. Trump insisted in calling it Wuhan virus despite World Health Organization's (WHO) prescription not to name pathogenic agents after a country or region. The implication was that it was a lab made virus. China responded with allegations that the virus was brought to Wuhan by a US Army contingent which had come to Wuhan in October 2019 to participate in military games. China also referred to a statement of Director of Disease Control Department in a Congressional Enquiry that some of the deaths in

US due to Influenza last year could be due to Coronavirus. There followed a free for all for a few weeks. nCorona did not like it and put an end to it by a vicious outbreak in West European countries and US itself.

Propaganda apart, the speculation on whether nCorona could be a lab construct, a bio-weapon whether of China or US, was dispelled by a paper published in March 17 issue of reputed Nature Medicine magazine. The paper's lead author is Kristian Anderson. In this paper, the authors concluded that nCorona was not a lab made virus but a natural mutant which had jumped from animals (probably bats and pangolins) to human beings. They gave a number of scientific arguments to substantiate their argument. This paper and more importantly the outbreak in western countries stopped the campaigns of mutual incrimination. Big money sharks have respect for science only if and to the extent it helps their profits. Who does not know of billions being poured into spreading obscurantism and anti-science beliefs among the people?

To briefly recapitulate, the first case reportedly presented itself in Wuhan on November 17, 2019. It did take some days to recognize that it was not any of the earlier existing Coronavirus. Moreover, many more cases came to hospitals with similar symptoms and similar course of disease. By mid-December 2019, 60 confirmed cases were there in Wuhan. On December 5, 2019 WHO China sounded an international alert concerning the situation of "44 patients with pneumonia of unknown etiology." On December 31, China officially informed the World Health Organization of pneumonia like symptoms of unknown origin. On January 7, 2020 China's central television telecast a report confirming the novel coronavirus. On 20 January, human to human transmission was confirmed. Around the same time, Chinese scientists made the genome of nCorona available for scientific study to many laboratories across the world. On January 23, China began lockdown of Wuhan.

From the above time line it is clear that by the end of the first week of January 2020, the breakout of an epidemic was well known through the acknowledgement of Chinese authorities and WHO guidelines. WHO termed this later as a Global Health Emergency.

It should be emphasized that this nCorona is a new virus for which there is no vaccine available. It will take some time before the vaccine for this gets prepared and sanctioned for human use. Experts agree that the virulence of this Virus is not particularly high as compared to other recent outbreaks of Virus epidemics. Mortality due to the infection of this virus is high among the elderly with existing health issues i.e. already having medical problems. However, according to experts nCorona is highly infectious, its rate of infection is particularly high as compared to some recent epidemics caused by viruses. This poses a particularly tough problem for containing the spread of this Virus among the population. nCorona spread through cough/sneeze etc. i.e. coming out as aerosols, droplets etc. which contain virus. The Virus settles on surfaces and survives there for varying period ranging from a few hours to a few days.

While rulers in many countries were indulging in their routine work of exploiting and oppressing the people, the Virus continued its march. It reached a number of countries, turning their laughter into despair. The rulers- for example Trump and Johnson- who had been trashing the threat of spread posed by nCorona were soon to bite their words. More importantly, they had to swallow their words trashing the public health system and stop praising privatization of health services. Boris Johnson, who himself tested positive, was saved following the advice of National Health Scheme (NHS) doctors though he had left no stone unturned to undermine the NHS. What years of struggle against privatization of health services could not achieve was accomplished in a few weeks. The Capitalist system once again turned to public funds to meet the emergency created by nCorona outbreak. The praise of privatization has been temporarily postponed though not abandoned for good. Trump, who had long been ridiculing free health care, even trashing its truncated version called as Obamacare by him and his friends, is now talking about spending public funds on this health emergency. This is no exception and no revival of socialism, though revisionists and reformists of different hues and colours are peddling this non-sense. The pandemic offers little profits and hence no role for the private sector but the latter will be handed parts of the scheme for money making. Capitalism has always summoned public funds to tide over crisis; who can forget large scale bailouts during 2008 recession, they were no retreat to socialism! This moreover is a health emergency and rulers fear losing all standing among the people and hence all chances of fooling the people. Hence they must act lest the people's anger topples them and the system nurturing them and served by them. And how best to do this except with people's money, not bothering capitalists to bear the burden but confining them to voluntary contributions to show their concern to the people and whitewash their crimes of undermining the public health system over the decades. None of them now talks of the superiority of the private health providers over public health system but that is because no profit is to accrue. These private players have overnight become experts on public health!

In India, the Govt. had a lot of time to prepare to check the spread of nCorona which would have definitely knocked at our door. But our rulers were busy in other urgent matters. When nCorona was undertaking its silent journey through air and sea, our rulers at home (RSS-BJP) were busy spreading the Virus they had prepared in their Nagpur laboratory- the Cinana (CAA-NRC-NPR) virus. When the whole world was waking up to the danger posed by nCorona spread, RSS-BJP leaders were trying to send shock waves to Shaheen Bagh. While nCorona outbreak was getting ready to test the strength of the health care system in the country, RSS-BJP leaders were busy undermining the Constitutional framework of the country.

And they were not alone. Their friends / mentors abroad were with them in this foolhardy approach. The rulers, particularly those of US and UK were in denial mode more concerned with attacking the people than to care for the threat of spread of Corona. During Trump's visit to India (Last week of February 2019) no heed was paid to the threat of spread of Corona virus. Rather a large public assembly was held to welcome Trump.

India had a lot of time to prepare to face the nCorona pandemic. The first case in India was reported on January 30, well after WHO had sounded a global alarm. However, as noted above Indian rulers took no notice of it, they were engaged in unleashing another deadly virus on the Indian people. Not only that, no attempt was made even to stock supplies. Export of vital equipment continued upto third week of March when reportedly ventilators were exported to Israel. Supplies to Serbia have also been in the news even while health personnel in India are struggling with shortage of equipment. Conduct of Indian rulers has been grossly callous towards the looming epidemic.

The biggest lapse if the Central Govt., if it can be called a lapse, was not to attend to arrivals from abroad. This virus came to India from abroad, through travellers from China, from European countries, South East Asian Countries, USA and others. The most efficient and inexpensive way would have been to compulsorily quarantine these arrivals after WHO had given the warning and particularly after cases started being reported from India. But even after the Govt. belatedly woke up to it, it left it to those arriving from abroad to self-quarantine themselves. What a callous, casual and criminal approach to the looming pandemic! With health services in India being in the state they are in, it was all the more vital to take this simple step if the Govt. had minimum concern about the people it is ruling over. However, this simple logical step was not taken.

After swearing in of RSS-BJP Govt. in Madhya Pradesh on March 23 evening, Prime Minister Modi declared a complete lock down in the whole of the country. There was no preparation for it. Even while the Prime Minister was speaking there were chaotic scenes outside grocery shops and people were seen running behind *pheriwallas*. There does not seem to have been any preparation for providing food to the people who are dependent on daily earnings to get their daily food. It will be tested in the days to come but whatever news is coming in does not show any advanced preparation. Lockdowns are indeed recommended to contain the spread but unplanned lockdown are not! Compare this with other countries, where all necessities are arranged for the people. Here people are left to their own devices and to braving the lockdown! This is Tughlaq without his vision! His laudable steps were out of step with existing reality but here steps are out of tune with the lives of the people and with nothing laudable about them. The claps with which medical personnel were cheered in Italy were not called by those in power; this was mechanically mandated by those in power in India, orchestrating what was spontaneous. Only *thalis* were added to *thalis*.

A very telling omission was no provision for physical distancing. It is broadly agreed that physical distancing prevents or at least contains human to human transmission. But where is the scope of physical distancing in urban areas where a large majority of people live in small tenements with six to seven persons sharing a small room of almost no size. May be the foot path dwellers are better off for this purpose! Prime Minister's address did not even touch this subject. There was no announcement of Govt. buildings, schools, colleges, stadia and other vacant govt. buildings being opened for that purpose. There was no announcement of acquiring and making

available for the period of Corona spread, a large number of buildings of the builders lying unoccupied, unsold. There was no announcement of making available large spaces in Lutyen's Delhi lying vacant in every bungalow allotted to the political elite or occupied by the economic elite. How were the unfortunate working masses of large cities to maintain physical distancing? Corporate friends of RSS-BJP did not volunteer to open their vast buildings for this purpose. Police has been reportedly harassing the people on the streets but not telling them the place where they can get food and shelter, save themselves from Corona and hunger. This was one of the most glaring omissions of the Govt.

In fact street scenes with people being thrashed by the police are a singular reminder of total powerlessness of Indian people, those called citizens. Where-else have you seen such scenes of brutal beating up, making people crawl or imprinting their bodies with designs with help of lathi brushes? Not even in countries where the pandemic has taken a heavy toll. No use of blaming individual policemen by higher officials, ruling politicians and even those in robes. It is the culture of impunity carefully cultivated and assiduously kept in place which is to blame. Videos of the policemen pouring inflammables into buses, damaging cars and windows and more importantly destroying CCTVs to wipe out the evidence of their acts have been shown a lot of indulgence by the powers that are mentioned above, which is at the root of this ill, administering verbal admonitions is only part of this indulgence. Only hearts of the Indian rulers are hardened enough not to melt at the sight of poor hungry destitutes trudging along braving hunger pangs and police batons. Some training at the feet of the erstwhile colonial masters!

The large hiatus provided by the announcement of WHO of global health emergency and its actual advent in India, was wasted by the Govt. i.e. not used to prepare to meet the danger. Not only its entry into India was not checked at the airports, no steps were taken to meet the danger. Some time was given during unfolding of this danger to streamline the health services but it was not utilized. Rather it was wasted and is being wasted in gimmicks. Health personnel, key figures in treating the ill and afflicted, do not have adequate equipment. Will silencing them solve the problem of lack of equipment? It is the common knowledge that soiled linens are left in open to dry, but our rulers and administrators want these facts to be brushed under. This will only fester the problem and make it worse. The rulers failed to take timely action, they can at least now be serious. India has the largest population of undernourished, ill and hungry people in the world, far more than our proportion in the world population entitles us to. If the pandemic breaks out in India it will take an unimaginably high toll. We should realize that nearly half of the casualties of the dreaded Spanish flu (1918-1920) which came to India through soldiers returning from World War I, were from India. Nearly 20 million Indians reportedly died of the total of 38 to 50 million casualties in the world. We in India have the potential of meeting the needs of the equipment in record time if only the Govt. forgoes the lure of profiting its friends.

There is no time to be lost in this fight. Our approach has to be firstly science based and secondly science based. There is no place for playing with fire. The stakes are just too high. There is no place for obscurantism and sycophants in science. Let the people with scientific temper and

knowledge step up and neither be bullied nor cowed down by the powers of the day. Serve the people and speak up so that you can serve better! We can wage a successful battle but for that we have to shed complacency and obeisance.

The full impact of Corona pandemic is yet to unfold. In the first round, the rulers of the day have taken over unbridled power and have totally restricted people's freedom. There was no need for that, rather the measures could have been more efficiently and effectively carried out by mobilizing the people. But the representatives of the exploiters and oppressors know no other language. Besides, they have their ulterior motive of suppressing the democratic rights of the people and doing away with democratic freedoms. In that, they find Corona an ally. They have yet not stopped arresting people on flimsy and cooked up charges. Even the elementary step of releasing the political prisoners from jails has not been taken. Round one of battle against Corona has gone the rulers' way in restricting the democratic freedoms, all justified in the name of people who have to first live to exercise democratic rights. But Corona is a Virus and has not said the last word. As the crisis deepens, the rulers' steps will be called into question. Cutting the salaries, wages, unemployment and all the hardships heaped on the people will be tested on the altar of rulers' service of corporate, their divisive political games and their various acts of omission and commission in dealing with the Corona Crisis. Those who lead in the first round need not be the victors at the end. It all depends on parasite-host interaction i.e. interaction between parasitic ruling classes and overwhelming majority of the toiling people of the country.

There is much speculation about the post-Corona world. All the basic contradictions of imperialist system are playing themselves out. Western economies are wary of lockdown for the fear of losing market share. The same fear has plummeted oil prices to record lows. Major oil producers are unable to agree on production cuts despite decline in demand. Coronavirus pandemic has broken out at a time when imperialist world was undergoing serious and deepening crisis. Growth rates had plummeted in a number of countries including India where growth rates had been continuously declining and people's condition worsening. Neoliberal model of capitalist economy which was in practice for more than last three decades was facing a serious challenge in the form of growing inequality and lack of growth of the market i.e. of purchasing power of the people. A section of the imperialist world had sought to overcome the crisis through partial roll back of globalization as was done by US, UK and a number of countries. It is to be seen what impact will Coronavirus outbreak will have on this process. But more important would be the impact on the neo-liberal model. Whether Keynesian recipes will be just for the time being to throw the burden on the people or will Capitalism undergo some more change from neo-liberal model. A lot will depend on the struggle of the working people and the toiling masses against this attempt to thrust the burden on them. The struggle of the working class and toilers will be the key to bring about basic changes in the present system. This however, does not prevent Capitalism from changing some of its forms to facilitate its survival. But Capitalism cannot make any basic concession for then it will not be Capitalism. Whether their subterfuge pulls off, will be tested in the key battlefield of class struggle.

Trump Plan on Palestine: Dead on Arrival

On January 28, 2020 US President Trump with Netanyahu at his side announced his blueprint to liquidate the national aspirations of Palestinians. His Admn. called this alleged Arab-Israel Peace Plan as the “deal of the century”. But this was essentially a deal between Trump and Netanyahu, representatives of the most rabid sections of the ruling classes of their countries. It carried forward what have long been US designs in the Arab world and is being done with the now characteristic Trump’s blowing of his own trumpet, with no need to hide their real motives. The 80 page document makes it apparent that this is not a “peace plan” but a plan to do away with Palestinians’ national aspirations.

The plan represents a fresh offensive of US imperialism and its main pillars in West Asia, Zionist Israel and Gulf monarchies led by Saudi royal family, against the Palestinians. This is the price that Arab monarchs of the region are willing to pay to safeguard their rule and plunder of the rich petroleum resources of the region. As the people in their own countries get more and more restive and turn against these decadent rulers, they become increasingly dependent on the military forces of US. Presence of Ambassadors of UAE, Bahrain and Oman in the White House when Trump unveiled this plan is a clear reminder of the fact that Gulf monarchies are also in the loop. Much need not be read into the absence of the Saudi representative; that is only for appearance. They had participated in the Manama (capital of Bahrain) meeting where Trump's son-in-law, Jared Kushner, had presented the economic part of this plan. This plan in fact provided for investments by these Gulf monarchies which only demonstrates that they are very much part of this betrayal of historic proportions. This amounted to purchasing with Arab money compliance of Palestinians to bartering away their national rights, a favourite past colonial practice of paying their agents with their own money. Trump has repeatedly shown this bait of \$ 50 billion in investments if Palestinians accept liquidation of their national rights.

The broad contours of the plan involve gifting of the whole of Jerusalem to Israel, acceptance of all the settlements established by Zionist rulers stealing Palestinian lands, annexing the whole of Jordan Valley to Israel, providing for Palestinian settlements isolated from each other and connected through tunnels and bridges, the security of the whole region in the hands of Israel and grant of Palestinian statehood after a few years subject to their good behaviour. It only provides a few residential areas where Palestinians are allowed to live as long as they behave well and that too live under the control of Israel. Gone are also Palestinians’ right to return as provided in UN resolution and also any possession of defence forces by them. The plan envisages leaving only 10% of the historic Palestine land for the Palestinians. Good behaviour involves eliminating “terrorism” which translates into liquidating all resistance and into recognition of Jewish state over 90% of land of Palestine. This statehood, provided Palestinians behave well and get certificate of that issued by US Admn., will at best be a few Bantustans. That is all that is being dangled thought real Israeli design is to drive away all the Palestinians from their “promised land”.

In fact this plan has not emerged all of a sudden. It is essentially modeled on the Bush Administration plan which emerged after Iraq's occupation by armed forces of US imperialism and its allies. It was denounced then as Bantustan plan. In fact, US imperialist rulers' two states plan involved one state that is Israel and a non-state i.e. for Palestinians. It had certain points i.e. validation of Israeli occupation of Palestine, creation of Palestinian state without military forces and foregoing of Palestinians' right to return to their homes in Israel from which they were forcibly driven out. All US Admns. over the years have been insisting on this. Camp David negotiations organized by Clinton during his second term also floundered on this issue. In Oslo accords this was left for future negotiations. Since Oslo Accords there was a misplaced expectation that a Palestinian state will be created in Gaza and West Bank though the entire thing was nebulous and no specifics were laid down. With Trump's Plan Oslo process, long in the incubator, is finally dead and this time news of its death is no exaggeration.

Now Trump does not feel any necessity to camouflage US designs. For this besides Trump's own predilections, the connivance of Arab monarchies and dictators is also very much necessary who increasingly need US military and also Israel's armed might to defend themselves from their own people. The whole Arab world is in turmoil due to rising disaffection of Arab masses, US unwillingness to commit more troops to the region is in the face of rising contradiction among imperialist powers and its reflection in the increasing assertiveness of the countries of the region. Iran and now Turkey are being viewed as existential dangers for these Gulf monarchies. Label of "democracy" and "human rights" cannot be applied to their designs. Hence, Trump has long discarded these labels, which have any way been handy tools of US imperialism and bandied by western powers in pursuit of their imperialist interests.

Besides Gulf monarchies, Trump Plan has been supported by US allies as well. US House of Representatives' Speaker and a prominent leader of Democratic Party, Nancy Pelosi, said during a press conference that "There appears to be a basis for negotiation". Boris Johnson Govt. termed this caricature of a Plan a "serious proposal." Initially Russia called the Plan "assault on peace", but after Netanyahu briefed Putin, Russian criticism has been much subdued. Russia would like to consolidate its presence in Middle East and would like Israeli acquiescence in that. European Union spokesperson referred to "EU's established position and its firm and united commitment to a negotiated and viable two-state solution that takes into account the legitimate aspirations of both the Palestinians and the Israelis, respecting all relevant UN resolutions and internationally agreed parameters." The spokesperson refrained from offering specific comment on the Plan. UN Secretary General spokesperson also commented in a similar vein. Regional powers, Iran and Turkey however, condemned the Plan. Arab Summit held on February 1 and OIC a few days later have rejected the Plan though main sponsors of these two fora are very much a party to the Plan. Even Foreign Policy, a magazine respected in the ruling circles of western imperialist powers, has commented that the Plan "is a far more insidious program that is designed to do away with a genuine two-state solution while normalizing permanent Israeli occupation and annexation within a de facto one-state reality."

Though Trump Plan is dead on arrival but it does signify growing seriousness of the situation facing Palestinians. They are facing an existential crisis as a nation. They are facing a deadly assault on their rights and their struggle over last nearly a

century, especially since 1948. Moreover they cannot rely on the rulers of Arab states who are bartering away their rights for the sake of their own survival in power. On the other hand, balance of force is heavily tilted against them particularly in view of this duplicity. It is an oft repeated dictum that the road to liberation of Palestine runs through Arab capitals. One can make it even more pointed to say that it runs mainly through Riyadh.

United Nations too will not come to Palestinians' aid. UN resolutions have only been on paper so far as the rights of Palestinians are concerned while it was the UN which had authored the plan which entailed their national subjugation. Zionist rulers backed by the western imperialist powers in their quest for domination of the petroleum rich region, have both used and discarded the UN mandates- used them for establishing their own state and discarded them for negating the rights of Palestinians. United Nations is powerless to act against its most powerful member. Other imperialist countries too may make some appropriate statements but would not go beyond that as they are keen to increase their presence in the region and would not like to antagonize powerful forces like US imperialism, Israel and Gulf monarchies.

The Palestinians have to depend on their own struggle and have only revolutionary and democratic forces as their reliable ally. Though world people have been supporting and do support Palestinians' national aspirations and their struggle for them, however, Palestinians face most brutal enemies who are out to not only suppress their national aspirations but wish to extinguish their very right to exist in their traditional land. There is growing movement in western countries against Israeli settlements in the Palestinian land. But this movement is being outlawed and suppressed by govts. in imperialist countries. However, while struggle of the Palestinian people will play the decisive role, it will be helped by the growing contradictions among imperialist powers and their regional allies.

On 4th Death Anniversary

Remembering Com. Ravi

Y.K.

On this day (March 9) four years back we lost a pillar of our Party and the revolutionary movement lost a beacon. Com. Rayala Subhash Chandra Bose (Ravi to all of us) was among the rare who do not make their presence obtrusive but their absence becomes all pervasive; they do not beat their own drums but whose contributions to the movement shine bright. Like a bright star his shine has not dimmed and will not dim by the distance of time.

Though we had been in the same party for nearly four decades I got to know Com. Ravi closely for more than two and a half decades after he became the Secretary of APPC and was later elected as a Member of Central Committee. His life involving different phases of struggle, his simple disciplined life, his focus on work and no nonsense attitude inspired affection, respect and awe among the cadres and leaders alike. Successes of revolutionary movement not only in our country but anywhere in the world would bring immense happiness to him while setbacks would not deter but make him probe the reasons behind them. His unassuming and self-effacing manner hid a revolutionary of steely determination and unbound commitment.

Com. Ravi came across as a comrade with very few needs. He would place very few demands on the comrades. He never smoked; he did not even take tea for last several years of his life. Comrades helping in meetings would bring a cup of milk for him while giving tea to others which he would very reluctantly accept and that too only once a day. In such a long period when we spent much time in meetings together, I cannot remember any time when Com. Ravi complained of anything in the arrangements in wherever he slept and whatever he ate. We used to attribute these exemplary traits to his long squad life which had made him very punctual in his work and very frugal in his personal needs.

Com. Ravi was a party person. That is because of his deep realization that without Party there could be no meaningful advance in revolutionary work. From this deep commitment arose two important facets of his work. He was always forthright in his views in committee meetings and he would express them with clarity and force. If he had not made up his mind on any issue of importance he would say so and would ask for opportunity to express his views later. However, once a decision was taken he would strive hard to implement it. He would make suggestions for implementation of the decision in the true spirit of democratic centralism as if it was his own opinion. This is easy to say in words but not so easy to follow in practice. But it was easy for Com. Ravi as he considered himself an integral part of the Party and hence whatever affected the Party affected him. He would sometimes say that because of his strict adherence to implementation of the decision of the Party some comrades who knew his opinions call him names. Though pained at this, it did not bother him as he considered it his bounden duty to follow democratic centralism which he considered indispensable for functioning of the Party. Com. Ravi used to emphasize the Party as the highest form of class

organization. He considered any dilution of this as deviation of the proletarian character of the Party and any deviation from this as a compromise with the proletarian character of the Party.

Com. Ravi was a team person. He would always utilize for study any time available to him. But importantly he would pay attention to the political development of other comrades and would suggest to them what to read and help comrades in that, explaining difficult aspects with lucidity and a clarity born out of deep and clear understanding of the issue.

Com. Ravi was always very enthusiastic about unity of revolutionaries as well as united action with other forces which would be helpful in developing people's struggles. He always supported proposals for unity with other organizations. He never allowed his personal views to come in the way of pursuit of the unity of communist revolutionaries even while reminding the comrades to move ahead with realistic expectations.

Com. Ravi had developed a habit of deep reflection on the problems facing the revolutionary communist movement. He always combined his firm grasp of strategic orientation of the revolutionary movement with detailed study of the concrete conditions in which this strategic orientation is to be applied. In essence he had deep conviction in revolutionary mass line and he would oppose any deviation from it. Whenever he would express an opinion, whether one agreed with it or not, it would command serious attention of all the comrades. He would give patient hearing and deep thought to the opinions of other comrades. It was a great experience to have worked with Com. Ravi in the same Party and that too in the same committee. One had much to learn from him and I did learn a lot from his experience of the revolutionary movement and also from the organizational methods practiced by him.

Com. Ravi would always volunteer for the most hazardous tasks faced by the Party. Whether it was the difficult situation in Godavari districts in mid-80s or the challenge of re-energizing the movement in North Telengana, Com. Ravi always volunteered to take up the tasks. This, the finest quality of a revolutionary communist, was in him in abundance.

Comrades should learn from Com. Ravi's life and work. As CC in its homage to Com. Ravi said, "Com. Ravi symbolized the finest qualities of a revolutionary communist. His simple and disciplined life, his ideological conviction in Marxism-Leninism-Mao Zedong Thought, his undaunted commitment to New Democratic Revolution, his organizational methods of taking everybody along while adhering to strict discipline, his willingness to take up arduous and risky tasks, his willingness to endure every hardship and offer every sacrifice in the interest of the revolutionary movement made him stand out as one of the finest leaders of the revolutionary movement of the country." Comrades will imbibe these qualities in their political and personal life. They have much to learn from his work and example and learn they must to serve the cause of New Democratic Revolution in the country.

It is good to have those qualities for any length of time. But to practice them for about five decades, most of these in arduous UG, is really worthy of emulation. Even partial translation of them in one's life will make a comrade worthy. He lived his entire life in that manner.

Today with the Party facing serious challenges and also opportunities, we greatly miss his contributions both in formulating as well as practicing the appropriate tasks. His example however inspires us to advance to make new democratic revolution in India.

March 9, 2020

Reflections on 8th March, 2020

Great movements are built on big issues. On March 8 this year women across the country, young and old, have risen to oppose the RSS-BJP attack on the rights enshrined in the Constitution - not only their own but the people of the country at large. They are displaying the perseverance of seasoned campaigners, consciousness of enlightenment and eagerness to imbibe all that is new and relevant. Their quest for justice unravelling popular myths about them is creating a new paradigm of women's activism. None of the inequalities, discriminations and oppressions has been even lessened and yet they rose to defend what belongs to all. Brushing aside motivated propaganda to portray their struggle through the prism of patriarchal mindset; generating folklores and creativity befitting the cause they have taken up surpassing all till now, women have once again showed that the wretched of the earth are the creators of history and great issues of the society are raised not in closed spaces but on open roads. The scenario of women's activism in India on this 8th March would have gladdened the hearts of the visionary women leaders who declared 8th March as a commemoration of the struggle of working women.

This struggle is only the front paw of the women's struggle for their rights, which face increasing odds for their realization. But in one swoop the parameters of this struggle have been broadened to be awe-inspiring, setting a new landscape in which these struggles must be waged. By emerging at the head of the defence of what has been the idea of India, crystallized during freedom movement, they have changed the conditions under which their struggles will traverse though there remain obstacles to be surmounted, hesitations of those sympathizing and resistance of those opposing. Their glorious role in the unfolding struggle will influence and permeate their quest for rights including gender rights.

Women of India face huge burden of both the past and the present. While feudal chains bind them hands and feet, capitalists extract the last drop of blood from the semi-starved and uncared bodies of working women. One cannot fail to see their

exploitation at construction sites, in brick-kilns, in numerous unorganized sectors, rag picking and the most unpaying labourers can name. While landlords and their hoodlums exploit them in every way, the capitalists squeeze every muscle and all energy. They somehow pull themselves through their miserable existence yet seeing their children emaciate and die before their eyes due to want of food, health care leave alone hope of any education or other cares. While this is the lot of overwhelming majority of women, those privileged to enjoy higher status are not free from their share of suffering, humiliation and discrimination at every step. Rulers talk of their reverence of women, read from scriptures to buttress their claims and yet do everything to increase exploitation and oppression of women. Their reverence is to selfless and uncomplaining service women render to the men; after all saying a few good things is not much of a price for lifelong service. They are revered for their dependence while all expressions of independence are snuffed out. The forms of domination have changed over the years that have passed since the advent of patriarchy but not the fact of it; inferior position of their gender only adding to the weight of their inferior socio-economic position.

What to talk of the large issues of equality and guaranteeing basic human rights and dignity, this system has failed to even provide them physical security. Rapes and murders take place unchecked and if the culprits are powerful, mostly go unreported. When any force themselves into public recognition, some superficial measures are announced insincerely and insensitively. Even the most basic measures are not implemented, rulers' noise subside as the public anger subsides and the latter is often misled. The frequency with which these attacks occur bears ample testimony to the inefficacy of the measures supposedly taken by the rulers. The rulers want to drive home the point that women are not safe outside the homes, avoiding any mention of the conditions of women inside homes. From inside the womb to early childhood, adolescence, youth, married life and old age their life is a reflection of the grossest inequalities in society, suffering at each step and in every conceivable way.

Sometimes the list of RoopKanwars, Shazadis, Acid victims, Hadiyas, girls and boys killed for daring to fall in love against social diktats, seems not only never ending but also elongating at too rapid a pace. One scarcely finishes the fight for at least arrests for one before another is added to the list. We rail at the patriarchal judiciary and state, at the communal police force and state machinery, at the limitations that these impose on the fight for justice in that to get the law to move is a separate issue from getting it enunciated and enacted.

It is like the story of a death foretold to misquote and transpose Gabriel Garcia Marquis. Yet he was writing about a society like ours where the strong feudal traditions play out despite the fact that everyone knows they will and also exactly how they will.

Inequalities and oppressions faced by women are ingrained in this social order. Exploitation of women is an integral to the surplus extracted by capitalists-domestic and foreign- and landlords. Without changing the present society, its socio-economic structure and the whole political, ideological superstructure, without doing away with patriarchy, the task of securing gender justice cannot be fulfilled. It is in the interests of women themselves that they link their present struggles with the struggles for revolutionary transformation of society. Tasks of progressive women's movements are quite clear in this regard.

There has been no real struggle for any meaningful change in society leave alone revolutionary transformation, which has been successful, nay advanced, without substantial contribution of women, without women playing a large role. And there is a good situation today to carry forward these tasks. Women of India have repeatedly demonstrated their utmost resolve to sweep all the demons before them. They have played a leading role in all the struggles of peasants, workers, students and not only in their own struggles. They have borne the main brunt of social oppression of caste, tribal and minorities and have come forward to participate in the fight back. They have emerged among the vanguard of the struggles of Indian people in almost all parts of the country. It was the women workers of Bengaluru who in one big swoop forced the RSS-BJP Govt. to take back their order on denial of PF withdrawals. It was the leaders of women's organizations who came forward to lead the exposure of the gruesome suppression of civil liberties and democratic rights in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. It was no co-incidence that all the teams that went to J&K in August last year, who made the sufferings of the people of that state known to the people of the country and who raised their voices against fascist offensive, were mostly led by the leaders of the women's organizations. And the present struggle against CAA-NRC-NPR has surpassed all that was earlier and set new standards for the women's movement. This is still a developing movement ready and willing to write new chapters in the unfolding saga of women's march to liberation. They are worthy successors to the legendary women leaders who fought for voting rights to all women irrespective of all distinctions and today Indian women are fighting against denial of citizenship rights including disenfranchisement on the basis of religion.

March 8 this year came at a fortuitous time. Let it inspire a further sharpening of women's movement and their leadership in people's movement. They are writing history and they are good writers.

March 8, 2020

CC Resolution

On the Movement Against CAA-NPR

Since the last CC meeting, the country has been rocked by sharp protests against Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA), National Register of Citizens (NRC) and National Population Register (NPR). These mass protests have attracted the attention of the people throughout the country.

In the last CC meeting we had adopted a resolution on the present situation and decided on certain tasks. (ND, September 2019) In this resolution CC gave its estimation of the present situation particularly the status of the RSS-BJP drive towards imposing fascism in the country and formulated its approach to the joint movement with other forces. CC formulated that on the issues of fascist offensive we should not hesitate to have joint action where-ever necessary with other forces including those of the ruling classes who oppose that offensive.

The previous CC meeting was held after abrogation of Article 370 and lockdown in J&K. In December 2019 the Govt. piloted amendment to the Citizenship Act which was passed by the Parliament. This amendment provides for granting citizenship to Hindus, Sikhs, Christians, Jains, Bodhs and Parsis from Pakistan, Bangladesh and Afghanistan who have come to India prior to December 31, 2014. This is in conjunction with Central Govt. declaration on preparing a National Register of Citizens (NRC) and in preparation of that, to prepare a National Population Register (NPR). After protests erupted all over India with its epicentre in the BJP ruled states particularly capital Delhi, UP and Karnataka, Prime Minister announced that there has been no discussion in the Govt. on preparing NRC. However, the Govt. is moving ahead with NPR with its modified questionnaire. The questionnaire that RSS-BJP Govt. has prepared is for using the NPR as a precursor to NRC, in fact that is the very purpose of preparing NPR according to the amendments to the Citizenship Act done by the then NDA Govt. in 2003.

This mass upsurge against the CAA-NRC-NPR has drawn several sections of people into struggle. The foremost among them are Muslims who are convinced of an existential threat from the measures of this Govt. Faced with this existential danger Muslim masses have overcome their inhibitions and hesitations, in brief a defensive attitude since the partition of the country in 1947. Asserting their roots in the country, they are upturning the long held ideas about the community and its place in the country. They are finally turning a page on the isolation that community has suffered; at least politically they are challenging the ghettoization. They have been fully mobilized including politically the most backward among them. Muslim women are at the front of this struggle – educated among them leading the way. They are articulating their opinions well and are heralding not only a mass upsurge in India but also a radical challenge to the leadership from among their own community. They are eager to identify with the problems of the people at large owning them up and visualizing themselves as a part of struggle against them. This

has been one of the most important aspects of the present upsurge among the people. Muslim masses constitute a large part of the gatherings of the people on this issue.

Second important section coming out in protest against CAA-NRC-NPR is the intelligentsia from all walks of life, with institutions of higher learning becoming important centres of these protests. No university has been left untouched and even the most otherwise politically inactive centres have become centres of these protests. Scientific community, academicians and film industry knowns have joined these protests. This section has been spurred into activity as they do not identify themselves with the India which RSS-BJP want to make this country. For this section, idea of India has become a focal point. They are using advanced means of communication, are not defensive in the face of repression and intimidation. They feel that RSS-BJP are taking away India from them. Though many among these sections are socio-economic status quoists, two factors are important to note here. The upsurge in the universities and institutions of higher learning has to be seen in the backdrop of rising attacks on higher education both in terms of declining allocation to these institutions and sectors including scientific research as well as attempts to control them and direct them into most unscientific and obscurantist channels. Both these aspects combined are pushing those in these institutions into movement. JNU students' struggle against the fee hike has been the precursor of the present upswing in this movement.

The activity of this section from all communities and regions has popularized new tools of disseminating information, organizing protests and building links throughout the country. The immediate response throughout the country from one corner to another in these institutions to any repression on these sections highlights the importance of these tools of dissemination as well as organization which is bringing these sections in their thousands and lakhs onto streets.

This upswing in the movement against fascist offensive has brought all sections of progressives, communist revolutionaries, parliamentary left as well as democrats into this movement. They are displaying energy, initiative and imagination in supporting this movement. All hues of left participated in the movement. However, participation in this movement by any political organization does not mean any change in their basic class position and their political strategy i.e. of revisionists of channelizing this anger into parliamentary channels. Nor does it show their steadfastness in the protests and agitation. Rather such differences are out in the open with waning of the interests of revisionists and progressives aligned to ruling class parties in these protests of late.

From what has been stated above, the tasks before the communist revolutionaries and progressives can be deduced i.e. of drawing the broad masses of workers and peasants into this movement, those sections which have not yet come into the movement. Concrete plans should be drawn to draw such sections into this movement.

Fascist offensive attacks the existing democratic rights. Fascism is not a change in the ruling classes but a change in the mode of ruling classes' system of governance. Hence it tramples under feet the rights which the people have snatched from the ruling classes through their struggles or the rights that the ruling classes were forced to concede for their accession to power or retention of power. Secondly this change in the mode of ruling is backed by a chauvinist mobilization

of people in favour of such a change with jingoist, hyper-nationalist and social chauvinist slogans renting the air and diverting the people from the real causes of their growing distress. It digs deep into long held backward chauvinist attitudes and marshals them into a strong movement against the existing system of government thus forging unity between the oppressed and oppressors for opposite reasons covered under the hyper-nationalist frenzy. Fascism is the response of the ruling classes to a crisis situation pregnant with the possibilities of the growth of revolutionary movement, a sort of pre-revolutionary situation. The anti-system feelings of the exploited and oppressed are misguided to annihilate whatever progress was made in the past in terms of their rights, the exact opposite of what moved the people. Fascism is the most naked terroristic method of rule and its form is dependent on the socio-economic condition of a given country as well as on the place it occupies internationally. This is all well known. Also known is the fact that fascism is embraced by the ruling classes when they are not able to rule in the old way i.e. with the existing methods of rule. This necessity may come about when their rule is threatened by a rise in the struggle of working people which they cannot put down within the existing ruling framework. This is the existential threat that capitalism faced in several European countries after the First World War; after the Victory of Great October Socialist Revolution challenged Capitalism in European countries. Fascism arose there to combat that challenge and save Capitalism. However, such necessity may also arise when the ruling classes need to intensify their exploitation and this intensification cannot be accomplished within the existing framework i.e. when they themselves need to do away with the existing framework. Such is the challenge Finance capital is facing today with the growing accumulation of capital in the conditions of stagnant or relatively stagnant markets, it needing to do away the existing rights of the people to maximize its profits, the very drive of Capital. Rise of fascist forces in developed capitalist countries and even backward countries where imperialist and comprador capital plays a leading role in the economy like in India should be seen in this backdrop. Other reactionary sections like landlords any way oppose democratic rights of the people. We have analyzed the socio-economic crisis underlying the rise of fascism in India in CC Resolution adopted in September 2019. Sometimes, fascism becomes the need of the ruling classes due to a mixture of both the factors operating to a varying degree.

In these conditions, symbols of erstwhile existing system have emerged as symbols of resistance. Contradictions in the erstwhile system are becoming a new battle ground in the period of rise of fascism. In fact rise of fascism takes place through a fierce struggle not only against the forces of the people but also against the other forces of ruling classes. Tricolour, Constitution and other symbols of the hitherto rule of the ruling classes have become symbols of resistance to fascism. Preamble of the Constitution which had been used to hoodwink the masses and expressed the contradictions of the rule of big bourgeois big landlords ruling classes, which contains declaration of promises which the ruling classes did not fulfill and had no intention of fulfilling, has emerged as a particular symbol of the resistance. This represents both status quo and change- reversion to the erstwhile state of things and yearning for the fulfillment of the promises made by the ruling classes. In this way these symbols act both as shield and sword.

In these protests indefinite Dharna at Shaheen Bagh has become a symbol. Situated near Jamia Milia Islamia University, the area has a large Muslim

population. Protest has drawn a good number of Muslim women. Selection of site is suitable for its sustenance. It is located in the very area where local participants live. They do their household work and participate in Dharna. A whole lot of initiatives have sprung here. There is a library named after Savitribai Phule and Fatima Sheikh, the earliest women teachers who taught at the all Girls school in Maharashtra. It has become a rallying point for all types of progressive forces, all anti-fascist forces. Shaheen Bagh has been replicated at over 150 sites and many more unreported and the trend of starting Shaheen Bagh type of protests has been continuing. CC had underscored importance of Shaheen Bagh protest in inspiring similar protests in the country. While all sorts of forces are active and playing different roles, none of them does or can control it. Such attempts made at several places have come a cropper. It does not mean that political situation or changes in it have no influence, in fact they do exercise a lot of influence, in fact the ruling class media too exercises a lot of influence but in more general terms i.e. no single political force controls it or can control it. This is a good situation for people's forces including communist revolutionaries to work in. It is pregnant with the possibilities to work among big multitude of people.

The real content of this protest is not being understood by a variety of forces, particularly those who are long used to working with a small band of loyalists. They are at sea in this vast multitude. They are in a hurry to exercise their influence and getting frustrated. This protest is also a lesson for a variety of revisionists and ruling class politicians who want to quickly fashion it into their electoral tool. That they see Muslim masses mainly through the prism of electoral gains is substantiated by their waning interest in this protest after elections in Delhi. Protesters are aware that this is a long drawn struggle and they are braced for it. Those who talk of immediate flare up or adopting means to lead early showdown, have failed to comprehend the nature of the protest which the women of Shaheen Bagh have imbibed. They are at the head of this protest displaying perseverance and patience required, not complaining against those doing less rather appreciating them for what they are doing. More and more ShaheenBaghs are coming up and people are moving to assert their democratic right to protest and braving all repression to assert their right.

Muslim masses are participating in these protests. At most of places they constitute the bulk of participants. They too are aware of it and it has important bearing on the emerging situation. It has led to increasing activity of the Islamic forces and the political forces having mainly the base among Muslims. In our last CC resolution, we had dealt with joint action with revisionist parties and civil society organizations which are active against fascist forces. We have also in the past mentioned organizations of minorities to be part of effort against fascist offensive. However, we have not dealt concretely with such organizations with the result that our comrades do not have clarity on this. Here are aspects which have bearing on this, the most important being communal outlook of some of them and ties of most of them with the ruling classes. When we are facing the offensive of RSS fascist offensive of Hindutva, the question of the role of minority religious organizations needs to be tackled. Which organizations or at least, what would be the criteria for judging which ones we can work with and to what extent, if any, we can cooperate with them, needs to be worked out. There are some important streams among them which have many differences between them. The picture of uniformity projected by the ruling classes in the country about Muslims is an

artificial construct. While the Jamat-e-Ulema-e-Hindi (JUI) is known for its staunch opposition to Pakistan and for espousing the cause of composite nationalism, parts of the Jamait-e-Islami (JI) did not support Pakistan from the angle of Muslim interests. Here reference to Pakistan is only to show their attitude to the relation between nationalism and religion. While JUI has been close to Congress, JI has worked among Muslim masses and intelligentsia. The latter's cadres have been behind some militant Muslim organizations which have been banned by the Govt. They are operating in many outfits. JI has sometimes been drawn into opposition framework, one such being in protests against Emergency when some leaders of JI were also behind bars. The huge Muslim participation in the ongoing protests and influence of these organizations has made this discussion very necessary and urgent. Support extended by these organizations to some organizations particularly at a time when masses are active has contributed to their strength and relevance. However, we must be vigilant to ensure that organizations adhere to the common framework about the movement. This is not easy to ensure and hence careful attitude is necessary. However, we should not hesitate to be part of protests irrespective of what organizations are also taking part; we may interact with them for and in course of such protests.

It is also important to assess the role being played by the communist revolutionary organizations. CRs were the first to warn against the danger of fascism and moved against fascist offensive. However, despite this, CRs were slow to intervene in the emerging situation. CRs had led the effort for a platform against fascist offensive uniting revolutionary forces and forces struggling against social oppression i.e. against social oppressions including caste oppression and religious persecution. To play due role in the emerging situation, gaps in theoretical understanding have to be overcome. We have to overcome the understanding that Indian ruling classes' rule itself is fascist and hence, as such, there can be no danger of fascism in the country from any section of the ruling classes. Such debates were there during Emergency also. According to this opinion, fascist offensive needs no special effort at mobilization, revolutionary movement need be developed without regard to this aspect. They ignore the political situation faced by the revolutionary movement. This is all strategy and no tactics, a sure recipe to inaction and passivity, swinging between ignorance and irrelevance. This stand is often couched in revolutionary phrases.

There is another understanding which recognizes the danger of fascism but is not clear about the nature of struggle against it or rather does not embrace logical consequence of such recognition of building broad based people's resistance against fascism and its offensive. It is easier to come to theoretical agreement with this understanding, but on the practical aspects there is a deep seated sectarianism ranging from half-baked prescriptions to treating such effort only as some sort of cover for their revolutionary work. At the root of their approach is their failure to work out definite policies suited to a given situation which they concede to be different. Though this understanding is different from the former in theoretical recognition, but it is not helpful in moving ahead in practice.

There is also an important fact of the small strength of CR forces particularly in their divided state. We should work out approach in the concrete conditions, not withdrawing into our shell, content with local existence. We should not float in the sea of irrelevance with the help of balloons of revolutionary phrases, nor we should remain content with or confined to participating in the forums floated by the ruling

class and revisionist combines. This underlines the localism which drags down many of us. In this respect, it is not very different from the trend which advocate following revisionist parties' lead on all such matters, reducing revolutionary movement to local struggles, most of them are very much in the legal framework. The fact is that even these revisionist Left parties are not able to play any central role in these protests though like others they are there.

Any joint move among CRs should not take much time. We should not attempt to settle all outstanding issues facing the revolutionary movement. There is a distinction between unity efforts and joint actions though they facilitate each other. We should all appreciate the need to project before the people a revolutionary line on immediate issues. Persistent efforts are required for that. Though it may be time consuming, this effort should be pursued with clarity of purpose that such effort is very much necessary in the interest of revolutionary movement for which unity is very necessary. Moreover, the challenge posed by the situation is much bigger but the revolutionary forces can act as a catalytic core. We should overcome inertia in our joint effort which makes timely intervention difficult. This becomes particularly important in the fast moving situation. For example in a very short time, such initiatives crystallized in different states with different forces including communist revolutionaries.

Two important issues have come to the fore, both are also interconnected. First there is need to play active role at the Central level. The importance of all India intervention is increasing along with the increasing network among the activists and rise of social media as effective tool of dissemination of information as well as nature of the issues on which movement has come up. Most of these e.g. attack on higher education or more importantly CAA, NRC, NPR are by the very nature all India.

Another important aspect is the need to link this intervention with the tasks of growth of revolutionary movement i.e. class struggle. In particular, the emphasis on developing areas of resistance struggle and on developing militant movements of peasantry and working class needs to be reinforced. Obviously political situation in the country has much influence over our tasks in different states and regions, but development of these struggles alone can help revolutionary forces play an important role. An important direction of our efforts should be to take up building of class and mass organizations and draw the masses that have become active in these protests into such organizations. While taking up such steps we should keep in mind the interest of the ongoing movement.

An important task pertains to the field of culture. With intelligentsia and cultural activists actively participating in the protests, the need to develop cultural tools of protest, particularly against the growing fascism and in defense of people's rights has emerged an important task.

This movement has come to the fore in the situation of deepening economic crisis. We have repeatedly analyzed this crisis and its root causes- its primary cause being declining purchasing power of the people. This is related to the worsening conditions of working class in urban areas and peasantry and agricultural labourers in rural India. This declining purchase power is leading to decline in growth of domestic demand and with stagnant and decline in demand in the foreign markets, the economy of India has suffered sharp decline in growth. The economic growth in the year 2019-20 has dipped below 5% despite changes in

the method of computing economic growth. All sectors are suffering from this decline. Manufacturing has been in decline while some sectors have been stagnant. The banking sector crisis has further deepened. The extent of NPAs continues to be high over 9% of the entire lending of the PSBs. This is in addition to waiving of nearly 8 lakh crores of NPAs over the last five years i.e. Modi Govt. came to power in 2014. Further the crisis in NBFCs which have been promoted by the Govt. to spur growth has further deepened the banking crisis as much of NBFCs' tainted assets are on the balance sheets of PSBs. This has been a favourite method of squeezing the PSBs besides directly siphoning off their money like robbing the reserves of Reserve Bank. Now the gov't. is embarking on selling its stake in the PSBs and in the biggest state insurer, LIC. This shows the dire strait in which the economy finds itself besides their drive to siphon off this money to help their corporate friends. On the other hand, foreign debt has scaled new heights. It has crossed 550 billion \$ mark. The Govt. remains silent on this while parading its foreign currency reserves.

While stranglehold of imperialism and fetters of semi-feudal agrarian relations are the root cause of worsening economic crisis, the handling of the economy by the present Govt., its policies of loot and plunder of the public finances by the corporate has played a role in precipitating the present crisis. Its demonetization, GST imposition and waiving of loans of the corporate have all contributed to depressing the demand.

The Govt. attempt to increase share in the foreign markets has been unsuccessful. In fact there is growth in protectionism in western imperialist countries particularly USA. Trump Admn. is not willing to grant Indian products any increase in access to US markets. In fact, Trump Admn. has removed India from MFN status for concession in taxes. Trump has also asserted that India should be considered a developed country and not a developing country. Trump, who is on visit to India, has not brought US Trade Representative as a part of his delegation. Rather, he has made it clear that his emphasis is on increasing sale of military equipments to India.

In the conditions of this growing crisis, RSS-BJP govt. is embarking on the failed policies of encouraging foreign and domestic corporate and helping the landlords. In the recent Budget, while there were no measures to spur growth, there was increasing attack on the peasant masses and workers. While MSP was not increased nor its coverage improved, there was increase in the prices of fertilizers and diesel which make agricultural operations costlier, further squeezing the peasantry. With cut in the allocation of MGNREGS and decline in industrial employment, this is bound to result and is resulting in decline in agricultural wages and generally in lowering the consumption in rural areas, a key factor in declining growth, noted even by the IMF. There has been cut in the allocation for agriculture, irrigation and rural development except for agricultural credit, a bane of Indian peasantry.

The attack on the workers in the form of changes in labour laws has continued with gov't. encouraging further contractualization of employment. While this has not led to any increase in the employment it has led to further depressing the wages, benefits, working and living conditions of the workers. Working class condition is worsening while TUs linked to ruling class parties have neither the willingness nor

the ability to arrest this trend as their political organizations support the policies which are responsible for this state.

Despite very high level of unemployment reaching 7.3% according to CMIE (highest over last five decades) not taking into account gross under-employment rampant in the country, RSS-BJP Govt. has not taken any measures to address the same. Number of hungry has increased with India dipping several places in the World Hunger Index. The response of RSS-BJP Govt. has been to make drastic cut in the allocation for Food Security which shows the priorities of this Govt. The allocation for Health and Education have suffered real time decline i.e. allocations taking into account inflation while allocations for these sectors have traditionally been abysmally low.

With deepening economic crisis and pressure of their corporate- foreign and domestic- mentors, the RSS-BJP Govt. is shamelessly attacking the people. They have further sharpened their communal conspiracies and move towards Hindu Rashtra. But the worsening conditions of people are hampering their efforts to further deepen communal polarization with people increasingly seeing designs of RSS-BJP behind these conspiracies and real content of their Hindu Rashtra. Communalism is a vote catching device perfected by the ruling classes but it delivers only when couched in the cloak of nationalism. Before the Lok Sabha elections in 2019, RSS-BJP could use Pulwama-Balakot with the help of corporate media and by keeping the news of economic decline under wraps giving hope to the people that though they were feeling the pinch the situation is not so bad. Since those elections, economic downturn has become the main story of the day as this could no longer be hidden. With the growth declining and people's conditions worsening, BJP has lost all the state elections. It lost majority in Haryana and could cling to power only after conceding some space to JJP. It also declined in Maharashtra. Though its alliance with Shiv Sena secured a majority, the alliance broke down on sharing power and Shiv Sena formed state govt with NCP-Congress. These electoral setbacks came even when the opposition Congress has been in disarray after 2019 Lok Sabha defeat. Loss of power in Maharashtra, wherein lies the financial capital Mumbai, has been a blow to RSS-BJP. Pakistan bashing, which worked in Lok Sabha elections, was not so effective for state elections, a fact proved over and over again in the elections to other state assemblies as well.

RSS-BJP suffered a big setback in Jharkhand elections in which JMM-Congress-RJD alliance got clear majority though BJP had got 11 out of 12 Lok Sabha seats from the state in 2019 parliamentary elections defeating the same alliance. Tribal anger, which was seething due to changes in the tenancy laws, led to defeat of RSS-BJP while worsening conditions of the people hampered their efforts at communal polarization.

With protests against CAA-NRC-NPR growing and Shaheen Bagh emerging as the focal point, RSS-BJP fought assembly elections in Delhi on the plank of communal polarization. Modi-Shah-Yogi led campaign gave up any talk of development and resorted to thorough communal polarization. New records of hate speeches were set with EC turning into only a spectator, even facilitator. AAP, ruling in Delhi, totally sidelined this issue and instead focused on its waiving off charges on household power consumption up to 200 units, water charges waiver for common people and free bus ride for women. They also propagated their claim on

what they had done on govt. schools and mohalla clinics. In view of the fact that RSS-BJP having not made any issue about people's lives; AAP could make it an election on people's issues. It was helped by the fact that Congress, which had emerged second to RSS-BJP in recent Lok Sabha elections, did not take any energetic campaign giving rise to common belief among people including Congress leaders even prior to elections, that Congress had outsourced the task of defeating RSS-BJP to AAP. It was also being talked that Congress has given up local for national. In general terms, BJP could increase its vote share by 5.5% while Congress declined by roughly the similar margin but the transfer was not direct to the BJP. AAP held onto its vote share (53.5%) suffering only a marginal decline of 0.8% as compared to 2015 elections. In broad terms the middle classes which had supported BJP fully in the Lok Sabha elections split in assembly elections with lower middle classes, the larger part, going to AAP. It appears that votes lost by AAP to BJP were made good from the Congress which got only 4.27% vote share.

RSS-BJP defeat in Delhi punctured their claim that CAA-NRC-NPR enjoy a lot of support among the people. Though it does not mean any dilution of their communal conspiracies, rather these will only be intensified. They have nothing else to offer. But this defeat has kept up the energy of anti-CAA-NPR protests.

UP has seen worst repression in the course of these protests. 23 people have been killed. Women and children have been brutally beaten up besides men. The whole state saw internet blockade for days, making it the largest area covered in the world. Even post mortem reports have not been given to outsiders. While activists were arrested on a large scale, the worst treatment was given to Muslims to further the communal campaign of RSS BJP. Despite such repression, protests have continued at several centres. RSS-BJP has conducted a number of rallies but could not mobilize the common people for their campaign. However, RSS-BJP are drawing some strength in the states ruled by opposition parties.

On Violence Unleashed in Northeast Delhi

For last two days, parts of North East Delhi have witnessed large scale attacks on Muslims in which more than nearly twenty persons have been reportedly killed. Violence is still continuing in some localities and also reportedly extending to the nearby localities. Full scale of deaths, injuries, destruction and loss of life, property and livelihood is not known and may grow due to continuing attacks. These attacks on Muslims were preceded by open calls by BJP leaders for violent attacks on Muslims, their hate speeches backed by mobilization from outside the colonies for the attacks. This is a familiar pattern as well as the fact of participation of police personnel in such attacks, their remaining spectators when minorities are attacked and coming down heavily where minorities resist the attacks. A large majority of those arrested for the violence or so-called conspiracy behind it belong to minority community while they themselves are the victims of attack.

This spate of violence has shown some bright side of the situation. Gurudwaras of the area made open announcements on the very first day of violence that their doors are open to the victims of violence for food and shelter. So was done by some temples particularly those belonging to oppressed castes. There have been several reports of the people of different communities guarding people and religious places of other communities. Such humane and daring efforts in face of

Govt. orchestrated violence have been there but their open and organized nature is a welcome development.

Revolutionary forces must intervene to mobilize the people against these attacks, expose the perpetrators of this violence and organize relief to the people, particularly forcing the Delhi Govt. to provide relief. These efforts must be undertaken without delay and unitedly with other forces willing to come forward.

Some Other Issues

Two acts of the Govt. of transferring cases to NIA have attracted the attention of the people. One related to arrest of DSP Davinder Pal who was caught with a leader of Hizbul Mujahedeen. He has been one of the main conduits of Central Govt. in using surrendered militants to commit acts which were used by the Party in power. Afzal Guru, himself a surrendered militant, had stated that it was this DSP who had asked him to arrange accommodation in Delhi for those allegedly involved in attack on Parliament in 2001. His plea had fallen on deaf ears, not even enquired into and he was hanged to satisfy the "conscience of the nation". It is being alleged that the Hizbul leader was being asked to plan a big attack in Delhi prior to elections. While he was arrested by J&K police and there was no case in NIA against him, his case was transferred to NIA to prevent any disclosures inconvenient to the Govt.

More important has been transfer of Bhima Koregaon case to NIA. This is a case which was being handled by Maharashtra Police. In this case a large number of democratic rights activists have been arrested. With the change of the Govt. in Maharashtra the case is once again in focus with NCP demanding judicial enquiry into it. When the Central Govt. learnt of the deliberations in Maharashtra cabinet on this issue, they immediately transferred the case (Elgaar Parishad case) to NIA. It has been one of the biggest fraudulent cases in India. The judiciary has been pliant in suppressing the democratic rights activists. It has been the test case of what is known as Urban Naxals, a term coined by RSS to suppress all the progressive and democratic intellectuals and activists. Transfer to NIA is to prevent unraveling of this case which does not have any basis in law or facts. Besides saving the real organizers of the violent attacks on Dalits in Bhima Koregaon who were linked to RSS, this is a crude and cruel attack on the democratic rights of the people.

This period has demonstrated surrender of the state organs before the RSS. Central Election Commission has been a mute spectator to the most flagrant violations by RSS-BJP leaders. Most importantly the Supreme Court has endorsed the RSS Hindu Rashtra with a series of Judgements. Its judgement on Babri Masjid has been a clear case of endorsing majoritarian outlook. It is not based on any law or Constitution and lacks basis in principles of jurisprudence. It has been widely criticized by legal experts besides political leaders. Supreme Court has also abandoned the people of Kashmir when it refused to lift lock down in J&K where internet shutdown has set the record of longest shut down in the world. Supreme Court has passed a number of orders beginning with Judge Loya case which show that Supreme Court should not be expected to stand for the democratic rights, even those guaranteed in the Constitution. What is termed as judicial activism was a product of the era of minority/coalition govts. May be with the decline of RSS-BJP some of these institutions may find their voice again.

North East is seeing large scale mobilization against CAA. RSS-BJP govt. is facing increasing isolation among the people. To stem the tide of the people's unrest Central Govt. signed third Bodo Accord which is being termed as the final accord which has allegedly settled the problem of Bodos finally. But a number of Bodo leaders have come out against this. Moreover, the Accord is being opposed by majority of the people of the region. Assam is a complex mix of ethnic, linguistic and religious groups and requires multi-layered autonomy to address the concerns of the people. But the successive govts. have only played one people against other and have not tried to solve the people's problems in democratic framework ensuring autonomy and democratic rights to diverse groups. Bodo Accord will not solve the problem in the region rather it will further aggravate the same. This will also not help the RSS-BJP in the North East where it is getting increasingly isolated and people's protests are growing.

(Central Committee of CPI(ML)-New Democracy

February 25, 2020)

A Tribute to an Inspiration

PK Murthy—From Puducherry to Chindwara and Back

He would walk briskly with a bamboo pole hung on his shoulder with two vessels on both sides containing water supported by ropes to his hutment located about a half a kilometre from the source. After reaching home he would rush through all the daily chores and get ready to pedal on his bicycle to report for work in the mine where he was working as a contract worker. This was part of a routine of our friend, Murthy in the mines area in Chhindwara (Madhya Pradesh) in the winter of 1972 when I had gone there to meet him. Together with his partner, Neeta the process of organizing the mining workers had begun by then. Murthy was 31 years old then, a well built, strong personality.

When on 22-03-2020 some of us went to see him in a hospital in Puducherry it was a frail, shrunk body on the bed hardly able to open his eyes and mouth. He could recognize us. He was struggling to talk to us, to say something but lifting his hand helplessly and placing it on his mouth. The desperation of his helplessness was

discernible. It reminded of a line in Victor Jara's last poem smuggled out of jail and sung, recited by Pete Seeger, "Oh song I cannot sing you when I must sing". It was clear that the suffering, despite the best efforts by his doctor friend to mitigate it, was soon to end. He was gone the next day. He was 80 years old.

In September 2018, some of us tried to contact Murthy on his mobile but he did not respond. In the meantime, a comrade from Chhindwara called up to enquire if Murthy was in Hyderabad. Once a year Murthy used to visit his cardiologist in Hyderabad, but then he was not in Hyderabad. Neither was he in the place of his activity. He was not responding to our calls. Sometime in mid-September we received a mail from him informing us that he had been hospitalized in Puducherry due to a malignant tumor in the urinary bladder. He further informed that he would be undergoing a delicate surgery that was risky. Hence, he had decided to bid goodbye to his friends. But he stayed on struggling against a fourth grade cancer for almost eighteen months. The doctor said if it were someone else that person would not have survived this long.

The Journey:

Edmond Rathiney, known to us as PK Murthy, was born in Saigon, Vietnam in 1941 to Valentine and Leon Rathiney when the latter was an official in the French colonial police establishment in Indo-China. The Rathineys, a traditional catholic Christian family, had two daughters and the family moved to Puducherry in 1954, the year when it got incorporated into India as a union territory, where Murthy did his schooling and graduation from the French Lycee. The eight years he lived in Puducherry were important in shaping his ideas. As a student, according to his doctor friend, he was stubborn and short-tempered, ready to get into fights. He was a fighter alright, not to be easily bullied. It was the anti-caste, self-respect movement against Brahminism led by Periyar that influenced him a lot and shaped his future political ideas. He was an ardent opponent of Brahminism and many a time would become very emotional in discussions on caste oppression. He moved to Paris in 1962 and while doing his engineering was conscripted into the French Army. Murthy became a refusenik, when he refused to be a part of the war in Algeria that won independence from French colonialism in the same year. He was jailed for six months as a result and later discharged from the army. He was confronted with issues of racism and colonialism and was influenced by the works of Frantz Fanon and Mao and by the time the Paris uprising in May 1968 took place he was a Marxist. As a research scholar in the Sorbonne, the centre of the student protest, he was active there in the tumultuous days of May 1968. He returned to India the same year. He was asked once why he came back to India to which he replied that it was the Spring Thunder of 1967 that brought him back.

It was sometime in 1970 that he came to Hyderabad for the first time. He was my sister's friend in the Sorbonne and he along with Neeta, left Paris in 1968 and stayed in Mumbai. It was during his visit to Hyderabad in 1970 that I first met him in our residence. He stayed in Hyderabad and left for Bombay only to come back with Neeta. In 1971 they rented a room in Himayatnagar and in order to earn a livelihood, he took up a job as a worker in a small industrial unit making wooden

products. Around this time, George Reddy was organizing the students in the Osmania University and Murthy was interested in meeting George. If my memory serves right there were four or five sittings in which issues ranging from guerilla warfare to the experiences of the Cuban, Chinese and Russian revolutions were discussed. Murthy and Neeta were already committed to the Marxist-Leninist movement and obviously, their effort was to convince George. This was a period when George's political ideas were taking concrete shape.

Murthy and Neeta left Hyderabad in March 1972 to the coal belt area in Chhindwara and the gruesome killing of George happened on 14th April. While leaving Hyderabad Murthy left some postal address with us for future contact. He was informed through a letter about the murder of George and the situation thereafter. A reply came after a month. On his suggestion I went to meet him in Chhindwara sometime in September, 1972. Murthy by then had joined as a worker in one of the mines.

This was the time when the nationalization process of coal mines in the country had begun and in May, 1973, the Nationalization Act came into effect. Murthy had joined as a loader on the surface and later as a worker in the mines. He began to organize the mine workers and this prompted the authorities to transfer him to the Accounts Department in order to isolate him from the workers. But Murthy began to expose the irregularities even there, and incurred the wrath of the Mafiadom that prevailed in most coal fields. An incident in which Murthy thrashed up a Mafia member made him an adored figure among the mine workers. He dared to question and fight, and that made him a leader. With the imposition of the Emergency in June 1975, Murthy and Neeta had to go underground but were arrested and detained under MISA. He was subsequently discharged from work and became a whole timer. In fact he was a whole-time activist but in order to organize the mine workers, that too in an entirely new area and being unknown, had to work as a miner. He was already a functionary of the CPI-ML, though all the while he was working within an existing union affiliated to the AITUC. In his 48 years of life in the coal belt area in Chhindwara he led many struggles of the miners and was always in the forefront. He built the Lal Jhanda Coal Mines Mazdoor Union, then affiliated to IFTU. He was Vice-President of IFTU and later President of AIFTU. While he lived and organized in the mines area, he also took active part in some of the international platforms. He was a member of the World Forum for Alternatives founded and led by Samir Amin. He was active in the organization of the International Mining Workers Conference in Telangana in 2017. Murthy also took part in the Social Forum meetings. He narrated to us one incident during the meeting of the European Social Forum in Paris in 2004. He was distributing some pamphlets and another guy younger to him was also doing the same. Since this person looked Indian, Murthy asked him his name. That person replied that his name was Prakash Rathiney. On further enquiry he found out that he was his cousin and that his sister lived in one of the suburbs of Paris. But Murthy did not reveal his identity. His mother and elder sister had already died by then. He figured out where his younger sister was and went to meet her. It was a reunion after 36 years.

A visit to his small office cum residence will show that here was a person who laboured to keep the place clean and in order. Everything should go where it belongs. He would fold his garments with such meticulousness that they appeared to have been ironed. Was this some kind of a fetish? No, he learnt to be tidy and keep his surroundings in order from his mother. Murthy was a wonderful cook and loved cooking. He was a very bad singer but would not hesitate a bit to sing and dance. He was a stubborn guy. After returning from Paris in 1968, he along with Neeta went to his family home in Puducherry and decided there, for whatever reasons, never to return to that place again. He visited Puducherry a couple of times in the last decade, but never went home. Even while in Puducherry under treatment, he refused to visit his old home.

The little story of our comrade cannot end without the mention of a person who was his school and college mate and his best friend in Puducherry. This friend had no contact with Murthy after 1968 till 2008. It was after forty years they met but their friendship was not lost and the bond revived. It was this doctor friend who looked after him during the last eighteen months of Murthy's life. We should salute him for all the care and affection that he showered on Murthy.

We have lost a good comrade and friend in Murthy's death. He was a wonderful, remarkable person full of strength in the struggle for a revolutionary change in the existing unequal, oppressive socio-economic system. He loved this struggle.

As one friend put it, a life well lived with his heart in the right place. The caption should then read, Back to Chhindwara.

“Kuchnahinthokam se kamkhwab-e sahardekhathohai

jistarafdekhanatha ab tak, udhardekha to hai- Majaz

If nothing else, we have at least dared to dream of dawn

that which we had never glimpsed, to that place our gaze has gone

Pradeep

How NOT to fight this CORONA Epidemic – Learn from Modi Sarkar

If you have only a hammer as the solution,
everything before you will appear to be a nail.

Corona Epidemic threat in India has exposed the deep fault lines of “governance” in India, exemplified by the current RSS-BJP govt. led by Modi-Shah duo. This epidemic threatens lives of millions and to begin with, the precautionary steps urgently needed to involve these millions of helpless, deprived Indian in its management and control.

Some facts to start with

A. The first exposure with Corona came to light in China’s Wuhan province on 7th January 2020 (some say Dec, 2019). By 12th its scare was already in discussion and China did well to share with the world to genome in order to help all countries prepare for it testing and management.

B. Corona spread to almost all of Europe and USA, also Japan, Iran and South Korea, but to a few countries below the Tropic of Capricorn. It is possible that the strain of the virus that reached India, Africa and Latin America was less virulent. Virus attacks are known to become less virulent over time, as they multiply and possible impact of temperature is also there. Close trade contact between Wuhan and EU and US were the main reasons for early spread there. Certainly this late and low spread in India, Africa, Latin America was not due to better screening, better care of contacts, better health of the people, etc.

C. China contained impact of Corona by sealing Wuhan town first and the province Hubei later and by mobilizing the resources of the country to make provisions. Closed factories were made to shift production and stitch masks, make sanitizers, respirators and other medical equipments on a large scale which was distributed far and wide. South Korea went on early wide based screening and testing, containing the infected and their contacts and with mass distribution, hygiene, etc. Social distance was widely promoted and practiced.

D. For most of the first two months, till March 5, Modi govt. remained in denial, its ministers even making fun of the seriousness of the problem. It failed to ban tourists who were the only vehicles of transmission of this virus. It failed to screen and test all the people coming from abroad, failed to set up such facilities and to quarantine persons arriving from abroad in all of its

several international airports. It will be fair to believe the govt. knew well in advance the seriousness of this killer virus that is spreads only through international travel, majority of those doing so are upper class and high officials, who often frown on attempts at being disciplined. They may actually have been the reason for this casual attitude. WHO had warned of the seriousness in December itself.

E. In India the govts' active steps have only surfaced after tourists and VIPs were caught with the disease and they tested positive. Then the Govt. immediately resorted to mass lockdown, curfew, creating mass hysteria through propaganda of the devastating nature of this infection and blaming the common people for not following the strict instructions. The PM said since you are not following Janata curfew, so we will impose it. The police has been most vigorous in implementing measures to fight this 'health' scare, not the doctors, health and food department officials.

F. Observe carefully the more the member of VIPs that are caught violating precautionary measures, the stricter are the restrictions on common people, even when they are not to blame for the spread that has so far taken place. The Parliament was to be seen as working, it has worked till 24 March, VIP gatherings are on, big hotels continue to function, partying continued, President's breakfasts were on, Madhya Pradesh swearing in continued, as did the Ram Lala Puja till 25th, in which the CM is taking part – all without masks or physical distancing. But for the common people there is complete lockdown, factories, shops, hospitals (almost complete), transport, trains, even coming out of the house with the police using batons, confiscating vehicles, lodging FIRs to drive people home.

People in several villages are petrified due to lack of work, earning and no shops or facilities being open. The worst condition is in large metros where millions of migrant workers are trying to get out and return home to far off villages in order to beat the unemployment, unhygienic crowded living conditions, fear of an epidemic spreading and sickness/ death looming over their heads in foreign land. There hutments are the most unsafe places for spread of Corona, though they may be as unconscious of this as they are of the dangers of Corona infection. But yes, these are the biggest potential sources of the Corona infection getting into stage of Community spread and becoming endemic (high disease rate in a geographically bound area). And then there are jails, for which the SC fortunately has given some orders to decongest. Airlines incidentally were the last to be locked down and private cars are still not in lock down.

G. On paper emergency supplies of food, health are on and some paltry payments of Rs 1000 per worker has been promised for the entire month. The govt is to send supplies to homes, but there is no structure in place for that. With such a clampdown all backend supplies are bound to choke and the panic is bound to intensify. As per reports 'percentage of customers unable to buy essential goods via e-commerce services between March 20 and 22 were 35% and it shot up to 79% on March 23-24. And percentage of customers unable to buy essential goods via retail stores was 17% on March 20-22 and 32% on Mach 23-24". (ET, 25.03.2020). Delhi Noida Border has already seen a road jam due to cars being stopped. We are living in an unprecedented

situation and if the deprivation lasts, there may be very genuine outbursts from deprived people, whose need for food and treatment will have become more important than safeguarding from Corona than the fear of 'hammer' of Modi's police.

H. It is important to note the specific aspects and scientific advisory to prevent its spread. It spreads by droplet infection, not as an airborne disease. That means it is important that droplets released by a patient or carrier can infect another victim. These droplets travel up to maximum of 1 meter when a person sneezes and the virus remains alive in the air for up to 2 to 3 hours. Open air is the best place to be in to fight the droplets, as they dissipate fast and virus concentration is the least in open spaces. These droplets may travel through the hand, mobile phones and other surfaces where the virus remains alive for longer periods of 1 to 2 days. One important factor to be highlighted is that people need not be scared that even one virus entering their body will cause the disease as disease is caused only when there is a sufficient dose of the infective agent which the body's natural defense cannot fight back. This virus readily spreads in immune compromised patients and is more fatal in patients of heart disease, diabetes, hypertension and asthma and in old people. Lastly in fighting all viral infections, role of nutrition well being is of upper most importance in building peoples' natural defense.

Prevention needs to include a) Social distancing up to 1 metre between common people and up to 2 metres from patients, b) use of masks by all persons, c) washing hands by all persons when they enter their homes and before they eat, with scrubbing for at least 20 seconds, d) isolation of all patients prone to be attacked and all old people, e) decongesting single room dwellings, f) nutritional care of the entire population and g) proper medical backup.

Since long duration measures, may be needed for months, all precautionary steps should have been planned to ensure that the entire society is able to accept and implement it, not just the haves. It must be kept in mind that most people live in congested colonies and very small houses.

These steps are:

1. There should have been a complete ban in foreign tourists with all non tourist arrivals being tested and quarantined at least since February, since the virus began spreading to Europe.
2. Decongest the slums and jails. Release all prisoners accused of minor crimes. Allow people to travel back to villages in trains sparsely filled. Ensure enough trains run and people don't panic. Shift excess persons from congested slums to vacant and under construction buildings temporarily. Instruct all old and sick persons to be in houses. Rally the youth for the various tasks necessary for taking care of society.
3. Ensure high nutrition diet to all poor by providing them with extra protein diet foods like eggs, meats, pulses or with extra funds to buy these. Put in place supply chains. This will also build their confidence in cooperating.
4. Take emergency measures for production of masks, soaps, sanitizers in each block/ village by organizing the village committees. Send teams of village youth to each houses to distribute these, two masks for each person, soaps and sanitizers to each house and to educate and demonstrate to

each household the value of this and of keeping distances. Develop production and supply claims for above items on war footing.

5. If a community spread breaks out these measures will be required for months and several hospitals/ medical care will be required. So if the govt is serious it should convert empty schools into make shift hospitals, by establishing such set ups in villages and bastis, equipping and training personal for this.

What should not have been done:

1. Shut down as has been done is bad. It reflects the response of a nervous govt, unsure of what to do now after it has failed to act in time. It is already spreading panic due to fear of the 'unknown'. Population already burdened with poor facilities and resources, now deprived of even their jobs and means to reach home are in greater panic. Even officials, including the police, apart from pushing people back in to their homes, are nervously rubbing alcohol on their hands and praying repeatedly. With the approach spelt out above, officials and common people could have been and should have been inspired and rallied together to fight the menace.

2. The govt. has given direction to its political planning by asking people to come together on March 22 at 5 pm to beat thalis and blow conch shells as a social drive, basically to drive people towards exorcist measures of 'driving away the virus' ghost. Baba Ramdev is advocating Surya Namaskar twice a day. Some RSS persons are advocating Gau Mutra and others vegetarianism. All these are being promoted to divert peoples' attention away from the real cause, i.e. failure of the govt to ensure steps that will take care of the prevention steps as well as the great impending requirement of food and care, which the govt. has no plan to implement. The more the crisis aggravates, the more it is likely to intensify this obscurantist drive as well as 'nail' the peoples' protests with the police 'hammer'.

Dr. Ashish Mital

G20 Summit: Abdication of Responsibility

The Communique issued after the virtual G 20 summit on March 26 2020 denotes total abdication of any responsibility by advanced economies to address the problems created by COVID19 pandemic in the lives and livelihood of a great mass of people. The fact that G20 summit was held months after WHO notified the pandemic as a global health emergency has more to do with its spread to USA and West European countries than the havoc created by this new mutant of Corona. Not long ago the mandarin in White House was gloating over the discomfiture of China.

The very fact that the Summit was held in the first place is due to the widespread anger among the people in western imperialist countries against casual and callous handling of the looming pandemic and disruption in supply chain of drugs, masks, in general the items necessary for tackling the health emergency. Production of these items was long shifted to other countries due to their labour intensive nature or greater expenses in meeting mandatory environmental requirements for their production in western countries. Now they need them, hence the talk of co-ordinated global response, of “Sharing materials and increasing production of medical supplies” and the like.

G20 Communique has no concrete measure to help the developing and less developed countries, in fact the overwhelming majority of the people of the globe. That these countries face resource crunch has been “noted” but not acted upon; effusive words but nothing more. The Communique does not have any concrete measure for helping the poorer countries.

The failure of the Summit can be seen from the elementary steps it failed to take to address the situation created by the pandemic. It failed to call for ceasefire in different parts of the world. Imperialists and reactionaries are waging wars in different parts of the world but the Summit did not issue such a Call. Moreover, it did not call for lifting of all sanctions at least for the period of tackling of pandemic so that medical and other supplies can be ensured in the fight against the pandemic. Even the suggestion to provide corridors for transport of goods- medical and other supplies was not agreed to. This was the minimum expected from the Summit but the western powers did not agree to these measures.

On the medical aspect, the Communique says, “We fully support and commit to WHO’s mandate in co-ordinating the international fight against the pandemic”. G20 “commit to provide immediate resources to WHO’s COVID19 Solidarity Response Fund”. With US and West

Europe emerging as the epicenters of the Pandemic, this commitment makes immense sense in their own interest.

The major part of the Communique deals with the economic aspects and addressing the disruptions caused by the Pandemic in these countries. While countries like India are mainly dealing through police response, the unrest brewing in these countries is being handled with injecting large stimuli into the economy. The Communique notes, "We are injecting \$ 5 trillion into global economy to counteract the social, economic and financial aspects of the pandemic." US has enacted a \$2.2 trillion package equaling 11% of its GDP while Germany has allotted nearly 20% of the GDP to address the pandemic. \$5 trillion package is mostly in these countries and a major part of it is to help the big business, though, to contain the social unrest, measures to help the working people and small businesses are also part of it. There are already reports of social unrest in Italy and some other countries in the West. \$ 5 trillion package includes all these packages and there is no commitment of any help to any poor country in the world, Africa included, though the continent has been mentioned by name. G20 mentioned that they are "ready to mobilize development and humanitarian financing" but there is nothing more than expressing their readiness; in brief no concrete measure.

The Communique notes the disruption to Employment and Livelihood but fails to outline any global or co-ordinated response to this. The communiqué merely notes, "We also ask the ILO and the OECD to monitor the pandemic's impact on unemployment." It does not go an inch further to specify what they would do after monitoring this impact.

Govts. are injecting a lot of public funds to tackle the pandemic. In a number of countries private hospitals, nursing homes and clinics are being brought under govt. control/nationalized. A large dose of public money is being injected to lighten the economic impact of the pandemic. However, it all only means using public funds to safeguard private capital from the shocks whose impact is largely due to one-sided siphoning off of public funds for private profit, scaling down and cutting on the public health schemes and institutions. Now with deep crisis, public money is being spent on saving capitalism from a catastrophe of its own making. It is a new version of Keynesianism which had been pressed into service to save capitalism from the Great Depression and whose various incarnations have been adopted in the crisis situations. This only shows that capitalism even in its highest stage, imperialism, is inherently unstable and needs support of the state not only for suppression of workers but also for its own survival. It essentially and since long has been public money maintaining private interests.

Even in this hour of grave concern, as so expressed by the rulers of G20, they did not fail to emphasize, though tongue in cheek, the enlisting of private sector in this fight against the pandemic. They were more blatant in dispelling any doubt of gratis help to needy countries. They committed to make the medical supplies "widely available" but "at affordable prices." With people losing their means of livelihood and employment, what remains "affordable" for them?

The Communique is whole sale abdication of the responsibility by the developed countries for the consequences of the policies they have thrust upon the world i.e. unbridled privatization. These policies have seen decline of expenditure on public health and refusal to invest in

scientific research for addressing the diseases still dogging the developing world killing millions every year and the mushrooming of private hospitals & commercialization of the health services in the govt. hospitals. All this in name of “public private partnership”, where public pays all the bills and private cashes all the cheques.

Along with the news of G20 summit came the news that Indian PM Modi has advocated reform of WHO. However, no details were forthcoming nor any relation of this to the WHO’s handling of COVID19 pandemic explained. One is left wondering whether the former RSS pracharak was taking objection to the “science based global response” mentioned in the Communique for which WHO’s mandate for coordinating the international fight had been supported and whether he would like it to be replaced by a faith- based response!

CPI(ML)-New Democracy Condemns Killing of Sikhs in Kabul

On Wednesday (March 25, 2020) morning, fanatic terrorists attacked a Guru Hari Rai Gurudwara in Kabul. In their indiscriminate firing upon the worshippers they killed 27 of them and seriously injured 8 of them. This was a gruesome attack aimed at terrorizing minorities in Afghanistan. Earlier this month, 32 persons (Shias) were killed when a mosque was attacked in Afghanistan.

Islamic State unit working in Afghanistan has claimed responsibility for the attack. Taliban had earlier denied any hand in the attack. Islamic State, which is trying to expand its base and operations in Afghanistan is carrying out attacks on soft targets. It is worth recalling that IS operatives were brought or allowed to come to Afghanistan after the debacle they had suffered in Syria.

CPI (ML)-New Democracy strongly condemns this dastardly attack on the minority civilians. Terrorists who carried out this attack must be brought to book. Their nefarious designs must be exposed and their heinous activities be punished.

CPI (ML)-New Democracy notes with deep concern the rising attacks on the minorities in South Asia. This sub-continent, which has historically been a place of shared life and shared aspirations, is witnessing unchecked activities and increase in strength of the homophobic forces targeting minorities in the interest of their power games. The imperialist powers with their omnipresent tentacles have since long been using these terrorist assets and majoritarian forces to increase their loot and plunder of the sub-continent rich in natural resources, labour power and vast market.

CPI(ML)-New Democracy appeals to all progressive, democratic, secular forces to rise against such attacks and isolate the forces responsible for such attacks. We condole the death of those have fallen in this attack. People of countries of the region must realize that those who are sowing discord among the people and attacking minorities are enemies of the people and doing the dirty work of imperialist powers intent on subjugating the region and its people. People

belonging to majority community have the main responsibility to fight such anti-people forces which kill minorities and have the larger aim of oppressing the entire people.

(Issued by Central Committee, CPI(ML)-New Democracy on March 26, 2020)

Fighting Corona : Symbolism is Not the Need of the Hour

(Ms. Nirmala Seetharaman, Union Finance Minister announced a package of Rs. 1.70 lakh crores (roughly 22 billion US \$). Compare it with the package passed by US Senate of US \$ 2.2 trillion i.e. 2200 billion. Modi Govt.'s package is only 1% of the US package, but is to take care of four times the population of USA. Not to be misled by the propaganda of smaller Indian economy, the package is less than 1% of GDP as opposed to over 10% in US, Singapore and several other countries. This is on top of the miniscule amount spent by the Govt. on Health and the abysmal condition of Health infrastructure in the country.)

The announcement is scary as it shows the lack of intent of the RSS-BJP Govt. which has bestowed much more on its corporate friends – Ambanis, Adanis, Chandras, etc.- and allowed loot of public exchequer by those close to it. It has proved itself unequal to, or rather, is unmindful of the challenge facing the Indian people. Some of the announcement is just a rehash of the existing schemes like 2000/- Rs. payment to peasants and some of them plain noise like increase of Rs. 20/- per day to MNREGS workers i.e. if they get the work once the lockdown stops.

*We are here posting a comment by Com. **Aparna**, IFTU President, on the announcement.)*

The Financial Relief of 1.7 lakh crore rupees announced for India by the Finance Minister is unlikely to make a major impact on the lives of those who need assistance urgently. While announcing an extra 5kg of grain and a kilo of dal per month per head for those covered by PDS, she skipped the details, where lies the catch. There is apparently not going to be home delivery of rations. There is no stop to the distribution being tied to only those ration cards which are linked to Aadhar.And the core issue is that the demand has been for ration, soap and cooking fuel for all poor linked to doorstep delivery. This has not been even commented on.

The FM has doled pittances to single women, pensioners and disabled- Rs 500 for women in these times when the Govts across the country including in Delhi are failing to protect from the police the right to opening of small grocery shops. There is inevitable hoarding, inevitable price rise for a large section of working population who have no ration cards especially in large metros.

Construction workers throughout the country should have been given minimum wage of the state from the colossal amounts of money lying hoarded by state govts in welfare funds meant for workers alone. Even the Supreme Court had sometime earlier bewailed the refusal of

Governments to part with the massive sums of these funds lying locked in Banks TheRs. 2000 announced for peasants is merely a repetition of the old announcement and should not have been drawn from the corona relief fund. Similarly, what is the point of hiking MGNREGA wages, that to by a princely sum of twenty rupees, in a lockdown situation. There should be account transfer to all of them, of every paisa of their old dues, plus a month's minimum wage immediately and for next three months.

A massive human issue unaddressed by the FM is the thousands of migrants stranded in cities; planes have brought in people stranded abroad and Govts have politely refrained from protecting the country by compulsorily quarantining them for 15 days. But what about running special trains to take these workers home safely with full precautions? Heart rending stories of thousands upon thousands walking on roads to their homes thousands of miles away braving hunger and police beatings on the way, with their small children bearing all this with their parents! Stories of thousands and thousands of them stranded on roads without food and shelter in the states far far away from their homes! Those making the announcement of lockdown and those cheering it should have spared a thought for these. Workers are braving the brunt! How about their rental payments if they are trying to stay where they are- landlords are at times themselves dependent on the rentals for survival. Why should Govt. not open closed and under construction and unsold buildings and house for this population?

While free refills are promised under Ujjwala scheme, what about the huge population which is uncovered by it? Why not free cooking fuel to every home and no tax and surcharges of any govt on the cooking gas cylinders? That would provide real relief to even the lower and middle class who do not earn a govt wage. Coverage of EPF deposits of both employer and employee by Govt is not so simple and direct as it looks, and allowing workers to withdraw their own EPF is hardly a govt's intervention. Govt. should have also clearly stated that they would pay the dues of all contract workers employed in organizations of any size who are being paid less than co permanent workers.

Many concrete relief measures have been demanded by trade union organizations and people's organizations which the Govt has not bothered to address itself to. Rather than addressing the task of connecting to people's need of food and shelter, of effectively providing protective gear to Health personnel, the Central Govt. has once again made superficial announcements. They are unlikely to make any impact.

Arrest of Com. Naresh Condemned

While the country is occupied with facing threat of Corona virus, Telangana police is intensifying attacks against communist revolutionaries.

Telangana police has arrested Com. Naresh, a prominent revolutionary leader and member of Kothagudem-Bhadadri District Committee of CPI(ML)-New Democracy. He was arrested from Gundalamandal.

CPI(ML)-New Democracy strongly condemns the arrest and demands his immediate and unconditional release.

Police Action Against Shaheen Bagh Protest Condemned

On 24th March a big posse of Delhi Police forcibly removed the protesters from Shaheen Bagh. A small number of protesters who were at the site, the number being regulated by the participants in deference to the Delhi Govt's advisory, as a precautionary measure against Corona virus outbreak, were arrested. The protesters were roughed up. The police went on to damage the arrangements at the site and destroy the paintings and art work of participants, which were over the last hundred days. Those arrested were charged under various provisions of Epidemic Diseases Act 1897! This was one thing on which the Narendra (Modi) and Arvind (Kejriwal) absolutely agreed. Some music to the revisionist liberal ears!

We are here publishing two statements condemning police action in Shaheen Bagh. First is a statement by IFTU and the second issued jointly by women's organizations.

IFTU: Condemn RSS Govt's Male Police Crackdown on Women Protestors in Delhi under Corona Garb!

Women Did Not Kneel- Defeat of Manuwadi Forces!

In a horrible, indefensible and patriarchal show of state strength, Modi Govt's Policemen cracked down on Women protestors at Shaheen Bagh in the early hours of Tuesday morning on the 101th day of protest. In a bizarre defiance of orders of lockdown to prevent the spread of Corona virus hundreds of police gathered in the area and stormed the protest site where, in deference to the lockdown call, women protestors were present in regulated number. Videos show male police grabbing and pushing the women. The same site had seen the creative response of the protestors on 22nd in response to Janata Curfew, when women kept a token presence and placed their slippers at the site to mark their protest.

Police has since also forcibly shut down the Turkman Gate and Jaffrabad protest sites.

The Modi Govt is trying to gag under police boots, the outcry all over the country against the Manuwadi Hindu Rashtra project of CAA NPR NRC. These women protests have given continuity and energy to the protests by women, Dalits, Adivasis, working class, and so many other sections opposing the project. Shaheen Bagh was in the forefront. But lockdown and Sec 144 is being used to fight democratic rights, not the epidemic. Gathering hundreds of police at one place shows the Modi Govt's total lack of concern for the health of the people. This includes the health of the hundreds of police personnel who have hardly been able to practice social distancing!

IFTU condemns the police crackdown. We demand withdrawal of NPR NRC CAA package by the Central Govt so that the people unitedly can seriously concentrate on fighting the deadly novel corona virus. After all, callousness of Govts has placed this whole burden on our shoulders.

Four Women's Organizations' Statement

CARONA LOCKDOWN PRETEXT TO MUZZLE DEMOCRACY

The 24th of March 2020 will go down in history as the day democracy and socialism as enshrined in our constitution, suffered a critical blow in two stages, namely the crass manner in which the protestors from Shaheen Bagh were evicted, and the lockdown of the country for 21 days. It is impossible to not connect the two dots. On the 23rd, more than 70 women's organizations and individuals issued an appeal to the Government/ Institutions to repeal the CAA and withdraw the process of NPR/NRC. The response they received was a horrible, indefensible and patriarchal show of state strength. While visuals of the lockdown to save the people from a pandemic are going viral on the social media, the government's priority was to clear off the Shaheen Bagh protest site. At 3 am, the police started cordoning the area and in a few hours were busy demolishing the site and arresting protestors at Shaheen Bagh in the early hours of Tuesday morning on the 101th day of protest. The sites of Jafrabad, Inderlok, Turkman Gate too were dismantled. Protesting women maintaining their social distance and observing the safety precautions according to the guidelines of the Ministry of Health, were arrested from all the sites. While the police have been going round the rest of the city asking people to stay indoors if they do not have any work of critical importance, it was busy supervising re-painting over the protest site paintings at Jamia and Shaheen Bagh. The sneaky underhand activity of the government is reflective of its misogynistic, anti-democratic ideology. While on the one hand they raised the bogey of the virus being a threat to the women, on the other they could not tolerate the idea that a bunch of women could stand up and defy a virulently male order. A feminine face of resistance was countered by every vile tactic possible, from the police allowing goons to shoot at the protestors, barricade and beat them up, throw petrol bombs and worse, burn up entire colonies to intimidate the protestors. The refusal of the women to cow down seems to have irked the government even more. We would like to tell the government that their action is not reflective of their victory. Rather it is shameful that they had to use shady underhand techniques to quash a perfectly democratic and legal movement. As the interlocutors of the Court are pointing out, the government should have negotiated with them and assuaged their fears rather than forcibly evict them and paint over their site. The possibility of a resurgence of support for the women of Shaheen Bagh or other antiCAA/NPR/NRC exercise now faces a challenge of a deliberate mismanagement of the Covid crisis. The Prime Minister has declared a lockdown for 21 days, ensuring that there is no organized protest for days and weeks while it can frame any policies or laws it deems fit. The government is aware that the civil society is clamouring for more social welfare cover and budget allocations for those who will suffer double jeopardy with the lockdown. As over 85% of the employment in our country is in the informal sector, a complete economic lockdown, with no economic respite will kill small and medium industries, workers and families. We demand that the government relook its priorities. We have cities and towns in

lockdown and curfew over a pandemic that may leave hundreds dead and thousands infected. Our national priority should be to protect the lives and livelihoods of the weakest and most vulnerable sections of our population that is running in millions as a result of the economic losses suffered due to the lockdown. A look at the global economies will show that the countries are battling the virus by increasing testing, quarantine facilities, intensive care units, apart from social distancing and provide free masks, sanitizers, soap and testing facilities to all. Japan built 1000 bed makeshift hospitals, as did Korea, Italy and Spain. Every country is providing free testing and treatment to all affected. The economic buffer is provided by stimulus packages in the form of rations, money transfers, tax rebates and other measures to ensure that no one suffers a wage loss. Though we are under lockdown, our demand for social security alongwith social distancing will not diminish. It will remain as persistent as our demand to Repeal CAA, stop NPR/NRC. Our support to the brave women of Shaheen Bagh remains as unwavering as their commitment to the cause of repealing the CAA, and withdrawal of NPR/NRC. May they return from this hiatus stronger and victorious. In its zeal to demolish the sites, the government has failed to squash women's resistance. Our government should be working towards saving lives and not fragile male egos.

We Demand:

- An unconditional release of all anti-CAA protestors. We demand that all cases against the protestors be withdrawn. We are opposed to the picking of people without charges and later framing fictitious charges on them. Protests of the women of Shaheen Bagh have constitutional validity that has been upheld by the court.
- Increase national budget allocation to Health. Testing and treatment for all affected should be done free of cost.
- Ensure Food Security by rehauling the public distribution system and ensuring rations to all below poverty line. Covid-19 will be fatal for over 53% of our women who are anemic, and nearly 56% of our population that is malnourished.
- Use the Prime Minister's Relief Fund to provide succor to the millions who risk losing lives due to the economic crunch caused by the closing of the economy
- Repeal CAA, no NPR/NRC Signed: (24 March 2020)

1. NATIONAL FEDERATION OF INDIAN WOMEN

2. PragatisheelMahilaSangathan

3. Centre for Struggling Women

4. Swastik MahilaManch

Doctors' Team's Conclusions on Violence in North East Delhi

A team of doctors had visited the areas affected by the violence from February 23-26 in Northeast Delhi. The team consisted of eight doctors and members of the team went to the areas on a number of days. They had received calls and appeals for urgent medical aid to be reached to the affected area. They made repeated attempts to reach the violence hit area but could not do so on 24th and 25th as these attempts were foiled by the police. We finally managed to reach the Al Hind hospital in Old Mustafabad area of Northeast Delhi, on 26th of February. The Al Hind hospital was one medical facility that had been totally overwhelmed by this tragedy. Apart from 26 February, doctors visited the violence affected areas on 28th February as well. We are here reproducing the main findings of their Study and recommendations of the Team. (From the Press Release.)

Main findings of the study

- Describing the situation in the Al Hind hospital on the evening of 23rd, 24th and 25th, one of the doctors at Al Hind hospital told us:
“..... Live people, writhing with agony had come to the Al Hind hospital. We did not even have the courage to look at them; we were becoming dispirited. But it is the local people of this area who gave us courage. They said – ‘Doctor sahib if you lose heart like this then we will die; We shall lose all hope.’ It is the people of this area who have assured us..... We do not even know that those who died were Hindus or Muslims. We were weeping because we were seeing people die of their agony and that we were feeling helpless.
- A hospital that catered to between 30 to 40 patients daily, and that too suffering from common ailments, was simply overwhelmed with more than 200 patients who came on the 24th February itself. By 25th February, this figure reached to between 350 to 400. Nearly seventy-five percent of the cases were those who had sustained piercing injuries either from charras (pellets), or bullets. Of the rest, majority were fractured limbs or skull etc.; a small proportion were simple blunt injuries or grievous injuries, for example burn injuries. There was a rampant use of firearms in this violence.
- Even though government ambulances were stationed on the main highway, they were not allowed inside the localities resulting in unnecessary loss of lives and enhanced suffering for those injured.
- A young man with fractured skull and part of his brain popping out had to be taken on trolley to the ambulance stationed near the police barricade on the main road. But when the patient reached the barricade, the injured men accompanying the patient were severely beaten up by the Delhi police men stationed there whose constant refrain was – ‘inhonehamaare do-teen log mare hain; das-pandrahinkebhimarne do.’ It was only upon persistent pleading and intervention by the CRPF personnel that the police ultimately allowed the patient to be taken to GTB hospital (Delhi Govt.’s Hospital draining this area).
- Another young man’s testicles were chopped off by men reportedly shouting ‘Jai Shri Ram’, and the attendants accompanying the man had told the doctors that the attackers first pulled his legs apart stretching the area where the lower limbs converge (the perineum), causing a massive tear and then deepened it with a sharp edged weapon.

- Two young males presented with bullets lodged in their bodies, a good two days after sustaining the injury. One of them had a bullet in the left axilla, while the other had a bullet in the abdomen. They had been hiding for more than forty-eight hours out of fear of the police, which, they said, would more likely treat them as rioters rather than as victims. When suggested to go to the GTB hospital immediately, they refused saying that they would rather die a respectable death at home than die due to neglect in the hospital.

Finally, both of them agreed to go to GTB hospital with a doctor from the team accompanying them. Within a distance of a kilometre to the highway, the policemen stopped the ambulance four times, and each time they removed the dressing over the bullet wound to check it for themselves, despite the doctor assuring them that he is a specialist doctor. Most shockingly, the policemen insisted that ‘only you can transfer the patient’ and made the victims’ relative disembark from the ambulance.

The sincerity and quality of medical response of the government

- Even as the dead bodies in the GTB hospital mortuary were mounting, the hospital authorities failed to perform the post-mortems of these bodies within time, as they were waiting for “instructions” from the government, indicating the possibility of attempting to tamper with the cause of death. Finally, the post-mortems were carried out after the order dated 26 February, 2020, issued by the Delhi Minorities Commission instructing the Superintendent of GTB hospital– “..... *to conduct post-mortem procedure on all these bodies and on any fresh cases within 24 hours of arrival of each dead body.*”
- Numerous cases of inappropriately treated fractures and bullet injuries were encountered.
- There was not even one ‘Mohalla Clinic’ in the entire Mustafabad area and as regards coverage under publicly funded health insurance schemes, it was said:

“Many of the poor people in the area are migrant labourers who have come from other states; they neither have the documents required for coverage under such schemes, nor are they actually covered. Anyways, which private hospital will be willing to provide ‘world class treatment’ to these victims of violence who have been pouring in to AI Hind hospital over last three days.”
- Even as government agencies were completely absent from relief work, a large relief camp had been set up by the Delhi Waqf Board by pitching in tents within the Idgah premises in Shiv Vihar. We set-up our medical camp within this compound, as indeed were other medical relief camps by the St. Stephens Hospital, Holy Family Hospital and some other NGOs. In any society that claims itself to be secular and non-discriminatory towards any section of its people, it is the government that is looked upon as the principal guarantor of these values. Provisioning of relief either by or through religious organizations primarily reinforces the belief that people can ultimately depend only on their religious organizations in times of crisis. This cannot but undermine the secular credentials of the state.

Despite being the National Capital Territory of India; despite the fact that some of the best medical institutions of the country of national and international repute, as also the fact that Delhi has hospitals which attract a large number of international patients by way of medical tourism, none of this stands any guarantee of easily accessible, effective medical care for the people in the times

when medical catastrophe strikes, given the fact that the victims of such catastrophe are invariably the poorest segments of the society.

Just as there is behaviour of the people with respect to seeking health care, there is also the behaviour of health institutions. The experience of this violence directed primarily against the Muslim minority, actually shows that dominant social and political attitudes can make health institutions inaccessible to the suffering masses even though these may be physically located right in the midst of the people. Instead of reaching out to the people in the most testing of times, the public health institutions, let alone the private ones, clearly fell much short of what was expected of them.

Some recommendations for alleviating the immediate suffering

Winning back peoples' confidence by providing them effective relief and assuring them that the society at large does not share the world view of those who attacked them and that of their political sponsors, remains a big challenge for all of us. The tragedy is too huge to be mended by the efforts of civil society alone. There has to be a large-scale organized effort on part of the government to heal the physical, mental, psychological, social and financial wounds which have disfigured the lives of people in the violence affected areas of Northeast Delhi. Towards this end we feel the following measures can be of immense help in providing medical and other relief to the affected people.

- There clearly is a need for medical services to proactively reach out to the community in the violence affected areas, seek out the patients and provide them effective treatment for physical injuries, mental and psychological trauma in facilities existing or created closest to their homes. Only those cases requiring specialized care in hospital settings need be shifted to hospitals.
 - Outreach teams constituted of doctors, and other paramedical staff, equipped with necessary equipment, medicines and other consumables be constituted forthwith.
 - Existing public infrastructure in different localities be used to create field hospitals, may these be government dispensaries, urban Primary Health Centres or the schools and other such places.
 - Social workers and civil society volunteers need to be deployed in large numbers to reach out to the people house to house and inquire about the injured or those sick and requiring help. Help need be taken in this regard from departments of Social Work in universities in Delhi.
- In the hospitals nearest to the affected areas, a ward need be separately designated for some time to expeditiously deal with cases of serious injuries due to communal violence. If separate facilities can be established in the hospitals to deal with cases of such infectious diseases, the same needs to be done with respect to treating the victims of such communal violence as well. In the outbreak of violence of the kind Northeast Delhi has been a witness to, death could sometimes be far more imminent than in case of an outbreak of a dreaded infectious disease. The high case fatality among victims of violence pointed to above, clearly establishes this.
- Mental and psychological health care is a pressing need when it comes to dealing with the victims of such violence. Teams of psychologists and mental health experts shall have to be created to provide the necessary counselling and medical relief in this regard on a more long-term basis. This constitutes a necessary measure to fortify the healing touch.

AIKMS Demand of Immediate Release of Dr. Ashish Mital and Withdrawal of Case/s against him

Yogi led RSS-BJP Govt. in UP has once again resorted to suppression of democratic rights of the people, this time under the pretext of controlling Corona virus pandemic. Yesterday evening i.e. on March 23, 2020, UP govt. has arrested All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS) General Secretary Dr. Ashish Mital from his house in Allahabad (UP). Another activist Mr. Umar Khalid has also been arrested. These arrests have been made to suppress the protest against CAA-NRC-NPR going on in Mansoor Park in the city.

UP govt. has made repeated attempts to remove the protesters from the protest site. This has been the Govt.'s attempt from the beginning i.e. much before any talk of Corona virus pandemic had started in India. Yogi Govt. has brutally suppressed women protesters in Lucknow, Aligarh, Etawa and several other centres in UP. This is in addition to large scale firings and killings by the police of the protesters in UP in December, 2019. A large number of Muslim youth and democratic rights activists and Muslim youth have been arrested in UP. People have been fined huge sums and have been forced to pay large sums of money for allegedly causing damage to property. Large hoardings of those falsely accused by the police have been put up in the capital Lucknow. All these violations of democratic rights have taken place only on the whims of the Govt. without any sanction of any Court or any basis in law. RSS-BJP have made UP a laboratory on impunity.

Dr. Mital has been charged under Epidemic Diseases Act 1897, another relic of colonial rule, shamelessly used by the presentday rulers. Even the provisions of this Act have been abused against Dr. Ashish and Umar Khalid. This Act empowers the designated official to require any person from refrain from doing an act or to deal with the property under his control in the interest of controlling an epidemic disease. The violation of that order is to be treated as under Section 188 of the IPC. The provisions of the Act have no bearing on the case against Dr. Mital.

The Admn. had issued a notice to Dr. Mital on March 21 in which he was asked to “immediately get Dharna by women stopped and fully cooperate with the Admn. If you do not do so, then presuming your full involvement, lawful legal action will be taken against you.” (Translated from Hindi original) Everybody knows that the Dharna was started by women against CAA-NRC-NPR which are attacks on secularism. People came out in protest in large numbers and several organizations supported these protests.

This direction of the Admn. and subsequent arrest for non-compliance of this Order is a gross abuse of the provisions of the Epidemic Diseases Act 1897 in that what is covered is the act under the power of the person or relating to a property under his control and cannot cover acts which are not his/her own. Now everybody knows that protests by women in exercise of their democratic rights have neither been initiated or conducted by any person or organization, rather these are expressions of the anger of the people against the acts of the Govt. How can the Govt. issue such unlawful order under the Act except through gross abuse of power.

This is an absolute travesty of fact that a person of the training of Dr. Mital, a trained doctor from the AIIMS, New Delhi, would do anything which will amount to spreading any epidemic disease. In fact even the women protesters have been taking all the precautions against spread of Corona virus. Women protesters have themselves reduced the number of participants in protests in view of Corona virus threat. But what UP Govt. wants has nothing to do with precautions against spread of Corona virus but is meant to suppress the movement against CAA-NRC-NPR. It is utterly shameless on the part of the Govt. to use even such a looming tragedy for its nefarious designs.

Central Executive Committee of All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS) strongly condemns arrest of Dr. Ashish Mital, its General Secretary, and of other activists. We apprehend that UP govt. has taken this action against Dr. Mital also for his role in the peasant movement in UP, particularly in the region. Yogi Govt. has been protecting the illegal Mafia and suppressing the workers engaged in sand mining against which AIKMS has been continuously struggling. Dr. Ashish Mital is a member of the Working Group of All India KisanSangharsh Co-ordination Committee (AIKSCC) and has been playing an active role in building peasant movement particularly in UP.

It is also worth recalling that in order to put pressure on Dr. Ashish Mital, UP Govt. had sealed Ultrasound Centre of his wife, Dr. Madhavi Mital, on 8th March 2020. Dr. Madhavi Mital is a renowned Ultrasonologist in Allahabad (Prayagraj) UP. She has done her MBBS and MD in Radio Diagnosis from AIIMS, New Delhi.

CEC of AIKMS demands that Dr. Ashish Mital and other activists should be released unconditionally and immediately. We also demand that frivolous cases against him should be withdrawn.

(Issued by V. Venkataramaiah, President, AIKMS on March 24, 2020)