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**Organ of the
Central Committee CPI(ML)**

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in J&K**

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Hail the Corporate ; Damn the People

EWith the second wave of Corona pandemic ebbing in some parts of the country, there is yet again a tide of propaganda to make the people forget the loss of lives of near and dear ones, the loss of livelihood unleashed on the people by the casual, callous, nay criminal, Govt. There is an attempt to ignore any lessons from one of the deadliest mayhems unleashed on the hapless people and to make people forget their miseries through time tested diversionary tactics which the ruling classes of the country had learnt from their masters and mastered over time.

Second wave of Corona was marked by Govt. refusal to take any steps to address the situation flagged by the first wave despite most of the experts warning of coming of second wave. In fact, the Govt. patted itself on the back on its success in containing the pandemic. On 28 January, Mr. Modi claimed his Govt., by controlling Covid, had “saved the world from disaster”. Claims of similar nature but in less grandiloquent terms were also made by several state govts. and advertised in newspapers. On the other hand, Central Govt. embarked on super-spreader events like organizing Kumbh in April 2021 and organizing big election meetings without observing minimum guidelines. It appeared that the Govt. cared little for what may happen in second wave or actually wanted to bring it on for its oblique purposes. Just as,

utilizing the first wave, it had removed the protest sites against CAA-NRC-NPR, it hoped to utilize the second wave to remove the protest sites against 3 Agri Laws and for MSP. While it failed in its design against the farmers' movement, there has been unprecedented exposure among the people of its criminal mishandling of the second wave.

And not only the Central Govt., all state institutions abdicated their responsibility and abandoned the people to the virus. They assumed no responsibility except of collecting taxes, even on medicines, medical equipments and vaccines. They did not hesitate to further extract high taxes on essential items especially diesel and petrol, making them the costliest in the region, and this rise increasing prices of all commodities as is always the effect where these items are concerned. For April and May the social responsibility of the state had withered away, reduced to its bare structure of machinery of repression. Criminal cases continued to be filed even with increased vigour even for raising the issue of unavailability of Oxygen or criticizing the Govt. for its mishandling. Organs of the state, especially its top brass, came down on all attempts to pin the blame on the Govt. and moved for exonerating the Govt. Even where some High Courts came down heavily on the State, Supreme Court came to rescue staying the orders or at least modifying them. They stepped in not in favour of the people, but to save the state. It appeared that state is everything, people nothing and all provisions of the Constitution about the rights of the people are held in abeyance in such situations.

The extent of the people's sufferings and helplessness is in public domain, is widely known and commented on. This wave showed how narrow the ruling class is and has waved away illusions of many of belonging to the charmed circle, especially of many in the

middle classes who used to show themselves more loyal than royal. This rude awakening has shaken their misplaced and cultivated faith in the system. For the lot of the poor and powerless it was the most horrible scenario when even the pretense of care was thrown off and bloody claws of the rulers dug deep into their depleted flesh and demoralized spirits. People did what they mostly do in such situations. Abandoned and oppressed by the rulers, they did whatever they could to help each other, which could not be much given the enormity of the situation and fickleness of their resources, having been further depleted by the earlier wave of the pandemic. Hundreds of millions had been out of job, hundreds of millions have sunk into poverty even though its line lies at the rock bottom of bare survival. Hundreds of millions had to dump all savings or sell off whatever they could. On the other hand, the very rich, the billionaires, increased their wealth phenomenally i.e. by over 35% in the first year of pandemic. The biggest beneficiaries are the two chums of RSS-BJP, Ambani and Adani, who have registered very sharp increase in their wealth. This continued and even increased fleecing of the people on the one hand and showering largesse on their favourites on the other by the Centre was not altered even during the pandemic, rather got further sharpened. How this shaped the response of the higher echelons of state, closer to the real powers in the system and the media controlled by the corporate, is there for everyone to see.

In managing the pandemic, lack of transparency on the part of the Govt. has been widely commented upon. It has been seen in the first wave and on a wider scale in the second wave. In the number of infections, in the number of deaths and in the results of the trials and surveys, govt. has not been transparent with the data, an essential requirement for scientifically managing the pandemic.

In this, medical science establishment which is populated by those who owe- and they know it- their positions to their subservience to the ruling dispensation and not to their standing in the profession, have helped the Govt.; rather they became the govt.'s tools in discarding Science and furthering obscurantism being propagated by the ruling dispensation to fool the people. The spin has robbed the data of veracity the world over. Many reports put the number of cases many times more, some even as high as ten times, and number of deaths five to six times more. People believe these reports as they see the denial in their own vicinity, how the number of deaths are many times more than being reported. Sharp increase in the reported number of deaths in Bihar has given rise to calls for audit of deaths caused by Covid. But this is insufficient unless parameters for the same are clearly laid down. The bodies buried on the banks of Ganga which are being uncovered of sand as the water rises, show the gross inadequacy of the declared deaths.

Super-spreader events

When the first wave ebbed towards the end of 2020, the Govt. was both relieved and discovered an opportunity in what had happened. That this ebb happened largely due to the cycle of the viral disease; govt. lockdowns contributing little to it, as is evident from the timeline, except to scare the people and bring untold sufferings to the poor especially to migrant labourers. The rulers considered they came out virtually unscathed from what was horrendous crime against the people. They also saw how they could use the pandemic to crush the struggle, muzzle all dissent, incarcerate dissenters and suppress people at large. Nowhere in the world has such large-scale suppression in the name of control of epidemic been done. Pandemic situation made no difference to put the people in jails, exposing them to Covid19 and all pleas were

turned down. State apparatus and ruling party controlling it utilized pandemic situation to further strangle the people's struggles, fear of the disease pressed to further increase fear of the state.

In this situation, ruling RSS-BJP embarked on utilizing the situation to further sharpen their designs to gain total control over the state and fan religious feelings of the people. They went ahead to organize super-spreader events. We will deal here with two major ones- Kumbh and election meetings without following any norms as in both of them the ruling RSS-BJP had a major role. Both these super-spreader events were held at a time when number of cases was rising sharply and these events contributed much to this rise. It is not that the virus would not have spread without these super-spreader events. It would have as is evident by the cases elsewhere. It is because of the sharp rise in cases traceable to these events that these are called super-spreaders and there are many reports of the same. BJP leaders like UP CM are misleading the people by alluding to cases elsewhere to hide their own role in spreading the virus.

Nearly three million people reportedly took a dip in Ganga on April 12 when India overtook Brazil to become the country with second highest number of cases. On March 21, when cases had assumed their northward march, a newspaper advertisement with Narendra Modi featuring in it, had invited people to Kumbh. Those who criticized continuing the Kumbh despite rising cases were met with assertions like "faith in God will overcome the fear of Kumbh" by Uttarakhand Chief Minister while BJP Vice-president Bijayant Panda blamed "hindu phobic elements" for the criticism.

By the time Kumbh ended, more than 9 million people had reportedly attended. There was no question of physical distancing, testing was scantily done and even that gave staggering figures. When the spread was marked, officials were instructed not to count

Kumbh pilgrims among the positive cases so exact toll will not be known. A number of states from which large number of people came, reported sharp rise in cases. Some commentators called it “the biggest super-spreader in the history of the pandemic.” Seeds of corona were sown even in the distant places. Many are prone to blame this on religious belief of the people, thereby to underplay role of the Govt. When the Govt. was itself promoting, and experts who had waxed eloquent on Markaz gathering were silent on this, people obviously thought it safe. In the week following Kumbh, host Uttarakhand state registered a 1,800% increase in Covid cases.

Another important series of events which contributed to spread of the virus is the way election meetings were held without adhering to norms. More importantly, Election Commission itself chose not to act and so flouted the norms. Even the High Court directions were not enforced by the Election Commission. When Covid cases started rising sharply in West Bengal where there was a demand to abridge the schedule of polls. Even earlier, the eight-phase election was criticized by the opposition parties as meant to benefit the ruling RSS-BJP. Despite this sharp rise in cases, Election Commission negated the demand to combine the last four phases as that would have not worked to the advantage of RSS-BJP.

In the four states e.g. West Bengal, Kerala, Assam and Tamil Nadu, the number of corona positive cases and covid deaths rose sharply due to ECI permitted large meetings without adhering to norms. Number of cases and deaths unmistakably point in one direction. PM and Home Minister themselves were the main speakers at several meetings especially in West Bengal where they went all out to win control of the state Govt. It is these deliberate acts of omission and several acts of commission that the exasperated High Court of Tamil Nadu talked of placing charges on

ECI members for causing deaths.

Not only state elections, RSS-BJP held rural local body elections in UP flouting Corona norms. More than a thousand of the Govt. employees who performed election duties subsequently suffered from Covid and died. It is not the holding of elections per se but flouting of the norms and sticking to the ill-conceived very long schedule, especially in West Bengal that has been responsible for the spread.

With widespread sufferings of the people during pandemic and the total abdication of responsibility by the state institutions, particularly by the RSS-BJP Govt., besides role of RSS-BJP in super-spreader events, there rose widespread disillusionment with Indian state institutions and sharp anger of the people against the ruling RSS-BJP in particular. Hence, there was a concerted effort by the RSS-BJP to deflect the anger and by the top echelons of the state to shield the state from people's disillusionment and rejection. With total cases of the infection reaching 30 million and death toll nearing 4 lakhs (with observers estimating the numbers as several times over and govt. estimates omitting large number of sufferers) the extent of the sufferings of the people can easily be seen. An overwhelming majority of these deaths could be avoided if there were adequate arrangements for treatment, has been asserted by a number of doctors. Most of these deaths and many more who have died unattended and whose deaths have gone unaccounted, could not reach or avail health care. The govt. which had more than a year to plan for this wave, can be held responsible for this calamity? - a govt. made disaster.

RSS Comes to Fore to Shield Its Govt.

RSS had the principal role in super-spreader events. It is the

RSS which was behind the organizing of Kumbh mela. RSS had deployed a large number of its cadres in conducting election campaigns especially in West Bengal. Hence, RSS stepped in to save its Govt. Its principal aim was to deflect the anger of the people from the acts of commission and omission of their Govt., primarily the former. Its cherished communal narrative lay in tatters as a very large number of the dead and dying obviously belonged to the majority community, virus having no regard for Hindutva. But the cynicism of its endeavour was all too obvious. They chose to see in this situation “Positivity Unlimited”. RSS Chief Bhagwat called those who died as a result of Govt.’s denial of remedies as having been “liberated”, not even learning any lesson to save those who are going to be “liberated”. There was no question of denying the obvious – the large wave which swept through the country. But the blame has been sought to be deflected on to the people- that they too shared the blame for having “dropped their guard despite indications from doctors”. Nagpur mandarins have not said what people could do to make hospital beds or Oxygen available. As if falling ill by itself was their worst crime. Moreover, sharp attack has been launched against those who are not able to see unlimited positivity in the situation and those who are trying to hold the Govt. responsible for its acts of omission and commission, even the former coming in the latter category in view of the repeated warnings by the experts of the impending catastrophe.

That this is an exercise to salvage the image of its Govt. is clear that while saying that Govt. too lowered its guard, there has been no criticism or self-criticism of the concrete acts of commission and omission which are being widely talked about. Rather in its place, Mr. Bhagwat said a dose of positivity will help improve the situation. Even as the pandemic raged outside, government officials

participated in a workshop aimed at “creating a positive image of the government”. It is clear that the sole emphasis of RSS-BJP Govt. has been “image management” and providing health care for the people who had fallen sick or providing means of prevention for those who are vulnerable or taking care of those who were rendered destitute and hungry, has not been even on their agenda. Supported by the major section of mainstream corporate media, they have confined themselves to damage control through controlling the narrative on the one hand, and coming down heavily on critical voices on the other.

RSS chief asked the people to stay positive even in the face of “coming third wave”. After all, it is all “cycle of life and death” as he said and his Govt. could have no role in saving the lives of those afflicted and will probably have none in the next wave as and when it comes. RSS has been blind to the sufferings of the people and this pandemic has given a death blow to its assiduously cultivated and laboriously propagated image of social service. A large number of people linked to RSS-BJP (and also to other ruling class parties) have been found indulging in hoarding and black marketing medicines, Oxygen cylinders etc.

Apex Court: Moderating the Judicial Response

With govt. embarking on super-spreader events and turning a blind eye to sufferings of the people, several people’s organizations turned to the higher Judiciary; to High Courts and Supreme Court. Several High Courts have come forward to take cognizance of the dire situation in which the people found themselves. They expressed their anguish at the attitude of the Union and state govts. and also of some state agencies. Karnataka High Court issued directions on Oxygen being made available to the hospitals and patients. Delhi High Court, Tamil Nadu High Court and UP High

Court also took up this issue in various dimensions and issued some directions. However, the apex Court intervened in each of these cases to moderate the judicial response. It appeared that for the apex Court the interests of the institutions of the state were paramount and not the interests of the people when the two come into conflict which they often and mostly do as the state serves the interests of the small stratum of ruling classes. The very edifice of the Constitution i.e. “We the people...” was ignored to protect the ruling classes and their institutions. We may here examine some of the responses.

When Karnataka and later Delhi High Courts took up the issue of availability of Oxygen, Supreme Court took *suo moto* cognizance of the issue in the name of uniform policy and took upon itself the question of the supply of Oxygen. As if it is handling an insurmountable issue, Supreme Court constituted a Committee to examine it and in this committee, majority of the members represented the private medical set-ups. What was obvious was never taken into cognizance i.e. there was always enough medical grade Oxygen available and could be secured and supplied for the need. In fact, need of the Oxygen at no point was higher than that available. Even the parliamentary standing committee which had flagged the issue of Oxygen availability in its September 2020 report had recommended preparations for its supply i.e. cylinders and transport. That the govt. criminally neglected its recommendations was of no concern to the apex Court who said that they were more concerned about making Oxygen available for the needy patients. In that too, it ignored the obvious about where such Oxygen was available and buried this simple question under the weight of committee peopled by private and govt. nominees serving the private interests. Of the concentrated Oxygen capable of being

used for medical purposes, around 12% only is used for medical purposes. The overwhelming majority of such concentrated Oxygen is with corporate associated with steel, petroleum products and some other sectors. They possess overwhelming quantity of such Oxygen. Why the apex Court did not direct the Govt. to secure Oxygen from them? Even the lead shown by Mumbai Municipal Commissioner about how he had arranged 200 metric tonnes of Oxygen through a simple call from Maharashtra Chief Minister to Mukesh Ambani was ignored. Supreme Court beat around the bush, did not do the obvious and created camouflage of acting i.e. committee creations till the crisis blew over. Alleged quarrel between the Union and State Govts. only covered their total callousness toward preparing for the upsurge in cases and total servility to corporate when the crisis did arrive. While SC made noises to the gallery, its orders did little to help those who died gasping for Oxygen. That this too is hailed in some quarters shows the scant rights that the people of the country have, that whatever little is done is gratefully accepted as pity and not secured as a right. Citizens do not have even the right to life, right to breathe and citizenship is used for creating sectarian strife and for deepening communal divisions.

Supreme Court again came forward to chastise Tamil Nadu High Court for its coming down heavily on the Election Commission of India for not enforcing measures formulated by it to prevent spread of Corona. ECI not only did not enforce the guidelines, it ignored the commitment it made before Kolkata High Court and refused to shorten the period of elections even when Corona wave was rampaging in West Bengal. The states where huge election meetings without following norms were allowed to be held saw sharp increase in the number of cases. Why ECI is not liable for this

willful spread of the virus violating its duties? Whose interests should be paramount for it- those of the people or of the powers that be? The apex Court observations in defense of ECI are to uphold the right of state institutions over those of the people.

Supreme Court has really gone far when dealing with Allahabad High Court directions to the state govt. It observed, “Doctrine of impossibility is applicable to Court orders as well” staying the direction of the HC issued on May 17. Supreme Court bench said “such directions which are incapable of being implemented must be avoided.” Extending the provisions applicable to contract between parties to the liability of the state to the people, the apex Court has not even gone into the directions of the HC, not extending the time frame even. The apex Court found that impractical but to apply in general terms “doctrine of impossibility” which means that it is not possible and hence not necessary for the govts. to take steps to help the people. What these directions of HC were? These included providing ambulances with ICU facilities in all villages, making oxygen beds available in all nursing homes and up-gradation of medical college hospitals in the state etc. which the Govt. and the Supreme Court found impossible to implement! HC had asked these to be done in a time bound manner, giving time from one to four months. Is it impossible to provide ambulance to every village? Supreme Court has not bothered to find out how many ambulances are available in the state but remained content with the submission of the Solicitor General. Is it impossible to provide Oxygen beds in the nursing homes? What is wrong in upgrading medical college hospitals in the state to the level of SGPGI in Lucknow? Is four months a very short time for that? An Oxygen generation plant can be set up within a week or two weeks and it has been so done in some hospitals in

Delhi. Why these cannot be done within four months in UP? Neither SG sought nor SC enquired in what time frame UP Govt. would be able to implement these directions, holding that the directions themselves were “impossible”. It is strange that the apex Court should hold impossible to implement what appear to be the minimum requirement to tackle the pandemic. Even State Govt. objection to HC observation that health care system in UP towns and villages is “*Ram Bharose*” is held by SC to have some force as such observations “may create panic amongst the citizens of the State and nullify the endeavours of the State Govt. in doing whatever at best they are able to do.” So citizens should be satisfied with whatever Govt. thinks it can do. Apex Court’s observation deal a blow at judicial intervention when the people were in need of the same.

From the above it is clear that the apex Court intervened not to uphold the rights of “We the People” but of the Govts. and state institutions and advised the people to remain satisfied and not demand the ‘impossible’ lest this demoralizes the state institutions and they may not do even that much! These interventions show the extent of the rights of the people which the apex Court is willing to uphold.

Motto of Rulers- To Serve the Corporate

Why have the Govt. and the institutions of the state including higher judiciary not taken measures to help the people caught in this pandemic? That the Govt. has sought to use it to impose a full blown police state to further its drive to impose fascism has been commented on earlier. But what is at the root of this approach must be exposed. In this respect it is noteworthy that even the commentators who have criticized the Govt. (mis)handling of Corona pandemic have avoided this aspect. This may also be due

to concerns of wanting to get published in the mainstream media, if not directly in the service of the real powers behind throne.

The Corona pandemic should have been used as an opportunity to expand the health care infrastructure in the country, both preventive and curative. This would be of help even in post-Corona period as India has only rudimentary health care facilities and millions of Indians die every year for what are totally preventable deaths. However, no such steps were taken. On the other hand, in the name of Covid care, hospitals were shut for patients even with serious ailments and inhuman lockdowns prevented a large number from even reaching out for health care. These deaths are not, though they ought to be, added to the pandemic toll.

India has one of the lowest Budget allocations for health care facilities. Our Govt. spends less than one percent of GDP on all aspects of health care. The pandemic has not altered this in any significant way. Even the economic package for Corona pandemic announced in March 2020 had less than 1% of direct expenditure for providing relief to the people and directly spurring economic activity during Corona period. Tackling the pandemic needed bigger expenditure on the health care system which the Govt. is not willing to do. Govt. is unwilling to raise funds for this as it may involve either increasing taxes on the rich, mainly corporate, or printing money- both these measures being abhorrent to the corporate. Modi led RSS-BJP Govt. knows well that it is dependent on corporate support for staying in power- both their money and the mainstream media controlled by them. Modi Govt. is doing everything to serve the interests of the corporate- foreign and domestic. Indian billionaires have increased their wealth by 35% in the first year of the pandemic. This is estimated to represent nearly

3% of the GDP. Even if one is to take one third of this newly acquired wealth, expenditure on health care could have been doubled and the Apex Court need not have taken recourse to the doctrine of impossibility. Just 2% wealth tax on the super rich could afford enough resources for uplifting the health care and even provide relief to the people during pandemic. But the Govts. and the state institutions do not want to look in that direction. In fact the two richest persons in the country- Mukesh Ambani and Gautam Adani- have increased their wealth phenomenally and other billionaires have also partaken in this largesse. This phenomenal increase has been facilitated by the Govt. A huge amount has been showered on them as tax forgone and other measures. Govt. has utilized this pandemic to change environmental laws to gift mineral resources to foreign and domestic corporate, brought forward four labour codes to do away with whatever workers could use in old labour laws to secure some rights and enacted three Acts relating to Agriculture to hand over total control over the production, storage, processing and trade of agricultural produce to corporate while taking away the rights of peasants and even of the poor people by changing the Essential Commodities Act. A Govt. so much wedded to corporate, is not expected to raise money for the care of the people. People count for little for them.

In fact, some ultra-reactionary rulers like Trump (former President of USA), Bolsenaro (President of Brazil) and Modi led RSS rulers of India have refused to take any measures for the health of the people. While the former two have denied the very seriousness of the pandemic, Indian rulers have done the same though paying lip service to it. RSS-BJP have really not lagged behind in espousing obscurantist and unscientific ideas and treatment, all to deny the need to improve health care facilities. The real reason behind these

was rulers did not want to raise money from the super-rich so they went about denying or understating the very threat. In a comment on “Will Corona trump Trump” it was said that Trump did not want to tax the rich and hence embarked on denying the seriousness of the pandemic. This is true of RSS-BJP as well though their denial is imbued with Indianness as understood and propagated by them.

The real reason behind the RSS-BJP Govt. and institutions of Indian state including higher judiciary as well as the mainstream media – publishing as well as electronic media- is to protect the profits of the super rich and prevent them from being subjected to increase in taxes. This is also true for the ruling class opposition parties which rightly criticize Modi Govt. but refrain from asking for increase in contributions from the super-rich. This is also true for most of the commentators and columnists who venture to attack the Govt. but not these wealthy who sustain this Govt. In the process, they act less as critics and more as apologists of the system. The corporate base of this response should be obvious to anyone serious enough to find it out though it is the best hidden aspect from the people.

Response to Pandemic

The second wave has ebbed in some parts of the country though it is raging in some other parts and even becoming more serious there. Experts are talking of the impending third wave even as the second continues to affect. India is a vast and diverse country and large part of India lives in rural areas i.e. more than two third. Many of these areas are quite remote. Even the level of integration with large metropolitan India is of diverse nature. Hence this pandemic is having differing impact and time frame in different parts of the country.

The first wave was most intense in metropolitan India and it largely spared the rural areas though they were not left untouched. The second wave severely affected both urban areas, even those affected in first wave e.g. Mumbai, Delhi, Bengaluru etc. and also vast swathes of rural areas in many states. For many rural areas it was mostly the first wave and yet quite devastating. The coming upswings in cases in the rural areas may be even more alarming. Besides, areas which have not been seriously affected till now will also have their share. Hence, there is urgent need to tackle the situation. While millions (officially nearly 4 lakhs) have already died, many more will be in the line.

Vaccination, though its level of efficacy may not have been established through transparent trials, can be a useful tool in checking the spread. But the speed of vaccination has been very slow and may not be very useful in checking the spread of the virus. Vaccine production has exposed not only the dependence of Indian vaccine production on imperialist countries but also lack of capacity of production as per need though it was being touted. It also showed the bankruptcy of closing down Govt. vaccine production facilities over more than a decade under the new economic policies of d and globalization. All these are to glaring to be ignored.

Every need of medicines has shown up paucity of drugs, hoarding and black-marketing partly contributed to this. Be it the anti-viral drugs, anti-fungal medicines and even the ubiquitous paracetamol, every medicine went out of reach. The whole ambit of policies of the ruling classes stood discredited before the people.

It is time to mobilize the people and for the people to rise to demand health care for all, especially covid care for all, equipped hospitals and network of health care providers especially in vast rural areas, and special care for these health care providers.

It is time to mobilize the people and for the people to rise to demand that taxes on the super-rich e.g. wealth tax, income tax, corporate tax etc. should be raised to mobilize the resources for tackling Covid. It is time for people to assert that Indian Govt. is duty bound to take care of their health needs; that India belongs to them and not to foreign and domestic corporate.

It is time to mobilize the people into struggle on the above issues and generally against this anti-people Govt. and ruling class dispensation.



Stand With Palestinians !

Beset with unresolved political crisis in Israel, corrupt criminal Netanyahu has unleashed Israeli Army and chauvinist gangs against Palestinians in Gaza and West Bank and inside Israel. With four consecutive indecisive elections over last two years and the prospect of losing power and start of proceedings in corruption scandals, Netanyahu led Likud and allies have precipitated this crisis. While domestic compulsions have influenced the timing of the offensive, intensifying contradictions in the world, specifically in the region in the specific context of readjustment of US hegemonic policies in the region under new US President Joe Biden and Israel's resistance to any change in the Trump era policies in the region, is the regional context in which the present offensive has been launched. All these are obviously part of the longterm Zionist strategy of creating Greater Israel, evicting Palestinians from their entire historic homeland and largely eliminating Palestinians as a separate people, as a national identity.

Over a hundred people have been killed in Gaza, whole civilian neighbourhoods have been flattened by air strikes. Children are being killed, hospitals, orphanages and shelter homes are being targeted. Scores have been killed in West Bank by Israeli security forces. Police has fired bullets at those praying in Al Aqsa mosque.

However, all these have for long become 'normal' for the strengthening of the 'only democracy' implanted, nurtured and sustained by western imperialist powers amidst the Arab people of this oil and gas rich region. Even talk of any right of the Palestinians is bamboozled under the heavy hand of 'anti-semitism', any sympathy for the Palestinians is tarred with the brush of terrorism- that omnibus cover which state repression has used since the collapse of the bipolar world. Every few years Zionist occupiers launch an avalanche of mayhem and destruction to destroy whatever Palestinians have built in the period and to further expand annexations, even as the paid lecturers on human rights- ruling politicians and celebrities- go on vacation for a few weeks.

All these to build a new Middle East- Greater Israel for Jews and total control over resources of the region for the imperialists. But every such attempt is resisted by those living and willing to die to live as a people- the most persecuted of the people of imperialist era who hold a mirror to the powers - what injustice they have heaped on them while talking about bringing about a just and democratic order! These- Palestinians- are not only the most persecuted but also most advanced people of the region- their persecution steeling their resolve and their deprivation forcing them to develop capabilities in the face of threat of extinction. Palestinians have refused and refuse to die as a people; their resistance rising in proportion to the attempts to eliminate them. Their resistance is their assertion of being alive, the persecution

they take as a reward of this assertion.

The immediate context of the present conflagration was a forced displacement of some families from Sheikh Jarrah, a Palestinian locality (named after personal physician of Saladin who had conquered Jerusalem from Crusaders) situated a mile north of Al Aqsa mosque in the heart of East Jerusalem which is sought as the capital of Palestinian state. This is part of territories occupied by Israel in violation of the UN resolutions. Any forcible displacement of the residents from such territory is violation of international law and a potential war crime. For its expansionist design, Israel has enacted some laws, again without any international sanction, which allow Jews to claim Palestinian houses. Court has postponed decision on the expulsion of Palestinian families. But the Jewish supremacists have forcibly captured the houses and have, with the help of the security forces of the Jewish state, thrown out the residents. Similar incident of forcible capture took place in another Palestinian neighbourhood- Sulivan- as well.

Palestinians protested these expulsions. People assembled in Palestinian areas and confronted the police which was siding with the supremacist gangs. In this atmosphere, police fired rubber bullets on the people who had assembled in Al Aqsa mosque for Friday prayers on May 7. More than 200 Palestinians were injured. On May 10, Jerusalem Day, Palestinians again assembled for protest against forced evictions, were again fired upon and over 300 were injured.

On May 10, Hamas gave the ultimatum of 5 pm for vacation of eviction. Rockets were fired into Israel from Gaza at the expiry of the ultimatum. And then followed a barrage of air strikes and artillery fire. Propaganda machines of western imperialist world are focusing on rocket fire, totally ignoring the eviction, mass repression

and suppression under military boots. This is a dilemma familiar to all resisting oppression under gross imbalance of power- if they do not resist they are deemed to acquiesce in their oppression and if they do resist, they are deemed to indulge in terrorism! Both the options expressing that there is no alternative for the oppressed. But living people always make obvious choice of resistance and Palestinians have repeatedly proved their will to live.

The precipitation of the present crisis has a temporal relation with the troubles of Netanyahu who has failed to win majority in the last four elections conducted over the last two years and has survived because of the lack of unity among the forces arraigned against him. Reason for that is simple- pro-annexation Zionist forces have majority in the Parliament and are so divided that alternative to Netanyahu is not possible without cooperation of parties representing Arabs in Israel. Netanyahu faces serious charges of corruption and the charges are before the Court- starting of the trial awaiting his stepping down as Prime Minister. On May 2nd he failed to form the govt. and the President has asked the second largest party to try to garner majority which cannot be done without Arab parties. This precipitation has made cobbling together of such a majority even more difficult. This is the life line that Netanyahu has sought for himself, forcing pro-settler parties into his coalition or at least making them unable to join hands with Arab parties.

The present crisis is also rooted in the changing dynamics of the power equation in the middle-east, especially at a time when Biden Admn. is trying to re-adjust power equations in the region under the umbrella of US imperialism. Biden has indicated that he would like to re-enter Nuclear Agreement with Iran which Trump had left in 2018. Over the last decade, two factors have shaped the

region- decline of US willingness to commit endless military power to maintain status quo and rise of the anger among the Arab people-expressed vaguely as what is known as Arab Spring. US 'decline' is also rooted in the growing contradictions among the imperialist powers and need to relocate its forces to other regions, tiredness of the people with the war of aggression and lingering effect of Great recession. With this decline and failure of war of aggression especially in Iraq, rise of Iran also became a problem to be managed. With the people's resentment growing and lack of trustworthiness of imperialist overlord, monarchs and dictators, installed and maintained in power by imperialist powers, grew anxious particularly of their own people and the regional powers like Iran and Turkey. Their response is of deepening Shia-Sunni rift and military suppression of their people besides arming and funding mercenaries in other countries. But they remain fearful of their own people, over whom they rule by bribing the gullible and silencing those who refuse. They had to find additional military strength to buttress the US military commitment to the region.

In 2017 Trump came to power in USA. He modified the policy of Obama Admn., a policy of maintaining hegemony by other means. Two pillars of the US hegemony in the region i.e. Zionist Israel and imperialist puppet monarchs and dictators had been coordinated by US imperialism. Trump brought their collusion into the open. Puppet monarchs and dictators were asked to openly embrace Israel to get military support from the Zionist power. Agreement with Iran was torn asunder and enmity with Iran was ratcheted up to justify this open alliance. But for this, Palestinians had to be abandoned openly and clearly. This was done with what are known as Abraham Accords i.e. an accord of formal renunciation of the Palestinian issue by the Arab monarchs and dictators. The so-

called peace accords were signed when even a bullet had not been fired! What was behind the scene was brought into open; after all Trump signified open and unashamed declaration of pursuit of loot.

Along came the Kushner Plan authored by the son-in-law of Trump. It was a further development of Bantustan Plan of Bush presidency- a plan that was later abandoned. Palestinians were offered unspecified economic benefits in exchange for totally renouncing national rights and aspirations. Plan presented in Manama was endorsed by UAE and Bahrain Emirs and supported by Saudi monarchy from behind. To make his intentions clear, Trump supported Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and moved US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. He openly denounced the two state solution which had hitherto been the declared policy of the US Admn. even if they had acquiesced in the steps of Zionist rulers of Israel, making its realization harder and harder. It was at least a fig leaf their puppets could show and with which people could be deceived. Again, that unashamed imperialist, Trump, had no use for such niceties. Under him, US imperialists were out to openly and unapologetically squeeze the region. He would boast that these puppets could not last in power even for a week without US military power- their pretensions not worth bothering when their economic interests had been taken care of.

Biden had signaled his intention of rejoining the Iran Nuclear Deal reached under Obama in 2015. He also expressed reservation on conduct of Saudi-UAE war in Yemen. He also mentioned support to two state solution. Broadly, Biden foreign policy, especially in this region, is a continuation of Obama policy with some modification. Obviously, there are many changes that have occurred over last four years. Besides Obama policy was facing serious problems at that time as well. Saudi-UAE war against Yemen has gone badly for

aggressors and forces led by Houthis are ruling over major part of Yemen including capital Saana and are striking inside Saudi Arabia. In Syria, with Russian help Assad regime has consolidated its control over larger area. And in Iraq, despite US sporadic attacks, influence of Iran has continued to grow bringing it almost to the cross-roads between US imperialism and Iran. On the other hand, China has increased its trade, economic and strategic foot print in the region. It has reached a huge 400 billion \$ deal with Iran covering economic and military aspects. Russia has consolidated its presence in Syria and increased its presence in the region including North Africa.

In this changed situation, when maintaining US hegemony has become increasingly difficult, Biden has hit out in all directions. He has heightened tensions with Russia while continuing to target China. He would be a pathetic figure but his office makes him dangerous. He has been a keen war mongerer, an acknowledged imperialist. What he will make of the present situation may be a dangerous gaffe. Or he may simply bide time and time may force him to show his true colour.

While focus of Biden Admn. is on domestic issues particularly pandemic and economic difficulties, Netanyahu struck. He got alarmed by the US Admn. efforts to rejoin Iran Deal and tried to subvert these efforts by organizing attacks against Iran's nuclear programme. Netanyahu also got alarmed at the unraveling of so-called Abraham Accords and discussions held between Saudi monarchy and Iran's leaders and UAE's efforts to bridge differences with Iran especially through Syria. All this is obviously at the instance of US Admn. Netanyahu did not have time and did not want to give time. Biden Admn. does not have even an Ambassador in Israel.

The asymmetrical war unfolding in Palestine, which is causing death and destruction of Palestinian people, has once again exposed the hypocrisy of western imperialist powers particularly US imperialism. Biden talked to Netanyahu and expressed support to Israel's security. His Admn. condemned rocket attacks from Gaza but kept mum on the killing of children and targeting of civilians. Netanyahu and the developing situation is not giving him enough reaction time, so he has gone with the default mode, tying himself and his Admn. in knots, most of them due to the inherent contradictions of the US imperialist policy in the region. He is laden with Trump framework and finds himself unable, or perhaps unwilling as well, to shake it off. His Admn. has blocked even issuing of any statement or even appeal for ceasefire, terming any public measure "unhelpful". They even got the discussion in the Security Council moved by Tunisia, Norway and China, postponed probably to make some arrangement prior to this public discussion.

However, there are some new features as well which may have a bearing on the present situation. There is a stronger articulation of the opposition to Israel's present war, particularly attacks on civilians, within the Democratic Party. A number of prominent leaders have openly voiced opposition to Biden Admn.'s handling of the situation. Though Democratic Party has strong pro-Israel section, such an opposition was not there earlier.

Importantly, this time opposition parties which are trying to form a Govt.in Israel have blamed Netanyahu for the war, almost for the first time. Generally, parties in Israel close ranks behind the Govt. during any war, but have not done so this time. This also has relation with the not so unanimous support in US as well as their own fight with Netanyahu.

Very importantly, this time there are wide clashes between

Jewish supremacist thugs and Arab youths in several cities inside Israel itself. Lod had been one such centre but it has spread to several cities. Jewish supremacists are attacking Arabs with the active support of the security forces. An Arab youth has been shown being lynched by these thugs with the police looking on. This has torn down the façade of democracy inside Israel. Though for our country it does not shock, but it undermines the myth of so-called democratic society in Israel propagated by western media. These Arab-Jewish supremacists have had some influence on the public opinion in Israel who regularly acquiesce in the violence on Palestinians in occupied territories but this is inside Israel and has disrupted life inside Israel.

Also, there has been growing anger in the Arab world. Large demonstrations have been held in Arab countries. This is rousing the people against Arab monarchs and dictators who have been openly friendly with Netanyahu. There may be pressure on them to work for some sort of a ceasefire and quickly so. In fact it is a long known fact that the road of national aspirations of Palestinians goes via Arab regimes' capitals. Their continuation in power is one of the biggest stumbling blocks in the realization of Palestinian national aspirations and they act as a backwater to support imperialist supported racist Zionist regime.

Indian Govt. has been unmasked on this issue despite not much criticism in the mainstream media. In a change which has been there some time, Indian Govt. has sided with Israel; one among the few. Though Security Council minutes are not made public, T.S. Trimurti, Permanent Representative of India at UN, in a tweet outlined Indian Govt.'s position which had as the first point: "Condemn all acts of violence, especially rocket attacks from #Gaza". Note the singling out of rocket attacks but no mention of

targeting of civilians, even children, by Israeli air strikes.

RSS-BJP Govt. has been at a loss at the defeat of Trump in the last elections. RSS had mobilized Friends of BJP in America and many of their fronts to support Trump even as most of Indian Americans had opposed him . Even Modi had called for “Abki Bar Trump Sarkar” in his Howdy Modi attended by Trump. Hindutva zealots feel a natural affinity with white supremacists and see validation of their agenda. They also banked on full support of Trump for enhancing their role in Indo-Pacific region. Though the orientation of US imperialism continues to be the same, there is not much enthusiasm. Moreover, they find attack on democratic rights in India irritating, something Trump and Republicans did not bother about. While pro-Israel tilt has been there for some time, Indian Govt.’s stand is shameful, against the earlier practice and out of step with most of the countries of the world. Here again, ruling Hindutva zealots feel affinity with aggressive Zionists like Netanyahu who openly advocate violence against Muslims.

Palestinians are resisting. Their resistance is winning increasing support. Every progressive and democrat, peace and justice loving people, must support their resistance. Organize protests against this attack on humanity in whatever form possible. Lend support to Palestinians’ struggle which is at the forefront of the struggle of the world people against imperialism and against supremacist ruling groups.

May 14, 2021



**Worldwide Reaction Against Israeli Killing of
Children, Women and Elderly and Destruction of
the Offices of International Media Houses**

**Ceasefire, a Victory of
Palestinians, and
Momentum towards Two
State Solution**

On 20th May night (11 PM GMT) ceasefire was announced between Israel Govt. and Palestinian organizations to end 11 days of barbaric pounding of Gaza by Israel and rockets fired into Israel from Gaza. Effort to broker ceasefire by Egypt and Qatar have been successful in view of near total call for the ceasefire by the countries of the world and growing world public opinion for end to this war including in the United States. Israel's agreeing to ceasefire, Netanyahu having vowed to continue bombing Gaza, has definitely shown the source and limits of Israeli belligerence. On 19th US President Biden told Netanyahu that he expected "significant de-escalation" by Wednesday, fuelling hopes of imminent ceasefire and on Thursday Israel agreed to the ceasefire. Biden was obviously forced to make the Call with near total isolation internationally and growing demands from the 'progressive' wing of the Party. He was met by thousands of protesters including Arab Americans when he had visited Michigan on 18.5.2021. There was a growing perception that Biden Admn. with respect to Israel, is continuing with Trumpism without Trump.

Terms of the ceasefire have not been made public. Palestinian organizations- Hamas and Islamic Jihad, have claimed that this includes no forcible eviction in Sheikh Jarrah and stopping all police actions at Al Aqsa. Israel has claimed that ceasefire is unconditional. This would be known only when the terms are made public, if ever, as not making them public can be part of the terms. However, the very fact of Israel having been forced to accept within less than 24 hours of ruling it out, shows that Israel had little choice. Second, and more importantly, Palestinian organizations have forced the issue of illegal settlements and forcible evictions on the agenda which world body can no longer ignore. Ceasefire has definitely been a victory for Palestinians and their resistance, a victory gained by tremendous sacrifices but then when and where do the oppressed gain anything without sacrifices. Celebrations in Gaza and questioning in Israel substantiate this fact, at least of the subjective perception on the ground.

Israeli bombing of Gaza lasted eleven days. More than 255 Palestinians have been killed, 232 of them in Gaza. Over half of them are children (65), women and elderly. Over 1500 of them were injured and 68,000 of them displaced in Gaza. Whole residential building blocks have been flattened. In the rubble lie whole families. A building housing offices of international media organizations including AP, Al Jazeera and CNN, has been deliberately razed to the ground after giving an hour's warning. US Admn. and a section of corporate media have tried to bury the news, unsuccessfully though. For the whole day of the worst bombing campaign, many major media outlets in America, Canada and many European states tried to ignore it; instead those in US and Canada covered the death of Obama's pet dog the whole day. Israel often claims that while Hamas rocket fire is indiscriminate, their

bombing campaign is precisely targeted. It means that the bombing of media houses (nearly 250, most of them Gazans) was precisely targeted. It could have only one meaning, that Israel deliberately wanted to black out all news of death and destruction rained by them on Gaza.

Netanyahu's Gamble

In his brazen attempt to stay in power, ultra-reactionary Prime Minister of Israel, Benjamin Netanyahu, has speeded up developments on the Palestinian question and in the larger Middle-East. Trump doctrine- of formally abandoning two state solution long sought by UN including past US Admn. at least formally and recognizing the whole of Palestine as Jewish state of Israel, and forcing US dependent Arab monarchies into openly abandoning Palestinians- has been torn down. All the members of Security Council meeting held on May 16 (streamed live) including USA had affirmed, even if some of them only formally, their opposition to illegal settlements and their support to two state solution. Arab states- UAE, Bahrain, Morocco and Sudan- who had signed Abraham Accords of surrender to Israel on Trump Admn. dictates, are looking for cover and have been severely criticized for their repudiation of Palestinians' right. They had claimed that their Accord would help Palestinians but are speechless now, blocking news and suppressing expressions of dissent in their states. Morocco expressed "concern" over Israeli bombing. UAE which had emerged as the main instrument of Trump Admn. in forging these accords, is trying to suppress all news. Kushner Plan (Kushner, son in law of Trump and his senior advisor who had developed extremely close personal relations with Netanyahu) has got unceremonious burial. It completely ignored Palestinians, terming their conflict with Israel as a mere real estate dispute. Palestinians

have buried it in the sands of Arabia. Netanyahu's gamble had not taken into account the differences that have come in the international situation and situation in the region. What a difference a year can make!

The conspiracy of giving one-sided focus on rocket attacks from Gaza and affirming Israel's right of self-defense has not been successful. All Security Council members including close friends of Zionist Netanyahu Govt. - Biden Admn. of USA, Boris Johnson led Conservative Govt. of UK and RSS-BJP Govt. of India- had to talk about the illegal occupation of the Palestinian land by Israel in Sheikh Jarrah and Sulivan where forcible occupation became the flash point for the present conflict. This has been the singular achievement of the world public opinion opposing racist apartheid practiced by Zionist rulers of Israel. Where does the right of self-defense come into question anyway! Israel is annexing the territories which are under its illegal occupation and which belong to the state of Palestine according to a number of UN resolutions. Any question of Israel enacting laws governing such annexation does not arise. It is forcibly evicting Palestinians unleashing Jewish extremist thugs upon them with security forces helping these thugs. And then, if oppressed respond with whatever means available to them, accusing them of being the culprits. Changing the demography in an occupied territory is a war crime according to international law. And if the oppressed resist with means available to them, where arises any question of self-defense for such an aggressor and violator of international law? Raising such a question itself amounts to favouring the Zionist expansionist racist practitioners of apartheid.

Israel's ambassador to UN held a picture of a young Israeli girl who had died in rocket fire. A total of 12 Israelis had died in this

conflict. He also mentioned that Israelis had to carry their children to bunkers for safety. He failed to mention and obviously so, how many Palestinian children had been killed. While Israeli carried their children to underground for safety, Palestinians had to carry dead bodies of their children from the underground! It is Netanyahu govt. which is responsible for all the deaths, Palestinian or Israeli, by its annexations and war crimes.

New Aspects of the Present Situation

The statement by CPI(ML)-New Democracy on May 14 had mentioned the new elements in the present situation which will influence the outcome of this round of war. One of them was growing strength of ‘progressive wing’ of the Democratic Party. Biden had initially responded to the bombing of Gaza by phoning Netanyahu to express support to the right of defense for Israel. In three consecutive meetings of the Security Council, Biden Admn. exercised veto to a statement by Security Council calling it “unhelpful”. Not to let UN Security Council have any role, US Ambassador to UN asserted “US is acting tirelessly through diplomatic channels to bring this conflict to an end.” Chinese envoy who presided over the Security Council commented, “Regrettably, due to the obstruction of one country, the Security Council hasn’t been able to speak as one voice.” This pro-Israel stand was opposed by the ‘progressive wing’ of the Democratic Party. 29 senators, including both Jewish Americans, Bernie Sanders and Jon Ossof, made a statement for immediate ceasefire. Two others including a Republican senator also favoured ceasefire. A number of members of the Congress also made such statements. Besides there were large demonstrations across US against Israeli bombing of Gaza. It was in this gathering support for ceasefire that Biden made that Call on 19th May. On 20th Israel assented to ceasefire.

Just before the outbreak on May 5, Biden Admn. authorized supply of Joint Direct Attack Missions (JDAMs) worth \$ 735 million to Israel. These are precision guided bombs. Despite attack on Gaza, Biden Admn. refused to cancel or even hold back the deal. Bernie Sanders has now moved a resolution against the deal. There is no doubt that growing opposition in US played an important role in bending Israel.

Another important feature has been large-scale demonstrations by Arab citizens of Israel. City of Lod, near Tel Aviv became a particular centre of such protests but they were widespread throughout Israel. Arabs constitute nearly one fifth of the citizens of Israel. These clashes between Jews and Arabs inside Israel was termed a situation of “near civil war” by police chief. The open siding of Police with Jewish chauvinists including in lynching totally unmasked the claims of democracy at least inside Israel. This created deep anxiety inside Israel and made many Jews also question Netanyahu Govt. Their claim of being the sole democracy in the region lies in tatters. This united movement of Palestinians in Occupied Territories, inside Israel and in the refugee camps is a welcome development in their struggle for national aspirations.

A very important pillar of the imperialist control over Arab oil and gas are the Arab monarchies who owe their rule, its sustenance, to western imperialist powers. Of them Saudi family is the most important, ruling over the largest exporter of oil, homes of the most revered sites of Islam and over the biggest and most populous country of the region. They are most fearful of their own people, hence rely on imperialist military for their rule. Trump had remarked that Saudi family cannot stay in power for even a week without US military support. The current president of USA, Joe Biden had called the rulers 500 royals and their families. They are

given a share of the imperialist loot and plunder of the rich resources of the region. It is not just western imperialists' own need of oil and gas but their wish to exercise control over other countries who import oil and gas from the region. It is in this land ruled over by monarchs installed in power and maintained by western imperialist powers that Palestinians have to fight for their national rights and even existence and these are one of the main stumbling blocks in their path. There is no democracy and the modern-day crusaders for democracy and human rights, western imperialist powers, leave these out of their sight. Internally the problem of fighting for democratic rights is that most of the working classes are immigrants and do not enjoy any rights. The struggle for democratic rights is waged in these countries by middle classes and suffers from all the weaknesses of these classes. The traders of these lands are organized by Muslim Brotherhood (MB) which has social reactionary outlook. On the other hand progressive

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intelligentsia does not have support of the working classes and is thus weak and flabby. This was quite apparent during Arab Spring of last decade. In Egypt, the most populous and intellectual cultural leader of the Arab world, the military dictatorship was restored after an interregnum of the rule of MB. The democratic restructuring of these societies will give such an overwhelming support to Palestinians, their Arab brethren, that no imperialist power on the earth can snatch away their rights. Hence, the imperialist powers in the world have always opposed any democratic change in these countries.

Western Imperialists' Support to Israel

The issue of imperialist support to Israel, its creation and sustenance, is of economic plunder and political control and has little to do with religion. The discourse of unity between Jews and Christians on Israel on religious grounds which has made some inroads among some progressive intellectuals also, is devoid of any basis. A majority of Jews in USA have since long been opposing Israeli atrocities over Palestinians but the successive US Admns. have been supporting Israel. However, big capitalists, many of them Jews, have been supporting Israel's atrocities and that is because of their class interests as a dominant imperialist power. In fact the current US President, Biden, then a Senator, had expressed succinctly in 1986, "Were there not an Israel, the United States of America would have to invent an Israel to protect our interests in the region." He meant control over petroleum resources of the region.

Similarly, the support by Evangelical Christians of Israel to Zionism, has little to do with Christianity but all to do with their ties to the big bourgeois ruling classes. It is a well documented and

known fact that Christians in Jerusalem and Israel feel oppressed and feel greater affinity with Muslim Palestinians.

Even the fact of proximity due to religious reasons is not rooted in history. Jews had been prosecuted by Christians who held them responsible for the death of Jesus. Pogroms, burning of their colonies are documented throughout history. No such pogroms were done by Muslim rulers. In fact, in Europe, trading community of Jews, who had a substantial number of craftsmen and workers, was always used as a scape goat by the feudal monarchies who diverted their laboring masses into chauvinist channels to disrupt their struggles and sustain their rule. In fact at a time when Christian elimination of Jews was in full swing, it was the Muslim rulers of Spain who saved them from extinction in the last place in Europe where they had substantial population. So, the present myth about the support of evangelical Christians to Israel on religious grounds is an artificial construct piecing together unrelated events, all in the service of imperialism and propagated by the corporate media.

Hindutva Zealots Back Israel

While Israeli atrocities in occupied Jerusalem and bombing of Gaza has been globally condemned, the supporters of ruling RSS-BJP have run a campaign in support of Israel. Social media campaigns with various hashtags supportive of Israel have trended on Indian social media over the past week, many calling Palestinians “terrorists”. RSS-BJP supporters are behind this campaign. On May 12, BJP Member of Parliament Tejasvi Surya, known for his anti-Muslim rhetoric, wrote on twitter : “We are with you. Stay strong, Israel.” BJP spokesman from Chandigarh, Gaurav Goel, has been regularly tweeting in support of Israel. Hardik Bhavsar, a

Twitter user followed by 134,000 people including Prime Minister Modi and Home Minister Shah, on Saturday shared a video of a high-rise tower that hosted media offices, including Al Jazeera and Associated Press, destroyed in Israeli bombardment. These are some of the examples reported in the media which show that social media engines linked to ruling RSS-BJP are actively involved. These Hindutva zealots feel affinity with Zionists like they did with white supremacists led by Trump. Again it has little to do with India or Indians as a majority of Indian Americans had voted against Trump despite RSS organized Friends of BJP actively supporting Trump. It has all to do with their agenda in the service of corporate here, and that is the reason that corporate media does not expose them.

On 16th May, India's Permanent Representative to the United Nations, T.S. Tirumurti took a more balanced approach which included, "I reiterate India's strong support to the just Palestinian cause and its unwavering commitment to the two-state solution." After an earlier S.C. meeting on May 12, T.S. Tirumurti, in a tweet, had singled out rockets from Gaza for condemnation. Change is probably due to fear of isolation at the global stage. India's historical stand on Palestine has been diluted over the decades after the dissolution of Soviet Union and ushering in of unipolar world. India established full diplomatic relations with Israel under Congress Govt. in 1992 when they drew closer to the United States. Though Congress Govt. had forged closer relation with USA and its surrogate Israel, it was the BJP which was more open and unashamed in this regard like on other issues. It was first time during NDA I that a cabinet minister visited Israel and Israel's PM visited India. Again, it is during NDA II that it was taken further when both President Pranab Mukherjee (2015) and later PM Modi visited Israel, the latter without visiting Palestine. RSS-BJP find

themselves cornered as they did at the time of Trump's defeat. Their supporters called India's stand on May 16 as "shameful diplomacy. Spineless act by our govt." RSS-BJP have forged close links with Zionists, White supremacists and Buddhist extremists in Myanmar and Srilanka, hatred against Muslims being the common factor among them.

Mobilize the people for realization of national aspirations of Palestinians

With ceasefire taking hold, the democratic forces the world over should demand immediate cessation of all oppressive acts against Palestinians in occupied West Bank, particular their forcible displacement. Siege of Gaza should be lifted and all humanitarian aid should be freely allowed through land and sea. Illegal Israeli blockade should not be permitted and it is not difficult if UN or major powers are prepared to force its lifting and not limit their support to mere posturing. UN should help in rebuilding of Gaza, which is quite possible in a short time considering its small size.

There should be determined advance towards lasting solution of Palestine question. UN has a special responsibility towards this to undo the historical damage it has done by snatching Palestinians' land from them treating Palestine as "a land without people." Israel had been founded on basis of gross injustice towards Palestinians, the project being developed by British imperialists and brought to fruition by US imperialism and other world powers. At present, UN should at least move to implement its two oft-repeated resolutions – One, creation of State of Palestine in pre-1967 borders (This Israel is much bigger than the one given in November 1947 UN resolution). Second is the right of return to refugees, i.e. Palestinians who were living in boundaries of Israel and their

descendants, a right repeatedly reiterated by UN in its resolutions and a universally accepted right. Implementation of these steps can pave the way for the two states to live peacefully together and lead to the resolution of conflict. Support to the first i.e. Palestine in pre-1967 boundaries was reiterated by all Security Council members. On the second, western powers especially USA have equivocal position despite several UN resolutions reiterating it. It was in fact on this that Camp David talks convened by Clinton after Oslo floundered. No Palestinian organization can forgo it and there will be no durable peace in the region without it. It will lead to democratization of Israeli society, so essential for the two communities to live together and foster amicable relations among them.

Advance can be made towards resolution of the problem because the world today is multi-polar and no single power can dictate to others while every power would like to increase its influence in this resource rich region. Another important factor is growth of the support from democratic forces for Palestinians against Zionist atrocities. There has been what is being called a “tectonic shift” in the ruling Democratic Party on Israel. Biden despite his opinion will not be able to resist the winds sweeping the base of his own Party. Democratic forces the world over must unitedly and vigorously build a movement for the realization of national aspirations of the Palestinians and in near future.

May 21, 2021



Homage to Com. Jannu

Com. Janardan (Jannu) member of Telengana PC and veteran communist revolutionary passed away today (May 21) at 2 PM. He had got Covid and had comorbidities. He was admitted in a hospital in Khammam.

Central Committee of CPI(ML) New Democracy pays homage to the departed comrade, offers condolences to comrades of Telengana and specially of Nalgonda where he mainly worked and led the Party and to members of his family. The death of this firm upholder of revolutionary mass line of the Party and tireless fighter in people's struggles, is a serious loss to the Party and revolutionary movement. CPI(ML) new Democracy vows to carry forward struggle for New Democratic Revolution for which Com. Jannu worked tirelessly throughout his life.



Red Salute to Com. Jannu!

CPI(ML) New Democracy

May 21, 2021



Comrade Raghunath Nayak Passes Away

We are very much saddened by the untimely demise of Comrade Raghunath Nayak. He died on 25th May morning due to prolonged illness at the age of 42. He was from Ekalapur of Sorada block in Odisha. Coming from a landless poor Dalit family, Comrade Raghunath very soon became one of the popular leaders of peasant masses in Ganjam district. Inspired by the land and anti caste movement going on under the leadership of AIKMS he joined our organization in 2006.



As a very good organizer he was instrumental in expanding AIKMS in different areas of the district. He was the district secretary of AIKMS till his death. He was also the state committee member of CPI(ML) New Democracy. His sad demise in this critical situation is not only a great loss to our party but for the revolutionary movement. The masses have lost a very good comrade and leader.

Red Salute to Comrade Raghunath!

He will be remembered forever!

Odisha Provincial Committee

CPI(ML)-New Democracy

May 29, 2021

Comrade Jannu : A Journey into the Revolution

P. Suryam

He was an ordinary man. He couldn't continue his studies beyond class X. Propertyless, he had the responsibility of four younger sisters. He lost his mother and his father was aged. He got married and two small kids were added to the family. The only craft he knew was tailoring. He was struggling to take care of his family amidst these challenges and hardships.

Even as he was struggling to meet the needs of daily life, he used to engage himself in discussions with his friends. The questions involved were about the inequality, about the gods worshipped by people and the events and developments happening around them. There were no satisfactory answers to his questions. He then shared those questions with a teacher. The teacher with whom he talked was influenced by the communist ideology. He used to write poems with a pen name – Kiran. His real name is Jani Miya. They both hailed from the same village and became close friends.

One day, he visited the village where his friend, the teacher, was working. The teacher was maintaining contact with a communist revolutionary organization. Accidentally an activist of a communist revolutionary organization paid a visit to the teacher's house at the same time. The teacher introduced his friends to each other. One of them happened to be Janakiramulu and the other one was Suryam. It was this acquaintance that made them associates. Janakiramulu

transformed into Jannu and that Suryam became PS in their later political life.

Janakiramulu used to keenly listen to the discussions between Suryam and the teacher. Over a period of time Janakiramulu was drawn towards communist literature, a shift from his earlier interest in rationalist literature. People's movements strengthen the ideology and ideology in turn refines and reinvigorates the mass movements. Janakiramulu was greatly inspired by these words of Mao.

Those were the days of Naxalbari peasant uprising. Naxalbari inspired the heroic Srikakulam and Godavari valley peasant movements. Nalgonda witnessed a wave of peasant struggles. The movement in Suryapet area reached a high level. The village of Epuru, the village to which Janakiramulu belonged, was one such village in the Suryapet area. His quest led him to answers and he gained a clear political perspective. He began to take part in the activities of the communist revolutionary organization in Epuru and its neighboring villages. He played an active role in the struggle against the neo-revisionists. All the while he was still working in his profession and doing odd jobs to feed his family. He ran a night school and educated the people.

In 1982, an anti-feudal struggle was being waged in Ramannagudem village which was adjacent to Epuru. The henchmen of the landlord attacked the local leadership in the village and beat many of them badly. A resistance was organized by 400 people, and they attacked the landlord in his house. People from Ramannagudem and its neighboring villages actively participated in this resistance. Jalagam Janakiramulu was one among them. The landlords and their henchmen were shaken with the resistance and they feared for their safety. It boosted the morale of the people and

the activists.

Cases were foisted on 75 people for leading this resistance. Some comrades at the leadership level went into hiding to avoid arrests. Two among them, including Janakiramulu, took a political decision to continue the secret work among the masses. He started working in secret, with an assumed name Janardhan. People fondly called him Jannu.

His secret party work continued for 14 long years from 1982 to 1995. He was arrested in 1995. Prior to his arrest Jannu and myself were staying in a shelter in Suryapet town. Jannu went to meet another comrade. He was accompanied by Kumar. I was waiting for Jannu as he did not turn up at our appointed time. That was when I saw Jannu with his hands tied at the back and shirtless. He was taken into police custody. He was raising slogans and shouting as he was being forcibly taken away. I sent the message to our people in the nearby villages. Kumar, who was with Jannu, escaped and informed other activists. Hundreds of people gathered within hours and demonstrated in front of the police station. Thus the police were forced to produce Jannu in the court the next day. He was sent to Chanchalguda prison and later he was moved to Mushirabad prison. He was kept in Naxalite barracks for a year.

When Jannu went into hiding in 1982, he had not decided to become a fulltime activist yet. It was a decision to go into hiding to avoid arrest at that moment. His youngest sister was yet to get married. He had two small kids. The elder son, Vijay, was just three years old and the daughter, Srujana was still a toddler. His father was aged. He was working as a tailor and was also engaged in selling clothes and cattle trade to make his ends meet. His wife Kamma was assisting him in these jobs. A thatched hut was the only property he had. And the enemies burned it down. To make

matters worse, he had several ailments. He was enthusiastic about the work for the party, but he was bound by the constraints at family level and caught in inner conflict. He was considering these aspects and at times even thinking about going back to his previous life in those initial days. On the other hand, the party was striving to retain him.

Jannu was resolute about his self-respect. He was more worried about what the lenders would say and the blame of running away and leaving the family destitute. He was concerned about what the family, relatives, friends and people at large would say about him. While the struggle with the enemy is sharp and direct, the inner conflict at the individual level can be tormenting. Jannu was struggling to reach a decision.

I was a district committee member at that time and in charge of the movement in that area. I was closely following the issues tormenting Jannu. Since meeting him in Jani Miya's house in Tripuraram village, we became more acquainted. I considered Com. Jannu as sincere, a comrade with resolute commitment and eager to develop his consciousness. He had passion, perseverance, and courage. The district committee of the party discussed about the situation and decided Com. Jannu should lead the movement in the area. Jannu was enthused with the approach adopted by the party. He was determined to get rid of idealist tendencies and strive to inculcate a proletarian outlook.

DC consulted the local committee and tried to resolve the issues faced by comrade Jannu. The landlords and the police were after him and they were targeting his family to get hold of him. We shifted his family to a relatively safe place outside the police dragnet. His family was sheltered in Nadigudem village under the protection of the party. The police could track the shelter after some time, and

they were shifted to another village Pajjur. From there they were moved to another village Erragaddalagudem where they stayed for a relatively longer period. They had to repeatedly move their shelter to various places e.g. Nakrekal, Thirumalagiri, Suryapet and Nalgonda in view of the prevailing situation. Jannu used to feel bad that he was troubling the party with his family burdens and his ill health. As the party committee had an understanding about his nature and character, it used to resolve those issues without his direct involvement.

Jannu used to operate secretly in the villages. He always used to walk to cover any distance. He had an indomitable revolutionary spirit in facing difficulties. In his early days of party work he faced problems within the party organization apart from his personal issues. They were of not being a recognized leader at that time and lacking experience in leading the mass movement. Comrades in village party committees were much senior to him. They had been through ordeals in their fight against the state and the enemies and were far more experienced than him. There was some reluctance initially to accept Jannu as their leader. He was prepared to die in an enemy attack, but he was not prepared to take this slight inside the party organization. The party equipped him with the understanding that the party committees at various levels might still carry the external influences of the class system outside and one must struggle to weed them out.

Com. Jannu could gain insight and the ability to grasp, discuss and debate through his study and practice. He could overcome the initial resistance he faced in the villages. Jannu was more interested in moving and interacting with people all the time. He used to go around the villages. Our movement in Suryapet area at that time was spread across all villages. Jannu used to visit each of those

villages regularly. He was there with the people whenever they needed help or guidance in dealing with a problem. He used to keenly follow events, provided guidance and gave confidence to the people. Everyone now wanted Jannu to visit their village and was seeking his guidance. Jannu could create this new situation through his political work and mould himself to meet the challenges. He was a son of the soil. He was a gem.

Thus, Jannu rose from the ranks to become a leader of the Suryapet zone/ division. Majority of the Nalgonda district committee was with Com. CP Reddy at the time of 1984 split. Com. Jannu was promoted to the district committee of the party. Com Jannu organized political classes in September 1984. Jannu keenly listened to Com CP even as he was taking care of all security precautions. He was greatly inspired by Com CP.

Jannu worked as the Suryapet Zonal party committee Secretary of the then CPI(ML) Vimochana/ Resistance till 1992. He worked hard to expand and consolidate the party organization in the division and rallied people against all enemy attacks. In 1992 when CPI(ML) Janasakthi was formed, Com Jannu was promoted as the Secretary of the district committee of CPI(ML) Janasakthi.

Jannu focused his efforts on the Nakrekal area. Powerful class struggles were organized by him. He played an active role in extending and building the movement in Aler, Motkur, Kodada and Devarakonda areas. Thus, Jannu emerged as a key leader of the large movement in the then united Nalgonda district.

Many struggles were conducted. Apart from the anti-feudal struggles, movement against the exploitation in the agricultural markets, movements demanding irrigation and drinking water facilities were conducted on a wider scale. Powerful women's

movement against liquor was developed. Meetings with huge gatherings were held. A large meeting with one lakh people against communalism was conducted in Nalgonda town on the Dec 31, 1990. Jannu mobilized thousands of people from the Suryapet division for this meeting.

CPI(ML) Janshakti underwent two splits during the period 1995-97. Com. Jannu was taken into the provincial committee in 1997 after the above splits. Many national and state level leaders left the organization. Majority of the organization within the Nalgonda district had separated themselves from the CPI(ML) Janshakti. Jannu was elected as the provisional secretary of the organizing committee which was formed to lead the movement. There was an intense debate within the party. It was felt that it is impracticable to sustain the independent party organization at the district level and defend it from enemy attacks. We lost Yanala Chandra Reddy, as he was brutally murdered by the landlords and their goondas. Pidamarthy Venkanna was martyred in the struggle against the enemies. Congress goondas attacked Gaddam Amrutha Reddy with bombs and killed him. Com Pajjuri Krishna Reddy was killed in an encounter. Thousands of people and activists were implicated in police cases, many were facing arrests. Some had to forego their properties. In this grave situation, discussions were held with CPI(ML) New Democracy. It was decided to merge the district party organization with CPI(ML) New Democracy in October 2000.

Com Jannu continued to be the secretary of Nalgonda district party committee till 2011, when he was developed a heart ailment. He was co-opted into the then united AP state committee in 2007. He was elected to the state committee in the 2013 state conference. He remained a state committee member of the party till he

breathed his last.

Com. Jannu was suffering with multiple physical ailments all through his political journey. He had to deal with numerous attacks from the landlords, touts, goondas, police, and the state. He withstood all political and organizational crises that shook the party. Added to these, he had to endure numerous health issues. In the initial days, he was suffering from epileptic seizures. He used to collapse suddenly with a seizure in committee meetings. He lived dangerously. Once he was hiding in a hut adjacent to an agricultural well. The police were passing by. Com Jannu suddenly had a seizure and fell down making a noise. The peasant had the presence of mind to make a noise pretending to drive away the birds and thus divert the police. In another incident, Jannu was hiding near a village Thimmapuram. He had a seizure, and the enemies tried to kill him and make it appear as an accident due to the epileptic seizure. Somehow, he was cured of that epileptic seizure.

Jannu suffered from severe asthma, arthritis, diabetes, edema, acidity, and heart ailments. One day he was travelling in an auto in Hyderabad as he going to the bus station to reach Suryapet. He had a severe pain in the chest and felt breathless. He urged the auto driver to take him to a hospital and that auto driver took him to the Care hospital. They treated him and placed a coronary stent. Recently he suffered from Covid-19, suffering from issues of lung function. He was admitted into a hospital in Khammam. When it appeared his condition was improving, came the news that Jannu breathed his last on the 21st of May at 2 PM. It was shocking.

The people have started to realize that the Union government is more concerned about reaping electoral benefits than saving the lives of people. The elections in Bengal are a pointer to this. The river Ganges filled with floating corpses is a testimony to the inept

handling the pandemic situation. The growing criticism within the ruling party itself is an indication. The government is more focused on projecting Modi and it never bothered to protect the lives of the people. The RSS–BJP ruling clique is directly responsible for the large number of avoidable deaths in the country due to the pandemic. Jannu's death is part of the devastation sweeping across the country. Hundreds of people gathered at the funeral of Com Jannu at a short notice and raised slogans blaming the governments for his death.

There are many instances and incidents to write about Jannu and one wishes to go on and on narrating those. Com Jannu was 64 years old. The last 44 years of his life were entwined with the revolutionary movement. He worked as a professional revolutionary for 40 years. He worked as secret organizer for 14 long years.

The hardships and the socio-economic difficulties endured by his family sharpened the class outlook in Com Jannu. The party provided him the revolutionary consciousness as he decided to work as a professional revolutionary. He revolutionized his understanding and practice to deal with all external influences and the erroneous trends within. He had developed himself into a mature revolutionary leader.

He never got himself carried away with any of the issues that arose. He always discussed with comrades and arrived at a consistent political approach. He continued learning from the peoples' movements and developed them further. He never went overboard and remained unassuming even as he was respected and revered within the organization. He remained rooted and stayed humble even as he rose from the ranks to become a leader. He shunned opportunism and anarchism and was steadfast with his

simplicity and sincerity. He was an ordinary man and the revolutionary movement helped him transform into an extraordinary leader. He will remain in our hearts forever.

The Naxalbari peasant uprising transformed many an ordinary individual into new men. Com Jannu is one such new man. Born as Janakiramulu, he transformed himself to become Janardhan and Jannu and as beloved peoples' leader. Such transformation is a result of his revolutionary journey of 40 years against all odds. Com Jannu was a brave soldier who never looked back when faced with vicious enemy attacks and hardships and intractable illnesses.

- Com Jannu was inspired by the Godavari valley resistance struggle and always stood with it.
- Com Jannu is the beloved leader of Nalgonda movement, the red fortress of revolutionary movement
- We will strive hard to fulfill your revolutionary goals. That will be our real tribute to Com Jannu.



CPI(ML) New Democracy Statement

On Results of Assembly Elections in Five States

Results of the five state elections have given a setback to the rule of fascist RSS-BJP, with resounding electoral defeats of the fascist forces and their allies in the larger states of West Bengal and Tamil Nadu. PM Modi and Home Minister Amit Shah had gone all the way to secure victory in these elections and use them to justify their attacks on the people; their offensive against farmers and workers; their deliberate gross mishandling of the Corona pandemic amounting to genocide of Indian people. People have given a blow to their designs and deserve to be thanked for their wise decision.

A determined and broad based struggle of peasant masses with its epicenter in North India has had its impact on the outcome of these elections. Leaders of Farmers' struggle had actively campaigned especially in West Bengal for punishing the BJP. Indeed growing anger of the people played a dominant role in these elections. And the results are expression of this anger.

CPI(ML)-New Democracy had called for defeat of fascist RSS-BJP and their allies in these elections. All Party committees and members had worked to that end i.e. to defeat RSS-BJP and their allies.

In West Bengal, RSS-BJP, Prime Minister Modi, Home Minister Amit Shah and the whole state machinery controlled by them went whole hog to capture power in that state. But they performed substantially worse than in last parliamentary elections both in terms of votes polled and seats they had then led on. They

rode into West Bengal like on their 'victory' chariot, but neither their hundreds of thousands of musclemen nor corporate money or media could fool or cajole the people of West Bengal into submission. RSS-BJP had their eye mainly on West Bengal while enacting CAA and undertaking all India NRC-NPR but they did not quite succeed in their communal design. People voted for the force which they considered to be in best position to defeat RSS BJP.

Defeat of ADMK-BJP alliance shows continued rejection of Hindutva by people of Tamilnadu. BJP was reduced to only three seats and its ally the ruling AIADMK lost the election.

BJP lost even the lone seat it had in the outgoing assembly in Kerala. It showed sharp rejection of their communal politics by people of Kerala.

In Assam, BJP was to an extent able to drown anti-CAA anger into their communal din of AIUDF being part of Congress led grand alliance. This also demonstrated shallowness of anger of chauvinist sections against RSS-BJP. By siding with RSS-BJP they betrayed their earlier rejection of RSS-BJP for having enacted CAA. BJP led NDA suffered loss of seats though retained vote share as it could win back anti-CAA votes of Assamese.

In Puducherry, AINRC led front of which BJP is part, has scraped a majority, though slow rate of counting despite small constituencies has created doubts. It was mainly a result based on local factors.

These elections showed total subservience of Election Commissioners to ruling RSS BJP. This manifested in allocation of phases, partiality in enforcing model code of conduct and total and criminal dereliction of duty in enforcing Covid rules despite rising infections.

CPI (ML) New Democracy welcomes defeat of RSS-BJP in West Bengal and defeat of RSS-BJP & AIADMK alliance in Tamil Nadu. This will act as a morale booster to ongoing farmers'

movement and spur other sections including working class into intensifying their struggles.

These results have given a setback to fascist drive of RSS but their defeat can only be ensured by people's struggles.

We call upon all the revolutionary and struggling forces to jointly develop people's struggles, and specially build Delhi border type continuous sit-ins in different states/regions.

Central Committee

May 2, 2021

CPI(ML) New Democracy



All India Kisan Mazdoor Sabha (AIKMS) Statement

Expose and Oppose Lockdowns, Oppose Fines and Cases on people.

Demand Free Health Care, Tests, Vaccines, Masks, Sanitizers; Food and Work for All.

Oppose Corporate loot and Black Marketing of Beds, Oxygen, Medicines.

AIKMS committees to organize help to the people for Covid.

'Atmanirbhar' Patients of Corporate Dependent India is Criminal Desertion and Genocide by the Govt.

Peasants and rural people have been made to suffer untold inhuman miseries due to their complete desertion by the Govt. in the face of Corona second wave. Govt. Corona hospital care have been cut down while the govt. is promoting Big Corporate and Black

Marketers and imposing unwarranted lockdowns to serve that end. There is serious paucity of livelihood and food; people are facing problems in travel and to seek medical care. However heavy fines are being imposed and cases lodged. Patients continue to die while they could be saved. Now even cheap cremation on ghats is under police control. This “atmanirbhar vikas” by Modi govt. is nothing less than criminal negligence and genocide.

AIKMS calls upon the people to Oppose Corona Lockdowns and Curfews and Fight on with safeguards to Demand Proper and Free Health Care, Free tests and Vaccines, Mask and Sanitizers, Free Food and Work for All under MGNREGA. Lockdowns will neither improve Govt. hospitals, Beds, Oxygen, Medicines or food availability, nor ally hunger, nor give jobs, transport and other health facilities.

Purpose of Lockdown is to restrict and target Farmers’ struggle and to hide all Govt’s antipeople measures. The Govt. is denying its failure and only engaging in Image makeup. It refuses to spend on Corona care for common people while it is squandering public money on its Corporate Friends but not taxing them. While USA raised Corporate tax to 40% for Corona funds, Modi Govt. charges only 26%.

Corporate hospitals sold beds for Rs 10 lakhs upwards, black marketing of oxygen and beds continues. There was enough Oxygen in stock with steel industry. Mumbai was able to get 125 metric tonnes Oxygen from Reliance, Jamnagar in 16 hours. But the GOI did not tap these sources. The RBI, with Govt. approval, has eased bank loans of Rs 50,000 crores for ‘private’ Corona hospitals.

UP govt., under its religious garb, freely tells lies. It claims few Corona deaths while floating bodies tell the truth. It is lodging

defamation cases against those who complain.

AIKMS has called upon its units to form teams to identify and help people who need help. A protocol for the same is being issued. AIKMS units must teach basic medical facts to all peasants. Living in open areas and airy rooms is safest to prevent Corona. Corona spreads faster in closed rooms. Farmers' protest sites are as safe as village open fields and safer than houses. Masks and cleaning hands/ sanitization helps.

Any person can get Corona infection, but 90% will not get symptoms, 90% of those with symptoms will be cured with simple, proper medical advice and of the rest 90% can be saved with proper hospital care, Oxygen, etc. Most deaths today are outside hospitals, because of lack of medical care.

(Issued by Com. V. Venkatramaiah, President and Dr. Ashish Mital, General Secretary of AIKMS on May 17, 2021)



Curfew Extention in Delhi Proves Lockdown Does Not Stop Covid !

Lockdown is For Covering Up Abandoning of People by Govts !

Covid rages in Delhi, the number declared dead due to Covid remains high and total deaths per month have also risen in April 2021 showing that so many are dying without positive reports or hospital care. People continue to be looted because public

transport is locked down and they are forced to criss- cross the city to look for beds, medicines, oxygen. The Delhi Govt's dashboard on hospital beds still continues to misreport. Announcement of financial help has been made only for a tiny minority of the over 25 lakh unorganized working class; work is shut, people are steadily leaving the city, there is no statement from the Delhi Govt. that wages of workers in private establishments will be paid. The Delhi Govt. promise of rations on e-coupons is yet to start off properly. People are still desolately looking for beds. It is looters and black-marketeers who continue having a field day as even crocin and steroids are scarce in the locked down city.

Covid been not been controlled in three weeks of lockdown. Labs now are not giving RT-PCR reports for days, Delhi govt. centres have switched to antigen tests whose negative report is valueless, the number of tests has come down and all manipulations done to try to show some small decline in the massive number of cases. Yet the disease rampages, sick and dead lie on roads outside hospitals and pyres burn all night. Mohalla clinics and hospital OPDs of Central hospitals, Delhi govt hospitals and clinics and MCD hospitals and dispensaries remain closed and people suffering from chronic illnesses are hopeless now.

Yet the Delhi Govt., rather than responding to the misery of the people, has conjured up 'pressure' and extended lockdown. This time even the metro, which helped people to go from one end of the city to another where hospital beds were available, is to be shut down.

Delhi Govt. has proved it is a govt. friendly to black-marketeers and profiteers. There is absolutely no logic to prolong this lockdown; there is desperate need to open public utility

departments, start midday meal services, open ANC clinics for pregnant women, allow domestic workers to go back to work. The people's burning need is for full public transport to work so they are not looted, dramatic increase in free oxygen beds which can even be set up in all govt. schools, takeover of corporate hospitals and full opening of all govt. health care facilities, free RT-PCR testing around the clock at all dispensaries and covid medicines freely supplied throughout the city. Not ONE of these issues is being addressed by the Kejriwal Govt. People are hungry, unable to pay rentals, jobs are gone, people are sick and are losing loved ones every day. The people need social support and health care but are being locked down.

We call on the Kejriwal Govt, stop locking the people of Delhi, address their needs.

This curfew extension is only to cover up the total failure of the Delhi Govt. In these three weeks hardly any attempt has been made to address the burning problems of the people. Only politicking is on between the Kejriwal Govt. and the Central Govt. which controls Delhi through the LG.

People need health care, people need social support.

People of Delhi, we must come together, struggle together while helping each other and also protecting ourselves.

We must fight for reopening the city, we must demand accountability from Govts.

(Issued by Com. Mrigank, Spokesperson of Delhi Committee of CPI(ML) NEW Democracy on May 9th, 2021)

1857

12 Hindu-Muslim-Sikh Women Jointly Laid Down lives at Thana Bhawan

Hindu-Muslim unity during the First Indian War of Independence was not confined to one area or one section of the population. This unity pervaded the whole country at all strata. It was a ground reality and fact of life with which, naturally, women also did not remain untouched. In a small town, Thana Bhawan, situated in Muzaffar Nagar district (now in western Uttar Pradesh) 12 brave women belonging to different religions and Castes were hanged together or burnt alive for taking up arms against the repressive British rule.

The names and heroic deeds of some of them are as follows. Asghari Begum, 45 years old, belonged to a well-to-do family and was burnt alive for organizing rebellion in the area. Another revolutionary woman was 28 years old Asha Devi, who belonged to a Hindu Gujar family and was hanged. Another martyred woman was young Bhagwati Devi, born into a Tyagi family of farmers who fought in many battles against the Firangee rule. 24 years old, Habeeba, belonging to a Muslim Gujar family, fearlessly fought in many battles to liberate neighbouring areas from the British tyranny. She was captured while resisting a British attack and was executed on gallows in 1857.

Another brave woman from this area named Mam Kaur belonged to a family of the shepherds and was hanged at the young age of 25 years. 26 years old, Umda was another gallant woman from this area, born into a Jat Muslim family who sacrificed her life resisting the British invasion. Raj Kaur born in 1833, hailed from a Sikh family and made the supreme sacrifice fighting against the British in Thana Bhawan area only. Another brave woman hailing also from a Jat family who laid down her life fighting against the British was Inder Kaur. Bakhtawari, born in 1819, was another brave woman from the region who laid down her life fighting against the British rulers.

Jamila, born into a Pathan family of the area, took up arms against the foreign rulers and was martyred. Two other revolutionary women who sacrificed their lives for liberation of India from the Company rule were Rahimi, belonging to a Muslim Rajput family born in 1829 and Bhagwani, born in 1831 hailing from a Brahmin family of the area.

(By Shamsul Islam)



NEOLIBERAL POLICIES RUINING THE ECONOMY AND INCREASING INEQUALITY, UNEMPLOYMENT AND POVERTY

Sujan Bose

New Wealth Production

Share of world GDP, 2018 (Rank 5): 3.28
GDP average growth rate 2013-18: 7.16%

GDP composition by end-use (2017)

- Household consumption: 59.1%
- State spending: 11.5%
- Fixed asset capital investment: 28.5%
- Net trade: -2.9 % net import (export 19.1% - import 22%)

GDP composition by sector of origin (2017) = Industry 23% +
Services 61.5% + Agriculture 15.4%

(Source: World Bank, 2018)

Globalization and free-trade access since 1991-92, destroyed the Nehruvian ‘import-substitution industrialization’ strategy which aspired to reduce dependence on imports in some spheres. This was replaced with ‘export-dependency’ of cheap skilled labour and natural resources to Global North (i.e. imperial-

rent extraction) and import of high-tech finished products in return. But such free-trade access to 2nd largest labour force in the world failed to generate optimum conditions for exploitation as India lags far behind China, Vietnam, Malaysia, Indonesia, and Thailand in the global value-added chain generated export share in terms of % of GDP. Overall, these IMF enacted ‘free-trade’ neoliberal policies were imposed not to fulfill domestic demand of India, but to sustain US financialization driven over-consumption at the expense of super-exploitation of the working class. India in fact, maintained trade deficit since such opening-up of markets as domestic manufacturing sector continued to stagnate. It was growth of service sector which in fact pushed that extra-consumer liquidity, stimulating the house-hold consumption of billion people. This resulted in an average GDP growth of above 7% since 1991, benefitting the top 10% the most, at the expense of the rest 90% (see ‘wealth distribution’ section).

But trade-deficits began to pop-up at a rapid pace since 2011-12, an after-effect of the US mortgage crisis, 2008-09 and Eurozone crises, 2011-2012. Such global stagnation has led to fall in Global GVC participation rate for simple GVC products i.e. labour-intensive exports. India spends 0.5% of GDP on R&D, and in short failed to climb-up the global value chain as share of domestic value-added content in exports, to take advantage of complex or intermediate GVC products (like China).

Countries	% of Global Imports	% of Global exports	Net Trade
USA	13.92	8.98	Trade deficit
Germany	6.69	8.43	Trade surplus
China	11.37	13.45	Trade surplus
India	2.6	2.1	Trade deficit

Source: UN Comtrade, 2018

This chart gives a comparative idea about the current poor health of our manufacturing industry. Share of goods (merchandise) export is far less (1.5%, 2015 data), compared to service exports which has a trade surplus. US, EU, and China are the major trading partners. India had a small trade surplus with China until 2005. But since then China became the global end-point of all GVCs. Global North based complex and intermediate GVC products also got re-routed through China. This resulted in a huge trade surplus with India. India not only started to experience decline in existing merchandise labour-intensive exports (textiles, leather and gems and jewelry) since 2007-08 financial crises, but capital goods domestic production for home consumption also shrunk since 2011-12 because of lower-cost import options benefitting the top 10% consumption, contributing to the current over \$50 billion annual trade deficit with China.

Meanwhile, US is one of the very few countries with an overall trade deficit with India (\$16.85 billion exports, \$53.56 billion imports, 2018-19 data). But Trump cancelled the GSP duty free benefit (established in 1974 eliminates import duties on products) on \$6 billion worth of Indian goods in 2019, as part of the trade war going on to reduce US trade deficits. Earlier, US sanctions against Iran and Venezuela forced India (unlike China) to halt cheaper oil import from them, thus enforcing higher-priced oil imports from US and Saudi Arabia instead. US, in the long-run, wants to exploit such export dependence of India to get duty-free access to the Indian farm and dairy consumer market. This is like bailing-out large US agribusiness at the expense of Indian poor rural population dependent on agrarian sector which produces world's largest quantity of milk, pulses and jute, and ranks second in rice, wheat, sugarcane, groundnut, vegetables, fruit and cotton

production. US in response continues to pressurize India with new tariffs on goods and services, and create new barriers for H1B visa.

Part-1: Agrarian vs. Industrial sector

Rural population comprises two-third of total population and is dependent on agrarian sector in one form or other. This is too high compared to other industrial nations where proportion of agriculture contributing to GDP has gone down to less than 1%. This change takes place because of better 'rate of profit' in manufacturing sector and its allied services. Post-liberalization, Indian State tried to create optimum conditions for 'industrial development', opening the gates for neoliberal exploitation of cheap labour and natural resources. Public capital in the form of buildings, factories, land, etc. were handed over to the private sector at dirt cheap prices. This complemented the decline in public investment in agriculture, falling from 42% in 1980s to 24% in the 1990s, and 15% (equal to 0.4% of GDP) in 2011-12; along with reduction of agricultural bank credit and other price-stabilization measures, opening-up of agricultural imports, and large-scale forcible acquisition of lands from peasants and then leasing out the lands to big corporate. Overall, small and marginal households (owning less than 2 hectares) account for 87% of farming households and 60% of net cultivated area still depends on rainfall. Data suggests that total income from all sources (cultivation, farming of animals, wages, etc.) in such small land-holdings falls less than consumption expenditure. Such planned destruction of farm productivity reinforced the existing semi-feudal means of coercion.

Since 1950-51, share of GDP in agriculture went-down from 54% to 33% in 1990-91, and to 15.4% in 2018-19. So did the employment from 63.05% in 1991 to 43.21% in 2019. But Census

2011 data still talks about rise in share of labour in agriculture instead. This mismatch of data happened because NSS considers many agricultural workers as construction workers. Such construction work is in fact, seasonal and part-time as most still depend on farming as major source of income. This data is in sync with land-holdings data as 60% households still continue to hold over their wealth as land in 2012, across all economic strata despite agricultural sector distress. That means, the agricultural work force was getting exhausted between State intended decline in farming productivity and lack of intended pace of industrial growth. This resulted in over 3 lakh suicides since 1998. Some data do suggest that forced structural shift from farm to non-farm jobs took place since 2004, parallel to US speculative boom induced world over-consumption.

This 'surplus pool of labour' was intended to be absorbed in the organized industrial sector for super-exploitation. Share of GDP in industry went-up from 13 to 21% between 1950-1971 period, and edged-up to 23% between 2004-2012 period. But the manufacturing sector i.e. the major component of industrial sector which contributed 16.41% of GDP in 1989-90, remained stagnant since then. The rate of growth of the index of industrial production was 7.83% per annum between 1980-81 and 1990-91 period, and has in fact slowed since then to 6.28% between 1990-91 and 2011-12 period. That means, much of the industrial sector growth which took place between 2004-2012 period was limited to the construction boom, fueled by the US speculative expansion. The employment in industrial sector did go up from 15.30% in 1991 to 24.89% in 2019, but employment share in manufacturing never went above 12.8% (2012), and since then has fallen to 12.1% in 2018. Rest 31.90% of the working force got sucked into the services

sector which contributes 61.5% of GDP.

	<u>Agriculture</u>	<u>Industrial</u>	<u>Manufacture</u>	<u>Services</u>
GDP	15.4%	23%	16%	61.50%

Contribution

Employment	% 43.21%	24.89%	12.1%	31.90%
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Source: ILOSTAT 2019

That means, the total growth of jobs of about 20 lakhs pa between 2004-2012 was due to construction and service sector (manufacturing contributed very little) that compensated for sudden drop in farm jobs, and in turn contributed to the rise in rural wages and per capita consumption expenditure in this period. In contrast, East-Asian ‘tiger’ economies of Taiwan and South Korea reached such a turning point in the mid-1960s, but China with 8% GDP in agriculture has still failed to reach such stage. But global stagnation since 2011-12 resulted in sudden decline in employment in both agriculture (45 lakhs pa decline), and manufacturing (5 lakhs pa decline) sector between 2011-18 period, nullifying the growth effect seen between 2004-12 period. Construction sector could add just 5 lakhs pa jobs in the same period, compared to 40 lakhs pa jobs generated between 2004-12 period. Services sector still managed to grow at 30 lakhs pa, but most jobs were low paying, yet compensating part of the total job loss which stood at unprecedented net 90 lakhs. But non-manufacturing sectors have backward linkage to manufacturing sector, and decline of production will affect the overall economic and employment growth in the long-run.

The total labour force in India is estimated to be above 500 million (50 crores) in 2019. But this labour force participation rate

(employed + unemployed) data tends to underestimate the actual unemployment rate in a country like India because you need to be actively looking for work and need a national register to record this denominator. But in a country with 30% workforce being illiterate, additional 52% having studied till class ten, and barely 3% having technical education at tertiary level, this data is prone to underestimate the actual unemployment because it fails to account for part of migrant workers out of employment in between season or who are forced to drop out of workforce outside their will. Meanwhile, the employment-to-participation ratio gives a better idea as it takes into account the proportion of total working-age population who are employed and contributing to the production of goods and services of a country. That means the denominator is the total working age population and not the total labour force (employed + unemployed). This ratio has gone down from 56.83% in 1994 to 45.52% in 2018. Compared to this, the labour participation rate for US stood at 62.7% as of March 2020, and 68% for China in 2018.

The real problem in fact, doesn't lie in the unemployment rate (which is still at a 45-year high), but in the employment rate in the non-organized sector i.e. with no social security. Legal restrictions and labour laws don't apply to this sector. Hence, the structural violence of 'fear of losing job' is much higher and has driven the wages to non-sustainable levels, even lower than in agriculture. Child labour is the powerful 'invisible force' which has gone-up in the informal industrial sector since 2011-12 and has provided the final push to bring down the labour wages below starvation levels. This sector employs overall 90.7% (and 83.5% in non-farm sector) workers. The situation in government or public sector enterprises which generate just 13% non-farm jobs (share in

manufacturing sector is only 2%; non-manufacturing is 11%, and in services is 18%; 2017-18 data) has also seen a sudden sharp jump in contractual jobs by a massive margin. Rest 87% of jobs is under private ownership where such structural arrangement is anyways predominant.

To sum-up, this brings us back to the question of rural India which still supports two-third of population, dependent on agrarian sector and is struggling from poor productivity i.e. higher production cost and stagnant food prices. The same farmer transforms into migrant wage labour during the farming off-season to serve the industrial sector. This sector on an average contributes two-third of total rural income. But parallel slow-down in manufacturing and construction sector since 2011-12, coupled with demonetization and new sales tax (GST), along with decline in government social welfare expenses has pushed the same farmer to dire poverty levels. The working class is thus getting sandwiched between the State intended non-viable farm sector and Global stagnation induced declining non-farm sector (both organized and non-organized). Leaked NSSO survey data revealed that total consumption fell 3.7% between 2011-12 and 2017-18; overall rural consumption fell 8.8%, and rural food consumption slumped by 10%. This first fall in consumption in last 40 years, and failure to ascertain bare-minimum level of 'food security' for majority of population is the final outcome of such free-trade policies serving the interest of the top 1% at the expense of the rest 99%.

Part 2: Industrial sector – Big vs. Small

The major part of such non-farm sector growth between 2004-05 to 2011-12 period took place in factories which hire less than 10 workers i.e. the informal sector which comprises most of

the micro or small medium enterprises (MSMEs). This has declined since then, but still contributes up to 68% (2017-18) of the total industrial sector. Global economic stagnation is culpable, but part of the credit goes to the Central Government which diverted the major share of loans and benefits to the big corporate. Such crony lending spiked since 2002, parallel to the US financial boom as corporate debts went-up from 34.2% of GDP in 2002 to 56.8% of GDP in 2018, concentrated to just handful of large companies. But bad-debts started to pile-up since the 2008 financial crisis. UPA-II stuttered to manage the sinking ship as corporate lobbying catapulted Modi to power in 2014. Lending continued and so did the NPAs which shot-up from Rs 4 lakh crore in March 2015 to Rs 7.10-lakh crore in March 2016. This was equal to around 5% of the total credit. Meanwhile 27 PSU banks had written-off Rs 1.14 lakh crore of loans between 2012-15 period. Major part of such debt was attributed to 500 largest corporate, out of which at least 240 were either defaulter or on the verge of default in 2015. India Ratings in 2015 estimated that Rs 7.04 lakh crore of equity infusion was imperative to meet the Basel-III norms and prevent the banks from going bankrupt. This was just 4-6% of the total outstanding debt but would have met the minimum capital requirement to issue fresh lease of loans to such defaulters, instead of blacklisting and punishing them for reckless investments. This cronyism set the stage for demonetization in late 2016 which sucked-in 86% of the total circulating cash out of the market into the banking sector.

Household savings accounted for 72.4% of all savings in 2012-13, and two-third was either in the form of physical assets like cash, gold or real-estate. This was an outcome of combination of negative interest rate (adjusted for inflation) and a boom in real-estate. GDP to cash ratio of 12% was in fact way too high as it

translated into 97% of retail transactions taking place in cash . Demonetization was the forced diversion of such out of bound savings into the capital market. RBI expected that Rs 3 lakh crore of black money will be struck out of the total circulation of Rs 15.44 lakh crore, reducing the liability of RBI and leaving behind a cash surplus. But 99% of currency got back into the banks. Currency circulation reached pre-demonetization level within a year, while changing hands in between from informal agrarian and industrial sector to the organized sector, dominated by big corporate in the form of cheap loans . Demonetization was in fact not a one-time affair, but was planned to have a long-term deterrent impact over cash savings, so as to divert the funds towards either banking capital, financial investments (e.g. mutual funds, stocks, bonds, etc.) or just force people to ride on the consumerism tag to save less and spend more on non-essential goods and services, contributing to the artificial growth of the economy limited to the top 10% of the population. But this failed because of the overall negative impact on the economic growth in the years to come. Later, Goods and Services tax was launched after another 8 months which squeezed the left-out capital out of the already crippled informal sector.

Shadow banking sector, also known as Non-Banking Financial Companies (NBFCs) started to fill in the loan void to raise the total share of lending from 15.2% to 19.2% between 2016-19 period. They account for 30% share of auto loans, and 40% of home loans as of December, 2018. These banks don't take deposits from public, and this capital flow remained outside the ambits of RBI oversight. Majority of capital is raised from banks by taking loans and the rest by selling bonds, stocks in the market. But, IL&FS (Infrastructure Lending & Financial Services), one of the largest NBFC went bankrupt in late 2018. Established in 1987 to fund

major infrastructure projects, the outstanding bad debt-burden stood at 1 lakh crore (\$12.8 billion). The footprints can be traced back to 2001, when a private bank managed to get sovereign guaranteed loans from Asian Development Bank (\$2 million) and KFW Bank (\$ 700,000). This was Indian Lehman Brother in the making, giving loans to non-viable projects over 20 years, benefitting certain bankers, bureaucrats, and politicians in return. LIC, and other public-sector banks have now stepped in to bail-out a private bank with tax-payer money (just like Yes Bank). RBI has identified 256 NBFCs (84.8% of total NBFCs) with assets over \$72 million as systemically important in 2018. This 'too big to fail' doctrine adds to the zero liability that allows the bankers to get away with hazardous speculation as no one was ever arrested for IL&FS fraud. Host of other NBFCs like Dewan Housing Finance, Reliance Capital and subsidiary Reliance Commercial Finance, DHFL, and Altico Capital India have started to miss interest payments since 2019. Bottom-line remains that NBFCs had full access to tax-payer money saved in public-sector banks and mutual funds, but nature of investments remains out of public domain.

To sum-up, the overall negative impact on 10 crore MSMEs which employ 30 crore people is a culmination of global economic stagnation and GST, complimented by demonetization which led to scarcity of loan funds for them compared to big corporate. Top 20 corporate of India including Reliance ADG, Vedanta, Essar, Adani, Jaypee, JSW, GMR, Lanco, Videocon, GVK Group in fact managed to get Rs 16 for every Rs 100 loan amount until end of financial year 2019. This total exposure stands at Rs 14 lakh crore. The loan share has now spiked to Rs 24 in the 2018-19 financial year for the top 20, while total loan portfolio has grown just 12%. This selective favoritism and general neglect are well reflected in the stagnating

domestic production resulting in 45-year high unemployment rate. It also sums-up the recent collapse in the banking sector debt service as the interest rate of 9% remains much higher than GDP growth rate of 6.6% in FY 2019.

Credit Suisse in 2017 reported that 40% of corporate debts are held by firms that cannot even earn enough to repay the interest costs. But crony lending continued under the patronage of the political cronies which helped NPAs to climb from 5% in 2015 to over 10% of total gross loans at the end of 2019. This is very high in comparison to China (1.74%), US (1.1%), or Brazil (4%), with similar high debt to GDP ratio. Out of total 10.3 lakh crore NPAs, the top 8 companies (RBI refuse to reveal names) owe over Rs 3 lakh crore i.e. 30% of bad debt. To add insult to the injury, more than 30 willful defaulters like Nirav Modi, Mehul Choksi, and Vijaya Mallya have fled India with money safe in off-shore accounts. Owing to growing public outrage, RBI revealed the names of 11,000 companies declared willful defaulters (not bankrupt) worth 1.61 lakh crore in 2019, which includes the top 30 worth 50,000 crores. Public sector banks have already written off Rs 2.75 lakh crore bad loans in the last 3 years, out of which Rs 37,700 crore belonged to just 33 borrowers. These bad debts, total amounting to around Rs 10 lakh crore had led to the collapse of IDBI Bank, Yes Bank and Punjab National Bank, while 11 out of 25 public-sector banks are placed under 'prompt coercive actions'.

Meanwhile, Central government in desperation (in sync with US and EU tax policies) slashed corporate tax by almost 10% points in 2019. This Rs 1.45 lakh crore tax break is the biggest reduction in 28 years and supposed to rejuvenate the economy out of 6-year low growth (since 2014). This is in top of the Rs 42 lakh crore tax concessions given to the corporate sector between 2004-16 period.

State can fund their expenses from either tax income or debt. Central budget 2020 data break-up shows that out of total income of say Rs 1, net income will be 80 paise. Out of which, 64 paise will come from taxes. Corporate tax (18 paise), income tax (17 paise), and sales tax (18 paise) are such major sources. Non-debt capital receipts will earn 6 paise, and the rest 10 paise will come by selling profitable public assets at dirt-cheap prices to big private sector. That means government has to borrow 20 paise, to cover rest of the fiscal deficit caused by such low tax revenues and tax-cuts (out of which 18 paise will fund the interest payments on old debts piling-up since 1951). Major part of such public-debt (80%) is internal and will be funded by the Super-rich who get such tax-benefit. Current debt to GDP ratio stands at 69%, and just trails behind Brazil among the EM countries. Such fiscal constraints are having a major impact on people of lower social strata due to curtailment of social welfare expenses.

On the whole, Government is placing the entire public capital (by selling profitable public assets at dirt-cheap prices) and the surplus private capital (in the form of cheap bank loans) into the hands of the big corporate and begging them to start production. But without effective demand in the market, major part of the capital is getting diverted into speculative expansion of stock values i.e. share buy-backs, and then handing huge payouts as dividend to share-holders. This in effect, results in net transfer of such public and private capital to the top 0.01%, even without rolling a dice. Part of this surplus capital (i.e. profits?) is siphoned-off to tax havens. IMF estimates that more money has left developing countries since the 1970s, than was received in foreign direct investment and foreign aid combined. Taxes earned from such illicit money since 1970s could have paid all the debt of the developing

world. Global Financial Integrity (GFI) reports that \$8.7 trillion trade value gap exists between 135 developing and 36 advanced countries over the 10-year period between 2007-2018. China (\$482.4 bn), Russia (\$92.6 bn), Mexico (\$81.5 bn), India (\$78 bn or 3.05% of GDP) and Malaysia (\$64.1 bn) top the list of having largest average annual value gap on trade mis-invoicing for 2008-17 period and is escaping tax net. Just a week before demonetization, RBI report revealed that Rs 17 lakh crore return deficit exists from the exports done from India in the past 44 years. This adds to the existing tax and budget deficits. This is while bottom 99.9% end-up shouldering the resultant public debt-burden as RBI continue to slash bank interest rates to accommodate the loss (and is inching towards zero, just like US, Japan, and EU), while confronting mass layoffs or wage reductions due to stagnation in real production in the face of declining State social expenses.

Wealth Distribution

Population %: 1326 million (17.7%); Birth rate 2.24 Very-low GDP per capita; Gini index: 0.378

(Source: World Bank, 2018)

GDP of India is third largest in terms of purchasing power parity (PPP) driven by 1.3 billion people consumption and bare-minimum living standard, but rank falls to 140 on per capita income basis. This growth of national income is thus plagued by severe non-equitable distribution of wealth. Oxfam data shows that the growing divide is getting worse as richest 1% netted 73% of the total wealth generated in 2017, close to total Union budget expenditure, while 67 crores representing the poorest half saw their wealth rise by just 1%. The top 10% now holds 77% of total country's wealth. Tax payer base comprising of adults aged 20 years and above in fact has shrunk because of such disparity in earnings from 4.4% in 2002-03

to 3.8% in 2018-19. Overall, just 1.5 crore i.e. 1.15% of the total 130 crore population earned enough to pay income tax in 2018-19, in a country with about 130 billionaires (3rd after China and US).

British-ruled India drained the wealth of India, and left it crippled as share of global GDP fell from 6% in 1870 to 3.8% in 1952. GDP growth rate averaged 1.5-1.8%, similar to US or Japan (1.5-3%) during the same time-frame. British India levied low taxes to just maintain the army i.e. no scope of providing social benefit. Thus, total national wealth remained limited to the hands of private sector and was as large as 600-700% of national income (similar to Global North). Transfer of State power in 1947 did not make much difference as private wealth, majority of belonging to erstwhile foreign colonial owners remained intact. State became dependent on foreign-aid right from the start to fund the social expenses. Minimal transfer of wealth from private to public sector did take place during the nationalization of key sectors between 1955-74 period because of State monopoly and not due to direct take-over of private wealth. Public industrial investment dominated over private sector until mid-1980s. Direct taxations (estate, gifts, wealth, and income) between 1953-85 restricted private wealth centralization to some extent as top marginal tax rates rose from 27% to 97.5% between 1965 and 1973. Between 1860-2020 time-frame, public-wealth to national income ratio peaked in between 1950-1980 period (150-160% in 1985) and income disparity was held back, but wealth disparity stayed. Bottom 50% income in fact, captured 28% of the total growth and grew faster than the average, while top 0.1% income declined.

Acceleration in income disparity in favour of top 1% started to take shape since 1984 after Rajiv Gandhi became Prime Minister. This new economic agenda talked about private entrepreneurship

and foreign investment, as the marginal tax rates went-down from 62% to 50%. Then the oil shock, led to the debt-trap and the balance of payment crises (i.e. dollar reserves insufficient to pay for oil imports) in the late 1980s. US backed IMF dollar loans came to the rescue, but at the cost of denationalization and free-trade access to global private capital. It ended most of the State price control and led to privatization of key sectors, affecting the agriculture sector the most. The overall impact was positive in terms of national annual real income growth which from 2% in the 1990s, has continued to grow at an average of 4.7% between 2000-2015.

But the skewed distribution of income led to severe economic and social disparity between different income groups from 1991 onwards, particularly after 2002. Between 1981-2015 , the top 0.1% captured a larger share of income than the bottom 50% (12% vs. 11%). That means, less than 800,000 individuals in 2014 (top 0.1%) earned more than 397 million individuals put together (bottom 50%) in 2014-15. Similarly, the top 1% received a larger share than the middle 40% (29% vs. 23%). This middle 40% income did grow at 94%, over 1985-2015 period. But it was below the average of 187%, capturing a much smaller share (22.6%) of total growth, compared to 40% in China and 33% on US. This middle class and top 10% held about 40% share each during mid-1950s. Since then middle 40% income share went-up to touch 46% in 1982-83. But then started the decline and fell to a low level of 29.2% by 2014-15. That means the top 10% (i.e. a small class of 80 million adult individuals in 2014) benefitted the most at the expense of middle 40% (317 million, 2014) and held 73% of total country's wealth in 2018. Out of which, top 1% took the largest share (29%), and is equal to the bottom 83% of the population share.

Compared to China, USA, and West Europe, the gap between

the growth of top 1% income and growth of the full population is maximum in India (by a near factor 4). Moreover, compared to China, in India the bottom 50% income grew 4 times more slowly, and middle 40% income grew 8 times more slowly. But higher income group growth rate is much similar. Overall, current polarization of top 0.1% income is highest since the creation of Income Tax during the British Raj, in 1922. That means, global stagnation led decline in industrial exports since 2011-12, and replacement of domestic produce with cheap imports from China; amplified by demonetization and goods and service tax had a far-worse impact on the bottom 90% in the last 5-6 years because of such higher disparity in income share distribution, compared to other countries.

Meanwhile, debt-ridden Indian State (like US) cannot print money to fund the budget deficit (unlike US). Taxing the Super-rich is the only way-out to reduce the fiscal deficit since taxes don't add to the debt-burden i.e. no need to repay. But instead State is selling profitable public assets (including natural resources) to the big private sector at dirt-cheap prices and reducing social expenses to bridge the fiscal deficit, and make-up for the fall in tax revenues. Public-wealth ratio to national wealth has hence further gone down in 2012, and continues to depreciate at a faster rate. That means, the distressed bottom 90% are getting deprived of social subsidies in all fronts including education, health, rural development, and social welfare, to accommodate the large tax-cuts given to the Super-rich, who are meanwhile busy indulging in self-speculative expansion of existing wealth due to lack of potential foreign and domestic market purchasing capacity. Recent State social subsidies in fact have either faced restriction and disruption (e.g. due to Aadhar linkage) or have got diluted including the National Food

Security Act.

To sum-up, this decline in industrial sector, coupled with lack of option of falling back on a defunct agrarian sector and the cumulative State apathy over the last three decades resulted in decline in rural consumption for the first time in the last 40 years. Recent corona virus pandemic and the migrant labor crises have exposed such overall State bankruptcy. This is an ominous sign for India as World Bank estimates that population between 15 to 59 years will go-up by approx. 200 million between 2010 and 2030. Such sharp rise in potential labour force in such stagnant scenario can prove to be disastrous.

Recent US led global consensus built-up in favour of China's role in facilitating the spread of corona virus has led many economists to speculate about India taking leverage of the situation. But India is not an alternative to China which has already climbed-up the value-chain ladder in the last 15-20 years. China has in fact started to outsource low-end assembly work to third countries much earlier. Chinese FDI in India has grown from \$1.6 billion to at least \$8 billion between 2014-18 period. But this GVC movement is not because of the pandemic but because of the stagnant unit labour costs of India over the last 4 decades, which have become more competitive in comparison to China's wage growth. But survival of G7 countries will still be intricately linked with China because of GVC dependence on skilled relative cheap labour, massive infrastructure and cheaper trading costs. GVC chains can work only within the paradigm which depends on best possible use of technology and cheap labour for maximum profit extraction. Thus, cost of moving to new factories in countries lacking skilled human capital in high-tech jobs is potentially more difficult and out of question during such global capital stagnation. □ □ □

Sharp hike in Prices of Edible Oil

A.C

Prices of edible oils are more than their highest in a decade. The monthly average retail prices of all six edible oils soared to an 11-year high in May 2021. This sharp increase in edible oil prices has come at a time when household incomes have been hit due to Covid-19 pandemic.

The prices of six edible oils — groundnut oil, mustard oil, vanaspathi, soya oil, sunflower oil and palm oil — have risen between 20% and 56% at all-India levels in the last one year. The retail price of mustard oil (packed) has increased by 44% to Rs 171 per kg on May 28 this year from Rs 118 per kg on the same date last year. The prices of soya oil and sunflower oil too, have increased more than 50% since last year. Adani Wilmar-owned Fortune, Marico's Saffola and Dhara from Mother Dairy are selling at a higher price.

Wholesale-prices-of-edible-oil-brands' manufacturers such as HUL, Tata Consumer Products, Emami, ITC etc. have been impacted by the rise in the prices as the palm oil is a key ingredient. Experts say that prices are likely to fall in the second half of OY21 (November'20 to October'21) as the global supply normalizes, however, the prices will still remain higher as compared to OY20.

Changing food habits have also contributed to changing the consumption pattern of edible oils over the years. While mustard oil is consumed mostly in rural areas, the share of refined oils — sunflower oil and soyabean oil — is higher in urban area. Monthly

per capita consumption had risen further to 0.67 kg in rural areas and 0.85 kg in urban areas. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Farmers' Welfare, the per capita availability of vegetable oils in the country has been in the range of 19.10 kg to 19.80 kg per annum during the last five years.

In 2019-20, domestic availability of edible oils from both primary sources (oilseeds like mustard, groundnut etc.) and secondary sources (such as coconut, oil palm, rice bran oil, cotton seed) was only 10.65 million tonnes against the total domestic demand of 24 million tonnes. In 2019-20, the country imported about 13.35 million tonnes of edible oils worth Rs 61,559 crore, or about 56% of the demand. The major sources of these imports are Argentina and Brazil for soyabean oil; Indonesia and Malaysia for palm oil; and Ukraine and Argentina again for sunflower oil. India imports about 65 percent of its annual requirement of 14.5 million tonnes of cooking oils. International prices have risen because of lower output in major producers Indonesia, Malaysia, Argentina, Ukraine and Russia, mostly because of bad weather.

Due to labour shortage Palm oil supply has fallen in Malaysia, second-largest producer in the world. Similarly, in Indonesia and Malaysia, the B30 and B20 biofuel mandates, which increase the amount of vegetable oils mixed in fuel, has increased local consumption, leaving a lower exportable surplus. (CRISIL Research) Almost all of India's palm oil requirement is met from Indonesia and Malaysia. As per ICRA, palm oil is about 40 percent of total consumption in India and 60 percent of imports.

Soybean oil prices are rising because of dry weather in Argentina. Similarly, sunflower oils prices are up because of drought-like conditions in Ukraine and Russia, the largest

producers and exporters of sunflower oil.

About 85 percent of soybean oil in India is imported from Argentina and Brazil, while 90 percent of sunflower oil is imported from Ukraine and Russia.

Import duty of 32.5 percent on crude palm imports has also a major contributor to higher prices. Moreover domestic production of oilseeds has also fallen.

In last oil year (OY20) the domestic production of soyabean, groundnut, mustard, and cottonseed oil was impacted due to lower acreage and crop damage.

The increase in domestic prices is basically a reflection of international prices, because India meets 56% of its domestic demand through imports. In the international market, prices of edible oils have jumped sharply in recent months due to various factors.

The prices of soyabean at Chicago board of trade (CBOT) and of Malaysian palm oil determine the prices Indian consumers pay for edible oil.

Even the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) price index, an indicator of movement of edible oil prices in the international market, has soared to 162 in April this year.

The executive director of the Solvent Extractors' Association of India (SEAI), Mr. Mehta said one of the reasons is the thrust on making bio-fuel from vegetable oil. Mr. Mehta also said that there has been a thrust on making renewable fuel from soyabean oil in the US, Brazil and other countries. He said that despite the Covid-19 pandemic, the global demand for edible oils has been high.

Other factors include buying by China, labour issues in

Malaysia, the impact of La Niña on palm and soya producing areas, and export duties on crude palm oil in Indonesia and Malaysia.

One of the immediate options for reducing edible oil prices is to lower import duties. According to SEAI, the effective rate of import duties has been 35.75% with effect from February 2, 2021. The effective import duties on ‘refined, bleached and deodorized (RBD) palm oil is 59.40%. Similarly, the rate of effective import duties on crude and refined soyabean oil and sunflower oil is in the range of 38.50% to 49.50%.

The policy for import of crude palm oil is “free”, while for RBD palm oil it is “restricted.” If the government reduces import duty on refined palm oil, prices will come down immediately. But the edible oil industry is not in favour of reducing duties. They are of the opinion that international prices will not be reduced, government will not get revenue, nor will the consumer benefit even after withdrawal of duties. They suggested that the government should rather subsidize edible oils and make available these to the poor under the Public Distribution System.

Farmers will shift to oilseeds and domestic production may be increased if the government agrees to give incentives of a few thousand rupees per acre to farmers for diversification, which is necessary. Such a move looks unlikely during the farmers’ struggle over three new farm laws enacted by Prime Minister Narendra Modi’s government abandoning MSP.

These MSP prices are set for more than 20 crops each year, but state buying agency the Food Corporation of India (FCI) applies them only to purchases of rice and wheat and that too in selective regions. Only the prospect of financial support will encourage farmers to switch from grain crops, with their government-set

prices, to the less predictable gains of oilseeds.

The government, which earns 350 billion rupees (\$4.77 billion) from levies on edible oil imports, can easily set aside 40 billion rupees a year for crop diversification, through more taxes on such imports.

Higher output of oilseeds and fewer imports of oils will boost farmers' incomes, create jobs in the domestic crushing industry and help save precious foreign exchange.

Government purchases, initially meant to promote self-sufficiency in domestic staples, have encouraged farmers, especially those with access to better irrigation, to favour grain over the years. That has pushed India to the rank of the world's second-biggest producer of rice and wheat but at the same time, lower oilseed output has made it the world's biggest importer of oils, to meet nearly 65% of consumption.

Oilseeds are now mainly grown in rain-fed areas with low crop yields, but experts say that in Punjab, with efficient irrigation, can expect higher yields. It is estimated that farmers in the Punjab and neighbouring Haryana can produce 6 million tonnes of rapeseed if they divert half the area now under wheat, bringing a domestic supply boost of 2.5 million tones. India should create a transition fund to combat this edible oil crisis.

Therefore, the edible oil crisis in India is part and parcel of Neoliberal agricultural policy making Indians dependent on import and corporatization in the guise of slogan of 'Atmanirbhar'.



RSS-BJP Govt. Cajoles J&K Leaders to Vindicate its Actions in J&K

Modi led RSS-BJP Govt. invited 14 leaders of different parties of J&K and held discussions with them on June 24 at Delhi. Most of these leaders belonged to the parties which had been party to Gupkar Declaration against steps taken by the Modi Govt. on August 5, 2019. This alliance was earlier called Gupkar gang by Union Home Minister Amit Shah. It is a change in the attitude of RSS-BJP Govt. but from what reportedly transpired at the meeting, it is clear that this change is mostly formal while Modi Govt. refused to commit to reversal of the steps taken in August 2019 i.e. division of the state of JK into two union territories and depriving it of the status of a province; virtually annulling Article 370 and repealing Article 35A, the two articles forming the bedrock of what was being seen as autonomy of the state though in practice it has been under direct and indirect military rule with AFSPA holding sway over citizens' lives.

Many commentators have pointed out that this initiative to meet leaders of parliamentary opposition parties is driven by geopolitical changes. These relate to defeat of US and allies in Afghanistan and also to the change in approach brought about by new US President, Joe Biden. It is well known that RSS-BJP had been particularly close to Donald Trump whose white supremacy matched with their Hindutva besides his aggressive militarism

directed against China. Not only Modi had called, in his US trip, for re-electing Trump, RSS affiliates in US had mobilized their followers to support Trump despite overwhelming majority of Indian Americans being opposed to Trump. While anti-China campaign of US imperialism will stay under Biden and hence their courting of India to contain rise of China, his domestic constituency is not supportive of anti-minority Hindutva of RSS-BJP.

RSS-BJP's open alliance with US under Trump has been a singular disaster. Trump is out of power in US and in the process, Indian Govt. has lost trust of Russia.

Withdrawal of US troops from Afghanistan is having serious repercussion on the political landscape in the region. Biden has announced September 11, 2021 as the date when withdrawal will be completed but reports are that it will be done before that. That the US Admn. has no faith in the survival of Afghanistan Govt. is obvious from their decision to airlift thousands of their collaborators and their families from Afghanistan, the total estimated to be over 50,000. Talibaan are certain to wield main power in Afghanistan. Indian Govt. had earlier been ruling out all relations with Talibaan, but is now talking to Talibaan in Qatar. For managing withdrawal of troops and exercising influence in post-withdrawal Afghanistan, US dependence on Pakistan is going to increase. It is for this reason that US and allies have tried to bridge the gap between India and Pakistan. Role of UAE in Pakistan and India agreeing on February 25 to observe cease-fire agreement of 2003 is well documented. It is reported that at the time of that agreement, it was agreed to normalize situation in J&K. On June 7 US Assistant Secretary of State had called for dialogue with Kashmir leaders. This discussion on June 24 is therefore believed to have geopolitical dimension.

Besides this, RSS-BJP govt. is confronted with rising anger of the people, best exemplified by the ongoing farmers struggle which has exposed its pro corporate character. Gross mismanagement of Covid and electoral setbacks in some big provinces have added to the pressure on the government. This is the domestic scenario in which the govt. has held this meeting.

That this meeting was merely formal is largely due to the fact that the parties invited for talks do not enjoy support of the people in the Valley. Nor do they represent the aspirations of the people of J&K. Govt. has deliberately avoided the organizations which command people's support in that region. The participants in the meeting did not even enquire about the agenda proposed by the Govt. It appeared that they were just happy to be invited.

RSS-BJP Govt. is keen to hold elections to show to the world apparent normalcy. For that purpose it wants delimitation of the constituencies so that it could increase weight of its supporters. Delimitation is not due in J&K. Assembly had put it off till after 2026. Even the parliament of India has put off delimitation till after 2026. It is clear that this delimitation exercise is driven by the agenda of RSS-BJP. PM Modi emphasized on delimitation and holding of elections without outlining what rights such elected representatives will have i.e. without even declaring restoration of statehood to J&K. Probably it will depend on who are elected. This is a managed democratic exercise if not a frank mockery of it. J&K leaders have been cajoled into attending this meeting to justify undemocratic and unconstitutional steps of the RSS-BJP Govt.

As a byproduct of this exercise, there may be some relaxation in the prohibitions placed for the people in J&K. If that happens, it may be some relief for the people who have been living

in one of the most militarized regions in the world and under one of the most stringent denial of democratic rights.

Progress in resolving J&K issue needs recognition and willingness to respect democratic aspirations of the people of J&K. Without that it may not amount to much despite this talk between a Govt. bent on crushing the people and leaders who do not represent these aspirations and the people.

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