

RULING POWER GETS A MEASURE OF WHAT PEOPLE'S POWER IS

A historic and massive protest movement of the farmers' is going on in Delhi for the last 37 days weathering wintry chill and disdaining all hardships. They are demanding repeal of the three black Farm Laws and withdrawal of the proposed Electricity Act (Amendment) Bill. It is not only the men but also women and children who have joined the protest. They are firm in their resolve of not returning home till the BJP government accedes to their legitimate demand. They are ready to make any sacrifice for realizing their just demands and foiling the conspiracy of the government to privatize agriculture in totality. Already 40 peasants have laid down their lives while fighting for a just cause. More might be the number in the days to come. But the grit and determination of the peasants to go upto the end is eloquently visible.

The anti-peasant pro-corporate BJP government might have thought that there would be some commotion for some days. Once the government would show red eyes and take some coercive measures, the peasants would be frightened and demoralized. Thereafter, everything would die down and the peasants would quietly accept the new Farm laws. But people in power failed to understand what power of people means. The rulers deployed their entire arsenal-armed

policemen, water cannons, teargas shells and what not. But the peasants just ignored full-fledged assault with such an array of arsenal. Then the government began blocking the roads with boulders and digging trenches along highways to

viewpoints have joined hands to wage this movement. The government thought it would be able to drive a wedge into the unity of the various participating organizations, if necessary by planting agent provocateurs, and

by adopting these trickeries as well.

The third strategy adopted by the government was to undertake a smear campaign against the movement. So, a malicious propaganda that this movement has been precipitated and steered by terrorist groups and funded by foreign countries was unleashed in full swing. The participants in the movement were branded as unpatriotic, anti-national and disruptors of development programmes. The pliant corporate media was pressed into action for this. The objective was to create confusion in people's mind so that popular support is not rallied behind the countrymen from the movement. But just the opposite has happened. Toiling people at large as well as right-thinking democratic minded intellectuals could soon understand the sinister motive behind spreading such canard against the movement. Hence they have expressed total solidarity with the struggling peasants. Throughout the country, mass support is pouring in on an increased scale. So, the government scored a big zero in this attempt also.

The BJP leaders had another calculation. They thought that they would kill time in the name of entering into dialogue for settlement and thereby tire the peasants. But the peasants did not fall in that trap.

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Comrade Shankar Ghosh, General Secretary, AIKMS, offering red salute to the martyrs of the peasants' movement on 21 December 2020, Shradhdhanjali Day, at Singhu border.

prevent entry of the peasants from various states to Delhi. But that too could not deter the stream of peasants marching towards the national capital. The peasants themselves removed the roadblocks and advanced. Finally they reached the borders of Delhi and have been squatting there for over a month. They have declared that they would stay there as long as it is necessary. We salute this unbending attitude and fighting zeal of the peasants.

It is true that many organizations with different ideologies and

thus destabilize the movement from within. The ruling dispensation has also tried to present a couple of stooge outfits as representatives of the peasantry and made them give statements eulogizing the black Farm Laws. All these are very old tactics on the part of autocratic rulers to break people's legitimate movements. But the struggling spirit of the peasants has kept all organizations united and the agents of the government were exposed in no time. The government failed to create any fissure in the movement

MASS PLEDGE IN SOLIDARITY WITH AND SUPPORT OF PEASANTS' MOVEMENT ON 1 JANUARY 2021

"Defying severe cold and oppression and repression of the BJP-led central government, an undaunted, heroic peasants' struggle with unheard of spirit, is going on in Delhi demanding the immediate repeal of the three anti-peasant pro-corporate black Farm Laws and Electricity Act Amendment Bill 2020. In this struggle, we have already lost some of the brightest sons and daughters of the country and we are ready to sacrifice more. Still, we, the exploited toiling peasants, workers, students, youth, women and all honest, thinking and democratic-minded people are taking pledge to continue our struggle till our desired goal is achieved. **We will fight, we will win.**"



Odisha



Madhya Pradesh



West Bengal

Peasants' movement

Undaunted peasants determined to wrest their demands

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They made it amply clear that unless the government clearly spells out the process of repealing the Black Laws, they would not relent.



Comrade Arun Singh, all India leader of AIUTUC, addressing the peasants at Singhu border on 21 December 2020

In fact, all other proposals of cosmetic changes or verbal assurances have been firmly rejected by the struggling peasants.

Unable to make head or tail of how to frustrate the movement, the government first raked up an old dispute between Haryana and Punjab centring on distribution of water. But that attempt proved abortive. Then the government began to say that this is a movement of the peasants of Punjab and Haryana only. Peasants of the rest of the country are in agreement with the new laws. That is another brazen lie. Peasants round the country have understood how ruinous the proposed laws are and how it would virtually cage them in captivity of the corporate giants. So they have been extending

unstinted support to the movement through various programmes like organizing dharnas, rallies, civil disobedience movements, burning of copies of the black laws etc., in West Bengal, Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Jharkhand, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamilnadu, Kerala. A good number of peasants from Rajasthan, Maharashtra, Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh have already assembled at various demonstration sites at the Delhi border. Planning is afoot to raise the movement to higher level. This is a movement of the oppressed working people. Do or die for a cause-that is the slogan of the movement.

So it ought to be said that overcoming all odds and refusing to be swayed by trickeries and manoeuvring tactics, the movement is continuing and becoming more powerful with every passing day. But wherefrom the peasants have been deriving strength to conduct such a sustained painstaking movement? No political party took the initiative. No peasants' organization had provided necessary inspiration. The answer lies in the

process of social development, in the course of history. A fighting spirit germinates in the minds of the oppressed people almost unknowingly. This spirit spurs them on to take up cudgels against the

oppressor. Often this spirit bursts forth in the form of spontaneous movement and assumes an undaunted character. If there is correct revolutionary leadership within the vortex of the movement, it guides this spontaneous outburst to be organized with due consciousness and channelized along right track to upset the opponent's apple cart and cause revolutionary transformation of the society to herald progress. This is how courage and spirit of struggle sprouts and boldly manifests itself. A spark of

that indomitable spirit is observed in this epoch-making peasants' movement. If the rudder passes on to the hands of correct revolutionary leadership, the sail would gain winds and chill would be sent down the spine of the exploitative despotic arrogant rulers. This is but the struggle of the poor and oppressed, in self-defence, against the rich. There is no region, no caste, no



AIDSO leaders and activists at Singhu border

religion, no ethnicity in it, no Hindu, Muslim, Sikh, Christian or Buddhist in it. This is not a movement of Punjab, Haryana, Uttar Pradesh or Assam, Tamilnadu, Maharashtra. This movement is against a pro-corporate autocratic regime and the exploited starving peasants. The movement spots have become glowing spectacles of people's unity. They are staying together, eating together, helping each other and shouldering collective responsibilities happily. Singleness of purpose and fight against common enemy for a just social cause have bound them in fraternity, cemented their unity. This once again confirms the truth that the cultural milieu of legitimate mass movement creates a congenial atmosphere where all divisive mindsets and sectarian mentalities simply perish. What is witnessed is that steeped in a common culture of fighting against injustice based on desired human values-ethics-morality and sense of fellow feeling and uprightness legions of peasants are steadfastly pursuing their mission, undaunted and unwavering. "We will struggle, we will win"-that is their conviction.



AIMSS leaders including Comrade Chhabi Mohanty, General Secretary, (4th from right) at a Delhi demonstration site

As a revolutionary peasants' organization guided by the highest ideology of the era, All India Kisan Sangathan (AIKKMS) has been in the movement from day one trying to give it a right direction. Right from 5 September 2020, when the BJP government



AIDYO leaders with Comrade Prativa Nayek, General Secretary, (3rd from left) at Singhu border

passed the black Farm Laws, AIKKMS started playing an effective role in shaping the movement in the desired mould. As an important constituent of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), AIKKMS mustered all its strength to spread the movement in different parts of the country by forming peasants' struggle committees in different villages in different states and initiating a drive for recruiting volunteers. AIKKMS organized rallies and roadblocks, conducted street corner meetings to explain the devastating consequences of the bills, distributed lakhs of leaflets clarifying the stand of the struggling peasants. When the 'Grameen bandh' (rural strike) was called on 25 September 2020, AIKKMS made an all out effort to make it a grand success. Thereafter, AIKKMS strived for escalating the movement through widespread observance of All India Protest Day on 14 October and successful 'Bharat Bandh' (All India general strike) on 26 November. Many leading organizers of AIKKMS including Comrades Jaikaran, Haryana State Secretary and B S Amarnath, Andhra Pradesh State Secretary were arrested. When AIKKMS activists and common peasants proceeded towards the movement sites in Delhi, they were prevented by the police and made to stay 68 long hours under open sky in this severe cold. Thereafter, the police had to bend before the firm attitude of the AIKKMS workers and allow them to go. AIKKMS has also organized a tractor rally of the peasants from Sonapat to Singhu border of Delhi. SUCI(C) and its mass organizations AIDSO, AIDYO and AIMSS as well as AIUTUC, its Trade union wing, have also undertaken various programmes in solidarity with and support of the peasants' movement. Doctors, nurses and health activists of Medical Service Centre, a voluntary organization of repute have opened quite a number of medical camps at the movement spots. These hands of support are of immense value.

It is very encouraging that frustrating all ploys of the government, the movement is gathering strength day by day. But there is no scope for complacency or slack. The peasants ought to remain vigilant so that the government does not succeed in its heinous attempt to create cracks in the cemented unity of the movement participants by any kind of scheming. This movement has indeed added a glorious chapter in the annals of history of post-independence India. It must be led to its logical culmination at any cost. With that pledge, AIKKMS along with the SUCI(C) and its mass organizations observed an All India Pledge Day on 1 January. Long live unity of the peasants! Down with pro-corporate anti-people government!

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PANDEMICS, EPIDEMICS AND SOVIET SOCIALISM - LESSONS OF HISTORY

As on 25 December 2020, 7,97,43,029 Covid-19 cases are reported in the world and the death toll is stated to be over 17,49,606. The worst affected countries are US, India, Brazil, Russia, UK, France, Italy, Turkey and Spain. In terms of casualties, US tops the list with 3,14,577 followed by India with a figure of 1,44,487. Now a new rapidly transmittable strain of the virus has come to light in UK, South Africa and some other European states necessitating reimposition of stringent lockdown measures there and suspension of air travel from UK to other countries. Given this horrendous scenario, one wonders what triggered such a wide spread of a pandemic and why the situation is still stated to be not under control. Is it because the pandemic is unprecedented or is it due to utter callousness of the powers that be and absence of a universal healthcare system and a proper infrastructure for fighting epidemics? It is true that the virus originated in Wuhan city of China, a giant industrial and commercial hub and got transmitted from there throughout the globe since almost all countries are having business transactions with China on a sizeable scale. China, which is now an imperialist country after counter-revolution, did commit a crime by not letting the world know about the deadly virus well in time. Rather, the Chinese rulers suppressed the information presuming they would be able to contain it. But when the pandemic began to spread menacingly, the ruling dispensations of almost all the major worst affected imperialist-capitalist countries showed a kind of indifference as if nothing were going to happen. The US President just brushed aside the question of taking least precautionary measure like wearing mask. He even sacked many well-known health specialists and medical personalities who criticized such an irresponsible attitude of his. The UK prime minister talked of herd immunity of his nation against the virus. And the people have paid a heavy price for such criminal callousness on their rulers' part. The Indian government also took no preventive measures for two long months since detection of Covid 19 case in the country. At present when many pharmaceutical companies are claiming to have

invented preventive vaccines, a clear commercial intent both in terms of cost as well as patent rights is surfacing. What do all such instances indicate? It indicates that the question of universal healthcare and combating a pandemic effectively is inseparably linked with the character of the socio-political system in place. If the socio-political system is based on exploitation of man by man and driven by profit motive of the ruling class owning the means of production as it is today in capitalism-imperialism, saving mankind from any such menace is never the prime objective of those in power. Rather, it is a telling tale of growing woes, blows and disaster. This prompts us to recall the healthcare system and handling of pandemics and other deadly diseases in socialist Soviet Union and contrast the same with what is happening in the imperialist-capitalist world where the governments, instead of saving mankind from such a killing virus in right earnest are busy utilizing the situation to reach out more and more commercial benefits to their respective domestic monopoly houses and MNCs, including pharma-tycoons, at the cost of the life of thousands of toiling people.

Proclamation of nascent socialist state

On 7 November 1917, the day the process of dealing final blow to the prevailing capitalist order by the revolutionary proletariat under the leadership of the Bolshevik party had commenced, great Lenin, the architect of the November Revolution, declared in the Bolshevik Decree on Peace to the new workers' government: "The workers' and peasants' government... calls upon all the belligerent peoples and their government to start immediate negotiations for a just, democratic peace. By a just or democratic peace, for which the overwhelming majority of the working class and other working people of all the belligerent countries, exhausted, tormented and racked by the war are craving [we mean] an immediate peace without annexations - that is, without the seizure of foreign lands, without the forcible incorporation of foreign nations and without indemnities." Lenin's proposal to end the slaughter and embrace

international solidarity fell on deaf ears as far as the belligerent powers went. But neither they nor even Lenin were aware that had the Bolsheviks' offer of peace been accepted, the flu pandemic of 1918, which wreaked death across the globe, could have been contained much more effectively.

As Chairman of the Council of Commissars, one of the first steps Lenin took as the leader of the infant socialist state concerned public health. CPSU(B) notified that "As the basis for its activity in the sphere of protecting people's health, the Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks) considers primarily the implementation of extensive health-building and sanitary measures with the object of preventing the incidence of disease." A People's Commissariat of Public Health was established in July 1918, and control of infectious diseases was one of its priorities.

Lenin wrote in 1920: "All our determination and all our experience of the civil war we must apply to combating epidemics." One author, who has written on the Spanish Flu and the way it had caused the world to look at the subject of health, has commented: "In 1920, therefore, Russia was the first to implement a centralized, fully public health care system. It wasn't universal, because it didn't cover rural populations... but it was a huge achievement nevertheless, and the driving force behind it was Vladimir Lenin... The official vision of the physician of the future was spelled out in 1924, when the government called on medical schools to produce doctors who had among other things, 'the ability to study the occupational and social conditions which give rise to illness and not only to cure the illness, but to suggest ways to prevent it'. Lenin realized that medicine should be not only biological and experimental, but also sociological, and it was round the same time that epidemiology - the science of patterns, causes and effects in disease, that is the cornerstone of public health - received full recognition as a science."

Soviet Russia was the first country to put in place a centralized public healthcare system, which it funded via a state-run insurance scheme.

Public healthcare and pandemic prevention system in Soviet Union

A look at the public health history in Russian and Soviet periods offers an intriguing case of relationship of public health measures and political conditions. The control of infectious diseases in the former USSR was a complicated task. The country covered a vast geographical area and included every climatic zone, from the tropical to the polar. The population was multi-racial and belonged to various nationalities with different traditions, customs and life-styles. Czarist Russia occupied the first place for mortality due to infectious diseases among European countries mainly due to their wide propagation in the borderlands. Despite these adverse conditions, eradication of some of these infectious diseases and control of others were successfully accomplished by the Soviet state, a result that owed a lot to the system of epidemic disease control established in Russia after the revolution.

The characteristic feature of disease control in the USSR was a focus on preventive rather than curative medicine. The comprehensive control system established after 1917 had an unquestionable effect within 20 years and markedly contrasted with the minimal impact of the patchwork service that existed before the revolution. The absence of any central agency in Czarist Russia meant that the disease control was mostly in the hands of local authorities, such as Zemstvo (county) and city councils, supported by philanthropic and voluntary organizations. The priority was to just deal with the epidemic crises in hand. There was neither any long-term preventive strategy nor any initiative to educate people about basic hygiene and safety measures.

After the victory of the Great November Revolution, several changes were brought in within no time. "Either the lice will defeat socialism or socialism will defeat the lice!", said great Lenin in the 7th Congress of the Soviets in December 1919. Free medical care was introduced and maintained even in the difficult conditions of the civil war situation from 1918 to 1922

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Soviet Socialism

Article 42 of Soviet Constitution gave all citizens right to health protection and free access to any health institutions

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when the country was just recovering from the ravages of World War I and various counter-revolutionary forces aided and abetted by 14 imperialist-capitalist countries, were hatching conspiracies to, what the then British prime minister Winston Churchill infamously proclaimed, "strangle the infant Bolshevik state in its cradle". A single state medical agency, the People's Commissariat of Public Health, was established in July 1918 and the control of infectious diseases became one of its main priorities. A state decree "On the measures to fight epidemics" was issued in 1918. In 1918, vaccine-serum commissions were created in Moscow. Epidemics were considered by the Bolshevik government as one of the main threats for the new state order. The new disease control system enjoyed an important advantage: it was supported and controlled both by public health authorities, and directly by the Party apparatus, since local Bolshevik Party leaderships, guided by noble ideology of Marxism-Leninism, were ready to support the measures.

Before the November Revolution and during the civil war, epidemics of many infectious diseases (typhus, relapse of typhoid fever, cholera, malaria, etc.) raged on the territory of Russia, claiming millions of human lives. One fourth of the population died from infectious diseases. Pre-revolutionary Russia occupied one of the first places in the world in terms of total mortality - 291 per 1000 population. The average life expectancy was 32 years. But after revolution, Lenin issued a decree in 1918 titled "On compulsory smallpox vaccination". This was a beginning of compulsory vaccination and infectious patients' treatment. To accomplish this goal, a network of sanitary stations was established, from the district to the Republic and soon covered the whole country. There were three types of stations: (i) general purpose sanitary stations, (ii) anti-plague stations, which also dealt with other highly infectious diseases such as cholera, smallpox, tularaemia, anthrax and brucellosis, and (iii) anti-malarial stations. Sanitary paramedics in the village were the organizers of all measures to improve working and living conditions, and to carry out

preventive and ongoing sanitary supervision over the construction and operation of food and other facilities. Later history would show that, in the USSR, significant successes had been achieved for a number of infections.

From the very beginning, the fight against epidemics became a priority in Soviet Union under the aegis as well as control of the socialist state. On the very first day of Soviet power, a medical and sanitary department, headed by a Bolshevik doctor, was organized under the Petrograd Military Revolutionary Committee. This department was entrusted with the reorganization of the entire healthcare in the country. To manage the fight against epidemics and eliminate unhygienic conditions

prevailing hitherto in the country, a sanitary and epidemiological department (section) with an epidemiological subdivision was created. This department became the central body for carrying out anti-epidemic and preventive measures. Similar subdivisions were organized locally and were immediately involved in the fight against epidemics and all kinds of insanitation. The sanitary and epidemiological department was headed by a prominent hygienist. Under this department, as advisory bodies, commissions like the Central Commission for the Fight against Epidemic Diseases, the Serum Vaccine Commission, the Commission for the Study of Typhus and "Spanish" disease, were organized to combat epidemics. The Central Commission was established on 23 July 1918. Its responsibilities included the development of measures to combat various epidemics. From 1919 to 1921, the Bolshevik party and the socialist government adopted 18 decrees on the fight against infectious diseases. The decree titled 'On sanitary bodies of the Republic' of the Council of People's Commissars (SNK) of the Russian Soviet Federative Socialist Republic (RSFSR) issued on 19 February 1927 approved the standards of sanitary bodies for servicing the population of the RSFSR. In the resolution of the SNK of the RSFSR

of 8 October 1927, a special place in the work of sanitary authorities was given to the prevention of infectious diseases and the organization of anti-epidemic measures.

Specialized helminthological (study of helminths or parasitic worms) institutions began to be created in the 1920s and 1930s, first as departments in research institutes in the centre and then in the union republics and regions. Very important documents on organizing the fight against epidemics were discussed in presence of great Lenin during his lifetime and then great Stalin, his worthy disciple and continuer, and necessary action taken with due promptitude. The allocation for health protection rose from 128.5m to 660.8m roubles per year, and the

number of hospital beds from 175,000 to 225,000. Even by the mid-thirties, health care in the USSR far outstripped the health care in the western world. More than 28,000 State infirmaries for women and children were built up during the construction of socialism in the Soviet Union and were run with utmost care and importance. 17% of the annual budget of Soviet Union was spent to provide free universal healthcare to all.

Most notably, Article 42 of the Soviet Constitution gave all citizens the right to health protection and free access to any health institutions in the USSR. And this was honoured in USSR till the time the process of counter-revolution was rolled out full-fledged by the revisionist Khrushchevite leadership.

Role of hospitals, doctors, nurses and paramedics in combating epidemics

As we had pointed out in our earlier article In Proletarian Era dated 1 July 2020, USSR had the highest number of doctors and hospitals in the world. At the end of the first five year plan under stewardship of great Stalin, the number of doctors increased from 63,000 to 76,000, the number of hospital beds increased by more than half and the number of nursery places increased from 2,56,000 to 57,50,000. It was the Soviet scientists who developed a coherent

system of the theory of epidemiology and prevention of a number of infections and the stages of reducing their incidence. Textbooks and books written by prominent scientists of the Academy of Medical Sciences of the USSR became the desk manuals of every epidemiologist. Students and doctors studied according to these textbooks. One notable textbook on epidemiology has been republished in a number of countries and is being used in many medical universities.

Not only doctors, but even nurses were also trained according to the textbook of epidemiology. The medical staff of district hospitals and feldsher (health care professional who provides various medical services limited to emergency treatment and ambulance practice) - obstetric centers periodically monitored compliance with the rules and regulations for the maintenance of dairy farms, transportation and storage of food products, rules for slaughtering animals, etc. Specially accredited healthcare persons were in contact with patients and monitored the foci of infections as well as held regular dialogue with the population about observance of measures to prevent infections, identified patients with fever or other symptoms of infection in the outbreak, organized disinfection measures, etc., took part in dispensary observation of persons who had typhoid fever, dysentery, viral hepatitis, invasions. The role of the paramedical workers was also laudable in carrying out vaccinations and monitoring the implementation of preventive and anti-epidemic measures in children's institutions, outpatient clinics, polyclinics and hospitals. Soviet Union was first to show the world how required stress on community medicine, proper healthcare infrastructure and correct application of medical science can successfully combat epidemics. The healthcare system of the Soviet Union was held in high esteem by many foreign specialists as well.

Positive results of pro-people healthcare measures

Results of such pro-people measures under close supervision of the socialist state were obtained in no time. The mass vaccination against smallpox, organized in 1919 after the adoption of a decree signed by Lenin, led to the elimination of this disease by the 1930s. Cholera was eradicated by 1930. Sporadic cases of malaria were reported in some areas. So was the case with diphtheria. An

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A true pro-people all-encompassing adequate free healthcare system coupled with state-sponsored development of medical research were the hallmarks of socialist medicare

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ably organized implementation of preventive measures kept down the incidence of plague, despite the fact that in a number of regions there used to be natural foci of this disease among rodents like rats, mice, squirrels etc. The incidence of tularaemia (a highly infectious disease of rodents, especially rabbits and squirrels, and sometimes transmitted to humans by ticks, flies or by handling infected animals) was reduced to almost nil because of administration of a vaccine developed by Soviet scientists and other preventive measures. Back in the 1950s, polio was a fairly common disease with mortality reported to be as high as 11% in some places. About 20% of those who recovered had severe complications, while 1.5 to 4.7% remained disabled. After the introduction of mass immunization against this infection with a live vaccine, developed by Soviet scientists, the incidence of poliomyelitis was observed only in isolated cases. The incidence of pertussis (whooping cough) in children after the introduction of mass vaccination was reduced tenfold and affliction of tiny children by measles decreased considerably due to the large scale vaccination approved by the USSR Ministry of Health. Planned preventive work and timely vaccination virtually removed tetanus, rabies, anthrax etc. The incidence of intestinal infections was significantly reduced. Typhoid in most territories of the USSR had become sporadic with supply of pure drinking water to all ensured within shortest possible time. Thus, mortality from infectious diseases had gone down significantly: more than 1,300 times in scarlet fever, more than 300 times in respect of diphtheria and whooping cough. Death from typhoid was almost zero. In general, during the years of Soviet power, the health and lives of millions of Soviet citizens were saved.

Disruptions in healthcare programmes due to Second World War were successfully overcome

Outbreak of Second World War precipitated by two warring groups of imperialist powers centred on capturing market) and the directed attack on Soviet Union by fascist Germany with a view to smashing socialism posed a serious challenge to continuation and improvement of socialist healthcare programmes and epidemic-prevention measures as the entire people, army and the socialist government under great Stalin, had to engage themselves in saving the nascent socialist state from fascist aggression. Thousands of factories had to be evacuated. Many regions had to be deserted overnight leading to increase in migration of the affected population to other places. The war situation created grounds for recurrence of many infectious diseases. Among the military contingents during the war years, sporadic cases of infectious diseases could not be

averted. From November 1941 to March 1942, tularaemia diseases were reported among some on the Southern Front. But those did never turn into epidemics though the invading Nazi army made deliberate attempt to transmit infection among the common Soviet people and Red Army.

But, right from the beginning of the Great Patriotic War of Soviet Union to repel aggression of imperialist powers and secure socialist system, the Military Sanitary Directorate of the Red Army took into account all the positive and negative aspects of anti-epidemic and preventive measures in previous wars and drew the necessary organizational and scientific-historical conclusions. Already, in the first months of the war, a unified doctrine for sanitary and anti-epidemic protection of troops was developed. The draft resolution of the State Defence Committee "On measures to prevent epidemic diseases in the country and the Red Army" was approved on 2 February 1942 with important additions. The implementation of the relevant measures was entrusted not only to the People's Commissariat of Health of the USSR, but also to the executive committees of the local Soviets, the people's commissariats of railways, sea and river fleets, etc. The resolution provided for the creation of emergency plenipotentiary anti-epidemic commissions at the local level, consisting of chairmen of local councils, representatives of the Red Army and party bodies. Sanitary control points were created on the roads, railway stations. Isolation checkpoints and bath and laundry disinfection factories were in operation. In the Red Army, sanitary and epidemiological detachments, washing and disinfection detachments and mobile hospitals for infectious diseases were organised. To identify infectious patients, door-to-door rounds were carried out both in the units and among the population. Garrison bath and laundry disinfection teams were created. Sanitary-epidemiological laboratories were deployed at the fronts. The number of these subdivisions increased from year to year. Adoption of such targeted measures from the top to the grassroot level even when the fascist army was on the rampage, saw, for the first time in the history of wars that the troops of an active army did not contribute to the spread of any infectious disease. The considerable rise in the living standards of common people, spectacular achievements in science including medical science and speedy implementation of a well-thought out free public healthcare system in just three decades of socialism could make this remarkable accomplishment possible.

How could Soviet Union achieve this feat

Soviet Union could achieve such a great feat because the entire healthcare system was restructured after the victory of socialism and healthcare issues were directed by people's

councils locally while all the healthcare resources were mobilized and centralized to work efficiently under close supervision of the state. Implementation of a true pro-people all-encompassing adequate health system and giving full encouragement and state assistance to development of medical research integrated with a state-funded academic network were the hallmarks of medicare in socialist system.

Let down by the way the present Russian imperialist regime has been handling the Covid threat, one commentator has pointed out: "Under socialism, such epidemiological issues were taken seriously and were resolved promptly. The capitalist states knew very well of the upcoming pandemic (as early as in November 2019) but resolved not to take any preventative measures to battle it in order not to halt any market operations. That led to the death of hundreds of thousands and the endangering of millions more.

Moreover, a privatized healthcare system means that those who cannot afford insurance would be charged 200,000 Roubles (3,000 US Dollars) for treatment, not to mention the incapability of hospitals to host patients. On the other hand, under the socialist USSR, treatment and prevention measures and public health were the priority. While in Czarist Russia mortality rates from epidemic diseases were 291 per 1000 population, under socialism some diseases ceased completely. Clear organization and implementation of preventative measures averted the incidence of many serious diseases, including plague in the 1930s. Thus we can make scientific and historical conclusions in favour of a socialist economic system which does not put profits over people." Perhaps, this very comment is self-explanatory and eloquently contrasts the exploitative capitalist-imperialist system with exploitation-free socialist system.

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COURTS, JURISTS AND EMINENT PERSONS RAISE QUESTIONS ABOUT LEGITIMACY AND LEGAL VALIDITY OF "LOVE JIHAD" LAW

In our write-up on "Love Jihad and conversion" in Proletarian Era dated 15 November 2020, we had drawn attention of all peace loving democratic, secular, well-minded people to the heinous design of intensifying religious fundamentalism-communalism that the BJP-led UP government hatched by promulgating "Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance 2020", now made a law, to stamp out so called "love jihad". "Love Jihad" is an imaginary conspiracy theory of the arch Hindu communal RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar that Muslim men seduce Hindu women and lure them into marrying them with an intention to convert them to Islam. We had shown that by this draconian law the state is seriously violating the right to freely choose one's partner, or enter into marriage of one's choice, not to speak of infringing on the inalienable right to interfaith marriages as well as the right to freely adhere to the religion of one's choice. From that perspective, it is an infringement on the fundamental constitutional right of individual freedom. Now, the MP government has also tabled a bill - the Madhya Pradesh Dharmik Swatantrata (Freedom of Religion) Bill, 2020 - on banning so called dubious inter-faith marriages.

Telling tales of victimization of innocent citizens

Instances of harassment and victimization of those whom the saffron brigade unilaterally and arbitrarily hold to be accused of "love jihad" are pouring in, in good numbers. For example, Pinki, a 22 year Hindu woman, while walking through the road in Moradabad on 5 December along with her Muslim husband Rashid, whom, out of her own choice, she had married in Dehradun nearly a year ago, that is before 'Love Jihad' law was passed, some miscreants belonging to Bajrang Dal, a Sangh affiliate, attacked them, draped their necks with orange scarves, heckled and assaulted them physically. Finally, the boy and his brother were handed over them to the police who arrested them on a false charge of forcefully converting girl to Islam when still a minor. The girl, Pinki was sent to a government shelter as she was pregnant. Days later, the girl suffered a miscarriage in custody. Later, the police admitted that there was no evidence for the allegation of forceful conversion, and the boys were released by the chief judicial magistrate. No one knows how many more Pinkis would face similar fate because of such an awful law, the constitutional validity of which, as we shall see later, is questioned even by the eminent jurists.

In another case, A Muslim teenager from Bijnor in UP was jailed for a week after a case of "Love Jihad", sections of the SC/ST Act, and the Protection of Children from Sexual Offences (POCSO) Act was filed against him because he walked home from a birthday party with a 16 year old dalit girl, his former classmate. The girl had repeatedly and vehemently denied the allegations of 'love jihad'. The FIR was registered allegedly based on a complaint by the girl's father

that the boy "induced the girl to elope with him" with the "intention to marry and convert her". The girl's father has denied that he made a complaint and alleged that police dictated the statement. "I trust my daughter completely. So, the falsity of the charges and the persecuting attitude of a communalized police-administration were evident. What wrong did she do? Is it unlawful for a boy and a girl to walk together now?", he asked while being interviewed by the Indian Express.

In one more case, an inter-faith couple in Lucknow was stopped from getting married despite having consent from both families. The wedding was to take place under Hindu rituals, both of the couple were getting married with each other's consent and there was no coercion of any type, and neither the bride nor the bridegroom had expressed any immediate desire to convert. But some representatives of Hindu Yuva Vahini, another Sangh affiliate, objected to the wedding and the police forced to stop the marriage. One lawyer Vakasha pointed out that this case did not even qualify on any ground under the new anti-conversion ordinance, which the police cited while stopping the wedding. While this meant marriage registration may not have been possible yet, there was no impediment to the ceremony." But the marriage was not allowed to be solemnized by the police-Sangh Parivar duo. The above are just of the many incidents that are taking place today not only in UP but also other BJP-ruled states of Uttarakhand, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh (MP) and so on, Very few of which are being reported.

Jurists on constitutional validity of "love jihad" laws

Visibly enraged at such highly undemocratic, unlawful and immoral "love jihad" law enforced by a government which vows to abide by the Constitution, 104 retired bureaucrats in a letter to the saffron-clad BJP chief minister of UP have asked "Does this not amount to effective murder of an unborn child and is the police force of your State, by their inaction, not complicit in this?...the entire police force of Uttar Pradesh needs to be trained without delay in respecting the rights of all citizens; and the politicians of UP, including yourself, need to re-educate yourselves about the provisions of the Constitution which you and other lawmakers have sworn to uphold." And now four former judges have criticized the new anti-conversion ordinance of Uttar Pradesh, aimed at curbing cases of "love jihad", calling it unconstitutional, against fundamental rights, and one of the strangest laws, with one even terming "love jihad" a "creation of religious extremists for the purpose of dividing people."

Former Supreme Court judge Madan B Lokur has held that the law puts freedom of choice and dignity "on the backseat". He also questioned what would happen to earlier Supreme Court judgement, which had ruled that states have no jurisdiction over an adult's absolute right to choose a life partner. According to Justice AP Shah, former Delhi High Court judge and former chairman of the National Law Commission, said

the new law reflects the objective to subjugate women. The former judge opined that that several provisions of the law violate the fundamental right to practice religion, "striking at the very root of right to life and liberty guaranteed under the constitution". This law, he said, was "capable of great public mischief". He also found it "difficult to believe it was passed by a government in a country governed by the rule of law and a constitution. The ordinance has already taken its toll, according to him, with large-scale arrest of people and stories of separation." He emphasized that it is needed to stop the destruction of these freedoms. Justice Deepak Gupta, a former Supreme Court judge, too called the law "absolutely unconstitutional," while adding that it takes away the right of choice of every human being. "What business does the government have to deal with the personal beliefs of any human? Our Constitution guarantees every individual the right to not only freedom of religion, but the right also to have his or her own belief, and this belief needn't be a religious belief, you could be an atheist, you could be agnostic, you could be anybody. But it's your right to believe, and the Constitution also guarantees that each one has the right to change our beliefs," he said.

Former judge of the Kerala High Court, Justice M Sasidharan Nambiar, also observed, "the (UP) ordinance will not survive the test of constitutional validity as it violates Article 21 of the Constitution which guarantees personal liberty of every citizen of this nation irrespective of religion, caste and gender." Speaking about the so called "love jihad" laws, Nobel laureate Amartya Sen said that there can be "no jihad in marrying someone you love. The Supreme Court should intervene in this matter immediately. A case must be filed in the Supreme Court to declare this law unconstitutional. This is a very big issue", he added.

Court verdicts uphold right to marry as per choice

The Delhi High Court on 26 November gave a clear verdict in a "love jihad" case, reuniting a 20-year-old woman with her husband as it said an adult woman is free to live wherever she wants and with whoever she wishes. In a similar judgement, the Allahabad High Court a few days ago had cancelled an FIR filed in Kanpur against a Muslim man by the parents of his wife who had converted to Islam last year to marry him. "We do not see Priyanka Kharwar and Salamat Ansari as Hindu and Muslim, rather as two grown-up individuals who - out of their own free will and choice - are living together peacefully and happily over a year. The Courts and the Constitutional Courts, in particular, are enjoined to uphold the life and liberty of an individual guaranteed under Article 21 of the Constitution of India," the two-judge bench had ruled. Earlier, in another verdict on 11 November, Allahabad High Court denounced a previous single-judge bench decision that religious conversions only for the sake of

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Love Jihad Law

Real intent of the law is to foment religious bigotry and persecution of minority populace

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marriage are unacceptable, saying that decision was "bad in law". While hearing a petition moved by the father of a 19-year-old woman, who married and converted to the religion of her husband, a division bench of Calcutta High Court has also reiterated in December last that "If an adult marries as per her choice and decides to convert and not return to her paternal house, there can be no interference in the matter." Similar views were also expressed by Karnataka HC in a Muslim man's habeas corpus plea complaining of unlawful detention of his Hindu lover by her parents. "...Liberty relating to the personal relationships of two individuals cannot be encroached by anybody irrespective of caste or religion... It is well settled that a right of any major individual to marry the person of his/her choice is a fundamental right enshrined in the Constitution of India...", observed the division bench of Karnataka High Court on 1 December last.

"love jihad" laws— an offence against humanity

It is thus clear that the UP "love jihad" law that invalidates and criminalizes interfaith marriages and associated religious conversions through an overly broad and vague definition of "allurement" among other clauses, clashes with the spirit of the court rulings and opinions expressed by renowned jurists and eminent persons. Clearly, even from legal point of view, it does not have any validity while militating against fundamental precepts of individual right and freedom as recognized in democracy. "While the law itself is severely under question, the UP police and right-wing Hindutva organizations appear to be taking it a step further to stop inter-faith marriages altogether. The UP law is teeming with legal blunders that strongly indicate the real intent of the law is to harass people so much that conversion per se is discouraged," observed one retired IPS officer has observed in a write-up. "What worries me today is that we seem in India to be regressing into a Hindu version of Pakistan. Not only should Indian women have the right to choose their own husbands, but they should also have the right to decide if they want to change their faith. The idea that there is a widespread Muslim conspiracy to prey on innocent Hindu girls and convert them to Islam is ludicrous. So is 'love jihad'", commented Tavleen Singh, a noted journalist in the Indian Express. Time has come to seriously ponder over these questions and raise loud voice against those guilty of committing such an offence against humanity.

[Sources: The Print 23-11-20, india.com 26-11-20, The Wire 29-11-20, 04-12-20, 19-12-20, 22-12-20, Times of India 29-11-20, 04-12-20, 25-12-20, scroll.in 01-12-20, Hindustan Times 17-12-20, 28-12-20, BBC 17-12-20, NDTV 18-12-20, Outlook 19-12-20, Indian Express 20-12-20, The Statesman 29-12-20, India Today 30-12-20]

Landslide Victory of PSUV - a blow to US-led imperialist conspiracy to destabilize Venezuela

The ruling United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV) and its allies achieved a landslide victory in the National Assembly Election of Venezuela held on 6 December 2020 obtaining 69.3% of the vote casted and winning 253 of the 277 seats in the parliament. President Nicolás Maduro bagged a large win. This victory has been achieved despite call of boycotting the election by Juan Guaidó, extreme rightist interim acting president, backed by the US-European Union imperialist bloc. The Guaidó group even attempted sabotaging the poll. Except the Guaidó group, three other rightist opposition groups who took part in the election, accepted the people's verdict and strongly criticized the call for a boycott.

Background and analysis of this election:

Why this electoral victory of PSUV is significant? For that, we need to recapitulate the past history of Venezuela which under presidentship of Hugo Chavez had maintained a consistent anti-imperialist, particularly anti-US imperialist stand. These imperialist sharks were keenly interested to intervene in the internal affairs of Venezuela and somehow install a puppet government there so that they could capture the huge oil reserve of that country. For the last more than two decades US imperialism has been waging "hybrid warfare" against Bolivian Venezuela, which is not just a physical attack, but comprises information war, diplomatic war, economic war and war on the country's currency, and thus ruining the country and its people which is more devastating than direct bombardment. But Chavez and the people of Venezuela stubbornly resisted such nefarious moves and hence earned the displeasure of the imperialist powers. After Chavez's demise in 2013, Nicolas Maduro, handpicked by Chavez as his successor, became the President and continued progressive reforms initiated by Chavez. But the imperialist powers in league with the Venezuelan oligarchs tried to destabilize his progressive, legitimately democratically elected government by plotting a coup. In spite of all efforts, Maduro could not be prevented from being re-elected for a second term in May 2018 securing 68% of the popular vote. But the imperialist powers and their stooge right-wing forces raised a hue and cry about the vote having been rigged notwithstanding the fact that none of the rightist opposition parties contested in the election.

However, Mr Maduro's re-election was not recognised by the opposition-controlled National Assembly, which labelled Mr Maduro a "usurper" and argued that the presidency was vacant. Seizing the opportunity of creating chaos in the country with a view to ensuring that the imperialist camp establishes its control over the Venezuelan oil, the mainstream bourgeois media of the West have been extensively propagating that democracy in Venezuela is in peril under Nicolas Maduro. They also attributed the cause of a deep economic crisis triggered by draconian sanctions to Maduro and spread a false propaganda that 5 lakh Venezuelans

have migrated to other countries because of immense hardship. Then the US imperialists nakedly interfered into the internal affairs of a sovereign democratic country like Venezuela and the US President Donald Trump pitchforked opposition politician Juan Guaidó as a so called "saviour of democracy" and then, flouting all democratic norms, he hastily recognized Guaidó as the country's interim president and declared Maduro's presidency "illegitimate" and called for regime change. Thus Guaidó, who did not get a single vote of the Venezuelan people, was foisted by the US President Donald Trump as the "interim president" of Venezuela and this gross, dictatorial highhandedness of the US imperialist regime was supported by the wealthy elite of Venezuela, whose power has been eroded by nearly 20 years of the Bolivarian Revolution. Alongside, a split was engineered even within the pro-revolution parties, and the dissidents induced to challenge Maduro and create civil unrest in the country. Guaidó made all desperate efforts to mobilise all anti-revolutionary Venezuelan parties behind him. Not just that. For toppling president Maduro and his government, Guaidó and his mentors even resorted to heinous conspiracies which included US backed coup of invasion over the Venezuela-Columbia borders joining hands with this neighbouring pro-US state of Columbia, which was crushed by the Venezuelan people and armed forces unitedly. Incidentally, the vested interest of the US oil behemoths was exposed when, speaking to Fox Business host Trish Regan, John Bolton, Trump's top adviser, who had been branded the most fervent hawk in the administration, admitted that the US had "a lot at stake" in Venezuela's political crisis, specifically citing the country's oil and the economic benefit it could bring to the US.

Current election was totally free and fair

It is pertinent to mention that ever since Hugo Chavez's victory in the 1998 presidential election, the rightist opposition forces have oscillated between participation and abstention in election. However, this time, the right-wing opposition was divided over the question of the ill effects of economic sanction imposed by the imperialist powers, threat of foreign aggression, justifiability of boycotting election and several other issues. So, one section had rejected Guaidó's call for boycotting the election. In the current election, 14,000 candidates belonging to 107 parties, as many as 97 of which were opposed to the Maduro government contested for 277 seats. Besides en-mass voting for PSUV and President Maduro, people also freely voted for other parties and ideologies according to their choices. Opposition candidates got airtime on state television stations and took part in several debates. Amidst Covid-19 protocols voting was smooth and fair.

The elections were monitored by 300 international observers from 34 countries, as well as over 1,000 national observers from political

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Venezuela

US-led imperialist conspiracy to destabilize Venezuela

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parties and social organizations including from US as well. According to all of them, the election was conducted fairly and votes were properly counted. Teri Mattson, who observed two previous elections in Venezuela, led a CODEPINK (a women-led grassroots organization working to end US-led wars and militarism, support peace and human rights initiatives, and redirect people's tax money into healthcare, education, green jobs and other life-affirming programmes) observer delegation and described this year's elections as free and fair, and without fraud or tampering. "Voting is easy, fast and secure: an incentive for all voters while also preventing long lines due to cumbersome ballots and voter procedures", Mattson said.

As all attempts to sabotage the election failed, the White House National Security Council of US said the election scheduled was fraudulent. The Pentagon rulers repeatedly asserted that there were "no conditions" for free and fair elections and President Maduro ought to resign before polls are held. Yet the vote did take place and there has been no evidence of irregularities. Unsurprisingly, the Pentagon, European Union, the Lima Group*1 (an ad hoc set of Latin American countries pushing for regime change in Venezuela), the corporate media led by US and Organization of American States (OAS), a tool of US imperialism, are leaving no stone unturned to delegitimize this one of the most fraud-proof electoral processes in the world. In contrast, observers on the ground, including the Latin American Council of Electoral Experts (CEELA), marked the election procedure as in conformity with international standards.

This once again showed how the US imperialists have been continuing their hated pursuit of hegemonism, overlordism and reviled interference in the internal affairs of other countries. It is incumbent on all anti-imperialist peace-loving people of the world and organizations to be in solidarity with President Maduro and brave Venezuelan people and intensify global anti-imperialist, particularly anti-US imperialist militant peace movement against US interference and tactics of bullying through economic strangulation.

(Sources: workers.org wvnews@workers.org via gmail.mcs.v.net; https://misionverdad.com/opinion/el-filo-de-nuestra-victoria; Green Left Weekly; Dec 12 2020; https://venezuelanalysis.com/YwTk - Dec 12 2020; https://venezuelanalysis.com/YwSy - Dec 9 2020; https://venezuelanalysis.com/YwTG - Dec 19 2020; AP | Caracas | 6 December 2020, BBC 24-01-19, 03-12-20, rt.com 28-01-19 and Global Research dated 31-01-19.)

PROGRAMMES IN SOLIDARITY WITH THE HISTORIC PEASANTS' MOVEMENT

AIKKMS activists in the joint demonstration in Hyderabad on 30 December 2020



Comrade A Rengasamy, President, AIKKMS and Vice President, AIKSCC, Tamilnadu state, speaking at a joint rally of peasants' organizations at Thanjavur, Tamilnadu on 29 December 2020

Tractor rally of AIKKMS from Sonipat to Singhu



Protest demonstration by SUCI (C) at Nalbari, Assam



Dharna Manch at Goalpukhur, West Dinajpur, West Bengal



Police brutality on the joint demonstration in Patna on 29 December 2020



A peasant who has undergone an eye operation recently preparing roti at the demonstration site

BJP's pre-election 'jumla' of giving 75 lakh jobs in West Bengal

Come election and the vote-birds are out with their bagful of hollow promises and deceptive slogans. Bell has tolled in West Bengal and hence the contending power-monger parties are in the field with their respective baskets. The state which was long considered as the citadel of left-democratic movement and the first to voice protest against injustice now wears a different look-courtesy the 34 year long rule of the CPI (M) and its allies which was marked by planned erosion of leftist politics characterized by fighting zeal it produced and total shift to bourgeois parliamentarism with all its associated fads, filths and rots. So now the incumbent Trinamool Congress (TMC) government is facing challenge from the BJP which had no footing whatsoever on this soil even few years back. But now with the self-styled Marxists like CPI (M), CPI trying to hold on to their existence by anyhow securing some seats in alliance with the Congress, their newly found "secular democratic friend", have left the ground open and ripe for the BJP to flex its money and administrative power and its head as the principal opposition to the TMC and dreaming of being anointed to power. So, all gimmicks or bluffs (jumlas) which, Amit Shah, considered next to PM Modi, once told to be of great use in electoral campaign, are now being dished out on a palatable saucy base.

Dangling carrot of unemployment in West Bengal

It is a well-known practice of the power greedy bourgeois parties to brandish job carrots during election to buy the support of frustrated youths. The BJP leaders are saying that they are sitting tight with 75 lakh jobs for West Bengal in their pocket. They are only waiting to be saddled in power in next election. In fact, they have even started to distribute job cards (!) to the unemployed. Once installed in power, they would be giving jobs to the card holders in rows. A recently turned BJP leader and MP along with two ex-TMC leaders jointly made this promise. Only they have not spelled out what pre-electoral service those handpicked as card holders need to provide to them.

BJP's 'enviable' track record of employment generation during 2014-19

Well, what is track record of the BJP in providing jobs? One would remember that in 2013-14, Shri Narendra Modi, then PM-designate of the BJP, promised two crore jobs a year if voted to power. They were voted to power but the jobs remained ever elusive. Rather existing jobs were lost in large number. According to statistics released by the Labour Bureau, job creation or job growth for 2015 and 2016 (April-December) stood at 1.55 lakh and 2.31 lakh in numbers, respectively. These numbers are less than 1% of the 2 crore jobs promised per year by PM Modi. In the 2016 survey of the Labour Bureau, it was found that in most of the eight biggest employment generation sectors - textiles, leather, metals, automobiles, gems and jewellery, transport, information technology and handlooms - jobs were shrinking. A study conducted by the All India

Manufacturers' Organisation (AIMO), which represents over 3 lakh of mostly micro, small scale, and medium scale industries engaged in manufacturing, shows a drop of 60% in employment and loss of 55% in revenue March 2017 as a fallout of sudden demonetization. Corporate media also could not but admit the loss of 1.5 million jobs. The actual figure would be much more than what the official media has reported. In 2019, the National Sample Survey Organization run by the government informed that in last 45 years Mr Modi has gifted highest unemployment in the country. In September and December of 2018, Centre for Sustainable Employment of Ajiz Premji University informed in a study that in that year at least 11 million one lakh people lost their job. ILO had informed in 2018 that from 2014-18, the BJP government reportedly could give only 8,23,000 jobs throughout India. It is not known whether these jobs were inclusive of casual jobs, under-employment (meaning a highly educated person doing a lower-end job or those in part time jobs and pseudo-employment). How does this number fare against the teeming unemployed millions in the whole country! Incredibly, PM Modi during a no-confidence motion in the Lok Sabha in 2018 had reportedly said citing Employees Provident Fund (EPF) data that over 1 crore jobs were created in the country over the past year. This claim was reportedly refuted by the Chief Statistician of India, Pravin Srivastava, who said that EPF data should be seen as a proxy for formalisation, not employment creation. The government later admitted to a Parliamentary panel that it had no real data on the number of new jobs created since 2014. So, where did the figure stated by the PM come from?

Saga of post-2019 election

Then came the question of having a second term in office in 2019. As usual, the BJP went on parroting about more job creation without feeling any need to inform the countrymen how much employment they could provide in the bygone 5 years, let alone saying about the huge loss of jobs because of closure of industries, extinguishing of posts in government offices, non-fulfilment of vacancies created by retirement in organized sector and so forth. Without addressing any people's issue including mounting unemployment, the BJP conveniently rode on communal polarization, promise to set up Ram mandir, so called surgical strike on a neighbouring country to demolish terrorist hideouts, bogus call of "make in India" etc. and of course absence of necessary political consciousness of the oppressed masses, managed to occupy governmental seat for another five years. And then the situation continued to worsen further on employment front. In reply to a question in the parliament, the BJP government stated on 1 July 2019 that till then 6.8 lakh establishments had closed down in the country, obviously throwing millions out of job. In core industries, there has been no employment, only retrenchment. Fresh employment has stopped in Rail, BSNL, oil companies, government departments. Millions of workers are outright retrenched. Retrenchment continues in steel,

mines, fertilizer, cement industry. The National Sample Survey Office (NSSO) report which got leaked this year showed that spike in unemployment during the first year of second term of the BJP government was the highest in the past 45 years. Government report shows that though the population of the country has increased, number of employed persons got reduced by 4.7 crores. Reported 10% drop in Labour Participation Rate (section of working population in the age group of 16-64 in the economy currently employed or seeking employment) shows that people are seeking jobs but not getting it.

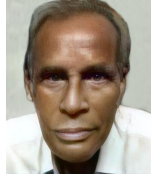
Condition of BJP-ruled states

What is the performance report of the BJP ruled states in this regard? Unemployment almost doubled in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh (UP), during the last year compared to 2018 according to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) data. The number of unemployed educated youth in Uttar Pradesh, has grown by over 12.5 lakh in last two years to 34 lakh, Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government admitted at the state assembly on 14 February 2020. What is the spectacle of much touted Gujarat model? More than 2000 industrial units in various estates of the Gujarat Industrial Development Corporation (GIDC) are closed, according to information provided in the Assembly by Gujarat Government in a written reply. With regard to this data on closed units, Secretary General of Federation of Gujarat Industries (FOGI) told that "As per the information provided, there is no mention of how many industrial units shut down year on year basis." Highlighting the reason of the closure, he mentioned "There could be various reasons attached to it but do not rule out that a few might have not been able to sustain because of demonetization and roll out of GST due to slow refund circle process in first year. According to the collated data reported in the media, around 2,069 units were shut in GIDCs in 31 districts as of 31 December 2018. In Jamnagar, 36 units were shut in GIDCs. Similarly, 19 out of 50 units in Kutch area, and 10 out of 18 units in Banaskantha district downed shutters in last two years, admitted the BJP chief minister of Gujarat. Surely, these closures did not breed but kill jobs. The Gujarat government in February last told the state Assembly that 4.58 lakh educated youth are registered with various state employment exchanges. Of these, 4.34 lakh are 'educated' while 23,433 are in the 'semi-educated' category, Gujarat Labour and Employment Minister Dilip Thakor said in a written reply during Question Hour in the assembly. Only 3.1% of the working population there get job for 25 days a month to feed a family of five. Moreover, six states saw rising joblessness in cities in July-September 2019. The highest spike in the urban unemployment rate was seen in Gujarat where it rose by 1.3 percentage points to 4.3 per cent.

97% of workers of Gujarat do not earn enough to run their families. Six of the ten states which reported highest job loss at the end of 2019 had BJP governments in place. As per CMIE report, Tripura, Haryana and Himachal Pradesh recorded unemployment rates of 31.2 %, 20.3% and 15.6%, respectively. Instead of creating new jobs, the BJP-led state governments have been abolishing vacant posts as is confirmed by various

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COMRADE AJAY SAHA PASSES AWAY



Comrade Ajay Saha, veteran member of the West Bengal State Committee, SUCI (C), 24 Pgs District Secretariat Member and an eminent mass leader breathed his last in the night of 24 December last in a sudden heart attack. He was 73. Next day his mortal remains were brought to the central Party office in Kolkata. Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary of our Party, paid his revolutionary tribute to the departed leader through a floral wreath that was placed by Comrade Amitabha Chatterjee, Central Committee member, on his behalf. Comrade Saumen Basu, Polit Bureau member, Comrade



Comrade Debaprasad Sarkar, veteran Polit Bureau member and South 24 Parganas State Secretary, SUCI(C), paying revolutionary tribute to departed Comrade Ajay Saha at Jaynagar Party office

Chandidas Bhattacharya, West Bengal State Secretary and other central and state leaders also offered floral tribute.

Party workers and supporters who had assembled at the office also paid their respects to the departed leaders. His body was then taken

to Gocharan in South 24 Parganas, where many comrades, supporters, sympathizers of the Party as well as admirers of Comrade Ajay Saha paid their respects to him. Then he was taken to South 24 Parganas party office at Jaynagar. In the long ride from Kolkata to Jaynagar office via

Gocharan, countless people and party workers and supporters, flanking the entire distance, paid their last respects in tearful eyes. Comrade Debaprasad Sarkar, veteran Polit Bureau member and Secretary, South 24 Parganas District Committee, and other leaders paid respects at the district party office. The last journey began thereafter. He was cremated at the Bishnupur cremation ground. On 30 December, the memorial meeting of Comrade Ajay Saha was held in Padmerhat, South 24 Parganas. Comrades Saumen Basu, Chandidas Bhattacharjee and other state and district leaders spoke about the qualities of the departed comrade and called upon all to learn from his struggle and character.

Red Salute Comrade Ajay Saha

BJP's pre-election 'jumla'

75 lakh jobs in West Bengal

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media reports and studies.

But shamelessness has not deserted the BJP leaders

Nonchalant with such a spectacular(!) performance, the BJP in its election manifesto during the last Maharashtra election had promised to generate 1 crore jobs in the next 5 years in that state. And now they are once again vending the spurious dream of 75 lakh jobs in West Bengal. The BJP leaders know very well that in crisis-ridden capitalism today, creation of jobs through rapid industrialization is a utopia as shrinkage of market because of steadily falling buying power of people and consequent closure of industries is an endemic feature of the system. Only way, some jobs can be created if the government takes initiative to open labour intensive industries in key sectors under its aegis, as happened after independence under public pressure. But the BJP is now on a privatization spree, allowing monopoly houses and MNCs to take over all key sectors, including even education, healthcare, railways, electricity, mines, road transport, agriculture, retail and telecommunication. More privatization means more profit maximization which is contingent

upon reckless commercialization entailing more and more job loss because of highly sophisticated mechanized organization to keep production cost lower. Facts corroborate that in no uncertain term. The BJP as the most trusted representative of the ruling monopolists now cannot do anything otherwise. So, all its vow to provide 75 lakh jobs in West Bengal is not only a bunkum but deception par excellence! In fact, situation of the state would turn worse if the BJP manages to sneak into power here by hoodwinking people and manipulating verdict with all resources at its command. People of West Bengal cherishing a glorious past of freedom movement as well as left-democratic movements in post-independent India ought not to be swayed by the fraudulent utterances of the shrewd BJP leaders but give them a befitting reply by thrusting on it a humiliating defeat in the ensuing poll.

[Source: First Post-22-11-13, Business Today 26-03-14, 08-10-19, 27-03-20, The Wire 26-11-17, 27-11-17, daily O 29-01-19, knnIndia 20-02-19, Economic Times 19-11-19, New Indian Express 28-02-20, Times of India 12-05-20, Timesnews network 02-06-20, The Mint 01-06-20, Business Standard 20-10-20, Outlook 01-11-20, Ahmedabad mirror indiatimes-08-12-20]



Protest by SUCI(C) in Bangalore on 21 December 2020 against massive hike in the prices of LPG-Petrol-Diesel,

PRIME MINISTER URGES PRIVATE SECTOR TO INVEST IN AGRICULTURE FROM SEED TO MARKET

"the corporate world has no investment in agriculture beyond making tractors. There needs to be more investment in food processing, building warehouses, and facilitating the movement from seed to the market. We need to have a futuristic vision for agriculture. We need to inspire them; we have to create new policies for them. Food processing, warehouses, cold storage needs corporate investment", said PM Modi.

(Business line: 25 June 2019).

Addressing the 93rd Annual General Meeting of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) via video conferencing, PM Narendra Modi lamented that private sector has not "explored" enough the opportunities in agriculture and allied industries. "There are some companies doing good work in agriculture, but it is not enough. It is important that private sector show both interest and make investments in agriculture", he said. The Prime Minister suggested to the private sector that they should not lose the opportunity to invest in small towns and villages, which are going to be the pillars for India's growth in 21st century. Modi highlighted that there was ample scope for agri based industries.

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