

## SUCI (C) vehemently condemns fascist NCT Bill and demands its immediate repeal

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following statement on 23 March 2021:

“We vehemently condemn the most atrocious National Capital Territory of Delhi (Amendment) Bill, 2021 which has debarred elected Delhi government from taking any executive action without approval of the Lt Governor. This move to make Legislature subservient to Executive is part and parcel of the naked fascist policy of the ruling BJP to wipe out whatever little remnant of democracy is still there in each sphere of socio-political life and turn all bodies, institutions, judiciary and even elected governments into its rubber stamp. This sign is ominous.

We call upon all democratic-minded people to rise up against all such moves to trample down democracy and establish fascist autocracy.”

## SUCI (Communist) vehemently condemns mass killing of civilians by Myanmar Military and denounces Indian participation in a parade of the killers

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following statement on 30 March 2021:

“We vehemently condemn the way the Military junta of Myanmar has declared a virtual war on the common people killing and maiming hundreds of them with alacrity. The Myanmar people have taken to the streets in demand for restoration of the elected government toppled by the military through a coup. While the democratic minded people of the whole world have been unequivocally denouncing such a barbaric attack on the civilians by a blood-thirsty fascist military junta, the Government of India till date did not even condemn this mass carnage. Instead, Government of India has sent its representative to attend a military parade of the coup leaders on 27 March, the bloodiest day of the pro-democracy movement when 114 civilians were shot dead taking the death toll to over 500 since the military coup on 1 February. No civilized person can remain silent over this shocking and horrific situation in Myanmar.

Rightly the Myanmar people held in extreme contempt the Indian participation in the shameful Armed Forces Day parade and held that those who “shook hands with the generals whose hands are soaked with our blood have brought disgrace to their own people and the international community”.

We call upon the right-thinking Indian people to firmly stand in solidarity with their fighting Myanmar brethren and build up pressure on the government of India to use diplomatic channels to prevail upon the Myanmar military to stop such mayhem and reinstate the elected government.”



## COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH THOUGHT ILLUMINES THE PATH

[On the eve of 73rd Foundation Day of our beloved Party, SUCI(C), on 24 April, we produce below an important teaching of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, Founder General Secretary of the Party and an outstanding Marxist thinker of the era. One would find it extremely educative in the present day context.]

“...the very use of the word 'country', or when we talk of 'the country's interest', when we, or whoever it be, use these words simply like that, they conceal a vital truth both from themselves and from the masses. The truth is that today our society is not an undivided, not an indivisible society. No matter, whether we want it or not, whether we like it or not, our society, in accordance with the inexorable law of history, is class-divided. *Contd. on page 3*

## SOME FACTS ABOUT “DOUBLE ENGINE” GOVERNMENTS OF BJP

[NB : The coinage 'Double Engine' governments connotes governments led by the same political party, here the BJP, at the centre and in any state concerned. See, how it fares in the BJP-ruled states.]

### UTTAR PRADESH

#### 1. Unemployment and job loss

- 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. (Outlook 01-11-20)
- The number of unemployed educated youth in India's most populous state, Uttar Pradesh, has grown by over 12.5 lakh in last two years to 34 lakh, Yogi Adityanath government said at the state assembly on 14 February 2020. (Business Today 27-03-20)

#### 2. Environment pollution

- Close to 11 per cent or nearly 275 industrial units continue to operate by flouting the pollution control standards in the country. Nearly half of these non-compliant GPIs are in Uttar Pradesh and are responsible for polluting rivers like the Ganga. There are 992 industries in the main stem of Ganga and its referred tributaries, Kali and Ramganga. Out of which, 851 industrial units are in UP. (Down to Earth 06-06-19)

#### 3. Poverty and hunger

- 29.43 people are below poverty line (“You

will be on BPL list if your annual income is Rs.27,000”, “Rural India spends most on mobiles: NSSO”, “SDGs India Index”. 31 December 2019.)

- 62% of households report incomes lower

than pre-lockdown period. In Uttar Pradesh, the condition of vulnerable communities like Musahari became precarious. The community collecting chicken feathers for consumption in order to survive. (Counterview 10-12-20)

#### 4. Hate Crimes

- Over 200 alleged cases of hate crimes were reported in 2018 against people from marginalised groups, especially Dalits, with Uttar Pradesh recording the highest number of such incidents for the third consecutive year, Amnesty India said. (The First Post 06-03-19)
- Uttar Pradesh continues to be the hub of harassment of minorities and Dalits. Between 2016 and 2019, National Human Rights Commission registered 2,008 cases where minorities/Dalits were harassed, including cases of lynchings. Of these, Uttar Pradesh alone accounted for 869 cases i.e. 43%.
- In regard to Dalits, the number of harassment cases registered by NHRC in Uttar Pradesh saw an increase of nearly 41 per cent (from 221 cases in 2016-17 to 311 in 2018-19). This information was revealed in a written reply by the Union home ministry in *Contd. on page 2*



## Double Engine

## Harrowing spectacle of BJP-ruled states

*Contd. from page 1*

Parliament on 16 July 2020. (India Today-20-07-19)

### 5. Crime against women

- In just four years, crimes against women increased in Uttar Pradesh by over 66%. (scroll.in 11-10-20)
- Crime against women in Uttar Pradesh has increased by 20% from 2016 to 2019, says a National Crime Record Bureau (NCRB) report.
- UP had 3,065 cases rape cases in 2019. (Zee News- 07-10-20)
- 11 rape cases reported every day in UP. (Zee News 07-10-20)
- In 2018 UP recorded 21711 cases of kidnapping, 8908 of rioting and 3218 of robbery. The cases of violent crime increased significantly over the past few years. (Hindustan Times 10-01-20)
- According to NCRB data, UP recorded the highest numbers in both categories with 2,524 dowry deaths and 4,324 murders in 2017 for which the figures were released. (Times of India 23-10-19)
- UP tops the list of crimes against women and the girl child. (Hindustan Times 03-10-20)
- The National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB) which works under the Ministry of Home Affairs, has marked Uttar Pradesh as the most unsafe state for women. (NewsClick 10-01-20)
- UP accounts for the maximum dowry deaths -11,800 (Rediff.com 31-01-19)

### 6. Encounter deaths

- Uttar Pradesh Police tweeted that 103 criminals have been killed and 1,859 injured in "5,178 police engagements in the last more than 2 years".
- Uttar Pradesh has seen a spike in encounter killings by police since the advent of the Yogi Adityanath government in 2017. In fact, a month after assuming office in March 2017, Adityanath had declared "if you commit a crime, you will be knocked off".
- Legal experts, opposition parties and human rights activists have expressed concern about the encounters, which they alleged had targeted people from disadvantaged sections of society. However, the Adityanath government has remained unperturbed. (The Week 06-12-19)
- The encounter killing of gangster Vikas Dubey may have opened a Pandora's box for the Uttar Pradesh Police.
- Questions are being raised on several aspects: from the need to fatally shoot a criminal attempting escape to the police narrative. But it has mainly kicked up dust over Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath's alleged 'thok do' policy (a quote of the chief minister) which the Opposition has used to decry the rise in encounter killings.
- Shortly after taking charge of India's most populous state with the worst crime statistics, Adityanath infamously told India TV in a June

2017 interview, "Agar apradh kareng to hthokdiye jayenge (if they commit crime, we'll take them out)."

- Magisterial inquiries have been completed in 74 encounter cases where deaths occurred and the police have got a clean chit in all. In as many as 61 cases, closure reports filed by the police have been accepted by the court. (The First Post 12-07-20 with inputs from PTI)

### 7. Custodial deaths and Swelling Imprisonment figures

- Almost five persons died daily in custody in India in 2019-2020, according to data shared by the union ministry of home affairs (MHA) with Parliament. The total number of people killed either in police custody or jails between April 1, 2019 and March 31 was 1,697. Of this, 1,584 died in judicial custody and 113 in police custody. The most deaths in judicial custody, 400, were reported from Uttar Pradesh (UP). UP's 72 jails have the highest number of inmates at 1,01,297, while the capacity is 60,340. (Hindustan Times 17-09-20)

### 8. Attack on Journalists

- On 26 March, two days after Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi announced a national lockdown to control the spreading of COVID-19, Hindi-language daily Jansandesh Times reported that a tribe in Varanasi, Uttar Pradesh state, didn't have enough to eat due to the sudden announcement and that children were eating grass. The same day, the magistrate of Varanasi district, Kaushal Raj Sharma, sent a legal notice to the newspaper claiming that part of its report was false and "sensationalized."
- In Azamgarh, about 170 miles east of the state capital Lucknow, Jansandesh Times reporter Santosh Jaiswal was arrested on September 7 last year after reporting that students in a school were being forced to clean the premises. In Mirzapur, about 180 miles southeast of Lucknow, Pawan Jaiswal (no relation to Santosh) was charged with criminal conspiracy on August 31 last year after he reported that a local school was serving meals below the government's minimum standards. The state government stopped advertisements to the newspaper for three months.
- Since the BJP maintained its parliamentary majority in Uttar Pradesh during India's May 2019, general election, there has been a surge in the number of such incidents in UP. During a trip to Uttar Pradesh in late February and early March, journalists told Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ) that they felt under increased threat of criminal charges and physical assault. Such fear could lead to self-censorship.
- A national lockdown is precisely the time when journalists in a democracy need to be free to write and report without worrying about a midnight knock." Siddharth Vardarajan, the editor of Indian news website The Wire, wrote April 21 in The New York Times. Vardarajan has been the subject of several defamation suits and criminal complaints for his work - most recently for criticizing Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi

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## OBITUARY

### Red salute

### Comrade Minhar Ali Mandal

Comrade Minhar Ali Mandal, veteran member of Assam State Committee, SUCI(C), breathed his last at Dispur Hospital, Guwahati, on 7 March 2021, after prolonged suffering from COPD. As soon as the news of his demise came, all comrades, Party



supporters and sympathizers, his friends, admirers and relatives were profoundly grieved.

Comrade Minhar Ali Mandal was born in 1948 at Jhowdanga village of Mankachar. He was a very meritorious student. After passing entrance examination, he got admitted in St. Edmunds College, Shillong from here he passed B A examination. Then he completed his post-graduation and also passed LLB from Guwahati University. Then he joined as a lecturer in Darranag College of Mongoldoi. At that time, he came in contact with the Party through Comrade Azahar Hossain, another veteran State Committee member. Then after several rounds of discussion with Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya, now Polit Bureau member of the Party and a worthy student of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, Founder General Secretary of the SUCI(C) and one of the outstanding Marxist thinkers of the era, he could realize that the SUCI(C), developed on correct Leninist Model and based on higher proletarian culture is the genuine communist party on the soil. From then onwards, he joined the Party as a dedicated worker. It was in the main his efforts that our Party organization spread first in Mongolkot and then in the entire Darrang district.

His quiet nature and dexterity in conducting theoretical discussion attracted many and most of them joined the party.

When the fascist chauvinist movement gripped Assam from 1979 to 1985, his faced life risk and forced to quit his job of college lecturership. Later he joined Mancachhar college. There also he attracted many with his lucid theoretical discourse and recruited in the Party. He himself played leading role in many movements organized by the Party.

When his body was being taken to Mancachhar, Comrade Chandralekha Das, Assam State Secretary, Comrade Jainal Abedin, Assam State Committee member and many others paid floral tribute at Paikan. At Mancachhar, Comrade Suratjaman Mandal, Central Committee member, paid revolutionary tribute to him on behalf of Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya. Other comrades too bid him adieu.

In his demise, the Party has lost a dedicated comrade.

## DEVASTATING FALLOUT OF CORPORATIZATION OF AGRICULTURE IN USA

The BJP Prime Minister (PM), his cabinet colleagues and party leaders have been claiming that the three black Farm Laws enacted of late, evidently to facilitate corporate invasion in agriculture, would bring in its wake a slew of benefits and prosperity of the peasants. They are also giving a host of spurious reasons in support of their claim though unable to provide any convincing answer to any of the relevant questions that the agitating peasants are raising. Addressing the 93rd Annual General Meeting of Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) via video conferencing in December last, the PM lamented that private sector has not "explored" enough the opportunities in agriculture and allied industries. The PM 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 the 21st century. In public or private, the USA was held as an idol.

But now it has come to the fore what devastation has been caused to the American peasants following corporatization of agriculture in US. 40 years ago, in 1981, the US threw open agricultural sector to the corporates. Ronald Reagan, the then US President and a strong advocate of 'free market and deregulation', that later became the crux of the doctrine of globalization, ended government control over the agrarian economy and provided a free hand to corporates and agri-MNCs to pursue their interests in any which way on the pretext of creating a competitive market. He argued that this deregulated agriculture would be a panacea for both the farmers and the consumers. Though 90 % of the US farms are small and medium ones, they produce only 25% of the market value, while it is the corporates that dominate the US agricultural landscape and appropriate the bulk of profit. In fact, in the last decade, income of small farms has consistently been in the red.

The share of US farmers in the retail market has declined from 50% in the 1950s to less than 15% today. It means that with corporates taking over, the small and medium farmers have fast lost access to retail market through small retail outlets or might be forced to sell crops to agri-giants at non-remunerative price. Farmers' debt has been as high as \$425 billion. Loan default rates and bankruptcy filings are up, so are calls to the suicide prevention lines. Farmer suicide rates in US today are 4-5 times the national average. Moreover, nearly 75% of all US poultry farmers today live below the poverty line while gigantic agri-businesses houses ("Big Ag") control everything from "farm to fork" and from seeds to grocery stores. Four large firms control at least two-thirds of the seed market, 80% of chemical fertiliser, grain trading, dairy production, meat supply, and almost 100% of farm machinery. Earlier, within each square mile, generations of families tended pigs and cattle, grew oats and raised children, with the sons most likely to take over the farm. Now the lands are rented out and given over to corn Farming. Corn is a grain used for livestock feed which, besides domestic market has large demand in overseas market. Export sales for US corn in 2020-21 was up 162% compared to previous year. US government also gives subsidy for corn production as it is deemed to be a 'cash crop'. Government money flows to

the corporations in the form of write-offs, market facilitation and crop insurance subsidies. Over 70% of the \$50 billion in US government subsidies goes to the top 20% of farms.

Not only that. As small farming dwindled, nearly 80% of rural counties have witnessed population declines. Local businesses like seed suppliers, grain elevators (granaries), repair shops and even hospitals have started disappearing. Some 1,000 schools are reported to be closing every year in America's rural districts. Nearly all the farmers hold that the "opening up" of agriculture and the rise of the "Big Ag" who now dominate American farming are responsible for their plight and eviction. "They are vertically integrated, from animal genetics to grocery store. What they charge isn't based upon what it costs to produce, and it's not based on supply and demand, because they know what they need to make a profit. What they have done, through government support and taxpayer support, is to intentionally overproduce so that the price stays low, sometimes below the cost of production. That kicks their competition out of the market. Then they become the only player in town. The system has been set up for the benefit of the factory farm corporations and their shareholders at the expense of family farmers, the real people, our environment, our food system. The thing that is really pervasive about it is that they control the rules of the game because they control the democratic process. It's a blueprint. We are paying for our own demise," observed one small farmer in a talk with a research firm team. Another peasant said: "Investors buy the land, and they have tractors and combines that you can run by computer," she said. "They'll hire somebody to sit in a little office somewhere and run that stuff off the computer and farm the land that way. Now what you've done is you have lost the innate knowledge of how to grow food and raise animals. You've lost a whole generation of it, probably two. Now we are going to rely on a few corporations to decide who is going to eat and who isn't. We're one generation away from that picture right now. If you want to work on a farm, you will have to work for them. They will give you a job, but you're going to be working on their terms. They control everything. So, small farms cannot survive."

As mentioned above, while holding brief for corporatization of agriculture, President Regan said it would benefit both peasants and consumers. A brief account of peasants' growing predicament and pauperization has been given above. Now what about the consumers? Did monopoly takeover of agriculture reduce food prices? Or the story is just the opposite? In the past 40 years, average food prices in America have shot up by more than 200%, while the earnings of the bottom 90% have increased by less than 25%.

So, this is the inevitable outcome of corporatization of agriculture. Hence, the ongoing historic peasants' movement braving all odds against the ploy of the BJP-led Indian government to virtually replicate US model ought to be supported and strengthened so that the requiem of Indian agriculture can be thwarted.

(Source: The Guardian-09-03-19, Hindu Business Line 12-12-20, Times of India 08-03-21)

### COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH THOUGHT ILLUMINES THE PATH

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On one side there is the capitalist class, the owners of all wealth and means of production who own and control the entire production, trade and commerce of the country. On the other side there are the have-nots, the proletariat who sell their labour power, who are not the owners. Whether one likes it or not, this social reality cannot be dismissed by a pen-stroke, by any wishful theory... concealed (is) this stark reality with catchwords like 'country's interest', 'national planning', 'national development'... when we talk of "the country's interest", when we, or whoever it be, use these words simply like that, they conceal a vital truth both from themselves and from the masses. The truth is that today our society is not an undivided, not an indivisible society...- whose nation is it? Is it the nation of the Tatas and the Birlas, or that of the toiling millions? The nation of the Tatas, Birlas, or of the people who toil for a living? Had it been the nation of the toiling people, there would have been no need to impose such draconian laws on those very people in the name of national security. Rather, if needed, these should have been enforced on the black-marketeers, on the anti-social elements, on the Tatas and the Birlas, on the agents of the imperialists. But just the opposite is happening. They are applied here as punitive measures to suppress the legitimate democratic movements of the people. Who are disturbing law and order in this country? The people themselves, it is being said. According to their version the people who constitute the nation, they themselves are endangering law and order. Their nation, therefore, is not the nation of the people, but the nation of the Tatas and Birlas! The law and order serves the latter, under whose millstone the people are being crushed.... instead of trying to induce and develop the class consciousness, almost all ...in unison, are chewing the cud of catchwords like 'national interest', 'national planning', 'national development'. One thing has to be always kept in mind concerning these catchwords, and which the political leaders, too, not to speak of those calling themselves Marxist-Leninists but others also have to be asked: which class interest, which class planning, which class development do you mean by national planning and national development?... The parties which so long have been providing leadership to the movements in our country are basically election-oriented parties. Be these self-styled, fake Marxist-Leninists or bearers of Left or Right 'communist' flags, be they contenders of this ism or that ism - their bottom line is the same, they are absolutely election-oriented parties....

We need a new ideology. This society is pregnant with the possibility of emergence of a new ideology. What is that ideology which can smash this crushing mill-stone, shatter these fetters? It is the ideology of socialism, the ideology of proletarian internationalism, of proletarian revolution, anti-capitalist revolution. If we can inspire and instill the people of the country with this ideology and develop struggle on the basis of this ideology, then we shall once again witness the kindling of the spark of vitality among the people. That valour of Kshudiram will fire people once again, that daring fearlessness will again rekindle the students - but not before that." ("The Present Situation and Our Task", speech delivered in 1966, SW Vol IV)

## Double Engine

## Devastation of people's life is vivid

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Adityanath's conduct during the national lockdown, as CPJ has documented.

- Since taking control of the state in 2017, though Adityanath claims he has vastly improved law and order in the state, his government has been accused of supporting extrajudicial killings, clampdown on non-violent protesters and arrests of political opponents and civil rights activists, as widely reported in national and international media.

- Over the past year, CPJ has documented several attacks on journalists related to critical reporting of governance at various levels of the state. These included the arrest on June 8 of TV news channel reporters from Nation Live, as well as a freelancer, for allegedly attempting to incite violence and defaming the chief minister. The journalists are now out on bail, but the news channel was shut down for allegedly operating without proper government clearance.

- In Varanasi, the city on the banks of the Ganges river in eastern UP, Baccha Gupta, a photojournalist with Swatantra Chetna newspaper, told CPJ that police filed a case of charged him with trespassing and criminal conspiracy in November after he took photographs of children cleaning a flooded police station near river Ganges.

- Most worryingly, given the public health crisis, Akash Yadav, a journalist with Dainik Bhaskar, accused the police in Varanasi of being aligned with a local hospital mafia, which accused him and five other journalists of robbery and sexual harassment after he reported in October that a private hospital was being run by an unqualified doctor.

- In one case, a mob attacked Krishna Kumar Singh, a journalist with Hindustan newspaper in Mirzapur, in September. He told CPJ that he has been the subject of legal accusations of physical assault and abuse since he started reporting on a local parking mafia, which he alleged is supported by local politicians. "The police took over six hours to register a case of assault even though many police officials were present when I was mercilessly beaten up," he said.

- Manoj Kumar Soni, a journalist with Hindi daily Dainik Perfect

Mission in Sonbhadra district, told me he was attacked by six men with iron rods on 4 November resulting in broken knees and other injuries.

- Yogesh Mishra, senior journalist and editor of Newstrack, a Hindi-language news website, said police in Uttar Pradesh are going after journalists for even the smallest matter. "Once upon a time politicians used to bring tea and ask you for your source. Now they outrightly abuse you," he said. "It doesn't seem like we live in a democracy," he added. (Committee to Protect Journalists 23-04-20)

### 9. Illegal confinement of Dr Kafeel Khan

- The Supreme Court dismissed an appeal by the Uttar Pradesh government against an Allahabad High Court decision quashing the detention of Dr. Kafeel Khan under the National Security Act (NSA)

- Dr. Khan, a pediatrician, first shot into focus when 60 children died in a government hospital at Gorakhpur in 2017. He was initially hailed a hero for arranging emergency oxygen cylinders for the sick children, but then later arrested. A court finally absolved him of medical negligence on his part.

- Dr. Khan had been in custody since 29 January 2020 for his remarks during a speech at an anti-Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA) event in Aligarh Muslim University in December last year.

- The High Court had, in its order, said that his speech did not "disclose any effort to promote hatred or violence" and termed the three extensions of his detention illegal. The UP government, however, claimed that Dr. Khan ignored orders regarding the imposition of Section 144 of the Criminal Procedure Code. It said his remarks were inflammatory. (The Hindu-17-12-20)

### 10. 'Love Jihad' and anti-conversion law

- The Uttar Pradesh government had in November 2020 promulgated an ordinance, Uttar Pradesh Prohibition of Unlawful Conversion of Religion Ordinance, 2020.

- Four former judges have criticised 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 Delhi High Court judge and former chairman of the National Law Commission, Justice AP Shah, said the new law reflects the philosophy of a khap panchayat, with the objective essentially being to subjugate women. "In any criminal case (where) conversion is presumed to be illegal, the burden of proof is usually on the prosecution. In this ordinance, every religious conversion is presumed to be illegal. The burden of proof lies on the person accused of illegal conversion to prove that it is not illegal. So there is a presumption of guilt. The offence is cognisable. It is non-bailable and the police can arrest anyone," Justice Shah said.

- Similarly, former Supreme Court judge, Justice Madan B Lokur, in a written statement to NDTV said that "it will require a miracle to uphold its constitutional validity," while calling it "one of the strangest legislations" he had ever seen.

- 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.

- Justice M Sasidharan Nambiar, former judge of the Kerala High Court, also said that in his view, "the 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." (NDTV 18-12-20)

- UP 'Love Jihad' Arrest case--A private lab in Bijnor has confirmed that the 22-year-old woman, who was sent to a shelter home pursuant to a report by a Bajrang Dal unit to the Uttar Pradesh police about an alleged instance of 'love jihad' made punishable under the recently promulgated anti-conversion ordinance in the state, had a miscarriage. (The Wire 20-12-20 with inputs from PTI)

## GUJARAT

### i) Industries closed down

- 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 KNN India 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 media reports collated data, around 2,069 units were shut in GIDCs in 31 districts as of December 31, 2018.

- In Jamnagar, 36 units were shut in GIDCs, but 19 of them closed down since 2016. Similarly, 19 out of 50 units in Kutch, and 10 out of 18 units in Banaskantha downed shutters in last two years, the CM said. (KNN/YV) (knnIndia 20-02-19)

### ii) Industrial accidents

- A total of 89 industrial accidents happened between January and July 2020 across Gujarat. Over 130 workers died in industrial accidents in Gujarat during the first seven months of 2020, of which 57 per cent were reported in four months after the Covid lockdown was lifted in phases in the state. (Indian Express 22-08-20)

### iii) Unemployment and job loss

- The CMIE, in its "Unemployment Rate in India" report, noted that Gujarat's unemployment rate which was 6.7% in March, increased to a whopping 18.7% in April. (Times of India 12-05-20)

- In 2014, Narendra Modi promised to bring the Gujarat model of development to India. But the state's focus on megaprojects at the expense of SMEs hurt job creation, says a new book. But 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. (PTI and New Indian Express 28-02-20)

- Six states saw rising joblessness in cities in July-September 2019. The highest spike in the urban

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# FREEDOM-HOUSE AND V-DEM INSTITUTE REPORTS EXPOSE CRUMBLING DEMOCRACY IN INDIA

Day in and day out, the ruling party leaders, the vote-oriented opposition and the quarters of the establishment cry hoarse about India being an epitome of democracy. But the myriads of Indians crushed under the grinding machine of ruthless capitalist exploitation with every passing hour know from their life's experience what kind of democracy is in operation! Keeping a facade of parliamentary democracy, what is clamping its grip on the country is fascist autocracy.

## Freedom-House Findings

Now a couple of reports brought in the public domain by US-based 'Freedom House' and Sweden's V-Dem Institute have held that democracy in India has virtually become a caricature.

According to the latest annual report on global political rights and civil liberties, titled as "Freedom in the World 2021 - Democracy under Siege" covering the events of 2020 published by 'Freedom House' that conducts research on political freedom and human rights around the world, India has lost its status as a democracy and free society. So the report downgraded India from 'free country' to 'partly free'. The report has commented that under the rule of Modi-led BJP government, Hindu nationalist interests are being elevated disregarding its founding democratic values of inclusion and equal rights for all. The report mentions that since PM Narendra Modi led BJP came to power in 2014, increased pressure on human rights organizations, intimidation of journalists and activists, and a spate of attacks, especially against the critics of the government and the religious minority - the Muslims -- had led to a deterioration of political and civil liberties in the country, and freedom of expression is under threat in India. The report further says that this decline of democratic standard has accelerated after Modi-BJP government assumed central power for the second term in 2019, as the Modi government and its mentor, RSS-Sangh Parivar, had spearheaded discriminatory policies and increased violence affecting the Muslims, Dalits and Adivasis who remain economically and socially marginalized. The report reveals that the capitalist countries across the world, especially the imperialist powers, more emphatically USA, the leader of world capitalism-imperialism, and India, its closest capitalist-imperialist ally and an emerging super power, both least for democratic values that has been causing serious erosion of

democratic institutions the world over, resulting in rampant attacks on people's human rights and civil liberties, including freedom of expression and choice.

"In September, 32 individuals charged with orchestrating the illegal 1992 demolition of a prominent mosque in the state of Uttar Pradesh were acquitted by a special court, despite substantial evidence of their culpability. Among those exonerated were several high-profile members of the BJP. Modi had laid the foundation stone for a new Hindu temple on the site a month earlier, after a long-awaited 2019 Supreme Court judgment had permitted the construction of a temple there. The mosque had stood on the site for centuries prior to its unlawful destruction," the Freedom House Report said on the Ram Mandir construction in Ayodhya. It also talked about the "ham-fisted" nationwide lockdown imposed to control the spread of coronavirus. Under this lockdown, many labourers were forced to walk hundreds of miles on foot since they did not have access to basic supplies and services in the cities.

## Revelations by V-Dem Institute

Not long before the Freedom House Report, Sweden-based Varieties of Democracy (V-Dem) Institute in its finding of an analytical research project commented that India has turned into an "electoral autocracy" and the ruling BJP now closely resembles a "typical governing party in an autocracy". But according to the research organization, after Narendra Modi became the prime minister, censorship efforts have become routine and are no longer related to only government matters. It also claimed that the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, amended in 2019, was being used to "harass, intimidate, and imprison political opponents" as well as against people protesting against the government's policies. "The UAPA has been used also to silence dissent in academia," it said. "Universities and authorities have also punished students and activists in universities engaging in protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act." "These developments are among the instances contributing to the descent into electoral authoritarianism in what used to be the world's largest democracy", the report mentioned. The report also added that sedition cases have risen exponentially since 2014. The Modi government had resorted to crackdown on dissent or misuse of enforcement agencies. The Report mentioned, inter alia,

that two factors are creating even more apathy towards democracy. First, when populist nationalism reigns supreme and rulers shower sops and freebies at election time, who really cares about democracy and holding leaders accountable? Also, when public life is intensely polarised, it is almost impossible to build a consensus on what constitutes a danger to freedom. The report also alluded to the 'love jihad law' fundamentally curtailing personal freedom in love and marriage. While international bodies are lashing out at the Modi government's authoritarian ways, the BJP government for obvious reason is fulminating against such reports. Not surprisingly, above-mentioned reports not only showed that in matters of freedom of expression, etc., especially concerning rule of law, India's record is far worse than USA even. (as witnessed recently how frantic efforts by former President Trump to bend the rule of law according to his whims met with failure).

## Such misdeeds not rebuffed in elections

But the V-Dem report wondered how such systematic decimation of democracy is not impacting electoral results and the BJP has been returned to power a second time? This is where they have not been able to get into the truth. When democracy is being slaughtered so much so as to become an 'electoral autocracy', how can elections be held freely and fairly? Or they are manipulated by the power that be with money-muscle-media and administrative power at its command? Rigging in election has become a worldwide phenomenon in capitalist countries. Even there are allegations of cybercrime in tampering election results through remote control and hacking even installing monitored programmes. India has been no exception to that. In fact, over the years, the common Indians have become accustomed to imperious displays of such coercive powers by the parties of the establishment during the elections and are also familiar with efforts to rig people's mandate through manipulating Electronic Voting Machines (EVMs). They are also seeing how the Election Commission, a statutory body, is being virtually reduced to a talking parrot of the ruling party and acting according to its behest. Since they find no remedy to such farce of election and also regrettably lack necessary political consciousness to understand the reason behind such degeneration of the electoral process

and its conductors, they have to a great extent become indifferent to election. Rather, the misery and penury-stricken people think that as such they are not going to get anything other than deprivation, denial and discrimination. So, when the bell tolls for election and the bourgeois parliamentary parties offer raw cash, one or two square meals, sops and freebies against vote, they grab those giveaways and blindly rally behind such parties being oblivious of the fact that this is highest order of deception, if not a veritable crime of bribing, on the part of the vote-birds to corner pelf and power riding on their plight, wretchedness and haplessness.

## Erosion of bourgeois democracy is inexorable

The oppressed working class, peasants and other sections of the toiling masses need to imbibe the truth that with world capitalism plunged into ever deepening insoluble crisis bred by the laws of operation of the exploitative capitalist system, the parliamentary democracy, as political superstructure of capitalism, is bound to degenerate. Harboring illusion about the putrid bourgeois democracy would be a height of folly. The ruling capitalist class, in order to provide extra lease of life to its decadent moribund rule would continue to strip parliamentary democracy of all its essence, deny all democratic rights to the people and trample underfoot all democratic norms, values and practices. Both the "Freedom-House" as well as V-Dem reports have only attested to this reality. But what they did not do is to focus on the definite cause behind such erosion of democracy. They cannot, we know. Because they cannot think beyond capitalism. But the oppressed people round the world, including India, must realize that this tumbling democracy cannot be restored by any magic wand within the frame of capitalism. Their emancipation from the yoke of exploitative capitalism lies in revolutionary overthrow of the capitalist system and establishing socialism free from exploitation of man by man by traversing the historically-determined path and fulfilling all necessary conditions for this desired qualitative change.

(Sources:freedomhouse.org03-03-2021,Outlook 04-03-21 2021, BBC 04-03-21,Bloomberg-04-03-21,washingtonpost 24-01-20, 24/1/2020, Vox News-03-03-21, The Wire 04-03-21, Business Today 04-03-21, scroll.in 10-03-21, Times of India 21-03-21)

### Double Engine

## Harrowing spectacle of BJP-ruled states

*Contd. from page 4*

unemployment rate was seen in Gujarat where it rose 1.3 percentage points to 4.3 per cent. (Business Standard 20-10-20)

#### IV) Poverty and Suicide

- 16.63% people are below poverty line ("You will be on BPL list if your annual income is Rs.27,000", "Rural India spends most on mobiles: NSSO", "SDGs India Index". 31 December 2019.)

- Gujarat showed signs of distress related to economy when state authorities recorded 294 suicides in 2018 where reason for ending life was termed as 'poverty'. 318 persons ended their lives citing 'unemployment' as the reason. The figures were 163% and 21% more than the ones recorded in 2017. (Times of India 11-01-20)

- Data on crime tabled by the state home ministry in the assembly stated that a total of 14,702 cases of suicide were registered in Gujarat in the last two years, suggesting that on an average nearly 20 persons took their lives every day. (Indian Express 03-03-20)

- Minister of State for Home Pradeepsinh Jadeja said 90 persons had ended their lives in Kheda and 111 persons had committed suicide in Anand district of Gujarat in 2019. (Business Standard 02-03-20)

#### V) Hunger

- The 'Hunger watch' survey carried out by Anna Suraksha Adhikar Abhiyan (ASAA), Gujarat to track the hunger situation amongst vulnerable and marginalised communities amid the of Covid 19 pandemic revealed that 20.6 per cent households sometimes skipped meals due to lack of food while 21.8 per cent said they sometimes slept without a single meal. "The government has not given accurate information to the families, many of whom are from very deprived communities, as to why their ration cards cannot be used anymore to claim their basic entitlements. This process of making ration cards 'silent' has happened at the local taluka and/or district level. Additionally, in many areas, taluka level committee meetings are not being held due to Covid-19 effectively depriving families their right to food security," the report

stated. (Indian Express 11-12-20)

#### VI) Crime against women

- Numbers question 'Safe Gujarat' tag by ruling BJP. The data released by the National Records Crime Bureau for 2019 has revealed that complaints of crimes committed against women have been increasing steadily. While about three molestation cases were by women every day in the state, more than one rape complaint was filed daily last year. organizations working for women say that the cases of crime against women are much more than reported. (Times of India-02-10-20)

#### VII) Rape cases

- Gujarat reported nearly four rapes every day in the two years beginning January 1, 2018. The state reported 2,723 rape cases, of which 41 were incidents of gang-rape, while 35 involved girls younger than five years old. (Times Of India 12-03-20)

#### VIII) Cybercrime

- Gujarat turns hub of cybercrime during lockdown. As per data released by the Cyber Crime Cell of Ahmedabad Police, over 15,300 complaints related to financial frauds have been received from all over Gujarat between January and July this year.

#### IX) Patel statue

- Built at a cost of Rs 2,989 crore. (Economic Times 31-10-18)

- The statue's construction has affected 75,000 tribals across 72 villages in Gujarat's Narmada district, NDTV reported on October 20, 2018. (TheWire-31-10-18)

#### X) Namaste Trump

- US President Donald Trump's three-hour Gujarat visit set to cost over Rs 100 crore. (Times of India 15-02-20)

- Ahead of US President Trump's visit, Ahmedabad wants to use a wall and trees to screen slums from the road. A similar exercise has been carried out before at least thrice.

- Back in September 2017, Japan Prime Minister Shinzo Abe and his wife Akie Abe visited Ahmedabad and Gandhinagar in Gujarat. During their three-day visit, Abe and PM Modi presided over the stone-laying ceremony of the Rs 1 lakh crore Ahmedabad-Mumbai bullet train project. At that time also, the

government put huge green cloths to screen the slums from the roads.

- In January 2017, when the Global Summit hosted presidents, prime ministers and foreign ministers of several countries in Gandhi Nagar, Gujarat, the government used cloth to shield the Saraniyavaas slum. Over 3,000 people were believed to have been living in the 556 kaccha houses. The slum-dwellers said they felt "isolated" from the world. (The Print 13-02-20)

### MADHYA PRADESH

#### a) Unemployment

- Madhya Pradesh's unemployment rate increased 15.1 percentage points, rising to 27.5% in May 2020, according to a survey conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Over a longer time period, unemployment has moved from 1.2% in Jul 2017 to 27.5%. (live mint 01-06-20)

#### b) Rape cases

- As per the National Crime Records Bureau 2019 statistics, Madhya Pradesh recorded 2485 rape cases which makes the state third highest in this regard.

#### c) Dowry deaths

- 3,550-third highest in the country.

#### d) Cybercrime

- In lockdown, 3 e-fraud cases reported every 24 hours in Madhya Pradesh. (Times of India-26-04-20)

#### e) Poverty

- 31.65 people are below poverty line ("You will be on BPL list if your annual income is Rs.27,000", "Rural India spends most on mobiles: NSSO", "SDGs India Index". 31 December 2019.)

### BIHAR

#### A. Unemployment

- Unemployment in Bihar greater than national unemployment rate of 23.5%. Bihar's unemployment rate increased 31.2 percentage points, rising to 46.6% in Apr 2020, according to a survey conducted by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE). Over a longer time period, unemployment has moved from 1.6% in Apr 2017 to its current rate. (live mint-01-05-20)

#### B. Job loss

- Among those who lost employment, the worst affected were casual workers, with eight in 10 such workers losing jobs in Bihar. (Indian Express 04-06-20)

#### C. Rape and murder

- Bihar records 2,406 murder, 1,106 rape cases in 9 months. (Times of India 25-12-20) Average one rape case is reported in less than six hours every day in Bihar, according to the official data of the state crime records bureau (SCRB). (Times of India-07-12-19)

#### D. Dowry deaths

- 5,992-second highest in the country.

#### E) Poverty and illiteracy

- Bihar is the only state in India where the incidence of poverty is uniformly at the highest level (46-70%) in all the sub-regions. The annual real per capita income of Bihar at Rs 3650 is about a third of the national average of Rs 11,625. Bihar is also the only Indian state where the majority of the population - 52.47% - is illiterate. (National Herald-12-07-20)

- 39.9% people are below poverty line ("You will be on BPL list if your annual income is Rs.27,000", "Rural India spends most on mobiles: NSSO", "SDGs India Index". 31 December 2019.)

### TRIPURA

#### 1. Unemployment

- Tripura ranks second highest in Unemployment as per CMIE report. Tripura's unemployment rate increased 11.3 percentage points, rising to 41.2% in Apr 2020. Over a longer time period, unemployment has moved from 8.3% in Nov 2017 to its current rate. (live mint-01-05-20)

#### 2. Outsourcing Government jobs

- Amid news of escalating unemployment, the BJP-led Tripura Government has launched a shocker on the youth of the state by reportedly outsourcing a number of jobs in government departments to private firms. This distressing news has exposed the reality of reportedly false claims made by several ministers including Tripura Chief Minister Biplab Deb that the BJP government in the state has provided over 23,000 government jobs since it came to power in 2018. (News click 11-03-21)

#### 3. Poverty

- 14.05 % people are below poverty line ("You will be on BPL list if your annual income is Rs.27,000", "Rural India spends most on mobiles: NSSO", "SDGs India Index". 31 December 2019.)

# Defeat the anti-people, pro-monopoly electoral fronts: Make SUCI(C) candidates victorious

The people of Kerala are facing the 15th State Assembly elections on April 6. The left democratic front (LDF) led by headed by CPI(M) is trying to maintain the continuity of rule while the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by Congress is trying to wrest power. The NDA front led by BJP is trying to improve its performance from earlier elections. The usual slogans - 'continuity of rule', 'change for the better', 'new Kerala', 'development' etc. are rending the air. That these slogans and promises have only a short life till the results are declared and that the people who fall victims to these promises are going to be fooled soon after is also a usual scene that we witness in our country.

To somehow wrest power, the three fronts are making all kinds of nefarious tactics like joining hands with religious, caste and communal forces, creating communal polarization, and so on. Disintegration within parties and reshuffle of alliances are continuing. Irrespective of party affiliations, all are seeking the blessings of community leaders and money bags. Ram temple and Sabarimala are the most important issues for all the fronts, not the burning issues of the people.

The decadence in the socio political atmosphere has been a serious concern for the democratically minded people. The rule of BJP at the Centre is leading the country to fascist darkness. With autocratic power and huge money power it is trying to silence the democratic conscience of the country. The leftist parties which were expected to resist this onslaught have instead become part and parcel of the ruling establishment and have been taking measures that accelerate this decadence. The political responsibility before the people in this election is to strengthen the democratic counter current to stem the rot.

In the election scenario the real fight is only between two forces - the camp of the ruling establishment representing the interest of the capitalist economic system and the camp of democratic movements representing the broad interests of the people. The mainstream political parties, the Congress, BJP, CPI(M), CPI, Muslim league, Kerala congress etc. are all part of the ruling camp, the apparent fight between them is only a shadow fight. Their fight is only for determining who should take over the governmental power. The economic system and the policies will remain the same whoever comes to power.

The capitalist forces with their money and media power do everything to eclipse the presence of the camp of people's movement in the elections. Only by strengthening and making victorious the people's movement the interest of the common masses can be protected. This is the prime task before the people in this election.

The NDA rule at the Centre for the last seven years has been of complete servitude to the monopolies and corporates. The natural resources of the country - forests, the sea,

water, oil, etc. and the public sector establishments built with people's sweat and labour are all being sold out to the corporates. This policy of globalization and privatization was initiated by the Congress in 1991. The BJP accelerated its implementation. The LDF in Kerala that ruled the state for the last five years has also been following the same path. In the name of 'development', the projects initiated by LDF government like the K-Rail, K-Phone etc. by taking huge loans disproportionate to the state's income are going to land the state in great debt. These projects will not bring any improvement in the people's lives but are meant for helping the corporates to amass huge profits.

The following are a few samples of the developmental projects of the LDF government. The K-Phone project in which the state govt is investing 1100 crores is a project for providing internet facility to homes through cables using the facilities of KSEB. This is essentially for providing basic infrastructure for internet providers like Jio and others by spending from the state's exchequer.

The deep sea fishing contract with EMCC Global consortium that has become controversial recently is a project that would pave way for the corporates to grab the sea food resources at the cost of the small and traditional fishermen.

This way a number of such projects have been initiated by the LDF government in the last five years. The state's seat of power in Thiruvananthapuram has become a den for consultancies and their agents. The proponent of rightist policies and a senior consultant of the World Bank, Gita Gopinath was the economic advisor to the Chief Minister. The reconstruction works after the heavy floods in 2018 had been given to the notorious firm KPMG. Several corruption charges have been raised regarding the reconstruction contracts.

The LDF govt through the Kerala Infrastructure Investment Fund Board (KIIFB) has been promoting private investments in developmental projects. The KIIFB will take loans with government guarantee and invest in the projects. Any debt incurred will fall on the taxpayers' head. This way it will lead the state into a debt trap. When the LDF govt came to power, the state's debt was 1,60,638 crores and now when it is completing its term the debt has doubled to 3,01,642 crores. During the last five years, for paying interest alone the state spent 83,486 crores.

The LDF had come to power by giving the promise that within 100 days 5 lakh people will be given jobs. But presently the joblessness in the state has reached unprecedented levels. Even the existing vacancies in the government remain unfilled and disregarding the PSC rank list the government has been recruiting contract employees and making back door appointments. The suicide by a youth who was No.77 in the PSC rank list for the Civil Excise officer post indicates the extreme frustration the youths face.

Education is another area that has been

converted for commercial exploitation in the state. In the last five years almost all the new educational institutions were started by private businessmen.

On labour rights, the situation is very dismal in the state. The 14.2 lakh unorganized workers in the state in private hospitals, schools, anganwadis, shops, domestic work etc. are not provided with the minimum wages to maintain their lives.

Liquor menace: When LDF came to power there were only 29 liquor bars in the state. Today the total number is 565. The rule that liquor shops should be located at a minimum distance of 200 metres from schools, temples etc. was reduced to 50 m by the LDF govt.

The attacks on women and children are growing more than ever. The approach of the government and the police department is very discouraging in taking preventive measures. The one case of the killings of two young girls in Walayar is enough to demonstrate the approach of the government. In this case instead of giving protection to the victims the government has been giving protection to the police officials who wilfully colluded with the criminals. Incidentally, the mother of the children Smt. Bhagyavathy out of frustration with the government and police has filed nomination in Dharmadam assembly constituency where the chief minister Mr Pinarayi Vijayan is contesting.

What has been stated in the above paragraphs is only a glimpse of the dismal situation in the state. While the people in the state are reeling under innumerable problems facing their lives, all the three electoral fronts are only harping on the magic word 'development'. But they do not spell whose development. The 'development' they speak of are only construction activities for increasing the profits of the corporates. It has nothing to do with the improvement of living conditions of the people such as livelihood, health care, education etc. It is also a fact of history that our society is class divided and no government can ensure the development of both the capitalist class and the common masses at the same time. It is the duty of a genuine left government to stand by the people which the LDF has miserably failed and that has helped the reactionary forces to grow in the state.

Whom to vote? On the question of whom to vote there is only one answer, that is to vote for those who stand for building democratic mass movements to safeguard the broad interest of the common masses. Only through mass movements, people will acquire the necessary social consciousness to fight the darkness surrounding their lives. The SUCI(C) candidates are committed to this stand and are engaged in various people's movements in the state - the K-Rail movement, the PSC rank holders movement, the ASHA workers movement etc. to name a few. They have also been working strenuously for the last several months in gathering support for the historic farmers struggle in Delhi. The SUCI(C) is contesting in 36 constituencies in Kerala.

## DHARWAD PEASANTS ACHIEVE VICTORY

On 26 march, AIKKMS along with newly formed struggle committee to fight against land acquisition for highway coriander project, a massive rally was organised in Dharwad District of Karnataka. 8,000 acres of land from 14 villages were claimed by the Karnataka Industrial Development Board and notice to this effect was served on 23 March. So in 6 of the villages, where AIKKMS has organizational base, the activists immediately swung into action and mobilised aggrieved peasants from other villages as well. Under pressure of such a massive protest, the authorities verbally assured AIKKMS and Struggle Committee that lands would not be acquired if the peasants are not inclined to agree.



## Even stray dogs don't go hungry in India, ignore hunger reports, minister says in Parliament

Union Minister of State for Agriculture Parshottam Rupala, in the Rajya Sabha on Friday, questioned the methodology and data accuracy of the Global Hunger Index (GHI) report, which has placed India at 94th (out of 107 countries) rank in 2020.

Mr. Rupala said, "Some NGO in the world has done the survey. We have asked them on what basis have you reached this conclusion? They have not replied yet. Whenever a street dog gives birth in our village, even though it bites, our women provide them with sheera (sweet dish). So, in a country where such a tradition exists, and an NGO comes and releases such a report about our children, we should not be sensitive to such reports. As far as

these surveys are concerned, even healthy and strong children are counted...

According to the GHI website, the data for the indicators come from United Nations and other multilateral agencies, including the World Health Organisation and the World Bank.

GHI is a peer-reviewed annual report, jointly published by Concern Worldwide, an Ireland-based humanitarian group, and Welthungerhilfe, a Germany-based NGO, designed to comprehensively measure and track hunger at the global, regional, and country levels. It says the aim of publishing the report is to trigger action to reduce hunger around the world. (The Hindu and The Print 19-03-21)

## How 'comfortable' workers are in the USA

Paradise of democracy on the earth! That is how those with faith on bourgeois democracy would have made people believe about the United States of America. But even a peep through the keyhole may speak otherwise. Thus revealing is an editorial in the Workers World periodical posted on 1 March 2021. This is how the clipping goes:

"A \$15-per-hour minimum wage cannot be included in the \$1.9 trillion COVID-19 relief bill proposed by Congressional Democrats. So ruled the Senate parliamentarian, Elizabeth McDonough, on Feb. 25", calling it "irrelevant to budget legislation."

".....the House of Representatives passed the bill 219 to 212 on Feb. 27 with the minimum wage increase intact. .... but most likely without the hourly pay raise. ... All Republicans .... plus two conservative Democratic senators, oppose this wage hike.... Powerful corporate moguls and Wall Street financiers who are vehemently opposed to this minimum wage increase....the Biden White House has apparently decided to abide by McDonough's decision and not challenge it. ... Sen. Bernie Sanders and other Congress members proposed a Plan B: to tax corporations that don't pay their

## AIKKMS CONGRATULATES PEASANTS AND OTHER TOILING MASSES FOR SUCCESSFUL BHARAT BANDH

Comrades Satyawar, and Shankar Ghosh, respectively President and General Secretary of AIKKMS issued the following statement on 26 March 2021:

"Bharat Bandh" called by Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) on 26 March 2021 ( leaving the four poll-bound states and one union territory out of the purview of bandh) in demand for immediate repeal of the three back Farm Laws has been a total success. All India Kisan Khet Mazdoor Sangathan (AIKKMS) congratulates and thanks the farmers, workers and toiling people across the country for this resounding success when the historic peasants' movement has been continuing for over four months.

As the days are passing by, the enthusiasm within the farmers and public at large is increasing overwhelmingly. All sections of the

society are joining this movement. Bandh of 26 March bandh has been supported by 10 big Central Trade Union Organizations of the country. Students, youths and women of the country are all with the peasants' movement. This movement has helped the toiling masses of the country to get themselves organised for protracted movement against anti-people policies. At the same time, they have realised that the Modi-led BJP government is just a mask of the ruthlessly oppressive capitalist system which is actually responsible for their all-round misery. The peasants' movement is moving very fast towards achieving victory.

Under pressure of movement, the Modi government will have to repeal the three black Farm laws and highly damaging electricity (amendment) bill. The peasants shall score the ultimate victory.

## Government draws flak for 'adversarial' stance

A group of retired senior civil servants have criticized the Centre's attitude to the ongoing farm protests as "adversarial; and confrontationalist." In an open letter they expressed concern about the effort to blame farmers for the events of Republic Day, as well as the barricading of the protest sites, denial of essential services and sedition charges that have followed.

The 75 signatories include a number of former ambassadors, secretaries to the Government of India, and chief secretaries to State governments, with members from the IAS, IFS and IPS cadres.

"The approach of the Government of India towards the

farmers' protest has been an adversarial and confrontationalist one from the very beginning, treating the apolitical farmers like irresponsible opposition to be derided, demonized and defeated," said the letter. "The repeated, albeit unsuccessful, attempts to polarize the agitation along regional, communal and other lines are also reprehensible. Such an approach can never lead to a solution," the letter mentioned. He signatories asked why the media did not cover the majority of farmers who held a peaceful parade and why the police had not immediately intervened when "a few hooligans" attacked protesting farmers at the Singhu border site. (The Hindu 6-2-21)

workers at least \$15 per hour.

Two-thirds of workers .... have been living (barely on their wages) since COVID-19 hit U.S. shores. Nearly half ...in that predicament even prior to the pandemic.... extremely low wages, combined with the exorbitant costs of housing and other necessities. Many families are one paycheck away from economic ruin, and face a crisis every month when bills come due. Millions of workers must toil at two or more jobs to make ends meet, and have to turn to government programs or community food pantries to feed their families.

The woefully inadequate federal minimum hourly wage of \$7.25 has not risen since 2009, while the cost of living has skyrocketed... A full-time worker earning the current

minimum wage cannot pay rent in most areas of the country. The original relief bill would have raised that minimum wage to \$15, but in increments, not reaching \$15 until 2025.

However, even the proposed increase would benefit ....32 million workers; 60 percent of essential and front-line workers .... One-third of African Americans and one-fourth of Latinx workers .... About 25 percent .... women workers of colour. Due to systemic racism and sexism, oppressed workers are severely underpaid....The demand for the federal minimum wage hike is supported by two-thirds of the U.S. population, especially Black, Latinx, Indigenous, women and young workers....The struggle continues!" (Emphasis added: P Era)



# 91st Martyrdom Day of Shaheed Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukdev observed with due solemnity on 23 March



Ghatsila, Jharkhand

Vadodara, Gujarat



Pilani, Rajasthan

## LET NOT THE HISTORIC NANDIGRAM MASS MOVEMENT BE MALIGNED

In a statement issued on 29 March 2021, Comrade Chandidas Bhattacharjee, West Bengal State Secretary, SUCI(Communist) said - "It has come to our notice that on the eve of election, the TMC, BJP and CPI(M) are repugnantly making confusing statements and distorting facts regarding the historic Nandigram movement. It is known to all that the movement started following the secret plan to create an 'SEZ' by the then CPI(M) led government in Nandigram with the help of the group 'Salim', big Indonesian corporate house, by evicting thousands of peasants from their land. To frustrate this conspiracy,

'Bhumi Uchedh Pratirodh Committee' (Committee for resisting eviction from land), a people's struggle committee, launched a resistance movement. One of the prominent convenors of this committee was Comrade Nanda Patra, one of our local leaders. We would like to state unequivocally that in order to forcibly suppress the mass movement, the then CPI(M) led government, throwing the banner of leftism to the wind, deployed armed police and criminals to perpetrate an unprecedented genocide and mass

rape on the protestors. Even today, many families in Nandigram are carrying the pain and agony of that torture and oppression.

We also want to state that it is completely unethical for any leader or any party to attempt to take the credit of the historic Nandigram movement. It was the people of Nandigram who had shed their blood and sacrificed their lives to resist the attack on their life and livelihood and finally gained victory because of their grit and determination. This was a victory of democratic mass movement.

We appeal to all, that it is not proper for any political party to exploit this glorious movement to buttress their petty-electoral interest.

We remind everybody that our Party is fighting this election on the basis of a correct Marxist outlook and correct line of militant leftism and mass movement. We are, on the one hand, fighting the fascist BJP government in the Centre for its rabid communalism and anti-people policies, and on the other hand, the corrupt, oppressive TMC government in the state as also against the opportunistic line of the CPI(M)-Congress-ISF alliance."

## How knowledgeable is BJP chief minister

The new Uttarakhand Chief Minister, Tirath Singh Rawat, is back with another -- this time blaming the US for "200 years of rule in India". In a video of his speech, the Chief Minister can be heard saying "America, which enslaved us for 200 years and ruled the whole world, is struggling" to control the coronavirus pandemic.

He compared India with the US on number of COVID-19 cases. "As opposed to other countries, India is doing better in handling the pandemic. America, who enslaved us for 200 years and ruled the whole world... it is struggling at present." (NDTV 22-03-21)

## Fuel Price Rise is a "Maha Bhayankar Dharma Sankatam," says Union Finance Minister

Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said on 20 February last that the issue of soaring petrol and diesel prices is a "dharm sankat" (divine predicament) and "vexatious" concern. What else can she say to shield the fact that this abnormal rise in fuel prices is a handiwork of her government who has been regularly raising excise duties and cess on oil to mop up fabulous revenue at the cost of growing misery and destitution of the people at large. A dollar was little less than Rs 59 when international crude price was \$108 per barrel. So, cost of procuring one barrel of crude oil was Rs 6,472. Right now, One

barrel of crude oil is \$60 and exchange value of one dollar is Rs72. So, cost of buying one barrel of crude is now Rs 4,320. In May 2014, one litre of petrol was Rs 71.50. Now it is nearing Rs 100). In other words, when crude oil price dipped by 32%, retail price climbed up by around 40%.

Why? Because central and taxes constitute 60 per cent of the retail selling price of petrol and over 54 per cent of retail price of diesel. Is it a 'divine predicament' by any stretch of imagination or a calculated fiscal savagery?

(ABP 23-02-21 and Business Today 21-02-21)

## Prime Minister says that privatization decisions will help empower Indian citizens

Prime Minister Narendra Modi on 10 February last made a strong case for privatization of Public Sector Units that he said burdened the taxpayer and stressed that the government has "no business to be in business". "When a government engages in business, it leads to losses. The government is bound by rules and the lack of courage to take bold commercial decisions," the Prime Minister said, addressing a Webinar on privatisation by the Department of Investment and Public Asset Management.

"It is government's duty to support enterprises and businesses. But it is not essential that it should own and run enterprises." "Asset monetisation and privatisation decisions will help empower Indian citizens," he said. If India is of any use to humanity today, our private

sector has had a big role in it," PM Modi told the Lok Sabha, emphasising that "wealth creators are also important for the nation". "India is proud of the role of the private sector in national progress and in enhancing India's prestige globally," the Prime Minister said. The Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman also played a second fiddle by exhorting the private sector to take advantage of corporate tax rate cut and other initiatives of the government, and unleash 'animal spirits' by enhancing investments to make India one of the fastest growing economies of the world. Industry barons expectedly cheered the privatization push by the PM admitting that it would unleash exciting opportunities for them. (NDTV-14-02-21, The Hindu-20-02-21, The statesman 25-02-21)

# Rail Roko and Demonstrations on Bharat Bandh Day on 26 March



Bangalore, Karnataka



Bhubaneswar, Odisha



BAHADURGARH NEAR TIKRI BORDER, HARYANA



GWALIOR, MP

## SUCI (Communist) expresses serious concern at cancellation of 3 crore odd ration cards

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(Communist), issued the following statement on 18 March 2021:

"We are seriously concerned at the news that the Supreme Court has asked the central government to respond to an allegation of cancellation of 3 crore ration cards on the pretext of non-linking with Aadhar cards without any notice to the families concerned. It is also mentioned in the status report that fault in the technological system based on Iris identification, thumb prints, possession of Aadhaar, functioning of the internet in rural and remote areas etc, is the reason behind such deprivation of poor people from the right to food security. Such an act of callousness on the part of the governments and their grievance redressal agencies under national Food Security Act, both of the Central as well as the states, have been one of the reasons of rising starvation deaths in the country. It also smacks of a conspiracy as the BJP-led central government is not only slashing food subsidy but also on the plea of direct transfer of subsidy to bank accounts is trying to abolish the Public Distribution System in a phased manner.

We demand that the government immediately restores the cancelled cards and refrains from victimizing poor common citizens because of inefficiency and indifferent attitude of the government machineries."

### Bihar State SUCI(C) demands immediate withdrawal of draconian Police Act and stringent punishment to those guilty of manhandling opposition legislators

Comrade Arun Singh, Bihar State Secretary, SUCI(C), severely condemned the recently introduced draconian Bihar Special Armed Police Act, 2021 which empowers the police to arrest anyone at any time at its will and whim. He also condemned the manhandling of the opposition legislatures inside the assembly for voicing protest against such a black act. Comrade Arun Singh also said that in tune with the BJP-led Central Government, the Bihar Government led by BJP-JD(U) alliance is also adopting one after another anti-people policies to make life miserable for the people. Priceline and unemployment have reached new heights in the state. The graphs of corruption,

bribery, fraud and crime are rising steeply. In such a condition, by promulgating such fascist acts, the Bihar Government is conferring unbridled power on the police to muzzle the voice of protest. Undoubtedly, whatever little of democracy is still remaining democracy is being systematically destroyed by the reactionary government subservient to the sinister class interest of the ruling capitalist class.

Comrade Singh demanded of the Bihar Government to withdraw the amended Police Act and mete out stringent punishment to those guilty of mounting the heinous assault on the opposition legislatures in the Assembly.

### BASAD (Marxist) condemns police firing on anti-Modi protests in Bangladesh

In a statement dated 26 March 2021, Comrade Mubiniul Haider Chowdhury, General Secretary, Bangladesher Samjatantrik Dal (Marxist)--BASAD (M)--strongly condemned opening fire on the protesters belonging to Chhatra and Yuba Leagues and other forces against visit of fascist Narendra Modi, representative of Indian imperialism and perpetrator of communal riots, in Dhaka and Chattogram killing four on the spot.

The very effort to crush the protest which is a democratic right of Bangladesh people, the ruling Awami League has unfolded its fascist face. Comrade Chowdhury further said that though their party has ideological and political differences with many of the protesting parties and forces, we decry opening fire on them and demand impartial probe into the matter as well as exemplary punishment to the guilty.



## ELECTION CAMPAIGN IN FULL SWING

Changanassery, Kerala



Kultali, West Bengal

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