

Dissection of economic stimulus package against Corona fallout would only unpack deception and derision of highest order

Corona Lockdown, now continuing for over two months and a half, has indeed been a saga of escalating misery and destitution of over 90% of the countrymen. Most affected are the abjectly penurious populace—the retrenched workers, jobless migrant labourers, poor and marginal peasants as well as other sections living hand-to-mouth like loaders, porters and vendors. Even small business as well as many

middle and lower middle class people are in dire straits. Though the country's BJP Prime Minister (PM) had tried to find a scapegoat in corona for the nosedive of country's economy, the fact is that it had already been in deep crisis which is insolvable because it is endemic of the capitalist system. And the brunt of this capitalist crisis continued to be squarely passed on to the already back-broken toiling countrymen by the government subservient to the class interest of the ruling monopolists. With each and every economic measure announced by the bourgeois government, past or present, the rich has become richer and the poor poorer. Even a good number of economists-bureaucrats-commentators belonging to the capitalist camp are miffed at the way the economy is handled by the BJP-led government with nakedly manifested one-sided tilt towards safeguarding interest of the ruling monopolists notwithstanding mouthful slogans of "saab ka saath, sabka vikas" (development of all), "inclusive growth", 'Atmanirvar Bharat' (self-

reliant India) and so forth. The boastfully announced economic stimulus 'package' claimed to be worth Rs 20 lakh crore or '10 per cent' of India's GDP to counteract the impact of the coronavirus disease (Covid-19) is also a big hoax and cruel joke on the myriads of countrymen struggling to somehow stay alive. A closer scrutiny would reveal that hardly any new money is being pumped into the economy. A good number of bourgeois economists and academicians had been repeatedly urging to boost demand by direct cash transfer to the devastated poor. But the package does not contain a single paisa to be directly transferred to the poor or to the workers who have lost their livelihood due to the lockdown. The Union BJP Finance Minister (FM) has clarified that the government consciously preferred a route aimed at empowering people rather than doling out cash. She also hastened to add that the package would provide much needed relief from the pandemic to small and large businesses and she would not

Contd on page 2

SUCI(C) expresses shock at the way ruling BJP is sounding bugle of ensuing election when corona is on a rampage

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following statement on 10 June 2020 :

It is most shocking that the BJP leadership has chosen the present time to sound the bugle of ensuing assembly elections in Bihar and West Bengal, when the people of the country are extremely worried, helpless and bewildered since Corona virus has already infected lakhs, killed few thousands of them and the infection is alarmingly increasing daily due to utter negligence of the central and state governments, who have practically left the countrymen to the mercy of the deadly virus. Notably the number of infections and deaths are already on the verge of overtaking some of the devastated western countries and WHO has sounded an alarm that very soon a big explosion of Covid-19 would grip India. Moreover, crores of retrenched workers, migrant labourers and unemployed youths are languishing in abject poverty, starvation and many are dying because of being denied any concrete governmental help. Does not this attitude prove that the rulers do not care at all for the life and death of the people? Their sole motive is to anyhow grab the ministerial power with the blessings of the monopolists and multinationals even riding on the bodies of the Corona victims and starving countrymen.

The US mass uprising carries historic prospect

USA is witnessing unprecedented protests across the length and breadth of the country not seen since the sixties of the last century. At that time, the country was in the throes of the civil rights movement, and also grappling with the massive protests taking shape against its involvement in Vietnam.

There have been some significant movements in the interim, such as for example the protest of the inhuman beating of Rodney King in 1992 or the more recent Occupy Wall Street movement of 2011. But those were either of shorter duration or lesser spread. The current outburst of the common people was

triggered by the gruesome murder of George Floyd, an unarmed 46-year-old African American man by four police officers on 25 May. Videos showed clearly the inhuman and depraved actions of the officers lasting for almost ten minutes and even defying warning from medical technicians, in which we could hear

Floyd uttering "I can't breathe", "you are going to kill me", and "mama", and then going silent and motionless. The videos of the cold-blooded and callous killing immediately went viral, and people started pouring into the streets of the twin cities of Minneapolis-St. Paul.

Contd on page 4

Countrywide Protest against brutal killing of George Floyd of USA



Guwahati



Ahmedabad



Bangalore

Rescue package

Monetary stimulus and liquidity-enhancing measures cannot be prescription of increasing purchasing power of people

Contd. from page 1

hesitate to take more steps to support Indian businesses. Of late, the PM in his address to the “Confederation of Indian industries” had no qualms in revealing his government’s pro-industrialist stand when he assured the monopoly houses that he would be with them and “if they would take a step, he would take four steps”. So, there has been commotion and criticism all around. Even some of the critics did not hesitate to say in fine-print that the BJP government has made lying an art form. “Every message from the extremely repressive leadership reverses the truth”, they remarked. Let us peel the beans to unveil the trickeries embedded in the rescue package

Rs 20 lakh crore package is only a bundle of loans and enabling liquidity-enhancers

First, of the Rs 20 lakh crore, a Rs 1.7 lakh crore represents the fiscal package already announced by the FM on 27 March. Its salutary effect is therefore long over. Next, as much as Rs 8.04 lakh crore, is the sum total of all hitherto announced additional liquidity-enhancing measures by the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) through repeated lowering of repo (interest at which RBI lends funds to commercial banks) and reverse repo rates (rates at which RBI borrows money from the commercial banks) in February, March and April last. Thus, a little over half the package comprises liquidity provision, by RBI and the Government of India, and the government’s relief package announced in March end.

Of the balance amount, Rs 3 lakh crore of extra fund is stated to have been unlocked by the RBI with the commercial banks for lending particularly to the micro, small and medium enterprises (MSME) which have been badly hit by lockdown. It has been said that this extra fund released as loan would be backed by a government guarantee. Very encouraging at the outset, no doubt. But this gleeful reception would be dampened once one goes through the fine print that follows. Only the MSMEs with outstanding loans of up to Rs.25 crore and with an annual turnover of Rs100 crore would qualify for this additional loan.

But, with more strings attached. The loan limit would mean dues pending for up to 60 days prior to 29 February 2020. Even the actual cost to the government in this respect, as calculation reveals, is estimated at just 25,000 crores. The Finance Minister was put in a spot when she was asked how much was owed to this sector.

Why is the MSME sector—a vital cog in the industrial capacity of the country—is in crisis? Because, its production chain is broken. Because of drastic fall in demand, the MSMEs are unable to deal with cash flow problems. Lockdown-induced conditions have greatly amplified this crisis by threatening to turn them insolvent. Taking new loans with no certainty of sales, even without having to offer collateral, is the last thing any small business would have in mind. Survival counts over everything. This survival would be reassured only when there is a huge injection of purchasing power into the economy, that means providing cash in people’s hands. Otherwise, so called ‘loan mela’ is nothing but a futile attempt to stimulate a sagging economy with a credit push.

It is pertinent to mention in this regard that as much as Rs 5.2 lakh crore is reportedly disbursed as loans by the Reserve Bank by way of bringing down the borrowing rates so far. But there have hardly been any borrower. Who would risk borrowing when the economy is in deep recession and demand is dipping with every passing day as people are losing purchasing power in absence of means of earning? So the commercial banks were left with no option but to park all of that money in the RBI’s reverse repo account, which swelled from Rs 3 lakh crore on 27 March to Rs 8.4 lakh crore by the end of April. Neither the PM nor the FM made this truth public.

Government criminally indifferent to the plight of jobless millions including migrant labourers

The inhuman attitude of the government who is thumping its own chest by riding on lies and gymnastic of rigmarole, is exposed in every way whereas during lockdown, shutters have reportedly been downed in as many as 2.7 lakh

industries and 6 to 7 crore small and cottage industries. This is over and above declared closure of 6.8 lakh industries in the pre-lockdown period. Only in last three months of lockdown, over 11 crore people are estimated to have lost jobs. Of these, 9 crore are daily wage earners and around 2 crores are salary earners who have been laid off. The crash in demand from them is close to Rs 100,000 crores a month, assuming that each unemployed person is now spending at least Rs 8,700 per month less than they were earlier. But acknowledgement of this hard reality finds no place in trumpeted ‘corona rescue package’. No concern is expressed for the millions of migrant workers who are trudging alongside highways at night with barrows, bundles and children in their arms; those dying midway without food and water and because of fatigue due to covering hundreds of miles on foot in scorching summer sun; small children trying to elicit response from their dead mothers; old men picking papaya peels out of an open drain to eat the rind; the young fathers sweeping up milk spilt on a road with bare hands to feed their starving children. It needed around Rs 66,000 crores only to provide direct cash transfer to the abjectly poor and thereby infuse spending power into the economy. This amount is just a tiny fraction of much touted Rs 20 lakh crore and less than the recently written off bank loans of around Rs 70, 000 crore defaulted by top industrialists and traders including the fugitives. Transferring cash to the wretched countrymen would not have been any profligacy born of a desire to protect the country’s “macro-fundamentals” whatever be the outcry of the so called economists.

The government also loudly proclaimed that it was going to spend Rs 3,500 crores, amounting to 0.175% – i.e. one sixth of a paisa out of every rupee promised by the PM on 12 May, for giving 5 kgs of one cereal a month per person, and one kg of chana (pulse) a month per family. And this too is for only two months. Did both the PM and the FM forget that cooking needs edible oil, salt and minimum spices? Where would those come from? Moreover, he government which now claims that this additional grant is for providing additional free foodgrains

to about 8 crore migrant workers not having ration cards. But, it bears recall that this very government had earlier cancelled over 3 crore ration cards of poverty-stricken people and branded them as “bogus” since those were stated to have not matched with Aadhar biometric standards. Such indifference and neglect to the poor suffering millions is mercilessness born out of an inability to feel the pain of others.

Weird saga of giving relief to peasants

The PM and his cabinet colleagues often feign concern about the growing destitution of the peasants and agricultural workers and promise repeatedly to double peasants’ income in 5 years. But what has so far been done for that? Prescription of a meaningless crop insurance which only benefits the insurance companies instead of the affected peasants and occasional announcing of raise in minimum support prices (MSP) of crops which, every informed person knows, are never received by the peasants because of dominance of a strong utterly corrupt nexus in the procurement mechanism. In the pre-election interim budget of 2019, the BJP government announced one “Pradhan Mantri Kisan Samman Nidhi (PM-KISAN)” under which peasant families having cultivable land upto 2 hectares, were to receive direct income support of Rs 6,000 per year to be credited to their bank accounts. This programme was stated to entail an annual expenditure of Rs 75,000 crore. If a family has four members, this so called income support would translate into Rs 4 per day. What would one call it? A palliative or electoral gimmick when cost of agricultural inputs are rising gallopingly and remunerative price for the produce vulgarly continues to elude the peasants? What prevented the government to at least release two additional monthly instalments under the PM Kisan scheme spending an additional amount of just Rs 34,000 crores? Why could not the government increase fertilizer subsidy from Rs 80,000 crores to Rs 1 lakh crores?

But, the government did not take any such measure. It ended its responsibility by sanctioning Rs

Contd. on page 3

Rescue package

If there is no demand, how would credit-push boost production?

Contd. from page 2

30,000 crore additional emergency working capital funding for farmers through the National Bank for Agriculture and Rural Development (NABARD) to be targeted at rural co-operative banks and regional rural banks. Who does not know that priority sector lending to small and marginal farmers—the focus of this relief package—is very limited and hence the peasants are forced to take loan from local moneylenders at an exorbitant interest? In its 2019 report, the Reserve Bank's Internal Working Group to Review Agricultural Credit estimated that despite numerous existing initiatives, at most, hardly 40 per cent of India's small and marginal farmers are covered by formal credit. Moreover, as the said report mentioned, these estimates are based on landholding-based data that exclude landless peasants—tenant farmers, oral lessees, sharecroppers—who constitute bulk of the peasantry but remain systematically excluded from the existing formal agricultural credit network. So, it is quite a stretch to assume that this same banking system will now effectively transmit this additional infusion of credit to nearly 3 crore small and marginal peasants in the upcoming season. At a time of crop losses, of added expenditures, of sales below MSP prices, the Government has refused to give a waiver of loans. To add insult to injury, statistics were trotted out to show how much the government has done for rural workers during the lockdown period. For example, the FM claimed that there was a 40-50 percent increase in workdays provided under MNREGA during the lockdown. But the official government site shows there was in fact a reduction of 59 percent in workdays and 46 percent in households covered in the month of April compared to the same period last year - a case where the government's own statistics reveals the lie. Doubling daily wage under Rural Employment guarantee scheme (MNREGA) would have benefitted 6 crore jobless people costing the exchequer around Rs 50, 000 crore—1/3rd of the amount of revenue foregone in a year because of slashing of corporate tax rate. Moreover, the Finance Minister (FM) has admitted that the government is recycling its schemes (like PM-Kisan) and

allocations already accounted for in budgetary allocations as part of the Covid package. But she declined to give more details. Understandably so because her job as FM of an out and out anti-people cruel bourgeois government is to suppress truth and deceive people with jugglery of words, figures and shallow pedantic verbiages.

Not just that. Seizing the opportunity of Covid pandemic, the government has cleared amendment of existing (Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act (APMC) Act through ordinance route thereby completely deregulating sale of agricultural produce and allowing private operators including giant Agri-MNCs to procure the harvest at any term and any price. This would, contrary to what the government is claiming, would further intensify exploitation of the peasants manifold and triggering spurt in contract farming. Alongside, the government has cleared repeal of Essential Commodities Act to dismantle whatever little legal provision is there to check hoarding and black marketing of vital items of daily use particularly food crops.

Thus, it is clear that agrarian and rural distress was aggravating long before Covid 19. But in the wake of imposition of lockdown in 4 hours' notice followed by the slew of measures in the name of rescuing the economy, the poor peasants and agricultural labourers now face not only an extremely challenging and uncertain season of cultivation ahead but a much more fierce capitalist onslaught on their life and livelihood.

So, this stimulus package, a bundle of earlier announced schemes and relaxation of official credit norms from public sector banks and financial institutions like NABARD, shrewdly camouflages actual figure of fresh government spending. Even the highest estimate puts cost to government at just 4 lakh crores or 20 per cent of the package. This too seems an overestimate. It is based on the statement issued on 8 May that central government borrowings for the year will be increased by 4.2 lakh crores, which therefore is the amount the government would be spending on the Covid-19 package. Even the government has refrained from spending Rs 2,000 crore, just 0.1% of national income to create a

Covid fund for giving a thrust to research for discovering preventive vaccine or medicine. In fact, the actual figure of fiscal stimulus would be around Rs 2.1 lakh crore. That is why, the BJP FM has been repeatedly parrying the question of actual government spending.

New definition of 'Multiplier' theory

As is evident to everybody, the lockdown has lowered aggregate demand. The estimated direct loss of output during the first seven weeks of lockdown has been valued at around Rs 28 lakh crore. With lockdown period now having been doubled, the loss of both demand and output ought to have doubled. So, a direct fiscal stimulus was needed. But the policy response on the part of the government so far has been something akin to a "backstop" in finance.

But the FM is bent upon justifying the measures undertaken even if that goes against the basics of bourgeois economics. She said that the government has consciously preferred a route aimed at empowering people rather than doling out cash. Because the government felt that it was better suited to deal with the emergency which the Covid-19 pandemic had triggered. She further claimed that the relief package would spur demand and would also provide much needed relief from the pandemic to small and large businesses and thereby stimulate growth through 'multiplier effect'.

How far correct is the claim? The answer can be obtained if one just flips over the pages of any textbook of classical bourgeois economics. A multiplier broadly refers to an economic factor that, when increased or changed, causes increases or changes in many other related economic variables. In terms of gross domestic product (GDP), the multiplier effect causes gains in total output to be greater than the change in spending that caused it. The term multiplier is usually used in reference to the relationship between government spending and total national income. For example, if a government provides a fiscal stimulus (meaning pays additional cash to the distressed peasants or jobless workers by way of direct transfer) of say Rs 1000 and the consumers spend 75%, then consumers' marginal propensity to

consume (MPC) is 0.75. Now, a spending of Rs 750 would effectively initiate another stimulus i.e. recipient of Rs 750 would spend Rs 562.5 and so on. Thus, increase in consumption expenditure would boost production of consumables and the producers would also likely expend a part of their increased income for procuring their requirement. So a fiscal stimulus of Rs 1000 would go on increasing economic activity much more in value. But a major part of the rescue package is monetary stimulus i.e. the measures taken by the RBI like cut in interest rate, relaxing the norms for giving loan, providing more money to the banks etc. It can indirectly help increasing consumption expenditure (taking loans to buy consumer durables) or allow industrialists to take loan for productive investment. But monetary stimulus would remain in the books or treasury of the banks making no impact on productive investment unless there is urge for taking loans. We have already referred above how banks are parking their surplus with RBI even at reduced reverse repo rate as there is no taker of loans. Secondly, how can common consumers who are having no or depleted income afford to take loan? Does the FM believe that jobless migrant workers, distressed peasants, hawkers, rickshaw or handcraft pullers would queue up for bank loans? Similarly, when there is no demand in the market, which industrial house or entrepreneur would come forward to take loan for productive investment and generate employment? The "rescue package" talks of just Rs 2.1 crore of fiscal stimulus which includes Rs 90,000 crores announced in the last budget. How would then "multiplier" effect be generated?

Stimulus package only reconfirms Marx's prognosis of capitalism

So, the economic policy package amounting to Rs 20 lakh crore, described by the FM as a stimulus, is nothing but a sinister design to fox people even at such a hard time. It had been received with shock and awe as it had appeared substantial and bold. It hardly needs to be said that entitlement to the "liquidity-enhancing measures" or "eased up loan gateway" is reserved for

Contd on page 4

US mass uprising

“We want Justice” is the slogan raised by the protesters comprising people from all race, colour, ethnicity.

Contd. from page 1

In no time angry, resolute protestors started gathering in hundreds of cities all over the US and beyond, demanding justice for George Floyd. It was a surge of masses, unnerved at which, the administration had to shut down the Brooklyn Bridge of New York, Golden Gate bridge of San Francisco. Throwing away the Corona-virus pandemic lockdown, tens of thousands of people gathered everyday in the Union Park of Chicago, road to Hollywood was blocked in Los Angeles by the protestors. The statue of a racist leader was shattered in Richmond. Atlanta and Philadelphia reverberated with the slogan ‘We want justice’ raised in one voice by thousands. One Minneapolis city police precinct (station) was torched by protesters in the early days of the movement. The White House itself was surrounded by unending gathering. The roads in front of it had the slogan ‘We want justice’ painted in such a size as to be visible even from high above the ground. Behind the curtain, there were also incidents taking place to give the protest further importance. The Chief of the editorial staff of a leading newspaper in New York had to resign for publishing an editorial in support of the coercive measures of Trump. The editor of a major newspaper of Philadelphia had also to resign for criticizing vandalism under a title “Buildings also Matter”. The pulse of the society was clearly

running high.

In all the protests, there were men and women from different walks of life; black, white, Hispanic and Asian; emotional and angry; young and old; housewives with their children, professionals risking their career at the hands of Trump administration and its ancillaries infamous for victimization. All of them joined the protest that had grown into the movement *Black Lives Matter*. What united them was the outrage at the injustice meted out to an unarmed black man at the hands of white callous police officers.

Yes, there were instances of vandalism, looting and burning of businesses and shops in Minneapolis, New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and a few other cities. Though most of the protesters were peaceful, raw emotions also resulted in few opportunistic looting. Some miscreants including white supremacists infiltrated the protests and caused much of the violence. Trump administration tried to change the conversation by focusing on the violence. The President himself invoked the typical ‘law and order’ mantra of racist despotic politicians in his rant, called the protestors rioters and terrorists, chastised the governors and mayors over their response and exhorted them to call in the National guard, which is a part of the army, in 23 states. He himself deployed the National Guard in Washington DC. Moreover, the

President violently got cleared peaceful protestors standing with banners and placards in Lafayette Park across from the White House, using pepper spray, tear gas, rubber bullets and cavalry. But that people’s wrath and zeal told upon the confidence of Trump and his White House brigade, was evident not just from his taking to repression, greeting peaceful protestors with tear gas, rubber bullets, clamping of night curfew in many major cities and mass arrests. Over the weekend, when protests were surging, the president and his family had to take refuge inside an underground bunker below the White House floor only to emerge on Monday after calling in the army to protect the White House perimeter. Since then the “mighty” President has turned the White House into a fortress, like one in an enemy country amidst a war-like situation. However, it took the arrogant mindless administration four days to charge the officer who strangled George Floyd in broad daylight. The other three onlooker officers were charged only nine days after Floyd’s death.

But the inclusiveness, spread, resolve and zeal of the protestors made the present movement earn a historic position. This is particularly significant because the moribund capitalist world order had relentlessly been trying to shove the people into the shells of self-seeking, self-oriented living, secluded,

isolated and detached from each other and without any concern for social commitments and happenings. George Floyd’s death appears to have shaken the shackles, if not broken them. So even the politically apathetic members of the majority white community have stepped out with the mission “I really could not afford not to be here” to defend the cause of security for the minorities. It was this appreciation of the social cause that sent messages to cross the Atlantic. Common people irrespective of colour of different European countries expressed solidarity. Protest demonstrations were held in entire Europe, in London, and cities like Berlin, Rome, Brussels, Madrid, Istanbul, Stockholm, Helsinki and also in cities such as Seoul, Tokyo, Nairobi, Capetown, as well as different countries from Australia, to Brazil, Mexico and Canada saw protests all over the places. In different cities of UK statues of slave owners were brought down either by the demonstrators or by the authorities themselves. But to judge the real importance of such a movement some words on history and the contemporary USA beyond this movement are necessary.

Racism against minorities, particularly the African Americans, and ghastly atrocities brought down upon them by the police and the white supremacists is as old and persistent as the history of the first Africans brought to the New World as slaves. The first slave ships arrived in the early 1600s. Men, women and children were brought in as slaves, and a court ruled in the mid-1600s that children born to enslaved mothers would also be slaves. Such was the civilized world, the colonial land which grew into the capitalist state of the United States of America in 1776. Since then we find the anti-slavery societies, outlawing of slave trade, and freeing of slaves, the Civil war between north and south that contained the element of anti-slavery campaign in the north. After a hundred years, the Civil Rights Act was made operational in 1875 granting all Americans, regardless of race, access to all public facilities. But racism and atrocities persisted, and the Civil Rights Act was declared unconstitutional, rather, the same Supreme Court declared the “separate but equal” principle

Contd on page 5

Rescue package

Government seizes lockdown advantage to fully open agricultural market to private houses

Contd. from page 3

those monopoly houses and big business corporates whose bank loans worth 7.5 lakh crore rupees have been written off since they have the right credentials. The additional finance mopped up through this relaxed credit route would be used for deployment in either stock market speculation or non-productive defence and allied sectors or would be exported abroad as finance capital.

It reminds the truth enshrined in the Communist Manifesto by great Marx and Engels that “in bourgeois society, capital is independent and has individuality whereas the living person is dependent and lacks individuality.” Marx further showed

that “Vulgar economy actually does no more than interpret, systematise and defend in doctrinaire fashion the conceptions of the agents of bourgeois production who are entrapped in bourgeois production relations. It should not astonish us, then, that vulgar economy feels particularly at home in the estranged outward appearances of economic relations in which these *prima facie* absurd and perfect contradictions appear and that these relations seem the more self-evident the more their internal relationships are concealed from it...” (The Trinity formula—Capital Vol III) And finally, addressing the proponents of capitalist reforms, Marx said that “They all want the impossible, i.e.

the conditions of bourgeois existence without the necessary consequences of those conditions. They all fail to understand that the bourgeois form of production is an historical and transitory form, just as was the feudal form. This mistake is due to the fact that, to them, bourgeois man is the only possible basis for any society, and that they cannot envisage a state of society in which man will have ceased to be bourgeois.” (Letter to Vasilyevich Annenkov, 28 December 1846) This is the truth we need to imbibe, expose the obsolescence and oppressive character of capitalism and accelerate the process of overthrowing capitalism by revolution fulfilling all necessary conditions.

US mass uprising**Precipitation and nurturing of racial hatred is part of capitalist design to divide oppressed people***Contd. from page 4*

resulting in the spread of segregation or “Jim Crow” practices across the country. Throughout the late nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth centuries white mobs instigated riots, killing blacks and lynched them by the thousands, and destroyed their houses and businesses in numerous cities and towns to terrorize the black communities to submit to white supremacy [1]. In reaction, the fifties and sixties saw the growth and spread of the civil rights movement and black militancy. Under pressure of the civil rights movement, the US Congress finally passed a comprehensive Civil Rights Act in 1964 and voting right in 1965, granting blacks the right to vote and equal access to public facilities. But at the same time, numerous civil rights activists, including Malcolm X, Martin Luther King and others were murdered by Ku Klux Klan, a white supremacist organization and such other ruthless outfits.

This chain of outrageous events in the country of Abraham Lincoln, one of the great proponents of the principles of bourgeois democracy, brings out glaring facts. In racism and police atrocities against the

promote an image of consent, these three institutions are the coercive backstop to threats to the rule of the monopolists. Governors and mayors come and go; they remain as watchdogs to unrest. They are either acquiescing in murders and lynchings or else they are powerless or too frightened to prevent them—they only pretend to govern the police.

But what makes the coloured people the soft targets? Chanting slogans of parliamentary democracy, American capitalism has grown into one of the most powerful imperialist states of the world. And with this have grown discrimination and deprivation. The top 5% of US households have a share of 25% of the total US household income, and the top 20% more than half of all US income[2].

Out of a total US population of 330 million, 76% are White and 13.4% are black or African-American. Currently, the black population in the US exceeds 45 million. The median wealth of a black household is \$17,000 which is 1/10th the median wealth of a white household [3]. Moreover, this disparity has increased over the last decade. In another recent instance, a quarter of Covid-19 deaths are

of the ruling power and coercion-oppression, there developed the resistance movement of the African-Americans. Historically, the nationally oppressed African American people have offered the greatest collective resistance to the US ruling class. Their former enslavement, their very limited enjoyment of basic bourgeois democratic norms and their continued physical and economic segregation has given them every reason to struggle against the injustices of the capitalist system. That tradition has placed African Americans in the cross-hairs of wealth and power and their trusted security apparatuses. It is, therefore, no surprise that the police wield their repressive powers so violently against Black people.

In course of this history, *Black Lives Matter* (BLM) movement was founded in 2013 as a protest movement in response to the acquittal of George Zimmerman, the killer of Trayvon Martin, a black teenager and high school student who was just visiting his relatives. It is an anti-racist activist organization which tries to intervene and combat violence by state officials or vigilante groups on African Americans [6]. The movement has been reinvigorated after George Floyd’s death in a form, shape and spread that has unsettled the ruling dispensation. Quite predictably, the mainstream monopoly-sponsored media are frantically trying to get the issue of police atrocities to fizzle out in the labyrinth of two-party parliamentary democracy of the USA. Like his responses in all earlier cases of police atrocities, Trump’s response to the murders of George Floyd has been crudely racist. Joe Biden, apparently the main contender for the post of US President now pitted against Trump, mouths the liberal platitudes that have been typical of Democratic Party politicians on occasions like this: a robust denouncement, a call for change, and then inaction. Biden’s own past is also not clean. It shows fanning racist violence, supporting the militarization of the police, boosting mass incarceration. The neoliberal wing in the Democratic Party want to show more Black faces in important positions. But what difference does that make for people’s problems as these parties are all subservient to capitalist class interest? As a matter of fact, ‘the Black Lives Matter’

movement emerged under President Obama, a non-white president, a Black attorney general, and a Black director of Homeland Security, and they could not deliver, as it was revealed by Cornel West passionately in a CNN interview. The present uprisings across the US are a remarkable sign of both the breadth and depth of anti-racist sentiment. They are inclusive in the best possible way. And they have frightened the rulers, the government and the monopolists. The monopoly-sponsored media is doing its best to shatter the hard-won unity against racism and against the police. It is true the police are one of the forces that are central to maintaining the legitimacy of capital. So, the rebellion is a rebellion against capitalism, whether its participants recognize it or not.

People want a change; there is a change in the air; the people smell the change. Each day of protest the crowds are larger than the previous day’s, the people see a change on the horizon; the people seem determined to bring about a change! But first and foremost they must safeguard the unity of people and expose the source of racism and police violence: capitalism.

So to realize that change, what the people must be convinced of is the fact that it is the mighty and nasty, cruel and cunning capitalist system of their country which keeps this racism alive, now and then perpetrates racial oppression, spends up people’s ‘resentment in a few days’ movement, creates a few black or some such elites who breed confusion by advocating for compromise and then everything goes on as usual. A leadership which can visualize this design and can educate and organize the do-or-die minded people into a band of determined army for bringing about a fundamental change, is the crying need of the hour which can bring people out of this labyrinth of victimization, protest, sacrifice and rather than quietly accepting the run-of-the-day. Till then real change remains in the dream!!

[Source :1. Williams J, Romer C: Black deaths at the hands of law enforcement are linked to historical lynchings. 2020. 2. Schaeffer K: Six facts about economic inequality in the US. 2018.3. Bialik K: Five facts about blacks in the US. 2018. 4. The Covid racial data tracker [https://covidtracking.com/race] 5. Gramlich J: Black imprisonment rate in the US has fallen by a third since 2006.; 2020. 6. Black lives matter [https://blacklivesmatter.com/about/]



Kolkata, joint rally with other left parties

African Americans not only the white supremacists, but the Federal rulers were also responsible. The complicity of local and state authorities cannot be denied. Under capitalism, the police, like the military and the security services, are direct agents of the ruling capitalist class, with people having no control on them. All three, in their areas of responsibility, are the “legitimate” purveyors of violence and aim to own a monopoly on violence. As much as governments aspire to maintain and

among African-Americans while they represent only 13% of the population. Again, though blacks are only 6% of the population of Minnesota, they constitute 30% of the corona positive cases of the state [4]. The disparity in the incarceration rates among the black and white population groups is simply mind-boggling. While 15 per 1000 black people are imprisoned, the comparative rate for the whites is 2.6 [5].

On the other hand, as anti-thesis

AIKKMS movements during Corona Lockdown to uphold pressing demands of the suffering peasantry

6 May 2020: All India Demands Day

The sudden imposition of Corona Lockdown by the Central Government without any prior preparation from 25 March 2020 has exacerbated the plight and penury of the already suffering agricultural labourers, middle, lower and poor peasants. They are now faced with the kind of hardships hitherto unheard. The painful sight of mass exodus of the hapless migrant labourers many of whom are rural poor seeking to eke out a bare living by moving to other states to work on contractual basis has exposed their wretchedness because of plummeting income from agriculture. Being denied food, shelter and wages at their places of work, they desperately decided to come back home on foot covering hundreds of miles in scorching summer sun and some of them died midway out of fatigue. On the other hand, the poor and marginal peasants were unable to harvest their yields or sell their crops because markets had closed down and transportation of their produce was totally impossible in lockdown condition. The producers of perishable agricultural But the governments, both at Centre and in the states, did not care to come to their rescue in time and virtually left them to fend for themselves. Same inhuman approach was seen towards the poor peasants struggling for mere survival.

In such a backdrop, All India Kishan and Khetmazdoor Sangathan (AIKKMS) declared 6 May as 'All India Protest Day' through online mode and organizing demonstrations maintaining safety protocols for pressing the governments to fulfil the legitimate demands of the peasants and migrant workers like waiver of bank loans as well as micro finance loans, provide agricultural inputs free of cost, ensure availability of remunerative price of produce to the peasants by toning up the procurement system, grant interest free loan of adequate amount to the middle and lower peasants, give due emphasis on MGNREGA work at higher wage and immediate payment of the dues, arrange food, shelter and transportation facilities to migrant workers etc. Memorandums incorporating the charter of demands were submitted to concerned authorities at various levels authorities and also to the Prime Minister of India. Before the protest day, a massive online campaign using all available windows was undertaken. A video explaining the demands and purpose of the movement was circulated in Karnataka in local language. Massive response was received from the peasants, agricultural labourers and migrant workers. Thousands of them uploaded their own holding posters of demands in Karnataka, Kerala, Andhra Pradesh, Telangana, Tamil Nadu, West Bengal, Odisha, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Haryana, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Madhya Pradesh, Assam and other states.

22 May 2020: All India Protest Day

The Central Government is criminally busy utilizing the lockdown advantages to favour the corporate houses in every manner while thousands, mostly the downtrodden and underprivileged, are falling victims to this deadly disease and many precious lives are lost. One

such blow to the farmers is the amendments made to APMC act and introduction of APLM Act. This new Act at one stroke has demolished the APMC, which, notwithstanding all its shortcomings, had hitherto kept open at least some avenue for the poor peasants to sell their crops at a reasonable price. It has instead legalized privatization or corporatization of the entire agricultural market and left the peasants at the mercy of the profit-greedy corporate sharks. AIKKMS called upon the countrymen to protest this anti-peasant and anti-people Act and observe

'All India Protest Day on 22 May 2020. Alongwith online protests, street demonstrations taking all precautionary measures, memorandums were submitted demanding (1) repeal of APLM Act, 2017, (2) providing minimum cash assistance of Rs.10,000 rupees to each poor family for buying immediate requirement of essential commodities, (3) sanctioning adequate interest-free loans to the peasants and (4) providing round-the-year work under MGNREGA project. This programme to has been widely supported by one to all in all states mentioned above.

OBSERVANCE OF AIKKMS PROTEST DAYS



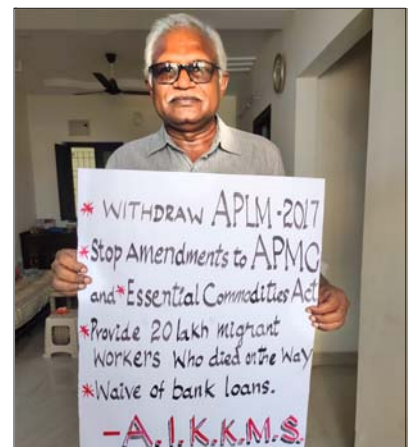
Comrade Satyawan, President, AIKKMS, in Haryana



Comrade Shankar Ghosh, General Secretary, AIKKMS, in West Bengal



Comrade Suratjaman Mandal, AIKKMS Secretariat member, in Assam



Comrade B S Amarnath, AIKKMS Secretariat member, in Andhra Pradesh



Haryana



Bihar



Karnataka



Madhya Pradesh

Reckless dilution of Labour Laws taking advantage of Corona lockdown

The nationwide lockdown was imposed on 24 March evening with only four hours' notice ostensibly to contain the spread of deadly corona virus. If the government was genuinely serious about what it proclaimed, the pandemic should have been dealt with on the healthcare front comprehensively while the vulnerable working people ought to have been supported in all respects including protection of their jobs to secure their life and livelihood. But the government did not care to save precious human lives nor did it pay any heed to the telling human miseries. All these are unforgivable criminal negligence.

Now as the government has initiated to gradually lift the nationwide lockdown under the pretence of reviving economic activities by wooing the investors, the hard earned labour rights are being drastically curtailed at an astonishing pace. Taking shelter under the umbrella of Covid 19 pandemic and the prolonged lockdown, the governments both at the centre and in different states, have been targeting the rights of the workers and the trade unions by way of blanket suspension of the key labour laws. As a first step towards implementing this sinister design, the BJP running the central government take a conspiratorial strategy to make its pliant state governments to take such drastic anti-worker and pro-corporate measures so that other state governments including the central government also follow the suit. In compliance, the BJP-led Uttar Pradesh BJP had brought a draconian ordinance named "Uttar Pradesh Temporary Exemption for Certain Labour Laws Ordinance 2020" to suspend all 34 out of 38 existing labour laws for a period of 3 years on the plea of facilitating economic activities. Only, section 5 of the Payment of Wages Act, 1936, Workmen Compensation Act, 1932, Bonded Labour System (Abolition) Act, 1976, and the Building and Other Construction Workers Act, 1996 would be in vogue. But, settling industrial disputes, occupational safety, health and working conditions of workers, and those related to trade unions, contract workers, and migrant labourers etc. would be defunct in both existing as well as new industries. However, later, under a notice from the Allahabad High

Court, it withdrew its controversial order of 12-hour shifts for workers in industrial units, against the usual 8-hour day.

The BJP-led Madhya Pradesh government has announced its decision to exempt the employers from the obligation under various labour laws like Factories Act, Industrial Disputes Act, Central Labour Act, Madhya Pradesh Industrial Relation Act, etc. through executive orders or ordinance for a period of 3 years. All these would empower the capitalist owners to merrily follow out and out anti-working class policy of 'hire and fire' as per their will. Besides UP and MP, several other governments including BJP-led Gujarat, Himachal Pradesh, Assam, Karnataka, Congress-led Rajasthan and Punjab, Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress coalition in Maharashtra and BJD-run Odisha have already extended working time in factories from 8 hours to 12 hours. Many of them have already expressed its desire to go by the UP government's way of suspending key labour laws for 1200 days. It is evidently clear that all ruling in different states, irrespective of hues, are following the same anti-worker pro-capitalist policies in subservience to bourgeois class interest.

The extension of working day is being done by citing the provision of "Public Emergency as stipulated in section 5 of the Factories act, 1948. But section 5 explained that "public emergency" means a grave emergency whereby the security of India or of any part of the territory thereof is threatened, whether by war or external aggression or internal disturbance." No such condition now exists in India or any of its states. As such extension of working day on the pretext of public emergency is gross distortion of section 5 of the Factories Act. Hence, it is not only unjustified but totally illegal. Regardless of that, it is also blatant attack on basic human rights and tantamount to enslavement of labour. Significantly, the states of Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and Gujarat are also banning application of Trade Union Act 1926 thereby preventing 'Freedom of Association' and scope of 'Collective Bargaining'. All these heinous moves are obviously being taken in direct connivance with BJP-led central government. These

diabolical measures are being taken in hot haste when, due to prolong lockdown, the working people are unable to go for any industrial action.

Such sweeping anti-worker measures are being taken with a view to using the workers as bonded labour bereft of any rights, any guarantee of wages, safety, healthcare, hygienic work condition, social security and above all any semblance of human dignity. These are all aimed at increased exploitation of labour to serve bourgeois class interest to maximize their profits at the cost of blood and sweat of workers.

These moves are akin to committing inhuman crime and brutality on the working people and are also in gross violation of the ILO Convention 87 on 'Right to Freedom of association' and ILO Convention 98 on 'Right to Collective Bargaining'. Such policies also flout the internationally accepted norm of 8 hours working day, espoused by Core Convention of International Labour Organization which government of India is part to. The ILO Convention 144 has thus been undermined by the Indian government.

Let there be no doubt about the fact that suspension and dilution of

labour laws cannot revive the economic activities in a capitalist country like ours. The Indian capitalism being part and parcel of the global capitalism- imperialism is engulfed in ever deepening crisis in all spheres of the society. Without increasing the purchasing capacity of the people by putting money into their pockets, economic activities cannot be geared up. Only when people's purchasing capacity increases, it would boost demand in the market and propel the economy. But the attack on the labour rights will only reduce the purchasing capacity of the vast majority of the people further and thereby aggravate the market crisis of capitalism even more.

The events and developments in the lockdown period have once again amply demonstrated that the only course remaining before the working people is to develop mighty movements to stall the nefarious moves of the pro-capitalist governments. The working people cannot accept these onslaughts lying down. Mounting resistance movement has to be built up in an organized way to defeat the atrocious anti-worker moves of the central and the state governments pursued at the behest of the exploitative capitalist rulers.

Bank Employees' Unity Forum opposes move to privatize three public sector banks

In a statement issued on 4 June 2020, Bank Employees' Unity Forum strongly opposed move to privatize Indian Overseas Bank, Bank of Maharashtra and Punjab & Sind Bank and attempts to increase working hour from 8 to 12 hours. Privatization means that both people's deposit in the bank as well as service security of the employees would also be at stake. The Forum called upon the employees, customers and people at large to build up united resistance movement against this heinous move of the central government.

Food Delivery partners' deputation in Karnataka

A token protest demonstration was organized on 4 June 2020 by United Food Delivery Partners' Union (UFDPU), Karnataka, affiliated to AIUTUC on various pressing demands concerning the food delivery partners'. Memorandum was submitted to the respective district-level labour department authorities Belgaum, Dharwad and other places. Earlier, the Union had submitted a charter of demands to the Hon'ble Chief Secretary to the Government of Karnataka and also the Labour secretary of Karnataka. But response from them is still awaited.

While suffering of the poor multiplies, coffer of richest billionaires swells during corona lockdown

When Covid-19 Lockdown is officially stated to have devastated the life of 270 crores of workers— nearly 81 percent of world’s estimated work force of the world—with harrowing spurt in job loss and at least 5 crore people are expected to plunge into “extreme poverty the coffer of the world’s richest monopolists and multinationals has been swelling like anything. According to a report published in the Forbes Magazine, 25 richest persons in the world have become richer by \$255 billion. And their combined wealth is estimated to be \$ 1.5 trillion, about 16 percent of the total wealth of the world’s billionaires.

Even as the coronavirus pandemic pushed the U.S. economy into the worst downturn since the Great Depression, some of the wealthiest Americans have seen their collective fortunes increase exponentially, according to a new report. U.S. billionaires’ wealth has grown by \$565 billion — or 19.5 percent — since 18 March 2020, when the majority of the nation shut down to slow the spread of the virus. The five wealthiest Americans — Jeff Bezos, Bill Gates, Mark Zuckerberg, Warren Buffett and Larry Ellison — saw their combined fortune surge by \$96.6 billion, the report found. Together, they represent almost one-fifth of the total wealth growth of all 600 billionaires in the last two months. US billionaire Mark Zuckerberg, the head of Poibarro Facebook, tops the list with his total assets now climbing to \$ 6.5 billion. Jeff Bezos, the founder of Amazon, has increased wealth by \$30 billion. The wealth of Indian billionaire Mukesh Ambani, the richest person in Asia, has now touched \$52.7 billion, up nearly \$20 billion during first two months of lockdown, when 12 Crore Indians lost jobs and 84% Indian households saw their income falling in just one month. The list also includes Colin Zheng Huang, founder of Pindudu, China’s second-largest online marketplace after Alibaba. He is now the third richest man in China, with a net worth of 35.6 billion. On the other hand, in January and February only, 50 lakh workers had lost job in China as per official report and 90 lakh more was slated to become jobless in the cities. Significantly, when global economy is shattered during lockdown, wealth of not a single of top 25 billionaires in the world has not dipped.

Besides reconfirming the facts that in capitalism, industries might fall sick but not the industrialists and the chasm between few rich and billions of poor continues to widen, this pandemic lockdown has also attested to the proverbial saying: “Some have the hap, some stick in the gap.” (Source: www.forbesafrica.com, 26-05-20, NDTV 28-05-20, Business Standard 16-05-20, CNBC 16-05-20, Fox business 06-06-20)



SUCI(C), Tripura, submitted a memorandum to the Mayor of Agartala Municipality Corporation demanding, *inter alia*, withdrawal of wealth tax @20%, arrangement for supplying purified water and Mosquito repellent etc.

Raise voice of protest against anti-people Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2020 to Electricity Act 2003 : SUCI(Communist)

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist) issued the following statement on 5 June 2020 :

Amidst the catastrophic situation caused by rapid spread of corona pandemic and prolonged lockdown for over 2 months, the BJP-led central government has brought a bill to amend the electricity Act 2003 to benefit the corporate houses at the cost of people’s interest.

Earlier, the Vajpayee-led BJP government had passed the Electricity Act 2003 with a view to opening the power sector to private operators and thereby put a seal of approval to widespread commercialization of such a vital public utility service. Now the proposed amendment in the form of an Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2020 proposed by the present Modi-led BJP government has further liberalized the provisions of the existing Act to make the power sector a lucrative hunting ground for the domestic and foreign monopoly houses. Already, the power sector is trifurcated into three divisions namely— production, transportation and distribution. This trifurcation has resulted in an increase of as high as 16% in profit margin in the sector obviously by way of more and more denting into the pockets of the common consumers. The present amendment proposes further division of the earlier categories by way of introducing Distribution Sub-licensee and Franchisee system. Also it has been proposed to withdraw cross-subsidies. Obviously, it would reduce the charges to the monopoly houses who have made decisive foray into the power sector and impose more burden on the common consumers by way of raising tariffs.

Further, the amendment has proposed to create a new ‘Electricity Contract Enforcement Authority’ (ECEA), which would be the key central body to deal with contractual disputes between the state distribution companies and generation, supplier, and transmission entities. Thus the authority hitherto exercised by the central and state governments as per the provision in the Constitution in making laws governing the power sector would be passed on to an independent supra-government body which would not be answerable to the parliament. It glaringly violates the constitutional provisions

We strongly protest this highly undemocratic amendment bill 2020 to the electricity Act 2003 as a part of the ongoing spree of privatization of essential sectors much to the detriment of the people’s interest and demand its immediate rollback.

We also appeal to the people to raise their voice of protest and compel the central government to withdraw this amendment.



The Karnataka Raja Samyukta ASHA Karyakarteyara Sangha affiliated to AIUTUC Union observing PROTECT ASHA DAY on 29 May demanding immediate redressal of the difficulties and distress of theirs caused by corona lockdown



AIDSO, Karnataka, observed statewide online protest day on 5 June 2020 against conduction of examinations based on online classes. Photo is of deputation led to concerned authorities in Dharwad

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH