



THE WORKING CLASS

MONTHLY JOURNAL OF THE CITU

7 November 2020, CITU Celebrates

- 104th Anniversary of Working Class led October Revolution
- Centenary of the First National Trade Union Centre in India
- Golden Jubilee of the Foundation of CITU

CITU National Leaders Addressing online



Hemalata



Tapan Sen



Elamaram Kareem



Subhas Mukherjee



A Soundarajan



M. Saibabu



Meenakshi Sundaram

Condolence

Comrade Maruti Manpade



CITU was shocked and grieved at the sudden demise of Comrade Maruti Manpade at Solapur due to Covid who was the Vice President and former President, of AIKS Karnataka state unit and also President of Karnataka Grampanchayat Workers Union (CITU).

He was in the forefront of many struggles for land rights, demands of sugarcane and other farmers; helped in organising the panchayat, MNREGA and other workers; helped in organising the Anganwadi workers in the initial stage; was active in the ongoing struggles in the State against the farm laws and labour codes; played crucial role in the struggle against social oppression in Karnataka and was a part of the Dalit Hakkugala Samiti (Dalit Rights movement).

He was actively involved in organising the movement of 'Devadasi' women in the state.

CITU conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family and comrades.

Comrade Narendra Kumar



CITU paid respectful homage to Comrade Narendra Kumar, State Vice President of Uttar Pradesh CITU. He was 75 years of age.

Comrade Narendra Kumar was a worker in Syohar Sugar Mill in Bijnor District of UP became active in unionising the sugar mill workers in and led many struggles. He was the General Secretary of the Sugar Workers' Federation (CITU) in UP.

CITU conveyed its heartfelt condolences to the bereaved family members and comrades.

Comrade Sandeep Ghatak



CITU is shocked and deeply grieved at the passing away of Comrade Sandeep Ghatak, Joint Secretary of CITU Varanasi district committee, due to Covid-19 pandemic in a hospital at Varanasi on 26 October at the age of 52.

Comrade Sandeep was a SFI functionary in Varanasi Hindu University during his college days. Later, working as a Medical Representative he was an all India activist of FMRAI's council movement and was also its Varanasi unit secretary in Uttar Pradesh. He was a member of CPI(M) and was also the reporter of 'Ganashakti', CPI(M)'s West Bengal party daily newspaper.

He was very active in social work organising blood donation camp, flood relief work and relief among the migrant workers.

He left behind his wife, who is also working as a Medical Representative, and his child daughter. As per his wish, his family donated his body in the hospital for medical study and research.

CITU conveyed its condolence to Comrade Sandeep's comrades and his family members.

WORKING CLASS

NOVEMBER 2020

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Editorial

Significance of 26 November General Strike

Workers countrywide general strike on 26 November 2020 will be a new experience as it takes place in a totally new situation.

This new situation has been created due to health-related restrictions of Covid-19 pandemic; and the governments' restrictions on mass gatherings and protests under Disaster Management Act and Sec.144.

That is not all. These are accompanied by suppression of right to dissent, civil liberties; squeezing democratic space and institutions; over-centralisation of power and imposing an authoritarian rule. It is an extraordinary situation.

This situation, created due to Covid-19, is also being taken advantage of by the ruling dispensations. Niti Aayog described it as 'Now or Never' situation for them. Series of anti-people and anti-national ordinances are issued, executive orders passed and bills adopted in the Opposition-free Parliament which include three anti-workers Labour Codes and three anti-farmer Farm Bills.

26 November workers general strike is the culmination of series of joint actions of the trade union movement and also of and with the farmers' movement; step by step raising the protest mode from in-house - to step-out - to mass mobilisation; at local - to higher levels - to national; coordinated protest actions on 21 April, 3 July, 16-17 July, 9 August, 5 September, 25 September etc involving lakhs of workers-peasants-agri-workers and others across the country in each of these days.

26 November general strike is the culmination of one stage for raising it at higher level in the next stage as part of ongoing resistance movement to the new attacks of the BJP-led governments at the Centre and in States.

Significantly, 26 November workers general strike is not only for the workers 12 point demands; but also to challenge this authoritarian rule; and in defence of democracy, civil liberties and right to dissent; by action.

26 November Workers General Strike

CTUs & Federations on Strike Notice

2nd November 2020

Joint Circular to all constituent unions/federations of the Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions & Independent Sectoral Federations/Associations

Dear Comrades and Friends,

We are all in the midst of active preparatory campaign for the Countrywide General Strike on 26th November 2020, called by the National Convention of Workers held on line on 2nd October 2020 at the initiative of Joint Platform of CTUs and Independent Sectoral Federations/Associations.






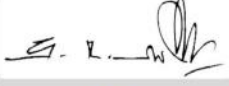
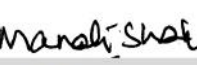
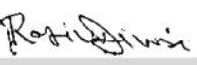


Joint Conventions have already been held in most of the states. In many states joint conventions have also been held at district and industry levels. Simultaneous campaign is going on against the anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies of the Govt. at the centre and those in many states, focusing the charter of demands of the working people as reiterated in the joint declaration for the general strike of 26th November 2020.

These preparations should lead to the serving of the notice for the General Strike to respective managements/authority by all the unions latest by 10th November 2020 or even before without fail. *(Bold added for emphasis)*

All the constituent unions/federations/associations of the Joint Platform are requested to please take note of this requirement and take initiative accordingly.

Let us unitedly march towards a massive countrywide strike action throughout the country on 26th November 2020.

With greetings,

				
INTUC	AITUC	HMS	CITU	AIUTUC
				
TUCC	SEWA	AICCTU	LPF	UTUC

And Independent Sectoral Federations/Associations

26 November 2020 Countrywide General Strike

Context and Focus

Tapan Sen

We are heading for the Countrywide General Strike on 26 November 2020 as ongoing united intervention by the united platform of central trade unions and federations against the anti-people, anti-worker, anti-national destructive policies of the Modi Government.

This general strike is definitely going to be massive and bigger than all previous 19 countrywide strikes since 1991 against the neoliberal policy regimes as indicated from the reports being received of the response to the ongoing preparatory campaign throughout the country and across the sectors, jointly and independently, by almost all the central trade unions and the sectoral independent federations; and the response from not only workers and employees in the industries and the services, both in organized and unorganized sectors, but also of all sections of toiling people - the peasants and agricultural workers in particular, who are already in the midst of militant agitations and actions. They will also be seen in several lakhs on the streets, along with the striking workers and employees, crying a halt to the destructive and barbarous policy regime of the Govt at the Centre.

But, our task does not end here with the success of general strike of 26 November 2020. Rather, it is going to be the beginning of the course of a heightened and militant peoples' actions with determination to defy and resist the barbarous policy regime which is meticulously designed and structured to loot the country as well as the toiling people in entirety, seeking to snatch away even the basic entitlement for a human survival in a civilized society, by the Govt of the day, only to serve their corporate-landlord masters, both foreign and domestic. And this is being done taking advantage of the Covid-19 pandemic and accompanying lockdown, particularly on peoples' right to collectively dissent, oppose and agitate.

The joint declaration of 2 October 2020 National Convention of Workers, while deciding on 26 November 2020, emphatically stated, "Let it be known that this One Day Strike is in preparation for more intense, more tenacious and longer struggles that lie ahead." It means that 26 November strike has to be made the launching pad of heightened actions, in continuity. Thus, the preparatory campaign for the strike, already unleashed, has to be further sharpened keeping in view this task of maintaining continuity of united action with heightened pitch, in view of the challenges that has been thrown before the working class by the crisis-ridden neoliberal capitalist order through their political agents in governance.

The Challenges Today

As CITU Secretariat in its last meeting on 7 October 2020, noted, *"Today we are in an 'abnormal situation' created by the ruling classes to serve their class interests. This is sought to be justified as the 'neo-normal' to legitimise its criminal machinations on the economy, the governance machinery and administration and on the society. The BJP government led by Modi is riding roughshod over all institutions, procedures and norms and attacking*

the people, utilising the lockdown and the restrictions imposed under the Disaster Management Act. Practically nothing has been done to address the pandemic and ensuring protection and affordable treatment to the people. Instead, private corporate health services are being allowed to encash this crisis for making huge fortunes at the cost of common people.”

The CITU Working Committee meeting, held on 19-20 October 2020, pointed out, *“Generally the impression that is being sought to be created among the people is that this abnormal situation is a temporary phenomenon till the pandemic situation remains. This is absolutely wrong. In fact, the pandemic and accompanying lockdown is being utilised by the ruling class to restructure the governance of the economy, political system and the society in a total authoritarian direction with a fascistic intent to serve the interests of the capitalist class.”*

Such aggressive authoritarian centralization of the governance structure by the BJP regime, completely undermining the Constitution and the trampling underfoot the basic democratic values in the governance process has been acting in promoting a kind of anarchy and criminalization in the society striking at the root of societal harmony.

Thus, the Modi-led BJP government is on full steam to complete its neoliberal agenda – of nullification of the rights and the hard won benefits of the working class, of total privatisation of the public sector including public services, completely restructuring the agricultural economy, changing the small peasant dominated agriculture in our country for the benefit of the big corporate and business houses, domestic and foreign. The Essential Commodities Act has been amended to essentially eliminate government procurement, and thus public distribution system. The entire project is to impose authoritarian regime with fascistic intent, to suppress all opposition to its policies and protect corporate interests. The Modi Govt is being driven by “now or never” syndrome in order to complete all their destructive misdeeds.

Brutal attacks and atrocities are being carried on the most downtrodden sections of the society, the dalits, minorities with the virtual sponsorship of govt and administration and sometimes even judiciary; attack and violence on women particularly from the most downtrodden section has increased alarmingly; an atmosphere of fear and terror is being sought to be perpetrated on the entire society with a clear authoritarian, fascistic and barbarous intent. It is carrying forward the RSS agenda of communal polarisation and ‘Hindutva’ ideology, heinously using the lockdown conditions to suppress dissent and weaken resistance. All this is being done to benefit the corporate-landlord classes.

The desperate move for bulldozing all the Labour Codes to be passed by Parliament in absence of opposition and without any discussion is aimed at virtually elimination most of rights and protections on Labour to virtually impose conditions of slavery on the working people; and this move is integral to the destructive project of authoritarianisation of governance of the economy, the political system and the societal governance by the Modi regime. This move of curbing labour rights through labour codes has been accompanied by aggressive onslaught on democratic rights to dissent oppose and collectively oppose as has been seen in vindictive arrests and intimidation on social activists, intellectuals and all anti-CAA agitations;

parliamentary norms and procedures have been trampled underfoot while passing the laws on agriculture and labour codes as revealed by the Monsoon session of Parliament; all constitutional provisions and bindings are being treated with contempt. These moves are all integral to decisive move to trample the democratic system as a whole with a clear fascist intent.

Hence comrades, the challenge before us is not merely privatisation or attack on labour rights, or gross alteration of the agricultural economy in favour of landlord-corporate-foreign traders nexus, the challenge is much bigger before us. It is in reality one of combating the project of installation of a fullfledged authoritarian regime and trampling of the democratic system, to allow the free unhindered loot of the national economy and resources by private corporate barons, both foreign and domestic. Our struggle, therefore is one of defending our country's economy being mortgaged, against country's resources being auctioned on a platter, defeating the anti-national conspiracy of deindustrialisation, saving the unity of the people from the poisonous machination of disintegration, in fact defending stoutly the sovereign entity of India in its entirety. The toiling people can defend themselves and their rights only by combating head on this atrocious comprehensive game plan of the Modi regime.

Here lies the importance and urgency of heightening the united struggle of the working people to the level of defiance and resistance; our campaign, agitation and actions must not only deal with the miserable impact of the policy regime on the lives and livelihood of the people but also link the same with the policy regime and expose the politics that articulates and promotes such disastrous policies. And simultaneously we have to present before the people the pro-people alternative to brazenly anti-people neoliberal politico-economic order. The 12 point demands of the joint platform of trade unions and the peoples' charter formulated on that basis by the joint platform in 2019 are premised on that **pro-people democratic alternative**, which needs to be reached to the toiling masses in effective and convincing manner.

Therefore, the struggles for defending our rights and benefits, the struggles for defending our workplaces and employment etc can no way be separated from the struggles against the comprehensive structural alteration of the entire governance of the economy, political system and the societal management towards authoritarian and divisive direction; because the attacks on our rights and workplaces are emanating from this comprehensive project of the Modi Govt for total structural alteration of the governance and we have to strike at the root.

The collective intervention of the working class thus aim at not to allow things to happen as the Modi regime desires. Resistance needs to be built up at every stage of its dubious exercise both at sectoral level and at national level. And this requires all the productive forces in the economy and the society on the united platform of concerted struggles. Surging struggles by farmers and agricultural workers countrywide has brought about positive changes in the overall atmosphere in this direction. The working class movement has to build up joint struggles with the peasants and agri-workers organisations at a sustained manner and develop joint fronts and coordination with them up to the grass root level. CITU has to take special initiative in this direction without fail. We have already been practising since long joint agitational

activities with AIKS and AIAWU and this has started drawing other trade unions and farmers' organisations into the process of mutual cooperation and solidarity among the two main productive forces in the society-the workers and the peasants developing the foundation of the united platform of peoples' movement. This process has to be expanded and consolidated further.

We are already in the midway of our preparatory campaign for the General Strike of 26 November 2020. During the rest of the days this needs to be intensified further. We cannot leave anything to chance. We cannot afford to allow the time to be wasted and go out of our hand. Indomitable spirit of determination to defeat all the ill and evil designs of the enemy of the people and nation must drive us in all our activities.

Our enemy class has been operating with "*Now or Never*" desperation to suppress our rights and entitlements and impose conditions of slavery on the working people. For the working class, it is "*NOW*" itself to act aggressively and unitedly to never allow the disastrous design of imposing slavery to take off, through building resistance at every inch. We can do that, definitely we can do that. None of the rights the workers are having now came on its own. Right from eight hour working hours, right to organise including right to strike, right to collective bargaining and grievance redressal etc –all these rights, the working class did assert collectively first through militant struggles, undergoing tremendous sacrifices, and through that process the society and the governance were compelled recognise those rights of the working class. That is the history of the working class movement since its birth.

When these rights are being targeted to be eliminated through Ordinances in many states followed by Labour Codes, we have assert those "sought to be taken away rights" to defy and resist the atrocious design. Already in the theatre of Indian working class movement, such defiance has started asserting itself. Coal workers three days strike, BPCL workers two days strike, cement workers' struggles in the BJP ruled states, and last but not least, the heroic struggle by the UP electricity workers against privatisation are testimonies to such united defiance struggles by the working class.

And we are not alone. Working class is on warpath throughout the globe against almost similar identical attacks on their rights by the respective ruling class. The three days massive strike action 6-8 October 2020 by the workers of Indonesia is the latest instance.

We have to fight, we can fight and we are destined to win. Anti-worker, anti-people and anti-national policies cannot have the final and ultimate say.

Let me conclude with the concluding sentence of the Report adopted by CITU Working Committee on October 19-20, 2020, **'Let us start the preparations for the 26th November general strike and for all the ensuing militant struggles and strikes, with this understanding NOW. If it is 'Now or Never' for the ruling classes, it is NOW ON for us too.**

WE WILL OVERCOME."

The Situation 'NOW'

K. Hemalata

PRESENT SITUATION for the workers is not like the usual. It is certainly unusual. But, is it 'New'? Is it 'New Normal'? Is it 'Abnormal'? What type of a situation is this?

IT is necessary to understand this to deal with the present situation. The change in the situation was dramatically brought about with the sudden announcement of the countrywide lockdown on the evening of 24 March 2020. The lockdown came into force in four hours.

Till then crores of workers drawing regular salaries were under the impression that their lives were more or less secure. Their salaries might not be huge; most of them were not getting even the minimum wage that was being demanded by the trade unions way back in 2015. For most of them, it was Rs.12,000/15,000 per month. But what was so reassuring about even this meagre income was that it was regular; they could plan their expenditure and balance their budgets; did not have to beg or stretch their hands in front of anybody. They were living with dignity.

All that changed suddenly. Crores of people woke up to find that their services were no more required for their employers. The society was no longer able to use what they had to offer. They lost their jobs and only sources of incomes. Suddenly, crores of these people, who led dignified lives with self respect, found themselves vulnerable. They found themselves unable to pay their children's school fees; defaulting on rent payments, skipping meals. What they were most proud of, their dignity, their ability to live within their means without begging, crumbled. Now, many are compelled to look for and depend on help to survive.

Their lives turned upside down.

THE Prime Minister said that all this was necessary to contain the Covid 19. It was a war to be won in 21 days, just 3 days more than the 18 days that it took the Mahabharat war. The new corona virus is more powerful than the Kauravas it seemed and the chhappan inch certainly could not claim to be equal to Arjuna, his chariot driven by none other than Krishna. Banging pots and pans, ringing bells, switching lights off and on, shouting 'Go Corona' slogans – and of course, havans, pujas, etc and etc were all touted as powerful weapons in this war, along with the ritualistic exhortations to wear masks, wash hands, sanitise, maintain social distancing.

They believed him. They were more than willing to do their bit in this war against Corona, as they patiently put up with loss of jobs and incomes during demonetisation, around 4 years back. At that time Modi said it was necessary to fight 'black money, corruption, terrorism'. Similarly, they voted for Modi and BJP because they believed they were discharging their patriotic responsibility in the fight against the so called 'anti national' forces out to destabilise the country.

Not 21, but more than 210 days are now over. But, victory over Covid 19 is nowhere in sight. Instead, India is now only second to the USA, in terms of total number of infections and deaths. Workers and the common people are worried about when normalcy would return.

Most of the workers, most of the poor people expected the Government would help them in their time of distress. They hoped that at least it would ensure that its own order - that jobs should not be eliminated, wages should not be cut – would be implemented; that it would help the migrant workers at least to reach their villages safely; that it would ensure they would not starve to death.

But to their utter dismay, nothing like that happened. Instead, the Government took back its own order in 53 days when it was challenged in court. The 'Atmanirbhar' package was not for the workers or common people. All it contained was concessions for the corporates on the pretext that this would encourage them to invest, which in turn, would generate employment, which in turn, would help the people and the economy. Old decisions like labour law codification, privatisation, farm bills etc were also made part of this 'relief package'.

Not only no-help was forthcoming from the Government; workers were even more dismayed that the Modi-led BJP government was moving so fast to dismantle one by one the little protection that they had, the few rights that they had. Labour Codes were passed in the Parliament, in the absence of the Opposition parties, without discussion. Farm Bills were passed in the Parliament suspending the MPs who demanded division. Not only were these MPs exercising their right, but they also wanted to show to the people, who stood where; MPs of which party supported these Bills, of which party stood with our farmers. But the MPs, who demanded division, were driven out and the Bills passed.

Suppression of people's voice and right to dissent

THE Government invoked the 'Disaster Management Act' to impose the lockdown for what it said 'containing Corona'. In many places, weekend curfews were imposed and continued even when the un-lockdown was well in advance. Section 144, to prevent people from gathering, continued even when shops and malls opened. Cases were filed against workers and people who came out to raise their demands. Many were sent to jail. These were in addition to all others who were booked and jailed for protesting against the attacks on Dalits, attacks on human rights, attacks on citizenship rights etc. In addition to the Disaster Management Act, the BJP government has also been using various other Acts and agencies, the UAPA, the Sedition Act, the NIA, the CBI, etc to suppress all dissent and opposition to its policies.

What is new

THIS is the situation today – the BJP government using the Covid 19 pandemic and the related lockdown to attack workers and common people from all fronts. Is such a situation entirely new? Unemployment and job losses have been there in varying degrees in different periods. That is not so unusual. Non-implementation of rights and benefits was also not unusual. Attacks on basic human and democratic rights and also on Parliamentary norms and Constitutional rights – the country had the experience of internal Emergency under the Congress regime with Indira Gandhi as Prime Minister. There have also been many examples of violations and attacks in between too. These are also not entirely new.

What is new as well as heinous is the BJP government's determination to use such health and humanitarian crisis as Covid 19 and the lockdown, ostensibly imposed to contain it, to ruthlessly take its neoliberal agenda. Modi government has taken this up as a

comprehensive project, as its attempt to protect the profits of the capitalist class in the midst of the economic crisis.

ANOTHER important point to be noted is that this response to Covid 19 and the economic crisis are not specific to the BJP government in our country alone. Most of the governments in capitalist countries, including the advanced capitalist countries, have responded to the economic crisis in the same way – by curbing the basic hard-won rights and benefits of the workers, particularly their rights to unionisation. Drastic cut in public expenditure on health, under neoliberalism, has left the people to the mercies of private corporate health care. Across the world, most of those who died due to lack of proper care, either due to Corona or other illnesses, during the pandemic, are the poor.

The capitalist crisis was there even before the Covid 19 pandemic and the related lockdown. For the capitalist class, the only way to protect their stagnant or sagging products is to shift the burden on to the working class and other sections of toiling people. The only way to maximise profits and amass their wealth is by grabbing people's wealth – natural resources, public sector including public education and public health. They see no other way but to expedite neoliberalism, which is discredited among the people across the world.

BUT, they know this would meet with stiff resistance by the workers and the people. This resistance must be suppressed. How? First, prevent people from getting united and from fighting unitedly. They can fight only when they are united. Use religious faith, caste divisions, gender, regional and ethnic differences to divert their attention from their real issues of job losses, unemployment, price rise, hunger, poverty etc. Make them believe that the majority is under threat from the minority; the so called upper castes are under threat from the Dalits. All their problems are because of the 'others'.

Construction of a temple in Ayodhya, demolition of another mosque in Mathura, regulating inter faith marriages, attempts to establish 'Hindu Rashtra' with obviously Manusmriti as the constitution, dictating not only people but also animals about what they should eat or not eat – are these going to create jobs, or provide income, eradicate hunger and malnutrition, improve health facilities or in the immediate situation, fight Covid 19? No. But for the BJP and its governments, at the Centre and in many States, these are the priorities. Simultaneously, threaten, intimidate, and attack those who insist on raising their voice. Target the victims. Label whoever persists in opposing these attacks as 'anti-national', 'urban Naxals' etc. Arrest them and put them in jail; or taunt them to go to Pakistan.

Essence of the present situation

THIS comprehensive project of neoliberalism and communalism, to promote corporate interests, both domestic and foreign, and to establish the RSS objective of 'Hindu Rashtra' – this is the essence of the present situation. This comprehensiveness of the project to save the capitalist system from growing people's anger is what is new today, under the Modi regime. Today, the BJP, the political wing of the communal fascistic RSS, is the best bet for the capitalist class to safeguard its interests.

The present situation shows the desperation of the capitalist class to go to any extent save the profit driven capitalist system; a system which has proved itself incapable of solving any of humanities basic problems, despite unprecedented resources and wealth. Unable to

find any alternative within the present system, Covid 19 and the lockdown appeared as a golden opportunity, an 'Act of God' to carry forward their agenda of maximising their profits and amassing of wealth. It is 'Now or Never' for them. That is the level of their desperation.

The drum beaters of neoliberalism are trying to depict the present situation as a 'New Normal'. They want to create the impression that 19th century slave like conditions for the workers, will be the 'normal' henceforth; our farmers being controlled by corporate agribusinesses would be the 'normal' henceforth; our country losing self reliance and sovereignty will be the 'normal' henceforth.

Growing Defiance & Resistance

BUT, the working class, the peasantry, the progressive and patriotic sections of people cannot and will not accept such cruel attempts at 'normalisation' of the present situation. Not under any circumstances.

In fact, there is another 'new' to this situation – the increasing willingness and determination of the working class, the farmers and other toiling sections to fight to protect their rights and livelihood, facing difficulties and braving oppression. The period of lockdown was a period of many unprecedented struggles. Within a month through the lockdown, lakhs of people, large numbers of them women, shouted from their rooftops and terraces demanding the government to stop lecturing and act by providing food. The seven months' lockdown witnessed the historic three days' joint strike by the coal workers, the strike by the oil workers, by the scheme workers, particularly ASHAs, by the steel workers, by the workers in many private industries. It was during this period that the solidarity and support between the two major producers of wealth of our country, the workers and the peasants, grew remarkably and visibly. Lakhs of workers and peasants joined in protests on common demands and in solidarity with each others' demands, on 9th August, on 23rd September and on 25th September this year. In highly significant developments, on behalf of the entire working class, the joint platform of trade unions supported the 26-27 November country wide protest called by All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), and the AIKSCC representing over 200 peasants' organisations extended solidarity and support to the 26th November country wide general strike called by the joint trade union platform.

This is what we need to understand about the present situation in its totality. The desperation of the ruling classes needs to be noted. At the same time the readiness of the toiling masses to fight unitedly and with determination also must be noted. Desperation can never win. Determination does. United and determined fight definitely will. The working class has to grab this situation and answer the desperate call of 'Now or Never' of the ruling classes with a determined 'Never Ever'. Preparations for this fight should start 'NOW'.

This situation calls for united actions, united defiance and united resistance by the working class, the peasants and all sections of toiling people, NOW. The working class and the leadership of the working class must keep in mind that this fight cannot be deferred, delayed, or diverted. The 26th November general strike and the 26-27 November countrywide protests by the peasantry are the beginning. The preparations by the working class for the strike as well as for the solidarity to the peasants' struggle have already started. They must be intensified 'NOW' with the understanding that these are precursors to much bigger struggles in the days to come.

CITU Working Committee Meeting

(Held online on 19-20 October, 2020)

Tasks Taken

1. Micro-level CITU Coordination Committees

Urgent initiative to be undertaken at all level to develop coordination committee of CITU unions at the lower/local/village level to carry on the campaign, agitations and struggles on local issues relating the same with the policy issues and the politics behind them. This will help to develop broadest unity of the class and toiling people.

This Coordination committee should diligently work in developing active coordination with Kisan Sabha and Agricultural Workers' Union at the lower/local/village level to strengthen the movement. Similar coordination has to be built up in industrial areas among our unions and friendly unions to broaden and strengthen the unity of the toiling class in united struggles and campaign.

2. On 26 November Workers General Strike

All out effort must be undertaken to organize the countrywide general strike on 26th November 2020 called by the united platform of trade unions to make the same more effective, visible and militant and all in united action by the working class.

The preparatory campaign for the strike must ensure the more effective implementation of the call for reaching the unreached; formation of active coordination committees at lower level, as mentioned in no 1, if seriously attempted, will help discharging this task more effectively.

The preparatory campaign for the strike should be aimed at creating ground for further heightened action following the general strike as unanimously conceived by joint platform of trade unions.

3. Solidarity with Peasants' Struggle

All India Kisan Sangharhs Samanway Samity (AIKSCC) in continuance of their ongoing struggle against draconian Farm legislations has decided to organise massive Delhi Gherao through road blockade by the farmers on the nearby states on 26-27 November 2020 and hold militant protest demonstration on the same days throughout the country.

We have to extend active support to the farmers' struggle programmes; while observing successful general strike on 26th November we should also join and support the farmers' agitations on 26th and 27th November by all possible means

4. Broadening of Anti-privatisation struggle

Anti-privatisation struggle has to be broadened further to involve the common people from all walks of lives. In certain critical and strategically important sectors in particular viz., Railways, Electricity and Healthcare, broader forums along with the consumers and affected people from all sections have to be developed by the trade union movement for effective combat and resistance.

CITU state committees have to take active initiative in this direction.

5. Conclusion of CITU's Golden Jubilee Celebration and Centenary Celebration of First National Trade Union Centre

Online meeting on the Conclusion of the Golden Jubilee Celebration of CITU and Centenary Celebration of formation of the first National Trade Union Centre on 7th November 2020 targeting participation of at least 10 per cent of our membership has to be made successful. Further details on link and technical arrangements will be sent shortly.

6. CITU Membership

Membership target decided by the 16th Conference have to be achieved; all dues of 2019 membership must reach CITU Centre by end October. Simultaneous initiative for cadre development activities must be strengthened.

7. WFTU Fund

The Call for fund for WFTU must be effectively responded at the earliest.

CITU & Federations Contribution to WFTU Fund

(As on 4 November 2020)

In response to the urgent call of World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU), to which CITU and other Left-led trade unions in India are affiliated; CITU Centre its State units and Federations immediately contributed to WFTU Fund, as on 4 November, 2020; as below.

1.	CITU All India Centre, New Delhi	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
2.	CITU Kerala State Committee	-	-	Rs.2,00,001;
3.	CITU West Bengal State Committee	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
4.	CITU Karnataka State Committee	-	-	Rs.1,00,000;
5.	CITU Tamilnadu State Committee	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
6.	CITU, Andhra Pradesh State Committee	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
7.	CITU, Telangana State Committee	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
8.	All India Federation of Anganwadi Workers & Helpers	-	-	Rs. 87,000;
9.	All India Coal Workers Federation	-	-	Rs.1,00,000;
10.	Federation of Medical Representatives' Association of India	-	-	Rs. 43,000;
11.	Petroleum & Gas Workers Federation of India	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
12.	Steel Workers Federation of India	-	-	Rs. 40,000;
13.	Steel Employees Trade Unions	-	-	Rs. 10,000;
14.	Water Transport Federation of India	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
15.	Bank Employees Federation of India	-	-	Rs. 45,000;
16.	All India State Government Employees' Federation	-	-	Rs. 43,000;
17.	Confederation of Central Government Employees	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
18.	All India Insurance Employees Association	-	-	Rs. 45,000;
19.	BSNL Employees Union	-	-	Rs.2,20,000;
20.	Construction Workers Federation of India	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
21.	Electricity Employees Federation of India	-	-	Rs. 50,000;
Total				Rs.14,33,001

Overview of International Situation

Systemic Crisis has engulfed the entire capitalist world. This is reflected in almost all economic indicators, even in the advanced industrialised countries, including in the growth rate, employment etc. *Economic Decline* was evident even before the Covid pandemic and it has worsened due to the lockdown. Most of the countries have recorded negative growth. Workers have lost jobs and earnings. Their wages and benefits have been cut down.

Imperialist Hegemony: The imperialist forces are aggressively pursuing the drive to retain their economic, political and military hegemony. International agencies like World Bank, IMF and WTO and other multilateral and bilateral combinations are being actively utilised by the imperialist powers towards this end. *US Imperialist Strategy Of 'Containment China'*: The efforts to strengthen US hegemony sharpened conflict between USA and China with the US efforts to reposition global alignments for 'Containment of China'. USA and its imperialist allies are resorting to manipulations and arm twisting to force developing countries to open their respective markets for their products as well as speculative capital destroying their indigenous productive capabilities.

Rise of Extreme Rightwing Forces: The period of continuing systemic crisis has also witnessed the rise of the extreme right wing forces in the political arena in many countries together with extremely repressive onslaughts on the rights and livelihood of working people. Simultaneously, aggressive divisive machinations are being played on the society in the name of race, religion, immigrations and many other hues with a dubious intent to divert the attention from the main issues and also to disrupt the unity of the people.

Overview of National Situation

Abnormal and Neo-normal: Today we are in an '*abnormal situation*' created by the ruling classes to serve their class interests. This is sought to be justified as the "*neo-normal*" to legitimise its criminal machinations on the economy, the governance machinery and administration and on the society. The pandemic and accompanying lockdown is being utilised by the ruling class to restructure the governance of the economy, political system and the society in a total authoritarian direction with a fascistic intent to serve the interests of the capitalist class. The developments after the announcement of lockdown clearly indicate a calculated and vicious decision of the BJP government led by Modi to utilise the lockdown, when the workers and the toiling people of the country are in severe distress, to push its anti-worker anti-people and anti-national neoliberal agenda, particularly in the matter of curbing rather eliminating the rights of the workers and their trade unions.

Stepping up CITU's Intervention

WITHIN a month since the pandemic and lockdown, CITU has taken initiative to organize collective interventions against the onslaughts on the lives and livelihood of the working people. In the midst of countrywide total lockdown, CITU's first call was on 21st April 2020 for collective *protest from doorsteps* which was well responded to across the country. 21st April programme unleashed numerous sectoral and union base initiatives of collective interventions at the ground level mostly on the issues of loss of livelihoods, hunger, non-payment of wages etc creating ground for further heightened intervention. It was decentralised initiative by lower level units. In this process, the joint platform of trade unions could be brought to regular collective actions on all the issues confronting the working class. 22nd May had been the first countrywide protests from the joint platform of trade unions. This was followed by series of agitational programmes latest being on 23rd and 25th September 2020. Notable is that, during the entire period right from the onset of stringent lockdown till now, every successive programme of collective interventions by the working class witnessed bigger mobilizations and involvement of working people, both in terms of number of locations and participation of workers.

In the Fight against COVID-19 Pandemic

Socialist Ideology that Guides Combating Covid-19

R. Karumalaiyan

Covid-19 virus and its wave of attacks globally have not only created a catastrophic pandemic situation with confirmed cases now touching 50 million; but also triggered debate on capitalism and its relevance to cope with such critical human needs.

The clash between capitalism and human basic needs, especially in healthcare, is strikingly revealed in this pandemic situation. It glaringly exposed the discrepancy between the healthcare cost and the capacity of a person of average or low income to pay for it. Measuring 'need' through the market, as the neo-liberal market fundamentalists advocate, fails in healthcare so completely that even the capitalist countries have widely recognized the principle of 'welfare state' in healthcare which is the byproduct of socialist principles.

Healthcare thus goes beyond responding just to market demand or to private interests. Instead there comes the need of building infrastructure that can respond to such emergency needs.

The socialist principles in healthcare is strikingly shown by China, where urgently needed temporary hospitals were built in Wuhan in just two weeks and planning also to maintain food supplies for the people living under quarantine. Socialist approach having the culture of cooperation makes it possible for Cuba to repeatedly extend its healthcare services, in large scale, to the peoples in other countries.

Thus the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the limitations/constraints of the governments in the capitalist countries and their healthcare system. It is more relevant to assess who has done better and their political ideologies those govern them.

After the setback to socialism in 90s and the emergence of neoliberal era, the remaining socialist countries have been facing many challenges. Nevertheless, along with these socialist countries and the countries that are committed to welfare state also did well in combating the coronavirus.

Prof.(Dr) Shah Alam Khan of the department of orthopaedics of AIIMS in New Delhi in his article analysed these contrasts and established the superiority of socialism over the capitalism in combating Covid-19.

Recent Central Committee meeting of the CPI(M) has highlighted the differences between the neo-liberal capitalism and socialism in combating Covid-19.

The LDF government of Kerala, led by the parties having socialist ideology, clearly stands out in combating Covid-19 pandemic among Indian states and in the capitalist world with strong universal public healthcare network, activists including of CITU joining the Government's efforts with people's participation.

In several other states, CITU and other Left activists, in a limited way, remained active in providing relief to the people by distributing masks, sanitiser and help in test and treatment of Covid-victims.

CITU Working Committee Meeting on Covid-19

(19-20 October 2020)

Harnessing for Healthcare Business: In most of the capitalist countries, instead of harnessing the lockdown period for addressing the problems of pandemic and protecting the people through expansion and operation of healthcare network under control of the state for public good, it is being utilised by the capitalist class to make peoples' health requirement, rather their basic survival entitlement, a profiteering business for the private health business, pharmaceuticals barons and others.

Squeezing democratic space and onslaught on the working people: In the background of lockdown restriction severely squeezing the collective democratic space for the common people, the capitalist classes through their servile governments have been desperately engineering onslaughts on the rights and livelihood of the people. Mass of the working people have been rendered job-less, income-less, shelter-less owing to prolonged lockdown and accompanying decline in economic activities.

For the corporate loot: Capitalist world are taking aggressive measures to squeeze the working people further for the benefit of the capitalist class to gain fortune even if the economy dwindles towards consistent decline. It is not without any reason that 14 billionaires in USA could augment their accumulated wealth by around 40% during the span of around 40/45 days lockdown periods when country's wealth creation had sharply plummeted to negative rate. This reflects perpetration of aggressive loot on the people and national assets in favour of those few billionaires.

Contrast in socialist countries: Only the Socialist Countries portrayed the pro-people contrast with saving the people and containing the pandemic as topmost priority besides extending helping hands to other countries as well.

LDF in Kerala Fighting Covid: Despite a hostile and discriminatory Central government, led by LDF government Kerala is the best performed State in the country in this fight against Corona. It involved and combined governmental institutions from top to bottom, class and mass organisations and people at large.

CITU in fighting Covid: In fighting Covid-19, CITU has played its due role at all level. When the virus outbreak started to spread the most unplanned lockdown was declared in India which led the massive dislocation and displacement of the migrant workers, CITU intervened across the country to help them in all terms- providing shelter, food etc.

As frontline workers directly engaged in this battle against Ccorona, besides their official duty Anganwadi and Asha workers and their unions did tremendous job in these regard. They supplied the personal protective gears like masks, gloves, hand sanitizes to the Safai Karamcharies who were engaged without these PPEs.

Similarly CITU cadres were in the fore front during pandemic in all possible ways.

Thus stark difference between the Left and Right political dispensations has clearly been established during the pandemic.

Socialism has been a handy weapon in successfully fighting COVID-19 pandemic

Countries more successful in curbing COVID-19 are welfare states, ruled by left-of-centre parties. There is a lesson here

Shah Alam Khan

A plea has been filed before the Supreme Court, seeking to remove the words “socialist” and “secular” from the Preamble of the Constitution. But despite a persistent erosion over the last couple of decades, both principles were central to the type of republic our political forefathers had imagined. With the embrace of neoliberal policies in the Nineties, socialism was pushed aside. With the ongoing pandemic, however, socialism has become relevant not only for India but also the world. As the world grapples to find a vaccine for COVID-19, a closer inspection of the backwash of the pandemic reveals that socialist ideals have turned out to be a life-saver. This needs further corroboration and evaluation.

In the neoliberal world, hardly any country can be bracketed as a purely socialist nation. Countries which provide socialised medicine are the ones which have evolved the model of what is called a welfare state — the closest cousin of yesteryear’s socialist state. The COVID-19 pandemic has exposed the vulnerability of governments, healthcare models and political ideologies. It is thus important to see which countries have done better in this pandemic both in terms of COVID-related morbidity and mortality and the political ideology which governs them.

It is no rocket science to imagine that those nations with good health infrastructure would do better during a pandemic. Having said this, the response and outcome parameters of the pandemic have not shown such simple trends. Besides healthcare management, it also involves political response and will.

The conceptualisation and application of a good public health system, which is an important component of any form of socialism, appears to have had a better outcome during the current pandemic. Capitalist systems with privatised healthcare have fared the worst, despite a good health infrastructure in terms of the availability of state-of-art healthcare technology. The US is a classic example of the latter.

In terms of good response to the ongoing pandemic, one country which stands out in the Australasia region is New Zealand. With around 1,757 cases and a low death rate of 4.56 per million cases, New Zealand has one of the best COVID-19 figures in the world. The country is at present governed by the Labour party, which has left-of-centre leanings. The total expenditure on health as a percentage of the GDP for New Zealand is around 11 per cent. For India, despite having “socialism” in its Preamble, the figure is a dismal one per cent.

Most European nations that have performed well in the current pandemic are thorough welfare states with socialist tilts or left coalitions in power. Germany had a rapid outburst of the pandemic but was able to contain deaths very quickly. Till date, Germany reported a total of 2,47,000 cases with a death rate of 108 per million cases. Germany's total expenditure on health is about 11 per cent of its GDP and this is about one per cent more than the average spent by other countries of the European Union on health. Portugal, which has had a coalition left-wing government for the last few years, has contained the pandemic well. Its democratically-planned lockdown was eased off earlier than many other European countries. It had a total of around 58,000 cases with 1,827 deaths. This was in stark contrast to next-door neighbour Spain, which was devastated by the virus causing 4,80,000 cases and 29,194 deaths. Portugal's total expenditure on health is 9.5 per cent of its GDP. Yet another European nation which has done well in tackling the pandemic is Iceland, with a total of 2,121 cases and 10 deaths. Interestingly, Icelanders voted for a majority left-wing government in the general elections in 2017.

Even among the Latin American countries, those who spend more on health have performed better than those who are prudent in spending on people-centric programmes. Argentina is a classic example. With 40,000 COVID-19 cases and 8,00 deaths, it has fared far better than most of its neighbours. The country is ruled by the Peronists, who subscribe to more leftist economic policies. Argentina's population is comparable in many respects to its neighbouring Brazil, which has a right-wing government and has been devastated by the virus, with 3.96 million cases and around 1.23 lakh deaths. Venezuela, which has been under socialist regimes for the last two decades, on the other hand, showed promising outcomes during the current pandemic. It reported 47,756 cases with only 400 deaths.

An argument against this hypothesis would be that it is difficult to compare the Indian situation with either New Zealand, Germany, Iceland or even Argentina because our population surpasses the combined population of these countries. The problem with the supporters of the market economy is that they lay all problems at the doorstep of population growth. Kerala, the best performing Indian state in the current pandemic, is also the most densely populated. Concerns of population growth have always been part of a populist agenda in which the population of the poor is the main concern. We fail to understand that the path to population stabilisation passes through the overall socio-economic development of the people, and this the COVID-19 pandemic has handsomely revealed.

To conclude, a quick glance shows that socialism is not an odd contraption ready to fall apart. Even in its most deactivated, metamorphosed, desultory form, it has been a handy weapon in successfully fighting the COVID-19 pandemic. India's quest for a socialist system may have been waylaid but socialist principles provide a semblance of hope concerning issues pertaining to peoples' health even in a country like ours.

The writer is professor, department of orthopaedics, All India Institute of Medical Sciences.

(Courtesy: Indian Express; 19 October, 2020)

From the Report of CPI(M) Central Committee Meeting

(30-31 October, 2020)

State of the Covid-19 Pandemic globally

CONFIRMED Covid cases across the world have surpassed 40 million. However, experts warned that this is only the tip of the iceberg.

USA, India and Brazil in that order continue to report the highest number of cases and deaths. Alarming, India's rate of growth of both positive cases and deaths is the highest in the world today.

Many countries like *Britain, France, Russia, Spain* etc., which are contributing highest to Europe's recorded weekly growth of nearly seven lakhs are now re-imposing various levels of lockdown.

Socialist Countries

IN stark contrast, the socialist countries have been able to contain the spread of the pandemic and restart economic activity and normal life.

Till October, *China* reported over 85,000 cases and the death of 4,634 people. Nearly 30 million party members participated actively on the frontlines to battle the pandemic. 396 party members lost their lives in the process.

Cuba lost 123 people due to the pandemic. Despite the US economic blockade on Cuba, the country has been able to contain the pandemic and save the lives of a large number of people.

In *Vietnam*, so far 139 people have lost their lives and it was able to successfully contain the second wave that surged in the country. The government of Vietnam started weekly super markets for people to shop all essential commodities for free. It has also started rice ATMs where people can take rice free of cost.

The *DPRK* continues to report zero deaths in the country, despite the recent ravage by floods and storms. The huge effort for relief and rehabilitation did not see any spread of the pandemic.

The stark contrast between neo-liberal capitalism and socialism is clearly established on this score, once again, during this period.

Vaccine

THE world's most promising coronavirus vaccine candidates need non-stop sterile refrigeration to stay potent and safe. However, it is estimated that nearly three billion of the world's 7.8 billion people live where temperature controlled storage is insufficient for an immunization campaign to bring Covid-19 under control.

While the virus strikes indiscriminately, the world's poor who are amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic are also likely to be last to recover from it. Unless overcome, this will prolong the prevalence of the pandemic even when a vaccine is developed.

New Bolivian Parliament

Over 50% Women Lawmakers

Bolivia ranks third in the world, after Rwanda and Cuba, in terms of women's representation in Parliament

Recent Elections in Bolivia have not only brought back the socialist parties to power but also more women lawmakers in both the Chamber of Representatives and the Senate.

Evo Morales' party Movement for Socialism (MAS) claimed victory in a Bolivian presidential election. This is a huge win for Bolivian democratic forces and its indigenous population, who faced heavy suppression after the right-wing interim government staged a US-backed coup last year.

According to Telesur, the MAS achieved a majority in the Senate with 21 seats, of which 10 are occupied by women.

The Citizens' Community won 11 seats, seven of them for women, while "We Believe" won four, two of them for women.

As for the Chamber of Representatives, 48.33 percent of the plurinominals are men, while 51.6 percent of the seats will be held by women. Meanwhile, Women's hegemony returns in the uninominals with 57.14 percent of the seats.

The indigenous representation will be led by women with 57.14 percent. Also, 55.56 of the supra-state representatives are women.

A significant number of elected women parliamentarians are new faces, which shows the confidence of the electorate in their female representatives.

How did this happen?

Women representation in Bolivian politics is not a new phenomenon. 2014 elections were historic as it led to 51% of women representation in the Legislative Assembly.

The approval of the Political Constitution of Bolivia (2009), concurrent laws along with an extensive and sustained mobilization of different women's movements, gave way to achieve the recognition and application of the principles of parity and alternation to strengthen more equitable participation between women and men. The election of 82 women out of 166 assembly members is the highest in Bolivian history. After 32 years of democracy, in 1982 the country went from having 2 percent of representatives in the legislature, to reach parity in the political sphere of the national legislature.

Women Representation in Politics

According to the Map of Women in Politics 2020 of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and United Nations Women, Bolivia ranks third in the world, after Rwanda and Cuba, in terms of women's representation in Parliament.

Rwanda boasts by far the best record for female representation in parliament, with nearly two-thirds of its seats currently held by women.

There are only two other countries with more women in parliament than men – Cuba (53.2%) and Bolivia (53.1%). Latin American and Caribbean nations also take a further four spots in the top 10 – Mexico (48.2%), Grenada (46.7%), Nicaragua (45.7%) and Costa Rica (45.6%).

The rest of the top 10 is rounded out by two more African nations – Namibia (46.2%) and South Africa (42.7%) – and, perhaps unsurprisingly, Sweden (46.1%), the world's first self-proclaimed “feminist” government.

The Nordic group of countries leads the way in female representation with 42.3% of seats, followed by the Americas (30.3%), the rest of Europe (26.5%), and sub-Saharan Africa (23.8%). Asia (19.7%) and the Arab states (18.7%) lag well below the global average, but it is the Pacific nations (15.5%) which have the worst record.

Female Representation matter

Quotas are a common factor in many of the electoral systems with more women as legislators and MPs. The first country in the world to introduce a gender quota by law was Argentina in 1991. Since then the legal requirement for parties to put forward a certain proportion of female candidates has become common across Latin America, and beyond. Many other countries have adopted different approaches with the same aim, either reserving seats for women (as in China, Pakistan and many Arab nations), or by political parties voluntarily adopting their own quotas (as in much of Europe).

Quotas have certainly had a dramatic impact on Rwandan politics. In the 1990s on average 18% of parliamentary seats were held by women. The constitution of 2003 mandated 30% of elected posts be held by women. By 2008 women made up more than half of Rwanda's parliament, and that proportion rose to nearly two-thirds in the 2013 election.

Over the last 20 years, huge steps have been made towards greater female representation. In 1997 women only held more than 30% of seats in Sweden, Norway, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands. Now there are 49 countries where that barrier has been broken. But since 2015 progress has stalled – and in some cases gone into reverse.

Representation of individuals from diverse sectors like farmers, women, community leaders, academics ensures the development of a more equitable society. Women's representation matters help in making rules to prevent women's oppression and gender-based violence. *(Courtesy: Gauri Lankesh News Desk; 30 October 2020)*

Struggle for Self-Reliant India

J. S. Majumdar

During Covid-19 pandemic, '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' is the new political slogan of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.

'*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' or 'Self-Reliant India' emerged out of national freedom struggle and, though dormant, remained in the anti-imperialist consciousness of the people of India. Though RSS and its political party incarnations had never participated in the national freedom struggle, Modiji realised it as a potential marketing slogan. Therefore, he repackaged his earlier '*Make in India*' project as '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' project.

The contents of Modiji's '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' development project remains the same as that of '*Make in India*' with wider spread and intensity to aggressively enforce international finance capital and the trio - IMF, World Bank, WTO - dictated neoliberal economic agenda of neocolonialism which, in contents and direction, is exactly the opposite to those of '*Self Reliant India*' which the people of India fought for.

Modiji is in a hurry with Covid pandemic coming in. NITI Aayog has been forecasting post - Covid and Trump's attack on China-in-Business - an exodus of 'Exit China' by the transnational corporates opening the opportunity to invite them in India. '*Namaste Trump*' was organised and declaration of Covid lockdown delayed and, when imposed, without preparation. Pro-corporate labour laws against labour and for corporatisation of agricultural sector, Ordinances / Executive Orders were issued and the Bills were passed in the Opposition-free Parliament.

The State governments, led by them and some others, are in competitive mode among themselves to invite this imaginary exodus of transnationals to India by amending labour laws for the labour-laws-free new industries and increasing workload and imposing exploitative working conditions on the labour in existing industries – all under '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' project.

It is, therefore, necessary to understand in historical perspective the contents and direction of '*Atmanirbhar Bharat*' or '*Self-Reliant India*' as evolved out of national freedom movement.

As national freedom movement advanced, it was realised that political freedom was not enough. There has to be economic freedom also from the imperial capital as existing under colonialism and make the country self-reliant in its economic development in Independent India. From this emerged out '*Self-Reliant India*' concept.

In pre-independent period there were some organisational initiatives to present a model of economic development for '*Self Reliant India*' after independence. One such organisational initiative was taken by the then top industrialists of the country. They presented this model which in history is known as 'Bombay Plan'.

Pillar One of Self-Reliant India: The Public Sector

Betrayal and Deprivation by British Government

Ardeshir Darabshaw Shroff, one non-official delegate in the seven-member Indian delegation in the United Nations Monetary Conference in July 1944, generally known as Bretton Woods Conference; was an upset man. In the Bretton Woods conference, IMF and World Bank were created for rebuilding severely damaged world capitalism in the World War II and for neocolonial exploitation in the ex-colonial countries in a completely changed post-War world situation. This was followed by GATT in 1948, changed to WTO in 1995 with more rigid condition for enforcing its decision over the sovereign States.

Shroff was the spokesman of a selected group of top Indian industrialists, at that time, which earlier in January 1944 adopted Bombay Plan. They were expecting Britain's huge debt amounts to be main source of funding for India's post-independence economic development.

In Bretton Woods conference, Shroff's resolution to add Britain's huge post-war debt to India in multilateral convertibility was voted down. Even the pre-conference White Plan for unblocking the convertibility was abandoned. The US-UK secret deal, UK delegation led by Keynes, now famous for his economic theory, in the background of US-UK-France alliance in Cold War to block socialist countries advancement; changed India's hope.

After a small first installment of £35 million, United Kingdom never paid back its huge debt to India. India's blocked sterling pound was £1.51 billion which is equivalent to \$83.93 billion in 2018. More than one third of this debt was from India's export earning, held back in London; and two third was for paying for imperial war and for the 2.5 million Indian soldiers fighting the war in different parts of the world, for supplying from India food, munitions, military vehicles and other equipments to the allies.

On the other side, the War, financed by taxation, increase of money supply and borrowing by the colonial government; has taken toll on the people of India which experienced galloping inflation, widespread scarcity and enormous privation. Declining purchasing power and non-availability of food grains due to British army supply, led to the death of approximately 3 million people in Bengal Famine of 1943. British government even did not allow, and prevented the US law PL 267 for UN relief and rehabilitation to provide food assistance to India; as part of US-UK secret deal. Betrayal of US-UK forced India to look for fund elsewhere.

Bombay Plan & Emergence of Public Sector

The signatories of 'Bombay Plan' titled as '*A Brief Memorandum Outlining a Plan of Economic Development for India*' in January 1944 were the top industrialists - JRD Tata, GD Birla, A. Dalal, Lal Shri Ram, Kasturbhai Lalbhai, A. D. Shroff, Purshottamdas Thakurdas and John Mathai. In March 1944, the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) endorsed the Plan at its annual meeting.

The Plan has objective to double per capita income; doubling agricultural output and five-fold industrial growth with Rs.100 billion investment (44.8% for the industry) over 15 years mainly from the funding of British debt repayment.

Key principles of the Bombay Plan was that the economy could not grow without government intervention and regulation; Indian industries requiring government protection

against foreign competition; and, as the private sector did not have sufficient fund for investment and long gestation period for actual production, establishment of critical industries as Public Sector Enterprises serving the private sector in final production for consumption.

The result was the First Five Year Plan 1950 followed by 1956 Industrial Policy Resolution, adopted by the Parliament, which proposed PSUs in all key sectors of industries. There were other considerations also; that was, for the development of capitalist economy in India, taking advantage by having technology, fund and establishment of PSEs in key sector industries on turnkey basis, without any perpetual tie-up and business interest, by the socialist countries.

Thus PSEs in key sectors and Public Sector emerged out as Pillar One of Self-Reliant India and became national assets of the people.

Betrayals

On the other side, the private sector increased profits and top industrial houses increased their huge assets since independence and new top industrial houses emerged out. Within three decades they had enough fund for demanding to hand over the PSEs to them at throwaway costs. Thus they betrayed their own Plan of 'Self-Reliant India'.

The political parties, representing them, also betrayed this promise of national independence movement. There is continuous neglect in maintenance, expanding and updating of these PSEs. Successive governments diluted and weakened the public sector and of the basic structure of the economy. Later, they started propagating that the Public Sector is 'socialist' approach of economic development.

Public Sector in India is not socialist agenda. It is in the core of 'Self Reliant India' in capitalist system. Public Sector represents State Capital. It depends on which class or classes rule the State. In Indian situation, the Public Sector was proposed by top industrialists and was the FICCI agenda. Jawaharlal Nehru called it as 'mixed economy' which does not exist in any economic theory.

International finance capital dictated neoliberal economic policy of liberalisation, privatisation and globalisation, adopted by the Government of India in early 1990s, brought further attacks on the Public Sector, on the people's property, to serve the private property holders, both domestic and transnational.

Resistance Movement by the Working Class in Defence of Public Sector

It is the working class in India, supported by other toiling sections, which is fighting and defending the Public Sector and the 'Self-Reliant India', 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' in Hindi. 19 general strikes during last 3 decades and the proposed 26 November 2020 incoming general strike and innumerable general and sectorwise resistance movement are its testimony.

Its recent testimony is in the Coal workers 3 days strike pushing the government back, repeatedly extending the dates of auctioning of coal mines for commercial purposes which the PM himself inaugurated; and in defence of Public Sector coal companies; in the Defence sector employees agitation and proposed indefinite strike from 12 October 2020 (and agreement halting temporarily the process of corporatisation of defence production); and against outsourcing; in the strikes and agitation by Transport workers; in the agitation of Electricity employees; in the strike in BPCL and agitation in Oil sector; strike of Port & Dock

workers; in the strike and agitation by Bank employees, Insurance employees, BSNL employees and others. All are for defending Public Sector as the Pillar One of the Self-Reliant India.

Modi Government's 'Atmanirbhar Bharat'

Modi government has abandoned the planned process of development, which is the core of Bombay Plan and of Self-Reliant India; leaving the entire economic development on the market forces, instead of Government's responsibility; in private hands; and inviting imperial capital through FDI routes in this stage of neo-colonialism for perpetual bondage and takeover not only of Public Sector but also of indigenous private sector industries. The message is out that in India people's assets and its natural resources like coal and oil, other minerals are for sale under Modi regime. We are also observing the naked dance of the Crony Capitalism.

Following are some steps taken by Modiji for his 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' project:

About PSEs in all strategic and vital sectors: Several PSEs are closed and are already notified for sale. Niti Aayog has prepared the list of strategic or total sale of the rest of the PSEs. This includes natural resources.

In communication sector: For privatisation of **Airways**, Air India is notified for sale and airports are being privatised; for **Roadways**, MV Act has been amended; for **Waterways**, Port & Dock laws are being changed; for **Railways**, handing over trains in private hands, corporatisation of its production units and workshops, handing over rail stations in private hands.

In Defence Sector: Corporatisation of defence production units on way for privatisation, outsourcing certain productions; Rafale Deal with private sector for Indian Air Force ignoring the Public Sector Aeronautics production unit.

In Financial Sector: LIC is being listed for disinvestment; Public Sector General Insurance companies are being merged for listing in SEBI; Public Sector Banks (PSBs) are being merged to wind up their branches and drastically cut employees strength to help private sector banks despite those reeking in revealed corruptions; PSBs are forced to serve the willful corporate defaulters by writing off their loans and also some rescheduling payments.

In Health Sector: Road for Free Universal Public Healthcare System has been completely changed by introduction of Insurance-based **PM-JAY** in 2018 for the marginalised sections and **NDHM** in 2020 for others adopting the road for private healthcare in India. Medical Council of India (MCI) has already been replaced by the **National Medical Commission** in early 2020 for corporatisation and foreign takeover of medical education and practices through FDI Route. Medicines production is being handed over to MNCs through 100% FDI in automatic route.

In Education Sector: NEP has been introduced for privatisation, commercialization and communalization drive; IITs entry and managements are being changed; central universities characters are being changed through management policy for corporatisation, communalisation and suppression of democratic norms.

Even the Government's Jobs are being outsourced and entry of private sector in strategic administrative positions.

BSNL Employees Protest against Hathras Gangrape



Chandigarh



Ludhiana, Punjab



Rewari, Haryana



Nagarcoil, Tamilnadu



Vijayawada, A.P.



Kolkata, W.B.

BSNL Working Women's Coordination Committee (BSNL WWCC), a Sub-Committee of BSNL Employees Union, held lunch hour demonstrations throughout the country on 9 October protesting against brutal gang rape and murder of a Dalit girl in Hathras. At the call of BSNLEU other employees also joined.

The call has been well responded. The protesters, while demanding stringent action on the perpetrators of the crime, also severely condemned the Yogi Adityanath government as well as the Uttar Pradesh police for the manner in which they tried to hush up the crime. They also condemned the Uttar Pradesh government and the police for suppressing voices raised against the crime by democratic forces.

(Contd/- from 28)

Celebrating 75th Anniversary of WFTU

Uttar Pradesh



Lucknow



Jaunpur

Celebrating 75th Anniversary of WFTU

3 October, 2020

Kerala



75th anniversary of WFTU was celebrated in all districts of Kerala. At CITU state committee office, its General Secretary Elamaram Kareem spoke on the relevance of WFTU in trade union movement today. Due to Covid restriction, big gathering was not organised.

Andhra Pradesh



In 7 districts, 274 CITU and AITUC functionaries and workers participated in staging demonstrations and in one hall meeting commemorating the 75 years of WFTU.

Odisha



The Day was celebrated jointly by CITU, AITUC, AIUTUC, AICCTU and AIBEA at Master Canteen Squire in the State capital Bhubaneswar raising slogan of WFTU, against imperialism and for socialism.

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