

Press Statement for Favour of Publication

The following statement was issued to the press by the joint platform of Central Trade Unions and sectoral Federations and Associations today 28th April 2021.

Trade Unions write to the Prime Minister Deplore callous attitude of government in handling covid 19 crises Calls for observing May Day Against the anti worker, anti farmer, anti people policies of the Government

The online meeting of Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and Independent Sectoral Federations held on 28th April 2021 expressed grave concern at the cruel insensitivity of the Government at the centre in addressing and combating the second wave of the Covid Pandemic. The alarming country wide surge of this second wave of Covid has thrown the lives of the people, working people in particulars in total jeopardy. The daily infection count has already crossed 3 lakhs and is estimated to grow further in the coming days. Number of daily deaths too has surged. A substantial part of deaths are preventable, being caused due to non-availability of basic infrastructure, oxygen, hospital beds and essential medicines. The CTUs and Sectoral Federations/Associations have written to the Prime Minister(The letter attached)

In the midst of such grave humanitarian crisis, the Central government ridiculously draws satisfaction over overcoming the crisis under the leadership of Narendra Modi! The Union Finance Minister has made mindless self congratulatory statement that their programme of privatisation/disinvestment is on track and in progress!

Caught unprepared, despite the warning about a second country wide wave, the Central government is now trying to blame the people, the state governments and everybody except itself for the surge of casualty with much more intensity and speed. The reprimand of EC by some High Courts has Vindicated the stand of Trade Unions having taken time to time. Now only the order has come not to organise any rally, celebration from 2nd to 15th may in the election bound states.

There is serious shortage of vaccines, testing facilities, hospital beds, ventilators, oxygen, medicines and above all trained personnel – doctors, nurses and other medical staff. The front line workers and employees are overworked and lack adequate protection. Instead of addressing these serious issues, BJP leaders including union ministers are engaged in shifting the responsibility to the state governments and indulging in blame games.

In the midst of this, the vaccine policy announced by the government puts corporate profits above the precious lives of people. *Today, it is crucial* to strictly regulate, under direct government supervision, the entire vaccination process to ensure that the entire population is vaccinated within a definite time frame. Vaccine production must be urgently scaled up; it must be imported as necessary. But the government is shamelessly succumbing to the profit hungry international drug mafia and liberalised vaccine sales. The new vaccine policy liberalises the vaccine sale by deregulating the prices through a discriminatory process that too without taking any concrete measures for augmenting availability.

States are not given the promised doses of vaccines. This has severely affected the first phase of vaccination itself. The new vaccine policy of Modi government *stipulates* that the state governments have to procure the vaccines from the open market with higher price of Rs 400/Rs 600 *per dose as announced by the two vaccine companies in India*. They will be thrown into unhealthy competition with each other and also with the private sector hospitals which are also free to procure the vaccines at Rs **600/ Rs 1200**. More such notorious announcements are expected to pour in the days to come with the Govt-corporate nexus. It is atrocious that the Serum Institute which has announced Rs 400 per dose of vaccine for the state governments and Rs 600 for private hospitals in India.

Covisheild is priced at 1.78 Euro (Rs 160) in Europe and at \$4 (Rs 300) in the US and Bangladesh, at Rs.237 in Brazil, at Rs. 226 in UK.

This pro-corporate deregulation on vaccine and other essential ingredients of pandemic management will further facilitate hoarding and black marketing which is already going on in case of essential medicines like Remdesivir and oxygen. Overwhelming majority of our people who cannot afford the huge price of the vaccine would be excluded. Policies of exclusion have now become the hallmark of the Central government.

The local and regional lockdowns and curfews being imposed in several states are creating uncertainties about the work and income among the working people, the migrant workers and workers in the unorganised sector in particular. Reminiscent of the migrant workers' march around one year back, migrant workers are again heading to their native places. None of the orders under Disaster Management Act issued so far by various authorities on curfew or scaling down of operation by industry etc had cared to concretely direct the employers to protect employment/livelihood of workers, their incomes and residences. It is again an attempt by the governments, as last year, to sacrifice the lives and livelihood of the workers and the toiling people to safeguard the interests of the employers' class.

The Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions and Federations demands the government to withdraw the new pro-corporate as well as discriminatory vaccine policy and take immediate measures to ensure 100% procurement of the vaccine, adequate supply of vaccines to the states, free of cost, utilising the PM care fund. The government, sufficiently empowered by Disaster Management Act must not abdicate its responsibility of prioritising protection of the lives of the people during this grave pandemic, over profiteering by vaccine-pharmaceutical barons.

The joint platform of Central trade unions and Federations point out that it is the public sector companies that are, as ever, coming to the rescue of the nation in this critical situation. It is the public sector steel companies that are producing and supplying oxygen; it is the Indian Railways that is transporting Oxygen to the needy states. We also remind the government that it was the public sector financial institutions in our country that have protected the country against the 2008 world crisis. The joint platform of trade unions demand that the government must immediately stop its mindless privatisation drive. We demand that immediate measures be taken to strengthen the existing public sector medicine and oxygen production units which are already playing a frontline role in producing/supplying oxygen and other necessities and establish new ones to ensure universal and comprehensive public health care.

The Joint Platform also demands that the Govt must ensure that any order issued by any authorities under Disaster Management Act imposing restrictions in movement, curfew etc must accompany strict enforceable orders to all employers and all concerned banning retrenchment, wage-cut and eviction from residences etc. It cannot be just an advisory but a stringently enforceable direction and the Disaster Management Act adequately empowers the Govt to issue such orders and enforce.

The Joint Platform calls upon the workers and toiling people to observe the forthcoming May Day, the international working class solidarity day through jointly organizing agitation in as many locations throughout the country to press for the following demands, while expressing solidarity with the working class movement going on throughout the world:

1. Ramp up vaccine production and ensure universal free vaccination within a definite time frame. Ensure free supply of oxygen in the crises as in present situation.
2. Ensure adequate hospital beds, oxygen and other medical facilities to meet the Covid surge
3. Scrap anti-people discriminatory pro-corporate Vaccine Policy
4. Strengthen public health infrastructure including recruiting the necessary health personnel
5. Any order under Disaster Management Act issued by any authority imposing restrictions in movement, curfew etc must accompany strict order on all employers and all concerned

banning retrenchment, wage-cut and eviction from residences etc and same must be strictly enforced.

6. Scrap anti-worker Labour Codes and anti-people Farm Laws and Electricity Bill
7. Stop privatization and Disinvestment
8. Cash transfer of Rs 7500 per month for all non income tax paying families
9. 10 kg free food grains per person per month for the next six months
10. Ensure non Covid patients get effective treatment in government hospitals
11. Ensure availability of protective gear, equipments etc for all health and frontline workers and those engaged in pandemic-management work including ASHAs and anganwadi employees along with comprehensive insurance coverage for them all

Covid protocols – wearing masks, maintaining physical distance etc should be strictly followed by all our leaders, cadres, activists and members to safeguard their own health and the health of their comrades, colleagues and family members.



INTUC



AITUC



HMS




CITU




AIUTUC



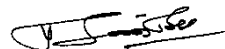
TUCC



SEWA



AICCTU



LPF



UTUC

And Sectoral Federations/Associations