

# Proletarian Era

Volume 55 No. 10 Fortnightly Organ of the SOCIALIST UNITY CENTRE OF INDIA (COMMUNIST) 8 Pages  
January 1, 2022 Founder Editor-in-Chief : COMRADE SHIBDAS GHOSH Page : 1 ■ Price : Rs. 2.00

## RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar riding on communal Hindutva to clinch electoral victory in UP and Uttarakhand

More the dates of elections to Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand Assemblies are drawing near, more the RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar are desperate to bring arch communal Hindutva narrative to the forefront. Revealing the truth, it is because the ruling dispensation is aware that not a single people's issue can be raised by them to seek vote as their performance on each front has been so dismal that aggrieved citizens in poll-bound states are

seething in anger. Harrowing price-rise, mounting unemployment, one after another closure of industries, spike in job loss, growing poverty, increasing hunger and malnutrition, acute scarcity of potable water, virtual collapse of law and order, shameless politicisation of police-administration, spiralling corruption, nepotism, rising number of custodial and encounter deaths, lynching by so called cow-vigilantes, unabated peasants' suicide, diminishing

access to education, perilous healthcare system, criminal callousness in handling corona pandemic, soaring atrocities against women, engineered fratricidal bloodbaths, domination of mafia-money power, absence of justice, vulgar inequality-these are only some of what constitute the spectacle of capitalist India, UP and Uttarakhand included. The ruling BJP, a devoted servitor of the ruling monopolists, has no

answer to all these problems as the very capitalist system is breeding all these evils, maladies and aberrations. But it needs to anyhow retain power. The ruling monopolists also find on date no suitable substitute for the BJP who could serve them best. Even efforts to rig the elections or manipulate the results using technology or any other means might prove abortive in keeping the BJP on the throne as public mood is decidedly anti-RSS, anti-BJP. The recent victory of the historic peasant movement and the failure of the BJP government to break it despite arraying its entire coercive machinery has further contributed in consolidating this

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## Government is objecting to legalization of MSP in the interest of monopolists

Forced to bend before the undaunted spirit of the struggling peasants who continued a yearlong movement braving all odds, the BJP government has repealed three Black Farm Laws and withdrawn the sinister Electricity (Amendment) Bill 2021. However, as regards legalization of Minimum Support Price (MSP) i.e. the floor price of procurement of the agricultural produce, which has also been in the charter of demands of the historic peasant movement, the government has not yet come to a decision. Instead it has promised to form a committee of all stakeholders, including farmers' representatives, ministers and government officers to discuss the issue. But already, from quarters of vested interest, some arguments are being floated against legalizing of MSP. These

arguments are also getting support from a section of the mainstream media and thereby creating confusions. Hence, it is necessary to examine the pros and cons of this demand and whether it is justified or not.

### What is MSP and what is its present status

Let it be clear at the outset that MSP is nothing new. In fact the governments, both central and of the states, have been announcing crop-specific MSP from time to time. The MSP represents a promise from the Centre that it will step in and buy these crops if their market prices fall below a certain level. In July 2018, the Cabinet Committee on Economic Affairs announced an increase in MSP for 14 crops

grown in the kharif (summer) season, including paddy, cotton, soyabean, pulses and millets at 50% more of the cost of cultivation. The government also promised the farmers MSP for 23 crops. In a press release, the Ministry of Agriculture called this a "paradigm shift" and a "historic" decision. But it was only an announcement. There was no legal guarantee. Secondly, the 50% rise was not based on full cost of cultivation. In 2006, the National Commission on Farmers led by noted agricultural scientist MS Swaminathan, recommended, among others, that MSP should be at least 1.5 times C2. What is this C2? Let us clarify. The Commission estimated the cost of production for various crops, using three definitions. The first is A2, which represents the

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## AIUTUC hails victorious movement of Jammu and Kashmir Electricity workers

In a statement issued on 21-12-21, Comrade Shankar Dasgupta, General Secretary, AIUTUC, said that the Electricity Workers of Jammu & Kashmir were all through Government employees under Power Development Department. But, of late, Jammu & Kashmir administration under direct control of central BJP government had decided to privatise the Power Sector.

Against this anti-employee and anti-people move of the Government, the Electricity Employees and Engineers of J&K started an indefinite strike from the midnight of 17 December 2021. The Jammu & Kashmir Government unleashed all sorts of repressive measures to crush the movement but in the face of stiff resistance of united movement of the Employees and Engineers, the government had to back out from its decision.

While congratulating all the Employees and Engineers of J&K Power Sector for their heroic struggle, AIUTUC urged the employees of Public Sector and Government Institutions across the country to strengthen and intensify their struggle against the ulterior move of Privatization and Disinvestment policy of the Union Government taking lesson from this victory of the united sustained struggle of the J&K Power workers.

## Kolkata Municipality Election held in a farcical manner

Comrade Subrata Gauri, Kolkata District Secretary, SUCI(C), issued a statement on 19 December 2021, saying that the Kolkata Municipality election held on date could in no way be called free and fair. The ruling TMC completely rigged it by booth capturing and muscle flexing with the state government in tow, just like what the CPI (M) used to do when it was in power and the way the BJP captured the Tripura municipality a month back. SUCI(C) is of the firm opinion that whichever parliamentary party irrespective of hue comes to power in the municipality, the basic civic problems faced by the citizens would not be solved. Remedy can only be under pressure of united organized people's movement.

### Hindutva fanaticism

## RSS-BJP have no alternative other than banking on communal polarization to retain power

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anti-RSS, anti-BJP disposition. Under the circumstances, neither the ruling class nor the party in power has any alternative other than intensifying communal-fundamentalist frenzy to the extreme with the objective of brainwashing the electorates through continuous propaganda, heightened anti-minority hate campaign and surfeit of provocative, if not inflammatory, speeches. By this, they aim at reaping twin benefits. On the one hand, this might polarise the people along communal lines and the majority Hindu vote might swing to them. On the other hand, the growing unity of oppressed toiling people, irrespective of religion, caste and ethnicity, which is crystallizing in the form of mass movements might be disrupted and the process of eruption of class and mass struggles might be spoiled. So is this swift shift of all the RSS-BJP leaders and the Sangh Parivar satraps towards exacerbating arch communal-fundamentalist jingoism. This is not to be viewed as an exclusive agenda of the RSS-BJP, but to be understood as a heinous class design of ruling capitalism. So even the vote-based parliamentary parties who stand in opposition to the BJP are also compelled to peddle soft-Hindutva in one way or the other to avoid isolation from the Hindu masses and at the same time covertly serve the bourgeois class interest with a view to be in the race for power with the blessings of the ruling monopolists.

### Dharma Sansad in Haridwar

With these ends in view, a 'Dharma Sansad' (Religious congregation) was organised at Haridwar in Uttarakhand on December 17-19. It saw an assortment of leaders from the Hindutva brigade taking the stage to set a new benchmark for brazen hate speech in the country. Sadhvi Annapurna aka Pooja Shakun Pandey, General Secretary of the Hindu Mahasabha, gave an open call to arms and incitement to genocide. Without any ambiguity, she gave a direct call for the mass murder of the Muslims. "Nothing is possible without weapons. If you want to eliminate their population then kill them. Be ready to kill and be ready to go to jail. Even if 100 of us are ready to kill 20 lakhs of them (Muslims), then we will be victorious,... I will pick up arms to

defend my Hindutva from every demon who is a threat to my religion," she added. Endorsing that, Swami Prabodhanand Giri, President of the Hindu Raksha Sena, a Sangh Parivar affiliate based out of Uttarakhand, said, "We have to make preparations... And I'll tell you what preparations those are. I will make myself clear, this is the solution, and if you follow this solution, then the path is made for you...every Hindu must pick up weapons and conduct a Safayi Abhiyan (ethnic cleansing). There is no other option left." On two occasions, Prabodhanand had shared photographs of himself with UP BJP chief minister Yogi Adityanath. "The decision of this Dharma Sansad would be a word of God and the government will have to listen to it," said Swami Anandswaroop, whose hate speeches and incitement led to violence earlier. Yati Narasimhanand, convener of the 'Dharma Sansad', who had been accused in the past of inciting violence with his incendiary speeches, declared emphatically that "...what I said in the Sansad ...is the truth of these times". Despite all these names being in public domain and their espousals not merely remaining within the precincts of hate campaign but transcending its boundaries by a direct call of armed action against the minorities, no arrests have been made so far. The police claimed that there was no FIR as there was no complaint. "The police are monitoring the situation," said Haridwar Superintendent of Police when it was pointed out that the divisive speeches were already out in the open.

### Planned violence against the Christian community

Not just the Muslims. To create a Hindutva xenophobia, the RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar are also targeting the minority Christian community. On 3 October last, over 200 armed hooligans of local Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHP), Bajrang Dal and BJP barged into a church in Roorkee, UP, vandalised the properties and mercilessly beat the churchgoers while Sunday morning prayer was going on. In another incident, wearing saffron scarves, the Bajrang Dal ruffians gathered outside a church in Matiala village, in the Dwarka area of West Delhi in November last and smashed the prayer hall structure, chanting the slogan 'shoot the rascal traitors'.

Earlier, the BJP ministers and leaders were found to parade in open anti-minority tirade to break the anti-NRC, anti-CAA Shaheen Bagh movement by fielding their armed storm-troopers to orchestrate a riot and vandalize the houses and shops of the minority people to generate terror, raising the same slogan. Earlier, by 'rascal traitors', they meant the Muslims. Now the same slogan is being used against the Christians. On the pretext of stopping 'forced conversion', an attack was led by the Saffron brigade on a missionary school in Madhya Pradesh earlier.

The latest attacks have been during the Christmas time. A group of Hindutva criminals raising slogans 'Jai Shree Ram' and 'Bharat Mata Ki Jai' forcibly entered a church in Pataudi, Gurgaon, Haryana, on the eve of Christmas and disrupted the prayers, pushed the choir members down the stage and snatched the mike. A video of the incident went viral across the social networking sites in no time. But, as usual, the Police said that they had not received any complaint. In Chandmari district of Varanasi, UP, a group of Hindutva foot-soldiers carrying saffron flags and raising 'Jai Shri Ram' and 'Church murdabad' (death to the church) slogans demonstrated outside the Matridham Ashram before a Christmas event was due to take place. In Kurukshetra, Haryana, a group of Hindutva hoodlums shouting the same slogans took over a stage at a Christmas celebration and began to play the 'Hanuman Chalisa' (A Hindu chant book) on the loudspeakers. On Christmas night, a statue of Jesus Christ in the Redeemer Church premises in Ambala Cantonment, Punjab, was torn down by two unidentified miscreants. Bajrang Dal activists were also involved in impeding the Christmas midnight mass celebrations in Silchar, Assam. Bajrang Dal and other Hindutva groups set an effigy of Santa Claus on fire in the middle of a street in Agra, UP, while shouting "Santa Claus Murdabad". Many similar incidents on the same pretext took place in Karnataka, too.

### Fanning up Hindutva fanaticism

Besides bringing down attacks on religious minorities, the RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar are also on a mission to accentuate Hindutva fanaticism. Joint General Secretary of VHP even commented that that the Ram temple movement was "bigger than the freedom struggle". "In 1947, India got its political freedom. But through the movement for the Ram Temple, we got our religious and cultural freedom. This

was an even bigger movement than the freedom struggle," a statement from the VHP quoted him saying so. The VHP which was in the forefront of the Ram Janmabhoomi movement, has also been campaigning to "reclaim" the temples in Kashi and Mathura after Ayodhya. Harnath Yadav, a BJP Rajya Sabha member, on 9 December last, raised demand for repeal of the 'Places of Worship (Special Provisions), Act 1991' underlining that the provisions of the law were "unconstitutional and violate the tenets of equality and secularism, which is part of the preamble," as if he and his party are accredited votaries of secularism. The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act of 1991, incidentally, prohibits conversion of any place of worship and provides for the maintenance of the religious character of any place of worship as it existed on 15 August 1947. Repeal of this Act would enable evasion of punitive measures for destruction of any religious shrine. There is planned saffronization of education in various ways to indoctrinate the students in Hindutva and kill their scientific bent of mind as well as rational thinking process. IIT, Kharagpur, world renowned institute of Science and Technology, has already included 'Vastu Shastra', believed to have been developed between 6000 BC and 3000 BC as a model of designing building structures, for this high-tech world. Its 'Centre of Excellence for Indian Knowledge System' has even issued a calendar, entitled 'Recovery of the Foundation of Indian Knowledge System', the Chairman of the Centre justifying it as providing evidence to disprove the myth on 'so-called' Aryan invasion and place the history on the right track, even though the international and national efforts have unambiguously and scientifically proven that Aryans had come from outside the country. The National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) has introduced a new curriculum under which ancient Indian knowledge and heritage, including Gita, Ramayana will be taught in about 100 madrassas across the country. Some of the courses will be on Veda, yoga, vocational skills, Sanskrit language, and Maheshwara sutras (aphorisms of Hindu Lord Shiva). The list is long.

And now the BJP Prime Minister himself, who had earlier floated weird theories about progress of science in ancient India citing references from myths (like elephant head of Lord Ganesha proving practice of plastic surgery) has again taken it upon himself to

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# A treatise on Cryptocurrency —the digital piracy

As known to the students of political economy, cryptocurrency means a form of government where the real leaders are hidden, or merely unknown. Taking a cue from that and riding on the advancement in digital technology, the 'fertile' brains of the shady money dealers comprising even big shots in the field of industry, business and stock market as well as underworld dons have found a new mode of financial transactions which would exist outside the control of governments and central authorities. This mode of exchange or so called digital currency is known as cryptocurrency. Cryptocurrency is a form of digital asset based on a network that is distributed across a large number of computers. This decentralized structure allows the transactions in that currency to bypass detection in the prevailing economic set up.

We know black money represents unaccounted money or in other words, undisclosed wealth which evades tax. But that black wealth is held in either paper currency or anonymous bank accounts or assets which can be converted into cash by sale or transfer. The monitoring authorities or vigilance mechanism of the existing utterly corrupt capitalist system remain either passive or indulgent onlookers to such huge accumulation of black money by the unscrupulous industrial tycoons, businessmen, bureaucrats, administrative high ups, professionals, bourgeois political leaders, smugglers and punters. Because they all fall in the category of "Caesar's wife" as they are the cogs and screws of the ruthlessly oppressive crooked capitalist system. Black money is not 'undetectable' but is abetted by the system. Internet banking or transactions using debit or credit cards—commonly termed as digital economy—also reflect in the system as valid transactions. On the contrary, the newly discovered cryptocurrency operates outside the system amidst a few digitally connected elements. Let us elaborate a bit.

### How does cryptocurrency operate

Cryptocurrencies allow for secure payments online which are denominated in terms of virtual "tokens," which are represented by ledger entries internal to the system. "Crypto" refers to the various encryption algorithms and cryptographic techniques such as elliptical curve encryption, public-private key pairs, and hashing functions, that safeguard these entries. Any investor can purchase cryptocurrency through crypto exchanges like Coinbase, Cash app, and more. (NB. Do they represent some medium or are they like digital apps?) Blockchains, which are the organizational methods for ensuring the integrity of crypto-transactional data, are an essential component of many cryptocurrencies. It is completely decentralized with no server or central authority.

Every single entity or peer who wants to use cryptocurrency needs to have a list of all transactions to check if future transactions are valid or there is an attempt to double spend. The decentralized nature of the blockchain makes

cryptocurrencies theoretically immune to the prevailing ways of government detection, control and interference. Like traditional currencies, cryptocurrencies express value in units. For instance, one can say, "I have 2.5 Bitcoin," just as one would say, "I have Rs 2.50". Because most cryptocurrencies are not regulated by national governments, they are considered alternative currencies—mediums of financial exchange that exist outside the bounds of state monetary policy. Ownership of cryptocurrency units can be proved exclusively cryptographically.

The system allows transactions to be performed in which ownership of the cryptographic units is changed. Due to their political independence and essentially impenetrable data security, cryptocurrency users enjoy benefits not available to users of traditional fiat currencies, such as the Indian rupee or US dollar, and the financial systems which those currencies support. Bitcoin has been the first cryptocurrency, followed by others such as Ethereum, Litecoin, and Cardano. It bears recall that cryptocurrency existed as a theoretical construct long before the first digital alternative currencies debuted. Cryptocurrency's technical foundations date back to the early 1980s when an American cryptographer named David Chaum invented a "blinding" algorithm that remains central to modern web-based encryption. However, cryptocurrencies were launched in 2009. (It may be worthwhile to note that the launch coincides with the present hour of intense crisis of the world capitalist system. How and why, we discuss in due course.)

### Where is cryptocurrency used

The anonymous nature of cryptocurrency transactions makes them well-suited for a host of illegal activities. However, advocates of cryptocurrency argue in favour of anonymity of by citing benefits of privacy like protection for whistle-blowers or activists living under repressive governments. Notwithstanding such deceptive advocacy, cryptocurrency, for obvious reasons, are used by the smugglers, fraudsters, money-launderers, tax evaders and those involved in illegal dealings including cross-border commerce of illegal goods particularly via the darknet. Clearly, anonymity is key to opting for such darknet transaction. It is estimated that 24 million bitcoin market participants use the cryptocurrency for illegal activities. "These users annually conduct around 26 million transactions, with a value of around \$72 billion, and collectively hold around \$8 billion worth of bitcoin," says a report. Another media report says that total investment in cryptocurrency in last two years is around \$93 billion. From 2017 to 2021, value of cryptocurrency has increased by 6,100% or 61 times whereas value of immovable properties in US has gone up by just 22%. So, a good number of affluent investors who are on the lookout for appropriate avenue to multiply money in quickest possible time is opting for cryptocurrency. Market value of cryptocurrency is mostly linked to its large core

of illegality putting a big question mark on the ethics of investing in it or any other anonymous cryptocurrency.

### Abuse of modern technology

Cryptocurrency is a glaring example of how the advancement in technology is abused for reaping illegal gains through unlawful activities just like the way, some iconoclastic discoveries of modern science were unethically commandeered to make weapons of mass destruction like atom bomb and other nuclear armaments. For example, there is no denying the fact that invention of nuclear power had been a great scientific discovery and ought to be harnessed for the development and progress of mankind. But we know that it was the US imperialists who, instead, preferred to abuse this immense nuclear power to descend upon the world a sustained period of horror and holocaust, destruction and devastation. In information technology also, hacking of others' user profiles and planting fake posts in one's internet accounts have become a common feature. Mega scale cyberattacks are also not short in number.

The latest revelation of use of spywares like Pegasus for hacking others' computers and smartphones of targeted people to snoop into their privacy and keep track of their movements as well as communications is also a proof of that. What is noteworthy is that the spyware manufactured by an Israeli company is sold only to the governments for being used as a tool to keep surveillance on select individuals and organizations and frame them on false charges by implanting spurious mails or content in their computers or smartphones. Indian government too is alleged to have procured that spyware to record and share every move of the opponents or dissenters with a spook. Cryptocurrency is also similarly insidious as it seeks to do harm to the country's economy by surreptitiously giving a slip to the tracking mechanism of bona fide financial transactions and thus distorting the system in place. Even Nobel laureate economist Joseph Stiglitz observed that digital currency is illegal as it does not have a 'socially useful function'. "Bitcoin is successful only because of its potential for circumvention, lack of oversight," he added. He even observed that "It's a bubble that's going to give a lot of people a lot of exciting times as it rides up and then goes down,"

### Dying Capitalism is promoting cryptocurrency

Yet, cryptocurrencies have found official recognition in many imperialist-capitalist countries. The US Department of Treasury which defines Bitcoin as a convertible currency with an equivalent value in real currency or one that can act as a substitute for real currency, has been issuing guidance on Bitcoin since 2013. The European Union (EU) recognizes Bitcoin and other cryptocurrencies as crypto-assets. It is not illegal to use Bitcoin within the EU. Same is the position with Japan and Australia.

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## MSP

## Government giving flawed arguments to stem MSP legalization

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actual amount farmers spend on growing a crop each season. This includes cost of agricultural inputs such as seeds, fertilisers, pesticides, and wages for agricultural workers. The second definition, A2+FL, represents the actual input costs plus the implied economic value of family members working on the farm, which offsets the wages the farmer might otherwise have paid as well as other expenses incurred by the peasants towards healthcare, education of their children, entertaining family guests etc.. The third definition is C2, which represents A2+FL and the value of capital assets, including rent and interest on the land. The MSP that the central government had announced with much fanfare was 50% above A2+FL and not C2. The peasants have been demanding fixation of MSP at 1.5 times C2. But the government is reluctant to give legal guarantee to this MSP. The government authorities would have no answer if they were asked how could the handful of industrialists be allowed to fix the price of the produced goods by taking into account the cost of entire production plus maximum profit margin? If that is viewed as legitimate, why should the peasants, who constitute around 60% of the country's population, be denied guaranteed price of their crops based on fair calculation?

Secondly, it was found that though the government verbally assured of MSP for 23 crops, it was mostly made effective for paddy, wheat and some pulses and that, too, mainly in the northern states of Haryana and Punjab. For farmers in other states, there was no certainty of government procurement at MSP. In fact, over the decades, only 6% of farmers are stated to have benefited from the existing MSP which, let it be reiterated once again, is not legally mandated but optional.

It is pertinent to mention here that one of the main reasons for monoculture farming in India's Northern states, where the focus is only on water-guzzling paddy and wheat, is also rooted in the limited implementation of MSP, as mentioned above. This has considerably depleted groundwater reserve. Farmers in Punjab and Haryana had been forced to grow paddy despite its pernicious ecological consequences because of the government assurance that it would buy their whole produce at

MSP. Had the tilt towards monoculture farming been averted and conditions created for encouragement to multi-crop farming by guaranteeing procurement at MSP, the problem of diminishing underground water could be addressed, soil health could be improved, and other pollution related issues like stubble burning (mostly associated with the paddy crop) could have been brought under control.

Moreover, the BJP government also launched in September 2018 'Pradhan Mantri Annadataay Sanrakshan Abhiyan' (PM-AASHA) – an umbrella scheme aimed at ensuring remunerative prices to the farmers for their produce. But in just the first three weeks of the season, the farmers reportedly incurred losses of Rs 1,149 crore due to PM-AASHA scheme's failure to ensure MSP. According to a report in *The Hindu*, agricultural ministry officials admitted that the scheme would make no difference to the farmers' income.

Thirdly, while calculating MSP at present, the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Produce (CACP), the government agency, is found to have left important cost-factors out, like actual input costs and the value of labour. They treated the peasants as unskilled labour and then only counted 156 working days, instead of 365. The CACP also do not factor in soil fertility losses, cost of hiring a tractor and other debt and interest costs. It is also alleged that lobbies of agri-giants like Cargill, Walmart, Metro Cash and Carry etc. are not allowing implementation of the Swaminathan report because if the peasants received a fair price, the profit margin of these agri-multinationals would dwindle.

### Arguments by ruling quarters against MSP legalization

The central government says that it already spends about Rs 2.5 lakh crore for buying crops from the peasants. If MSP is legally guaranteed, the government would have to shell out around Rs 17 lakh crores. Also if any private enterprise purchases agricultural produce at a price less than MSP, the government would have to pay the balance as subsidy. Apart from expenditure required to procure the crops, the government would have to spend a huge amount of money to create the facilities required to store the

procured grain.

However, the peasants estimate that cost would maximum be around Rs 9 lakh crore to procure every grain of the 23 crops currently under the MSP regime; and that moreover, the entire produce of the farmers does not come to the mandis (crop selling markets). Because, the farmers hold back part of their produce for their own personal consumption as well as for being used as seed and cattle feed. For instance, not more than 74% of the total wheat production enters the market for sale. It is about 90% in case of paddy. The figure varies for other crops as well. Hence, the total procurement value of all 23 crops that actually enter the market would not be not more than Rs 7 lakh crore, say the peasants. Also, it has to be kept in mind that public investment cannot be viewed as expenditure. It generates employment, raises incomes and thereby drives the economy. The industrial sector, as we all know, is turning more and more capital-intensive as against labour intensive to maximize profit by lowering cost of production. So, there is hardly any scope for absorbing people uprooted from the rural areas in industry. That is why preventing displacement of the peasants from agriculture is a necessity of the ruling class in capitalist India.

### Bogus claim that legalized MSP would entail very high expenditure from exchequer

The anti-peasant pro-corporate stand of the Modi-led BJP government is evident from just one instance. During its first term at the Centre, the government provided tax exemptions to corporate entities amounting to a whopping Rs. 4.32 lakh crore, according to Budget documents of various years. If one adds tax loss of Rs 1.46 crores in 2019-2020 and Rs 1,65,837.97 (estimated) in 20-2021 due to slash of corporate tax rate to 22%, it would be Rs 7, 32 lakh crores. Also the government is spending thousands of crores of rupees in constructing new parliament house, sky-high statues, construction of temples, renovation of Hindu pilgrimage sites, procurement of special jet planes for the Prime Minister and around Rs 44 lakhs towards salary and allowances of each of the 545 MPs per year. On the contrary, the government has slashed fertilizer subsidy by over 45% and food subsidy by more than 50% in the current fiscal. The combined net profit of the listed companies was up 57.6 per cent to Rs 5.31 lakh crore in financial year 20-21. On the other hand, more than

4 lakh peasants have committed suicide having being denied remunerative prices for their produce and enmeshed in debt trap. 83 crore Indians survive on Rs 20 per day whereas India's 100 top billionaires saw their fortunes increase by Rs 12,97,822 crore since March last year when the Covid-19 pandemic hit the country. This amount is enough to give 14 crore poorest Indians a cheque for Rs 94,045 each. In this country of gross inequality, can MSP be viewed as government sop or it is the bare minimum for saving the peasantry from devastation and destitution?

### Bugbear of rise in inflation

Another argument against the farmers' demand is that if the Union government makes MSP a legal mandate to ensure that private players or government agencies buy the crops at least at the fixed price anywhere in the country, there will be a price rise and increased inflation in general. The demand to legally guarantee MSP for all 23 crops would make whoever procures the crops, Union or state governments, bankrupt. Absurd! Then what is the role of the government in so far as regulating the functioning of the economy is concerned and in making sure that no one mints unreasonable profits, as is the case at present? Secondly, is the skyrocketing inflation in our country demand-pull (i.e. prices are rising because demand in terms of buying power of the people is more than supply) or cost-push (meaning cost of production plus maximum profit margin loaded on the rice)? where purchasing power of the people at large is falling constantly due to dipping income and soaring poverty? Let alone the aforesaid 83 crore poor, the number of Indians in the middle class - those who earn between Rs 724 to Rs 1,449 per day - shrunk by roughly 3.2 crores in the last one year. On the other hand, if the supply was less, how could there be stockpiling of unsold goods or stagnation? Why were over 40,000 tonnes of food grains damaged in FCI godowns in last 6 years? Even the International Monetary Fund's (IMF) Chief Economist admitted that India is in deep recession. A significant fall in spending and consequent drop in production generally lead to a recession. In fact, India is now in 'stagflation'-a new feature of dying capitalism which negates the classical theory of demand of supply. Now both inflation and stagnation are simultaneous features of crisis-ridden capitalist economy. Moreover, even today, the private

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## Cryptocurrency

## Digital currency outside economic system would open floodgate of illegal transactions

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While Bitcoin is welcomed by quite a number of big imperialist-capitalist countries, several less developed countries are wary of its volatility and decentralized nature. Some also perceive it as a threat to their current monetary systems while being concerned about its use to support illicit activities. Several countries have outrightly banned digital currency, while others have tried to cut off any banking and financial system support essential for its trading and use.

Why so? Why such an apparently parallel close-guarded covert mode of financial transactions that exist outside the control of governments and central authorities are reckoned by the big powers as valid dealings? Because capitalism in its decadent moribund stage has become not only reactionary and authoritarian, it is also patronizing all kinds of illegal, illegitimate and even criminal activities in every sphere the economic field included.

So alongside formulating one after another policies to fulfil the objective of profit maximization through maximum exploitation of the people, ruling monopolists and multinationals, besides dictating their subservient governments to formulate one after another anti-people economic and fiscal policies, are also constantly looking for further avenues to mint money for themselves as well as their servitors. For that, they are least bothered to distort all economic prescripts, norms and procedures propounded in the early days by the bourgeois think-tank and embrace any vile means at the cost of people's interest. Granting legitimacy to cryptocurrency is a testimony to that.

### Doublespeak of BJP-led Indian government

The same is true for the ruling Indian monopolists and their caretaker governments like the present one led by the BJP. Earlier, the BJP-led government had boasted of banning crypto-trade seemingly to deceive people. Late Arun Jaitley, erstwhile union finance minister said in December 2017 that India did not recognise cryptocurrency as legal tender. (money control 01-12-17) The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has also cautioned from time to time about the risks of dealing with Bitcoin. However, late Shri Jaitley toned down his voice within 15 days to inform the Lok Sabha that "The Department of Economic Affairs had constituted an Inter-disciplinary committee to examine the existing global regulatory and legal structures governing Bitcoin; to take stock of the present status of Bitcoin both in India and globally; suggest the frame work for regulation of Bitcoin among others etc. The committee has submitted its report which is under consideration of the Government." (ZeeBiz 02-01-18) Even the BJP Prime Minister himself commented in November last that cryptocurrencies could "spoil our youth". (BBC-12-12-21) But the mandate of the ruling monopolists and multinationals in capitalist globalization can hardly be disobeyed by their political managers

and stooges. So, in a *volte face*, the same BJP PM on 17 December last called for united efforts to shape global norms for emerging technologies like cryptocurrencies so that they are used to "empower democracy and not to undermine it." "We must also jointly shape global norms for emerging technologies like social media and cryptocurrencies, so that they are used to empower democracy, not to undermine it," PM Modi said during his virtual address at the Summit for Democracy hosted by US President Joe Biden. (Hindustan Times-19-12-21)

Earlier, the current BJP Finance Minister Nirmal Sitharaman also remarked that "Even as we are thinking about at a national level, there should simultaneously be a global mechanism through which we are constantly monitoring the movement of technology, so that whether it is your cryptocurrency, whether it is a tech-driven payment system, data privacy, whether it is ensuring that data is used ethically," (ibid) Now efforts are on to table a reworked bill on cryptocurrency in the ongoing Winter Session of Parliament after Cabinet approves it. Interestingly, the RBI which previously voiced stiff opposition to cryptocurrency is now slated "to create a facilitative framework for creation of the official digital currency to be issued by it".

Who does not know that just the other day, Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Twitter account had been hacked with a message saying India had adopted bitcoin as legal tender and would distribute it to all citizens. That means such malevolent Information Technology (IT) operations and operators are well-equipped to undertake any kind of manipulations even penetrating howsoever strong protective wall. If these IT felons gradually take over the economic system, one can guess what would be the outcome. So long, common citizens were concerned about heaps of black money generation and reckless speculation in the stock market which have been playing spoilsport in orderly economic operation and contributing to growing inequality. Now, cryptocurrency would be another source of worry. True that high-tech crypto-transactions are incomprehensible to the common citizens and there are no means either to locate such transactions either.

Exactly that is what the ruling class wants—ignorance of the masses on which they can work their stratagem of fleecing. It is the duty of the conscious section of people particularly those wedded to the task of unfolding capitalist conspiracies and overthrowing it by revolution to expose the sinister designs and vicious machinations of the ruling capitalism and its hang-ons. (But at the same time it must be recognized that the impending danger will not spare anybody, if the situation so requires).

However, it is incumbent on the SUCI(C), the revolutionary party of the proletariat founded by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, an outstanding Marxist thinker of the era, to warn people about the danger inherent in cryptocurrency.

## Common University Entrance Test (CUET) – a brazen violation of academic autonomy

The University Grants Commission (UGC) in its letter dated 26 November 2021 addressed to Vice Chancellors of all central universities advised them to "take appropriate measures for the Common Entrance Test from the academic session 2022-2023" for both undergraduate (UG) and postgraduate (PG). The letter reminded the VCs that "there is a provision of Common Entrance Test for all Universities through National Testing Agency (NTA)" in the National Educational Policy (NEP) - 2020. It also claimed that the NTA "will serve as a premier, expert, autonomous testing organization to offer high quality common aptitude test ... in the sciences, humanities, languages, arts, and vocational subjects in higher education institutions." In spite of the provision for CUET for all universities this year they have resolved to conduct for central universities only, though the facility will remain open for "willing State/Private Universities/Deemed to be Universities."

It is pertinent to mention here that conduction of entrance examination for UG and PG courses is purely an academic issue. The decision regarding modalities of conduction of that, pattern of setting question papers, process of evaluation and post-examination preparation of merit list based on which admission of students is done are statutory right of the academic bodies of the universities. Any interference on this right by any outside agency like NTA will be a blatant violation on academic autonomy. Courses and curriculum, standard of teaching, quality of students—all vary from university to university. How can there be a uniformity in this regard and how can NTA, an external agency having no knowledge of this variance in standard as well as modalities of admission in different higher Education Institutes (HEIs) be entrusted with such a crucial responsibility? Moreover, the national level competition might be tougher than the existing single campus level competition and if the students who figure into the merit list coping with the trying condition, would they run from one college or university to another for admission? Clearly, this move is to operationalize the design of the autocratic BJP government to impose centralized administrative and bureaucratic control over education, under the garb of one-nation, one-examination, and one-entrance test policy, ignoring the multi-lingual, multi-ethnic, multi-cultural features of our country and the role of the various state governments as education is in the concurrent list.

The concept of autonomy of education is a hard earned right in the governance of education which is now slated to be subverted in tune with the fascization of education prescribed in National Education Policy (NEP). It enjoins education-loving people from all parts of the county to raise a united voice of opposition against the move and build up a powerful organized movement to thwart it.

## MSP

## All-out state trading can alone protect both peasants and common people

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players and the hoarders buy crops from the peasants at virtually throwaway price and then sell those in retail market at huge profit. For example, the potato grower peasants get hardly Rs 4 to 5 for a kg while the same potato is available in retail market at around Rs 25. The Multinationals like Pepsi sell potato chips at Rs 10 per 5 gms. Do these not cause inflation? In these cases, profit greed of the businessman is key factor of pushing up inflation. But assuring MSP to peasants are for saving their life and livelihood. Can these two be viewed at par?

### Will MSP only swell the purse of a few rich peasants?

Some economists from the stable of the ruling dispensation also argue that MSP only fattens the purse of a few rich farmers. This is another distortion of truth. Yes, a lucky few manage to sell most of their produce at the government-mandated floor prices while others fail to do so. But why? Because the system deprives the peasants from selling at MSP. Earlier there was an Agricultural Produce Market Committee (APMC), a marketing board established by state governments in India with a stated objective of ensuring the peasants a safeguard from exploitation by large retailers, as well as preventing the farm to retail price spread from reaching excessively high levels. Not that this body does much to safeguard the interest of the peasants, yet this body does have some control over the licensed merchants and thus some kind of pricing mechanism, notwithstanding many a limitations, does operate to have at least a semblance of regulation.

But the government, on the pretext of protecting the interest of the small and marginal peasants by allowing them to have access to "direct and free markets and organized retailing", decided to establish private markets or yards besides APMC yards, open direct purchase centres, promote private public partnership (PPP, a euphemism for backdoor privatization) for management and development of agricultural market as well as develop contract farming arrangement. So APMC Act started being amended paving the way for private players to make foray into agriculture produce procurement sector. And within no time, the agri-giants, at the outset, began tempting

the peasants with prices higher than those of APMC yard to not only corner the produce, but also wean away the primary producers from the APMC approved merchants. To a significant extent, they have done that. Once they accomplish that fully, and render the APMC yards defunct, the APMC licensed merchants would be wiped out from the scene. That is what the government aimed at when it talked of "downsizing of distribution chain".

After that, the monopolist and multinationals have started baring their tooth and claw, calling shots and dictating the price to suck off the last drop of blood from the peasants. They are also forcing the peasants to grow crops that would earn them maximum profit in either agri-processing business or export market. In the name of contract farming, another kind of savage onslaught is unleashed. Hapless peasants have no choice but to comply.

Legalization of MSP and stringent control of the administration over compliance with the stipulations would benefit the poor peasants more. If the BJP government had seriously meant welfare of the peasants, it would have strengthened MSP-based procurement instead of dismantling it. It would have set up an adequate number of APMC mandis. India needs five times the number of APMC currently functional instead of disempowering them. It would have fixed the APMCs and tried to reduce the control of the middlemen.

### Weird logic that legalized MSP will make Indian crops uncompetitive in international market

Some pedants are giving another logic against legalization of MSP. They say that it would make Indian agricultural produce uncompetitive in international market as the government would incur more cost in procuring crops. Incredible indeed! Can international competitiveness be a factor while making a policy decision to benefit the abjectly poor peasants who somehow eking out a bare living? Secondly, what percentage of agricultural produce is exported? Hardly 10 to 15% and that too by keeping the countrymen starved. Can that be a consideration against legalization of MSP by any stretch of imagination?

### MSP would be an insurance against vagaries of demand-supply fluctuation

Those who are conversant with the reality of Indian agriculture know that the peasants begin sowing, armed with the knowledge of the previous season's demand. Even the most enlightened farmer, who keeps track of global trends, will still have to commit to a certain acreage at the point of sowing. If supply or demand trends change during the weeks needed for the crop to grow, there is nothing that the peasant can do about it. This is why supply and demand can never match in agriculture. They always confront each other with a seasonal lag. In such a situation, assured prices alone can provide security against any such vagaries of disbalance and fluctuation. Otherwise, a sudden glut can cause peasants to go bankrupt. And we know this happens every year in places where peasants are unable to access the few APMC mandis or get MSP. They are unable to pay the loans they had taken at the beginning of the season. Private lenders, microfinance agencies and banks come banging at their doors. At times, the peasants are humiliated so much and suffer from so much of despondency that they end up killing themselves.

### Remedy lies in government procurement through hassle-free system

Remedy to this problem lies in government procurement at MSP with a system that the poor peasants can have easy access to the procurement centres on due dates without intervention of any middlemen. This can never happen if private procurers and big agri-businesses are allowed to reign supreme. Even if any private house undertakes procurement, it would be bound to pay MSP. The very logic that opening up agricultural trade to private houses and abolition of MSP would enable the peasants to have a wider range of buyers to choose from and bargain better price, is a hoax. In the stage of monopoly capitalism, such 'free market' ceased to be in place. There is only a handful of big enterprises which amass fabulous wealth and virtually wipe out all small contenders by flexing money and political muscle. Monopoly seeks to establish exclusive control over the market and dictates terms. In such a situation, it is indeed frivolous to

claim that poor peasants would be able to bargain with such giants and elicit better price. Let us recall what great Lenin had said: "A monopoly, once it is formed and controls thousands of millions, inevitably penetrates into every sphere of public life, regardless of the form of government and all other details...monopoly is the exact opposite of free competition... Monopolist capitalist combines, cartels, syndicates and trusts divide among themselves, first of all, the home market, seize more or less complete possession of the industry of a country...It goes without saying that if capitalism could develop agriculture, ... if it could raise the standard of living of the masses, who are everywhere still half-starved and poverty stricken,... if capitalism did these things it would not be capitalism;" (Imperialism, The Highest Stage of Capitalism)

### Hoax of so called reform

So, it is clear that the BJP-led Indian government, as trusted caretaker of the ruling monopolists and multinationals, is weaving a ploy to open up agriculture to corporate penetration and control at the cost of the interest of the exploited peasants as well as the oppressed countrymen at large. They had to beat a retreat at the outset because of the determined resistance of the brave struggling peasants who also, from their intuition, have been able to understand that this government is working at the behest of the monopolists. The very reluctance on the part of the government to give legal guarantee to MSP is also stemming from the intention to allow the private players to dominate in procurement of agricultural produce with the government being relegated to the back. Some quarters avidly following latest capitalist wordbook are arguing that backing out from 'privatization' would impede reforms. This is another deception. Leave alone other fields, what has been the fallout of reforms in agriculture? The government earlier had liberalized the agricultural input sector i.e. production and distribution of inputs like seeds, fertilizer and pesticide and allowed the agri-giants to take that over. What has been the result? Cost of agricultural inputs has risen astronomically. Just in last May, there had been 45-60% hike in the price of various fertilizers which entailed cultivation expenses to grow by at least Rs10,000 to Rs12,000 per acre. To facilitate monopoly intrusion in fertilizer production, the government even downed shutters

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## Hindutva fanaticism

## People need to give rebuff to vendors of communalism-fundamentalism

*Contd. from page 2*

lead the raked up campaign of Hindutva fanaticism. While his henchmen are pressed for crude propaganda and direct attack on the religious minorities, he himself has started visiting the Hindu pilgrimages to sing peans in favour of Hindutva and spending thousands of crores of rupees from public exchequer to renovate those places. The pliant bourgeois media is also covering such events with much hype. It is relevant to mention that though such renovations are outwardly given a religious colour, there is an in-built commercial intent to showcase these places as tourist destinations and open up newer avenues to the corporate houses to earn fabulous profit from roaring tourism business.

Just the other day, the BJP Prime Minister inaugurated a Rs 700 crore Kashi Vishwanath Corridor in Varanasi, UP. "History has been created by reviving the socio-cultural history of this ancient city, which is vibrant with Hindu philosophy as enshrined in our religious books....Tyrants attacked this city, tried to destroy it. History is witness to Aurangzeb's atrocities, his terror. He tried to change civilisation with the sword," he said. In the way of typical of religious bigots, he then raised the chant of 'Har Har Mahadev', associated with Hindu god Shiva. "Kashi is Kashi. Kashi is imperishable....There is only one government in Kashi, the government of Mahadev who holds damru (a typical leather-made small drum-like musical instrument) in his hand", he added. Earlier, crores of rupees were spent to modernize Ayodhya. Besides Ram Temple on the site of demolished Babri Masjid, a 600 feet tall Ram statue at a cost of Rs 2,500 crores is going to be installed there. The RSS-BJP are also trying to project with elan some of the noted personalities of the so called dalit communities, building temples of the god or goddesses these backward populace worship and inaugurating those temples with "Jai Shri Ram" slogan. Even they are highlighting the chapters of the Ramayana where the so called lower caste characters were portrayed to have done something appreciable. Thus, they want to prove that the

dalits, too, are part of bigger Hindutva family.

### How are all these connected with people's interest?

The question is whether any of the aforesaid acts has any connection with people's interest? Will spewing venom against the religious minorities, bringing down murderous assault on them and vandalizing their places of worship would help, in any way, bringing down the price-line? Will "Jai Shri Ram" slogan provide jobs to the millions of retrenched workers and migrant labourers who lost their jobs before, during or after pandemic? Will decorating Kashi or Mathura solve unemployment problem? Will the proposed Ram statue eradicate appalling poverty? Will inclusion of Vastu Shastra in syllabus provide home to the homeless? Will "shoot the religious minorities" or "Santa Claus Murdabad" slogans improve the life of the distressed peasants? If "every Hindu picks up weapons and conduct an ethnic cleansing", will that remove corruption in every sphere of administration and ensure justice to all? Would a walk around Kashi corridor or a holy dip in Kumbh Mela or Ganga Sagar insulate people against pandemic and reach out proper medical treatment to the myriads of have-nots? Will reading Maheshwara sutras guarantee education to all? Will inclusion of Gita or Veda in curriculum reduce growing inequality or stop crime against women? Will hurling invectives against a Mughal emperor who ruled almost 400 years back provide justice to one and all? Will eulogizing dalit gods, installing their temples and citing references of dalit chivalry from the epics or myths improve the life standard of the misery and penury-stricken dalit people, abolish their discrimination in bourgeois society or their lynching in the hands of powerful upper caste rich and the cow vigilantes? In all the cases the answer is emphatic, NO.

### AIBEUF congratulates Bank Employees

In a statement dated 17-12-21, All India Bank Employees' Unity Forum (AIBEUF) congratulated the Bank Employees for making All India Bank Strike on 16 and 17 December 2021 against the Bank privatisation and no retrenchment and regularisation of Contract & Casual workers, a total success.

### Let not people be swayed by communal-fundamentalist rabble-rousing

These are the questions the suffering citizens of poll-bound UP, Uttarakhand should seriously ponder over. Even the oppressed millions round the country, particularly those professing Hinduism should think about these things in an unbiased manner. Let it be clear that Hindu religion and Hindutva are not the same. Just as Islam and fundamentalism of Islamic terrorist outfits are not same nor is Christianity responsible for war crimes in Vietnam and Middle East by the US imperialists. No religion preaches hatred against other beliefs, let alone giving call for bringing down murderous attacks upon believers in other religions. Religion is not to be equated with fundamentalism-communalism. When religion is abused by the power-mongers or despots to derive narrow sectarian political mileage, it is called fundamentalism. Communalism is a weapon in the hands of the fundamentalists and motivated bigots to bully others to submission. When logic ceases to weigh, the autocrats and tyrants chose the other way of wooing the masses through deception and defrauding. Should the people oppressed and repressed by ruthless capitalist exploitation and repeatedly cheated by the political agents of ruling capitalism get swayed by this communal-fundamentalist trickery and rabble-rousing of the RSS-BJP-Sangh Parivar who are no custodians of Hinduism but are liable to be prosecuted for distorting Hinduism for their self-serving agenda and aggrandizement? Or should not they take inspiration from the fighting peasants who rose above all religious and other differences and divisions to fight for their life and earn victory? Is not the time ripe to take up cudgels against these evil forces drumming communalism-fundamentalism and give them a befitting reply even in elections?

## MSP

## All vote-based parties are subservient to ruling monopolists

*Contd. from page 6*

on many units of the Fertilizer Corporation of India. Similarly prices of seeds and pesticides have also gone up substantially. Combined effect of this steep rise in the cost of agricultural inputs following entry of the private agri-giants has made the peasants back-broken. On the one hand, they are to bear the continuously rising cost of cultivation while on the other hand, they are not getting remunerative prices for their produce and more often than not forced to distress sale. This has been the endowment of much-touted agricultural reforms (read reckless corporatization or slashing of any kind of subsidies and minimum government control). So, is not the demand for legalization of MSP fully justified on each count?

### Legitimate demand of all-out state trading

It is pertinent to mention here that our Party for last six decades has been demanding all out state trading in food and all other essential items. We have been arguing that there ought not be any private house intervention in both procurement and distribution of food articles like rice, paddy, vegetables etc. The government would buy the stuff at appropriate support price from the peasants directly and then distribute those either free or at affordable price to the common people through its own distribution outlets. The entire public distribution system (PDS) or ration shops should be converted into government outlets. Then and then only unbridled price hike, hoarding, black marketing, price manipulation through stock market speculation and creating artificial scarcity in food and other essential commodities can be curbed.

But no government whether of the Congress or BJP or CPI (M) or any other party paid any heed to our suggestion. Because all of them, overtly or covertly, are working in the class interest of the ruling monopolists with a view to staying afloat in the race for power. So, as global imperialism-capitalism is now espousing for liberal opening of all sectors to private houses and progressively reducing government control over trade and commerce, Indian capitalism is also following suit. Naturally, the political parties wedded to the task of serving the ruling monopolists are avidly pursuing the path of privatization including agriculture and are averse to adopt any policy that might disturb the process. Hence, the disinclination towards legalization of MSP. But if the fighting peasants remain firm in their unity and solidarity and maintain the pressure of organized movement, the BJP government could be compelled to accept the demand of providing legal guarantee to MSP.



**AIMSS Delhi organized a convention on 16 December 2021 at Jantar Mantar against liquor policy of Delhi government and demanded complete prohibition. Many eminent personalities besides women from various places of Delhi participated in the convention. The speakers said that worst effect of alcoholism and drug abuse is on the women and hence this ought to stop immediately. Photo-Comrade Ritu Kaushik, Secretary Delhi AIMSS addressing (left) and a section of the gathering(right)**

### AIMSS on raising marriage age of girls from 18 to 21

In a statement dated 23-12-21, Comrade Chhabi Mohanty, General Secretary, AIMSS, said that in the patriarchal society of capitalist India, where atrocities on and discriminations against women are rampant, rapes, gang-rapes, honour killing, dowry deaths, domestic violence, child marriage, female foeticide and infanticide are going on unabated, the proposal of the BJP government to raise marriage age of the girls from 18 to 21 is a hoax and a cunning effort to bypass the real issues. So, it is deceptive and ridiculous.

### AIMSS protests patriarchal and misogynistic mindset of CBSE authority

In a statement dated 14 December 2021, All India Mahila Sanskritik Sangathan (AIMSS) strongly condemned the derogatory remarks made by the CBSE authority about women in its X English examination paper recently. AIMSS demanded of the central government to take immediate and appropriate action against the CBSE authority and ensure that no further repetition of such blunder takes

place in future. AIMSS has alleged that this is not a simple mistake but manifestation of the patriarchal as well as misogynistic mindset prevailing among the CBSE authority and the ruling BJP and Sangh Parivar.

AIMSS appealed to the saner section of our country to unequivocally protest against promotion of misogyny and gender inequality.

**A demonstration was organized by Kerala state SUCI(C) and AIUTUC in Kochi on 15 December 2021 against privatization of Bharat Petroleum. Among others who addressed the gathering was Comrade Jaison Joseph, Member, Central Committee, SUCI(C)**



**Demonstrations were organized by Madhya Pradesh State SUCI(C) in front of the collectorates of various districts on 13-12-21 against the decision of the BJP-led MP government to privatize water supply**

## People of Deocha Pachami, West Bengal are on the path of movement

Deocha Pachami area of Birbhum district of West Bengal, is stated to be having huge deposit of excellent quality coal underneath stretched over 3400 acres. A high quality basalt is also existing on the surface level. For long, discussions were going on to start mining of that coal by evacuating the residents of the area. It was promised by the TMC-led state government that all those to be displaced would be suitably rehabilitated and receive employment in the mining project. Those who would lose cultivable land are also supposed to receive suitable compensation.

It is pertinent to mention that those who are residing in that area are mostly peasants and workers of the nearby stone-quarries. But with the excavation date nearing, no concrete measure in regard to fulfilment of the promises seems to be in place. Given the bitter experience of the past as to how reality falls short of government declarations and petty party interests, nepotism and extreme corruption come into play, the affected people mostly poor tribals and backward communities have decided to launch a united movement to secure their legitimate demands. Our Party has taken the initiative to organize this movement.

On 29 November last, Comrade Madan Ghatak, Birbhum District Secretary, SUCI(C), led a four member deputation to the local Deputy Magistrate and pressed for meeting a 6-point demand. The deputation emphasized on concretization of rehabilitation-compensation and job guarantee after considering the opinions of environmentalists, voluntary organisations, mining experts and all other concerned before excavation starts. The 6-point demands are: 1) instead of open mouth mining, underground mining should be the basis of the project, 2) before starting work, list of persons affected should be made, 3) permanent job must be provided to at least one of each displaced family, 4) by no means coal blocks are to be handed over to private owners, 5) steps based on science be taken for afforestation and environmental preservation, 6) priority be given to the local people to recruit workers in the mining area. Comrade Madan Ghatak called upon the people of Deocha Pachami to get organised for achieving their legitimate demands drawing inspiration from the historic Nandigram-Singur movements and recent victory of year-long magnificent peasant movement.

### “Will you decide what we shall eat”, Gujarat High Court Judge asks BJP Municipality

Hearing a plea by 25 street vendors that the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation (AMC) had seized their carts following objections from councillors to the sale of non-vegetarian items, the Gujarat High Court Thursday came down heavily on the AMC.

Addressing the government counsel, the court said: “What is your problem? You don’t like non-veg food, that is your lookout. How can you decide what I eat outside? Tomorrow you will decide what I should eat outside the house. Call the corporation commissioner and ask him what he is doing. Tomorrow they will say I should not have sugarcane juice because it causes diabetes, or coffee (because it) is bad for health?... if there were hawkers selling eggs and omelette (and) overnight you decide because the party in power decides we don’t want to eat eggs, we want to stop them...you will pick them up and take them away?...why are you doing that?...Ask your corporation commissioner to remain present here...how do you dare to indiscriminately pick up people like this?”

(Indian Express 10-12-21)

### Reported corona death figure of Gujarat is half of compensation paid to bereaved families

The total number of deaths in Gujarat has so far officially been stated to be 10,098. But the BJP-led state government has given Covid compensation for 19,964 deaths. The figures were submitted in the Supreme Court on 13 December 2021. That means, the Gujarat government has so far been understating the death figure by about 10,000. Another example of how “vibrant” Gujarat is! (Source: NDTV 13-12-21)

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