

SUCI(C) calls acquittal of prime accused of Babri Masjid demolition a mockery of justice

Strongly reacting against the verdict of the CBI court acquitting all the accused involved in the demolition of the Babri Masjid, Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following statement today 1 October 2020:

The Lucknow special CBI court verdict given on 30 September 2020 acquitting all the 32 prime accused stalwarts of the saffron brigade in the case of Babri Masjid destruction has set another shameless example of ruling party-dictated judgment.

The CBI court in its eagerness to exonerate those directly involved in the criminal act of demolition of Babri Masjid has manufactured a ridiculous logic that there was no conspiracy behind the planned and organized barbarism in demolishing age-

old historic mosque by the armed hooligans assembled at the call of saffron brigade. In fact, the demolition of the mosque in broad daylight in the media-glare was seen by the whole world.

This dictated verdict is not only an open attack on truth and justice but also a planned assault on the very democratic foundation of a multi-religious country like India.

As a matter of fact, this judgment which is nothing but a travesty of justice has stunned the people of the whole country. We therefore strongly oppose this mockery of justice and urge the Supreme Court to order its immediate revision. We also call upon the people of the country to organize powerful movement throughout the country demanding its annulment.

SUCI(C) extended full support to the bandh call given by AIKSCC on 25 September against draconian anti-peasants bills

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist) issued the following statement on 18 September 2020:

We strongly condemn passing of the three draconian bills entitled — the “Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill 2020”, “Farmers produce trade and commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill”, and “the Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Fair Services Bill 2020” which were first promulgated through ordinances. This move is nothing but a heinous attack on the Indian peasants with a view to strengthening the hands of the corporate sharks, both domestic and foreign, as the new enactments would remove all pulses, cereals, oilseeds, onion and potato from the list of essential commodities, hand over the entire agricultural infrastructure including the procurement and distribution of food crops to private operators and force the peasants to enter into contractual farming with the agri-multinationals. From all these it is vivid that these draconian moves will result in eventual withdrawal of the policy of minimum support

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AIKKMS unmasked heinous motive behind the three anti-peasant bills

Ignoring the two long-standing major demands for “debt relief” and “increasing the remunerative price of crops by at least 50%” by the toiling peasants across the country as well as taking no concrete step to bring down the prices of agricultural inputs like seeds, fertilizers, pesticides and diesel (used for running shallow pumps), the BJP-led central government, taking advantage of the distressed situation due to rapid transmission of Covid 19 and the lockdown induced by it, issued three brazenly anti-peasant ordinances on 5 June and subsequently hurriedly legalized those by orchestrating passage in both houses of the parliament through voice vote. These new enactments have ensured absolute dominance of the domestic and foreign monopoly houses on the entire agricultural sector of the country which would entail total ruination of the peasants, especially small, marginal and medium peasants as also the agricultural labourers. This heinous move, that too at a time the entire country is gripped by an unprecedented pandemic and collapse of economy, only show how eager the BJP government is to serve the vested class interest of the ruthlessly oppressive monopolists caring a

fig for the poor peasants struggling day in and day out to eke out a bare living. No language is enough to condemn this sinister step.

Spectre of monopoly takeover of agriculture which has long been haunting is now made a reality. The amendment of the ‘Essential Commodities Act 1955’ has now provided a legal sanction to stock essential food articles like cereals, pulses, oilseeds, edible oils, potatoes and onions in whatever quantity desired by the hoarders. Sanction of unlimited hoarding would only trigger black-marketing and price manipulation of food items imperilling food security. The hoarders and blackmarketers, masqueraded as traders or cold-storage owners or branded agri-companies, would merrily buy the items at cheapest price from the peasants, store them in huge quantity in their godowns, create an artificial shortage in the market and then release stockpiled articles selectively to be sold to the common people at exorbitant price to reap maximum profit. Hence, galloping rise in prices of essential food items is on the anvil. The government would not intervene till the

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Countrywide protest by SUCI(C) and AIDSO, AIDYO, AIMSS against Hathras gangrape incident



New Delhi



Hyderabad



Guna, MP

Anti-peasant pro-corporate bills

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average price of food items does not rise beyond 50% in one year (for perishable commodities, it is 100%). So, it would be a free hunting ground for the corporate sharks. Along with the farmers, poor consumers will bear the maximum brunt of this rabid pro-monopolist policy. Already India is abode of 1/3rd of the hungry people in the world. Over 20 crore Indians sleep hungry every day. Over 7000 Indians die of hunger every day. Under-nutrition remains a silent emergency in India, with almost 50 percent of Indian children underweight and more than 70 percent of the women and children with serious nutritional deficiencies as anaemia. Around 84 crore Indians are reported to be surviving on less than Rs. 20 a day. So, this so called liberalization of hoarding and black-marketing would worsen the situation further.

'Farmer Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020' has abolished whatever little protection the peasants hitherto had in selling their produce at a reasonable price under the Agricultural Produce Marketing Committee (APMC) Act. Notwithstanding so called retention of government control on the existing agricultural *mandis* (rural crop procurement outlets), albeit confined within the *mandi* site only, the network of private agricultural *mandis* owned by agri-giants including agri-MNCs has been allowed to spread across the country. Outside the *mandis*, the giant agri-corporate companies can now buy agricultural produce from anywhere as per their choice. It is being argued that the new law has provided a 'Raksha Kavach' (safety net) to the peasants as they are now made 'free' from the tentacles of the middlemen and *arhtiyas* (owners of warehouses) and can sell their produce directly to any buyer anywhere. Apparently, the argument looks so good. But this is a blatant lie and a deception par excellence!. Under the slogan of 'One Nation - One Market', the corporate giants companies would now procure crops from the peasants outside the *mandis*, stated to be under government control only in paper. It is known to all aware of the agricultural procurement mechanism in the country that an utterly corrupt unholy nexus of officials-rural touts-panchayat members-ruling party leaders-warehouse owners-middlemen has hitherto been controlling the entire procurement machinery depriving the peasants of their dues in various ways and the government administration has been a mute spectator. Now, on the pretext of dismantling this system, the government is handing over the entire agriculture to the corporate and multi-national behemoths as if this would cleanse the system. But who are these agri-giants? Are they benevolent saints? What is the objective of their business other than profit maximization which is contingent upon squeezing the poor peasants and depriving them of their dues in every possible way? Moreover, they are thousand times powerful, both in terms of financial resources as well as network at command, than the *arhtiyas* and other players now ruling the roost.

Many giant domestic corporates seeking to penetrate more in the agri-sector have tie-ups

with big foreign multinationals (MNCs). These companies, either alone or in collaboration with the foreign MNCs, will now decide the quality of the crops grading those as A, B, C etc. and buy the crops at the rates of their choice. In fact, if there is any 'Raksha Kavach' in these new laws, then those are provided to these private houses in the form of unbridled right to decide both the nature of the crop to be procured as well as the price. Though the government, under pressure of movement, has announced Minimum Support Prices (MSP) for procuring the crops, it has not yet clarified if the agri-corporates are bound to pay MSP to the peasants. Just as the government schools have been systematically made non-functional and replaced by an expensive network of private schools, the same, if not worse, would be case with the agricultural market system once the stranglehold of domestic and foreign monopoly houses is firmed up by demolishing the existing agri-infrastructure. This would, in turn, affect the entire chain of food production and supply imperilling food security.

Empowered by the 'Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Fair Services Bill 2020', the corporate companies, wholesalers, big retailers, exporters and operators in the speculative 'futures, options and forward trading' in the capital market would compel the peasants to produce only those crops which would suit their business need and profit maximization objective. Under an agreement, they will provide loans, fertilizers, seeds, tools and farming techniques to the peasants in the name of undertaking 'farm services'. In return, the peasants would be under compulsion to sell their produce to those 'farm services' providers. The rate at which the crops would be procured by these private operators would be decided before sowing through an agreement. The agreement would stipulate which crop would be cultivated and for how many years. It may be one or more crops and the period of one to five years or even longer. As is evident, right from what crop to be grown to where to sell, to whom to sell and at what price to be sold—all would be dictated by the private operators. The peasants would have no say in any of these matters. In such a situation, the much hyped 'One Nation-One Market' would only remain in paper. It would be "multi-markets in multi-places under control of multi-nationals and monopoly groups. It is further stated that the agri-corporates would first recover the amount of loan and cost of other farm services from the sale proceeds. So, no one knows how much the farmers will get in their hands after hard toil. It is stated that if the crops produced by the peasants under contract are pronounced to be of not the stipulated standard by the 'expert group' of the giant agri-corporates, the peasants may not be paid 1/3rd of the agreed price. The peasants, if not satisfied with the price received, are debarred from knocking at the door of the court. That means even any legal protection of the poor peasants against any arbitrary and whimsical conduct of the agri-giants is denied. It is pertinent to recall that during the British imperialist rule in the late nineteenth century, the indigo-planter peasants of undivided Bengal

entered into such contract farming and then were so devastated as to organize a mass uprising enshrined in the history as "Revolt of the indigo planters". One is also aware how the banana planters in the Amazon belt and a host of African countries are devastated because of contract farming with the big MNCs. The BJP leaders are claiming that the peasants will have the freedom to withdraw from this agreement at any point without penalty. With such contract farming being made a rule and the leash in the hands of the corporate tycoons and giant MNCs, the small and mid-level famers owning one, one and a half to two acres of land would find themselves helpless. If anyone argues that such poor peasants and agri-corporates stand on the same footing, one is only indulging in an absurdity par excellence and deception of the highest order. The law would be in favour of the exploiters and not the exploited. So, the much-trumpeted "freedom of the peasants" by the government and the ruling BJP would seal "permanent servitude" of the peasants as is inevitable in decadent moribund capitalism.

This is the hideous underbelly of the three farm-related bills which the BJP prime minister defended as "laws framed first time in decades that would benefit the farmers". It is easily understood how precarious would now become the condition of the progressively pauperizing peasants who constitute around 70% of the Indian population. Already four lakh peasants and agricultural workers have committed suicide due to reckless plunder and oppression by the ruling monopolists and the rural kulaks. So many peasants have lost their lands, turned into agricultural labourers, migrant workers and even beggars and footpath dwellers in the cities. Rural India, as great Lenin had said about capitalism, is now an abode of horror unlimited. The only way the oppressed and repressed peasants can thwart this ruinous attack on their life and livelihood is to build up organized powerful sustained conscious movement under correct leadership. They need to imbibe the truth that their dignity is honoured only in their united struggle against the power that be. All India Kisan Khet Mazdoor Sangathan (AIKKMS) has been engaged in this work since independence. Highlighting the above points, Comrade Shankar Ghosh, General Secretary, AIKKMS, issued a statement on 20 September 2020.

Now to spearhead a united resistance movement of the peasants based on a common minimum programme against these black bills, the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), a massive platform of 250 peasant organizations, has been formed. AIKKMS is an important constituent and integral part of the AIKSCC. AIKSCC had given a call for a countrywide 'Grameen Bandh' (Rural Strike) on 25 September which was a grand success with unstinted support received from the farmers, agricultural workers and poor working people. AIKKMS is determined to build up the militant peasants' movement all over India. As a first step, it has declared 14 October as 'peasants' resistance day' against the anti-peasant bills and other anti-peasant policies of the BJP-led central government.

Two Recent Court Verdicts

JUDICIARY IN THE MIRROR OF MEDIA

Criticisms and comments of the judicial fraternity against Court verdicts and juridical process are showing no sign of abatement. There are even allegations from the jurists and a section of media commentators about flouting of judicial codes and ethics. Of late, such criticisms and comments have surfaced again centring on two recent judicial pronouncements on 'freedom of speech'—one delivered by the hon'ble Supreme Court penalizing Shri Prashant Bhushan, a senior lawyer, on a contempt of court charge for an alleged derogatory comment against a sitting judge and the other by the hon'ble Allahabad High Court asking for charges framed under National Securities Act against Dr Kafael Khan, a noted paediatrician, by the UP government to be dropped and to release him from preventive custody. These criticisms and comments against none other than judiciary do portend an ominous future for the country and raises question about functioning of parliamentary democracy. Since it is a very sensitive issue and does have a serious impact on the common citizens seeking justice through the existing judicial system, we reproduce here a compilation of various media reports on this issue in sequence and hope that democratic-minded people would seriously ponder over the matter and initiate necessary action to secure the efficacy of the justice-delivery mechanism.

Prashant Bhushan pronounced guilty of Contempt of Court

"On 14 August 2020, the Supreme Court found Prashant Bhushan guilty under the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 for two social media posts in June that, it said, had "the effect of destabilising the very foundation" of India's judiciary." (*Human Rights Watch, New York, 19-08-20*) "The scurrilous allegations, which are malicious in nature and have the tendency to scandalise the court are not expected from a person, who is a lawyer of 30 years standing. In our considered view, it cannot be said that the above tweets can be said to be a fair criticism of the functioning of the judiciary, made bona fide in the public interest," the Supreme Court said in its judgment." (*The Quint-14-08-20*) "In the first instance, the Supreme Court, in a display of self-proclaimed "magnanimity", let off Mr. Bhushan with a fine of one rupee in the contempt case.... In the alternative,

the top court ordered for a three-month imprisonment term and three years' debarment from practice. The Court chastised him for his "conduct", which, according to the Court, "reflects adumance and ego, which has no place to exist in the system of administration of justice and in noble profession, and no remorse is shown for the harm done to the institution to which he belongs". The jurisprudential contribution of this decision to the law of contempt will be studied for years to come, surely, but maybe not for the reasons that the Court intended. Hopefully, a wiser judicial and legislative community will realise one day how utterly self-defeating this law is for a healthy democracy, and eventually change the law around." (*Justice A.P. Shah, a retired Chief Justice, Delhi and Madras High Courts, and former Chairperson, Law Commission of India in "The Hindu" 07-09-20*)

"The Court generally is becoming more prickly when it comes to issues of free speech, as evidenced in the most recent Prashant Bhushan case. The court let off Prashant Bhushan with a fine of Re 1 for the contempt case against him over two tweets, but not without chastising his conduct. In the entire proceedings, one thing was clear: the court came across as an intolerant institution." [Adapted from Justice A P Shah's speech, *Supreme Court in Decline: Forgotten Freedoms and Eroded Rights, at the Justice Suresh Memorial Lecture, on September 18, 2020. (The Wire 18-09-20)*] "Many of us may have to either not say freely and frankly what we think, or we may only allude to things. That too would not be in the interest of the institution," said Advocate Sanjay Hegde. (*The Quint-14-08-20*)

"In India, contempt can be both civil and criminal under the Contempt of Courts Act, and is punishable by up to six months in prison. Criminal contempt is defined broadly as any act that "scandalises or tends to scandalise, or lowers or tends to lower the authority of, any court; or prejudices, or interferes or tends to interfere with, the due course of any judicial proceeding; or interferes or tends to interfere with, or obstructs or tends to obstruct, the administration of justice in any other manner." In the United Kingdom, the offence of "scandalising" the court was abolished in 2013 after the UK Law Commission said it was an infringement on freedom of expression. The contempt verdict

against Bhushan could signal to India's courts that any criticism of the judiciary could be subject to criminal action. The verdict prompted widespread condemnation across India." (*Human Rights Watch, New York, 19-08-20*)

"In 2010, Justice V R Krishna Iyer, in an article, addressed the question of whether people have a right to criticise the judiciary and if so, at what point does this freedom of expression degenerate into criminal contempt. He wrote that unlike the executive or legislature, whose excesses beyond the Constitution may be struck down by judiciary, the judiciary and judges may be corrected only by public criticism. Thus "only rare cases deserve contempt impeachment", he said, adding that the "best answer to abuse of judges is not frequent or ferocious contempt-sentencing but fine performance". (*The Wire-19-08-20*) "When invited to speak at a symposium on 'Approach of Judicial Reforms'...Justice Iyer's speech, *inter alia*, included the following observations: "In this country, the Jesuses are getting crucified and the Barabases are very much upheld, thanks perhaps to the judiciary" "Our whole judicial approach has a certain independence from all civilised behaviour." "In fact to speak very frankly, the Indian judiciary is non est." However, the High Court concluded that Iyer's criticism did not come within the purview of criminal contempt. "In a democratic age no institution should be beyond the reach of honest criticism. The courts are no exception. While commenting on the functioning of courts, on the working of the judicial machinery, adverse and unpalatable criticism is as likely an offer of bouquets for the excellence of its performance. The courts should not feel elated by compliments offered or be embarrassed by adverse criticisms", the court held." (*Priya Anuragini and Abdullah Nasir, assistant professors at Dr Ram Manohar Lohiya National Law University, Lucknow, in The Wire-19-08-20*) "Former Attorney General of India Soli Sorabjee told that the Supreme Court overreacted by taking action against lawyer Prashant Bhushan. "Every citizen has the right to his independent view," Sorabjee said. "I repeat, if Prashant Bhushan's allegations are found to be completely nonsensical, then punish him, but not before that...no, I don't think the Supreme Court has come out in good light in

this matter...the court has the notion that nobody can speak against us...You are not some divine institution against whom we can't speak." (*scroll.in 23-08-20*) "Asking Prashant Bhushan to serve a three-month simple prison term and be debarred for three years from legal practice, the Supreme Court has bared its dark, intolerant side." (*The Hindu Editorial 01-09-20*)

"On Tuesday, 18 August, the Bar Association of India also issued a statement, in which they too expressed their dismay about the case, and said that the "exercise of contempt jurisdiction by the Court in this manner has potential for more self-harm than the avowed purpose of safeguarding the prestige of the institution." (*The Quint-18-08-20*) "Lawyers, academics and political leaders on Friday, 14 August, criticised the Supreme Court's decision to hold activist lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt of court in its *suo motu* contempt case, calling it "alarming", a "blow to the rule of law" and anticipating a "bleak future for free speech". (*The Quint-14-08-20*) "More than 3,000 former judges, retired bureaucrats, journalists, and lawyers signed a statement calling the judgement a "disproportionate response" that would have a "chilling effect" on people expressing critical views of the judiciary. Over 1,800 lawyers signed a statement challenging the ruling and calling on the Supreme Court not to give effect to the judgment until a larger bench was able to review criminal contempt standards in open court after pandemic restrictions are lifted." (*Human Rights Watch, New York, 19-08-20*) "LAWASIA, the Law Association for Asia and the Pacific, expressed concern about the Supreme Court's decision in a statement on Tuesday, 18 August, particularly from the viewpoint of India's obligations towards free speech and freedom of expression in international law." (*The Quint 18-08-20*) "The International Commission of Jurists (ICJ) said it seemed inconsistent with the freedom of expression law guaranteed by the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights that India was a party to." (*The Hindu-01-09-20*)

Granting bail to Dr Kafael Khan as charges found not sustainable

"While ordering the release of Dr Kafael Khan, the division bench of

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Party State Secretary and 8 other activists arrested in UP

UP State Committee, SUCI(C) organized a state level demonstration on 28 September, birth anniversary day of Shaheed-e-Azam Bhagat Singh, against various anti-people policies of the BJP-led state government like the autocratic order of reviewing performance of government employees after the age of 50 or completion of 30 years of service and then force them to premature retirement, if so desired, setting up of a Special Security Forces with absolute power to arrest anybody without warrant followed by detention in custody, filling up vacancies in government service by contractual employees, the three anti-peasant bills passed by the central government as well as in demand for immediate reining on the rampant scam centred on Covid 19 tests. When a protest rally was taken out from the Party office in Pratapgarh to the office of the district collector strictly maintaining all Covid 19 protocols, 10 Party activists including Comrade Pushpendra, UP State Secretary of the Party, were arrested and cases were filed against them under section 269 (Negligent act likely to spread infection of disease dangerous to life) and 188 of IPC (Disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant). They are now released on bail. This showed the high-handed and autocratic attitude of the UP state government against peaceful democratic movements.

National Webinar on Unemployment

The All India Committee of All India Democratic Youth Organization (AIDYO) had organized a National Webinar on “Unemployment, NRA and Curtailment of Democratic Rights” on 19 September 2020. Veteran Legal luminary and former AG of Government of West Bengal Bimal Chatterjee, Senior Advocate and Veteran Activist Prashant Bhushan, Senior Advocate, Kaleeswaram Raj, Social Activist S R Hiremath and National President of AIDYO, Ramanjanappa Aldalli addressed the webinar. Dr. G. Shashi Kumar, Vice President of AIDYO moderated the proceedings of the webinar.

Addressing the audience, Mr. Bimal Chatterjee said “the central government is destroying the PSUs, privatizing Railways, curtailing jobs, has completely shirked from its shoulders the responsibility of job creation and has reduced state governments to municipalities threatening threatened the federal structure. The government continues to suppress the voice of dissent by branding every opposing voice as anti-national”.

Mr. Prashant Bhushan said that the autonomy of the institutions such as Election Commission, CAG, NHRC etc., are being systematically destroyed and a systematic attack has been launched on economic integrity and social security. The lesson from demonetisation has been forgotten and the mistake is repeated by unplanned lockdown. Regular jobs are replaced by contract jobs with meagre pay. The right of life includes the right to live with dignity and hence for the right to employment. That is being dishonoured. The surging youth movements against unemployment and other burning issues have potential to become huge national movement and we all should simultaneously raise our voice against the assault of our core values - democracy, constitution, culture.

Addressing from Kerala, Mr. Kaleeswaram Raj reiterated that the words such as Federalism, Secularism and Socialism in the preamble of Constitution have become empty words. There is a danger of too much Centralisation. The only way to deal with an unfree world is to become so absolutely free that your very existence is an act of rebellion and for this the youth have to come forward to get organized to fight injustice and change the destiny of our nation.

Anti-Corruption crusader S R Hiremath indicated that the present situation is an undeclared emergency and 20 times worse and more serious than the emergency period of Mrs. Gandhi. The BJP – NDA – Sangh Parivar nexus is nothing but a fascist regime and to fight this the rural and urban youth should come from all over the country and get trained as ‘fighting cadres’. Powerful sustained movement should be organized in demand for employment guarantee scheme and filling up of vacancies for government posts and we should stand together with Farmers’ Protest and voice against privatization.

AIDYO DELHI OBSERVES 113rd BIRTH ANNIVERSARY OF SHAHEED-E-AZAM BHAGAT SINGH WITH DUE SOLEMNITY



Make SUCI (C) candidates victorious in ensuing Bihar assembly election to strengthen voice of democratic movement

| Sl. No. | Name of Constituency | Name of Candidate |
|---------|----------------------|------------------------------|
| 1. | 71-Bihariganj | Comrade Pankaj Kumar Jaiswal |
| 2. | 83-Darbhanga | Comrade Md. Mujahid |
| 3. | 93-Kurhani | Comrade Kalikant Jha |
| 4. | 94-Muzaffarpur | Comrade Arvind Kumar |
| 5. | 95-Kanti | Comrade Lalbabu Ray |
| 6. | 97-Paroo | Comrade Nanhak Sah |
| 7. | 98-Sahebganj | Comrade Yadavlal Patel |
| 8. | 123-Hajipur | Comrade Indradev Ray |
| 9. | 124-Lalganj | Comrade Rajendra Sharma |
| 10. | 125-Vaishali | Comrade Ramnath Ray |
| 11. | 126-Mahua | Comrade Lalit Kumar Ghosh |
| 12. | 127-Rajapakar(SC) | Comrade Umesh Ram |
| 13. | 130-Patepur(SC) | Comrade SonelalPaswan |
| 14. | 146-Begusarai | Comrade Arjun Kumar |
| 15. | 149-Khagaria | Comrade Jitendra Kumar |
| 16. | 156-Bhagalpur | Comrade Ravi Kumar Singh |
| 17. | 157-Sultanganj | Comrade Naresh Das |
| 18. | 158-Nathnagar | Comrade Shyam Kishore Ram |
| 19. | 163-Belhar | Comrade Kavindra Pandit |
| 20. | 164-Tarapur | Comrade Ranjit Ram |
| 21. | 165-Munger | Comrade Devanand Mandal |
| 22. | 166-Jamalpur | Comrade Kameshwar Ranjan |
| 23. | 183-Kumhrar | Comrade Suryakar Jitendra |
| 24. | 213-Karakat | Comrade Lalbahadur Singh |
| 25. | 215-Kurtha | Comrade Rupesh Kumar |
| 26. | 216-Jehanabad | Comrade Raju Kumar |

Ramananjappa Aldalli, President of AIDYO, said that the debt of the government in last 6 year has doubled. However, the assets of big MNC and corporates like that of Ambani and Adani have increased many folds. Large plots of lands have been gifted to MNC’s apart from huge tax waivers and varieties of concessions gifted to them. NPAs in banks are mounting.

Dr.G.S.Kumar, Vice President of AIDYO, acted as the moderator. The webinar became immensely helpful intaking a firm resolve to spearhead a nationwide movement against unemployment and other pressing problems.

SUCI(C) vehemently condemns brutal rape and murder of teenage Hathras girl

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), issued the following statement on 2 October 2020 :

Within eight years of the diabolic Nirbhaya gangrape and murder case in Delhi which shook the conscience of the entire country and soon after the harrowing Unnao rape case of 2017 in which a former legislator of the ruling BJP was found to be the offender, the whole nation has now been stirred once more by another gruesome incident. A 19-year old girl belonging to the underprivileged dalit community from Hathras in Uttar Pradesh was dragged into the field, gang raped, brutally tortured, strangled, brutalised and inflicted serious cervical spine injury on 14 September by four arch criminals belonging to the “upper-caste” section infamous for repressing, harassing and persecuting the poor backward populace by flaunting their so called ‘caste supremacy’ and flexing muscle. The innocent victim had succumbed to her injury on 29 September. What is more, the state police, in an obvious bid to destroy evidence and hush up truth, deviously burnt the dead body pouring kerosene in the mid-night after locking the victim’s distraught family inside their house.

Though the BJP-led UP government, under pressure of

people’s protest, formed a Special Investigation Team (SIT) and took the alleged culprits in custody, the real intention of the BJP government did no more remain shielded when the “final diagnosis” based on forensic report of the viscera was found to have no mention of rape but only a reference to tears in the private parts. The forensic report certified the death to be due to “injury to the cervical spine by indirect blunt trauma” overruling the earlier autopsy report that confirmed “rape and strangulation. Clearly, the state government headed by a saffron-clad self-declared monk, has trampled underfoot the barest precepts of democratic conduct and bared its most inhuman and uncouth face once more to lend credence to the latest NCRB report which shows that UP has been the topper in crimes against women by recording an increase of 20% from 2016 to 2019 in such bestial offences.

While vehemently condemning such an atrocious crime with the entire administration acting as an accomplice, we call upon the countrymen to launch a powerful united movement demanding exemplary punishment of the culprits and immediate effective step to contain the growing crime against women.

Two Recent Court Verdicts

Contempt verdict against Bhushan could signal that any criticism of judiciary could be subject to criminal action

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hon’ble Allahabad High Court comprising Chief Justice Govind Mathur and Justice Saumitra Dayal Singh noted that the Aligarh district magistrate (who brought charges against Dr Khan for delivering an inflammable anti-national speech—P Era) had quoted selectively from a speech given by Khan at the Aligarh Muslim University to justify his detention. The judges noted, according to *Bar & Bench*: “We are having no hesitation in concluding that neither detention of Dr Kafeel Khan under National Security Act, 1980, nor extension of the detention are sustainable in the eye of law.” According to *LiveLaw*, the court, concluding that the order of detention is bad, adds: “The order of detention dated 13th February 2020 passed by District Magistrate, Aligarh and confirmed by the State of Uttar Pradesh is set aside. The extension of the period of detention of detenu Dr Kafeel Khan is also declared illegal. A writ in the nature of *habeas corpus* is hereby issued to release Dr Kafeel Khan, the detenu from State custody forthwith.” The order quotes the entire speech made by Khan to contextualise the comments which the prosecution says were ‘provocative’. The bench found that even, *prima facie*, Khan’s speech “does not disclose any effort to promote hatred or violence. It also nowhere threatens peace and tranquillity of the city of Aligarh. The address gives a call for national

integrity and unity among the citizens. The speech also deprecates any kind of violence.” “No doubt, some part of the phrases used in the grounds for detention are there in speech, but apparently in different context. The speaker was certainly opposing the policies of the government and while doing so certain illustrations are given by him, but that nowhere reflects the eventualities demanding detention,” the order notes. The order adds: “The speech also deprecates any kind of violence. It appears that the District Magistrate had selective reading and selective mention for few phrases from the speech ignoring its true intent. The entire speech being a subject matter of a criminal case pending against Dr Kafeel Khan, therefore, it would not be appropriate for us to make much comments on that. Our anxiety is only to assess that as to whether a reasonable man could have arrived at a conclusion as arrived by the District Magistrate, Aligarh? *Prima facie*, the speech is not such that a reasonable man could have arrived at a conclusion as the inference drawn by the District Magistrate, Aligarh.” (*The Wire 01-09-20*) “The hon’ble Allahabad High Court based its reasoning on the traditional understanding of our Constitution as a limitation on (meaning prescribed limits-P Era) the functions of the State. This means that the constitutional rights cannot be violated by the governments, irrespective of the fact which politician or political party is in power.

The court argued: “The system of governance is to promote fraternity with assurance to maintain the dignity of every individual as well as unity and integrity of the nation. The strong and valuable fabric of our nation is well designed with support of fundamental rights given in Part-III of the Constitution. These rights are golden thread in the fabric, which is further illuminated by extending protection of life and personal liberty under Article 21 of the Constitution of India.” (*Raghav Pandey in First Post 03-09-20*)

“In Khan’s case, he was charged under Section 153A of the Indian Penal Code, for which he was given bail by the CJM court in Aligarh on 10 February 2020. However, the Uttar Pradesh government did not release him. The second release order, which was issued on 13 February, was respected, but he was taken into preventive custody soon after. Such arbitrary behaviour by any government is unsustainable under any constitutional order and the system of rule of law. It goes against the Constitution as well as the judiciary. The mere wish of a state government to keep a person in detention will never be enough to divest someone of their personal liberty guaranteed under Article 21.” (*ibid*)

Comments and Criticisms on the two verdicts

“A speech of Babasaheb Ambedkar, the framer of Indian

Constitution themed around labour and parliamentary democracy clearly illustrates that with great power comes great responsibility and the Indian Constitution places onerous responsibilities on the Supreme Court. He explained: “In a parliamentary democracy there is [the] legislature to express [the] voice of the people, there is [the] executive, which is subordinate to the legislature and is bound to obey the legislature. Over and above the legislature, there is the judiciary to control both and keep them within [their] prescribed bounds.” Justice is not a cloistered virtue. However, the apex institution mandated with the task of dispensing it in the country comes across as both opaque and cloistered.” (*The Wire-19-08-20*) “Freedom of speech is a fundamental right guaranteed to every Indian citizen under Article 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, albeit subject to reasonable restrictions under Article 19(2). In *C.K. Daphtary v. O.P. Gupta* (1971), the Supreme Court held that the existing law of criminal contempt is one such reasonable restriction. That does not mean that one cannot express one’s ire against the judiciary for fear of contempt. Section 2(c) of the Contempt of Courts Act, 1971 defines criminal contempt as the publication of any matter or the doing of any other act which scandalises or lowers the authority of any court; or prejudices or interferes with the due course of

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Peasants across the country make Grameen Bharat Bandh against anti-peasant bills a total success



Two Recent Court Verdicts

Recently, Indian authorities have increasingly used criminal laws to arbitrarily arrest, prosecute and imprison scores of people in politically motivated cases

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any judicial proceeding; or obstructs the administration of justice. Does this mean that one can never voice any criticism of the judiciary? No. What the law permits you to say regarding the functioning of Indian courts forms the basis of this particular article, i.e., there is a thin line separating criticism and contempt. The Supreme Court has held that if a comment is made against the functioning of a judge, it would have to be seen whether the comment is fair or malicious. If the comment is made against the judge as an individual, the Court would consider whether the comment seeks to interfere with the judge's administration or is simply in the nature of libel or defamation. The Court would have to determine whether the statement is fair, *bona fide*, defamatory or contemptuous. A statement would not constitute criminal contempt if it is only against the judge in his or her individual capacity and not in discharge of his or her judicial function. Criminal contempt does not seek to afford protection to judges from statements which they may be exposed to as individuals. Such statements would only leave the individual liable for defamation. Statements which affect the administration of justice or functioning of courts amount to criminal contempt since public perception of the judiciary plays a vital role in the rule of law. An attack on a judge in his or her official capacity denigrates the judiciary as a whole and the law of criminal contempt would come down upon such a person unless it is a fair critique of a judgment." (*The Hindu* 19-08-20)

Allegations about high-handedness of the Executive and decline of the Judiciary

"In a democracy, sovereign power of the state rests on three pillars — legislature, executive and judiciary. Well-defined boundaries prevent encroachment by one into the area of the other. The judiciary is the trustee of democracy and fundamental rights of the people... The oath taken by every judge is inter alia of being bold and independent. The judges shall never succumb to any pressure. The public opinion reaching the judges through media

reports or the utterances of influential people shall neither force them to act nor deter them from acting... The judiciary should be extremely cautious to see that it is not unwittingly lending its shoulders for somebody else's gun to rest and fire." (*Justice R C Lahoti, former CJI in Indian Express* 02-06-20)

"Blurring lines of demarcation between the government and judiciary puts such incidents in the negative spotlight and brings it under the scanner of suspicion." (*daily O* 25-03-20) "In recent years, the Indian authorities have increasingly used criminal laws, including for counter-terrorism, sedition, and criminal defamation, against peaceful dissenters, journalists, rights activists, academics, and students. Scores of people have been arbitrarily arrested, prosecuted, and imprisoned in politically motivated cases." (*Human Rights Watch, New York, 19-08-20*) "Hearing the plea on hate speeches by BJP leaders ahead of the Delhi riots, the Supreme Court said that it is feeling "pressure" of the circumstances and cannot "handle" the pressure." (*daily O* 25-03-20)

"In their book titled, *How Democracies Die*, Steven Levitsky and Daniel Ziblatt, write of how "most democratic breakdowns have been caused not by generals and soldiers but by elected governments". They document the many instances of how "elected leaders have subverted democratic institutions" across the world. This subversion is carried out by the constitutional sanction of the ballot box, and even with approval from the legislature and the judiciary. Throughout, there is always the assurance that the democratic wheels are still turning. Levitsky and Ziblatt call the leaders who thrive in such situations "elected autocrats". Such elected autocrats weaponize institutions, to use them as political ammunition. They compel the media and the private sector into silence, and they redraft rules to suit their interests over those of their political opponents." [*Adapted from Justice A P Shah's speech, Supreme Court in Decline: Forgotten Freedoms and Eroded Rights, at the Justice Suresh Memorial Lecture, on September 18, 2020. (The Wire* 18-09-20)]

"Many columnists, leading scholars, and legal luminaries have

speculated on the marked drift of the Supreme Court away from rights-based court to an executive court. Of course, to keep such a court going, a judge who is ever ready to step up to handle politically sensitive matters, and who can be relied upon to issue decisions that are in favour of the executive, is always useful. Allegations and suspicions have been voiced from within as well with Justice Kurian Joseph suggesting that the assignment of work in the Court during Justice Dipak Misra's tenure was "remote controlled". It is very easy for an all-powerful executive that is looking to seize control over the other arms of the state, and especially an independent judiciary. There is no need to expend energy in packing the Supreme Court with pro-government judges. Finding over 30 judges who think alike would anyway be difficult, if not impossible. All that is needed is to ensure that certain "favourable" conditions exist in the Court: these include a CJI who is on your side, and a handful of other judges on the Bench who are "reliable". There is a tendency to view the threat to judicial independence in India as emerging from the executive branch, and occasionally the legislature. But when persons within the judiciary become pliable to the other branches, it is a different story altogether. Surely, this is as good a time as any for the judges of the Supreme Court to unite and seriously consider whether self-preservation trumps institutional independence, or whether they truly want to protect the judiciary from outside influence, and hold their own against an overbearing executive." (*Justice A.P. Shah in The Hindu* 07-09-20)

"Now, though, it seems that the court is turning away from decades of its own history, and is, instead, aligning with the majoritarian view unhesitatingly and without question. Two recent cases which demonstrate this clearly are *Sabarimala* and *Ayodhya*. In the migrant workers case, though, it made the unfortunate presumption that the government is the best judge of the situation. The *suo motu* recognition of the issue by the court also came too late. Instead, the High Courts came across as islands of rationality, courage and compassion in these times, asking questions about migrant

rights. Contrast this with the Supreme Court's reaction to the bizarre claim of the Solicitor General who argued that the exodus of workers was due to fake news: the court accepted this, and media houses were advised to report more responsibly. The former police officer, Julio Ribeiro, has pointed to the lack of a fair investigation in the Delhi riots, drawing similarities with the 1984 riots here. He rightly said that "riots recur in India because of the impunity accorded to one section by the political establishment of the day". Besides the various limitations of Parliament that have been revealed in recent times, it has not even met once during the COVID-19-induced lockdown, and even when it finally decided to meet, Question Hour has been scrapped.

The next characteristic contributing to the Supreme Court's decline is in the failure to perform its fundamental role as adjudicator itself. In the *Kashmir* case, it has practically abdicated its role as a court. That the judiciary is failing spectacularly to remain an independent institution is evident. That the executive is in fact responsible for this is also an open secret. How the executive is doing this is also well known. There is no need to expend energy in packing the Supreme Court with pro-government judges." [*Adapted from Justice A P Shah's speech, Supreme Court in Decline: Forgotten Freedoms and Eroded Rights, at the Justice Suresh Memorial Lecture, on September 18, 2020. (The Wire* 18-09-20)]

"We have fundamental rights tightly ensconced behind seemingly impenetrable firewalls. With a parliamentary system of government, separation of powers, and a federated division of responsibilities between the centre and states, we have a system that is the envy of many. On paper, the all-powerful executive is held accountable to the people through the legislature; and to the Constitution and the rule of law, through the judiciary; and through other institutions like the Auditor General, the Election Commission, a human rights watchdog, and anti-corruption bodies, besides entities like the press, academia, and civil society. Unfortunately, remember what I said — this is all only on paper. In India

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Two Recent Court Verdicts

All-powerful executive looking to seize control over other arms of the state, especially an independent judiciary

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today, every institution, mechanism or tool that is designed to hold the executive accountable, is being systematically destroyed. The National Human Rights Commission is dormant and appears to exist only on paper. Investigation agencies seem to be misused at the slightest opportunity. The Reserve Bank of India and the Election Commission of India appear to have been suspiciously compromised. The Central Information Commission is almost non-functional. The other authorities and institutions that could have played an important role in these times are also silent. We have heard nothing of the Lokpal.” (*ibid*)

“Universities are under attack daily, whether it is students being accused of rioting, or teachers being accused of criminal conspiracy. The idea of an unbiased mainstream fourth estate in India died its death a long time ago. Now, with moves like the media policy in Kashmir, the concept of an independent free media is also dying. And civil society is being slowly but surely strangled, through various ways. With only the executive conducting its operations, and with every other institution systematically side-lined, we are moving towards a form of elected autocracy. And indeed, as many scholars have reminded us time and again, this is how democracies die.” (*The Wire-18-08-20*)

“Parliament was always intended to function as a body that keeps the executive in check. It exercises this form of accountability on behalf of the people it represents. Tools and instruments such as questions and debates are used for this purpose. But what happens when parliament itself stops working? Besides failing to provide leadership to the people in a time of crisis, like the pandemic, it compounds the problem of representation and accountability by granting the executive a free rein to do as it pleases. Executive accountability, in these conditions, is a thing of memory, for there is no one to raise any questions about its actions.”

“Even if the executive has ensured that parliament is weakened to the point of inconsequence, one would have hoped that other entities would have stepped up to the plate and performed their duty of holding the executive accountable. Most notable amongst these, obviously, is the judiciary. We have always prided

ourselves in, and boasted of, India’s independent judiciary. Despite serious aberrations in the past, such as during the Emergency, the judiciary has always somehow managed to restore the people’s faith in the institution as one that preserves sanity in the chaotic life of the Indian democracy.”

“With parliament already so weakened, the Supreme Court would have been the next best space to discuss the Kashmir trifurcation, the constitutional validity of the Citizenship (Amendment) Act, suppression and criminalisation of protests against this law, misuse of draconian laws like sedition and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, electoral bonds, etc. Sadly, most of these are ignored or brushed aside or mysteriously kept pending for an indefinite period of time. In some cases, such as that of internet access in Kashmir, the Supreme Court has all but abdicated its role as arbiter, and handed over the matter to an executive-run committee to determine. How such a committee can take an unbiased view on a review of the actions of the executive itself makes no sense at all. Indeed, these are all matters that are not being discussed in any forum of constitutional relevance. Today, the judiciary appears once again to be failing us.” [*Adapted from Justice Shah’s speech, Supreme Court in Decline: Forgotten Freedoms and Eroded Rights, at the Justice Suresh Memorial Lecture, on September 18, 2020. (The Wire 18-09-20)*] “Today, we have a situation which was foreseen many decades ago, by former CJI Y.V. Chandrachud, when, in 1985, he observed, “There is greater threat to the independence of the judiciary from within than without” All the sermonising in the world (of the sort offered in the Bhushan judgment) will be of no consequence without any real changes in the way things work.” [*Justice A.P. Shah quoted in The Hindu 07-09-20*] “India’s Supreme Court has jettisoned its long history of protecting free speech by finding Prashant Bhushan guilty of criminal contempt for his social media posts,” said Meenakshi Ganguly, South Asia director, Human Rights Watch. “At a time when the space for peaceful dissent in India is fast shrinking, the Supreme Court is sending absolutely the wrong message about the importance of holding democratic institutions in a free society

accountable.” (*Human Rights Watch, New York, 19-08-20*) “Justice Madan B Lokur awarded ‘F’ grade to the Supreme Court, from where he retired a year and half ago, disapproving the way it handled PILs seeking judicial intervention to ameliorate the pitiable plight of migrant workers caught in the pandemic caused lockdown.” (*Times of India 01-06-20*)

“This destruction began in 2014 when the BJP government came into power. There is a temptation to compare this with the blatant destruction that the Indira Gandhi government indulged in the past, but comparisons are odious. What we are witnessing today is a force in action strategically intending to render the Indian democratic state practically comatose, with all the power entrusted with the executive.” [*Adapted from Justice A P Shah’s speech, Supreme Court in Decline: Forgotten Freedoms and Eroded Rights, at the Justice Suresh Memorial Lecture, on September 18, 2020. The Wire 18-09-20*]

“On November 28, 1987, P. Shiv Shankar, a former High Court judge, delivered a speech while he was serving as the minister of law, justice and company affairs, at the Bar Council of Hyderabad that later came under the scanner for being in contempt of the Supreme Court. Some of his observations included: “The Supreme Court composed of the element from the elite class had their uncelebrated sympathy for the haves i.e. the Zamindars (..)” And the bank magnates, the representatives of the elitist culture of this

country, ably supported by industrialists, the beneficiaries of independence, got higher compensation by the intervention of the Supreme Court in Cooper’s case. Antisocial elements i.e. FERA violators, bride burners and a whole horde of reactionaries have found their heaven in the Supreme Court.” (*The Wire-19-08-20*)

Must turn the search light inward

“Pressure on the judiciary is the last thing our democracy needs at this point in time. It is time we understood that every institution should reaffirm their places in democracy for the sake of the Constitution. The more we become dependent on one institution and ignore others, the more pressure will build, and it will end up harming us the most.” (*daily O 25-03-20*) “An observation by Supreme Court itself may be particularly pertinent in the circumstances. “It has to be admitted frankly and fairly that there has been erosion of faith in the dignity of the court and in the majesty of law and that has been caused not so much by the scandalising remarks made by politicians or ministers but the inability of the courts of law to deliver quick and substantial justice to the needy. Many today suffer from remedy less evils which courts of justice are incompetent to deal with. Justice cries in silence for long, far too long. The procedural wrangle is eroding the faith in our justice system. It is a criticism which the Judges and lawyers must make about themselves. We must turn the search light inward.” (*The Wire-19-08-20*)

SUCI(C) against draconian anti-peasant bills

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price and the present of practice of government procurement of paddy and wheat— both of which are so vital to safeguard the interest of the poor and middle peasants – and these vital rights were realized through powerful peasants’ movements. From all these draconian measures, it is becoming evidently clear that as a result of these atrocious acts, not only the interest of the peasants but also the interest of the people at large would be severely jeopardized and would entail, over a passage of time, complete ruination of the peasantry, more particularly the small and middle peasants. Already, around four lakh peasants and agricultural labourers have committed suicide. No doubt this noxious policy will push the poor peasants more towards self-destruction and self-annihilation and brighten the profit-maximization prospects of the rich peasants, rural kulaks and MNCs.

In view of this, AIKSCC, of which AIKKMS is an important constituent, has called for an All India Rural Bandh on 25 September 2020 to build up peasants’ resistance movement against these three anti-people, anti-peasant Bills. While extending full support to this Bandh call, we urge upon the people to come out and raise their united voice of protest so as to compel the government to withdraw these anti-people and anti-peasant Bills forthwith.

Lebanon — A Massive Movement against Bourgeois Corruption and Capitalist Debt Crises

A massive explosion rocked the port of Beirut, capital of Lebanon, on August 4, 2020, which killed more than 200 people, grievously injuring thousands; caused massive destruction across half the city and left more than 300,000 people without any shelter over their heads. Lebanon is a small country in the Middle East with a population of 7 million and sharing its Southern border with Israel, Syria on its North East and the Mediterranean Sea on the West. It is reported that the blast took place due to the accidental fire in a warehouse at the Beirut port where more than 2750 Mt of highly inflammable and volatile chemical Ammonium Nitrate was stored for six years in unsafe conditions. The shock waves created by the blast were so severe that the roads and buildings were damaged for miles. The people of Lebanon were already suffering from the erosion of their savings and very high inflation of daily necessities of life due to the rapid devaluation of their currency for the last one year. "The Lebanon currency has lost approximately 70% of its value since last October and the World Bank forecasting that half of its population would become poor in 2020."⁽¹⁾ The blast was like a proverbial last straw on the camelback. Lebanon's ruling classes, its political establishment, and administration are infamous for callousness, corruption, and total neglect of their responsibility to its citizens. The whole country after the blast exploded in anger and came on the streets. Despite severe repression and the barbarous use of force by the army and security forces on the peaceful protesters, the government was forced to resign.

Discontent in Lebanon was brewing for years. People were exhausted from rising prices of food and fuel, poverty, unemployment, prolonged power failures, and corruption and inefficiency in the government. Since the beginning of the last year, the banking and financial system built after the end of sectarian civil war in 1990 started crumbling. The whole system was structured around the pegging of the local currency to the dollar at a fixed exchange rate and free convertibility of local currency. Very high-interest rates that were being paid to attract the dollar deposits enriching a handful of rich investors could no longer be sustained and the country started defaulting on the payment of its Eurobonds. Since the

country depends upon import even for basic food items, the de facto devaluation of local currency pushed up the prices of daily necessities of life. Dependent upon an ever-increasing debt for its sustenance, a situation reached when 50% of the government revenues were spent on servicing the accumulated debt only.

Without touching the rich, the Lebanon government attempted to shift the burden of financial crises on the shoulders of the masses. In October 2019 it increased taxes on petrol and imposed a new tax on VOP (WhatsApp calls). Hundreds of thousands of people from all religions and walks of life came on the streets of Beirut against these new taxes. This was the first time in decades that the people put aside their sectarian and religious differences and came together to fight against the unjust economic and political system. The protests soon spread all over Lebanon against the government, Central Bank, the political parties, and the political system as a whole. Then Prime Minister Saad Hariri was forced to step down. In June 2020 again the people came on the streets against the mishandling of Covid pandemic and the financial crises, under the slogan "Great Day of Rage". The protestors pelted rocks and stones on the army and threw Molotov cocktails at the central bank building. The anger of people was directed against the political class as a whole whom the people consider responsible for their woes. "Widespread street protests started a year ago. Chanting slogans like "The people want the fall of the regime" and "All means all," protesters called for the removal of the entire political class."⁽²⁾

The country of just 7 million populations had an accumulated total public debt of USD 90 billion including national and foreign debt, which ballooned to 170% of its GDP. Lebanon is heavily dependent upon imports to serve its basic needs. It imports 95% of its needs of medicines, 80% of its requirement of food including wheat, and 90% requirement of oil for transport, production of electricity, and other energy needs. Its exports in 2018 stood at USD 3.6 billion whereas it imported goods worth USD 21 billion in the same period. A cursory glance at the Current Account Deficit figures from 2002 – 2018 show that Lebanon had always the problem of current account deficit which stood almost constant at 26%

of GDP.⁽³⁾ The foreign debt, capital inflows, and deposits in commercial banks of rich Lebanese living abroad were the main sources to overcome the balance of payment crises. Successive governments over the years have borrowed heavily from domestic and foreign lenders. After payment of instalments, interest, and salaries to the government servants, very little was left to spend on the public health, education, and maintenance of public infrastructure. Its external debt was USD 34.6 billion in May 2020. Being such a small country, it was next to impossible for it to service such a large debt. It started defaulting since 2019 on payment of bonds it sold to the foreign lenders. Over and above, the Covid-19 lockdown resulted in rapid loss of earnings and savings of poor and middle classes and condemned them to live in destitution and extreme poverty. Starvation is forcing people to sell their meagre belongings to purchase bread.

The Lebanon debt crises is an eye-opener for the poor people the world over that how financial manipulation and collusion of banks, financial, and the State institutions can defraud and rob the citizens of their hard-earned money and transfer the wealth from the poor and middle class to few elites. Unlike India and many other developing countries, the local currency of Lebanon, Lira, is fully convertible at a fixed rate. Any private citizen can keep with and take out his money from the banks in USD or in local currency. 75% of bank deposits in Lebanon are in US dollars. Since 2014, Lebanon, Syria, and Iran were facing the severe onslaught of the US sanctions that vastly affected the flow of incoming dollar deposits. To overcome the shortages the Central Bank of Lebanon since 2016 indulged in financial engineering which was just like a giant Ponzi scheme wherein you roll over the existing debts by paying from the new debts. To maintain the inflow of dollars at the ever-increasing amount, the Central Bank paid a higher and still higher rate of interest to the new debts and bank deposits. Commercial banks which are mostly owned by the politicians and the rich depositors made a great killing. The Central Bank encouraged the commercial banks to borrow dollars at higher than the market interest rate, deposit the same with the Central Bank in the

local currency at the fixed exchange rate at a still higher interest rate and make profits. The interest spread was as high as 11%.⁽⁴⁾

In 2017 and 2018 commercial banks issued USD 10.2 billion Euro bonds to keep the inflows higher than outflows- the basic conditions for operating a Ponzi scheme. It started defaulting on payment of instalments in May 2020. The Lebanese elites and bankers knew that the day of reckoning was drawing near. Before others could sense, the ruling elites transferred their huge bank deposits to their foreign accounts hastening the collapse of the complete financial and banking system. The subsequent imposition of capital controls and restrictions on withdrawals of dollars from the banks hurt the common people and the small businesses badly. Alain Bifani who resigned as director-general of public finance told the Financial Times in an interview that the Lebanon bankers, politicians, and rich people transferred around USD 6 billion to their foreign banks without allowing the ordinary people to draw even 100 dollars from their accounts. "Ordinary Lebanese are to pay a terrible price."⁽⁵⁾

Other than the factors stated above, the destabilizing game played in Syria by the US and its allies and sanctions imposed upon Syria and Iran contributed to hastening the crises. One would remember that in 2006 Israel forces abetted and supported by the US attacked Lebanon from the South with its expansionist aim of driving Palestinian refugees out of Lebanon and occupy its lands. South Lebanon has a large population of homeless Palestinians who have been driven out of their land by Israel. Hezbollah, an anti-imperialist organization fought valiantly and drove Israel out of Lebanon in 33 days war. Israel armed forces that defeated combined armies of many Arab states in the 1967 war and occupied their territories, faced a crushing and insulting defeat at the hands of an armed militia force of Hezbollah supported by the local population. Hezbollah since then has attracted the wrath and sanctions from the US as it is the only force in the otherwise imperialist and Zionist friendly Arab world that demonstrated its power to rein in the expansionist plans of Israel. "Sanctions against Hezbollah and

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Lebanon debt crises is an eye-opener as to what extent financial manipulation at state level can defraud and rob the citizens

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Syr-ia have been around in one form or another for decades, but the Trump admin-is-tra-tion has tak-en them to new heights. Since launch-ing its “max-i-mum pres-sure” cam-paign against Iran in 2018, the admin-is-tra-tion has unleashed a relent-less bar-rage of wide-rang-ing and crip-pling sanc-tions against Tehran’s allies in Iraq, Syr-ia and Lebanon.”(6). “U.S. pres-sure, in the form of a wide array of sanc-tions and increased scruti-ny of Lebanon’s finan-cial sys-tem, was one deci-sive fac-tor that made many Lebanese abroad — and any for-eign investor, for that mat-ter — think twice about send-ing mon-ey home or deposit-ing it in Lebanese banks.” (6)

Lebanon is not alone to suffer in this globalized world controlled by the imperialist financial institutions, investment bankers, and large transnational corporations – the annual output of a single corporation being many times more than the GDP of many countries. Greece, Argentina, Lebanon, and many more countries have suffered and are suffering from debt crises. Under imperialism, a few advanced capitalist countries have become the net exporter of capital to the majority of the backward bourgeois countries - whose backwardness is being maintained by the huge interest payments and fees they pay to the creditors. These developing

bourgeois countries produce little, export little, or depend upon the export of their natural resources like minerals & oil to earn the hard currency like dollars to import for their everyday needs without manufacturing much from their own resources. To maintain the balance of payment the central banks of these countries pay high-interest rates to attract the hard currency deposits.

In addition, in the name of making their economies efficient and competitive the bourgeois governments of these developing countries are encouraged to take debt at high-interest rates from the global financial institutes to build infrastructures like roads, seaports, airports, etc. A large part of these loans is tied to purchase equipment and services at the monopoly prices from the donor countries. Corruption, negligence, the collision of the politicians with the local and foreign bourgeois and the financial institutions help the elites to enrich themselves out of these loans. In the absence of any simultaneous development of their national economies and a meaningful increase in the purchasing power of their people, these projects are unable to generate enough revenues and hang like a millstone around the neck of these nations. Unable to pay the heavy debts very soon these bourgeois countries land into a debt trap. More new debts are taken at a higher rate of interest to pay the old

debts until a situation of default and economic collapse ensues. Debtor countries are denied any more credit until these countries take steps to impose more taxes on the people, withdraw subsidies to the poor and reduce expenditure on public health and education, and privatize state-owned enterprises and public services. Assets owned by the state are sold for a song to the local and imperialist bourgeois. Poor people bear the burden of financial crises and the bourgeois, politicians, and corrupt elites enrich themselves at their cost.

Historically, the bourgeois as a class has lost any progressive role in the present era of imperialism and monopoly capitalism. The ruling bourgeoisie or capitalist class of these countries are outright reactionary and compromising with the world imperialist powers. They are hardly interested in developing their independent economies and make the lives of their people better. Crony capitalism, financial manipulations, frauds, and corruption are the hallmarks of the present-day bourgeois or capitalist society. The task of developing their national economies and improving the lives of their people has now fallen on the shoulders of the working class who with the assistance of other exploited classes would take lead in the mass movements, overthrow the bourgeois, become a ruling class under the leadership of the genuine communist party and develop their

national economies on the socialist principles. The task may be difficult; path to socialist revolution may not be straightforward and may pass through number of zigzags depending upon the peculiarities of each country. But no matter the peculiarities of each country what remains a universal need or task of the people is to seek out or create the correct revolutionary leadership through their movements to lead these towards the cherished goal. For overthrowing the ruling capitalist class from state power, establishing the rule of the working class, and developing the national economy on the socialist principles is the only way out from the economic collapse and miserable condition of the working masses in capitalist ruled countries.

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MEDIA COLUMNISTS SAY SO

Indians find the perfect villain in Rhea Chakraborty. It says more about India than her

“Take a quick look at what has occupied prime time news on TV and the headlines this past fortnight, and one name stands out: Rhea Chakraborty. Ever since late actor Sushant Singh Rajput’s family lodged an FIR against his rumoured partner on 25 July, accusing her of abetting his suicide, Chakraborty’s every move has made headlines...

In Rhea Chakraborty, India has found the perfect villain to focus all its energies on, so that real issues of mental health, toxic workplaces and unfair systems can, once again, be ignored until the next incident and the next villain comes along to occupy the nation’s mindspace...

Despite so much going on in the country – a growing Covid crisis, floods in Assam and Bihar and, now, Mumbai, the India-China

standoff and the continued incarceration of student activists, to name a few – the national obsession with Rhea Chakraborty has put paid to any real conversation about anything else...

The case has become a political tussle now, with leaders from every political party weighing in on the investigation and even the Centre getting involved...

It just goes to show the problem with 24-hour news, which is that journalists need something to fill up the hours with, and they don’t care even if it means writing crass headlines like ‘The Noose Tightens’ or conducting dummy post-mortems...

And in all the noise about this one high-profile case, we have forgotten not only basic decency but also the fact that there are many people, across professions, who don’t get work at

all, leave alone work of their choice, whose careers suffer due to nepotism and cliquishness.” (Sameera Sood in *The Print* 08-08-20)

What hysteria over Bollywood helps TV news bury: Bad news on economy, China, Covid

“In their 1988 book, *Manufacturing Consent*, academics Edward S Herman and Noam Chomsky model out the political economy of the American media, arguing that large corporations that control newspapers and TV channels often serve to push propaganda even in a polity where freedom of the media is legally guaranteed....

Witness the past two months where Indian TV channels – especially national ones that broadcast in English and Hindi – have developed an obsession for

one single piece of news: the death of Bollywood actor Sushant Singh Rajput...

But, of course, this obsession means real issues affecting India are being ignored by powerful sections of the media. This would be terrible at any time – but it is particularly glaring now given that India is facing conditions that are the worst in decades, if not since Independence...

...the government released data showing Indian economy had contracted by an incredible 23.9% in the April to June quarter – the worst-ever contraction since the country started publishing growth data on a quarterly basis in 1996... while all countries have been hit economically by the coronavirus pandemic, India’s fall is sharper... when India was always within the top five.

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This economic destruction has meant Indians have lost jobs at an unprecedented rate. During the pandemic, as many as 18.9 million salaried jobs have been lost.... Modi's foreign minister threw up his hands on Saturday and admitted helplessness: "We have a very large number of Chinese forces and frankly, we are at a loss to know why".... As BBC's South Asia Bureau Chief put it grimly: "India is now the epicentre of the coronavirus outbreak"... India now has the highest confirmed mortality rate in South Asia. Clearly India's strategy of having the world's harshest lockdown backfired... An individual's health data is some of the most private information that anyone can have on a person. However, the time given to comment on this critical data policy was just one week – September 3. This has subsequently been extended by another week, still inadequate for any meaningful public consultation... Clearly, the government does not give the idea of health data much importance... the GST actually has a maze of multiple rates and cesses. Moreover, the entire structure is so clunky and easy to scam that the government has actually seen collections drop...

However, rather than hold it to task, much of the powerful TV media has completely ignored this,

preferring to concentrate on Bollywood...inexplicably, large India's media houses think its viewers would rather watch news centered around Bollywood than jobs... Maybe nothing spells more starkly how broken India's TV journalism is than the edging out of this massive health crisis by groundbreaking investigations such as Rajput's housekeeper claiming he rolled joints for the actor...

Like in Herman and Chomsky's model for the American media, it is difficult to not see a pattern in the Indian media's complete disavowal of the issues that matter in favour of a constant focus on the Hindi film industry. By abandoning its duty as a check on power, the media has given the ruling dispensation a free pass, which would rather have Indians obsess over the supposed debauchery of faraway people rather than wake up to see the deep crisis they themselves are stuck in. **(Shoaib Daniyal in the scroll.in 01-09-20)**

'Is there a bigger agenda behind drug probe against select Bollywood actors?'

"What started off as a rather grotesque 'Theatre of the Absurd' has rapidly degenerated into a dark comedy or horror show. Tell me — is there nothing worse happening in India besides Bollywood stars doing drugs? Or is there a sinister pattern emerging, as several alert critics

have been pointing out — are our so-called 'neutral' government agencies merely doing their (hit) jobs by targeting top stars and minor players, in their unseemly rush to 'clean up' showbiz? Why are they hand-picking these particular stars and not several others who may be equally guilty?

Everyone has realised it is no longer about SSR, or Rhea or any of those associated with SSR's death. It is now an insane shikhar to selectively implicate big names from Bollywood in an effort to: a) divert national attention from 'unimportant' crises, fiscal, legal, and Covid-related issues; b) assume control of Bollywood through intimidation and threats. The second aspect is very important, given the incredible, almost immeasurable influence of Bollywood on the nation's imagination. The long-term benefits of insidiously taking over the lives and content of India's vibrant entertainment industry are obvious. Apart from the monetary angle, it is the idea of entertainment itself that's at stake...

When a concerted effort is made to paint a terrible picture of an entire industry by picking on high-profile, successful targets, the government machinery effectively chokes free cinematic expression and sends out a strong message to those who aren't willing to kneel down and surrender to the state. This form of pressurising is being

witnessed across other cultural platforms — in the rewriting of our history books, renaming of heritage sites, restructuring of institutions and the gagging of media. Bollywood had been spared so far. But the SSR case provided the perfect alibi to muscle in and hijack an entire subculture that has spoken the language of India's masses for over a hundred years.

This is an opportunity to move in swiftly (timing is everything), using the smokescreen of massive 'drug abuse' and smoothly taking control. Once it's a done deal, all those self-righteous fellows strutting around with a holier-than-thou attitude will disappear into the woodwork, not to be seen again. Hatchet job complete. Mission accomplished.

Yes, there are Bollywood A-listers who do drugs. So do B-grade politicians. And sadhus. And businessfolk. And traders. Many others. I mean, drug use is not Bollywood's vice exclusively. Why has not even a single politician's name emerged? These are the same netas who party with their Bollywood buddies... Do you mean to say they sip Thums Up and avoid coke at cosy private bashes where they are regulars?...Using a Bollywood tragedy to influence Bihar elections is just testing the waters for the big bang to come — the total takeover and makeover of Bollywood." **(Shobhaa De in the Times of India 27-09-20)**

AIUTUC denounces passing of three anti-working class labour codes

Comrade Shankar Dasgupta, General Secretary, AIUTUC, issued the following statement on 23 September 2020 :

All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC) strongly denounces the brazenly anti-working class labour codes arbitrarily pushed through both the houses of the parliament by the BJP-led central NDA government on the pretext of 'ease of doing business' by the corporate houses. The three labour codes viz., Code on Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions, Code on Industrial Relations and Code on Social Security passed hurriedly in the parliament will rob the working people of the last vestiges of their hard-earned trade union rights and push them virtually to slavery. The anti-worker labour code on wages was enacted last year.

The Industrial Disputes Act, 1947 stipulates that any

establishment employing over 100 workers would need to seek government permission before any lay off, retrenchment and closure. This threshold now has been raised to 300 which will certainly further empower the employers to hire and fire the workers as per their whims. The Factories Act, 1948 defines any manufacturing unit as a 'Factory' if it employs either 10 workers and use electric power or 20 workers without using electric power. These thresholds are now being raised to 20 and 40 workers, respectively. These provisions of the existing legal rights provided in the Factories Act. The introduction of 'Fixed Term Employment' will no doubt demolish all job security and strengthen further the 'hire and fire' regime of the employers. The Industrial

Relations Code has introduced more stringent conditions restricting the existing legal rights of the workers to strike. This new code will virtually debar the workers from going to any strike action. It has also raised the threshold for requirement of 'Standing Order' in an industrial establishment to over 300 workers - a move which would enable companies to introduce arbitrary

service conditions for the workers.

While strongly protesting the heinous design of the government to unarm the working people of their hard-earned trade union rights through the newly enacted labour codes, we call upon the working people at large and the common masses in general to build up mighty movements to compel the government to revise its sinister move.

AIKKMS has given call to observe 14 October as All India Resistance Day against anti-peasant Bills. AIKSCC has endorsed the call.

SUCI(C) Congratulated Struggling Peasantry and Agricultural Labourers for making All India RURAL BANDH a grand success

Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), issued the following on 25 September 2020:

We congratulate the struggling peasantry and agricultural labourers all over the country for making all India RURAL BANDH today (25 September) against the three anti-farmer bills passed in the parliament by the BJP led central government through its brute majority, a grand success. These anti-peasant and anti-people bills will hand over country's agricultural market to national and multinational corporate giants. We call upon the poor, lower and middle peasants and agricultural labourers to organize themselves and lead a sustained movement to such a height that the central BJP government is forced to withdraw these black laws. We appeal to the toiling people to come forward and strengthen the peasants' movements across the country by all possible means.

In Kolkata AIDS0, AIDYO and AIMSS volunteers protesting against brutal gang rape and murder of a teenage girl in Hathras



STUDENTS STAND BY STRUGGLING PEASANTS

Solidarity Message of Left Students' Organizations issued on 25 September 2020

All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC), an association of 250 farmers' organisations has called for a 'Gramin Bharat Bandh' (Rural India Strike) on 25 September 2020 protesting the pernicious attempt of the BJP-led central government to give a legal look to the three anti-farmer pro-corporate ordinances that were placed in the parliament as - The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020; The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill, 2020 and The Essential Commodities (Amendment) Bill, 2020. Due to tyranny of the ruling dispensation, life of

the people from all walks of life - students, youths, women, employees, farmers and workers has become unbearable. In this precarious condition, a united movement against anti-people policies is the need of the hour and for this purpose, every section of the people should stand hand in hand.

Hence, we the following left students' organizations - AIDS0, AISEF, SFI, AISA, AISB, PSU support the 'Grameen Bharat Bandh' called by AIKSCC and urge upon the students in particular and people, in general, to come forward in support of the strike and pressurize the government to scrap these bills.

Ishwarchandra Vidyasagar, the boldest exponent of secular humanist trend of Indian renaissance remembered on his 201st birthday (conclusion of his bicentenary year) on 26 September with garlanding of his portrait, extensive cultivation of his illustrious life and teachings, organizing series of webinars, cultural programmes and competitions



ODISHA



KARNATAKA



WEST BENGAL



TRIPURA

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