SUCI (Communist) observed 75th anniversary of crushing defeat of Fascist Germany at the hands of Soviet Red Army led by great Stalin all over the country on 9 May, 2020.

[Left] Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI (Communist), paying tribute to the great leader Stalin at Shibpur Party Centre on the day.

More photos on page 4.

Political Lessons to be drawn from Covid–19 Pandemic

[This is English translation of an article in Malayalam, published in the Vol 47, no. 1, online edition, April 2020 issue of ‘Unity’. Malayalam organ of the Party.]

All the countries in the world are in a battle against the Covid–19 pandemic. The number of deaths has already crossed 1.5 lakhs. At the time of writing, the number of those infected by the virus has crossed 22 lakhs. “Along with several other factors, one important is absence of medicine or a vaccine, what has led to such a grave situation. The pandemic is caused by a novel virus called SARS-COV–2 which has already shown 11 varieties or strains with its gene sequence changing, as it is common for other viruses too, giving birth to new mutated forms. It is, thus, a relatively new disease for humanity and it is difficult to find a vaccine for it.

And also because of this, none has the acquired immunity which one acquires on recovering from the disease. The corona virus is highly infectious. When coupled with the fact that the poor in all countries have no access even to the basic health care now thrust under highly expensive private medical system, the situation has snowballed into one of the gravest crises the human race has ever had to face.

It is no stretch to say that the ruling capitalist states of these countries watch callously as their citizens – particularly the aged and the poor, succumb as innocent victims to the virus. The pandemic has rapidly spread from country to country and continent to continent. The incongruous speech which the US President Donald Trump made on March 31, in which he stated that the pandemic would probably claim the lives of 2.5 lakhs people, is a testimony to the extent to which capitalism has become inimical to the well-being of humanity.

The World Health Organization reported the first confirmed case in Wuhan, China on December 8, 2019. The official news of the first death came on December 27. On the same day, Dr. Zhang Jixian, Head of the respiratory department at a Hubei provincial hospital, revealed to the world that 180 patients were being treated after being infected by a novel corona virus. Swabs from the throat of infected persons were collected and the virus could be isolated as its character of the virus and on January 12, 2020, scientists, the WHO discerned the genetic inimical to the well-being of humanity.

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The WHO prepared a package of measures to counter the situation. This included efforts to...
find medicines for the disease, efforts to develop vaccines, precautionary measures to prevent the disease, measures to control the virus so as to eliminate it, efforts to trace the roots of the virus, and also measures like lockdowns to prevent the spread of the virus. Scientists detailed the apparent symptoms of the disease, the habits which could lead to the spread of the virus and the manner in which it happens, and also the genetic constitution of the virus.

The world came to fathom the astounding pace at which the disease could spread from the rate at which it spread in the city of Wuhan. The months of January and February was the invaluable time which was available to take all necessary precautions. Even after realizing the gravity of the impending danger, the vast majority of the countries with the exceptions of a few like Germany and South Korea, could not put in place adequate measures to counter the virus. We shall examine why this was the case.

The capitalist regimes turning the masses into helpless victims of the pandemic

In reality, the Covid-19 is not a very deadly disease. The average death rate is only between 3 – 6%. It is to be remembered that small pox had a death rate of 17%. Major epidemics like malaria, plague, Spanish flu and others had death rates which are much higher than the Covid-19. Initially, there were no medicines or vaccines for any of these epidemics. It was due to this reason that these diseases killed lakhs of people. Then why is it that the Covid-19, despite the lower death rate and the significant advancements in science and technology today when compared to the times when humanity had to contend with malaria, plague and cholera, has been responsible for the deaths of almost 1.5 million people in the past ten days alone? Why is it that 95,000 people died within thirty days? Noam Chomsky recently raised the criticism that it was the lack of implementation of preventive measures in a timely manner by the Trump administration that has pushed tens of thousands of US citizens to their deaths.

After China, Italy emerged as the next hot spot for the disease. Failing to draw any lessons from Italy, countries like Spain, Great Britain, USA and others failed to curb the community spread of the virus. Trump who had mocked the aged to be removed from the airport, after an arrival of the British tourist from the US, which, on realizing that Covid-19 cannot be faced by keeping in place private hospitals, initiated their containment efforts by nationalizing all hospitals overnight. Evidently, Spain has realized at last that the greedy capitalist powers have turned the country into a graveyard through their activities over the past several years. The primary reason for the utter failure of the European countries like Spain, Italy, Britain, Belgium, and the US in dealing with Covid-19 is the complete overhaul of the health sector on the basis of the private insurance system, and the corporate system of treatment. Reasons like the criminal negligence of the rulers, drawbacks in taking precautionary measures, paying no heed to warnings provided by modern medical science, and the lack of knowledge of the people, only come afterwards.

India also guilty of wasting invaluable time

The first Covid-19 case in India was reported from Kerala on January 30, 2020. It was on the same day that WHO declared a global emergency, citing the accelerated spread of the novel coronavirus. This declaration was made in the light of the disease spreading outside China. The Prime Minister Narendra Modi made his first speech concerning the spread of the coronavirus only on March 19. This means that the Prime Minister only addressed the country 48 long days after the first case was reported in India. Except for promising all passengers arriving at the airports, after an unwarranted delay, not a single serious measure was adopted by the Central Government to counter the threat of Covid-19.

All this while, several warnings had come from different international agencies. By February 20, 2020, the disease had already spread to 31 countries. On March 11, the WHO declared the disease a pandemic. The efforts taken by South Korea, another Asian country, in countering the threat of the pandemic as early as February, should have served as a strong example for India. The Central Government failed to draw lessons from this or to pay heed to the warnings with due seriousness.

The number of tests conducted per ten lakhs people is one of the criteria accepted by the world in the comparative study of preventive activities across countries. In South Korea, where the number of deaths is only 211, the number of tests conducted per ten lakhs people is 1,80,111. If it had been decided to test only the number of patients who have been quarantined in the country, the number would have gone into lakhs. The number of tests conducted per ten lakhs people is one of the criteria accepted by the world in the comparative study of preventive activities across countries. In South Korea, where the number of deaths is only 211, the authorities have been able to conduct 9,957 tests for every 10 lakh people. In Germany, it is even higher at 15,730. Even if it is argued that it is impractical to conduct so many tests in a country like India which has a huge population, it is very oined that a health emergency did not exist in the country.

The Indian government should have commenced process to start testing for Covid-19 on a war footing. Many had pointed out the importance of widespread testing after taking into account the intricacies of a country like India, and also the highly infectious nature of the disease. The importance of random testing had also increased because of cases where the infected persons showed no symptoms. One of the most successful measures adopted by Germany and South Korea has been in identifying infected persons and isolating them. To this end, they adopted a strategy of testing the maximum number of citizens by establishing testing booths across the country and also by deploying mobile labs. The WHO had propagated the slogan ‘Test, Test, Test’ after watching the success of this strategy. What the India government should have done was to draw lessons from the aforementioned exercises. It should have started rapid and universal testing by tapping all domestic and foreign sources for testing kits, allotted funds for doing the same; and established testing centers across the country. It is as clear as daylight that the central government did not do the needful in this regard. A decision which came late was the order which allowed testing to be done in private labs, but fixed the rate at Rs 4500. In short, what this means is that the government has not even been able to ensure free testing for the millions, already badly strapped for cash to buy even food and other bare necessities.

The number of tests carried out in India till April 11, 2020 were a mere 1,80,111. If it had been decided to test only the number of patients who have been quarantined in the country, the number would have gone into lakhs. The number of tests conducted per ten lakhs people is one of the criteria accepted by the world in the comparative study of preventive activities across countries. In South Korea, where the number of deaths is only 211, the authorities have been able to conduct 9,957 tests for every 10 lakh people. In Germany, it is even higher at 15,730. Even if it is argued that it is impractical to conduct so many tests in a country like India which has a huge population, it is very
**DIGITAL SLAVERY IN INDIA**

It is reported in HuffPost on 19 February 2020 that street sweepers in many municipal corporations in cities of India are being forced to wear GPS watches so that their supervisor, with a centralized screen, could monitor their work on real time basis. Green dots on the screen shows the location and the movement of the worker, length of the road cleaned and the area covered. The moment the sweeper stops or takes rest, red dots appear on the screen and the supervisor records it and prompt him or her to work. It means the street sweepers most of whom belong to the highly impoverished and socially disadvantaged dalit community cannot have any rest or break till the assigned job is completed. The supervisor can call them during the working hours, and make sure that the workers stayed in the area marked for him or her. Workers cannot switch off the tracker during the working hours; otherwise, their salaries would be deducted. Majority of these sweepers are contract workers and their salaries are calculated based on the GPS input after deductions for any rest period noticed by the supervisor. Such smart watches have camera for “manual face capture”, microphone, and sim card, which they have to charge after coming home every day night. Whatever the workers do, speak can be easily heard and seen by the supervisor on his monitor, that make the women workers most humiliating, vulnerable and they do not go to toilets or bathrooms, during the working hours up to six o’clock in the evening, out of fear that their privacy is violated by camera and microphones. It is reported that Municipal Corporation of Panchkulla in Haryana had spent over Rs 35 lakhs in only 9 months in 2019 on this worker surveillance system but it did not provide any basic safety equipment like masks, gloves and boots to the street sweepers. Meanwhile, sanitation work across the country remains distressingly dangerous, with workers frequently succumbing to fatal accidents. This Human Efficiency Tracking System in the jargon of the trade, has been implemented in at least seven other municipal corporations—Mysore, Lucknow, Indore, Thane, Navi Mumbai, Nagpur, and Chandigarh —most of which are controlled by the BJP” said the report.

What would one call this GPS monitoring system other than “a digital slavery” reminding one of the chained slaves in the slave-master society? That very chain is now replaced by GPS monitoring in “Digital India. Such a sophisticated form of medieval cruelty violates privacy, personal liberty, freedom, and dignity of the street sweeping workers and is blatantly violative of basic human right of the working class. This how the BJP government is operationalizing the mouthful schemes of “Swatch Bharat” and “Clean India-Sweep India” by raising funds from the common people tough imposition of cess. (Source of information: Surveillance Slavery: Swachh Bharat Tags Sanitation Workers to Live-Track Their Every Moves’ by Rachna Khaira, HUFFPOST INDIA 19 Feb 2020)
Comrade K Sridhar, Central Committee Member, SUCI(C), (second from right) alongwith other comrades offering glowing tribute to great Stalin on 9 May at Hyderabad Party Centre, on the occasion of 75th year of victory of Red Army over Nazism.

During the pandemic, maintaining protocol of lockdown SUCI(C) and its frontal organizations worked out protests across the country, online or otherwise, on multiple demands and issues like free tests for COVID-19, free transportation for migrant labourers and wage earners, adequate and proper safety measures for doctors and associates fighting Covid 19, involving Polit Bureau-Central Committee leaders to kids, villagers to city-dwellers, workers to peasants, women-youth-students.

Comrade Satyawan, Polit Bureau Member, SUCI(C) and President, AIKKMS.

Comrade Arun Kumar Singh, Member, Central Committee announces Protest Day on Facebook.

AIDYO take youth to protest countrywide.

Comrade K Uma Central Committee member and Karnataka State Secretary, SUCI(C), leads deputation to the Karnataka Chief Secretary.

Womenfolk AIMSSI protests in Bihar.

More photos on page 5.
PROTESTS ALL OVER THE COUNTRY

ABECA protests on power tariff, distribution, scrapping of Power Act 2003 amended to Bill 2020

Migrant labourer in UP

Farmer protests

Housewife protests

Kids do not fall back in villages

Urban housewives protest

Domestic helps’ organization protests in W B

Peasants in field protest

Protests by farmers from remote villages and protest against increasing working hours from 8 to 12 a day

Tribute to Martyr of Freedom struggle Pritilata

Collecting and Distributing food materials [Left] Puduchery and [Right] to Migrant Labourers at the roadside of Guna, MP
Reckless privatization of healthcare capitalist world has worsened the situation

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much possible to conduct at least 10000 tests per 10 lakhs people. Yet, India has not tested even 1/10 of that number. In Uttar Pradesh, which has locked down fifteen districts in the wake of the rapid spread of the corona virus, only 2232 tests have been conducted till April 10! Uttar Pradesh shares a border with Delhi, an acknowledged Covid-19 hot spot. Thousands of labourers had walked to their homes across this border. It is this situation which has conducted a mere 2232 tests!

If 358 tests are conducted for every 10 lakhs people in Kerala, in UP the corresponding figure is 9.6. Meanwhile, the situation in Madhya Pradesh has become distressing. The BJP which has seized power in the state through deflection, has not been able to form a ministry. Therefore, there is no Health Minister to head the department. Moreover, more than 60 high ranking officials in the health department are under treatment for Covid – 19. Even as the virus is being transmitted very rapidly, the number of tests being done remains abysmally low. Means of prevention of the transmission of the disease is only possible if tests to detect the disease are carried out. Adequate testing is necessary to paint a true picture of those infected. The experiences from other countries have also shown that there are many infected persons who do not exhibit any symptoms that are generally associated with the disease. In such a scenario, it is being confirmed that only adequate testing and accompanying isolation of the afflicted can be considered as a preventive measure. India lags behind in this aspect by a huge margin.

The Union Minister for Health had stated that had the lockdown not been implemented from March 25, there would have been 8.5 lakhs of Covid-19 cases in the country. What is being implied is that only 10,000 people, which is actually the number of confirmed cases, have contracted the disease till now. How can it reflect the reality when the second most populous country in the world conducts only 2 lakhs of tests and, on that basis, assess that the numbers of those infected in the country is very small? It is globally found that the lower the number of detection tests, lower would be the number of confirmed cases. There have even been accusations that certain governments carry out fewer tests so as to portray low figures of infection.

The Union Health Minister had stated on April 13 that there were enough stocks of testing kits to last six weeks. The number of tests being carried out daily is 15,000 at present. That would mean that the number of testing kits available in India is only 6 lakhs. The reason given by the minister for not conducting random tests is that the kits which have no adequate supply should not be wasted. It suggests that the random tests which were carried out in many countries would not be conducted in India because of a lack of adequate kits. How pathetic is the state of affairs in our country. What it proves without a doubt is that the country has not been able to procure the necessary testing kits during the twenty one days of the first lockdown.

A Prime Minister, with the aid of elaborate public relations machinery, may be able to address the country not five times but even fifty. But what is of significance is the number of testing kits the government has been able to mobilize. Of importance is the number of Personal Protection Equipment (P.P.E) that has been manufactured for the health workers. Of consequence is whether the government has adopted the necessary measures so as to manufacture PPEs by calling upon the large manufacturing sector (including the private sector). The people need to know what are the steps being taken on a war footing to invigorate the government health machinery which is in shambles. The shocking incident in which more than a hundred nurses who were working in a private hospital in Mumbai were infected because of the lack of availability of protective gear, is only a representative of the criminal negligence of our rulers.

The Covid-19 has gripped us during a time when the Indian health system, which was frail to begin with, has been completely shattered by the economic policies of globalization which have been implemented over the past three decades. The share of the health sector in the national budget has been cut annually. Even today, only 1.2% of the GDP is being allocated to the health sector. Even today, there are numerous villages in India which have no access to primary health care yet. There are 0.5 beds for 1000 patients in the country! This is the lowest for any country in the world. All the national news media have reported how patients admitted for ailments other than Covid-19 were shifted out from government hospitals in Mumbai and made to occupy the space beneath a flyover, when the number of cases in Maharashtra had only crossed 2000. This is a true reflection of the state of affairs in a country that claims to be ready to face the Covid-19 pandemic. What the government should have done was to make the necessary funds available without any hindrances or conditions, and to strengthen the public health sector by overhauling it completely.

The lockdown which was declared without any preparations has pushed the poor into helplessness

No preparations were done for the lockdown which was declared at night on March 24, and was implemented four hours later. A successful lockdown requires extensive and meticulous preparations. But when the Prime Minister asks a country as large as India to be locked down in four hours, it begs the question whether any thought was spared for the livelihoods of the vast majority of the masses who survive by selling their labour, and on the daily wages they receive.

Where could the lakhs of people of our country who work in the big cities, having migrated from far off places, have gone in a single night? None had searched for a satisfactory answer to this question. Neither did the government take any measures to ensure food and portable water nor did it adopt any preemptive measures to ensure the social distancing that has been held as a catchword of the times. As a result, it became the duty of the citizens to ensure their own safety. The pathetic sight of migrant workers who came out on the streets of the national capital in desolation, asking to be allowed to return to their homes after only a few days of the lockdown, is amply evidence of the irresponsibility behind the declaration of the lockdown. Migrant labourers, plagued by hunger were left to fend for themselves by their building owners and contractors, were forced to set out on foot for their homes, hundreds of kilometers away. Many had to carry their infants on their shoulders. Some of them died by the wayside. Some others were run over by vehicles.

These labourers had to walk their way through the labyrinth of the sky scrapers they had laboured to build, all the while searching for a place to rest. Their destinations were their villages of birth; their journeys undertaken so that they could, at least, to end their lives on the soil of their birth. The ones who survived returned to their home states in or by trucks left behind or clinging to the few buses arranged by the UP government. Nobody knows how many of them were infected with Covid-19, or whether any of them had died in reaching their homes. The outside world can come to know of these details only if testing is done in the land of Yogi Adityanath.

On April 9, labourers in Surat in Gujarat turned violent and set vehicles on fire in the city. On April 14, labourers, distressed by hunger, protested in front of Bandra Railway Station in Mumbai. They were baton charged by the police. Ten crores of migrant workers are counting the days in agony as they deal with the different crises brought on them by the lockdown. The Central Government had adopted no measures to sustain the lives of these helpless labourers before the first phase of the lock down was declared. The government which declared the lockdown had the primary responsibility for housing these labourers in the hundreds of schools, religious institutions or conference halls and providing them with uninterrupted supply of food and providing them with healthcare. They have not fulfilled this responsibility. The protests of the labourers in Mumbai show that even after the first phase of the lockdown was completed, no arrangements had been made to assuage their hunger.

Declaring a lockdown over the media is easy. It is in taking precautionary measures that would ensure that not a single person would starve that proves a government’s efficiency and a minimum concern for its citizens. The reports from different parts of the country makes it apparent that the government has failed in its responsibility of fulfilling this challenging duty. What is regrettable is that those ruling our country lack
the wisdom to discern that the most important precautionary measure to achieve social distancing in a country like India which has one of the highest density of population, is by rehabilitating the migrant labourers in the country. Even if these labourers are not called ‘guests’, the governments should at least consider them as human beings. The accountability for the tears and miseries of the labourers on the streets of our big cities should be taken by the central government. The valuable lesson that every government in the country should draw from this debacle of an ill-conceived lockdown is that social distancing can only be possible in a situation where social security is ensured.

Covid cannot be countered solely by lock down

Most countries have adopted lock down as a measure that is advantageous in controlling the rapid spread of the disease. Though Covid-19 is relatively not a deadly disease, its rate of transmission is high. Scientists have equated the spread of the virus to exponential growth in mathematics. It is due to this that social distancing has emerged as a powerful preventive measure. Lock down is also the creation of a material condition wherein social distancing can be implemented by a state directive, aided by the self – realization of each individual. But, forcing people to refrain from all production and social interaction for a short time, can lead to serious repercussions. There is no doubt that it can create a situation wherein more people will die of starvation than of the pandemic.

Therefore, a far-sighted government should adopt a policy that aims to put an end to the lock down as soon as possible. The protective measure advocated by the WHO is the IHC as the infected individuals and isolate them, to make sure that the medical and health care system and resources, both manpower and material, are not overwhelmed all at once. In short, take steps to flatten the curve, to control exponential spread. As such, a caring, efficient and strategically proficient government would have used the lock down as a most favourable opportunity to detect all the infected people and isolate them suitably. It is regrettable that during the invaluable 21 days of the first phase of lock down, the activities to identify the infected persons have been very lackadilasical.

If a strategy for the twenty one days which coordinated the activities of all the health workers in the country, the lakhs of volunteers and other sections towards a single aim, had been devised and there was a will to implement it during the period of lock down, it would have been possible to identify all the infected persons, have them treated, and quarantine all their primary and secondary contacts. South Korea was able to fulfill all this without having a lock down that is as severe as that of India, but which achieved far less. At the least, if the central government was willing to model their activities on those adopted by the state of Kerala, there would not have been the entry of Covid bomb in the country. If this had been done, the second phase of the lock down which lasts till May 3 could have been avoided.

It has been two weeks since deaths were reported from Dharavi in Mumbai. The number of detection tests corresponding to the grave situation in Dharavi, which has become a time bomb, remains woefully inadequate. The total number of detection tests that have been carried out in the state of Maharashtra till April 1 is a lowly 30,229. One can only wait, with bated breath and fingers crossed, for the heartbreaking news that might emerge from Dharavi slum of Mumbai and the rural areas of Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh.

Sinking masses… A Central Government that refuses to offer a helping hand

The Covid – 19 outbreak has created a situation wherein the wealth and resources of a country should be utilized for the survival of its people. All spheres of production have come to a standstill. In India, the number of labourers and the half-starved who survive on their daily wages is 40 crores. Now that the jobs and wages have stopped altogether, their lives have literally come to an impasse. The exhaustion of whatever little savings they had has forced the lower middle class into destitution. In the wake of the unusual economic crises created by the pandemic, governmental help has become of utmost importance. Yet, the Central Government refuses to lend a helping hand of any note even in these times of intense crises. People had rested their hopes on the address of the PM when he had declared the Janata curfew. But he had disappointed the people by not announcing any economic aid. All he had said was that a task force would be formed to tackle the economic crisis. Though it was constituted very late, no relief has been announced. Though the Finance Minister had created an impression that there would be huge reliefs, none were forthcoming. The announcements the Finance Minister made, like the removal of the fine for not keeping a minimum balance in the account, were cruel jokes that only mocked the plight of the people. The announcement of the moratorium on bank loans, which was announced with much fanfare, served only to blindside the people when it was announced that the interest due during the time of the pandemic would be waived later.

Then turned the way of the Prime Minister to take the stage. He announced an aid of Rs. 1.7 lakhs crores under the “Pradhan Mantri Garib Kalyan Package.” In reality, this amount is only 0.8% of the country’s GDP. At a time when most countries in the world have set apart amounts that are anywhere between 5 to 20% of their GDP, the government of India with its multitudes of poor, has set apart such a paltry sum. Here, we should note the words of German Chancellor Angela Merkel who, despite being a typical bourgeois leader, had announced that ‘the lives of the people will be saved even if all the wealth of the country has to be spent.’ The Indian Prime Minister was not able to internalize even a fraction of the content of this statement.

The announcements like Rs 500/- for three months for all women with Jan Dhan accounts, an increase of Rs 20/- per month for those involved in the employment assurance scheme have turned to be cruel jokes on those starving. The only aid worth the name is that those receiving free rations will get twice the amount now. As it becomes almost impossible to predict when the production will revert to what it was before, it is almost a given that daily wage workers and poor labourers will probably die of starvation. What the government should do is to deservedly compensate the losses suffered by the labourers who have lost their jobs and all sources of income. There has been no such announcements even at the time of writing these lines (April 17). Even in his speech of April 14, the Prime Minister who has deigned to praise the sacrifice and patience of the people, is in reality putting a price on the lives of the people.

Why has Kerala been able to become a model?

The invaluable and universal lesson imparted by the Covid-19 pandemic is that the health sector should remain in the control of the government. The gains of Kerala also underline this lesson.

Kerala has been able to overcome the threat of the corona virus, and the Nipah virus before that due to its strong public health system. The educational advancement born of the Renaissance movement and a health awareness which developed on this basis created a material condition for the formation of an excellent public health system. This serves to confirm that the Renaissance leaders in Kerala had repeatedly stressed on the importance of following personal hygiene.

We can see the transformation of health awareness as a movement which enveloped the whole society in the early decades of the twentieth century. Records show that in the latter part of the nineteenth century, the British authorities had established hospitals in three districts in cooperation with the plantation owners to tackle the diseases ailing the plantation workers. The contributions of the Christian missionaries in this regard deserve a special mention. Words lauding the moral value of the activities in healthcare can be seen in the literary works and actions of the missionaries. Health centers had already been established in the princely states to prevent epidemics. Though few in number, General Hospitals had begun functioning much before the formation of Kerala. Vaccination had also begun in Kerala around the same time.

The health awareness that had developed as a result of the Renaissance and the activities of the missionaries led the democratically elected governments of modern Kerala to represent the wishes of the people and were therefore encouraged to carry out noteworthy activities in this field. The early governments had allotted sizable amounts for the health sector in the budget. Accomplished doctors and healthcare workers who worked with complete dedication further strengthened the health sector. But after the 1980s both the Left and Right governments cannot be differentiated in gradually but surely
Covid 19 Pandemic

Plight of hapless migrant labourers exposed cruelty of ruining Indian capitalism

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reducing the budgetary share of health sector, as per the new neoliberal economic policies. It is also due to the boundless encouragement of these governments that has now led to the subsequent exponential growth of private capital in the health sector.

The studies of the Centre for Development Studies (CDS) confirm that after the advent of the neoliberalization policies, the private health sector has grown by 40% in Kerala while the corresponding figure for the public sector is only 6%. The recruitment in the public healthcare sector is very low. The reality is that there are not enough doctors, nursing staff or medicines in the vast health network of Kerala, beginning from the Public Health Centres (PHCs) to the Medical Colleges, even when assessed by the staff pattern of 1965. The State and the Central Governments have worked hand in hand to bring the system of insurance in the public health sector, as it is in developed capitalist countries. Those basking in the glory of the resistance against Covid – 19, at present and also those in the opposition are all advocates of these policies.

Care must be taken to ensure that the ‘Certificate of Merit’ that is being received by the Kerala Government now, is not taken as a licence to follow the same policies of privatization. That the public health system in Kerala has been able to retain its excellence to at least the present extent even in the face of attacks by the globalization policies, is due to the steadfast resistance put up by the conscious people of the state.

The primary reason for Kerala’s response to Covid-19 is the existence of a public healthcare system that has a legacy of over a hundred years and one which has gradually developed. It is commendable that the government has been able to coordinate, and improve the system into action. But the propaganda hype praising the present government as the sole reason behind the admirable resistance against the pandemic is nothing but done with the intention of narrowing political gains. Even amidst the shortcomings and limitations, Kerala has adopted precautionary measures in a manner that is an example for the rest of the country.

The most important of these was that the health system in Kerala has been able to act in a timely manner to prevent the community spread of the virus. At the least, an awareness was created among the public of the dangers of being a carrier of the disease, which is no small matter. This could be achieved because the health workers worked collectively as one in a dedicated manner round the clock.

Socialist Cuba: An exemplary model of human fraternity

Even as the developed capitalist countries were plunged into gloom with the arrival of coronavirus, Cuba’s emergence as the symbol of human fraternity is one of the great lessons during the time of corona. The world watches in reverence at its exceptional efforts against Covid-19.

It was a time when Europe was in shock, in the face of the rapid spread of the virus. The news that five passengers aboard a trans-Atlantic ship, carrying 682 passengers from Britain, had been infected by Covid-19 was reported. The ship had by then arrived in the waters around the Caribbean islands. They made repeated requests to different countries to allow them to dock but were refused by each of these countries. It was also at the same time that reports from the US had had alluded to the cruel news that the country was preparing to expatriate all foreign citizens infected by the 'Chinese Virus.'

It was at that time when no developed capitalist country would let that ship dock. But the country of Cuba came forward and welcomed all passengers with open arms. Britain was a country that had strongly supported the embargo imposed on Cuba by the US. Not only did Cuba open its port at the capital city of Havana to let the ship dock, but it also admitted all patients aboard the ship into different hospitals and provided them with treatment. Flights were arranged to take all healthy travellers to their home countries.

Cuba is a relatively small and poor country. Its population is just 1.5 crores. Moreover, it is a country that has had to deal with the severe economic embargo imposed by the United States ever since 1960. The heinous moves of US imperialism to destroy Cuba can never be forgotten. It should be remembered that it is from this country that a 52 member group of doctors and healthcare workers had come forward to help with the situation in Italy. Even now, they remain involved in different hospitals in Italy. The Cuban medical team had provided exemplary service during the time of the spread of the Ebola epidemic in West Africa in 2014. Presently, medical teams from Cuba have come forward to volunteer in 37 countries. There are 37,000 Cuban healthcare workers engaged in different medical missions in 67 countries across the globe.

Cuba is demonstrating the socialist culture in which all able hands are involved in the fight at the time of a disaster. Even though it is a small country, Cuba has an excellent public healthcare system. They do not provide treatment with a desire for any profit. The health system functions under the complete control of the state. A treatment however expensive is the responsibility of the state.

Anyway, the Covid-19 pandemic has not become a widespread epidemic in Cuba, North Korea or Russia. It is because these countries have a strong diagnostic and health care system. These are the countries which provide prime importance to the health of its citizens. Russia is a capitalist country but there are remnants of the strong health care system that was established during the time of socialism. Today, Cuba has emerged as a greater model than Russia because of the socialist system that exists in that country.

Modern science is the invincible weapon of the human race; we will face the pandemic with unity

We are witness to the sight of many countries who are at the forefront in science and technology, stumble in the face of the rapid spread of Covid – 19. Anxiety has gripped all. This is not the first time that a pandemic has gripped humanity. There were even times when terrible epidemics would afflict human race one after the other. Once upon a time plague, cholera, small pox, and tuberculosis were all feared epidemics that claimed crores of lives. These diseases could be tamed only with the development of modern science which enabled the biological world to be viewed scientifically.

How was it possible for science? What is the method of science? What trick does science possess that enabled the human race to deal with a problem that was viewed with indifference till then?

Science has no mysterious ways. It only has methods that can be comprehended, questioned, and proved through experiments by anyone. It became possible to control each disease when things like the identification of a pathogen that causes a disease, understanding the life cycle of that pathogen, understanding how it enters the human body, understanding the role of carriers, and how it is transmitted from one human individual to another became known and the necessary measures taken. Also, the invention of antibiotics opened the pathway for the successful treatment of an infected individual. These were the scientific methods which helped in taming deadly epidemics. Treatment is only a part of disease control. There are numerous methods to prevent a disease.

Become the flag bearers of socialism; become the saviours of humanity

What was the situation in the world before Covid-19? Unprecedented unemployment had forced people to roam the world for jobs. It was more overwhelming than the travails during the time of the Great Depression from 1929 to 1939. The communal riots, barbaric religious pogroms, and the regional wars sponsored by the imperialist powers have turned lakhs of people into refugees. The waters of the world have become depths of despair where the bodies of these refugees float. The African continent was engulfed by famine, starvation, poverty and epidemics. Reactionary ideas and neo-Nazi organizations are involved in the massacre of helpless minorities across the world, including India. Morality, culture, empathy and...
Central government is deceiving people with one after another gimmicks

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other humane ideals which had developed by placing human beings at the centre, are dying a gruesome death by drowning in the deluge of money and material greed. The fall of the great socialist camp, allowing capitalism-imperialism to take the upper hand, has led to the tyrannical rule of unimaginable inequality. It has petrified almost 300 crores of people. It is this world that has been attacked by the corona virus. It is imparting the painful lesson of how the existence of a class divided society threatens the very survival of the human race.

The hordes of weapons of the capitalist imperialist countries, which intimidates the rest of the world using nuclear weapons, becomes a cruel mockery on the human race. The capitalist powers which stockpiles weapons upon weapons to create a transitory market cannot save the human society. Covid-19 reminds us that what is important is to create living conditions which will enable all citizens of a country to live lives befitting a human being. The pandemic also makes us realise the necessity of a social system that completely sets aside interests of profit and holds only human interests at its core. The historical process teaches us that such a social system can only be socialism.

More than being a personal necessity, it is the necessity of a society to treat an infected person and return him to full health. The greatest wealth of a country is a population that is mentally and physically healthy by all means. This means that only a socialist system, which sees medical care as a social duty can essentially keep away the ailments of human beings and the miseries they cause. The few sanctuaries of socialism teaches us that lesson. If we advance on the path of scientific socialism, we can create a human society that is free of the interests of profits, and will no longer succumb to any pandemic. Therefore, the most invaluable lesson imparted by corona is to become the flag bearers of socialism.

It is inarguable that the crises that human race has to deal with presently is extraordinary. Thousands of healthcare workers are involved in the fight against Covid without a care for the threat to their lives. Many capable and earnest doctors and healthcare workers have already laid down their lives in this fight. News reports from Italy suggest that more than a hundred doctors have died in Italy. These deaths will not be in vain. There should be no doubt that this situation can be overcome by understanding the characteristics of this situation through an objective investigation. In addition to the lessons this corona pandemic has contributed to the shelves of medical science, we must also absorb the political lessons taught by the virus.

Covid 19 Pandemic

SUCI(C), AP, on the shocking the Vizag gas leak incident

In a press statement on 7 May 2020, S.U.C.I (Communist) State Organizing Committee of Andhra Pradesh expresses severe shock and concern over the death of 8 people and hundreds of people falling seriously ill due to the leak of Styrene gas from L G Polymers Ltd. at the outskirts of Vizagapatnam.

At the early hours of today hundreds of people came out of their houses due to breathlessness, burning eyes and rashes on skin and collapsed down unconscious on the road itself without knowing what is going on. Even birds, dogs and cows fell down wherever they are. Already people are scared with Corona virus and added to that, this horrific situation created great panic among the people.

It shows the criminal attitude of the Central and State governments for sanctioning permission to such a dangerous factory in a residential area and the callous attitude of the authorities for lack of supervision over running of such dangerous chemical establishments.

We demand that the government should plug the leakage on top priority and should mobilize its entire administration to shift the affected people to hospitals on war footing and provide free treatment and evacuate all the people from the effected villages to safer places.

Secondly both government and the factory management should pay adequate compensation to the bereaved families.

Thirdly government should punish the concerned authorities for allowing such factories in localities where people are living and also punish the concerned authorities and the management who utterly failed in monitoring such factories running in the lockdown period.

Fourthly we demand that this factory along with other such factories to be relocated far away from residential areas.

Chhattisgarh AIKKMS place 16-point charter of demands

On 6 May, Chhattisgarh AIKKMS Committee, as a part of observance of All-India protest day against anti-peasant moves and policies of the government, held demonstrations at Durg and Pankanjur districts. A 16-point charter of demands was submitted to both sate chief minister and prime minister demanding immediate arrangement for extending necessary financial assistance to the poor peasants and agriculturists.

AIUTUC MEMORANDUM TO THE GOVERNMENT ON TRAGIC DEATH OF MIGRANT LABOURS

Expressing anguish at the way 16 migrant workers on their way home on foot were crushed by a speeding train in Auranagabad, Maharashtra, in the early morning of 9 May last, Comrade Shankar Dasgupta, General Secretary, AIUTUC, submitted a memorandum to the central government, demanded compensation of Rs 10 lakhs to the bereaved families, immediate arrangement of sufficient number of trains to transport the stranded migrant workers back to their native places free of cost and payment of full wages to all such workers full wage for the lockdown period.

AIUTUC denounces UP Government’s decision to invalidate application of Labour Laws

In a statement issued on 08-05-20, Comrade Shankar Dasgupta, General Secretary, AIUTUC categorically denounced the decision of BJP-led UP government invalidate application of key labour laws for a period of three years. Just a few days back, the statement mentioned the BJP-led Gujarat government has unilaterally extended the daily working hours from 8 to 12 hours and not only BJP-led Madhya Pradesh and, Haryana governments, even Congress run Punjab and Rajasthan governments have also followed the suit. When the need was to address the distress of the working people in the lockdown, the bourgeois governments are taking one after another step to snatch their hard earned rights to life and livelihood. AIUTUC called upon the working class to resist such sinister machinations with all might.

SUCI(C) Mumbai raises two demands in a letter to Maharashtra Chief Minister

In a letter addressed to the Maharashtra chief minister on 5 May 2020, SUCI (C) Mumbai unit demanded of the state government to bear the travelling cost/fare of stranded migrant workers back home and withdraw permission to sell liquor during the lockdown period.
AIKKMS demands immediate repeal of amendment of APMC and APML Acts

In a statement issued on 16 May 2020, Comrade Shankar Ghosh, General Secretary, AIKKMS, strongly criticized the move of Central Government to change existing APMC Act through APML Act-2017 and force the state governments to enforce it even by Ordinance. In the name of reforming the existing Act, the BJP-led Government has practically handed over procurement of all the agricultural produce to the multinationals. At this grave hour of Corona Lockdown which has made life of poor and middle peasants ad well as the agricultural labourers miserable, the Central Government instead of rushing to ease their predicament, has brought these amendments only to crush their interest under the corporate profit machines. Already farmers are incurring huge losses while selling their produce and receipt of remunerative price is a mirage.

The amendment has also permitted to open Farmer-Consumer Market by private persons where retail marketing of agricultural products to consumer will be undertaken thereby making private investors and corporates omnipotent in this sphere at the expense of the peasants and consumers. And even worse is granting permission to establish Market Committees comprising majorly nominated persons in place APMC Board now elected by the peasants. Thus this new Act will most undemocratically muzzle the voice of the peasants. And all the labourers working in the Private Market Yards will have no security of any kind against the onslaughts of the private traders and so whatever little protection they had in APMC yards will be lost.

It is imperative on the part of peasants, labourers and democratic minded people and consumers to oppose the amendment and force both central and state governments to withdraw amendments to APMC Act and scrap APML Act 2017.

To foil this heinous design, AIKKMS has declared a Protest Day on 22 May 22 2020 demanding: (1) Repeal of the Act to reform Essential Commodities Act. (2) Allotment of minimum Rs 10,000 per poor family to meet their immediate need to procure essential commodities, (3) granting adequate interest free loan to the peasants and (4) providing work to the rural poor throughout the year.