

## Arbitrary vaccine policy of BJP government intensified deadly second surge of Covid 19

The lethal and ferocious second wave of the Covid-19 pandemic has been wreaking havoc in India. Despite the incessant propaganda by the combined machinery of the government, the ruling BJP and its cohorts, the world is now wide awake to the abject misery that has presently engulfed the common people in the country. Even as the fatalities keep remain high, the process for provision of vaccines -- which have been proven to be effective in preventing both deaths and severity of the virus attack -- continues to be ambivalent and non-functional, if not antithetical to the need of the country. This is precisely because of the inhumane attitude and naked commercial orientation of the Indian imperialist state and its servitor BJP

government in dealing with a health crisis of such a magnitude. Non-availability of medicines, abysmal shortage of oxygen supply, hoarding and black-marketing of essential drugs, scarcity of beds, paucity of doctors and nursing staff, fragile health infrastructure and above all the vaccine imbroglio-all these mark the government's 'response' to the Covid 19 disaster. In this write-up, we shall focus on the vaccine scenario.

### Much-trumpeted launch of pan India vaccination drive

It bears recall that on 16 January 2021, BJP Prime Minister (PM) Modi launched the pan India rollout of Covid-19 vaccination drive via video conferencing. It was claimed that this was the world's

largest vaccination programme with a total of 3006 session sites across all states and union territories (UTs). The PM claimed that in the first round itself, 3 crore people, which is more than the population of at least 100 countries of the world, are being vaccinated. He said that 30 crore more people (22% of the population) would be taken up in the second round when elderly and people with serious co-morbidities would be vaccinated. Vaccination would be completed in six months i.e. by July-August 2021. The PM also cautioned the people to be careful about not missing taking two doses which implied that sufficient number of vaccine vials would be available for hassle free administration. Yet, as on date, a mere 3% of the population has been covered! In a country with a huge population like ours, it warrants a properly planned and organised effort with due seriousness to cover the whole population with vaccination at the shortest possible time.

### Sense of triumphalism and paeans of praise for PM

But such has not been the case with the BJP-ruled India. It was

obvious that a sense of triumphalism had begun to emerge, buttressed by a faith in so called Indian exceptionalism, when the first wave had receded. Leading the pack were the cheerleaders of the PM as the ruling BJP was preparing to launch election campaigns in four states and one UT slated to go to the polls in March-April. Super-spreader religious event like Kumbh Mela was given the go-ahead to give Hindutva drumbeat precedence over people's health. On 21 February 2021, the senior leaders of the BJP and all the state unit chiefs met to adopt a resolution thanking Modi for his visionary leadership. On 28 February, it was announced that vaccination in government facilities would be free to all "eligible persons" while in private facilities Rs 250 would be charged per dose. Eligibility criterion included first healthcare workers, front-line workers and then those above 60. Later it was expanded to the 45-60 age group. It was asserted optimistically that as vaccine supply would increase, more population groups would be brought into the fold of vaccination.

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Comrade Provash Ghosh, General Secretary, SUCI(C), addressing an on-line memorial meeting of Comrade Krishna Chakraborty, former Central Committee and Polit Bureau member of the Party and ex-President, AIUTUC, from Shibpur Party Centre, West Bengal on 8 June 2021. This memorial meeting convened by AIUTUC was presided over by Comrade Satyawar, Vice President of the organization while Comrade Shankar Dasgupta, General Secretary of the organization read out the condolence resolution.

At the call of the SUCI(C), there is massive and spontaneous response countrywide towards signing of a memorandum to the Prime Minister demanding, inter alia, free Covid 19 vaccination for all, ramping up the infrastructure of the hospitals, construction of hospitals in all wards of the cities, towns and gram panchayets and immediate stoppage of hoarding and black-marketing of medicines, oxygen cylinders etc.

## SUCI (Communist), its class and mass fronts distributing relief in Yaas-affected areas of West Bengal



Nandigram, East Midnapure



Community Kitchen in Kolkata



Kultali, 24 Pgs (South)

### Vaccine Policy

## Inhuman character and naked commercial orientation of Indian imperialist state manifested in dealing with deadly coronavirus

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The crux of this policy was that the entire procurement and allocation would be by the central government. So much was the keenness to swirl in self-eulogy, rather than ensuring people's safety, that on 7 March Union Health Minister Dr Harsh Vardhan proudly declared: "India was in the end game of the Covid-19 pandemic." He went on to detail how India had emerged as "the world's pharmacy" having supplied 55.1 million doses of the vaccine to 62 countries, in keeping with international obligations as a responsible global citizen. Paeans of praise were showered on PM Modi to impress that he was the Vishwaguru (global master) despite the fact that under his stewardship India has effectively sleepwalked into a disaster of such a scale, the worst India has faced since independence. BJP spokesperson Sambit Patra, while addressing a virtual press conference, said 1.07 crore vaccine doses sent abroad were India's aid to different countries. But later, it came to be known that around 84 per cent of the doses sent under 'Vaccine Maitri' package was part of commercial and licencing liabilities of the Indian manufacturers, and no dole of magnanimity of the Indian PM. As cases have skyrocketed and vaccine supplies have plummeted, India's vaccine diplomacy has come under the scanner. Today's dominant narrative is that by prioritising vaccine exports over domestic inoculation, India has done a wanton disservice to its people.

### Deadly second surge made vainglorious assertions short-lived

But both spruced up celebration and vainglorious assertions were short-lived. January itself saw the US undergoing a third wave of the pandemic with an unprecedented 5,00,000 new cases daily and a per day death toll of well over 4,000. UK numbers had exploded with a new variant that was one-and-a-half times more infectious. Other European countries too were in their third lockdown because of the new wave. But, in overzealousness, the BJP government and leaders defied the dire warnings of epidemiologists that a second surge, more severe than

the first, was going to start in India. The wilful neglect of necessary preparations to face the approaching disaster was glaring. It was because the overcomplacent BJP leaders, including the PM, were not only caught up with electoral politics of winning assembly elections in the four states and one UT, but themselves party to glaring violation of health protocols in the process. And the outcome has been calamitous. By 4 April 2021, India had exceeded the daily new case load peak of last September. Over one lakh cases with a death toll of 700 per day were being registered. On 15 April, India crossed 2,00,000 new cases daily, doubling to 4,00,000 cases on 30 April. Active cases mounted to 32 lakhs million and daily deaths exceeded 3,500. Yet, inaugurating a number of blood donation camps on 27 April, the Union Health Minister went on parroting that India "is better prepared in 2021 to beat the pandemic compared to 2020." Such statements fly in the face of the daily reality faced by hundreds of thousands of Indians struggling for even the most basic medical care or even a dignified death.

### The vaccine mess

What was needed was that during the 6-7 months' of breathing time available between dip in the first wave in September 2020 and gush of the second wave in March 2021, healthcare facilities (hospitals, beds, doctors, nurses, medicines, oxygen and other requirement) were to be ramped up with a god speed. Simultaneously, every attempt was needed to be made for producing as well as procuring from all available sources maximum number of vaccines so as to provide considerable protective shield to the countrymen. But the government's vaccine policy was being revised every now and then which ultimately made a mess of the whole thing. No meeting of the National Executive Council, the apex decision making body under the National Disaster Management Act that had been invoked in 2020, was convened between November and March, either to track the behaviour of the virus or to follow-up on implementation of decisions taken in 2020 to augment health infrastructure and vaccine supply. Other than banning exports of

vaccines in end-March, no attempt was made to have a re-look at either augmenting vaccine production or accelerating the pace of vaccination. The PM even reprimanded the states on 8 April that they were running after vaccine forgetting the necessity to increase the number of corona tests. Upto 18 April, no state was allowed to procure vaccines directly from any manufacturer. Central government was supposed to buy and distribute vaccines to the states. At that time, the government, who had way back in October 2020 been pleading in the WTO for abolishing TRIPS provisions (patent right) in respect of corona vaccines, could make formal arrangement of boosting domestic production by waiving patent protocols and give license of Covishield and Covaxin production to other competent producers in the country (including two government companies). Foreign vaccine developers that applied for authorisation were told to carry out bridging trials that would take a few months before emergency use authorisation could be given. Then, by a reversal of policy, the central government on 19 April asked the states to buy vaccines directly from open market even by floating global tenders while it is a known fact that many state governments do not have necessary funds to procure the vaccines. Moreover, the central government retained the right to fix the quota of procurement by each state. Why could not the Centre go for inviting global tender when, as is known to all, giant manufacturers would naturally be interested to sell bulk volume to a union government rather than responding to smaller indents by the provinces of a federal state? Also, the India government like other powerful imperialist-capitalist countries took no initiative in pooling all the available resources with them to provide momentum to vaccine discovery and proper distribution. Such pooling of global resources together could also help improving health infrastructure and other medical requirements worldwide to fight and thwart the pandemic invasion.

### Fuss of 'Tika Utsav'

Surprisingly, when vaccine availability was far from requirement, PM Modi had announced a 'Tika Utsav', or a

vaccine festival, between 11 April and 14 April, with a declaration that maximum number of eligible people would be inoculated in the shortest time. In a virtual meeting with all chief ministers, PM said he believed the 'Tika Utsav' would help in "creating a sense of achievement" for people after getting vaccinated. However, the number of new vaccine doses in those four days of the so-called vaccine festival was found less than other days in April. The number of new vaccine doses administered on 11 April stood at 29,33,418 - much less than the new doses administered on 8 April (41,35,589), 9 April (37,40,898) and 10 April (35,19,987). Obviously, questions were raised over the very purpose of organizing such a super-flop 'Tika Utsav' other than befooling the people and the world. Then, as the pandemic was still on the rise, the government in a queer move announced on 21 April a revised policy. In this, 50% of vaccines manufactured for India are to be sold to the central government. The other 50% would be sold in the open market, with state governments and private hospitals competing for it. Again on 1 May, the Centre announced that it would not bear the expenses of vaccinating people of age group 18 to 45, that had by then become eligible for getting vaccination. Immediately, in May, only nine big corporate hospital groups have reportedly cornered 50% of the vaccines to be sold at commercial price for minting profit. This is also putting smaller hospitals in distress as they are denied the idented quotas. Incidentally, vaccination rates had dropped from above 35 lakhs jabs a day to below 25 lakhs in early May reflecting a looming vaccine supply crunch in the near term.

### Distressed people are burdened and harassed

In a country where people are already reeling under the economic burden caused by the pandemic, not to mention of the huge job loss, it is anyone's guess how many can afford to get themselves and their families vaccinated at the stipulated higher rates at private hospitals. There are many state governments which do not have the necessary funds to procure the vaccines. Moreover, after standing in the queues for several hours, people in many hospitals had to return empty-handed as the paltry stock was used up in no time. "No vaccine" signboards were on display in many

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# Judicial observations on administrative handling of Covid Horror

## Delhi High Court

- i) Delhi High Court observed on 20 April that economic interests cannot override human lives and suggested some reduction of steel and petroleum production to divert oxygen to COVID 19 patients. It said if nothing is done, then "we are heading for a bigger disaster".
- ii) On 21 April Delhi High Court issued unusually strong strictures on the Modi government and private industries, to order the Centre to 'forthwith' provide oxygen by whatever means ('beg, borrow or steal') to hospitals facing shortage in treating serious Covid patients. The Court observed, it seems human life is not important for the state. "Do you want to see thousands of people dying in the country?" asked a Bench of two judges. "Why is the Centre not waking up to the gravity of the situation? We are shocked and dismayed hospitals are running out of oxygen, but steel plants are running," the Bench observed.
- iii) On a day when 20 people died at Jaipur Golden Hospital because of oxygen shortage, the Delhi High Court said it would 'hang' anyone who tried to obstruct oxygen supply to the city that could prove fatal for patients in hospitals.
- iv) On 22 April, Delhi High Court observed that the Covid 19 situation has turned precarious; many hospitals are running out of oxygen; the anguished bench observed: We all know that this country is being run by god. Delhi High Court directed the Centre to ensure oxygen supply. "How many states are facing the kind of (oxygen) shortage Delhi is facing? People will keep dying and you will not do anything?" This is how an anguished Delhi High Court bench questioned the Centre on Wednesday,

observing that Delhi hadn't received its allocated quantity of medical oxygen for a single day. The Court was referring to the quantity of 490 metric tonnes (MT) of liquid medical oxygen allocated to Delhi. "What happened to that figure? What about the promise of 480-490 MT?" it asked.

v) Covid 19 has not spared even a single family and still central government's officers are living in "ivory towers" oblivious of ground realities, observed the Delhi High Court which on 17 May was of the view that manufacturing of Sputnik V vaccine in India is giving an opportunity to the nation staring at shortage of vaccines.

vi) "God bless this country," was another remark of a bench of Justices Manmohan and Navin Chawla which castigated the Centre for not being alive to the pandemic situation that is taking so many lives. It said "no one is applying its mind" when there is an opportunity for the government to get millions of vaccines and it should use this as a window. "Otherwise, deaths will continue to happen. Every day you are castigated by each and every court and still you are not awake." "Which bureaucrat is giving you instructions. Is he not alive to the situation? God bless this country. That is why we are facing this situation. In such matters instructions are to be taken from the highest authorities, that too within 30 minutes," the bench said. It added, "Does your officer not see so many deaths are taking place in the country and we are short of vaccines. Your client is not alive to the situation."

vii) The bench, which was critical of the Centre's stand on the issue, said "You (government) are so short of vaccines and you are not taking it through. May be it

is an opportunity for you. Don't be so negative. It is like a raging fire and nobody is bothered. You people don't understand the larger picture or what." "Tell your officers it is an opportunity for you, don't lose it. The virus has not spared any single family. Your officers are living in ivory towers".

viii) The Delhi High Court on 21 May held the Government's action of imposing Goods and Services Tax (GST) on Oxygen concentrators imported for personal use as 'unconstitutional' and said persons looking to import oxygen concentrators should furnish an undertaking that the devices won't be used for commercial purposes. A Bench of the Court held that oxygen concentrators constitute a life-saving device during the ongoing COVID 19 pandemic and therefore, should be treated on par with life-saving drugs. "Oxygen concentrator, on the face of it, is a life-saving device," One member of the Board said. "In times of war, famine, floods, pandemic, a different approach needs to be adopted. We have also indicated and taken judicial notice of the fact that funds have been allocated for healthcare in this Budget... We would have liked more time to delve into these issues but both of us thought that time is of the essence and waiting too long would take away the meaning of the judgement," the High Court Judge said

## Calcutta High Court

ix) 24 Covid patients on ventilator support suffocated to death. On 22 April, only hours after Modi cancelled four rallies in the state (West Bengal) citing several high-level meetings to tackle the Covid crisis, the Election Commission banned roadshows, vehicle rallies and public meetings of more

than 500 people, noting that political parties and candidates were "still not adhering to the prescribed safety norms". On the same day, the Calcutta High Court expressed dissatisfaction with the EC over the enforcement of Covid norms during the election process.

x) Calcutta High Court came down heavily on the EC for not taking proper action over not following of Covid 19 guidelines on the voting day and during campaigning time. After that the EC banned road shows and vehicle rallies and no public meeting having more than 500 people.

xi) A division bench of Calcutta High Court presided by Chief Justice T B N Radhakrishnan told the Election Commission that issuing circulars and holding meetings on the issue were not enough. Mere 'banning' was not enough. The EC directives should be treated like a high court order and 'strictly enforced'.

## Allahabad High Court

xii) Allahabad High Court took note of deaths of 135 teachers, shikshamitras and investigators assigned panchayat election duty, and issued notices to the UPSEC (UP State Election Commission) asking why it failed to check non-compliance of Covid guidelines during multiple phases of the panchayat elections and why action should not be taken against it and its officials for Covid violations.

xiii) Allahabad High Court on 20 April had directed the UP government to impose strict restrictions till 26 April in five cities-Allahabad, Lucknow, Varanasi, Kanpur Nagar and Gorakhpur but stopped short of calling it a 'complete lockdown'.

xiv) The Allahabad High Court on 19 May observed that the "entire medical system"

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## Vaccine Policy

# BJP Government's vaccine policy is in a veritable mess

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hospitals and inoculation centres. Such is the sorry state into which the BJP government has pushed its own people. Incidentally, even known autocratic imperialist-capitalist countries like USA, UK and Brazil who had initially underestimated the impending Covid 19 threat and took preventive steps much later after considerable damage having been done, have also did not hesitate to vaccinate their citizens free of cost. But in India, many people have to shell out money from their pocket to be vaccinated.

Another factor grossly violative of equity is the mandate of online registration of the names of vaccine-seekers on CoWIN portal. But over 75% of Indians live in rural areas and that too in abject poverty. How can they be expected to register their names on CoWIN portal? How far is it justified to expect that an illiterate villager from rural India would cross the "digital divide" to register for Covid-19 vaccination on the CoWIN portal where slots disappear in the blink of an eye? On that count, vaccination policy today is entirely exclusionary of the rural areas. It is noteworthy that over 50% deaths during the second wave are from rural India. Naturally, discontent is brewing up among one to all.

### Roaring trade of vaccines by the corporate manufacturers

Next is the aberrant roaring trade of life-saving vaccines by profit-greedy corporates with the government in tow. There are no vaccine manufacturers in the public sector today. This was indeed not the case not so long ago. Before the policies of globalization - liberalization, much of the vaccine needs in the country were met by public-sector manufacturers. It is because of the privatization policy of the governments which have resulted in the demise of such institutions. The governments had shut down these institutions citing them as being sub - standard instead of reinvesting in them or bringing them up to modern standards. The absence of public manufacturers has meant that the private sector companies are free to decide on the price of vaccines.

In India, only two domestically manufactured vaccines are currently being used in the vaccination programme: Covishield by the

Serum Institute of India Pvt Ltd (SII), and Covaxin by Bharat Biotech International Ltd. Needless to say, both of these are private companies. Initially, the central government had procured the vaccines from these companies and declared administration of those doses free of cost to those aged above 60, and to other priority groups like front-line health- and other workers who only comprise a fraction of the population. Even then, with parallel availability of vaccines in private hospitals at a price, many had taken the jabs there as well. Subsequently, in a move that was a deadly blow for a significant population, the BJP - led government had negotiated a deal with the companies that they would be allowed to sell 50% of the manufactured doses to state governments and private sectors at prices determined by them. As a result, SII priced its Covishield vaccine at Rs.600 a dose for private providers and Rs 400 for states, later scaled down to Rs.300, while Bharat Biotech had initially priced a single dose of its Covaxin for states at Rs 600 and for private sector at Rs 1200 . This price differential is clearly based on profit maximization at a time the humanity is in an unprecedented health crisis and facing life threat. Both, Covishield and Covaxin have been developed with the help of considerable public money. While Covishield was developed by Oxford almost entirely with public money, Covaxin was a product of a Public-Private partnership (PPP) venture which has considerable public input. The duplicity of such companies became apparent when Bharat Biotech tried to present Covaxin as wholly their own work. In the true spirit of how Intellectual Property Rights is conceived in the capitalist system, these companies are making huge profits out of research and products that are wholly or partially paid for by public funds. Now, Sputnik V, a third vaccine from Russia, has been approved. But the vaccine on being imported would be priced Rs 995. Every recipient need to take two doses of either vaccine so the cost would be double. Gone are the days of Madam Curie who refused to patent Radium because she believed that every research was a product of the combined knowledge of the society. In the text books of bourgeois economics, there is a concept of 'positive externality'. If

any product comes under that category, its price cannot be determined by market. The state ought to take responsibility of distributing that product. But in India, price of even a pandemic vaccine is being left to market.

### Argument of shortage of fund is spurious

Another argument, harping which the government has washed its hands off from the financial responsibility is that it does not have sufficient funds. What is disquieting is the fact that in the last budget with the effects of the first pandemic in full view, the Union BJP Finance Minister provided Rs 35,000 crores for Covid-19 vaccine in Budget Estimate 2021-22 and committed to provide further funds if required. A back of the envelope calculation would indicate that if India were to vaccinate 75 percent of its 900 million strong population that is above 18 years, the total number of vaccine doses needed is 1.35 billion. If the government were to procure at Rs 200 a dose, it works out to Rs 27,000 crores, much lower than the budget allocation. Experts have estimated that it would cost the government Rs 50,000 crores to carry out the entire process of vaccination in the country. Does not the government spend more than this amount on other projects? Anyone going through the recent Union budget will see that projects under the National Highway Authority of India have been allocated more than Rs.50,000 crores. Even the construction of the Central Vista, which has not been stopped in this gravest of situation will cost Rs.20,000 crores of public money. Need there be greater proof that the government's priority is not the lives of the citizens of the country but beautification of the residence of the PM, Vice-President, Parliament house and the adjoining sites to showcase "India's progress and prosperity"? Further, despite repeated requests from many quarters including the citizens, the government has not withdrawn GST on vaccines, medicines and other medical equipment like oxygen cylinders etc. on the false pretext that it would make the manufacturers ineligible to claim the input tax credit on the raw materials or services used in the supply of vaccines. And hence the end-price would shoot up. If that be true, how is that at present, items attracting GST are becoming costlier with every passing day? For information of all, a 5% GST is levied on domestic supplies and commercial imports of vaccines, while Covid

drugs and oxygen concentrators attract 12%. Do any of these fiscal policies have a semblance of concern for the pandemic-affected wretched people?

### Apple-cart has been upset

The BJP PM, it may be recalled, had put pressure on Indian manufacturers to declare discovery of vaccine even before August 2020 so that he could announce this during Independence Day speech on 15 August. But that scheme failed as minimum scientific tests and trials about the efficacy of a vaccine required much more time. So that attempt to arrogate to himself the glory of being the pioneer of corona vaccine fell through. Then the PM, who had hitherto been taking pride in making 'Atmanirvar Bharat', intended to receive the title of 'Vishwaguru' through fictitious claim about India's progress in vaccine production. But that too proved abortive as crunch of vaccine shortage assumed such a proportion that he had to look outside for procuring vaccine. The Foreign Minister was made to rush to USA with a begging bowl for vaccine and raw material. The Pharma giants like Pfizer, Moderna, Johnson and Johnson are demanding indemnity as a pre-condition to enter into supply contracts with India, and local manufacturer Serum Institute of India (SII) is also seeking the same. The indemnity will protect manufacturers from any potential civil-legal liability or provide immunity from being sued by people for any unforeseen complications arising from their Covid-19 vaccines. It is learnt that the BJP government has been considering the requests. This is how India and its BJP PM went from being a 'Vishwaguru' and the world's pharmacy to this role of a beggar when 60 days earlier, the ministers, ruling party leaders and the sycophants were caught up in a self-congratulatory frenzy of having defeated the pandemic. 'Atmanirbhar' is now succumbing to reliance on others.

### Centre faces ire of Supreme Court

A three-judge Bench of the Supreme Court held the vaccine policy as "arbitrary and irrational". The Court also asked the government to "please wake up and smell the coffee". "What is the rationale for this dual pricing policy? Why is the Centre procuring at a lower price and the Centre fixed its vaccine purchase at 50% and left the States to their own devices?...

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**Judicial observations**

## Entire medical system of Uttar Pradesh in smaller cities and villages is left to *Ram Bharose* (at the mercy of God)

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of Uttar Pradesh "pertaining to the smaller cities and villages can only be taken to be like a famous Hindi saying, Ram Bharose (at the mercy of God)". The judges added, "One can guess where we are leading people of this state to, i.e. third wave of the pandemic". Asking the government to increase testing, it added, "... if we fail to identify a Covid infected person at the earliest, we are definitely inviting a third wave".

xv) On vaccines, the High Court said: "one cannot understand as to why the government of ours which is a welfare state is not trying to manufacture the vaccine itself on a large scale". Noting that several vaccine-producing countries had agreed to the waiver of intellectual property protection, it said, "our central agencies may give the green signal to various manufacturers who have the infrastructure to manufacture the vaccines on a large scale".

### Madras High Court

xvi) Coming down heavily on the Election Commission for "not stopping political parties" from violating Covid protocols during their campaign rallies for Assembly polls in four states and a Union Territory over the last month, the Madras High Court said that murder charges should probably be imposed on the panel for being "the only institution responsible for the situation that we are in today". The scathing observations came four days after the Calcutta High Court had censured the EC for not doing enough to ensure that political parties were following appropriate Covid protocols amid the surging second wave. "You have been singularly lacking any kind of exercise of

authority. You have not taken measures against political parties holding rallies despite every order of this court saying 'maintain Covid protocol, maintain Covid protocol'," the Madras High Court observed. Remarking that the panel has been "the most irresponsible over the last few months in not stopping political parties from wanton abuse of the COVID 19 protocol". It asked whether the EC, which is a Constitutional body, "was on another planet when poll rallies were held".

xvii) Public health was of paramount importance and that it was distressing to note that Constitutional authorities had to be reminded of it. Only when a citizen survives, would he/she be able to enjoy the rights that a democratic republic guarantees to him/her, the Court said. "This situation now is of survival and protection and everything comes next", the Court added.

xviii) The Madras High Court bench also directed the EC to prepare a blueprint before May 2 on how Covid protocol will be maintained so that "this state does not succumb to your idiosyncrasies any further". Otherwise, the court warned, it will order the counting to be stopped.

xix) Later, issuing an interim order on the plea, the court said: "Despite repeated orders of this court, going on like a broken record at the foot of almost every order on an election petition, that Covid protocol ought to be maintained during the campaign time, the significance of adhering to such protocols may have been lost on the Election Commission, going by the silence on the part of the Election Commission, as campaigning and rallies were conducted without distancing

norms being maintained and in wanton disregard of the other requirements of the protocol." The Madras high Court reminded the EC's counsel that it is all about "survival and protection" now and that "everything else comes next". "Politics or no politics, whether the counting takes place in a staggered manner or deferred... at no cost (should) the counting of votes on May 2 result in being a catalyst to a further surge. Public health is of paramount importance and it is distressing that Constitutional authorities have to be reminded," the court observed.

### Gujarat High Court

xx) During the hearing of a suo motu PIL, on the recent surge in Covid cases, a bench of CJ Vikram Nath and Justice Bhargav Karia on 27 April expressed dissatisfaction over the affidavit filed. The court pulled up the government for not furnishing details about shortages of oxygen, the drug Remdesivir, functioning of 108 EMRI ambulances and shortcomings in Covid testing. Justice Karia said to Advocate General Kamal Trivedi : We are heading for a crisis. How to manage the crisis with effort and cooperation from all is important. You cannot sit in an ivory tower and decide we will solve this crisis like this. You have to come down to the ground level and see what the situation is."

### Supreme Court

xxi) On 22 April, Supreme Court observed that the situation is grim. Nonetheless, it seems that a certain amount of panic has been generated and people have invoked the jurisdiction of several high courts in the country seeking various reliefs such as

Delhi, Bombay, Sikkim, MP, Calcutta, Allahabad, and Gujarat. With a slight upon this, the Supreme Court also said the high courts have passed certain orders which may have the effect of accelerating and prioritising the services to a certain set of people and slowing down the availability of these resources to certain other groups. The Central government should place before the Supreme Court a national plan for dealing with different services and supplied during the pandemic.

xxii) Supreme Court bench headed by DY Chandrachud on 27 April termed the massive resurgence of COVID 19 cases a 'national crisis' and said it cannot remain a mute spectator and made clear that its suo motu proceeding on devising national policy for Covid 19 management is not meant to supplant high court hearing. 'Intervention must be understood in the correct perspective as there are some matters which transcend the regional boundaries. Following that, Election Commission banned all victory processions in states where assembly polls have been held and counting were to be held on 2 May. (Assam, TN, WB, Kerala, Puducherry)

xxiii) In a hearing on 24 May 2021, the Supreme Court noted that scared, unemployed and hungry, migrant workers may just want to go home and will hardly care for the finer nuances of "national" and "mini" lockdowns imposed by the government. A division bench of the Apex Court was hearing a suo motu case to provide migrant labourer families marooned in big cities dry rations and cooked food and public transport to workers travelling home to their villages, where they think they would be safe from the clutches of the virus.

xxiv) The court, not quite taken in by the submissions, referred to an affidavit filed by the government. Justice

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## Judicial observations

## Shocked and dismayed to see hospitals running out of oxygen

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Bhushan said the document mentioned only people covered under the Food Security Act, that is, people with ration cards. The court said unorganised labourers, wandering from one place of work to another in mega cities, cannot be expected to have ration cards.

xxv) The court also addresses the government's delay in completing a national database to identify and register migrant workers in order to provide them benefits in times of need. The direction for such a database, the court pointed out, was issued in 2018 and the process thus far had been very slow. The court also asked the government to clarify what steps it had taken under the Code of Social Security of 2020.

xxvi) A three-judge Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud also asked the government on 31 May to "please wake up and smell the coffee" about the farfetchedness of an illiterate villager from rural India crossing the "digital divide" to register for Covid-19 vaccination on the CoWIN portal where slots disappear in the blink of an eye. Justice Chandrachud said the government should be aware of the ground realities in 'Digital India'. Vaccination policy today is entirely exclusionary of the rural areas, the court said. "What is the rationale for this dual pricing policy? Why is the Centre procuring at a lower price and what has the Centre fixed its vaccine purchase at 50% and left the States to their own devices?" Justice Bhat asked. "Article 1 of the Constitution says Bharat is a Union of States. When the Constitution says that we will follow the federal rule. Then the Government of India has to wholly procure the vaccines and distribute them. Here, individual States are left in a lurch..." Justice

Chandrachud said.

xxvii) A three-judge Bench led by Justice D.Y. Chandrachud flagged indiscriminate use of the sedition law against critics, journalists, social media users, activists and citizens for airing their grievances about the government's Covid-19 management, or even for seeking help to gain medical access, equipment, drugs and oxygen cylinders, especially during the second wave of the pandemic. "This is muzzling the media," Justice L. Nageswara Rao, another judge on the Bench along with Justice S. Ravindra Bhat, said about the manner in which Andhra Pradesh had tried to "silence" channels TV5 and ABN. "It is time to define the limits of sedition," Justice Chandrachud said. He pointed out that the Court had categorically told the States not to initiate penal action against the critics of Covid-19 management measures in an April 30 order.

xxviii) The Supreme Court held that paid Covid-19 vaccination policy for 18-44 age group is "arbitrary and irrational". The Supreme Court's observation came days after it said that vaccine prices should be uniform across the country. "Unlike the prior policy, the Liberalized Vaccination policy does not prioritise persons with co-morbidities and other diseases, persons with disabilities, or any other vulnerable groups. This is especially at issue because the experience of the second wave of the pandemic has provided experiential learning that the Covid-19 virus is capable of mutation and now poses a threat to persons in this age group (18-44) as well," the Supreme Court said. The Supreme Court has sought a response from the central government asking it to clarify how Rs 35,000 crore earmarked for Covid-

19 vaccine procurement in the Union Budget was being spent. The court asked why the same could not be utilised for vaccinating persons in 18-44 age group. The Court directed the Centre to place entire data on record giving the purchase history of all Covid-19 vaccines within two weeks. The central government has been asked to place on record all relevant documents and file notings reflecting its thinking culminating in the Covid-19 vaccination policy.

xxix) The Supreme Court expressed concerns on 8 June over the role of private hospitals in Covid-19 vaccination, and wondered whether they would prefer profit over public health. The court's anxiety is real and present as Prime Minister Narendra Modi's speech on 14 June revealed that private hospitals would retain their capacity to buy 25% of vaccine stock from the manufacturers. "Further consequences of vaccination by private hospitals under the liberalised vaccination policy relate to a simple issue at the core of their existence: that while they provide a public health service, they still remain private, for-profit entities. Consequently, they may sell the vaccine doses procured at a higher price, unless regulated stringently". The Court was also worried about transparency. "Private hospitals also may not sell all their vaccine doses publicly through appointments on CoWIN, but rather sell them for lucrative deals directly to private corporations who wish to vaccinate their

employees," the Court observed. "Private hospitals are not equally spread out across a State/UT and are often limited to bigger cities with large populations. As such, a larger quantity will be available in such cities, as opposed to the rural areas," the Court added.

xxx) The Supreme Court on 1 June asked the Centre how it intended to deliver food to crores of migrant labourers who have no ration cards. "How will food reach migrant labourers without ration cards?" a Bench of Justices Ashok Bhushan and M.R. Shah addressed Solicitor General Tushar Mehta and Additional Solicitor General Aishwarya Bhati, for the Centre. The Court said the schemes rolled out so far seemed to cover only ration card holders. "No doubt you [the Centre] are providing food... No doubt some migrant labourers have ration cards... But we are only bothered about those who do not have them. We want to know about your mechanism to identify and provide food for people who do not have ration cards..." the Court addressed the government side. The Court pulled up the government for delaying the completion of a national database to identify and register migrant workers. "Why do you need three or four months? You are only preparing a database portal", queried the Court.

(Source:-The Hindu 26-04-21, 21-05-21, 24-05-21, 31-05-21, 01-06-21, 08-06-21, 11-06-21, Indian Express-27-04-21, 19-05-21, Times of India 29-04-21, NDTV 30-04-21, The Statesman 01-05-21, The Tribune-18-05-21, India Today 02-06-21)

## Bihar Covid-19 toll jumps overnight by 72.84%

On 7 June, the official toll figure in the BJP-JD(U) ruled state was 5,424. But on 8 June, the government said the figure had gone up to 9,375 after it recounted deaths in all 38 districts. A Division Bench of the Patna High Court had in May slammed the Bihar government and expressed concern over inconsistencies in the toll in Buxar district, presented by two top government officials in two separate affidavits. The court had asked the government to verify all facts before placing them on record.

This once again proves how the Covid infection and death figures are criminally fudged by the governments.

(The Hindu--10-06-21)

## Vaccine Policy

## Anyone in servitude of rotten capitalism is bound to spread festering sores of putridity

*Contd. from page 4*

Article 1 of the Constitution says Bharat is a Union of States. When the Constitution says that, we will follow the federal rule. Then the Government of India has to wholly procure the vaccines and distribute them. Here, individual States are left in the lurch...", the Court asked. The Supreme Court has sought a response from the central government asking it to clarify how Rs 35,000 crore earmarked for Covid-19 vaccine procurement in the Union Budget was being spent. The Court asked why the same could not be utilised for vaccinating persons in 18-44 age group. The Court also directed the Centre to place within two weeks the purchase history of all Covid-19 vaccines, entire data on record, all relevant documents and noting on the files reflecting its thinking culminating in the Covid-19 vaccination policy.

In reply, the government, besides shamelessly claiming its vaccine policy to be "just, equitable, non-discriminatory", said that as vaccination of the entire country is not possible in one stretch due to the very suddenness of the pandemic, limited availability of vaccine doses and the vulnerability are the prime considerations. It further submitted in the affidavit that the differential pricing of the vaccines is aimed at incentivising private manufacturers and increasing availability of vaccines in the country. Vaccination through private sector of 25% quantity would facilitate better access and will reduce the operational stress on the government vaccination facilities as those who can afford to pay and prefer to go to a private hospital, would not come to government vaccination facilities reducing the crowd which can continue to serve the rest, the affidavit mentioned. Obviously, this argument is a vain attempt to justify patronization of private manufacturers who are stated to have been reaping profits in thousands of crores by selling vaccines.

### Once again policy reshuffled under pressure

The valid questions raised by the Supreme Court, mounting discontent among people for not being able to get vaccine, pointed finger at the Centre for utter failure

in preventing second corona wave, pressure from the state governments and above all, fast erosion of the manufactured image of the PM forced the BJP government to again reverse the vaccine policy on 7 June. According to the revised policy, "the Centre will take over the 25 per cent vaccination procurement handed over to states earlier." This means that the Centre will procure 75 per cent of all vaccines produced in India and supply them to adults free of cost. Private hospitals, however, will still be able to buy 25 per cent of all vaccines produced in India directly from the manufacturers and, apart from the cost of the vaccine, will not be allowed to charge more than Rs 150 per dose. Pause! This Rs 150 is only the service charge. The actual billing to the vaccine-taker would be Rs 780 for Covishield, Rs 1,410 for Covaxin and Rs 1,145 for Sputnik V including purchase cost and GST. State governments have been made responsible for monitoring the new vaccine plan. However, it has not been clarified if the expenditure already incurred by the states for buying vaccines directly would be reimbursed by the central government. The PM also informed that vaccine supply in India is set to increase as seven companies are producing different vaccines and another three vaccines are in the advanced stage of clinical trials. Procurement of vaccines from other countries has also picked up pace, he informed. One wonders how far his talks would materialize given the backdrop of hitherto given plethora of gimmicks, hoaxes and false promises. Already, it has been reported that 25 crores of Covishield and 19 crore Covaxin would be received between August and December. New vaccine from Biological E, now under trial, would supply 30 crore doses in September. If India needs to meet the target of fully vaccinating its adult population by year end, it would need to step up the average daily vaccination levels close to five times from what has been achieved from 16 January 2021 to 7 June. How would then the new vaccine policy announced with so much fanfare be operational as per stated target?

### Why this inhumanness, cruelty and unfounded optimism?

Obvious question is why is the

BJP government playing such way cruel game with people's health and life in a country which is deemed to be a civilized one? What prompts frequent changes in vaccine policy? Why is the government not providing authentic data on production and stock as well as concrete schedule of inoculation including numbers, targeted groups and centres? Why so much vagueness and mismatch between claim and reality?

Notwithstanding the fact that the present BJP government as well as the BJP leaders are more inclined towards creating a 'larger than life' image of PM Modi and shield behind that all their anti-people policies, failures, suppressions, acts of persecution, brazen violation of rudimentary democratic norms, values and practices, ultimately the answer is to be sought in the system the BJP serves and protects. Capitalism, as we know, is now irretrievably caught in its phase of decadence. It is sunk in putridness--economically, politically, culturally, ethically and morally. Anyone in servitude of capitalism for pelf and power is bound to spread the festering sores of this rottenness. That is vividly manifest during this pandemic when the cruel and inhuman attitude as well as rottenness of dying capitalism are laid bare in the policies and practices, fraudulent approach and acts of the BJP government.

But what has been seen in India is indeed beyond compare. As we have stated above, most of the imperialist-capitalist countries of the West have been providing vaccine free of cost. At least they have that little bite of conscience and could not fully overrule whatever little vestige of democracy as well as concept of a welfare state is still in existence. However, that too is also not in existence in India. To the BJP leaders and government who have established a fascist autocratic rule with wholehearted backing of the top monopoly houses --now on a spree to multiply their wealth riding on the misery of the countrymen - the people's life, woes, further pauperization and utter destitution are all subordinate to their personal ambitions, power-greed, and above all, their desperate efforts to wiping off the piled up dirt on the artificially built superman image of the PM

intact by resorting to all kinds of trickeries, treacheries, falsehood and deceitful propaganda. When examples from across the world have clearly shown that such pandemics can only be dealt by a robust public health system that is standardised to meet all challenges, it is a disgrace that the BJP government of India has chosen to slavishly serve the interests of the corporate behemoths, many of whom have commercial interest and stake in pharma industry, vaccine production, hospitals, manufacturing of medical appliances and so forth. It is reported in the media that going by the prices offered by the vaccine makers, the Serum Institute, owned by Cyrus Poonawalla, the seventh richest person of India and Bharat Biotech, an Indian MNC, would make Rs 35,350 crore and Rs 75,750 crore of profits, respectively. At the forefront of such a blatant anti-people pro-capitalist vaccination policy, common Indians are facing risks that give no second chances. Time has come to rise up against such a disastrous vaccine policy and compel the BJP government to take appropriate measures to provide necessary vaccines free of cost, and set up proper healthcare under its aegis so that predicted third wave of the pandemic can be effectively prevented. This is absolutely necessary because of the fact that experts have already cautioned of a third wave of pandemic coming down in near future.

[*Information Source:* Times of India 03-01-20, 15-05-21, 21-05-21, 23-05-21, 27-05-21, The Wire 03-01-20, 22-04-21, 15-04-21, 14-05-21, 15-05-21, 25-05-21, ABP 03-01-20, 17-05-21, 18-05-21, 03-06-21, 06-06-21, Press release from Prime Minister's office 16-01-21, gqindia 17-01-21, Hindustan Times-24-02-21, 26-05-21, Down To earth 29-04-21, The New Indian Express-25-04-21, The Print 04-05-21, 07-05-21, 10-05-21, Reuters 10-05-21, Bloombergquint-10-05-21, Indian Express 13-05-21, 22-05-21, Business Today-14-05-21, The Hindu 15-05-21, 17-05-21, 24-05-21, 27-05-21, 29-05-21, 31-05-21, 01-06-21, 03-06-21, Prime Time with Ravish Kumar, NDTV 19-05-21 scroll.in 21-05-21, republicworld.com 22-05-21, NDTV 23-05-21, India Today 02-06-21, 07-06-21, Money control 04-06-21, Economic and Political Weekly 30-05-21.]

## 'Vista of PM's India' is in making when real India is reeling under pandemic and other burning problems

What should have primacy? Saving people from the grip of the countrymen from deadly Coronavirus or beautification and reconstruction of the parliament house as well as the residences of the Prime Minister and the Vice-President? Which one should receive the tag of an essential service-providing corona vaccine or beautification project? In imperialist India under the fascist autocratic rule of the BJP government led by Prime Minister (PM) Narendra Modi, the second one is considered to be sine qua non even if several lakhs of people die of the pandemic. No construction is allowed in Delhi's lockdown unless workers live on site. But 180 vehicles have been given permission to bring workers to the Central Vista. Sounds incredible? But that is the truth because the self-applauding PM has his own rule of deciding priorities based on what he can use it to spuriously boost his own image.

'Central Vista' project is a testimony to that. The present Parliament House, Rashtrapati Bhavan, North and South Blocks, Rajpath, India Gate, National Archives and the Princes' Houses around India Gate in Delhi were constructed in 1931. Entire architecture was known as Central Vista. Many of the museums and archives situated in the vista were supposed to be protected under the National Heritage Act. But just one year after he assumed the Prime Ministership, PM Modi decided to redecorate the entire area in his own way in May 2015. He wanted and continues to want Modi's Delhi to leave behind his legacy of

immortality. The redevelopment project includes converting North and South Blocks into public museums, while creating an ensemble of new secretariat buildings to house all ministries, relocating the Vice President and the Prime Minister's offices and residences near the North and South Blocks, and revamping the 3 km long Rajpath between Rashtrapati Bhavan and India Gate. A preliminary estimate of the cost of whole project was put at Rs 20,000 crores which is expected finally to be much more. Entire project is tasked with the corporate oligarch bidders in phases side-lining the government organisations. While around Rs 1,000 crores contract is given to Tata Project Ltd for the construction of the new Parliament, Rs.13,500 crore contract is offered to Gujarat based Sapoorji Pallonji Group for redevelopment of the Avenue. The inauguration of the renovated area is slated to be inaugurated by PM Modi on the occasion of observance of 75 years of Indian independence in 2022. Hardeep Singh Puri, Union BJP of Housing and Urban Affairs has made it clear that the whole idea is Prime Minister Narendra Modi's "dream project". Just as Shah Jahan decided to build a grand mausoleum for his wife, Modi wants to build a new capital for his vanity. So, when next Parliament election would be held in 2024, the ruling BJP would triumphantly showcase this new capital as signature of New India that has emerged under the stewardship of PM Modi. This is not the end. Narendra Modi's political aspirations go far ahead. He is not

just a BJP leader. In fact, he is an RSS preacher. The RSS never works to simply win votes for the BJP. It's main objective is to firm up arch communal obscurantist Hindutva doctrine in India, deny all kinds of the non-Hindutva traditions of the country and destroy all signs and marks that do not conform to Hindutva. Coinciding would be the centenary of the RSS in 2025. 'Central Vista' is therefore not only the personal legacy of Narendra Modi. It is also the centenary tradition of the RSS, the cradle of his politics in the heart of Delhi. That is why, the entire project site is barricaded to be off from public view and engagement of the labourers at the site is in clear violation of Covid 19 protocols. Some of the labourers have also been reported to be working in most unhygienic condition with fear of pandemic attack and even without any payment. But their hardship is of no concern-what matters most is adhering to the deadline of completion of the project that would 'heighten the image of the PM'.

Thus all the burning problems of people's life-the horror of pandemic, soaring price line, growing unemployment, mounting inequality, hunger, starvation, hoarding and black-marketing, promulgation of one after another Black Act to stifle voice of protest, Black Farm Laws to facilitate corporate takeover of agriculture, rising peasants' suicides, so called labour law reforms to put the last nail into the coffin of the workers and employees, reckless privatization and commercialization of health and education, spiralling

crime against women-everything would be prevented from surfacing during the poll. It would only the self-arrogated credit of PM Modi and the RSS-BJP combine for the refurbished central vista spending thousands of crores of rupees from people's exchequer when there is stated to be a fund crunch for vaccines and life-saving oxygen cylinders, for providing requisite cash subsidy to the wretched millions and such other public welfare schemes.

Which sections of people other than the handful of super-rich, beneficiary corporate behemoths and the ruling party leaders alongwith their bootlickers are vitally interested in the project? How is it that when two petitioners filed a petition in Delhi High Court seeking stay on the construction of 'Central Vista' in view of the crucial situation arrived due to recent surge in Covid-19 cases in the national capital and the threat posed by the construction work as a potential super spreader amidst the second wave of pandemic in Delhi, the government has managed to secure a judicial verdict to impose penalty on petitioners for raising genuine issues of public health and questioning the actions of the government in giving precedence to a beatification programme over securing people's health and life?

This very move has once again unveiled the inhuman face of the ruling BJP in faithful servitude of the ruling monopolists who are thriving on the rising misery and penury of the oppressed millions. Would the suffering multitudes allow this brutality or imbibe the necessity of rising in united organized protest to compel the heartless self-serving bourgeois rulers?

(Sources scroll.in 27-04-21, The Hindu 31-05-21, The Print 15-05-21 and 31-05-21, Indian Express 01-06-21, Ananda Bazar Patrika 27-05-21 )

### UP State SUCI(C) vehemently condemns death of 22 patients in Agra hospital due to suspension of oxygen supply

In a press statement released on 9th June, Comrade Pushpendra, UP State SUCI(C), strongly condemned the most cruel incident that occurred at Paras Hospital in Agra on 26 April.

As reported by Dr. Arinjo Jain, oxygen supply was suspended on that day for five long minutes allegedly as a part of the mock drill to identify mortally ill patients from the rest, thereby causing the death

of as many as 22 critical patients. Severely indicting such a grossly inhuman and heinous act, Comrade Pushpendra demanded that exemplary punishment be meted out to the guilty and all bereaved families be given compensation of Rs.5 lakh.

Comrade Pushpendra also voiced the demand that the Government should take over the Hospital immediately.

### Sharp fall in the number of Middle Class in India

A recent report Pew Research Center has revealed that the novel coronavirus pandemic last year pushed approximately 3.2 crore Indians out of the middle class. The report showed that the number of Indians in the middle class - those who earn between Rs 724 to Rs 1,449 per day - shrunk by roughly 3.2 crores. Almost a year into the pandemic, the strength of India's middle class has shrunk to 6.6 crores, down a third from a pre-

pandemic estimate of 9.9 crores, added the report. Citing the World Bank's forecasts of economic growth, the Pew Research Center said, "India is estimated to have seen a greater decrease in the middle class and a much sharper rise in poverty than China in the Covid-19 downturn." A dip in the number of Middle class indicates progressive pauperization of the segment and slip into proletariat, semi-proletariat categories. (India Today 19-03-21)

## Observance of “Drive out Corporates, Save agriculture” Day across the country on 5 June by AIKKMS in response to call of Sanjukta Kisan Morcha



Singhu Border, Delhi



Tikri border, Delhi



Gajipur border, Delhi



Tripura



Uttar Pradesh



Tamil Nadu

**Sanjukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) giving leadership to the historic peasants' movement against three Black Farm Laws and sinister Electricity (Amendment) Bill continuing for over six months, has given a call to organize dharnas in front of the Governor Houses of all the states on 26 June 2021. Besides this, AIKKMS, a key constituent of SKM, has also given a call of organizing sit-in-demonstrations in thousands of villages across the country on 21 June 2021.**

### AIDSO letter to Prime Minister on cancellation of Board Examinations

On 1st June 2021, in a meeting with few cabinet ministers chaired by you, it has been decided to cancel 12th board exams. Regarding this decision in no unclear terms, we want to say that the extraordinary situation that has arisen due to complete failure of the BJP-led central government and different state governments in taking timely and necessary measures right from the beginning in containing the spread of deadly COVID-19 has completely jeopardized the lives of common people in all aspects. This has also resulted in a complete chaotic situation in educational institutions ever since the beginning of the pandemic.

While AIDSO has been demanding that in this situation, following the democratic process, discussions should be organized with different state boards, students' representatives, teachers' representatives, eminent educationists and medical fraternity to decide about teaching, examinations, evaluation and rescheduling of academic calendar, the government on the contrary has completely neglected this demand and has been acting unilaterally while taking decisions. Now, during this 2nd wave of pandemic, while the government had sufficient time to discuss the issue of conduction of the examinations and evaluation and could evolve a scientific evaluation system but due to the negligence of the government the issue had not been resolved. Therefore, in this worsening situation of pandemic as students' safety

should be of prime concern the students, parents and teachers were left with no other option than to demand 'No Exam During Pandemic.' Though the central government to save its face had hastily announced the decision by buckling under the rising demand in several states, but it was done unilaterally and undemocratically.

Further the central government took the decision to cancel the exams without providing for alternative method of evaluation which has caused much anxiety among students. Students are also worried about the admission to higher courses as there is no clear guideline on conduction of different type of entrance tests and other kind of admission process to enter Higher Educational Institutions. Again, since condition of different states vary, it was very important that on the issue of examinations and evaluation steps should have taken following democratic procedures to ensure a uniform, non-discriminatory, scientific and transparent solution for all students in compliance with the Covid protocol. It should have also ensured vaccination to the students of the age group for which vaccination is approved by the medical experts across the world as well as to teachers and other staff. We understand that only by this way, in such a vast country having different situations in different states, the anxiety of students and parents could have been addressed which unfortunately the government has failed.

### AIUTUC expressed deep shock at the tragic death of the workers 'SVS Aqua Technologies'

The All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC) in a statement dated 9 June 2021 expresses its deep shock and profound grief at the tragic death of dozens of workers of 'SVS Aqua Technologies' of Pune district due to fire accident leaving many severely injured. The massive fire that broke out in the said factory due to sheer negligence and criminal violation of safety rules by the concerned authorities took toll of mostly the female workers. AIUTUC demanded adequate compensation to the bereaved families, best possible free treatment to save the life of the injured and a high power enquiry into the matter expeditiously and give exemplary punishment to the guilty officials.

### SEDITION (!)

Delhi Police has registered 17 FIRs and arrested 15 people for allegedly pasting posters reading 'Modiji humare bachon ki vaccine videsh kyu bhejdiya' (PM, why did you send vaccines of our children to foreign countries?) in several parts of the capital city. The FIRs were lodged under sections 188 (disobedience to order duly promulgated by public servant) of the Indian Penal Code and other relevant sections including section 3 of the Prevention of Defacement of Property Act across various districts of the Delhi Police. Delhi Police comes under the purview of the Central government, and reports to the Ministry of Home Affairs. It bears recall that great humanist litterateur Saratchandra Chattopadhyay had once remarked that in this ill-struck nation, there was no scope for telling the truth because that would be interpreted as sedition. What was true in British colonial rule is now several times more true in independent imperialist India. (The Hindu 15-05-21)

#### Corrigendum

Photo of scheme workers' strike on p 7 (on the right) of P Era dated 3 June was of Hyderabad and not Kamataka. Error regretted.

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