

Foundations of Indian Republic De-based Federalism a Case in Point

We have entered the 72nd year of our Constitution's coming into force declaring India a Sovereign Democratic Republic. This is also the 75th year of gaining independence from the British colonialism. The government of the day is observing it as 'Azadi Ka Amrit Mahotsav'. The celebrations are already mired in controversy as the ruling regime is trying to further its communal agenda by falsifying and distorting history.

The RSS and its outfits, which had no role in the freedom movement are now distributing certificates of nationalism and patriotism, trying to fit the diverse freedom movement of our country in their singular, monolithic Hindutva framework. This is harm-

ing the legacy of our great struggle and the Constitution built on that legacy.

Our Republic taking birth on the January 26, 1950 and the moment our Constitution came into force were big steps for the nation, longing to achieve the ideals of Jus-



CPI general secretary D Raja reading Preamble of Constitution [File Photo]

tice, Equality, Liberty and Fraternity, enshrined in the Preamble. Our struggle against the British was a long one with many ups and downs, glorious victories along with setbacks. Indians were resolutely bound together in the fight against colonialism.

Our Constitution tried to give a definite shape to the aspirations of the people for a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic through provisions like Fundamental Rights to all citizens, irrespective of their religion, race, caste, sex or place of birth, Directive Principles of State Policy and affirmative action. In a country of sub-continental proportions like India and its phenomenal diversity of climate, language, culture, regions and political traditions, it was and is necessary that the ideals mentioned in the Preamble should extend

D RAJA

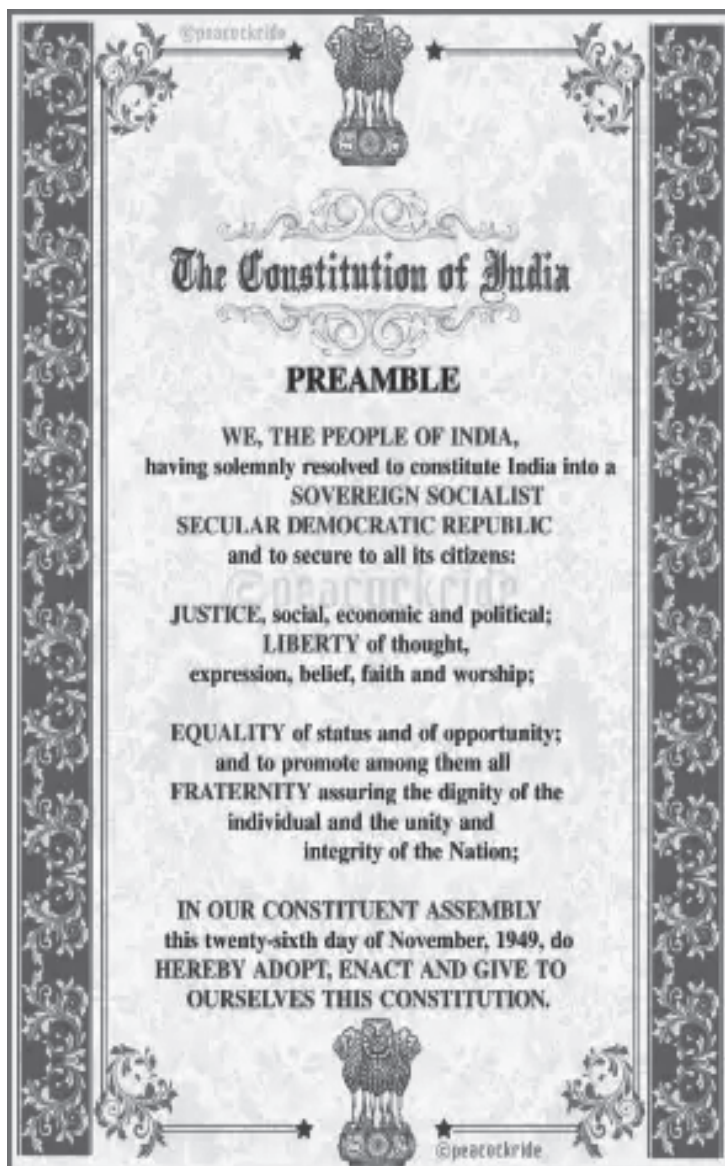
to all levels of governance in a Federal setting. The overall emphasis on equality in the Constitution is visible in other arrangements made around federal spirit and ideas.

Federalism of any kind rests on a written Constitution and on the supremacy of the Constitution. Conscious of the differential needs of the populations of different states, the Constitution makers themselves made provisions for an equitable share of powers and responsibilities for different levels of governments. The lists in the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution — Union, State and Concurrent — are a good example of this division wherein each level of government has its own sphere enabling context-sensitive

decision-making and absence of clashes around authority. Later, institutions for Local Self Government were also added through the 73rd and 74th amendments to the Constitution strengthening grassroot democracy and wider participation in decision-making.

Articles 246 and 243G provide for this division of responsibilities. Article 280 provided for the constitution of Finance Commission to clearly define the financial relationship and terms between the Union and the state governments. Apart from these institutions and the Rajya Sabha, Constitution makers also left much scope for consultative and deliberative bodies as to further strengthen the spirit of co-operation and federalism. Article 263 provided for the establishment of an Inter-State Council for

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Editorial

India suffers from the greatest tragedy of the century. It is the crisis of fragmentation. The Constitution that has always stood for multiplicity, faces the threat of autocracy. There is the majority with its divisive slogans calling for end of an age when all people lived in unity. The entire initiative is aimed at suffocating the voice of people even before it is communicated. The cry for hunger, livelihood, and finally life itself goes unattended. People have been reduced to caste, community and gender. Each one plays its divisive role, which promotes antagonism and feeds into our multiplicity. The areas are divided, localities are divided, every house lives in pain as people do not live as one. Each one has to live according to the space allotted to one. To honour human dignity has become an alien concept.

November 26, 1949 was the day when our Constitution was adopted. But the integration of our huge nation, and unification of cultural diversities was completed only by January 26, 1950. That stands for the people, by the people and also of the people, which signifies that the power is vested in the hands of entire people of the country. The Day itself has been known as the Republic Day. It is on this day the Indian people, irrespective of their multiplicity are empowered to select their own government.

But independence for what? Let us begin with our economy, the life line for our people.

Our economy is wrapped in a mist of lies. One of them is the boast that India is the fastest growing economy in the world. Under this mist the reality is that when GDP falls steeply, each step in the climb becomes

as close to the summit as far down it had gone. Further the decline, brighter is the reach up.

The NSO's First Advance Estimates (FAE) of National Income, 2021-22, were released on January 7. The bullet point in the government release was the number 9.2 per cent. The NSO had stressed that the estimated GDP growth at constant prices of 2021-22 (9.2 per cent) was against the contraction in 2020-21 (-7.3 per cent). The government had all the intentions to remove the fall in 2020-21 and instead record a growth of approximately 1.9 per cent over 2019-20, despite the reality being just reverse. The initiative was not without motive. It is the election time. States that are involved are Punjab, Uttarakhand and Uttar Pradesh and in faraway regions of Goa and Manipur. The sweet touch of lure has turned sore. It is just tip of an iceberg. Devastation is common. Public sectors are bought by corporate houses that have no interest in running them. All they want is to earn cash, without paying anything. Corporate houses are not interested in either production or investment. Industrial expansion is not their domain while public welfare remains a distant dream. The railways, airports, production houses are all victims of their cash starved management. The economy has been stuttering as industrial production, according to official data, has gone down to the bottom at 1.4 percent. Inflation keeps growing. Retail prices follow the same. While in November, it was 4.9 percent, in December it went up to 5.6 percent. In the urban areas, the prices have kept rising and reached up to 5.8 percent, in rural areas, the masses kept suffering at inflation level of 5.36 percent. In the proximity of polls, the measures are not so stern and one example is that of fuel which remains static for now.

The source of livelihood also has become scarce. Employment opportunities are getting scant and downward process is continuing. According to the CMIE, the urban unemployment rate is 8.51 per cent and the rural unemployment rate is 6.74 per cent. The reality is even darker. Jobs are temporary, salaries are poorly, work hours are much beyond the earlier legally permitted hours. Labour laws have been shaped to meet the needs of the vested interest. Women and children are the worst victims of the crisis. It is this section that is increasingly becoming targets of all kinds of exploitation. Children are facing stunted growth as basic food ingredients of an Indian household, the rice and pulses, milk and edible oil are beyond common man's reach.

Then there is lack of teaching facilities. Children in rural India and poor neighbourhoods of urban India have been totally denied the education programmes. They have been growing illiterate as there have been no lessons since last two years. Women have much less job openings and they usually get short term jobs with much less wages compared to their menfolk.

Along with economy, we need freedom also. Constitution has awarded us freedom of expression, choice of livelihood. Our democratic values ensure our freedom to demand jobs, education, health services, and availability of essentials to survive. It also allows us to preserve and observe our cultural stream. But even the breathing space has been taken away. There is the communal hatred, blazing relentlessly to divide the society and get rid of the other smaller half.

It is not the India that our national anthem speaks about.

Democracy in Crisis



Appeal for Election Fund



Dear Comrades and Friends,

The Election Schedule for the Assembly Elections in five states – Uttar Pradesh, Goa, Manipur, Punjab, and Uttarakhand – to be held in seven phases starting from February 10, 2022 has been announced. The preparations for the same are going on in full swing. CPI is making all out efforts to defeat the anti-people, divisive and communal RSS-BJP combine. Sincere efforts are being made by the Party Centre and State leaderships to make adjustments with all secular, democratic progressive forces so that all anti-BJP votes do not get divided in order to ensure the defeat of RSS controlled BJP. This is going to be a big, tough and strenuous battle.

The Left has to play a vital role in building the secular, democratic and progressive alternative. This is a historical responsibility on the shoulders of the communists. In this context the National Council of the CPI appeals to party members, supporters and friends to extend all financial help by contributing liberally towards the CPI Election Fund.

We request all Party comrades to collect funds vigorously and send the same to Party Central headquarters. As this election is a crucial election the results will have an impact on the outcome of the

parliamentary election in 2024. As we are all aware, corporate houses are funding the ruling party. There is no level playing field in the elections. In such a situation we need funds urgently to spend on campaigns.

Every Party member and sympathizer should send fund according to his/ her capacity. Rush your contribution (Cheques/ drafts) to the following address immediately:

Communist Party of India, Central Office, Ajoy Bhavan, 15, Indrajit Gupta Marg, New Delhi – 110002. Please send cheques/ drafts in the name of "Communist Party of India" to Party headquarters. Online transfers also can be sent to our bank:

Name of the Bank: Canara Bank

Branch: Rouse Avenue, CBSE, New Delhi

Account number: 24171010000036

IFSC Code.: CNRB0012417

With greetings,

Comradely yours,

D Raja
D RAJA
General Secretary

Impose Inequality Tax on Super Rich Urban, Rural Poor Must Get Minimum Wages in Budget

The Oxfam inequality report released coinciding with the virtual meeting of the World Economic Forum on Davos Agenda, has exposed in a candid manner how the two year pandemic has widened the inequality in the Globe including India. Specifically for India, the situation is grimmer as the present Government lacks the social security system to protect the poor and the distressed resulting in further deterioration in the livelihood of the poor.

Presently, discussions are going on in the Finance Ministry and the PMO about the shape of the 2022-23 budget and all suggestions are being given by different sections of the society including the industry and the economists. The next budget is scheduled to be presented on February 1 as usual and both the prime minister and the finance minister are expected to state after presentation that the new budget proposals will take India to a new high and catapult the country into the big league of the developed nations.

In the last seven years, the NDA government led by Narendra Modi pursued the growth path that has only widened the inequalities and every economic crisis was taken advantage by the rich to make gains at the cost of the poor and the lower segments of the Indian society. This process intensified in the last two years of pandemic despite continuous government announcements on the so called sops to the distressed by the Modi Government.

Starting with the sudden declaration of lock down on March 24, 2020 in the first wave to the present third wave, the wage earners, the employees of the SMEs, the migrant labour and lakhs of employees of the private sector small companies have been languishing in abject poverty with job losses, layoffs and reduction of income. These were the people who also suffered under the slowdown which gripped the Indian

economy from 2017 onwards. But what has happened to the Indian rich during this period? They have increased their wealth to a record level while the country's economy as a whole suffered.

Oxfam's annual report on inequality in India has focused on the Modi Government's governance structures that promote the accumulation of wealth by a few, while failing to provide safety nets to the rest of the population. The report titled 'Inequality Kills' also highlighted the economic impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the rich and the poor in India.

The report said that by taxing just these super-rich families only one percent of their wealth, India could fund its entire vaccination programme cost of Rs 50,000 crore (6.8 billion dollar). "Instead, the burden of taxation in India currently rests on the shoulders of India's middle class and the poor, and not addressing the proposal for a one-time tax on the wealthy, for COVID-19 recovery, has resulted in the government using the only other available option that is raising funds through indirect tax revenue which penalises the poor," the report said.

In September 2019, before the COVID-19 pandemic, the Narendra Modi government had slashed corporate tax rates for domestic manufacturers from 30 percent to 22 percent, and for new manufacturing companies, the rate was reduced from 25 percent to 15 per-

Nitya Chakraborty

cent, provided they do not claim any exemptions. The government took 36 hours to implement this decision, with the help of Rule 12 that empowers the prime minister to take a decision and get the cabinet's ratification later. US-based credit ratings agency S&P Global had termed the move "credit negative". This corporate tax cut resulted in a loss of Rs. 1.5 lakh crore contributing to the rise in India's fiscal deficit.

What is startling as per the report is that 142 Indian billionaires collectively own wealth of 719 billion (over Rs 53 lakh crore), while the richest 98 of them now have the same wealth as the poorest 55.5 crore people in the bottom 40 percent (657 billion dollar or nearly Rs 49 lakh crore). A 4-5 per cent tax on the billionaires can take care of the Universal Basic Income scheme to ensure a minimum income of Rs. 4000 to Rs. 5,000 per month to the urban and rural poor, especially the people below the poverty line.

The country faces an extraordinary situation and this needs immediate measures to protect the most vulnerable sections of our society. Already, the poor and the unorganised sections of the labour force suffered immensely during the first wave in 2020. The situation continued with the second wave in 2021 and now they are in the grip of third wave. The CMIE report has already shown that more than four crore people have been added to the number of poor again.

So what is the best option at this extraordinary time? All leading development economists are now talking of a minimum basic income meant for the

vulnerable sections of the society in India. This is the only way, the standard of living of a major section can be improved and demand can be generated quite rapidly having positive impact on the country's economy. The US has a capitalist economy with high living standard. Even there, President Biden has framed his rescue package proposals in such a way that it gives additional income guarantee to the lower sections of the American society, apart from the other pro-working class measures.

As usual, PM's addresses these days including the latest one at World Economic Forum on January 17 are more of optics, rather substance. He is showcasing the emergence of a digitally vibrant New India which has no place for the vulnerable. The digitalization of the economy and the other activities is welcome but there should be concrete measures to bring vulnerable population under the programmes, not accentuating the digital divide within the society.

The central government defied all the novel suggestions made by the leading economists like Amartya Sen, Abhijit Vinayak Banerjee and Raghuram Rajan, and instead opted for a shaky dependence on huge bank loan-based revival without taking into account the grim reality that nobody, even those who have funds, are in a mood to spend. The poor and the jobless, in staggering numbers, can be made to spend, and thus boost consumption, only through direct transfer of funds which is possible through this universal basic income.

The Universal Basic Income (UBI) issue generated a big debate in the West, especially the USA

where the issue of inequality came to the fore in a big way during the last presidential elections. Prominent Democratic Party leader Bernie Sanders in USA has been talking about the economies being run in the interests of one per cent and promising to change the system to favour 99 per cent. Even the capitalists of new generation like Marc Zuckerberg and Chris Hughes, co-founders of Facebook, have argued for UBI as not necessarily a comprehensive solution, but as at least a moderating analgesic for the severity of income inequality and poverty in countries, including global powers like America.

Congress leader Rahul Gandhi included the minimum basic income of Rs. 6,000 per month to the people below the poverty line as a part of the Congress manifesto before the 2019 Lok Sabha elections. He is now calling for Rs. 7,000 a month for the poor, both rural and urban and this makes sense at this time of devastated economy. The amount can be reduced to Rs. 5,000 or even Rs. 4,000 per month, but this is of prime need now for saving the lives as also imparting a consumption boost to the Indian economy.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi can still salvage the economy by taking up seriously this proposal of minimum basic income to help the poor and infuse demand in the economy. The funds to be realized by imposing tax on billionaires may easily take care of the resource requirements for this minimum basic income scheme. The opposition political parties should voice their demand for the imposition of this cess on super rich. That is the only way to alleviate the distress of the pandemic affected rural and urban poor and simultaneously boost demand in economy.

CPI Condemns Centre's Refusal to Non-BJP States' Republic Day Tableaux

Communist Party of India general secretary D Raja issued the following statement on January 17, 2022 strongly condemning the partisan attitude in rejecting the tableaux of the non-BJP-ruled states for the parade of 2022.

Communist Party of India general secretary D Raja severely condemned the discriminatory and partisan attitude of the RSS-BJP led Narendra Modi government at the Centre in the selection of tableaux for the annual Republic Day Parade resulting in the rejection of the same from non-BJP-ruled states.

The RSS-BJP combine government is resorting to such rejection as a part of its continued but failed attempts to distort our glorious history and the role played by our freedom fighters so as to suit its divisive Hindutva understanding of India and its tradition and culture.

According to the state government,

Kerala's tableau design was rejected as it featured a statue of Sree Narayana Guru as against the selection jury's suggestion of Adi Sankaracharya. The jury is appointed by the Union defence ministry to select the tableaux for the Republic Day pageantry. Is it not an attack on federalism as well as on India's diverse culture and history?

The party notes with anguish that tableaux of West Bengal, Tamil Nadu are also rejected. West Bengal's proposed tableau for the parade is themed on Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's contribution in the fight for freedom.

We also understand that the Centre has rejected the Tamil Nadu tableaux of Mahakavi Bharathiyar (Subramania Bharati), V.O. Chidambaram Pillai and Rani Velu Nachchiyar.

The party demands immediate roll back of the order and allow all states to display their own tableaux.

CPI Condoles Demise of Kathak Legend Birju Maharaj

The National Secretariat of the Communist Party of India issued the following statement on January 18, 2022, expressing party's condolences at the passing away of Kathak exponent legendary Birju Maharaj:

The National Secretariat of the Communist Party of India expresses party's deep condolences at the passing away of Kathak exponent legendary Birju Maharaj in the early hours of January 17.

The 83-year-old Maharaj ji as he was popularly known was one of India's best known and most loved artistes, who hailed from Lucknow's Kalka-Bindadin Gharana.

The demise of the Padma Vibhushan awardee dancer is a great loss. The party feels that it would not be an easy task to fill up the void left by him.

The party sends its condolences to all the family members of Pandit ji.



What the Others Say...

Inflation conundrum

While North Block mandarins seek to conjure up policy levers in the upcoming Budget to spur India's fragmented economic recovery along, the latest official data suggest industrial output is stuttering with a meagre 1.4% growth in November. More worryingly, inflation is re-emerging as a threat — retail prices surged to a five-month high of 5.6% in December from 4.9% in November. While urban India continued to record a higher incidence of price rise at over 5.8%, inflation faced by rural consumers was at 5.36% — the steepest pace since July 2021. A dozen States clocked higher inflation than the headline 5.6% level, with half of them recording well over India's stated inflation tolerance threshold of 6%, led by Haryana and Tamil Nadu with an over 6.6% print. While the CPI cooled month on month by about 0.35%, this was offset by low base effects that pushed up inflation in food and beverages, and higher clothing and footwear prices. The deferral of a higher GST on textiles, and softening food and vegetable prices this month, may help rein in some of these pressures, but there are other headwinds. Fuel prices moderated after excise duty cuts in November, but this may not sustain for long as average prices for India's crude oil basket are now at around \$84. For now, retail fuel prices have remained static, but this may have more to do with the unstated tendency of not effecting such hikes in the poll season. By Monday, yields on government bonds had hit a two-year high which could upset the fiscal math over time.

Inflation in wholesale prices offered little comfort in December even as it came off a record high of 14.2% in November to touch 13.6%, staying above double digits for the ninth successive month. Economists believe that the persistent gap between wholesale and retail inflation, now at eight percentage points, does not augur well for price stability ahead. Producers coping with high commodity prices and input costs will have to find ways to pass them on to consumers, feeding into retail inflation and squeezing household budgets further. For industry, inflation is as critical an obstacle to higher consumption and growth impulses as the new virus mutations and the third

wave — which by itself is expected to further stoke retail prices. Consistently high inflation, as witnessed since the pandemic onset, constitutes not just a tax on the poor and the middle classes, but is also a potentially permanent wrecking ball for future spending capacity (and growth) amid a damaged job market. The Government, through its statement of intent in the Budget, and the RBI, which has noted that the waning of inflation spiralling across geographies may 'take longer' than expected and will review its monetary policy stance next month, need to communicate their inflation game plan to soothe expectations.

Courtesy: The Hindu

Vemula and the new political wave

The birth of independent India was also its moment of freedom from the shackles of untouchability. The hope of the country's founders, especially its first law minister BR Ambedkar, was that a constitutional ban on the practice would herald the end of caste bias in institutional and everyday forms.

In the last seven decades, that promise has been repeatedly belied. But the death of Hyderabad University student Rohith Vemula in 2016 was a particularly cruel blow because it underlined how young people from marginalised communities continued to battle caste-erected hurdles in their pursuit of ordinary goals. It also showed that despite India's longstanding policy of affirmative action in educational institutions, not much headway had been made in breaking the hold of caste-based mindset in universities.

Vemula's suicide touched off protests as caste oppressed groups pushed for a statutory regulation against campus-based harassment and pervasive prejudice. Student bodies asked the government to enact a law against caste prejudices on campuses. Six years on, the demand remains unfulfilled though some institutions have started to address caste discrimination through a distinct mechanism, but a brighter legacy left behind by Vemula was a creation of a new generation of assertive students who have refused to take caste-based harassment lying down. Universities are meant to be nurturing spaces that mould the intellectual capacity of students. Caste is the anti-thesis of this paradigm because it is based on the accident of birth. For India to progress all of her people have to come together. After all, as Carl Sagan said (and Vemula noted), we are all made of star dust.

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

Scientific Ideology is Beacon of Change

A colleague of mine wrote an article recently in Marathi language weekly of the Communist Party of India "Yugantar", with the title "What to do with this mindset?". He enumerated his experiences working with people living in jhuggi-jhonpadis, for demanding their right to ration cards, drinking water supply, education etc. He said the concerned people did unite under his leadership, but only till they achieved their immediate demands. Thereafter they fell back into their individual roles of providing for their families, children and hardly ever stood up for others in the same locality for some other issue, equally pressing, but for someone else. Some climbed up the ladder, became various contractors' lackeys, or local politician's sidekicks, which was quite normal for others too. In short, everybody got absorbed into the struggle to lead their own lives. Hence my colleague's question: "What to do with this mindset?"

Yes, I thought, is this not a common experience of all of us working in various mass organisations? Are we doing something that is like the ripples caused by a stone on the water surface - they eventually subside into the water body, without leaving a trace?

Yes, true. But that is only describing the society as we find it. The point, however, is to change it, as Karl Marx reminds us.

All this almost came together with the 97th Foundation Day of the Communist Party of India on December 26, 2021. It was founded on December 26, 1925 in Kanpur. AITUC was formed in Mumbai on October 31, 1920, almost five years earlier. Quite unlike the ever new unions one sees sprouting following the formation of ever new political parties.

AITUC was an all India union of unions, which comprised of workers in various sectors, irrespective of their political affiliations. Even the activists of AITUC were of various political affiliations, but all united by the interests

of the workers they represented and all wedded to working with democratic principles. Those were turbulent times, when winds of freedom from the British Raj were gaining momentum. The only organisation of Indian Workers could not stay aloof. In fact it took an active part in the freedom struggle.

Yet, a political party, independent of the AITUC, the Communist Party of India, was launched five years later. Therein lies the answer to my colleague's question.

The issues handled by AITUC were those of the felt needs of the workers. Independence from the British Raj was a political necessity to free up the possibilities of the progress of the entire nation, including the workers. But it was not going to change the fundamental issue of exploitation of workers by their employers. That was and is the wider question that needs a permanent solution.

The Communist Party of India is focused on that question. It believes in and encourages its members to work with people in their localities, help them resolve their problems and in the process,

Sukumar Damle

impress on them the need to unite and organise themselves. This is done by forming various mass organisations, such as Women's Organization, Students' Organisation, Youth Organisation, Farmers' Organisation, Agricultural Workers Organization and so on. The workers' organization, the AITUC, already exists. The Communists working in all these organisations follow the same principles of democratic functioning in decision making and implementation of those decisions.

So far, this is what my colleague has been doing too.

The next step is to conduct study circles for the activists in each mass

organisation, explaining to them how the problems they have been struggling to resolve arise out of the social system prevalent in India and for that matter in various other countries, which is called Capitalist System. The permanent solution lies in doing away with the Capitalist System.

One has then to involve the students of such study circles in leading some struggles on their own - something akin to how we were taught in schools - theory and practice. Activists trained in theory and practice like this are admitted to the Communist Party, which carries on this activity in ever wider circles, preparing the masses for the revolutionary abolition of the prevailing Capitalist System.

One must realise that

there are competing forces trying to influence the masses, with all the means at their command - money, perceptions, media, caste and communal affiliations, the state apparatus and so on.

What we have on our side is the wretched living conditions of the people we work with and that is the reality and the scientific ideology that points to the way we have to proceed.

Again, it was Marx who pointed out that this revolutionary ideology has to be introduced to the masses, they do not have it by birth, but can imbibe it easily because of their living experience. He further pointed out that once this idea grips the masses, they become a material force that becomes unstoppable!

That, therefore, is the answer to my colleague's question. No short cuts.

CPI State Secretary Decries Rejection of West Bengal Tableau

KOLKATA: The central government led by BJP-RSS rejected the proposal of West Bengal government to send tableau to participate in the Republic Day Parade in New Delhi. CPI West Bengal state council condemned this attitude of the Central government.

Swapan Banerjee, the state secretary of CPI, said in his press statement that it is completely politically motivated and neglecting the sentiment of West Bengal people. Last year also the central government rejected the tableau of West Bengal.

Subodh Datta

The proposed tableau was on Indian National Army (INA) led by Subhash Chandra Bose. This year is the 125th. Birth anniversary of Netaji, as he was affectionately called. The attitude of the BJP government towards the freedom fighters is reflected here. The ruling party at the Centre has seldom participated in the freedom struggle of our country. They are trying to hijack others' participation in the freedom movement.

The left front of West Bengal wants to celebrate the birthday of Netaji as "Patriotism Day". But Modi government wants to celebrate the as "Parakram Diwas". Subhas is the symbol of patriotism not of might.

The people of Bengal take it as an insult to them. The chief minister should strongly protest and get all the political parties in confidence against this attitude of the Centre. Chief Minister's protest should be strong since it concerns the Bengali ethos and Bengal's contribution to the freedom struggle.

Foundations of Indian Republic...

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smooth transition of business between Union and states and resolution of disputes, which was constituted after the recommendation of the Sarkaria Commission in 1990 through a presidential order.

The Planning Commission always had space for discussion on issues concerning the federal nature of the polity and was sensitive to the different developmental requirements of states. The Inter-State Tribunals, National Development Council and other informal bodies have served as vehicles of consultations between the Union, states and UTs. These bodies have been instrumental in tackling many difficult issues democratically through deliberations while upholding the co-operative spirit between the Union and states.

The Supreme Court after the judgment in the Kesavananda Bharati case, recognised federalism as a basic feature of the Indian Constitution. Justice Sarkaria and Justice Punchhi Commissions have also recommended ways to improve Centre-State relations and reinforce the spirit of federalism. Historically, these institutions and practices have played an important part in the solidification of norms for the equitable distribution of authority between the different constituents of the State. The norms evolved thus have been simple: respecting the jurisdictions, rule through consensus, being sensitive to diversity and mutual respect.

Certain scholars have pointed out towards the unitary bias in the Indian Constitution in the form of Emergency Provisions, President's Rule, Office of Governor, All India Services, etc. Our Constituent Assembly was full of legal luminaries and individuals moved by high ideals of democracy but they were not operating in a historical vacuum. India was a newly independent state with little experience of democratic practices among the masses.

Dr Ambedkar summarised the situation with emphasis on cultivating constitutional morality: "Democracy in India is only a top-dressing on an Indian soil, which is essentially undemocratic." Moreover, India gained its independence in the aftermath of the Second World War and on the onset of the Cold War. Western Imperialism, colonisation and its use of regional rivalries and hostilities to destabilise the Indian democratic development did not cease to be a threat. After much deliberations and cautions, the framers of the Constitution did place Emergency Provisions in the Constitution but with the sincere expectation that it would never be used.

Debating Emergency Provisions contained in Articles 352 to 360, including provisions for the President's Rule in Article 356, Dr Ambedkar responded to the concerns of the most democratic minds present in the Constituent Assembly by saying: "I share the sentiments that such Articles will never be called into op-

eration and they remain a dead letter" and characterised the Constitution as "framed to work as a federal system". Dr Ambedkar repeatedly emphasised that it is a Federal Constitution. Unfortunately, this is not so in our times as we are witnessing the worst assault on federal system and institutions.

The Planning Commission was scrapped as part of the initial decisions of the Modi government. The Inter-State Council has only met once in the last seven years under Modi, the National Development Council has not met at all under his regime. The tenure of the 15th Finance Commission was mired in controversy and many states expressed apprehensions about devolution. The misconceived GST has already taken away much autonomy available to states and has made the country's indirect tax regime unitary in nature. Many important and politically sensitive decisions were made without reference and consultation with the concerned states. Article 370 was removed without any consultation with the provincial state Legislature.

The Parliament has legislated on 'Agriculture', entry No 14 in the State List of the Seventh Schedule to enact the three contentious farm laws, clearly overstepping its jurisdiction and imposing a law on states. Similarly, the model APMC Act is being imposed on states. Students in Tamil Nadu have committed suicides over the discriminatory nature of the NEET examination. Other centralised exami-

nations are also unfavorable to languages spoken in different parts of India and education boards of different states. The New Education Policy has been flagged as encroaching on the federal nature of the polity.

The BSF's jurisdiction was extended in Assam, West Bengal and Punjab without any consultation with the concerned states. The constitutional offices of governors and Lt governors have come under scrutiny several times in recent years for encroaching on the powers of state executives and legislatures. Further, governors of certain states were accused of working as the long arm of the Union government instead of working as the Constitutional heads of the state. Allegations have been made of governors influencing legislators to destabilise elected governments, installing governments preferred by the Union government and BJP-RSS. Very recently, the rejection of the Republic Day tableaux of Kerala, Tamil Nadu and West Bengal by the Union government prompted protests by the respective states and believers of federalism.

These developments stem from an ideology, which has utter disregard for the diversity of the country and contempt for constitutional values. These are rooted in the monolithic conception of the country, which is the hallmark of RSS-BJP. Their obsession with homogeneity and the idea of 'Hindi-Hindu-Hindustan' blinds them to the benefits of diversity in our country. Instead, they try to impose their own straitjacket on the matters of religion, language, caste and gender going into controlling

the minute details of life according to RSS philosophy, like the choice of partner to apparels. This philosophy of uniformity and flattening out diversity has disastrous consequences for our Republic, society and ways of life.

Starting with 'One nation, One tax', the battle cries of RSS-BJP are now 'One nation, One Election' and as their obsession with homogeneity suggests, they can escalate into 'One Nation, One Language' or 'One Nation, One Religion' anytime, plucking the progressive ideals of secularism, tolerance and mutual respect turning our soil undemocratic again. It should be underlined that Article 1 of our Constitution declares that "India that is Bharat is a union of states", devolution of powers is necessary in such a setting with diverse constituents. Conscious recognition of the federal character of our polity and struggling against the unidimensional flow of power, the RSS and BJP are imagining, is essential to protect our national character with all its diverse constituents and constitutional guarantees.

A struggle at all levels against the Union government's encroaching nature should be waged. Our struggle should be to oust the communal-fascist forces from power. We should strive for making our government as a government of the people, by the people and for the people. The contemporary history calls upon citizens to intensify the struggle to reclaim our Republic.

Huge Digital Shift in India's Education Impacts Poor

The country is undergoing for a huge digital shift in education, which will impact the poor students the most. The government is in a hurry to entertain the corporate houses in the field of education.

Traditionally, the physical presence of students in schools/colleges/universities was very useful which enable the students with direct contact with teachers. This tradition kind of education was disturbed due to Covid-19 pandemic. Here are the key education trends as we enter 2022 with India's education sector undergoing a huge digital shift.

The education landscape in India has witnessed a tectonic shift this past year with the impact of the pandemic and the devastating second wave that hit closer to home.

As schools and colleges across the country were suddenly bereft of the usual student chatter and in-person classroom lectures, India embraced a new age of remote learning with noteworthy speed and commitment.

Curriculums were tweaked almost overnight, teachers upskilled, and students adapted to the 'new normal'. What one assumed was a 'quick fix', has become the norm for the past year and a half, and it seems it is here to stay with many learning institutions adopting the hybrid model.

Thus, digital learning will continue to be the overarching trend as we enter the new year, as well as learning gaps such as assessment effectiveness and curriculum efficacy taking centre stage.

While there has been a quantum leap in the impact and reach of digital education, access to the best content has not been inclusive.

For example, in a recent research report published by Oxford University Press (OUP) titled 'Addressing the Deepening Digital Divide', 70 percent of teachers said the most dis-

advantaged students lost learning due to limited or no access to digital devices.

Many often had to share a device within the family which limited the opportunity for individual learning. Digital education platforms are expensive and out of reach for many families.

Equally, digital competency is a significant challenge, with 56 percent of the teachers in OUP's report citing that a lack of digital skills on the part of

establish a hybrid approach, the next few months will be crucial in order to assess the learning gaps created as a result of the online model.

Ten richest can fund education of every child for 25 years

Oxfam India said that an additional one per cent tax on the richest 10 per cent can provide the country with nearly 17.7 lakh extra oxygen cylinders.



both learners and educators prevented their effective use of digital resources and acted as a barrier to learning.

Technologies such as Augmented and Virtual Reality (AR/VR) and Artificial Intelligence (AI) were already on an upswing, but the pandemic has accelerated the pace of their adoption.

As classrooms shift to computer screens, there is more demand for aides that allow better engagement and visualisation of concepts.

These aides help students to immerse themselves in a more engaging learning environment that encourages them to explore new concepts further and apply them better in real life situations.

While India shifted to the online mode of education, there were, and continue to be, significant gaps with regards to the outcomes.

As students gradually move back to campuses and education institutions

Indian billionaires saw their combined fortunes more than double during the COVID-19 pandemic, and their count shot up by 39 per cent to 142, while the wealth of the ten richest is enough to fund school and higher education of children in the country for 25 years, a new study showed today.

Its inequality study released on the first day of the World Economic Forum's online Davos Agenda summit, Oxfam India further said that an additional one per cent tax on the richest 10 per cent can provide the country with nearly 17.7 lakh extra oxygen cylinders, while a similar wealth tax on the 98 richest billionaire families would finance Ayushman Bharat, the world's largest health insurance scheme, for more than seven years.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a huge rush for oxygen cylinders and insurance claims during the second wave last year.

On wealth inequality, Oxfam report further said

that 142 Indian billionaires collectively own wealth of 719 billion dollar (over ₹ 53 lakh crore), while the richest 98 of them now have the same wealth as the poorest 55.5 crore people in the bottom 40 per cent (657 billion dollar or nearly ₹ 49 lakh crore).

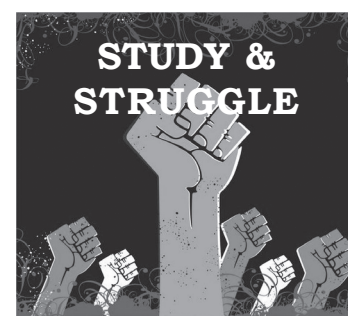
If each of the 10 richest Indian billionaires were to spend 1 million dollar daily, it would take them 84 years to exhaust their current wealth, while an annual wealth tax applied

to multi-millionaires and billionaires would raise 78.3 billion dollar a year that would be enough to increase government health budget by 271 per cent or eliminate households' out-of-pocket health budget and leave some 30.5 billion dollar.

Noting that COVID-19 may have begun as a health crisis but has become an economic one now, Oxfam said the wealthiest 10 per cent have amassed 45 per cent of the national wealth while the share of the bottom 50 per cent of the population is a mere 6 per cent.

It further said that the inadequate governmental expenditure on health, education and social security has gone hand-in-hand with a rise in the privatisation of health and education, thus making a full and secure COVID-19 recovery out of reach for the common citizen.

The study urged the government to revisit its primary sources of revenue generation, adopting more progressive methods of



C. Adhikesavan

taxation and assessing its structural issues that permit such wealth accumulation by the rich.

Additionally, the government should also redirect revenue towards health, education and social security, treating them as universal rights and as a means of reducing inequality, thereby avoiding the privatisation model for these sectors, Oxfam said.

On gender inequality, Oxfam India said women accounted for 28 per cent of all job losses and lost two-thirds of their income during the pandemic.

It further said India's 2021 budget allocation for the Ministry of Women and Child Development is less than half of the total accumulated wealth of the bottom ten of India's billionaire list and just a 2 per cent tax on individuals with an income of over 10 crore could increase the ministry's budget by an astounding 121 per cent.

If the wealth of the first 100 billionaires is accumulated, they could fund the National Rural Livelihood Mission scheme, responsible for creating Self Help Groups for women, for the next 365 years.

On health inequality, the report said a 4 per cent wealth tax on the 98 richest families in India would finance the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare for more than 2 years and noted that their combined wealth is 41 per cent more than the Union Budget of India.

On education inequality, the study said a 1 per cent of tax on wealth of the 98 billionaires in India can fund the total annual expenditure of the department of school education and literacy under the Ministry of Education, while 4 per cent of tax on their wealth can take care of Mid-Day-Meal programme of the country for 17 years or Samagra Sikshya Abhiyan for 6 years.

Bhupesh Gupta: Outstanding Parliamentarian, Builder of Communist Movement

Bhupesh Gupta was the 'stormy petrel' of Indian Parliament, rare luminary of the communist movement and a highly gifted orator. He was born on October 20, 1914 at Itna in Mymensingh district of East Bengal (now Bangladesh). His father, Shri Mahesh Chandra Gupta was a rich landlord. Though born in a wealthy family, Bhupesh hardly cared and plunged into national movement at the age of 16, and never looked back. He chose to remain a life-long bachelor with single-minded devotion to the service of the country and the communist cause.

Bhupesh all along was a brilliant student, educated at Scottish Church College, Calcutta and University College, London. He passed his F.A. and B.A. examinations of Calcutta University from Behrampur detention camp with distinction. In Berhampur, he was in the same cell for four years as Sunil Mukherjee, a founder of CPI in Bihar.

In revolutionary and communist movement

Soon Bhupesh was drawn into the magic circle of national revolutionaries, joining the revolutionary group Anushilan headed by Surendra Mohan Ghosh. He also took an active part in Civil Disobedience Movement, and was arrested several times: in 1930, 1931 and 1933, and was kept in detention till 1937. It was then that he came in touch with the Marxist ideology.

His father wanted Bhupesh to keep off politics, and as such wrote to the government requesting Bhupesh be sent to England for higher studies. Government agreeing, Bhupesh went to England to study law and was called to the Bar from the Middle Temple, London.

But in England he came in contact with the CPGB and student move-

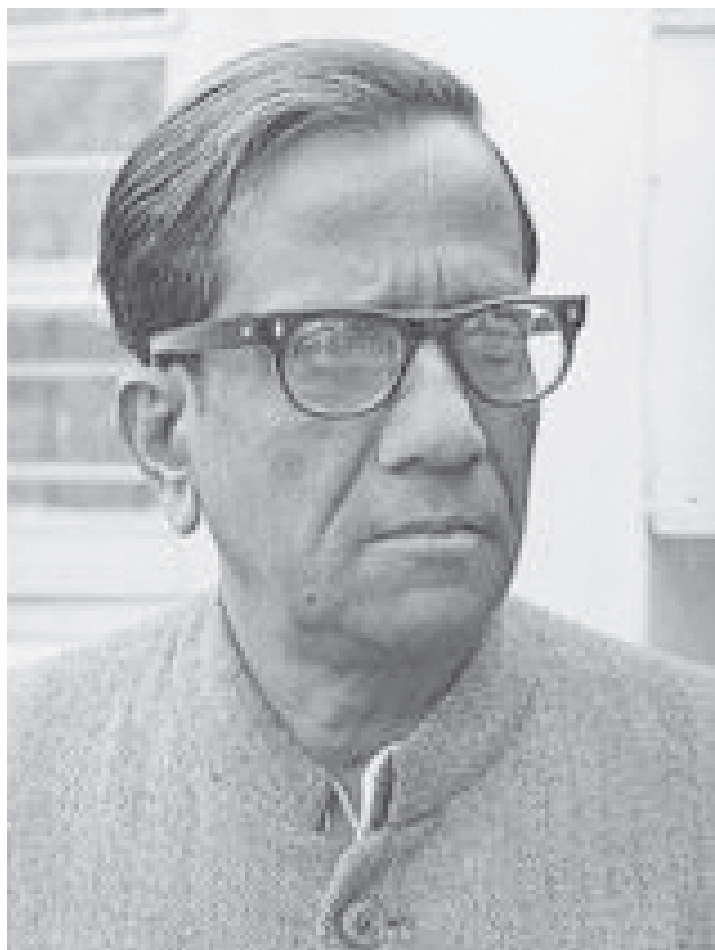
ment, and turned a communist. He met a large number of communists including Indian ones. Bhupesh returned to India in 1941 and devoted himself full-time to Communist Party of India. Initially he worked in the underground headquarters of CPI. He was also one of the founders of the 'Friends of the Soviet Union' (FSU) in 1941.

As a member of Jana Raksha Samiti, Bhupesh did tremendous amount of work during the Great Bengal Famine of 1943. He also was a founder of the People's Relief Committee. He defended the accused in Tebhaga peasants' movement of 1946. He also defended the workers of Jamshedpur including of TELCO in 1946 in compulsory adjudication under the Defence of India Rules.

During BTR period and in Parliament

Bhupesh went underground during the left sectarian adventurist period of BTR Line of 1948-50, which had done much damage to the party.

In 1947, he was elected to the West Bengal Provincial Committee of the CPI and was appointed as chairman of the editorial board of party's Bengali daily 'Swadhinata' in 1951.



Since the CPI was declared illegal by the government, he was arrested in 1951 and detained till April, 1952.

After the party decided to fight elections, he was elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1952. Since then he was its member till his death, as the longest serving member. He was especially felicitated on June 22, 1977 on the occasion of the 100th session of the RS and its 25 years.

He was closely associated with peace movement and AIPSO. Newspapers in Kingston, Jamaica, hailed him as the hero of the Commonwealth Parliamentary conference after his speech on racism and apartheid in 1979.

Positions in the party

Bhupesh Gupta was elected to CC of the CPI at its third Congress, Madurai, 1953-54. He was elected to the Polit Buro for the first time at

Palghat Congress in 1956. After organizational restructuring at Amritsar in 1958, he was elected to central secretariat, a position he held till his death in 1981.

He was the editor of 'New Age' from 1954 to 1957 and from 1966 till his death in 1981. Especially on Sundays he would be hammering away his editorials and articles on a vintage Remington typewriter of 1937 brought from England. His last article was on the Resolution of the CCCP China meeting of July 1981, written from Moscow. In this resolution the CC CPC had criticized the so-called 'cultural revolution' in China, holding Mao responsible for the destruction.

During the days of Maoist ideological-political assaults from the CPC and the consequent split in CPI in 1964, Bhupesh Gupta tried his best to seek ways to avoid split, and after split, to bring about a

reconciliation. But his efforts did not succeed.

World Communist movement

Bhupesh Gupta was a staunch internationalist and a tireless crusader against apartheid and racism. He attended the Bucharest preparatory meeting of the International Communist Conference (1957). He was a member of the CPI delegations at the 1957, 1960 and 1969 conferences of World Communist Movement. He was also a member of CPI delegation led by general secretary Ajoy Ghosh to Peking in 1959 and met Mao Tse-tung (Mao Zedong). Bhupesh Gupta was active in World Peace Council. In fact, the last conference he attended was International Conference of Solidarity with Syria and Palestine Liberation Organisation (PLO) in Damascus (1981).

Condemning Chinese aggression

Bhupeshda demonstrated that communism is the best form of patriotism. His patriotic fervour was very much evident when taking part in Rajya Sabha discussion on Defence of India Bill during Chinese aggression in 1962, he emphatically said: "I declare on the floor of the House that I do not know of any Communist or a trade-unionist of that sort who is opposed to the defence of the country or who is in sympathy with the aggression that has taken place. If anybody... went against resolution and the patriotic position of the country..., he would be

putting himself outside the pale of the Communist party and the movement."

He was the symbol of the Marxist integration of patriotism and proletarian internationalism.

Champion of rural labour and women

Bhupesh Gupta was a great champion of the weaker sections of society: the Harijans, Adivasis, the khet mazdoors, women and others. Both inside and outside Parliament, he utilised every opportunity to further their cause. He was happy when Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) was formed in 1968 at Moga, Punjab. In May, 1972, Bhupesh delivered inaugural address at the second conference of BKMU held at Mannargudi in Tamil Nadu.

He demanded strict implementation of minimum wages, regular employment and legislation to protect the weaker sections and improve their living and working (e.g. Rajya Sabha Debates, December 6, 1962) He said, without improving the lot of agricultural workers, all the talk about rural development was useless.

In 1975, when the International Women's Year began, he made an impassioned speech in Parliament urging the government to take concrete measures to improve the social status and living conditions of the vast majority of women and not confine to celebrations alone." (In RS, May 13, 1975) In this speech, he observed: "Emancipation of women is not a sectarian problem of emancipation of a section of the

people. It is essentially a problem of emancipation of womankind...the very foundation ultimately of our social life."

On secularism and national integration

Bhupesh was in charge of the sub-committee of CEC CPI on National Integration. He opined that discrimination against Harijans was an important factor hindering process of national integration. Bhupesh used every possible forum to raise his powerful voice in the defence of the secular democratic set-up of our country and for strengthening national integration. He was party's representative and main spokesman in the National integration council for nearly 15 years. He stressed that the fight against communalism was a matter of our survival as a civilised and forward-looking society. He meticulously worked out concrete and constructive proposals for meetings of NIC to defeat the designs of such forces and preserve secular set up. At NIC held in Srinagar in June, 1968, he made an important suggestion saying that in case of lack of confidence on the part of minority community in a disturbed area on any official, he should prima facie transferred immediately. For breakdown of communal peace in any area, conduct of all officials should be held responsible.

A powerful writer and speaker

He had eight books in English to his credit, namely: i) Freedom and the Second Front; (ii) Terror over Bengal; (iii)

Second Five Year Plan - A critique; (iv) The Big Loot: An Analysis of foreign exploitation in India; (v) Why this Food Crisis; (vi) Quit Commonwealth; (vii) India and American aggression in Vietnam; and (viii) Right reaction's bid for power. Bhupeshda wrote quite a few books in Bengali also, for example: (i) Nehru Sarkarer Swarup; (ii) Pak-Markin Samarik Chukti 0 Markin Samrajyabad; and (iii) Kala Kanuner Rajatva. They reflect an eloquent testimony to the intellectual height of Bhupesh Gupta.

He exhorted that the Rajya Sabha should always be a "vibrant and living institution" to mirror the urges and aspirations of the people. For example, in a discussion in Rajya Sabha on decision of the U.S. Government to resume arms supply to Pakistan, Bhupesh Gupta very aptly remarked: "It is quite clear that the United States today wants to build a new balance of military power in our region, and therefore they are interested in using Pakistan as a military base. So it should not be taken as if only Pakistan is interested in building up the arms race and America is not or that America is just a seller of arms. The US imperialism knows very well that unless India is browbeaten, curbed, menaced and threatened, it would not be possible for them to have their domineering say in this region of South Asia. Therefore, they made us a special target and that is why they are supplying once again arms to Pakistan. (Bhupesh Gupta in Rajya Sabha, RS Debates, March 10, 1975)

Biographies of Communist Leaders-58

— Anil Rajimwale —

He was often sarcastic but never vulgar, brilliant in his argument but humble, and was in his elements when it came to questions pertaining to the cause of the people. He was literally a champion of the toiling millions and the greatest defender of the downtrodden and the oppressed.

He never countenanced any single flaw of the treasury benches and had complete mastery over parliamentary rules and procedures. Nothing mattered to him more than the supremacy and dignity of the two Houses of Parliament. Bhupesh Gupta was a master of parliamentary techniques, and used all the possible openings: special mentions, calling attention, short notice questions, half-an-hour discussions, and questions, etc, to put across his point of view. Besides, on major issues like foreign policy, President's address, Finance Bill, Appropriation Bill and discussions on working of ministries, he used to make excellent speeches laced with solid arguments.

To give an illustration, on April 22, 1954, when Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru stated in Rajya Sabha that "It has been the policy of Government for the last six years not to allow any foreign troops to pass through or fly over India", it was Bhupesh Gupta who brought to the notice of the House a

newspaper report saying that on April 24, 1954, an American 'Globemaster' carrying French troops to Indo-China landed at Dum Dum Airport and then left after refuelling. He quoted another report of April 27, 1954, stating that a 'Skymaster' belonging to the French Air Force landed at Dum Dum and left for Indo-China. A few days later, he again referred to a report which said that on May 12, 1954, a 'Skymaster' belonging to the French Air Force had touched down at Calcutta and "36 French soldiers lived for a few hours in Grand Hotel in Room Nos. 315, 320, 466 and 490, and at about 3.30 a.m. in the early hours of morning they left." Everybody, friend and foe alike, admired Bhupesh Gupta's masterly and exceptional qualities as a parliamentarian. He was rightly referred to as "the stormy petrel" of the Rajya Sabha.

Death

Bhupesh Gupta was admitted in the Central Clinical Hospital in Moscow in last week of June. He was operated for stomach cancer on July 29, 1981. He was recovering but died of severe heart attack in Moscow on August 6, 1981.

Prime Minister Smt. Indira Gandhi had said on his demise, "...with the death of Comrade Bhupesh Gupta, the nation loses one of its most dedicated and eloquent sons."

Bhupesh Gupta was widely mourned.

Haryana's 'Sons of the Soil' Move to Hit Jobs, Development

When the world situation has taken a decisive turn reducing the entire world into a global village the divisive right-wing forces led by RSS-BJP are still groping in the dark. They are still trying to make use of rejected and failed policy initiatives only to defend its polarisation activities. 'Sons of the soil' drive proved a miserable failure in Mumbai years back. A big campaign was fought by the Shiv Sena, a particularly nationalistic Hindu and mainly Maharashtrian focussed group in the western part of India.

They were chiefly upset because of three other groups of Indians; the first group were the wealthy Gujarati's, the professional South Indian groups — Kannada, Tamil, Kerelaite, etc, and finally the labourer class of Northern India. In various shapes and sizes, the demands came up as, preference to the natives, better educational opportunities, funding opportunities, job opportunities, etc, to give better livelihoods to native of state rather than outsiders.

This has been an issue both in the plains areas and the hilly regions of Northeast India. In the river plains, the large majority typically depends on agriculture. When competition over cultivable land increases, as a result of a population that increases at an alarming rate, the issue becomes highly contentious. Also, due to such scarcity of land in the plain areas, some migrants have also moved into the hilly regions, which are the traditional tribal areas. As an example of understanding how population pressure due to migration creates competition over resources, consider some of the traditional Bodo-inhabited areas in Northwest Assam such as the districts of Kokrajhar and Goalpara. These ar-

reas have experienced large-scale immigration of Bengali Muslims, from partition and onwards. This has not only changed the demographic profile of the area but also caused many tribals to become landless.

It could also be said that the 'son of the soil' theory offends section 2 of the Prevention of Insults to National Honour Act, 1971. And being disrespectful of or bringing into contempt the Constitution of India is a criminal offence punishable by up to three years imprisonment or fine or both. Not just does the theory disrespect and bring into contempt Article 19 (1) (e) of the Constitution — hence becoming a crime — it is also an offence under section 153A of the IPC as it amounts to inciting enmity between groups of people.

The unity of India is required for economic development of the nation. Article 301 of the Constitution states that trade and commerce shall be free throughout the territory of India. This provision guarantees the economic unity of India, and political unity depends on economic unity. Thus, a factory in Tamil Nadu is entitled to sell its goods in UP, Bihar, Maharashtra, Punjab, Bengal, etc.

Social and economic

development, spread of education, deepening of democracy and politicization can act as a medium for solving the issue.

In the most appropriate and rightful way, the Haryana state committee of AITUC has expressed its strong views opposing the state government's stand.

The Haryana government has brought in the Haryana State Employment of Local Candidates Act 2020, which makes it mandatory for all employers in the state to reserve 75 per cent of the jobs offering a monthly gross salary or wages of up to Rs 30,000 for local candidates. This law applies to new recruitments and will not come into effect from retrospective effect.

The Act applies to all the 'Employers' in the state. This includes all companies, partnership firms, societies, trusts, limited liability partnership firms and any person or employer that employs 10 or more employees in any trade, business, manufacturing units or enterprises.

Though the Haryana state legislative assembly passed the Bill in November 2020, the government made some amendments to the Act including relaxing domicile conditions for local candidates and reducing the threshold level from Rs 50,000 gross monthly salary to Rs 30,000 gross monthly salary for employers. It was finally enforced on January 15. The law will have a sunset clause and will cease after ten years of enactment.

The private jobs reser-

vation was part of the election manifesto of 'Dushyant Chautala's Jannayak Janata Party, the alliance partner in Manohar Lal Khattar-led BJP-JJP coalition government in the state. One of the key arguments of the government has been that urbanisation and industrialisation has led to substantial land acquisition in the state, which has historically been an agrarian society. The government believes this has led to reduction in employment opportunities in agriculture sector for the local youth and the law will help create new job opportunities for them and also encourage skill development. It also believes it will reduce dependency of employers in Haryana on migrant workers and improve their efficiencies.

All employers in the state have been directed to register their existing employees garnering a monthly pay of not exceeding Rs 30,000 on the designated portal within three months and can now initiate any new recruitment in this pay bracket only after completing this process. They will also need to file a quarterly report on the government's designated portal providing information regarding the local candidates employed and appointed in this pay bracket in the previous quarter as per the norm.

Industry bodies for their own reasons have raised concerns on implementation of a law that is discriminatory in nature and against the concept of one nation. They believe this will

substantially increase their compliance burden especially on small and micro enterprises.

One of the key concerns of the industry is also whether enough workers will be even available for jobs in trades that are dominated by workers from certain clusters of the country, such as construction and manufacturing as well as in the services sector such as hospitality and retail. There is a provision for an exemption if an adequate number of local candidates of desired skill or proficiency are not available for a particular category of jobs. But the government can accept or reject the claim or direct the company to train local candidates in the desired skills.

India Inc has also warned that this will impact the business-friendly image of the state, ease of doing business rankings and may also discourage fresh investments by industries. The industry bodies have also said any rule which tries to artificially control the internal functioning of a private enterprise against the market, will affect its competitiveness in the market and hurt their productivity.

Several industry bodies have challenged the law in the Punjab and Haryana High Court. But, so far, have not got a stay on the implementation. The court dismissed a plea for early hearing last week and has now scheduled the hearing to February 2.

The RSS-BJP government in the state is digging its own grave by such sectarian moves.

AIBEA Veteran C S Ramaswamy Passes Away

Comrade CS Ramaswamy, a veteran leader of All India Bank Employees' Association (AIBEA) breathed his last on December 29, 2021 at Coimbatore. CSR as he was affectionately called was born on July 20, 1927 in Palakkad in Kerala. He joined Chaldean Syrian Bank in 1944 in Palakkad and then got a job in Punjab National Bank Chennai in August 1946. From there he was transferred to Coimbatore in 1947 when a new branch of PNB was opened there.

It may be recalled here that Comrade H L Parvana, the legendary leader of AIBEA, was also an employee of PNB. He was dismissed from the bank due to his trade union activities in the bank. PNB was started by the nationalist leader Lala Lajpat Rai, who wanted to provide indigenous banking in India. However, the management of the bank did not like a trade union to emerge in the bank.

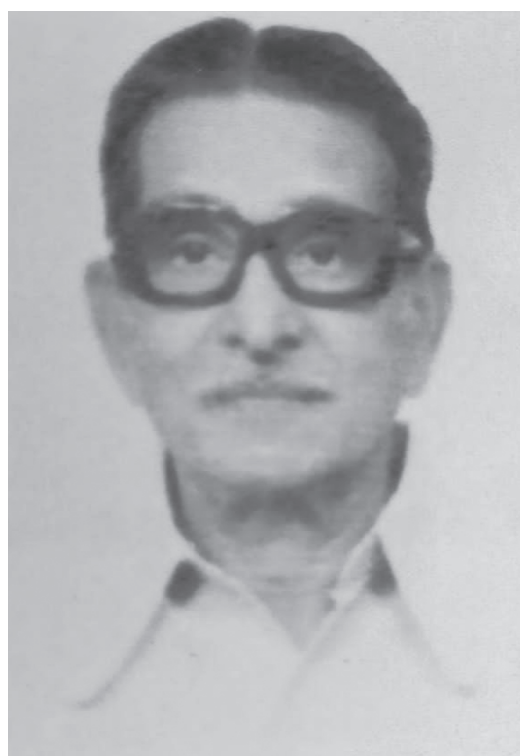
As the bank's viability was not in good shape, the Dalmia-Jain group which had the controlling interest in Bharat Bank merged PNB with Bharat Bank in 1951. In the process, Com CSR was transferred to Mumbai, where he had the rare opportunity to move with stalwarts like H L Parvana, D P Chadha, K J Joseph, D PVashi, P L Sayal and others.

Com Parvana, who joined Bharat Bank in 1944 after his short stint in PNB had again to encounter the onslaught of the new management in PNB. Out of 2,500 employees of the Bharat Bank, PNB had absorbed 800 employees only. Com Parvana and other union activists were selectively excluded from absorption. The PNB employees Federation called for indefinite strike, which lasted for 49 days. The matter was referred to Sastri tribunal, where the renowned communist lawyer A S R Chari argued the case and finally all the erstwhile employees of Bharat Bank were absorbed by PNB. But during the strike, 159 employees including D P Chadha, P L Sayal were victimised by the bank. The case went up to Supreme Court, which finally agreed for the reinstatement of the victimised employees in 1963.

In Mumbai, Com CSR was elected the state secretary of PNB Union. When the federation hosted the Seventh Conference of AIBEA in 1955, Com CSR played

B B Ramani

a pivotal role along with Com K J Joseph, who was working in Bank of India, Mumbai branch. Com CSR was adept in fund raising. He contacted the famous film actor Raj Kapoor and left-oriented writer and film director K A Abbas and obtained their permission for screening their film 'Boot polish' as a benefit show. Along with Com Joseph, he also raised around Rs 25,000 through publishing the conference souvenir.



After a gruelling experience in Mumbai, both CSR and Joseph came down to Tamil Nadu. CSR worked in Chennai and Madurai and finally came to Coimbatore, where he worked till his retirement. Both the leaders started organising the Coimbatore district Bank Employees' Association (CDBEA) as a well-knit unit of Tamil Nadu Bank Employees Federation. A good union office with a meeting hall was built for CDBEA at the heart of the city under their supervision. It was made a meeting place not only for bank employees but also co-operative and insurance employees' unions.

CSR was elected as joint secretary of TNBEF. CSR and Joseph played a sterling role in organising AIBEA unions in private sector banks like Karur Vysya Bank, Lakshmi Vilas Bank, Bank of Madurai. They also identified good cadres in the district centres, who could form district associations under TNBEF. Com CSR was a skillful defence representative in domestic enquiries and saved employees from losing their

jobs for flimsy reasons.

Later Com CSR was nominated to the Board of PNB as the Workman Director representing AIBEA.

Com CSR had not limited his activities among bank employees alone. He was also closely associated with outstanding leaders of Communist Party of India, namely Com N K Krishnan and Parvathi Krshnan, who were then residing at Coimbatore and carrying out their trade union work. He took up the responsibility of maintaining the accounts of the Coimbatore District Mill Workers Union, affiliated to AITUC. He was elected the treasurer of the Union. Further, he used to assist the Textile Union in formulating the wage / bonus demands by scrutinising the balance-sheets of the Textile Mills.

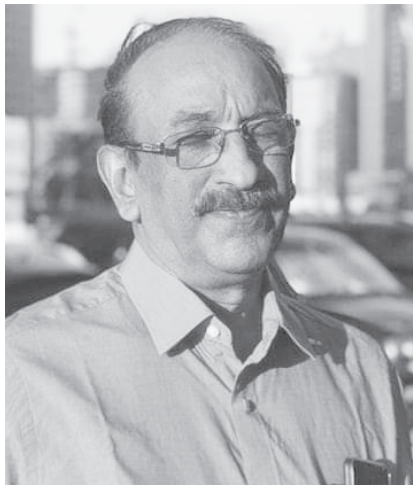
Com. CSR was an active member of the CPI and used to raise funds for the party from the bank employees as well as interested clients of the bank. He was a lifetime subscriber for party newspapers. He was a prolific writer in English. He has penned hundreds of articles in New Age, Mainstream, Uco Spark, Labour Life and others on banking, economy and political developments. During the Pension Settlement, he put forth powerful arguments in favour of opting for pension instead of PF, which served to clear the misconceptions amongst the bank employees.

When the state council of Tamil Nadu CPI decided to construct a new building for Balan Illam, state HQ of CPI, he gave. Rs 4 lakhs as interest-free loan for meeting an urgent need for the construction. He was also particular to encourage younger generation to take up positions in TU movement. He set an example by relinquishing all the posts he occupied in the unions at the time of his retirement.

Com CSR, who had lived 94 years, was an exemplary leader who taught the bank employees to be committed to trade union ideology as well as to have work ethics in their duty. He had no doubt carved a niche for himself in his seventy years of active public life that his name will always glitter in gold letters in the glorious history of AIBEA.

(The author is former president, Central Bank of India Employees' Union, Tamil Nadu)

Com. Gopakumar is No More



Com Gopakumar Panicker, former correspondent of *New Age* and *Central News Service (CNS)* breathed his last on January 13, 2022.

He was one of the founders of AISF in Jamia Millia Islamia in Delhi in 1979 said CPI Delhi state council secretary Dinesh Varshney said in statement.

The statement said: "It is a personal loss to all of us including for me as we worked together for many years in Delhi state AISF till he left for Kerala. Credit goes to him for building a very strong AISF in Jamia even winning students' union elections. He was affectionately called Gopa by all in AISF and in party."

He was an excellent organiser and is always quiet with a smiling face.

The statement further said that on behalf of the CPI and his personal behalf, Dinesh expresses his deepest condolences. "We will miss him and will always remember him.

The party expressed its condolences to the bereaved family members

Leaders Recall S Dorairaj's Contributions

Well known senior journalist S Dorairaj, 70, former Madras correspondent of CPI's Central New Service (CNS) breathed his last on January 15, 2022 passed away at his home in Tiruchi after a brief illness. He had dedicated his whole life for the upliftment of the downtrodden.

He, the son of S Sriramulu, a Railway employee and S Jayalakshmi, a homemaker, did his B.Sc in Botany from the American College, Madurai and MA in Tamil from Thiagaraja College of Arts and Science, Madurai. He had also worked as a journalist in Patriot daily, Link Weekly, Press Trust of India (PTI), News Today (English Eveninger) as Madras correspondent. He was also in The Hindu as a Principal Correspondent at Thoothukudi and in October 2008, he was transferred to Frontline, from where he retired as a Deputy Editor in 2012.

He was engaged as a consultant for two years till August 2014.

He is survived by his only daughter



Kannamma Dorairaj, a professor at National Institute of Technology, Tiruchi, and his wife Sulochana. Various political party leaders, including CPI general secretary D Raja, chief minister MK Stalin, and the journalist community in their separate condolence messages recalled his contributions. On receiving the news Raja conveyed his condolences to Dorairaj's sister over phone.

Dorairaj remained very close to the CPI till the end.

Chief minister M K Stalin said he was deeply saddened by the demise of the journalist. He said Dorairaj, who was driven by Leftist ideology and humanitarian approach, had dedicated his services for the rights and upliftment of the vulnerable and downtrodden. Having served as the office-bearer of several journalists' associations he was known as a crusader against oppression, the chief minister added.

CPI state leaders, TNCC president K S Alagiri, PMK founder S Ramadoss, TMC leader G K Vasan, journalist organisations and Tamil Nadu Kalai Ilakkiya Perumandram condoled the death of the veteran journalist, who was a former president of the Madras Reporters Guild and an office-bearer of the Madras Union of Journalists.

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Central Organ of the CPI

Maharashtra CPI Pays Homage to Prof N D Patil



Maharashtra state council of the Communist Party of India pays tributes to Prof N D Patil, leader of Peasants and Workers Party.

He was instrumental in introducing cotton monopoly purchase scheme, when he was a minister in the state. He led many struggles as convenor of Anti-Globalisation Committee formed in Maharashtra. He also led a successful struggle against Reliance SEZ formed in New Mumbai, which had to be scrapped because of people's struggle led by him.

He was always a part of the united left struggles and also of peasants' and workers' struggles. His death has deprived the left and progressive forces in the state of a friend, philosopher and guide. He was injured in police firing at Vairag in 1971 when he was leading a peasants' march during famine.

He will be missed by one and all, says CPI national council secretary Dr B K Kango.

Inequality Kills Millions Worldwide

*Diary of
International
Events*

C. Adhikesavan

The COVID-19 pandemic has heightened economic inequalities across the world. Not only has the pandemic led to the deaths of millions of people globally, but it has also exposed the weakness of public health systems and social and income protections for people worldwide. In short, the coronavirus pandemic has brought into relief that peoples' life chances are directly linked to their access to wealth and healthcare, their positions of power in society, their racial and caste identities, and their geographic locations.

The 98 Indians own same wealth as the bottom 55.2 crore people. One percent wealth tax on 98 richest billionaire families in India can finance Ayushman Bharat, the national public health insurance fund of the Government of India for more than seven years.

When 84 percent of households in the country suffered a decline in their income in a year marked by tremendous loss of life and livelihoods, the number of Indian billionaires grew from 102 to 142, Oxfam India's latest briefing 'Inequality Kills' has revealed. The briefing indicates that the collective wealth of India's 100 richest people hit a record high of INR 57.3 lakh crore (775 billion US dollar) in 2021.

Oxfam's global briefing points to the stark reality of inequality contributing to the death of at least 21,000 people each day, or one person every four seconds. The pandemic has set gender parity back from 99 years to now 135 years. Women

collectively lost INR 59.11 lakh crore (800 billion US dollar) in earnings in 2020, with 1.3 crore fewer women in work now than in 2019. It has never been so important to start righting the wrongs of this obscene inequality by targeting extreme wealth through taxation and getting that money back into the real economy to save lives.

In India, during the pandemic (since March 2020, through to November 30, 2021) the wealth of billionaires increased from INR 23.14 lakh crore (313 billion dollar) to INR 53.16 lakh crore (719 billion dollar). More than 4.6 crore Indians meanwhile are estimated to have fallen into extreme poverty in 2020 (nearly half of the global new poor according to the United Nations.) The stark wealth inequality in India is a result of an economic system rigged in favour of the super-rich over the poor and marginalised.

The briefing advocates a one percent surcharge on the richest 10 percent of the Indian population to fund inequality combating measures such as higher investments in school education, universal healthcare, and social security benefits like maternity leaves, paid leaves and pension for all Indians.

The 'Inequality Kills' briefing shows how deeply unequal our economic system is and how it fuels not only inequality but poverty as well. The government of India must to commit to an economic system which creates a more equal and sustainable nation. India can show the world that

democratic systems are capable for wealth redistribution and inclusive growth where no one is left behind. India's fight against inequality and poverty must be supported by the billionaires who made record profits in the country during the pandemic.

Historically, India has always been dependent more on indirect taxes. In the year 2000 the percentage of indirect tax in the total tax revenue was at 63.69 percent. Sadly, even during the pandemic this trend continued as the government revenue remained highly dependent on the indirect taxes — especially the tax levied on the sale and manufacture of goods and services that ordinary Indians depend upon.

The Oxfam India briefing shows the trend that indirect tax as a share of the Union government revenue have been increasing at a time when there is a decline in the proportion of corporate tax for the same in last four years. The additional tax imposed on fuel has risen 33 percent in the first six months of 2020-21 as compared to last year and is 79 percent more than pre-Covid levels.

At the same time, the wealth tax for the super-rich has been abolished in 2016. Corporate taxes were lowered from 30 percent to 22 percent to attract investment last year has resulted in a loss of INR 1.5 lakh crore which has contributed to the increase in India's fiscal deficit. These trends show that the poor, marginalised and the middle class paid high taxes despite going

through the raging pandemic while the rich made more money without paying their fair share.

Apart from the failure of generating equitable revenue, Oxfam India's briefing shows deprioritization of education and health in the Union government budget when these two services were needed the most.

Allocation towards health in 2021-22 saw a decline of 10 percent from the previous year in the Union government's budget, while the allocation towards education in 2021-22 saw an increase of 10 percent from the previous year. Health spending as a percentage of GDP has remained abysmally low at 1.2 to 1.6 percent and increased only 0.09 percent over the last 22 years. Similarly, Education spending as a percentage of GDP has remained low at 3 percent and increased only 0.07 percent over the last 18 years.

Expenditure on social security schemes for workers (under the Ministry of Labour and Employment) and the centrally sponsored scheme of National Social Assistance Programme is abysmally low at 0.6 percent of total expenditure in 2021-22, a decline from 1.5 percent of total expenditure from previous year. With 93 percent of the nation's workforce comprising of informal employment, there has been little success in bringing them under the ambit of formal employment, which would give them various benefits like paid leaves, health insurance, paid mater-

nity leaves and pension.

The policy push for privatisation of healthcare and education in India are further acting as enablers of inequality in India. In a 2021 survey by Oxfam India, 52 percent of the parents who send their children to private schools reported having to pay hiked fees for the AY 2021-22. 35 percent children were prevented from accessing education due to non-payment of fees. 38 percent parents had to pay illegal charges as capitation fees at the time of admission and 57 percent parents had to pay additional charges that were not part of declared official break-up of fees. Moreover, the survey shows that parents spend a substantial part of their household income (15 percent and above) on private school fees. The growing privatisation of school education disproportionately affects country's poor and marginalised people, particularly women and girls.

Oxfam India's briefing shows the high cost of private healthcare continues to affect marginalised communities especially due to its high costs and further widens inequalities. Data from the National Sample Survey (NSS) (2017-18) shows that Out-of-Pocket Expenditure (OOPE) in private hospitals is almost six times of that in public hospitals for inpatient care, and two or three times higher for outpatient care. The average OOPE in India is at 62.67 percent while the global average is at 18.12 percent.

Workers Denied Rights ...

From Back Page

AITUC state general secretary K P Rajendran delivered the keynote address. In his speech, he compared the minimum wages pronounced in the new labour code and the present minimum wages given in Kerala. While the former is just Rs 200, the latter is with a minimum of Rs 600. He also spoke about how determined AITUC was in securing gratuity for Indians. He said that the KSEU should also carry on its winning momentum from 2021 to the new year. He announced that the central government's proposed new labour codes would be strongly opposed and defeated.

KSEU president K. Vijayan Pillai presided over the conference. AITUC state President J Udayabhanu, state secretary KC Jayapalan, MPA

chairperson Kamala Sadhanandhan, K Ajith also addressed the conference. The working report of KSEU was tabled by KB Haneefa, its general secretary.



New office bearers of KESU are president K Vijayan Pillai, working president K Ajith, vice-presidents K C Jayapalan, Biju K Nair and A Dhamodharan, general secretary K B

Haneefa, secretaries S P Venu, Sunilkumar, B Raju, Beno Ayilyam, and Muralidharan Nair, organizing secretary Divin K Dinakaran and treasurer: Surendran Thambi.

Reception Committee convener C A Shakir delivered the welcome address while general convener Surendran Thambi gave the vote of thanks.

Com A B Bardhan Remembered

A L A P P U Z H A : AITUC state general secretary K P Rajendran says since the days of Narasimha Rao government at the Centre, the reformed economic policies have been harming

Bardhan commented that those economic policies would have the greatest negative impact on the workers. Time has proved that he was right and such was his far-sightedness". Rajendran further said that Bardhan's personality had evolved through many sacrifices. He remarked that Com Bardhan led many popular struggles on behalf of workers and peasants and always stood for them.

The conference was presided over by AITUC district president V Mohandas. Secretary DP Madhu welcomed the participants. AITUC national council member P Jyothis, constituency secretary E K Jayan, AITUC leaders A M Shiraz, R Anilkumar, A Ajikumar; and Working Women's Forum district secretary Archana Jismon also spoke at the conference.

the nation. He was addressing a public meeting after inaugurating the Com A B Bardhan Memorial conference in Alappuzha.

"At the time of 1971 economic reforms, Com

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Leadership Development Workshop in Manipur

Dr Nara Singh

A two-days State Level leadership Development workshop for the young party members was organised by the Manipur State Council of the Communist Party of India. The workshop was held at the famous 'Com. Irawat Memorial' located at Chalao, Lamlai Bazar, a town about 40 km from the state capital Imphal.

The inaugural function was attended by the party veterans and members of the state secretariat. State Secretary Sotin Kumar presided over the inaugural function, while National Executive Committee member (and former State Secretary) Com. Dr. Nara Singh presented the key note to the function. Central Party Education Department

member Dr Yugal Rayalu was the guest of honour at the inaugural function. Addressing the participants on the occasion Dr Nara Singh informed them about the aim of the workshop. He said due to the Corona pandemic it was not possible to hold party classes or workshops anywhere. This created a gap between the new party members and the seniors. Secondly we intend to have serious discussion on the current relevant issues. Thirdly we wish to prepare our cadre for the forthcoming state assembly elections where our party is contemplating a serious participation by putting up candidates in a good number of constituencies. Dr. Yugal Rayalu, the main faculty for the workshop congratulated the Manipur State Com-



mittee for organising the workshop at the appropriate time. He called upon the participants to seriously study the subjects discussed and taught in the workshop. He also called upon each participant to choose a particular subject and write a short essay on it.

This will give the state leadership an idea about the level of understanding of the new members of the party.

He guided the participants about the modern learning techniques so that the process of teaching and learning becomes effective.

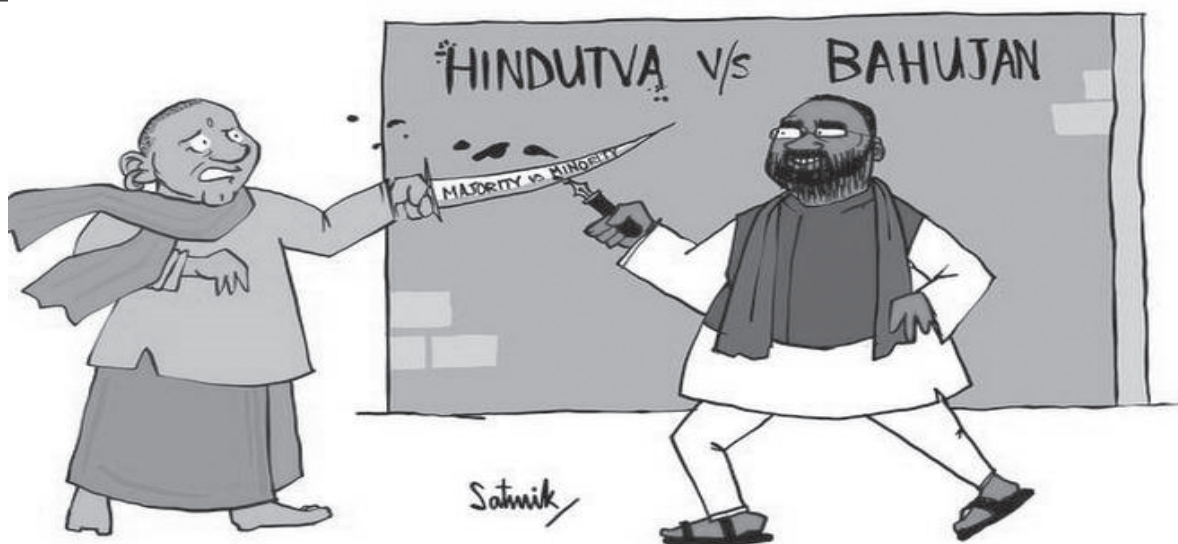
State Secretary Sotin Kumar extended his best wishes for the success of the workshop and hoped that it would create effective future leadership at all levels. He promised to make available the party literature in Manipuri language at the earliest.

On Record ...

India's Ambassador to the United Nations says global terror strategy is selective, urges against adding right wing extremism, violent nationalism to anti-terror resolutions

Calling for the United Nations to recognise 'Hinduphobia' along with other acts of religious hatred against Buddhism and Sikhism, India's U.N. envoy T.S. Tirumurti said that the U.N.'s latest Global Counter-Terrorism strategy passed last year is full of flaws and is selective, and could reverse gains from the global consensus in the "war on terror" post 9/11. In remarks indicating the government's discomfort with new terms being added to the definition of terrorism, he also said that terms like "violent nationalism" and "right wing extremism" must not be included to resolutions on terrorism, as they would "dilute" them. — *The Hindu*, January 20.

Noting that high scores are not the sole criteria for merit, the Supreme Court on Thursday upheld its January 7 order allowing reservation for Other Backward Classes (OBC) in the NEET undergraduate and postgraduate admissions for 2021-22. "Merit must be contextualised with respect to social and economic background. Role of



reservation cannot be negated in remedying backwardness. Reservation is not at odds with merit but furthers the distributive consequences of social justice," a bench of Justices DY Chandrachud and AS Bopanna said.

The court also pronounced that there will be no stay on the Economically Weaker Sections (EWS) criteria for admission to NEET-PG and the existing criteria (Rs 8 lakh gross annual income cut-off) will apply to the current admission year. — *India Today*, January 20.

The Supreme Court has told the centre to give latest data on the number of people who died due to starvation in the country and frame a national model scheme to combat hunger.

During a hearing today, a bench headed by Chief Justice of India NV Ramana said, "Are you saying there are no starvation deaths in the country except for one? Can we depend on that statement?" The centre had relied on a 2015-2016 report on starvation deaths.

"With states governments not reporting any starvation death, is it to be understood there is no starvation death in the country? Government of India should give us data on starvation deaths, latest information. Ask your officer to give us information," the court told Attorney General KK Venugopal. — *ndtv.com*, January 18.

Compiled by: C. Adhikesavan

KSEU 8th Annual Conference at Ernakulam Workers Denied Rights in Covid Lockdowns: AITUC

KOCHI: The eighth annual conference of the Kerala Security Employees Union (KSEU) was held on January 13 and 14 in Ernakulam. KSEU is affiliated to All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC). KSEU president K Vijayan Pillai initiated the proceedings with the hoisting of the Red Flag in the presence of AITUC general secretary Amarjeet Kaur.

Amarjeet Kaur officially inaugurated the two-day conference. She said that the Covid lockdowns exposed capitalist exploitation worldwide, including India. While welfare and socialist states like Cuba led from the front to resist a pandemic, big corporate houses made huge profits. Their profit margins increased incessantly and their wealth expanded ten-fold, though the corporates contributed nothing for the welfare of the public and even their workers.

She said on the other hand, the workers

worked tirelessly. They ensured a continuous supply of water, electricity and so on. Despite this, the issues of the working class in the country were ignored. She criticised the central government's discriminatory Covid measures. She remarked that its decision to enact the Disaster Management Act instead of a Health Emergency measure turned out to be a 'controlling mechanism' and was not done with people's welfare in mind, but only for political gains. The result was a further widening gap between the rich and the poor.



"While common people and working class were suffering from the damaging effects of the pandemic, instead of helping them, the BJP government announced special packages for its corporate friends". She also pointed out that this is the time to increase the struggle against capitalism and struggle for a socialist state.

Kerala LDF Govt an All-Time Model

She also mentioned that the LDF government in Kerala is an exemplary example of how a government can and should work for the welfare of ordinary people and workers. The community kitchen scheme implemented in the state is a perfect example. Contrary to the negligence of the central government and other state governments, the LDF government took extra care to ensure the safe passage of migrant workers. Even during a pandemic, the Kerala government provided

Abhiram Rajesh

welfare pension to the poor without any disruption.

The country's economy is in shambles and the only solution the government has is to sell out everything. Even education and healthcare sectors are not being spared from privatisation. She also said that the National Monetisation Pipeline Scheme (NPS) is meant to sell away the country's natural and national resources.

Citing examples of how many right-wing leaders are roaming around despite their hateful comments in the Haridwar Dharm Sansad, she reminded that the country's Constitution is under attack. She said that the test of democracy depends on the trade unions.

She also remarked that the central government's efforts to alter the labour laws and the codification of labour

laws would be detrimental for the workers and their unions. It should be strongly opposed. The unions should fight and win their rights no matter which ever government is in power. Citing examples from the glorious struggles from the past led by AITUC, she said that nothing would be served on the plate, and it is time for workers to struggle and win their rights. Lessons must be learnt from the farmers' movement.

Furthermore, the trade unions haven't been successful in conveying the damaging effects of the proposed labour laws to the local union leaders, union members, the community or the public in general. She underlined the importance of trade union education among the cadres of the security union. They need to be aware of the dangers in the country today and in society so that they can act to defend the rights of not only their own but also those of all sections of society.

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