Monthly Journal of the AICCWW(CITU) Vol. 37 No. 12 December 2017 ` 10/-

The Voice of the Working Woman

CTUs' MAHAPADAV Before Parliament 9,10,11 November 2017

Countrywide Protest Against Price Rise on 13 December 2017

The Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU) has called upon the working people throughout the country, its units and affiliated unions of the workers, to register countrywide protest against the continuing price rise on **13 December 2017**, in every industrial centre, city, town and rural areas by staging demonstrations.

Modi government's policies are entirely responsible for this price rise, inflicting huge sufferings and miseries on workers and other sections of the toiling masses. In fact, prices are not just increasing; they are being made to increase through a policy drive of the government to benefit middlemen, big traders, black-marketeers and speculators.

The prices of all essential commodities including foodgrains, vegetables, transport and health services, medicines, education etc have been consistently increasing; the targeted public distribution system has been made to virtually collapse in most of the states; various conditionalities imposed including AADHAR linkage on everything deprive a large section of the poorer population from the PDS, mocking at the Food Security Act. Prices of petroleum and diesel have been increasing at regular interval and LPG subsidy is being cut despite decline and/or virtual stagnation of crude oil price in the international market, generating a cascading effect on prices of all essential commodities. On the other hand farmers are not getting the remunerative price of their produce which is way below the ruling prices of food grains and other agri-products in the market. In the midst of such a horrifying syndrome of rising prices, speculation in the commodity market is going on creating big fortunes for corporate traders and speculators. Demonetisation followed by GST has added further fuel to the fire of price-rise. It is not without reason that under Modi's rule, the country's position is going up in "Ease of Doing Business" index while simultaneously pushing the country down on the "Hunger" index.

While continuing price rise is making human survival difficult and causing deaths due to hunger, the government of the day is further adding to their miseries by depriving them of a proper minimum wage. All welfare expenditure including on MGNREGA is drastically cut down, as reflected in the sharp decline in work days available under MGNREGA throughout the country.

In this background, the CITU has called upon the working class to launch militant demonstrations, as widespread as possible, on 13th December 2017 and to burn the effigy of the Modi government.

Inauguration of

P RAMAMURTI
Trade Union Education & Research Centre

15 December 2017
at 20, Pushp Vihar,
Sector - VI, Saket, New Delhi

*The **Voice** of the **Working Woman***

Monthly Journal of the AICCWW(CITU)

Editorial Board

Editor
K Hemalata

Working Editor
Ranjana Nirula

Members
A R Sindhu
Sunanda Bhattacharya

Inside

	Page
Workers Mahapadav	4
9 Million Jobs Lost	7
Too Little and Too Vague	10
Not a good week for Democracy	11
Mahapadav in pictures	13
Gujarat model of Development	17
India Today	20
International	22
On P Ramamurti	23
Breaking Barriers	26

Total pages - 28
(including cover pages)

We Demand Answers

The BJP gifted the country with a '*Prime Minister who speaks'*, claimed its president. But this Prime Minister who never loses a chance to ridicule opponents in his speeches, whether on domestic or foreign soil, who does not seem to be very concerned about the accuracy and correctness of their content drowning them in his oratorical skills, seems to have developed another art in recent times – that of speaking much more loudly through his silence.

Prime Minister Modi strangely was deafeningly silent on many questions to which people wanted answers; on which he owed answers to the people.
Hundreds of thousands of workers gathered from all over the country on 9-11 November to raise these questions in one voice.
Where are the promised 2 crore jobs every year? Why were we, the workers in the unorganised sector, the small business people, traders, vendors, made to lose our jobs, incomes and livelihoods due to the demonetisation? Who benefited from this exercise? While our basic rights are being taken away through the labour law
amendments, where is the employment that this is supposed to generate? While India has climbed up the ladder of 'Ease of Doing Business', how much private investment has come?

Why do prices continue to rise? If the country has progressed, why do children and women continue to be plagued by malnutrition? Why do children like Santoshi continue to die due to hunger? Where are the measures to improve the conditions of the anganwadi employees? All these were promised by the BJP in the 2014 elections. Over three years after the BJP government came to power promising these, why have none of these materialised?

They also wanted to know: What type of *'desh prem'* is it which hands over the nation's wealth including our railways, our defence and our public sector - to private corporations, domestic and foreign? In short, what does the government mean by *'desh'* – the toiling people who produce the wealth of this country or the big corporate, domestic and foreign who have been looting this country?
They asked about his *'Na khaunga; na khane dunga?'* What about Jay Shah? What about the scams in almost all BJP ruled states – Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Rajasthan, Maharashtra?

Did the 'Prime Minister who speaks' hear them? Probably the Prime Minister doesn't like to take questions, as alleged by one of his own MPs.
The Prime Minister sought succour in silence. His government had no answers. The 'Nation wants to know' corporate media chose to ignore the workers and the toiling people who comprise the nation.
As far as the workers and the toiling people of this country are concerned, it doesn't matter whether the Prime Minister speaks or how he speaks. What is more their concern is what the government does and for whose benefit. They understand from their own experience that there is no difference between the policies of the erstwhile Congress government led by Manmohan Singh or the present BJP government led by Modi. Both have been working for the corporates and the rich.

Hence the decision of the 'mahapadav' to intensify the struggle against the anti worker, anti people and anti national policies of this government and to prepare for a countrywide indefinite strike aimed at their reversal. The campaign and struggle for alternative pro people policies must be made part of this endeavour.

'Intensify struggle to reverse anti-national policies of Modi government!'
Massive 'MAHAPADAV' Call to the Working Class

Hemalata

The unprecedented joint trade union 'mahapadav' of workers concluded in the evening on 11th November 2017 with a clarion call to the working class of the country to intensify the struggle against the anti worker, anti people and anti national policies of the BJP led government.

The huge mass of workers who gathered from all over the country and from all sectors of the economy enthusiastically endorsed the unanimous call of the leadership of the joint trade union movement, made in the light of the 8th August 2017 national convention, to prepare for an indefinite country wide general strike if the government does not change track and heed the voice of the working class. The trade unions decided to chalk out a prolonged course of agitations and actions towards that objective.

The string of actions will start with district level joint conventions to be completed by the first week of January 2018, followed by joint 'Satyagraha'/ courting arrest at the district headquarters in the last week of January. The common date for the courting arrest in all districts in the state will be decided by the joint meeting of the state leadership of the trade unions.

In case of any anti worker measures being announced in the Union Budget, joint protest demonstrations will be held on the same day all over the country. The central trade unions will meet soon after the presentation of the Union Budget and decide upon the next course of action.

Along with this programme, the central trade unions also decided to go into joint industry/ sectoral strikes whenever the government takes measures for privatisation. The national federations of scheme workers affiliated to the central trade unions will go on strike before the presentation of the Union Budget on their own demands. The date of the strike will be decided in their joint meeting.

Special significance

The three days 'mahapadav' was significant in many ways. This was the first time that ten central trade unions and independent industrial federations jointly organised a dharna in the national capital continuously for three days, mobilising tens of thousands of workers on each day. The participation of women workers, not only the scheme workers, but also from other sections like beedi, construction, domestic workers, street vendors, home based workers etc was very huge, particularly on the third day. The participation of young workers was also remarkable.

Another significant feature is the participation of several state level trade unions. Some of them are part of the state level joint trade union platforms in states like Kerala, Telangana etc. In addition around 3000 transport workers, owners cum drivers of trucks etc from different states, who are not affiliated to any central trade union, participated at the initiative of the All India Road Transport Workers' Federation.

The workers displayed extraordinary resolve to participate in the 'mahapadav' overcoming many difficulties. The air pollution in Delhi received wide coverage in the media all over the country. Delhi's description as a 'toxic gas chamber' with a situation of 'public health emergency' created scare, particularly among those coming from the southern states. The banning of demonstrations and mobilisations at Jantar Mantar by the National Green Tribunal also raised questions on whether the 'mahapadav' will be allowed at all.

Many trains were running inordinately late and several were cancelled. Thousands of workers, including women workers from remote villages who travelled all the way to the nearest railway station had to go back after finding that the train they were to travel in was cancelled. Thousands refused to go back despite knowing that their train was late. They just wanted to participate in the 'mahapadav' even for a little while. On each of the three days thousands arrived at the venue just

The Workers Mahapadav saw the biggest mobilisation on the third day, 11 November 2017, a majority of whom were scheme workers from all over India. Anganwadi workers and helpers, ASHA workers, and Mid Day meal workers – the biggest constituents of scheme workers, literally stormed Parliament Street.

Responding to the fighting mood of the scheme workers throughout the country, for their long pending demands and the recent move for Direct Cash Transfer in place of the services given through these schemes, the Central Trade Unions called for a One Day All India Strike of Scheme Workers in January 2018 with district level joint demonstrations. The scheme workers will also join in large numbers in the Jail Bharo/ Satyagraha in last week of January 2018

The Demands

1. *Immediate Implementation of the recommendations of the 45th Indian Labour Conference on Scheme workers – recognition as workers, minimum wages and pension and social security benefits for the scheme workers*
2. *Adequate Budget allocation for the centrally sponsored schemes, make them permanent.*
3. *No privatisation of any scheme in any form*
4. *Immediate withdrawal of the move for Direct/ Conditional Cash Transfer in place of services of the Schemes, No denial of services in the name of Aadhar linking*

as the dharna was about to conclude or after it was adjourned for the day. Around a thousand women workers reached Delhi in the night of 11th November!

Attempts to disrupt fail

Attempts were made to create confusion among the workers. The BMS, which deserted the joint trade union movement on the eve of the country wide general strike on 2nd September 2015, the first one after the BJP led Modi government came to power, certifying that the government was positive to the demands of the workers, gave a call for a rally in the national capital on 17th November. Rumours were floated that the 'mahapadav' has been cancelled. The government, which has been totally ignoring the 12 point charter of demands of the trade unions during the last over two years, called a meeting on 3rd November 2017, sending a notice of less than 48 hours. It did not invite the INTUC, one of the major trade unions and a constituent of the joint movement. When the trade unions protested and refused to attend the meeting unless INTUC was also invited, the government called another meeting but on the same day when three other central trade unions were called to depose before the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Labour in Mumbai. After the trade unions again protested against the casual attitude of the Ministry of Labour, ultimately the meeting was fixed on the evening of 7th November. But the government had nothing to offer. The trade unions stuck to their programme. The workers brushed aside all these machinations to confuse, divide and disrupt their unity and participated in the 'mahapadav' in large numbers. The discipline displayed by the workers, belonging to different organisations and different states, during the entire duration of the three days' 'mahapadav' was exemplary. A majority of the workers sat throughout the day and showed eagerness to hear the speakers – not less than 30 of them, in three sessions, every day! They responded with enthusiasm whenever a call was given to intensify the struggle.

However all this was of no consequence to the corporate media. The corporate controlled mainstream print and electronic media chose to black out the 'mahapadav' and the demands of the workers, the backbone of our economy. All that they could capture was some poor street vendors 'doing hectic business' selling shoes and books and the long lines near the public toilets!

But the 'mahapadav' and the issues raised by it received wide publicity in the social media and some pro people television channels. Several teams active in the social media talked to the workers and union leaders and uploaded them in the websites.

Solidarity and support

The struggle and the demands of the workers also received huge support from various organisations within the country as well as from outside. The two major international organisations of the working class, the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and the International Trade Union

Confederation (ITUC) sent messages of solidarity. In addition, national trade union organisations from different countries including Greece, Nepal etc expressed solidarity. The joint platform of over 100 kisan organisations and several women's organisations came out in support of the 'mahapadav'. 50 eminent personalities including writers, university professors, scientists, researchers, artists and social workers, signed a letter to the Prime Minister demanding that the issues raised by the joint movement of the workers be addressed immediately. There were many more such expressions of support to the struggle of the workers.

As Tapan Sen, general secretary of CITU said in the concluding session, the working class cannot expect support from the corporate media for its struggle against the neoliberal policies, the very same policies that are meant to benefit the big domestic and foreign corporates and that are being implemented at their behest. The lakhs of workers who have come not only from the cities and towns all over the country, but also from its remotest corners, have to carry the message of the 'mahapadav' to the workers and all sections of the toiling people.

CITU had a highly visible presence in the 'mahapadav'. The CITU centre and all its state committees and industrial federations had made effective preparations. The three months duration since the decision of the national joint convention on 8th August were utilised for intensive campaign among the workers with the objective of 'reaching the unreached'. In addition to the joint leaflets and posters, lakhs of booklets, pamphlets and leaflets were published by the CITU committees in local languages. On their part, sectoral unions and federations of CITU also published lakhs of leaflets and booklets linking up the sector specific issues of the workers with the neoliberal policies being pursued by successive governments at the centre, whether led by the BJP or the Congress. Jathas, public meetings, gate meetings, street corner meetings, mohalla meetings etc were held across the country in which lakhs of workers participated.

Task ahead

The three days 'mahapadav' makes one thing certain. Discontent against the policies being pursued by the government is growing among all sections of the working class – unorganised sector workers, organised sector workers, those in the public sector and in the private sector, the scheme workers, contract workers and all others. Even large sections of the middle class employees who have voted for BJP are becoming disillusioned with the government's policies. It has shown that the workers are ready to fight. What is necessary is to make them aware that alternatives to the disastrous neoliberal policies exist; to make them aware that it is the working class which has to lead the struggle for such an alternative; and create confidence among them that they can do it through their organised strength and by uniting with other sections of toiling people like the peasants and agricultural workers.

That is the task ahead for a class based trade union like CITU. The magnificent success of the 'mahapadav' and the role played by CITU in making it such a success increases its responsibility in discharging this task.

Condolence

We are extremely sad to inform that three comrades passed away while travelling in connection with the 'Mahapadav' near Parliament on 9 – 11 November 2017.

Venkatesh, an activist of CITU from Solapur in Maharashtra, met with an accident near Ahmednagar while travelling in a train to participate in the 'Mahapadav' and died instantly.

Mustafa, an activist of the BSNL contract workers' union from Bidar district of Karnataka participated in the 'mahapadav' and was on his way to Ajmer when he had a severe heart attack and died at the New Delhi railway station on 11th November.

Bachan Mahapatro, secretary of contract workers' union in Rourkela, Odisha died in an accident near Pendra Road railway station on his way back after participating in the 'Mahapadav' on 11th November.

CITU expresses deep shock and sorrow at the death of these comrades. We convey our heartfelt sympathies and offer condolences to their families.

In One Year, 9 Million Jobs Lost in India

Job losses are piling up while the Modi government fiddles - and muddles along

Subodh Varma

Between October 2016 and October 2017, 9 million (90 lakh) jobs were lost according to latest CMIE data released last week. This continues the trend of falling employment in the past three years as recorded by successive Labour Bureau reports.

Typically ignoring this crisis at home, Prime Minister Modi was declaring that "he wants to make India a Global Manufacturing Hub and make youths job creators" at a meeting with international business persons on Nov. 13, on the sidelines of the ASEAN summit in Manila.

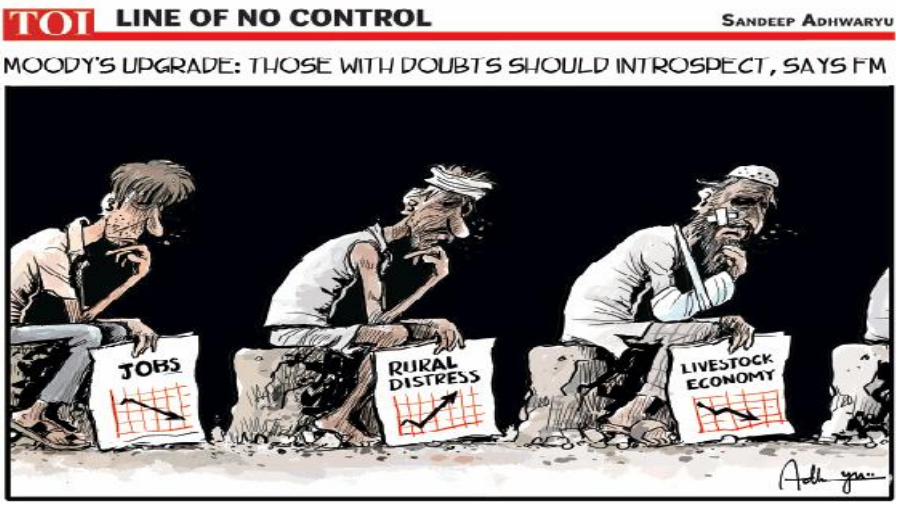
The unemployment rate reported by CMIE was 5.7% in October. This is up from 3% in July, steadily rising through the kharif season despite a largely normal monsoon which should have provided larger number of jobs in the agricultural sector.

Meanwhile, the Index of Industrial Production (IIP) for September again slowed down to show a growth of just 3.8% compared to 5% last September. This indicates that the slowdown affecting the industrial sector continues unabated. This is one of the main reasons for job losses. Notably, production of consumer durables actually dipped by 4.8% while infrastructure and construction goods production inched up by just 0.5%.

These dire statistics were released even as thousands of workers were protesting in Delhi demanding better wages and job security among other things. They held a massive mahapadav (mass sit in) in the Capital at the call of 10 central trade unions and several employees federations.

Modi government's indifference to this exploding crisis of jobs is matched only by their incompetence in dealing with it. Apart from forced attempts to create jobs out of thin air – like the recent claim by finance minister Arun Jaitley that 25,000 persons will get jobs every year for the next five years in road building projects involving an outlay of Rs.5.35 lakh cr outlay – there has been little talk of job creation by the government. This is all the more bizarre because Modi and his government came to power in 2014 by promising jobs for everyone.

The job losses reported by CMIE show a drastic dip from November 2016 – when Modi's disastrous note ban came in to effect. Readers will recall that in November-December 2016 Modi announced the sudden withdrawal of 86% of currency in circulation leading to chaos in the whole country with mass stoppage of work in all sectors, crashing prices of agricultural produce, dip in industrial output and misery for most people.



Shielding the Corrupt

Contrary to the strident statements against black money and corruption, the Modi government and the BJP are, in practice, taking step after step to shield corruption and to allow the rich to launder black money. Three such instances have occurred in the recent period.

In the first case, the Modi government has raised the upper limit for buying jewellery without submitting PAN-Aadhar details to Rs 2 lakh per transaction. Earlier, in August this year, the government had amended the Prevention of Money Laundering Act to make PAN and Aadhar mandatory for jewellery purchases above Rs 50,000 per transaction. So, buying gold and other forms of jewellery beyond Rs 50,000 required stringent "Know Your Customer" (KYC) norms. The purpose of this amendment was to curb the purchase of gold and jewellery for conversion of black money.

By diluting this measure, the government has undermined its own claim to fight black money by not insisting on registering jewellery purchases upto Rs 2 lakhs. Repeated transactions of jewellery purchases below Rs 2 lakhs will facilitate conversion of black money and money laundering. What this step signals is that the rich can evade taxes and convert black money under government's auspices while the poor have to face stringent conditions of being linked to Aadhar to get their PDS rations and other basic facilities.

The second instance is the ordinance promulgated by the BJP government in Rajasthan to shield public servants, judges and magistrates from allegations of corruption. The Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Ordinance 2017 came into force on September 6, but became known only when the government decided to introduce a Bill in the Assembly to make it part of the law. Though as per the existing law, public servants cannot be investigated without prior sanction from the relevant authority, the ordinance has made it more difficult to pursue such complaints. Six month's time is given to the authorities to decide on sanction. Further, any disclosure of the identity of the person against whom a complaint is made will lead to penal action with imprisonment upto two years in jail. This is meant to effectively gag the media and any private citizen from exposing any case of corruption.

After widespread opposition to this measure, the Rajasthan assembly has referred the bill to a select committee, but the ordinance is still in force.

The third example is the manner in which the central government and the ruling party is going about gagging the media in the Jay Shah affair. The report in an online news portal '*The Wire*' about the business of the son of Amit Shah has led to a defamation suit against the editors of the publication and an injunction from a court in Ahmedabad that no news concerning Jay Shah's business should be published by '*The Wire'.* The Modi government has permitted the additional solicitor general to appear on behalf of Shah in court. Far from investigating the matter, the Modi government seems bent upon assisting Amit Shah's son to escape any scrutiny for his business dealings. (*Note: The report, based on government documents, reveals that a company owned by Jay Shah , which started with a capital of Rs. 50,000 was wound up after a year, by which time it had assets of Rs 80 crores!)*

Given this blatant protection of those facing allegations of corruption, it is not surprising that the BJP government has not taken any step to constitute the Lokpal as per the law, even three and a half years after it came to power. More and more authoritarian measures like the Rajasthan ordinance and intimidation of the media through defamation suits are being resorted to, to shield the corrupt.

‘Paradise’ for the Super Rich

The revelations contained in the Paradise Papers based on investigation by the International Consortium of Investigative Journalists has thrown further light on how an intricate network of tax havens, opaque companies and financial dealings have developed to service the needs of multinational corporations and international finance capital.

The Paradise Papers are based on leaked financial records from two companies – Appleby in Bermuda and Asiaciti in Singapore and scrutiny of company registers of 19 tax havens around the world comprising 13.4 million documents. Earlier, 18 months ago, the Panama Papers had revealed the dealings of one company based in Panama. The Paradise Papers have provided a close look at how the super-rich of the world shift money to tax havens to avoid paying taxes in their own country. It has focused on how MNCs and corporates put away profit in these tax shelters by setting up subsidiary companies there.

This is not an aberration from how finance capital operates. It is an inherent part of globalised finance capital. A report in September this year, co-authored by economist Gabriel Zucman estimated that 10 per cent of global GDP, ie, 7.8 trillion dollars is held offshore. According to Zucman, 600 billion Euros of MNC profit were shifted to offshore havens in the last year alone. The super-rich and big corporates evade paying taxes in this manner depriving the countries of tax revenue which goes towards schools, hospitals and social welfare for its citizens. That this is legally permissible does not make it less ugly and exposes the double standards of neoliberal capitalism, tax avoidance for the rich while the citizens who barely earn a minimum wage have to pay taxes.

The Paradise Papers have thrown up the names of 714 Indian entities and individuals who have resorted to the use of these two financial companies to set up companies and park funds in them in tax havens. The list includes many Indian big companies, business men and real estate dealers. Some of them belong to the BJP.

The Paradise Papers, like the Panama Papers earlier, effectively debunks the myth of the Modi government’s fight against black money. The expose came two days before November 8, which marked the completion of one year of the demonetisation. It has underlined the absurdity of the claim that demonetisation has neutralised black money. The generation of black money, the conversion of it into assets abroad, money lending and round-tripping – are all revealed by the Paradise Papers. The fact is demonetisation has not made even an iota of difference to this process which goes on unhindered.

The Modi government has announced that the multi-agency group set up to look into the Panama Papers ‘list of entities’ will also probe into the details of Indian entities provided by the Paradise Papers. What this means is that some of the income not disclosed by those in the list will be subject to taxes and penalties. Nothing more. The structure of setting up companies in the tax havens, shifting funds to them and money laundering of black money will not be investigated, or questioned. Doing so would mean having to challenge financial investors and the very structure of predatory finance capital.

What is needed are strong measures to prevent the use of tax havens which are now allowed as legitimate business activity. Suitable laws and a regulatory framework have to be put in place to penalise offenders and plug all loopholes by which tax evasion is made possible. Confiscation of assets of those found guilty will act as a deterrent. To expect the Modi government, however, to do all this would be naive. This is a government at the service of corporate and international capital.

Too Little and Too Vague: Arun Jaitley's Scheme for Bank Rescue

Bodapati Srujana

The finance minister Arun Jaitley announced on October 24, a Rs 2.11 lakh crore plan for capitalising the public-sector banks. Out of the total announced amount, the banks will get a capital of Rs 1.35 lakh crores through recapitalisation bonds. Jaitley was vague on who is going to issue the bonds. Rs 76 thousand crores will be raised by selling banks' shares from the market. Only a paltry Rs 18,000 crores will be from the central exchequer. This recapitalisation is not going to be immediate, but will happen over the next two years.

Jaitley's announcement comes in the backdrop of the prevailing NPA problems of the banking sector. As most of us know, Indian banks have been buried under a massive pile of bad loans, or the so-called non-performing assets (NPAs). At present, this pile of NPAs amounts to more than Rs 8 lakh crores. 70 per cent of this eight lakh crore NPAs are owed by a handful of big corporates.

Public sector banks (PSBs) have been the primary victims of these loan defaults by the corporate bigwigs – as most of the NPAs are on the books of the PSBs. And, this pile of bad loans has been eating away at the foundation of the banks, which happens to be its capital.

This is where the finance minister's announcement assumes importance – recapitalisation, theoretically at least, will strengthen the banks by providing them much needed capital.

Yet, the manner of recapitalisation that government has announced, and the amount it has declared, raises some serious questions about the government's intentions.

The first question: why such a small amount? With an overhang of more than Rs 8 lakh crore NPAs, it is estimated that the public sector banks would need Rs 4.5 lakh crore of additional capital. What the government has announced is less than half of that –that too over a period of two years – when the need of the banks is immediate.

This gives strength to the criticism that government wants to shut down some of the PSBs and merge the rest, to form a handful of large banks. By providing less capital than required, it will be forcing some of the badly affected smaller public sector banks to go under. This will have a serious adverse impact on small borrowers and depositors, who these banks cater to. There is enough evidence to show that all over the world, big banks prefer large corporate customers over the needs of the ordinary borrowers and depositors.

Secondly, why should the banks be forced to raise the rest or part of the Rs 76 thousand from the market by selling their shares? Raising funds from the markets means that the shares of the PSBs will be sold to private parties. This just dilutes the stake of the government, increasing the control of private capital over the public sector banks, further paving way to the gradual privatisation of public sector banks. This is what the government and RBI have been frequently hinting at. Moreover, what happens to the smaller banks, who will find it very difficult to raise the funds in the market?

The final question – why is Jaitley cagey about revealing the manner in which recapitalisation bonds of Rs 2.11 lakh crore will be issued? Chief Economic Adviser Aravind Subramanian's remarks to the journalists suggest that the government is scared of increasing the fiscal deficit, by directly issuing the recapitalisation bonds.

Instead, there are suggestions that the government would float special purpose vehicle (SPV), which is going to issue the recapitalisation bonds. This would amount to a mere accounting trick, where the government's debt will not be officially on the budget books, but on the books of a government-owned SPV.

It is time for the government to set aside its unnatural fear of the fiscal deficit and spend on the health of the public-sector banks. Even if we accept the economic logic of dangers of fiscal deficit, considering the deflationary environment in India right now, a fiscal deficit can cause no harmful inflation.

There are also suggestions that banks themselves may be asked to invest part of their deposits in each other's recapitalisation bonds. In this case banks effectively own each other's capital. But any such scheme of diverting deposits, will squeeze credit to the already credit starved economy.

There are even suggestions that public financial institutions like LIC should be asked to subscribe to the recapitalisation bonds issued by the banks. Under any such scheme, banks will be paying interest on these bonds, adding an additional burden on them in the present circumstances.

Instead of breaking their heads about how to juggle the books and hide the fiscal deficit, the country would be better served if Jaitley and his government concentrated on bringing to book, the corporate bigwigs who have defaulted on loans given by the public sector banks. India's corporate bigwigs (India's 100 richest people), during the three years of BJP regime have amassed an additional wealth of Rs 8 lakh crore. Incidentally, Rs 8 lakh crore is also the value of bad loans, which the companies owned by many of them, owe to the banks.

Clearly, recapitalisation will not serve the purpose, if these corporates are allowed to continue to loot public sector banks at will. It is time the government brings the big corporations to heel and holds them accountable for their debts to the banks.

Not a Good Week for Democracy in India

Brinda Karat

In the village of Karimati in Jharkhand, Koili Devi, the mother of 11-year-old Santosh Kumari, who had died of starvation, had to flee her home as she was attacked by local *goondas* reportedly because she had challenged the official version that her child had died of malaria not hunger, and dared to publicly say that in fact her child had died because the government had passed orders that no one without an Aadhar card would get rations. She spoke the truth, and for that she was attacked. The local auxiliary nurse confirmed that the child was not suffering from malaria. She has been suspended from her job. The message: toe the government line or face the consequences.

More than one million ration cards in the state have been cancelled, without any notice, as being fake. Rations have been denied to thousands of poor families, a substantial number because the cards have not been seeded with Aadhaar. There have been no physical verification processes, no opportunity for people with bona fide ration cards to establish that they are not fake. Thousands who have got seeded ration cards have also had their cards cancelled. In digital India, if the machine does not recognize your thumb print, you cease to exist. The National Food Security Act under Section 15 mandates the setting up of a grievance redressal mechanism at the district and block level so that families like Koili Devi's can exercise a basic democratic right to appeal an unjust decision like the cancellation of a card, a matter of life and death for

millions of families; but in Jharkhand, as in most states, the establishment of such democratic mechanisms are not the priorities.
In Tamil Nadu, a quite different scenario unfolded, but the message was the same: toe the line or else. Here the film "Mersal" faced the wrath of BJP state leaders because of a dialogue which criticized the GST. The film is supposedly about the corruption and injustice in the health system and the hero makes a comment that although Singapore has a lower GST rate than India, the health services there are free.

How could anyone, least of all "ignorant" actors, dare criticize the "great achievement" of the Modi Government, even if every small shopkeeper, trader or small business owner across India and certainly in the state of Tamil Nadu is in deep distress, and who cares if the film has been passed by the censor board? When the Modi-Shah duo label all critics as being against national interest, then state BJP office bearers have a responsibility to follow their leaders. The film-makers and the main actor, Vijay, have been abused, demeaned and a demand has been made by the BJP that the scene should be cut. True to form, this all-out assault on the right to freedom of expression was further coloured by crass communal statements accusing the actor of agreeing to such dialogue because he is a Christian. Bullying, hounding, intimidation, the shameful display of power against cultural artists.

Around the same time, in another part of the country, in Rajasthan, democracy took a beating with the draconian Bill introduced by the State Government termed the Criminal Laws (Rajasthan Amendment) Ordinance, 2017, which seeks to protect the corrupt in positions of power from the reach of the law that ordinary citizens have to face. The proposed amendments to the Criminal Procedure code, 1973, and Indian Penal Code, 1980, provide extra protection to public servants by preventing any investigations by courts on a private complaint. The present laws in any case provide adequate protection to public servants and their actions "in the course of duty" and prevent any cognizance of private complaints against them without the prior sanction of the relevant authority. However, this Bill provides an unprecedented cover of six months to the relevant authority to give sanction during which period no action can be taken by any court. But even worse, there is a ban on the media from any coverage of the case till the sanction is given. In case the identity of the public servant is revealed, the person responsible can be sentenced to jail for two years. From Lok Pal to Bhrasth Pal. The Bill has been challenged in the courts, but it is hardly a secret that courts too are vulnerable to political pressure.

But it was the questions raised by the actions of the Election Commission which topped the events of the week. There is still no logical explanation for why the Election Commission did not declare the election dates for Gujarat elections when the Himachal elections schedule was declared earlier this month. While the Gujarat assembly's term ends onJanuary 22, 2018, it is January 7 in the case of Himachal Pradesh. As a result, the model code of conduct did not kick into place in Gujarat, and conveniently did not interfere with the previously declared programmes of the Prime Minister to his home state where he made a slew of promises worth thousands of crores. At least two former chiefs of the Election Commission went public with their criticism of the delay in announcing the dates, saying it creates "grounds for suspicion." Such actions do little good to the credibility of an institution constitutionally mandated to conduct free and fair elections.

But in the end, it is the people who decide the fate of democracy, and the good sign is the increasing number of voices speaking truth to power, like the child in the fable who cried, "*But the Emperor has no clothes*."

For Basic Rights

Towards More

ल्ली मेट्रो रेल कार्पोरेशन इम्पलाईज यनियन

Forge Wide Unity

Gujarat Model of Development

The BJP has been ruling Gujarat continuously since 1998. Narendra Modi was the Chief Minister of Gujarat from 2001 to 2014 before becoming the Prime Minister of India. He and the BJP have constantly harped on the 'Gujarat' model of governance claiming that it was perfect and corruption free. A myth has been created by the BJP propaganda machinery about the Gujarat model.

Let us examine the **anti-corruption claim** of BJP.

The post of Lokayukta (corruption watchdog) was not filled for ten years since 2003. When the Governor and Chief Justice of the High Court selected Justice R. A. Mehta for the post in 2011, as they were empowered to do according to the Gujarat Lokayukta Act, Modi fought tooth and nail against the appointment, reportedly spending Rs 45 crores to challenge it all the way up to the Supreme Court. Even after the Supreme Court had upheld the appointment, the state government refused to cooperate with Mehta, leading him to decline the position (Langa: 2013). Subsequently the state government amended the Lokayukta Act to make it a toothless body under the control of the very government whose corruption it was supposed to monitor! Apparently Modi learned a lesson from the fate of his friend Yedyurappa, former BJP Chief Minister of Karnataka, who was forced to resign due to corruption charges against him initiated by the Karnataka Lokayukta , and resolved never to give any Lokayukta the opportunity to do the same to him.

One of the ways in which Gujarat did become a model was that it became a **crucible for crony capitalism**. Apart from favoring a bunch of local industrialists, traders and land sharks, the shining example of this is the meteoric rise of the Adani Group, a prime favourite of Modi.

The rise of Adani's business empire coincides with the ascent of Narendra Modi, which can be a textbook example of crony capitalism. There must have been a quid pro quo of course.

The revenue of the Adani Group increased 20 times in a span of 12 years from Rs.3741 crore in 2002-03 to Rs.75659 crore in 2014-15, in the period when Narendra Modi was the chief minister of Gujarat, exposing the Adani-Modi nexus. The reality of the Gujarat Model is based on scams which involve selling of the state's natural resources at low prices to people like Adani and others, defrauding the people of Gujarat; making illegal profits from food meant for the state's poorer people and even diverting it elsewhere; selling off land at throwaway prices to various super-rich friends and associates, etc. Can the Gujarat model or the BJP be called corruption free after this?

Land Scam

From 2005 onwards, the Adani group was given land for setting up a port and a Special Economic Zone (SEZ) at Rs. 1.32 per square metre (sq. m) while the average market price was Rs.1100 per square metre which resulted in an estimated loss of Rs. 6546 crores to the State government. Also in 2016, Department of Commerce, Government of India has amended SEZ rules allowing refunds benefitting Adani group with Rs. 500 crore.

In 2010, associates of Anandiben Patel's daughter Anar Patel got 422 acres of land in 2010 from the Narendra Modi government at Rs 15 per sq. m, a huge 91.6% discount to the government's stamp duty rate of Rs 180 per sq.m. with an overall loss of Rs. 143.5 crores to the state government.

At Sanand, The Tata group was given land for the Nano car project at Rs 900 per sq. m against the market price of Rs 10,000 sq. m with an estimated loss of Rs. 33000 crores to the state.

In 2011-12, Narendra Modi while on a spree of selling government land to private giants such as Ford, L&T, Reliance and Essar resulted in an estimated loss of Rs. 500 crores.

The most recent incident of corruption among BJP leaders is the case of Jay Shah, son on the BJP President Amit Shah, who invested Rs. 50,000 in a company, which rose in value to Rs. 80

crores, within a year, after which it was closed down. An incredible rate of return of 16,000 times in just one year!

Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC) scam

In 2005, Modi claimed that a block in Krishna Godavari (KG) basin owned by Gujarat State Petroleum Corporation (GSPC) had 2 trillion cu ft (cubic feet) of gas worth Rs. 2.2 lakh crore. A decade later, GSPC is in the red for Rs. 20000 crore with negligible presence of gas as claimed as earlier. Now, the BJP government is forcing the public sector company Oil and Natural Gas Corporation (ONGC) to buy GSPC with all its losses.

Between 2006-09, natural gas owned by GSPC was sold to Adani Energy at cheaper prices at a loss of Rs. 70.5 crore to the state government.

Also in 2010, 49% shares in GSPC Pipavav power station were sold to Swan Energy for only Rs. 381 crore without inviting any tenders.

Adani Coal Scam

The Adani Group was accused of inflating prices of imported coal and equipment and of charging them to consumers. Reportedly the pending Enforcement Directorate case which has earlier levied a fine of Rs. 5500 crore and can rise up to Rs. 15000 crore on the group, was being sabotaged and the ED officials being harassed.

Leaving behind the scams mentioned above, the Gujarat government has levied lesser penalties than prescribed by Gujarat Urja Vikas Nigam to Adani power bearing a loss of Rs. 160 crore.

Recently, the adjudicating authority of the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI) has ordered to strike down all proceedings launched by the DRI against the Adani Group firms in 2009, earlier accused of allegedly inflating the total declared value of goods imported under power and infrastructure heads. This further benefitted the Adani group a worth of Rs. 1000 crore.

Anganwadi Food Scam

Despite the High Court directions, in 2014, pre-cooked food contracts in Anganwadis had been given to favored firms resulting in a loss of upto Rs. 500 crore to the State Government.

Rice Scam

Allegations of diverting subsidized rice, meant for distribution among labourers who dug village ponds, to the open market, came out in 2004-05. This scam was worth of Rs. 500 crore.

In **rural health**, Gujarat ranks among the BIMARU states.

IN SHORT SUPPLY

State	Required	Shortfall %
PEDIATRICIANS & GYANECOLOGISTS		
Uttar Pradesh	3,092	84.35
Rajasthan	2,272	76.85
Gujarat	**1,280**	**94.22**
Madhya Pradesh	1,336	80.31
Bihar	280	77.50
SURGEONS		
Uttar Pradesh	773	85.51
Rajasthan	568	71.30
Gujarat	**320**	**90.00**
Madhya Pradesh	334	84.73
Bihar	70	70.00
DOCTORS IN PRIMARY HEALTH CENTRES		
Uttar Pradesh	3,497	36.83
Gujarat	**1,247**	**28.71**
Madhya Pradesh	1,171	14.69
Bihar	1,883	+33.88
Rajasthan	2,083	+16.23

Although the Gujarat government claims to be giving incentives to doctors working in remote areas, the state is facing a shortage of specialists like gynecologists and paediatricians, to the extent that even BIMARU states -Bihar, Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh -are better off with regard to healthcare facilities and infrastructure.

This specialist shortfall particularly affects the health of mothers and children, which is apparent with the so called developed state, reporting a maternal mortality rate (MMR) of 127 and an infant mortality rate (IMR) of 36 according to the figures last released in 2013. (MMR is the number of mothers dying per 1,00,000 live births. IMR is the number of infants dying in their first year for every 1,000 live births).

Gujarat has the fifth highest shortfall of specialists including surgeons, gynecologists, physicians and paediatricians among 36 states and Union Territories in terms of numbers. It is 1,206 specialists short at community health centres (CHCs).

There is an acute dearth of surgeons at CHCs in Gujarat, which has just 32 surgeons in place against the required strength of 320.Gujarat ranks 5th in the shortfall of surgeons, while states like Bihar and Madhya Pradesh doing slightly better with deficits of 49 and 283 surgeons respectively.

The position is equally pathetic at primary health centres (PHCs) and sub centres. Gujarat has the second highest shortfall in terms of numbers of health workers at sub centres and PHCs. Against the required strength of 9,310 health workers, there are just 6,938 workers at various sub centres and PHCs, a shortfall of 2,372. Shockingly, 247 sub centres in rural areas are without s single health worker.

Gujarat ranks third in shortfall of doctors at PHCs. Only two states, UP and Chhattisgarh, have bigger deficits of doctors, 1,288 and 424 respectively.

It may be recalled that 18 newborn babies lost their lives in three days between October 26-28, in Gujarat. On 28 October, nine more newborn babies died in the Asarwa hospital leading to protests in the state.

Judiciary and Law

Women account for less than 28% of total judges in country which is also an indicator of lack of development. Gujarat lags behind even the National Average**.**

The following table will make it clear.

Obviously, with all these negatives at the state-level, this time the face of the BJP in the Gujarat Assembly elections is Modi, and his so called achievements as the head of the Union Government is the crux of its campaign. The BJP‘s worst enemy too has to give full marks to its innovative ideas to turn lies into truth. The latest instance of this is it‘s ‘Vikas‘ (development) personified. A professional actor plays the role of Vikas and gives all kinds of pseudo-logic in favour of demonetization, GST, Jan-dhan yojna, steps taken to curb corruption etc. whereas what disruption demonetization and GST in its present form have done to our economy is a well known fact.

WOMEN JUDGES IN THE COUNTRY TOI

SUBORDINATE COURTS

States	Total Judges	Women Judges	% of women judges	Reservation for women
Bihar	1,002	99	9.88	35
Jharkhand	448	62	13.83	05
Gujarat	1,111	177	16	Nil
J&K	219	43	19.65	Nil
UP	1,728	376	21.75	20
MP	1,240	319	25.72	Nil
Himachal	147	39	26.55	Nil
Maharashtra	2,025	596	29.43	Nil
Delhi	489	170	34.76	Nil
All India	16,443	4,704	28.60	—

Note: The percentage of women judges are of the total strength of judges in subordinate courts. Reservation for women judges range from 5% to 35%; not all states have provided quota in the subordinate courts. No quota in HCs and SC.

Jan Dhan Yojna is all about opening zero-balance bank-accounts for the common man. By August 2014, a massive 29.51 crore accounts had been opened. However, there is little evidence to show that the Jan Dhan Yojana has been successful in achieving all its objectives. Dormant accounts still make up for about one-fifth of all Jan Dhan accounts.

The number of zero-balance accounts has always been a cause of concern. In September 2014, three months after the scheme was launched, 76.81% of the accounts were empty. Bankers in public sector banks were allegedly putting paltry amounts of Rs 1 to Rs 10 in several Jan Dhan accounts, ostensibly to reduce the percentage of zero-balance accounts.

How bank accounts without any money in them have improved the lot of poor people in the country is a mystery.

Skill India Mission Data shows that the NSDC, through its partners, only managed to skill around 600,000 youth till September 1, 2017, and could place only 72,858 trained youth, exhibiting a placement rate of around 12 per cent. Under PMKYV 1, the placement rate stood at 18 per cent. But who cares about all this factual reality when the skill of lying, as by ‘Vikas‘, has been perfected !

(Sunanda Bhattacharya)

In BJP Ruled States

UTTAR PRADESH: An eight-year-old boy was killed when the convoy of Uttar Pradesh minister Om Prakash Rajbhar mowed down the child in Gonda district of the state on October 28.

The minister's convoy reportedly fled the spot immediately after the accident and didn't wait to help the child. Angry villagers blocked roads and shouted slogans against the minister, who did not visit the accident spot or meet the family of the deceased. Rajbhar claimed he didn't know immediately that the accident was caused by a car in his convoy. *"I didn't go back to the spot as I was already 25 km away. Police officials advised me not to go back as people were protesting."*

An FIR was registered of causing death by negligence and rash driving. "*Shiva Goswami died when he was hit by a vehicle in minister Om Prakash Rajbhar's fleet in Colonelganj area of the city,"*

The incident comes days after the convoy of another Uttar Pradesh minister Jai Kumar Singh drove over the farmland of a farmer in Jalaun district, destroying his crops and offered a paltry compensation of Rs 4,000 in return.

Dalit Woman, Unborn Child Killed for 'Touching' Bucket in Bulandshahr: On the morning of October 15, Savitri Devi, a Dalit woman collecting garbage from homes in Uttar Pradesh's Bulandshahr district, accidentally 'touched' a bucket belonging to Anju, an upper caste Thakur. The innocuous incident triggered an attack on Savitri in the caste-stratified locality. Savitri's neighbour Kusuma Devi described the incident*: "Anju stormed towards her, punched her repeatedly in the stomach and banged her head on a wall. She kept accusing Savitri of 'defiling' her bucket by touching it,"* Later, she says, Anju's son Rohit joined his mother in beating Savitri with sticks.

Savitri and her unborn child died six days later. Her husband, Dilip Kumar, said he had taken his injured wife to the district hospital the same day. But the hospital refused to treat her, taking the plea that there was no external bleeding and she was fine. On October 21, Savitri's condition worsened and Kumar took her to hospital, where authorities declared her dead.

On October 18, when Kumar went to file a complaint with the Kotwali (rural) police station, Tapeshwar Sagar, the SHO informed him that the police have not registered a case since no external wounds ('no injury') were found. Two days later however, a police team visited the village and verified the assault on Savitri. An FIR was subsequently lodged.

Starvation death: In an incident which echoes the death of a young girl in Jharkhand from starvation because she did not have an Aadhaar card, Shaqina Ashfaq, a 50-year-old paralysed woman, died on November 14 at Bholepur in Fatehganj West after not being allotted rations for November under the public distribution system.

Shaqina's ailing husband, Ashfaq Ahmed, 65, said, *"We received no rations from the PDS shop this month. For the past five days, distribution neighbours had been giving us something to eat because there was no food in the house. On Monday night Shaqina slept on an empty stomach. On Tuesday morning she complained of abdominal pain and died ."*

GUJARAT: A string of incidents took place in Gujarat, in the first week of October, when three Dalit boys were attacked, allegedly by people from upper castes. Around the same time, a youth was killed in the state's Anand district. His crime – watching garba at a temple. In the Gandhinagar district, another Dalit youth was attacked for sporting a moustache.

RAJASTHAN: The Rajasthan government has suggested that women can stay fit through domestic chores such as sweeping and mopping floors, grinding 'chakki', churning curd and filling buckets at home. The advice has been given in the Secondary Education Department's monthly magazine Shivira which is mainly intended for teachers.

Director of Secondary Education Department, Nathmal Didel, who is also Chief Editor of the magazine, said, "*If you read it carefully, they are only suggestions. And as the head of the department, I would say that they are good exercises."*

Didel said the activities suggested in the magazine are an effective means of physical exercise "*especially in rural areas*".

This is an example of how the BJP ruled states want women to move in a particular direction, nullifying all their struggle to move forward.

Another Murder of a Farmer in Alwar by Cow Vigilantes

The All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS), in a statement issued on November 14, has expressed deep shock and strongly condemned the killing of yet another farmer, Ummar Khan, by cow vigilantes in Alwar, Rajasthan. He and two other farmers, Tahir Khan and Javed Khan had purchased cows in a village near Jaipur. When they were returning after buying the cattle, after passing Ramgad, they were attacked in a village called Gahankar. Six or seven vigilante goons who came in a white Tata Sumo car, attacked them and started firing at them. Ummar Khan was killed and Javed Khan is reported missing.

What is even more shocking is that the Rajasthan Police registered a case against the victims and allowed these cow vigilantes to go scot free. Last month the Alwar police forcibly took away about 40 cows of a Muslim farmer at the instigation of a BJP leader and put them in a gaushala. It was after protests that they were released. Even in this case the Superintendent of Police is declaring the victims as cow smugglers without even any investigation or action against the killers. AIKS has condemned this prejudiced attitude of the police which is only aiding the vigilante groups and communal forces.

Last year, in an exactly similar manner, another farmer Pehlu Khan was murdered by cow vigilantes in Alwar. Not only did his family not get any compensation from the state government, but his murderers were set free by the police. The AIKS and the Bhoomi Adhikar Andolan had led an effective countrywide campaign on this issue as well as ensured financial assistance to the families.

In view of these murders of innocents by cow vigilantes in several parts of the country, the Supreme Court had recently given strict orders to the central and state governments to prevent such attacks and take stringent action in such cases. It had also said that adequate compensation must be given to the victims of such attacks.

The AIKS has demanded that the central government and the Rajasthan government abide by the directions of the Supreme Court, ensure that the culprits are brought to book and the families of the victims are immediately given an adequate compensation amount. The AIKS also demanded that the central government must ban all these hoodlums indulging in cow vigilantism all over the country.

Read and Subscribe to

The Voice of the Working Woman

Single Copy: Rs. 10/-, Annual Subscription: Rs. 100/-
Send **MO/DD** favouring **'Centre of Indian Trade Unions'**

to **The Manager, The Voice of the Working Woman,**
13-A, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi 110002, Ph: 011-23221306, email: aiccww@yahoo.com

Send money **directly through the Bank**,
A/c Name – The Voice of the Working Woman,
a/c no. – 0158101019570, Canara Bank, Branch-DDU Marg, New Delhi-02
IFSC Code – CNRB0000158, MICR Code - 110015005
please inform us immediately through call or email.

American Millennials Find Succour in Socialism

A dozen young, unabashed socialists have been elected to Virginia's House of Delegates

While working as an electrician, Lee Carter received a literal shock, through one hand and across the chest, that jolted him into politics and turned him on to what was a dirty word in America for nearly a century: Socialism.

His struggle to obtain compensation for the workplace injury inspired him to run for office, and this week Mr. Carter ousted a top Republican incumbent to nab a spot in Virginia's House of Delegates, becoming one of over a dozen unabashed socialists newly elected to U.S. State and municipal seats one year after Donald Trump took the White House. Mr. Carter, 31, a former Marine, is part of a growing cadre of Americans, particularly millennials, pledging their allegiance to the Democratic Socialists of America, the nation's fastest growing leftist group.

Riding the wave of democratic socialist Bernie Sanders's spirited White House bid against primary rival Hillary Clinton, the organisation is helping propel socialism out of the shadows.

In the years prior to the Sanders campaign, the DSA's number of members hovered around 6,500 — and has nearly quintupled since 2016's presidential race to more than 30,000.

Median age is 35

Its median age has dropped from about 60 to 35, according to organisers, some of whom have playfully referred to the surge among youth as a "socialist baby boom".

Dismayed by Mr. Trump's rise to power Jacquelyn Smith in January joined the DSA, which has chapters in nearly every U.S. State. And at just 22 years old, she managed Mr. Carter's victorious campaign. Today Ms. Smith said millennials — a generation that grew up during the 2008 financial crisis — are eager for socialism, to "*embrace the ideology and really fight with it publicly*".

However, despite their current momentum, groups like the DSA remain on the fringes of American politics.

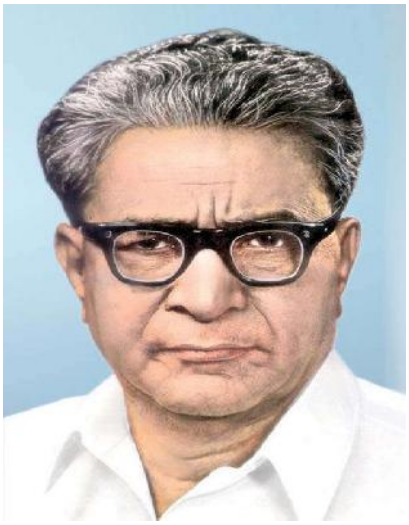
The political group is not a party, and has nowhere near the clout of sister movements elsewhere such as Jeremy Corbyn's Labour Party in Britain, or Syriza in Greece and Podemos in Spain. But socialism has not had a voice this loud in American politics for decades.

(Courtesy: AFP)

Read and Subscribe to
The Working Class (English / Monthly)
CITU Mazdoor (Hindi/ Monthly)

The Indomitable PR

B T Ranadive



*(**This article was written by BT Ranadive, founder president of CITU, paying tribute to P Ramamurti, on his death thirty years ago.** Comrade **PR,** as **Ramamurti** was fondly called by all, was the founder General Secretary of the CITU. On 15 December 2017, his 30th death anniversary, a permanent residential school for Trade Union Education and Research, dedicated to his memory, will be inaugurated at Saket, New Delhi. - Editor)*

The passing away of Com. PR brings to an end the life of a great pioneer of the Communist movement, a life of incessant struggle, full of sacrifices, incarceration and imprisonment, a life of confrontation not only with the ruling authorities but also with the past of the people enchained to anti-democratic feudal traditions. His death has inflicted a grievous loss on the Party and the Communist movement. PR in his life virtually embodied all the characteristics and facets of the epoch through which the Indian people and the working class were passing in the last few decades. As he progressed with his participation in the social and political struggle of his time, he began to represent the most forward looking, consistent anti-imperialist forces which brought him into the ranks of the communist movement. Once in the movement Com. PR through sheer brilliance, his devotion and mastery over Marxism-Leninism, rose to the highest position in the Communist Party - in the united party he was for years in the Central Committee and the Secretariat of the Party, in the CPI (M) he was for years member of the Central Committee and of the Polit Bureau of the Party. The youth who started as a Congress volunteer, once put in charge to escort Mahatma Gandhi on his Tamil Nadu tour, growingly rose to the highest position in the communist movement confronting his former colleagues and sometimes jailed by them.

The path trodden by Com. PR was taken by other radical youth. They came to communism, acceptance of Marxism-Leninism in the course of their participation in the national struggle. Their radical aspirations not being fully satisfied by the Congress programme and action, they were in search of new effective methods to wage the country's battle for freedom.

It was after the withdrawal of the 1920 Non-Cooperation Movement that a small number of dissatisfied youth veered to Marxism, inspired by the success of the October Revolution.

The story of its success inspired in them confidence in the mass and its fighting revolutionary capacity. Between 1920 and 1930 things therefore changed quickly. In Bombay, Bengal, the Marxist youth had started organising the working class. The British Government launched a number of communist conspiracy cases starting with the Peshawar Conspiracy case to curb the active Marxists. The Kanpur Bolshevik Conspiracy case (1924) and the Meerut Communist Conspiracy Case of 1929 were already announcing the growing power of the working class and the Communist movement. By 1927 the working class in Bombay, Calcutta had started participating a big political demonstrations. The strike of the working class to protest against the Simon Commission in 1927- the protest was called by the Congress - was an important political event causing concern to the British authorities.

But the South remained unaffected by the wave of new working class awakening and the appeal of Marxism. Ramamurti participated in the Simon Commission boycott as a Congress activist. The Civil Disobedience Movement of 1930-32 and its sequel led to a new discontent among

Congress radical youth. Earlier, from 1926 onwards, the youth were voicing the demand for complete independence as the immediate objective of the Congress. The dominant leadership of the Congress was still committed to the 'Dominion Status'. The Independence resolution of the Lahore Congress temporarily met the aspirations of the younger sections who participated enthusiastically in the movement. But the result of the movement, acceptance of the Ministry under the condemned 1935 Constitution, totally disappointed them. Once again there was a search for a new ideology, a new approach, a new programme for national liberation. The atmosphere was surcharged with news about the success of the 1st Soviet Plan and socialism began to attract a number of radical youth. This led to the emergence of the Congress Socialist Party led by Shri Jayaprakash Narain. PR made his turn to socialism in this period and was the founder of the Congress Socialist Party in Tamil Nadu.

But for a person like him there could be no halfway house. The triumph of socialist planning in the Soviet Union, the spread of Marxist ideology in India, the formation of All India Communist Party with the merger of several communist groups - all led him to break the shackles of Congress Socialist ideology and take the path to Marxism. At this stage he came into contact with Com. Amir Hyder Khan, the proletarian revolutionary now in Pakistan, but as ever busy with the Marxist Movement. Amir was an accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case but escaped arrest and was working underground in Madras. Another comrade with whom PR came into contact was Comrade S.V. Ghate, also an accused in the Meerut Conspiracy Case, a man with almost a vanishing physical frame, but of determined will and devotion. He was deported to Madras after the successful all India Textile Strike of 1934. PR now turned directly to Marxism and devoted all his energies to build and spread the working class movement.

It almost appeared as if his brilliant intellect and unbounded energy were held in check by previous ideologies and were waiting for explosion in the service of the people, their liberty and revolution. New PR turned with all his energy to the working class, recognised its importance in the revolutionary struggle. He organised the trade unions in several industries and cities, textile, tramways, railways, transport - one after another. The employers in these industries began to feel the presence of his organising ability with the awakening of the workers and the rise of their organisations. As a pioneer he had to work at the grassroot level, address gate meetings, deal with anti-socials hired by the employers and encouraged by the British police, fight the illegalities of the managements, wage battles in law courts, frame demands, conduct strikes and negotiations. PR soon flowered as the biggest trade union leader in Tamil Nadu and was directly or indirectly associated with all the important strikes of the period.

But PR could not be satisfied with organisation of the trade union movement alone. As a Communist leader and pioneer he had to organise all mass fronts and mass organisations, all sections of the people. The students, kisan, agricultural workers' organisations- all were nursed and nourished by PR's initiatives and guidance. PR built the Communist Party in Tamil Nadu. From the remnants of the Congress Socialist Party and from the rising working class movement he created new cadres, educated them in the spirit of Marxism-Leninism, inspired them to follow his example and accept the hard life of a party whole timer. A large number of the present day leaders of the Party in Tamil Nadu are indebted to Com. PR for arming them with the devotion and zeal to serve the party at all costs, in all conditions. The number of comrades directly inspired by PR will run into hundreds.

Comrade PR was a man of exceptional quality and ability, unique even among the top leaders of the Party. Very rarely a person is able to master all forms of party activity and is able to discharge all responsibilities. Perhaps none is equal to PR in this respect and it will take a long time to produce one of equal capacity. He was a mass leader, builder of the trade union movement, powerful mass speaker and a brilliant parliamentarian, effective journalist, writer of agitational pamphlets and polemical ideological documents, builder of the party and educator of party cadres.

There was not one front of Party activity which he did not touch with credit to the Party and to himself. He had an amazing memory and quick grasp over the most complicated problems. With ease he could tackle the technical problems of industries. With equal ease he could produce a document full of facts and figures on matters like the water dispute between Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

When the CITU was formed in 1970, PR was the obvious choice for the strategic and leading post of the General Secretary. His ripe experience, his all India prestige as a trade union leader and leader of the CPI (M) were bound to be helpful to the organisation. And they did help in rapidly spreading the appeal of CITU and enabling it to emerge as a leading centre of the trade union movement. He was quick to understand the trend of discussions at the foundation conference of the CITU. The delegates were bursting with anger at the reformist leadership of Dange and others. There was danger that the new organisation would lose its bearings and embroil itself only in disputes and wordy battles with the AITUC. PR proposed that within a month of the inaugural session, the unions and State Committees should undertake a week's campaign for trade union unity. This was done and the organisation was set on correct rails.

Within a few years of his work in Tamil Nadu, PR came to occupy a position of leadership in the all India trade union movement and inside the Communist Party. He was elected to the Central Committee and the Secretariat of the Communist Party, which position he held for years till the Party split in 1964. He fulfilled his all India responsibility with equal zest and resourcefulness. His prestige among the masses, his popularity helped the State Committees to carry the message of the Party to the people and his experience in Party building was of great help in setting up new units and Committees. His unerring trade union guidance helped trade union units in weaker states to consolidate their movement.

Comrade PR played a prominent role in fighting revisionism in the united Party. He took a firm stand in defence of the basic principles of Marxism-Leninism and was one of the founders of the CPI (M). Since the foundation of the Party he occupied the position of Member of the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau of the Party and was one of the top leaders of the Party, when it was engaged in a serious struggle against international revisionism and left dogmatism. In Tamil Nadu he played a decisive role in fighting Naxalite disruption inside the Party.

PR was moulded by these struggles waged in incessant defence of the people, the Party and the basic Marxist principles. He was moulded by the immense sacrifices he had to make for carrying on these struggles. His sacrifices, his principled fight for the purity of Marxism-Leninism and his brilliant intellect, all combined to produce a unique personality and an exceptional leader. Very few persons are able to render such long standing service to the Party in their life.

I felt a tremendous sense of deprivation and desolation on hearing the news of his passing away. For the last so many years we had discussed together in the PB the problems of the Party and the movement and we had become a part of each other. I knew the end was near when I went to Madras to see him on 26th November. The doctors held out no hope. It was only medical skill that was prolonging his existence and yet the shock was no less severe when the news came. It was difficult to believe that we would never see him again, nor listen to his voice. It was with great difficulty that I could control my emotions when paying tribute to him at the Madras burning ground. I saw his body being consumed and burnt by the fire. But then I consoled myself by saying after all was not his life a burning candle dripping its vital substance in the cause of the people. I saluted his remains and rest well our esteemed Comrade. You have earned your rest.

The great crusader has left. He has left us the memory of his revolutionary work and that is a rich heritage.

(Source: The Working Class, Vol.17, No.5, January 1988)

Meet India's Rare Woman Truck Driver

Tabassum, a 28 year old from Mandla in Madhya Pradesh, drives trucks for a living, for at least 20 days a month. It's a gruelling job and the pay is not that great, about Rs 35,000 a month, but it's what she loves doing. It started off, as many things do, by chance - on a summer morning when an urgent consignment had to be delivered. Tabassum's father fell ill and her elder brother was away on his bus tours. This left her, the only other driver in the family, to do the job. "*I was the only one who knew how to drive, and I remembered my dad telling me 'if I could drive a car, I could drive a truck'*,". Her father, Ali, lay by her side the whole 100 kilometers up and back, giving her instructions all along, as he does even now, on the few occasions they get to share a ride together.

Most of the time it is Tabassum on her own, traversing the roads of her state, and the neighbouring ones of Chattisgarh. Having completed her Bachelor degree in Arts, Tabassum took to driving one of the family's two trucks to help out in times of a financial crunch. Her mother's failing health consuming much of the family's income, and a family of ten to feed, meant that her father and elder brother alone could not make ends meet. "*We have had to rent a flat in Jabalpur to be closer to the hospitals, and take mummy to endless dialysis sessions to help cure her kidney problems*," says Shabnam, one of Tab-assum's elder sisters. In the business of transport for over two generations, Tab-assum and her father, manage the two trucks owned by the family, and use them to deliver rice loads to-and-from the mill for government distribution.

Tabassum hates being home and doing housework. She enjoys her time in the truck, out on the roads. "*A regular work day starts as early as 5 am when we have to get the truck to the mill for unloading*," she says. Waiting for it to be unloaded and loaded can be long. It can even be days before her turn comes. There have been times when she couldn't return home for days—spent nights in the truck, and cooked on the roadside, bathing being a far-off dream.

In times like these she only has her help to keep her company, and of course, Salman Khan, whose films she diligently downloads on her phone. She even has a repository of Bollywood tunes on a pen drive that is continuously playing while she is on the road. Her longest trip is to Raipur in Chh-attisgarh, 350 kilometers from her hometown. It takes her many days even though she does not believe in taking long breaks while on road. "*Driving at night is ext-remely convenient., there is very little traffic, apart from animals of course!"* Tabassum casually mentions the likes of jackals, hyenas, wild boar and some others. It is these that one needs to be more careful of, she says, brushing off any other fears. So far she has never had a bad experience. In fact, she says other truck drivers have gone out of their way to help her many times. She does carry a stone, and a spare knife, just in case. "*Main khud goondi lagti hu* (I look quite intimidating myself)," she laughs.

Being the first woman driver of a ten-wheeled truck ensures that she receives a lot of respect from people around her. *"To be able to handle a truck is not easy. Add to that an overloaded vehicle, which is usually the case with trucks carrying 'dhaan', the balancing is a very difficult feat,"* points out a neighbour who has taken driving lessons from Tabassum. She has even won a few community awards for women empowerment. (Courtesy: The Outlook)

Kerala Dalit Priests

Over nine decades ago, Dalits and backward castes weren't even allowed in the vicinity of temples. It took the Vaikom Satyagraha of 1924 to ensure that temple roads in the then Travancore state were opened for all castes. It would take another 12 years and the royal decree of 1936 for Dalits and OBCs to be allowed entry into temples.

On October 9, this year, the Travancore Devaswom (Temple) Board (TDB) broke another major barrier towards social inclusion in the state, appointing five Dalits as priests to temples under its control. The entry into the sanctum sanctorum was facilitated by the TDB's decision to select priests in line with the recruitment process followed in government posts, including adhering to reservation norms.

The TDB conducted an examination in 2016, held interviews early this year, and appointed 62 priests, of whom five are Dalits. While the current process faced little resistance, similar reform efforts in 1970, when around 10 members of the OBC community were appointed as priests, and in 1993, when OBC priests were finally allowed into temples, were vehemently opposed.

In 1970, following strong opposition from the Brahmin community, the TDB changed the 10 priests' designations to clerks and shifted them out of the temples. And in 1993, it took Supreme Court intervention to finally pave the way for an OBC priest.

Unlike their predecessors, the new-age Dalit priests have worked at private temples. But being part of the TDB is an altogether different matter. The most prominent of the four autonomous temple boards in Kerala controlled by the state government, the TDB manages 1,252 temples in South and Central Kerala, has nearly 2,500 priests on its payroll, and handles an annual revenue of Rs 390 crore. Its portfolio includes 70 major temples, including the famous Ayyappa Temple at Sabarimala.

The Odisha ASHA Karmee Union held a huge demonstration of over 5000 ASHA workers, in front of the State Assembly in Bhubaneshwar on 17 November. This marks the beginning of a strike and seven day-and-night dharna.

The ASHA workers are demanding minimum wages and implementation of the 45th ILC recommendations.

Postal regd. No. DL©-01/1199/2015-2017 Delhi, Licenced to post without prepayment under Licence No. U(C)-07/2015-17, Posted on 26-27 (Advance month) at NDPSO, ND-110001 RNI 37025/81.
(Date of Publication- 24th November 2017)

Jan Ekta Jan Adhikar Andolan

CITU Participates in 30 October *Jan Ekta Mashal* March

Printed by K. Hemalata and published by K.Hemalata on behalf of the AICCWW(CITU), 13-A, Rouse Avenue, New Delhi 110 002, Ph: 011-23221306, Fax: 011-23211284, Email: aiccww@yahoo.com, Website: www.citucentre.org and printed at Progressive Printers, A-21, Jhilmil Industrial Area, G T Road, Shahdara, Delhi-95. Editor: K.Hemalata