

Save agriculture save democracy day

Field workers join in mass protest action



26th June, 2021, PCMSRU



26th June, 2021, UPMSRA functionaries at Gazipur border

At the call of ten Central Trade Unions and independent Federations and in solidarity with the struggles of the farmers, which has already reached historic height at completion of seven months of struggle, including Dharna and demonstrations at the access roads to the national capital of Delhi (facing biting winter, scorching summer and now the ongoing winter swamp), called upon the workers to organize protest actions across the country by observing Save agriculture save democracy day on 26th June, 2021. The day also corresponded with the death anniversary of the legendary farmer leader Swami Sahajanand Saraswati. Protest actions demanded repeal of four labour codes, the three farm laws, the Electricity (Amendment) Ordinance, 2021, legally guaranteed MSP for farmers' produce, time-bound universal free vaccination, immediate

release of ten Kg of free food grains per person per month to all who needs it and release of Rs.7500 to every non income tax paying family every month, taking back of nefarious policy of privatization of public sector enterprises and government departments, deliverance of Rs 50 lakh insurance to all frontline workers including ASHA, Anganwadi employees, sanitation workers and adequate compensation to the families of the workers who died due to Covid 19. The protest actions were simultaneously organized by the workers with sit-in at Raj Bhavans in various states and different other demonstrative protest actions in districts and tehsils all over India. State and subunits of FMRAI across the country organized independent and joint programmes, along with other central trade union including CITU, organized the day decrying the authoritarian regime

that is quickly narrowing the democratic space, destroying the agriculture, indulging in firing rise in prices, causing unemployment, demolishing the cherished national object of universal health care of the country and thereby binging great calamity to life and livelihood of the common people adding fuel to the fire in the time of the disaster of virus epidemic. PCMSRU organized public protest demonstration on the streets, UPMSRA functionaries joined protest farmers' site at Gazipur border, besides organizing te programme at Lucknow, Kanpur, Jaunpur, Pithoragarh, Orai and Balia. Begusarai unit of BSSRU observed the day in organizing and joining demonstrations. TMSRU organized these programmes at Hyderabad and Nizamabad and DSMRO submitted memorandum to the Lt. Governor Of Delhi, besides other programmes throughout the nation.

Albert David

United fieldworkers resisting onslaught of the management

Albert David management has intensified unfair labour practices on the sales promotion employees working in the company. In violation of the existing understanding management is trying to impose newer working conditions in contravention to the laws of the land. The company management has adopted the path of victimization to compel the fieldworkers to succumb to their dictum. Management has illegally transferred ten fieldworkers of Odisha, West Bengal, Chandigarh, Maharashtra and Goa to distant places as a terror tactics in this pandemic situation. Not only that Albert David management has resorted to illegal wage cuts and summarily terminated eight fieldworkers in violation of principles of natural justice. Salaries of around 350 fieldworkers are withheld by the management. Several endeavour by the All India Council Committee of FMRAI to come to a mutual understanding on newer working conditions fell flat due to adamant stance of the management. The intention of the management is to snatch the existing rights of the workers and forcibly impose new work norms of attending company meetings through VC within a stipulated time knowing well, that the same is in violation of the understandings existing in the Company. It is on record, that in M/S Albert David Limited any

changes from existing norms are to be discussed in the welfare committee to arrive at a recorded understanding before implementation of the new systems/norms and this practice has been adhered for decades. It is evident that the management deliberately wants to break the existing understandings, which are essential for maintaining congenial and conducive employer-employee relationship, for growth and prosperity of the Company. Even after signing an tripartite agreement in labour office on 25th February, 2021 management is not settling the pending Charter of Demands and thereby depriving the fieldworkers from their legal rights. In this given circumstances FMRAI has lodged a complain petition in the Labour Department, in Kolkata and has given call for demonstration in front of company's establishment in July, 2021 in all state units against these atrocities of Albert David management. The fieldworkers are unitedly fighting tooth and nail against these illegal onslaught of the company. Memorandum submission to this management through the stockiest has been successfully implemented in some states and this has to be continued by the council sub committee till all the stockiest of the company across the country are approached for supporting the just demands of the workers.

Obituary

Apurba Ghosh



Apurba Ghosh (69), who served FMRAI as Vice President (2004 to 2007) and as Treasurer (2007 to 2010) and as General Secretary (1994 to 2002) and President of OSRU, breathed his last in a private hospital at Kolkata on 8th June, 2021. He had contracted Covid-19 disease in the first week of May, 2021 and initially he was being treated in a safe home for Covid patients. When his condition worsened, then he was admitted, in the midst of scarcity of hospital beds, in a private facility, where his condition did not improve even after long period of hospitalization and he was shifted to another

private hospital with upgraded facility, but all efforts ultimately failed. After his death his body was donated to R G Kar Medical College and Hospital, Kolkata. He joined the profession as a medical representative in Bengal Immunity in Odisha at Sambalpur in 1971. Subsequently, he joined Organon at Cuttack. During his employment in Organon he got deeply involved in organizing the Organon field workers in council and was elected as All India Convener. Simultaneously, he was deeply involved in the field workers movement at Cuttack (OSRU was known as OMCRA at that time). Later, he was transferred to Kolkata in 2006 and tirelessly served FMRAI, in different capacities and functions, till his retirement in 2010. Now, Apurba Ghosh, the beloved leader of field workers movement, retires from life and all his comrades, friends and relatives bid him a farewell with love in their heart and tear in their eyes. FMRAI conveys heartfelt condolence to all his family members and all his comrades and friends. FMRAI also express sincere gratitude to the members of FMRAI and its state units and the councils and all other well-wishers who contributed (remitted through his daughter's account) for his treatment which was raised, in lightning speed. Red salute to Apurba Ghosh!

States and subunits organize vaccination for field workers



Vaccination Camp at Bhubaneswar, OSRU

Like all other health care workers field workers are exposed to the virus by virtue of their professional duties. But, the employers have been not either sensible or responsible enough to arrange vaccination for the field workers, even if these employers are knowledgeable enough to

understand the grave threat that the field workers are exposed to. Neither the central government has prioritized vaccination of the field workers. In view of this, the states and subunits of FMRAI all over the country organized vaccination camps for field workers involving the local administrations and , in

some places with the help of associations of medical doctors and other organizations. These initiatives of the states and subunits of FMRAI encouraged the mass of field workers, members and non-members alike, imparted self-assurance and brought them closer to the organization.

Corrigendum

In a news item titled 'Field workers of DRL resort to mass action: Maharashtra' in the April, 2021 issue of FMRAI News, it was mentioned that 'The field workers of DRL in the state of Maharashtra resorted to collective action by taking mass casual leave on 12th March, 2021'. It has to be read as 'The field workers of DRL in the state of Maharashtra resorted to collective action by taking mass casual leave on 30th March, 2021'

The deleterious triplet

Disease, hunger and Government's escape

'The British colonial power enacted various laws to further their economic and political interests, at the cost of the colonized. The British used the law as a tool of political repression...', said N V Ramana, the Chief Justice of India, in a recent address. The English rule in India, thus, was 'rule by law' instead of 'rule of law', he observed. He further stated, **'Now, more than 70 years down the line, the entire world is facing an unprecedented crisis in the form of Covid-19. At this juncture, we necessarily have to pause and ask ourselves as to what extent we have used the Rule of Law to ensure protection to, and, the welfare of all of our people.'**

The 'rule of law' must value liberty, equality, justice, and fraternity and respect the very first five letters of the Indian constitution 'We the people of India...'. 'Rule by law', on the other hand, is expressed as enactments of laws and rules for legalizing oppression and for organizing loot of the people for a select group, which is exemplified in contemporary India by the recent enactment of Labour Laws and Farm Laws by the 'popular' Government. The 'rule by law' of this genre has little regard for constitutional values or least care for implementation of the existing laws that may provide some relief to the people. It is brazenly regardless of the welfare or protection of 'We the people of india...'.
Disaster management act 2005 (DMA 2005) is meant to give relief to the people affected by the catastrophes or calamities like those created by Covid 19. But the central Government declines to give relief to the people even if giving relief to the affected people has been made mandatory under Section 12 of the act. Consequently, the Government challenged public

interest petition in the Supreme Court and argued that giving relief according to the act is not mandatory and Government **may or may not** choose to give relief to the distressed people and the repetitive use of the word 'shall' should be read and considered as 'may' and the Government has no legal obligation to give relief. The Government further argued that payment of ex gratia compensation for loss of life due to Covid-19 pandemic to the aggrieved families is beyond the fiscal affordability (financial capacity) of the Government and took plea that the Covid-19 is a continuous disaster unlike other disaster, making it quite different, and therefore the law does not apply to Covid-19, even though the central Government documented Covid-19 as a 'notified disaster' through due process of law. Government also argued that comprehensive steps have been taken by the Union of India in relation to the pandemic, and therefore, the Government has no obligation under the particular act.

The supreme court, however, in its recent judgment rejected the argument that the said law is not mandatory and directed the National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA), constituted under the act and headed by the present Prime Minister of India, to recommend guidelines, as required by the act, for ex gratia assistance on account of loss of life to the family members of the persons who died due to Covid-19. The Supreme Court also, quoting a particular judgment of the past, observed that **'the courts cannot run the Government nor can the administration indulge in abuse or nonuse of power and get away with it'**.

Thus, the Government's plan for escape, making whirlwind of polemics, did not succeed and at the intervention of the court, once

again, Government has been prevented from abdicating its responsibility to the citizens.

This is another instance which shows that, as much this epidemic has imposed 'mask' as a dress code upon the mass of people, it has also unmasked the Government in the same measure. The poverty of civilizational values of the ruling elites in India, more than the fiscal poverty of the Government, is exposed to the point of disrobement in this awkward time of devastating disease outbreak. Thousands of common people have lost their livelihood. Thousands of workers, including hundreds of field workers, have been thrown out of job or their wages have been denied. Unprecedented price rise, especially the reckless price rise in the food and fuel (besides century of petrol-diesel and double century of edible oil), has devastated the poor the most, than the disease itself. Hundreds of families, comprised of children and old men and women, are going to sleep at night without food, even if formal public distribution system exists and Food Security Act is preserved carefully in the library of the lawyers. On the other hand, a small band of big business corporates, has been immensely profited during this epidemic and has multiplied their wealth. All these facts are glaringly brought before our eyes through scores of responsible statistics, even though some statistics, mixed with ministerial rhetoric, are no less than glorified lies. Still the truth about the 'we the people of india' is not unknowable and one need not rely only on ambiguous statistics as the very truth is detectable looking at the next door. The distressed condition of the common people in India is no secret today and as plain and unambiguous as the sky

blackened with the smoke of mass funeral pyres.

Invasion of the novel virus-disease broke out in the entire settlement of man on earth and the cities and towns across the continents, retracted behind the doors, for months together. While the virus has brought disaster for countless number of people it brought kismet, wealth and affluence to a handful of people who belong to the influential corporations.

When the virus has struck the country with its outrageous second wave, the pharmaceutical industry in India has grown at a nice rate. Sudarsan Jain, Secretary General of Indian Pharmaceutical Alliance, admitted that **'Covid-19 has unlocked new opportunities for the Indian pharma sector'** (Indian Express, 7th June, 2021). His candid admission is an evidenced fact. The pharmaceutical industry has ever taken opportunity to make diseases into fortune and it was more so during the present epidemic outbreak. But this fortune has been made on the back of the workers and employees, especially the field workers, even if they are mostly overworked, ruled by tyranny, insufficiently paid and sorely unprotected. Industry has grown while large number of field workers, who were up to the task of building the fortune for the industry, ceased to live under the attack of the ill-famed virus. But, the most inglorious tale of the employment situation, created by many of the employers in the pharmaceutical and other industries in india, is that the field workers, in several instances under job threat, went well beyond the 'call of duty' only to bring robust growth for the company even in these hours of distress, but the employers failed to recognize their contribution either in life or in death.

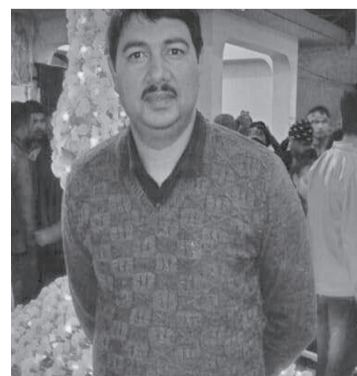
The Supreme Court directive, understood in a correct perspective, shows that a popularly elected Government cannot abandon its lawful responsibility nor it can pass the buck to the society or to the voluntary relief organizations and engage itself solely for the benefits of a few select corporations. Therefore, the Government must ensure quick relief measures for all those who are adversely affected and the workers and employees, including field workers, who have been atrociously removed from their job or who have been denied wages, and justice and equity for them should not be postponed forever. Such relief and remedy will be the duty of the Government, as mandated under the laws and the constitution. The mass of people are entitled to get this, and therefore, it should not be construed as acts of benevolence. It is occasion for the people, to rise up once again and appropriate their rightful entitlement which is being cornered in this country by some chosen individuals and corporations. It is occasion to remember a world famous song which was written one hundred and fifty years back, in June, 1871, by Eugene Pottier, a communard, soon after the fall of Paris commune: Workers, let's get together at last /Stand up! The damned of the earth!/Stand up! The convicts of hunger!/To overcome misery and shadow / Slave crowd, stand up! Stand up!/We are the right, we are the number:/We, who were nothing, let us be everything.

Kristalina Georgieva, the IMF chief, wrote in The Guardian that the pandemic has **'increased inequality leading to economic and social upheaval'**. In fact, likelihood of 'upheaval' is an alarm that has been raised in the neoliberal corporate world, and it is not quite unfounded!

Obituary

FMRAI deeply mourns at the grievous news of sad demise of the following field workers and conveys earnest condolence to their comrades, families and friends.

Ashim Kshyap(46), a field worker of Aimil at Nalbari



headquarter and a member of CRU passed away in the month

of June, 2021 following infection of Covid 19 virus.

Humphrey Kharbani, a field worker based at shillong and a member of CRU, breathed his last on 2nd June, 2021 soon after he contracted serious Covid 19 infection.

B P Vinoy, a field worker



employed in Zinda division of Franco Indian Pharmaceutical and a committee member in

Bengaluru unit of KSM&SRA, died of respiratory failure in June, 2021, on account of Covid 19 infection on the 18th day of his hospitalization.

Deepak Agarwal, employed



in GSK and member of UPMSRA passed away on 8th June, 2021. He was based at Agra as headquarter.

Atul Jaiswal, member of Junapur unit of UPMSRA, employed

Lokbeta Pharmaceuticals passed away on 22th April, 2021. UPMSRA Junapur unit handed over Rs.233000 to his bereaved family.

Kunal Kanti Ghosh (53), a field worker employed in Oaknet based at Nagaon, and a member of CRU, died following massive stroke in June, 2021.

Atul Sharma employed in Alkem, based at Farrukhabad, and a member of UPMSRA, died on 19th May, 2021. He was former CEC Member of UPMSRA and GCM of FMRAI.

Nitin Awasthi a field worker of FDC at Kanpur headquarter and a member of UPMSRA died on 26th April, 2021.

Nagendra Yadav a field worker of Micro based at Varanasi headquarter and a member of UPMSRA passed away on 22nd April, 2021.

Varun Agarwal a field worker of Alkem based at Agra and a member of UPMSRA died on 12th May, 2021.

Ramji Rawat a field worker of Micro based at Kanpur and a member of UPMSRA died on 22nd April, 2021

Anand Srivastava a field worker of Menarini Raunaq Pharma based at Varanasi and a member of UPMSRA succumbed to death on 6th May, 2021.

Vinay Bhushan Dubey a field worker of Abbott Healthcare based at Gorakhpur and a member of UPMSRA passed away on 9th May, 2021.

Manish Mishra a field worker of Abbott India based at Sitapur and a member of UPMSRA, breathed his last on 4th May, 2021.

Pankaj Dubey a field worker of Koye Pharma based at Varanasi and a member of UPMSRA died on 18th April, 2021.

Ankur Saxena a field worker of Abbott India based at Bareilly and a member of UPMSRA, expired on 27th May, 2021.

FMRAI writes to prime minister

In the midst of terrible loss of life, coupled with scarcity of vaccines, certain medicines, oxygen and healthcare facilities in the entire country during the second wave of the virus epidemic, FMRAI wrote to Prime minister demanding universal free vaccination of all the people of the country and freedom from monopoly in production of vaccines and some medicines. Similar demands were raised from across the country. This popular upsurge compelled the government to reverse its business-friendly vaccination policy and to revert back to time-honoured system of universal free vaccination making a significant instance of reversal of an anti-people policy of the government for the first time in last seven years.

FEDERATION OF MEDICAL AND SALES REPRESENTATIVES' ASSOCIATIONS OF INDIA (FMRAI)

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22nd May, 2021

To
The Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of India,
 Prime Minister Office,
 152, South Block, Raisina Hill,
 New Delhi - 110011

Respected Sir,

We are deeply disturbed when we write this letter to you in the midst of an unimaginable human tragedy in our country. This catastrophe, which India is presently passing through, is unprecedented in measure of suffering, death and devastation. Independent India never ever confronted such an incredible calamity. Our organization, FMRAI, represents the medical and sales representatives (sales promotion employees) working across the country, who are very vulnerable because of their job profile which involves interaction with doctors, chemists and other healthcare professionals for the sales promotion of medicines and sales promotion of consumer goods. Based on the collective experience of the workers in the field, during the Covid pandemic, we write this letter on the strength of a conviction that many of the current deaths and devastation can be prevented by your kind intervention in this critical time. Hence, we submit the following for your kind intervention:

1. The need of the hour is to combat this deadly virus through all existing means and methods, both short-term and long-term. This epidemic can be controlled and all probable future outbreaks can be effectively prevented through mass vaccination, involving every citizen of the country, as has been authenticated and confirmed by the experts over and over again. Considering that, FMRAI urges upon the government for restructuring its present vaccine policy to abolish discrimination (in price or access or both) that allows rank profiteering by private entities and demand of the government to adopt a National Vaccination Policy aimed at smooth delivery of free and universal vaccination for all citizens of the country in a short span of time.
2. But, given the duopoly of two vaccine-producing companies (Serum Institute of India and Bharat Biotech) in current situation, there exists serious shortage of vaccines in the country. Therefore, with a view to achieve the objective of 'universal and free vaccination for all citizens' government should make end to duopoly and give necessary license to several other able and efficient Indian manufacturers, both in private and public sector, for production of the two currently available vaccines in our country (Covishield and Covaxin) and all future vaccines. The recent import of Sputnik V from Russia and the commencement of its production by Dr. Reddy's Laboratories will definitely augment the availability of vaccines, but the price declared by the company, will make it unaffordable for the common masses. Similarly, the declared prices of Covishield and Covaxin in the private sector are prohibitive for the vast populace of our country.
3. FMRAI has noted that the government after lot of delay, engaged some of the vaccine producing PSUs and expects that the Government will urgently engage the remaining able and efficient PSUs for production of requisite vaccines.
4. Instead of using the Epidemic Diseases Act, 1897 and Disaster Management Act 2005, which is currently in vogue, in curbing the democratic rights of the people in distress, the government should make use of these acts to stop unscrupulous profit-mongering in medical oxygen, ventilator and medicines and issue directives and act in a manner that is appropriate in this cataclysmic time.
5. Presently, there is a huge scarcity of medicines, like Remdesivir, Favipiravir and Tocilizumab, which are being used in Covid 19 treatment. The recent outbreak of black fungusinfection (Mucormycosis) has also led to acute shortage of the disease-specific drugs like Liposomal Amphotericin B. In this background only, the distressed people are being forced to go to black market for accessing these medicines from the rapacious traders and pirates at unbelievably exorbitant prices. Unfortunately many of these medicines are patented and patent protection has created situation of monopoly or oligopoly in production, marketing and sale of these medicines. In view of this situation FMRAI demands of government of immediate revocation of patent making good use of 'Compulsory Licensing' (Section 84) provision of the Indian patent act, 1970 and issue compulsory license to Indian public and private sector pharmaceutical companies, so that these companies are enabled to manufacture, market and sell these medicines in the dire time of need. This will enormously help increasing availability and reduce prices. Simultaneously, the Central Government in coordination with the state governments must ensure adequate supply of medical oxygen.
6. Declare Covid 19 epidemic as a 'National Disaster' so that all the funds like State Disaster Response Fund, National Disaster Response Fund, Prime Minister's Relief Fund, PMCARE Fund can be utilized in tracing, testing and treating the citizens, in giving vaccines universally to all-free of cost, in preparing (by revamping universally-accessible healthcare infrastructure) and preemptively acting against the terrible third wave of epidemic and in giving assistance to individuals and families ruined by death or joblessness incidental to spread of virus, lockdown and virus-related restrictions.

FMRAI strongly believes that acts of indifference to death and devastation that accompanied the human tragedy will not continue any further. Therefore, with faith on the government that has been elected by the people of India, we earnestly request you, once again, to act in a manner that is appropriate in the terrible need of the citizens of the country.

Thanking you,
 Sincerely yours,
For Federation of Medical and Sales
Representatives' Associations of India (FMRAI)

(Santanu Chatterjee)
General Secretary

Modi Government's Covid Vaccine Policy

J. S. Majumdar

Tuned to Privatisation Policy

Modi government's Covid vaccine policy has to be seen in the background of this government's healthcare policy which mainly is privatisation of entire healthcare system including national health policy and the drug policy.

Drug Policy: Establishment of public sector pharma companies, Patent Act 1970 and Drug Prices (Control) Order 1979 were the three instruments with which India could become self-reliant in almost all medical products, including vaccines, at economically affordable prices; and major supplier of generic (non-patented) medicines in different countries of the world. With neoliberal policy the drug policy were systematically diluted in all three areas and finally all public sector drug companies are being sold out by Modi government.

Health Policy: Having objective of national health policy for *free universal public healthcare system*, from primary to tertiary treatment, also went on getting diluted since adoption of neoliberal economy. Finally, Modi government made big push in privatising the entire healthcare system making business of 'health for profit' through (a) giving up Health Planning along 5 years plans; (b) adopting National Health Policy in 2017 which includes side by side private healthcare system with that of the governmental healthcare system; (c) Ayushman Bharat – National Health Protection Mission (AB-NHPM) renamed as Pradhan Mantri Jan Arogya Yojna (PM-JAY), announced in the budget speech on February 1, 2018, which is insurance driven policy with private healthcare network participation; and (d) in 2020 introducing National Digital Healthcare Mission (NDHM), a governmental platform for promoting Tele-medicines and E-pharmacy with private sector participation.

Modi government's Covid vaccine policy was tuned to the above mentioned health and drug policies as against the need of *free public universal vaccination* in the situation of pandemic.

Failures in the management of Covid pandemic and the Vaccine Policy : Modi government failed in overall handling of the pandemic — in organising and building public healthcare capacity, medical equipment, oxygen, equipping medical and paramedical personnel etc. Their folly on the vaccine front is monumental. After the first wave of Covid, Modi government came to the conclusion that Covid-19 attack ended and there was no need to take defensive measures against its further attack.

Manufacturing Failure : Since January 2020, during the very first wave of Covid-19 pandemic, there should have been a roadmap of Covid vaccine's development, production, procurement, distribution and vaccination. Government did not take any initiative for indigenous capacity of vaccine's production by (a) Placing advance orders; (b) Extending bank credit for expansion of production capacity; (c) Take initiative for public sector production; and (d) Share with other vaccine manufacturers Covid vaccine technology of *Covaxin*.

Covaxin technology is available with the Central government, as it was only vaccine technology available and developed in India by ICMR (Indian Council of Medical Research) and NIV (National Institute of Virology) from inactivated virus and produced by BBIL (Bharat Biotech India Ltd) at Hyderabad.

Again, only recently, the Government said that it will be using three public sector enterprises for manufacturing *Covaxin* to augment the manufacturing capacity under Mission COVID Suraksha. These PSEs are (1) Haffkine Biopharmaceutical Corporation Ltd, a State PSE under in Maharashtra; (2) Indian Immunologicals Ltd at Hyderabad of National Dairy Development Board; and (3) Bharat Immunologicals and Biologicals Corporation Ltd, Bulandshahr, a CPSE under the Department of Biotechnology.

All other PSEs like IDPL, HAL etc, including heritage companies like BCPL and Bengal Immunity are in the sale list of the Govt.

Not Diversifying Production: Government did not diversify the production of *Covaxin* geographically and involving more public sector companies as well as smaller biological manufacturers. This would have given the government greater leverage in its dealings with the MNCs like AstraZeneca, the owner of *Covishield* and produced at SII.

In contrast, the production model of RDIF (Russia Direct Investment Fund), the owner of the Sputnik V vaccine, is spread over nearly 10 different companies in India, mostly small and medium-sized biological manufacturers with easy transfer of technology. Dr. Reddy's Laboratory (DRL)

is playing a "facilitator role" by coordinating production among these companies.

In China, they are utilising all technologies and wide bases of production. There is cooperation between China and Cuba, while Cuba brings its biotechnology capabilities, China offers its manufacturing expertise.

A vaccine for mass inoculation is produced on getting orders. For a vaccine, it takes time for production, distribution, inoculation, time gap between two doses and time for the body to develop antibody. Therefore, early mapping for vaccination is important to complete the process.

Delayed Order: To face the Covid pandemic while several other countries placed their first order for vaccines in 2020 - UK in May, Japan and USA in July, EU and Brazil in August and Australia in September; Modi government waited till January 2021.

National Vaccination Policy & BJP and Its Governments Propaganda Overdrive : 15 days gap, between announcement on June 7 and implementation on June 21, 2021 of free Covid vaccination to all adults, was for the preparation of a countrywide massive propaganda campaign of "Thank You Modiji" in Hindi and "Thank You PM Modi" in English linked with the vaccination. The propaganda was launched simultaneously by the BJP governments at the Centre and States, by the governmental institutions, its political outfits and others for BJP's own political purposes and, in the process, building up RSS' fascistic concept of 'One Nation, One Leader'.

The campaign was formally launched by the BJP's national president J. P. Nadda at New Delhi's RLM hospital on June 21. The proposed BJP help desks in vaccination centres across the country too have the same banners to send its political message. Not only the BJP, but even government institutions have been instructed to contribute in the campaign.

Every road, lanes and areas of NCT Delhi are full of DAVP Ads. Government of India's (GoI's) DAVP, BJP's state governments' agencies and governmental institutions are spending crores of rupees of public fund in providing the posters, banners, hoardings and other expenses for BJP's campaign. The BJP-led state governments in Uttar Pradesh, Karnataka, Assam, Himachal Pradesh and Uttarakhand have also gone on an additional advertisement overdrive thanking the PM for free vaccines. In election-bound Uttar Pradesh, BJP has begun booth-level campaign.

CBSE board has asked the Kendriya Vidyalayas to put up such advertisements in the school premises. Higher education nodal institution UGC instructed all government-funded colleges and universities to put up posters that read, "Vaccine for All; Free for all; World's largest vaccination; Thank you Modiji." Delhi University was among the first universities to put up such posters in its campus, website and social media handles. Several private universities also followed suit. 'Thank PM Modi' for 'free vaccination' even appeared in Toronto, Canada.

The Facts: During January – June 2021, Modi government announced four Covid-19 National Vaccination Policies, deficient in content and wobbling in implementation as against people's demand of *free universal public vaccination*.

First : Modi government announced its First National Vaccination Policy on January 16, 2021 followed by modification in strategy on February 1, 2021. The First National Vaccination Policy was meant for free vaccination only to the selected groups – the Health Workers (HCWs) and Frontline Workers (FLWs).

Second : The Second National Vaccination Policy was announced on 1 March 2021, to cover, in addition to HWCs and FLWs, population aged 60 years and above; and persons of 45 – 59 age group having 20 specified co-morbidities.

In this policy, the Government of India (GoI) procured all vaccine doses from the manufacturers and then distributing to the States/UTs free of cost for disbursement through government and private COVID-19 vaccination centres. The private facilities were allowed to charge a sum above Rs 250 per person per dose from the beneficiary.

The Second Policy was modified on 1 April, 2021 by adding all persons of 45 and above age group. GoI procured all doses and disbursed free for vaccination through public and private centres.

Third: The Third National Vaccination Policy, which came

into effect on May 1, 2021, introduced the so called 'Liberalised Vaccination Policy' by adding commercial aspects in it.

Under this policy, the vaccine manufacturers were required to supply (i) 50% of their monthly doses to GoI; and (ii) remaining 50% doses – 25% to State/UTs and 25% to private hospitals and industrial establishments - on negotiated commercial terms; (iii) removed limit of Rs.250 per dose in private hospital opening flood gate of black marketing and overcharging by private health corporates; (iv) free vaccines were limited to HCWs, FLWs and those above 45 years of age; (v) Age group of 18-44 years was added for vaccination, but at commercial cost and GoI's channel of vaccine doses would not be available to them; (vi) the fully ready-to-use imported vaccines are allowed to be utilized entirely by States/UTs channel and private channel.

Black Market: The "Liberalised and Accelerated Phase-3 Strategy" of Covid-19 in April by Modi Government resulted the "vaccine market" having a field day. The three-way split between the Centre, the States and the private channels facilitated rampant profit and thriving of black market across India. It is evident that private channels are adding their own mark-up to the prices set by the two main suppliers, SII and BBIL. Covid vaccination in the private sector, in large corporate hospitals, smaller nursing homes and even pathology labs shot up to Rs.1,800 a dose. It is reported in the print media that 9 top corporate hospitals cornered 50% of the doses, meant for private sector in May 2021, procured at higher prices from the manufacturers. These hospitals include Apollo, Max, H N Hospital Trust of Reliance Foundation, Medica, Fortis, Godrej Memorial, Manipal Health, Narayana and Techno India Dama.

Wide Spread Protest & Victory of the People: This National Vaccine Policy, effective May 1, 2021, was a total departure from the free universal public vaccination desired by the people. It came under sharp criticism by all sections of the people.

Protest: Modi government's vaccination, the only medically defensive mechanism against predicted third wave of Covid attack, policy led to wide spread countrywide protest and agitation. All opposition parties, the Chief Ministers of opposition-ruled States, several mass organisations of workers, farmers, agri-workers, women, youths and students, other social and cultural activists raising their voice of protest. CITU protested against the market-based policy statement of the Modi Govt of May 1 calling for countrywide protest and agitation. The joint platform of trade unions also launched protest demanding universal free vaccination for all. Independent campaign by CITU during 1-10 June inter alia raised the issues related to Central Government's vaccine policy.

The Supreme Court: The three member bench of the Supreme Court also intervened and extensively discussed the 'Liberalised Vaccination Policy' effective May 1. The Supreme Court said that while arranging free vaccination to HCWs, FLWs and 45 plus age group; asking the 18-44 age group to pay for their vaccination is "arbitrary and irrational" and directed the GoI to review its National Vaccination policy.

The Supreme Court also asked the GoI to submit reports within two weeks on several issues related to Covid vaccination like procurement process; unwillingness of foreign vaccine manufacturers to directly negotiate with the States/UTs; inter-State migration; existing healthcare infrastructure; urban / rural divide; road map for vaccination till December 31, 2021 etc.

Fourth: ultimately, the BJP's Modi Government retreated and reversed its Vaccine Policy of 1 May 2021 and the Prime Minister announced the Fourth National Vaccine Policy, announced by the Prime Minister on 7 June and which came into effect on 21 June, 2021.

Under this policy, 75% of vaccine doses are procured by the Centre taking over 25% responsibility of the State governments and Union Territories as was in the Third policy.

But, 25% of doses are still allowed for the private sector for commercial purposes restricting only injection cost at Rs.150 per shot without restriction on cost of vaccines.

This is big victory of the people demanding *free universal public vaccination*. Modi Government not only retreated from its announced "Liberalised and Accelerated Phase-3 Strategy" of Covid vaccine, effective from 1 May 2021; but also a reversal from its announced health policy.