

APRIL 2025

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# Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

**BADLO BIHAR MAHAJUTAN**

*Clarion Call to  
Transform Bihar*





## The Resonance of Bhagat Singh in Today's India

**I**t has been 94 years since Bhagat Singh and his comrades Sukhdev and Rajguru were executed in Lahore jail a day ahead of the scheduled hour of execution. Since then he is remembered by the Urdu epithet Shaheed-e-Azam (greatest martyr, or martyr of martyrs). Inquilab Zindabad (long live revolution), the slogan, again in Urdu, immortalised by Bhagat Singh, is daily invoked across India as the most popular chant of collective resolve for change and justice. When nine decades later today the BJP Chief Minister of India's most populous province Uttar Pradesh contemptuously describes the same Urdu language as a language of fanaticism, we can easily sense why Bhagat Singh sounds so contemporary and remains so relevant.

Bhagat Singh personified youth, and at the same time he was one of colonial India's most mature minds and a farsighted visionary. It was not just the passionate urge for freedom from colonialism that drove Bhagat Singh and his comrades in their great sacrifice, they were driven by the dream of a socialist India. India's freedom movement was a great national awakening that not only aroused and united millions of Indians to free India from the shackles of colonial rule but also shaped the vision of modern India in the course of that national upheaval. On both these counts Bhagat Singh was a freedom-fighter par excellence. Bhagat Singh and his comrades shaped the political imagination and ideological conviction which informed the Constitution of India proclaiming India as a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic with comprehensive justice, liberty, equality and fraternity for all, drafted under stewardship of Babasaheb Ambedkar.

We also remember Bhagat Singh for his prophetic warning that freedom must not be reduced to merely

an act of swapping, of replacing the white English rulers with their brown sahib successors. For him the chant Inquilab Zindabad was completed only with the call to defeat imperialism - samrajyavad murdabad. Clearly, he was mobilising India not just in the immediate context of freedom from the shackles of British colonial rule, he was also sowing the future seeds of struggle in a world marked by imperialist domination and in a context of possible complicity and capitulation by future Indian rulers. In so doing, he was playing precisely the distinct communist role underlined by Marx and Engels in the Communist Manifesto: "The Communists fight for the attainment of the immediate aims, for the enforcement of the momentary interests of the working class; but in the movement of the present, they also represent and take care of the future of that movement."

Today when the Trump administration humiliates and hurts India in every possible way and the Modi government justifies the American action, remember Bhagat Singh. When Netanyahu goes on killing innocent Palestinian children and their parents in a never-ending genocide, Trump persecutes every voice of freedom, justice and peace and the Modi government not only keeps quiet but also lends all possible support to this genocidal campaign, remember Bhagat Singh. When Adani grabs India's natural resources and infrastructural facilities in every sphere, gets internationally exposed and charged for his corrupt ways and criminal wrongdoings and Modi brushes it aside as a 'personal matter', remember Bhagat Singh. And remember Bhagat Singh when Mohan Bhagwat describes the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya as the moment of India's true independence. The courage, determination and ideological clarity that Bhagat Singh and his comrades brought to India's freedom movement a century ago is a permanent asset for we the people of India. It helped us in winning freedom in 1947. It will also energise us in our current battle for freedom from imperialist domination and fascist aggression, from corporate plunder and communal hate. Inquilab Zindabad! Samrajyavad murdabad! ■



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# India Must Not Fall Prey Again to the Colonial Strategy of 'Divide and Rule'

**T**he crucial Budget session is going on in Parliament. The Trump Administration is daily humiliating India and hurting India's economic interests. Even as Elon Musk and his economic empire are facing a huge backlash in the US, the Modi government is spreading out the red carpet for Musk's ventures in India. The share market is inflicting massive losses on investors in India while foreign investors are migrating to more stable and profitable markets in other countries. Yet there is little public discourse around this looming economic crisis and the Modi government's spineless capitulation to US imperialism as India has been plunged deeper into anti-Muslim hate and violence by the Sangh brigade and the Godi media with fuel supplied by Bollywood.

Ever since the BJP managed to secure a dubious victory in Maharashtra, the Sangh brigade has been working overtime to turn the state into a laboratory of hate. For quite some time the BJP has been systematically whipping up anti-Muslim frenzy by vilifying the sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb who had been in power more than three centuries ago. The recently released Bollywood blockbuster Chhava, which elaborately picturises the brutal killing of Shivaji's son and the second Maratha ruler Shambhaji by Aurangzeb, added fuel to this fire. Several BJP ministers and leaders including CM Devendra Fadnavis have also helped promote this frenzy of hate by making frequent statements against Aurangzeb and endorsing the demand for removal of his tomb. And this has finally led to the first instance of communal violence in Nagpur, which is also the Maharashtra CM's own constituency.

History tells us that back then Shivaji's descendants had no problem with Aurangzeb's tomb or other Mughal monuments. There are records of Shambhaji Maharaj's son Shahu I, the fifth Chhatrapati of the Maratha Empire, visiting Aurangzeb's tomb to pay his respects and even commissioning a mosque in memory of Aurangzeb's daughter Zinat-un-Nissa (Begum Masjid of Satara). The relationship between the Maratha and Mughal empires was not one of blind unmitigated conflict, it was much more nuanced where clashes coexisted with collaboration, and war did not permanently disrupt diplomacy. Mughal monuments were not destroyed by the Maratha rulers. But today the Sangh brigade is busy rewriting the Maratha history and redefining the Maratha legacy and identity on the basis of contemporary calculations of Islamophobia.

The heightened hate campaign targeting Aurangzeb's tomb and the entire Mughal legacy - the history of Mughal rulers is being obliterated from the history syllabus - is part and parcel of the Sangh brigade's orchestrated anti-Muslim agenda that increasingly targets the Muslim community over every aspect of life and livelihood. Uttar Pradesh, Uttarakhand and Madhya Pradesh are the key laboratories of this hate politics where with every passing day new excuses are being discovered and new tools of oppression are being developed. Even as tension continues to simmer in violence-hit Sambhal in UP, a relentless campaign is on to target more mosques and mausoleums or dargahs across the country. And this year even the celebration of Holi was

turned into a toxic hate campaign against Muslims by pitting Holi against the Jumma prayers.

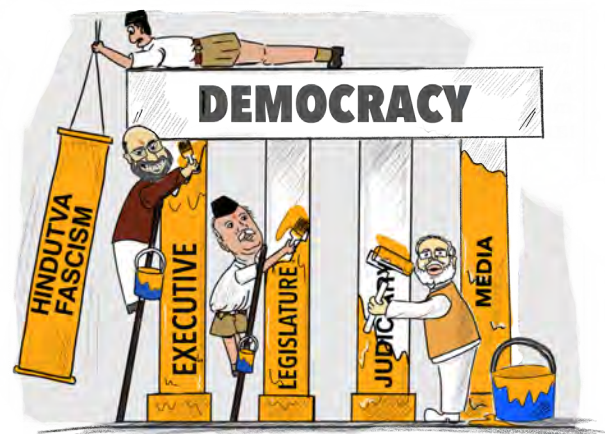
Instead of ensuring a peaceful Holi celebration, DSP Anuj Chaudhary of Sambhal asked Muslims to stay indoors. His call was quickly endorsed by Yogi Adityanath, and set the tone for provocative hate speeches and acts across north India. In Sambhal mosques were covered with tarpaulin sheets and BJP leaders taunted Muslims by asking them to protect themselves with tarpaulin robes. With the police looking away, teams of Holi revellers even felt empowered to throw mud at Muslim funeral processions. It took a lot of courage for people from both Hindu and Muslim communities to display sanity and celebrate harmony in this hate-filled toxic environment. Dalits too found themselves at the receiving end of feudal violence in the name of Holi. In Bihar's Aurangabad district a Dalit minor girl Komal Paswan was reportedly crushed to death for refusing to accept colours.

The Modi government's legislative agenda is aimed at legitimising this campaign of hate and violence on the street. To take two examples, the Uniform Civil Code which has already become law in Uttarakhand and the Waqf Amendment Bill which is awaiting parliamentary passage will make Muslims vulnerable to a permanent climate of fear, insecurity and persecution. The Uttarakhand model of UCC threatens the constitutionally protected freedom for two adult individuals to have interfaith and intercaste marriages or enter into live-in relationships of their own choice. And the Waqf Amendment Bill, if made into law, will effectively subject the entire Waqf board jurisdiction over Muslim charitable properties, mosques and mausoleums to state control.

It is such a shocking irony of history that today when the world is celebrating the return of Indian-American astronaut Sunita Williams and Butch Willmore from their extended space mission to earth, the Sangh brigade is pushing India into its hate-filled politics of excavation. The nondescript tomb of an emperor who had passed away more than three hundred years ago has become the focal point for the world's most populous country in 2025 which languishes at the lowest rung of every major global index of social progress and people's welfare. Let us remember that communal hate was one of the biggest colonial weapons to keep India in subjugation for two centuries before subjecting it to the trauma of Partition. The replication of this colonial era strategy of 'divide and rule' can only be a recipe for disaster. India must steer clear of this dangerous trap by all means. ■

## Recognising Fascism in India: If Not Now, Then When?

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA



**A**head of the forthcoming 24th Congress of the CPI(M), an internal note issued by the party polit bureau, and widely reported in the media, has attracted more public attention than the draft resolution released earlier. The draft, in a couple of places, had used the expression 'neo-fascist characteristics' to describe the current political situation and the Modi government. The note now clarifies that the expression 'neo-fascist characteristics' means only features or trends and by no means describes the Modi government as a fascist or neo-fascist regime. This is where, the note points out, the CPI(M) differs from the CPI or CPI(ML) in the analysis of the current state of affairs in India.

Perhaps the expression 'neo-fascism' had confused the CPI(M) ranks that the main difference between the CPI(M) and CPI(ML) in the current context revolved only around the epithet 'neo', so the note had to take the trouble of 'clarifying' that as of now fascism in India is only a tendency, the characteristics on display are only emerging and not entrenched or decisive enough to define the nature of the regime. The note wants to make sure that the party cadres do not read much into the word neo-fascist which appears for the first time in a CPI(M) document. In other words, while the situation is such

that the 'f' word cannot be avoided anymore, the note seeks to warn the party against 'overestimating' the fascist danger.

The note describes fascism in Italy and Germany as 'classical fascism' and points out how the emerging trend of neo-fascism differs from the classical variety. Part of these differences are contextual - fascism arose in Italy and Germany in the wake of the first world war in a situation of heightened inter-imperialist rivalry leading to world wars and an acute crisis of capitalism known as the Great Depression. The note however does not stop there and identifies one more difference which is more intrinsic - while classical fascism negated bourgeois democracy, the 'neo' variety is apparently compatible and even comfortable with bourgeois democracy, especially the electoral system. In other words, while classical fascism had no internal checks and unleashed a furious storm of destruction that ravaged every bit of democracy, there is something self-limiting or self-regulating in the neo-fascist variety.

This distinction that is being sought to be made between classical fascism and its 'neo' avatar certainly merits closer attention, as does the CPI(M) claim that what India is witnessing and experiencing now are just some 'neo-fascistic tendencies' at work which, if unchecked, may in future grow into neo-fascism. Talking about the historical context of the rise of fascism in the 1920s, there was something more than fierce inter-imperialist conflict and acute economic crisis - the fear of revolution. In 1848 itself the Communist Manifesto had begun with the iconic sentence: "A spectre is haunting Europe - the spectre of communism." The spectre became far more real in the wake of the

victorious socialist revolution in Russia in November 1917. While revolutionary possibilities elsewhere in Europe did not fructify, by the time of the fifth anniversary of the Russian revolution, fascism had acquired power in Italy.

“

***If fascism in India has had a slow and protracted rise, it is largely because of India's vast scale and innate diversity and the Modi regime is not losing a moment to bulldoze this diversity with its 'one nation' formula of uniformity.***

At the very inception of fascism in Europe, it however became clear that while fascism was an international phenomenon, it was bound to display national peculiarities shaped by respective historical realities and social conditions of respective countries. By the time fascism manifested itself in Germany it had already acquired a new brand name - Nazism or national socialism. Certainly nobody in India is today talking of an exact replica of the models of the European fascism we saw in the first half of the twentieth century. A Marxist analysis of India today has to take into account the Indian particularities as well as the unmistakable fundamental features that have been common to all instances of fascism in history. It will surely make sense to consider the CPI(M)'s note of clarification from this perspective.

The CPI(M) is in agreement with the wider progressive opinion in India and internationally which considers the RSS fascist. It is significant that right since its inception the RSS had drawn quite heavily on what the note calls the classical models of fascism in Italy and Germany, borrowing considerable inputs from them in terms of ideological foundation, organisational structure as well as operational pattern, with Muslims in India being identified as the ultimate internal enemy as Jews were in Germany. It is another thing that colonial India was not post-war Italy or Germany. While fascists came to power within a few years of their rise in Italy and Germany, in India they remained a marginal force during the period of the freedom movement or in the initial decades of India's journey as a constitutional republic.

There is perhaps no other example of a fascist trend in the world sustaining itself for so long, adapting itself to the changing socio-political dynamics to accumulate strength and insidiously penetrating the institutional network of the republic to attain the kind of control and domination that the RSS enjoys today. What use will a fascist force make of its growing grip on political power - will it proceed towards unleashing and enforcing the whole gamut of its fascist agenda or comply eternally with bourgeois democracy and play by its so-called rules of the game? The track record of the RSS through all its ups and downs, tactical retreats and strategic advances, over the one hundred years of its existence and especially over the last four decades of its dramatic rise and consolidation must leave no one in the slightest of doubt.

The escalation of the Ram Janambhoomi campaign through

Advani's rath yatra and the eventual demolition of the Babri Masjid on 6 December 1992 gave us the first unmistakable glimpse of the Sangh brigade's brazen fascist design. It was not just aggressive communalism or fundamentalist frenzy at work, but a clear attempt to redefine the identity of India on the basis of Hindu supremacy and ignite the imagination of a Hindu Rashtra. CPI(ML) identified this moment as a communal fascist threat to India's composite culture and constitutional republic. Comrades Vinod Mishra and Sitaram Yechury both wrote extensively about the RSS design and alerted the Left and progressive ranks about the ideological-political implications of this turning point. Progressive academics Tapan Basu, Sumit Sarkar, Pradip Datta, Tanika Sarkar and Sambuddha Sen produced their brilliant booklet exposing the fascist design of the RSS called 'Khaki Shorts and Saffron Flags'.

The BJP's isolation in the wake of the Babri Masjid demolition was however quite short-lived and within five years the party managed to gather an all-India coalition. By the turn of the century India was already under NDA rule, the first non-Congress dispensation to survive a full term. The lynching of Graham Stuart Staines and his sons Philip and Timothy by Bajrang Dal leader Dara Singh and his group in January 1999 and the anti-Muslim pogrom perpetrated in Gujarat three years later sent out loud signals of the Sangh brigade's unfolding agenda. While the Gujarat carnage overseen by the Narendra Modi government was widely denounced in India and abroad and played a major role in ensuring the defeat of the NDA in 2004, the refusal of the Sangh-BJP establishment to take any action against Narendra Modi made it clear

that the Sangh brigade was ready to take the next leap towards its Hindu Rashtra goal.

Even though the UPA government ran two full terms, the BJP consolidated itself in Gujarat and corporate India too began to rally increasingly around the Modi brand in the biennial investment summits called Vibrant Gujarat. The clamour to bring Modi to Delhi grew louder with the decisive backing of corporate India, the Tata group too joining the Adani-Ambani chorus, and by 2014 we had the advent of the Modi era. It is important not to forget this trajectory of corporate-communal convergence. The systematic and rapidly escalating execution of the long cherished Sanghi agenda of subjecting secular democratic India to a Hindu supremacist fascist order will tell us that there is a lot more to this blueprint of fascist disaster than just a crisis of neoliberalism howsoever acute.

Some eighty years ago, Ambedkar had warned us 'if Hindu Raj becomes a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country' and he could not have been more prophetic. From amending laws and changing the very framework of law and justice to legislating new measures in complete violation of the basic spirit of the Constitution and subverting the entire institutional framework and environment that governs our republic, this government is doing everything to destroy democracy and erode the rights and liberties of citizens. Add to this the impunity granted to state-sponsored hate and violence targeting the Muslim community, various weaker sections of society and voices of dissent, and we get an idea of the unprecedented daily onslaught on the constitutional foundation of our democratic republic. Explicit calls

for a new constitution are also being voiced from different quarters and the Union Home Minister himself made derogatory remarks about Babasaheb Ambedkar in the course of the parliamentary discussion on the 75th anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution of India.

Elections are of course still happening in India, but can that be a substantive safeguard for India's beleaguered democracy when the Election Commission is under the complete control of the government and when the entire election process right from the preparation of electoral rolls to the counting of votes is becoming increasingly opaque and arbitrary? Let us remember that Hitler too came to power through the electoral route and gradually delegitimised the entire opposition to secure 99% vote and enforce a permanent dictatorship. In India, Amit Shah keeps talking about ruling uninterruptedly for fifty years. And we have already seen any number of instances of the BJP's desperate and sinister bid to win every election and cling to power. Elections in India are being rendered increasingly farcical, meant to serve as a spectacle for global optics and claiming internal legitimacy.

It is true that the BJP has found several allies and enablers in its political journey thus far. Apart from the support of its formal allies, often it also receives wider support around the neoliberal agenda as also on the basis of the soft Hindutva continuum. On issues like persecution of dissenting voices, demonisation of Islam, virulent campaign of hate and violence against Muslims and other minorities and marginalised groups, and erosion of civil liberties, democratic rights and democratic spaces, there is still little sensitivity and vocal opposition in India's public discourse. No

wonder Ambedkar had termed the Constitution just a top dressing of democracy on an undemocratic soil. This makes it all the more imperative for communists to take the lead in building resistance to fascism and act as the most consistent and committed champions of democracy in the face of the growing fascist offensive.

The CPI(M) resolution recognises certain neo-fascist characteristics and the note says that if unchecked the characteristics may grow into full-scale 'neo-fascism'. The note even introduces further qualifications by using the expression 'ingredients of proto neo-fascism' - implying perhaps that we still have time till these 'proto ingredients' - three times removed from 'classical fascism' - mature into a complete case study of fascism in the twenty first century. If the direction is set and the question is only one of assessing the degree or intensity of the fascist danger, can communists have the luxury of ignoring what has already happened and is happening every day right in front of our eyes and taking comfort from the degree of democracy that still survives in India in comparison with Mussolini's Italy and Hitler's Germany? If fascism in India has had a slow and protracted rise, it is largely because of India's vast scale and innate diversity and the Modi regime is not losing a moment to bulldoze this diversity with its 'one nation' formula of uniformity.

The note says the Indian state is not a fascist state. Well, nobody has said that the state in India has turned into a full-blown fascist institution, but can we ever overlook the fact that institutional resistance from within the larger state apparatus is very weak and a real attempt is underway to decimate the residual components or potential

of democracy in India? This is why Ambedkar and the Constitution, and now increasingly the legacy of the freedom movement which informed the constitutional vision and found its eloquent articulation in the inspiring Preamble to the Constitution, have become such a great source of irritation to the Sangh-BJP establishment. The people on the ground who find themselves at the receiving end of this fascist aggression are rallying around the Constitution to defend themselves. From the Shaheen Bagh protests against the divisive and discriminatory new citizenship law to the Dalit-Adivasi-Bahujan concern about social dignity and the intensifying peasant-worker struggles against corporate loot, we can see how the people are rediscovering the Constitution as a weapon of democracy.

After eleven years of unchecked consolidation of fascist forces at the helm of power, should Indian communists still wait longer to call the growing disaster by its historically known name? Paraphrasing the famous Bob Dylan song we may say 'how much more damage must we all suffer before we call them fascists'. Any downplaying of the fascist danger at this juncture, any ambiguity in distinguishing the fascist danger from the general categories of neoliberalism and authoritarianism, can only erode the electoral strength and moral authority of the communists. On the other hand, if communists can take up the challenge of resisting fascism by championing the radical legacy of the freedom movement and the radical contribution of Ambedkar in advancing the battle for social equality and laying the constitutional foundation of democracy, and take bold initiatives to unite the working people and the intelligentsia on all

their core concerns and uphold the banner of anti-imperialist nationalism when the Modi government is visibly capitulating to the Trump Administration, the communist movement can turn the tables and push the fascists back.

One can understand the political and electoral complexities of Kerala and West Bengal, historically the strongest bastions of the CPI(M), and can only hope that the CPI(M)'s dilemma in identifying and naming the advent of fascism is not informed by the immediate electoral circumstances faced by the party in these two states. The repeated failure of the CPI(M) in the Lok Sabha elections in Kerala in spite of being in power in the state is surely as much a matter of concern as is its continuing decline in West Bengal. What is more disturbing is the continuing migration of sections of CPI(M) voters and perhaps also of some erstwhile organisers and leaders to the BJP fold.

The party should of course prioritise its independent growth and role, but must that be pitted against the equally important task of forging a broad anti-fascist unity? Of the four seats currently held by the party in Lok Sabha, three have come from Tamil Nadu and Rajasthan, as part of the INDIA coalition. And can any communist party really increase its strength and role by obfuscating the central political question of the day? We still hope that no section of the communist movement will falter at this crucial juncture of modern India and together we will be able to strengthen the communist stream of anti-fascist resistance to save India from the growing calamity of fascism before the latter unleashes its fullest fury. ■

# The Blatant Ploy of the Modi Government to Capture the Legal Profession

▲ CLIFTON D' ROZARIO

The Modi government has sprung a dangerous surprise on the legal fraternity by the sudden announcement of the proposed Advocates (Amendment Bill) 2025. The lengthy Bill, in the guise of amendments, proposes a veritable overhaul of the existing law regulating the legal practice, the Advocates Act, 1961. While the Bill cites lofty objectives including making the legal profession fair, transparent and accessible to all, a careful reading of the Bill reveals that its substantive provisions and policy prescriptions seek to obliterate the governing principles and values of the legal profession. Firstly, the Modi government contemplates changes that will facilitate the domination of the Union government in the regulation and functioning of the legal profession. Secondly, the Bar Council of India (BCI), which, over the past decades has capitulated to the machinations of the Sangh Parivar, is sought to be empowered at the cost of the independence and autonomy of the State Bar Councils. Thirdly, an all-out assault is unleashed on Advocates by infringing on their fundamental freedoms and rights.

Before getting into the details of the Advocates (Amendment Bill) 2025, a basic recapture of the fundamentals values and principles underlying the legal profession is essential.

The legal profession, notwithstanding the lawyer's foibles and weaknesses, enjoys a privilege of position in society, owing to its legacy of speaking out against injustice. The Freedom Struggle for instance had a galaxy of political

leaders from the legal fraternity, be it Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, M. Gandhi, Jawaharlal Nehru or Singaravelar. Beyond India's borders there is Fidel Castro and Nelson Mandela just to name a couple. After Independence, we have witnessed the crucial role that advocates can play in the lives of Nagabhusan Patnaik, Kannabiran and K Balagopal or even Krishna Iyer. The legal fraternity also enjoys a special status due to the inherent independence associated with the profession, in particular independence from the state and state regulation, as compared to other professions, which enables them to fearlessly oppose the actions and policies of the Government in defence of not just their clients, but of the constitutionally guaranteed rights and freedoms. Fali Nariman sums this up rather neatly in his autobiography "Before Memory Fades...", in these words: "The truth is that people – ordinary people (though not those working for governments) – regard lawyers as more equal than themselves. They look upon lawyers as trained to use the freedom granted by the county's constitution, as persons who know better than ordinary people how to use this freedom. In times of grave crisis – constitutional or national – they look at lawyers (and associations of lawyers) to see how they react. They have done so in the past – and will continue to do so in the future."

There are certain non-negotiable principles in the role of the lawyers and the status of the legal profession that have a direct nexus with the independence of the legal profession and the justice delivery system, in particular that lawyers shall

at all times be protected from any interference in the pursuit of justice. Governments are meant to ensure that lawyers are able to perform all of their professional functions without intimidation, hindrance, harassment or improper interference without any fear of persecution for any action taken in accordance with recognised professional duties, standards and ethics. To this end, it is envisaged that the bar associations of lawyers shall be independent and self-governing bodies regulating the profession itself. It is in this sense that the legal profession stands apart from other professions.

These principles are encoded into the Advocates Act, 1961 which ensures the independence of advocates, and the autonomy of the Bar Associations and Bar Councils. It is these very principles that the Modi government now seeks to undermine through the proposed amendments.

## Paving the way for takeover of the legal profession by the Union Government

One fundamental shift conceptualised through the amendments is the decimation of the independence of the legal profession. The hitherto limited role of the Union Government is sought to be enhanced in a manner sufficient for it to control the legal profession in its entirety. Firstly, it is proposed that the Union government will arrogate to itself the right to nominate three members to the BCI. Secondly, an amendment is sought to be introduced giving the Union government the right to issue directions to the BCI. Both these



proposed amendments severely compromise the independence of the legal profession. Professional self-regulation is fundamental to preserving judicial autonomy, as permitting such executive interference in the legal regulatory bodies will severely undermine institutional integrity. These politically motivated amendments are aimed at securing total control over the BCI, and by inference, facilitating the veritable capture of the legal profession.

This becomes apparent from another amendment sought to be introduced, in regard to the entry of persons into the legal profession. As things stand today, the Advocates Act, 1961 grants the right to practice to every person who has completed their legal education and has enrolled at the Bar Council. In a complete departure from this existing law, the Union government proposes to make this right subject to rules framed by the Union Government or Regulations framed by the BCI, thus empowering the Modi government to now decide who can even enter the legal profession.

### **Disproportionately centralizing power in the BCI at the risk of making State Bar Councils redundant:**

The second set of changes that the amendments seek to introduce is the disproportionate increase in the role, powers and control of the BCI, while simultaneously compromising its independence. In conjunction with the proposed powers of the Union Government, it is apparent that the Bar Councils will end up as puppets in the hands of the Union Government due to the amendments.

Hitherto, any complaint of misconduct against an Advocate is entertained and taken before the Disciplinary Committees of the State

Bar Councils. The Modi government now proposes that the BCI entertain complaints against ANY advocate across the country, and gives the BCI discretion to immediately put such Advocate under suspension if it deems fit. Another amendment proposes that the BCI can initiate disciplinary action for misconduct against the General Council of the State Bar Council or its Disciplinary Committee if it is of the opinion that they have failed to prosecute disciplinary proceedings effectively! Yet another amendment empowers the BCI to replace a Bar Council with a Committee of its choice, if it is of the opinion that the said State Bar Council is unable to perform its functions for any reason whatsoever. While empowering the BCI to such an extent that the State Bar Councils are rendered ineffectual and subservient, another amendment proposes special protection to members of the BCI against whom allegations of corruption and misconduct by mandating that such allegations would first be whetted by a Special Public Grievance Redressal Committee of Bar Council of India headed by former judge of the Supreme Court or Chief Justice of the High Court. There is no rationale for why BCI members have such high protection, except insulate them from action as members of a severely compromised and Union Government-run BCI.

These proposed amendments not only facilitates centralization of powers with the BCI but also empower it with arbitrary and discretionary powers to take action against State Bar Councils and Advocates. Clearly these are intended to target those advocates and State Bar Councils that it, or the executive, find inconvenient.

### **Shackling lawyers and their Associations**

Advocates are the officers of

the Court, and Bar Associations as their collective voice are integral to the administration of justice. Bar Associations, where well-organised and principled, stand as the genuine voice of the legal fraternity. Though Bar Associations have at times breached their mandate, for instance passing unconstitutional resolutions demanding lawyers not represent certain accused, these are issues that can be overcome by members of the bar, it does not need the intervention of the Bar Councils.

Genuine independence is a must for bar associations. The existing law contemplates these to be self-regulating and autonomous. Similarly, advocates are contemplated to be allowed to perform their roles in the pursuit of justice without interference. One proposed amendment expands the role of the State Bar Councils to “ensure effective and transparent functioning of the Bar Associations under its jurisdiction” in contrast to its more restricted present mandate of assisting with effective implementation of welfare schemes under the current Act. This completely undermines the latter’s independence and goes against the basic governing principle that the self-regulation of the legal profession enables professional bodies or associations to govern their members in a manner that ensures that they are not subject to undue influence from the State or other external pressures.

Self-regulation protects lawyers from external influences that could compromise their integrity and independence, which are essential for a functioning democracy. In many parts of the world, lawyers face pressure from governments or other entities that seek to control or influence their work. Self-regulation acts as a buffer against such pressures, enabling lawyers to act in the best interests of their clients and the justice system.

Sacrificing this independence of the Bar is detrimental to democracy and administration of justice.

Advocates too face a frontal attack under the proposed amendments. It is now proposed that advocates should be ready to undertake exams at any time during the course of their practice. Reading these provisions conjunctively it is apparent that the Union Government contemplates for the BCI to conduct exams even to permit Advocates to continue in the profession. Not a single profession contemplates such.

In a bid to silence advocates, a statutory prohibition on boycotts or abstention from courts' work is proposed. Any individual lawyer or organization in violation is liable for misconduct. Strikes are only permitted under the Bill when it impedes the administration of justice. These provisions are condemnable not least because they have been brought in to control and bar and divest them of their fundamental right to protest. This is only the latest in a larger series of interventions by the judiciary in a bid to stymie fearless voices against corruption, favouritism, and nepotism in the judicial system. Members of the Bar have time and again decried the lack of mechanisms to combat judicial corruption which is compounded by the lack of an impartial procedure for the selection of judges. Any boycotts or protests by Advocates ought to be seen in this context. These are mostly called in response to extreme exigencies like police misconduct, and the safety concerns of the legal fraternity.

There are numerous other amendments proposed that infringe on the basic rights of advocates. Membership to the bar associations, hitherto voluntary, is made compulsory. Several other provisions also have the impact of removing

advocates from practice altogether. The amendments allow for advocate names to be removed from the Rolls if found guilty of serious misconduct or for obstructing court's functioning. Punishments are massively expanded including imposition of fines upto Rs. 3 lakhs.

The Draft Bill also permits the entry of foreign law firms or foreign lawyers in India. The motivation for this lies in the negotiations around the India-United Kingdom free trade agreement (FTA), at the centre of which are trade in "services" in regard to which there is immense pressure from the UK for the opening up of the Indian legal service sector and the removal of restrictions for foreign lawyers to practice in India. Clearly the Union Government does not mind sacrificing the interests of the Indian legal fraternity for the sake of its free trade agreement with the UK.

## Conclusion

For the past sixty years and more, the Advocates Act of 1961 has regulated India's legal profession, establishing standards for lawyers, legal education, and professional conduct. The proposed amendments vide Advocates (Amendment) Bill, 2025 has the effect of dismantling the entire edifice of the legal profession as we know it. Even the few positive measures including co-opting women lawyers in the BCI and providing legal aid are grossly inadequate. For instance, why do the amendments only allow for co-option of women advocates to the BCI and not State Bar Councils? And why is it through co-option, and not reservation? Moreover, these are measures that the Union Government should have anyway actualized given the Supreme Court's slew of orders on reserving seats for women in Bar Council elections. Notably, there is still neither any

mention of reservations for SC, ST, OBCs, transgender persons, sexuality minorities, in the Bar Councils, nor any statutory mandates for ensuring social and economic justice within the legal fraternity. Tackling corruption in the Courts, lack of infrastructure and making meaningful access to justice remain unaddressed.

It is clear that the mainstay of the amendments is nothing less than a wholesale takeover by the Union Government at the cost of the independence of autonomous legal bodies. The legal fraternity is reduced to a pliant legal workforce with limited or no social role. Social justice may be the signature tune of the Constitution, yet it is glaringly absent in the Draft Bill. Nothing more could be more of a betrayal to the legacy of the galaxy of lawyers who won us freedom from the colonial powers and stood in defence of these institutions over the past 75 years.

Advocates across the country are up in arms against these proposed amendments. Looking at the dubious responses of some bar councils and bar associations, it is apparent that most of their leadership are committed to the Sangh Parivar and its ideology and have no concern about the legal fraternity or the independence of the profession. The legal fraternity cannot rely solely on the BCI, State Bar Councils or the Bar Associations. The legal fraternity has to unite and fight, not just against the Advocates Amendment Bill, 2025, but the intentions of the Modi government to decimate the legal profession. The Modi government, faced with widespread protests and resistance from the legal community has been forced to withdraw this Bill for now. Their intentions, though, have been made clear and the legal fraternity must be alert to any revived efforts by the Modi government. ■

# India Must Challenge the Modi Government's Capitulation to the Trump Administration

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

**T**ump 2.0 has begun on a tempestuous note. Compared to the narrow margins of his 2016 victory and 2020 defeat, this time round the Trump victory was quite thumping. And since being sworn in for the second term of his Presidency, Donald Trump has lost no time to unleash his agenda like a global bully gone berserk. From declaration of a tariff war in global trade and deportation in shackles of hundreds of foreign nationals calling them illegal immigrants to the televised bullying of Ukraine President Zelenskyy and several other visiting leaders and making frequent outrageous statements like turning Gaza into an obscene Trump-themed tourist destination emptied of Palestinians and incorporating Canada as the 51st state of the US - Donald Trump has kicked up a veritable global storm.

In his first term Trump had surfaced as a toxic symbol of white supremacist misogynistic politics with a strong Christian fundamentalist streak. He is now following up on the aggressive nationalist overtone of his slogan of MAGA (Make America Great Again). Tariff and deportation are his favourite weapons to bolster his 'nationalist' image by projecting himself as the saviour of American trade and American labour from so-called 'unfair' trade barriers and 'immigrant job-snatchers'. In this project, Trump has found a close ally in the world's richest person, ironically an immigrant American citizen of white

South African origin, Elon Musk. Unlike the Modi-Adani nexus, where Modi prefers to keep the partnership secret, Trump brazenly flaunts his alliance with Musk, acknowledges Musk's massive corporate contribution to his campaign and has reciprocated by putting Musk in charge of the newly created Department of Government Efficiency. And now as Musk's shares have begun to crash, Trump has jumped to his rescue, asking Americans to support Musk's electric vehicle model Tesla.

While Trump's domestic agenda has been on predictable lines, it is in the foreign policy domain that Trump appears to be making some drastic shifts. The televised showdown with Zelenskyy was the most pronounced example of this shift when Trump accused Ukraine of gambling with a possible third world war and appeared ready to risk a rupture with Europe and rock the NATO alliance in pressuring Zelenskyy to accept a so-called 'peace deal'. It is common to come across commentators seeing Trump's bullying tactics as just part of his maverick style, and some even see it as Trump working at the behest of Putin. In other words, these commentators view the Trump phenomenon as a freak development, something not organically connected to the historical trajectory and current priorities of US imperialism.

A closer look would however reveal that what Trump is trying to do is to concentrate on China as the current number one strategic target

of the United States. The Cold War era when the US had the USSR as its principal adversary has long ended with the collapse of the Soviet Union. NATO was a product of the Cold War period and should have also been dismantled after the disintegration of the erstwhile USSR. Europe and the USA however maintained this military alliance to contain Russia and also serve the common hegemonic interests of the Western world. But the dominant opinion in the US ruling elite now believes that the challenge from China has reached a level where encircling and containing China must take precedence over other strategic imperatives. Hence the desperate American attempt to 'untie' Russia from China and declare the BRICS 'dead'. Meanwhile, importantly there is continuity in US policy on Israel, with Trump continuing to back Israel to the hilt in its genocidal occupation of Palestine and escalating ruthless persecution of pro-Palestine voices in the US.

Where does India figure in the unfolding Trump agenda? Over the last two decades and especially since the signing of the Indo-US nuclear deal, India has considered itself a key strategic ally of the US. Since his ascent to power in 2014, the Modi government has tried to sell the illusion that there has been a qualitative jump in India's international stature and particularly in India's friendship with the United States, as well as a special intimacy with fellow supremacist Trump. Trump is now openly snubbing Modi and humiliating India at every opportunity. The treatment meted out to Indian citizens who were found residing in America without necessary documents has been among the harshest and most humiliating. Trump has also accused India of being a tariff abuser in Modi's presence and is now showcasing the drastic import duty reductions being

announced by the Modi government as an American victory.

The US surely values India as a major market and as a strategic ally in its policy of containing China. But the Indian hype over the rise of the Indian-American community and the so-called special bond between Trump and Modi has clearly been exposed as wishful Sangh-BJP propaganda. India had a trade surplus with the US, and Trump clearly wants to reverse that and wants a much bigger market access for American products in the Indian market. This has alarming implications for Indian exports to the US, especially in pharmaceutical and IT sectors and also for India's domestic producers including those in agriculture. If the highly subsidised agricultural produce of the US is allowed to swamp the Indian market, it will be a death blow to Indian agriculture. The Modi government has already announced huge concessions to the American auto industry, especially for Musk's electric vehicle venture Tesla. India's Telecom giants, Jio and Airtel, are signing accords with Musk's telecom arm SpaceX to sell Starlink internet service in India.

While the USA's continental neighbours in North and South America are standing up to the Trump administration's tariff threats and arrogant posturing, the Modi government has adopted a policy of quiet capitulation. At stake is not just India's national pride as a sovereign country which attained independence through protracted anti-colonial resistance, but also India's vital economic interests and strategic autonomy to pursue domestic and foreign policies needed for India's own development. The Trump Presidency represents an aggressive trend of unilateralism that has begun to defy the entire post-war framework of multilateralism beginning with the United Nations. The whole world will have to find an answer to this growing American threat to global peace and stability, sustainable development and climate justice. ■

# Regressive Code of Surveillance in the Name of UCC in Uttarakhand

▲ INDRESH MAIKHURI

**F**inally, the UCC was implemented in Uttarakhand on January 27, 2025. The Uniform Civil Code (UCC) was one of the main electoral agenda of the BJP in the 2022 Uttarakhand Assembly Elections. After assuming power, the Uttarakhand Government formed a committee under the chairpersonship of retired Supreme Court judge Ranjana Prakash Desai to draft the UCC. In February 2024, the committee submitted its report to the state government. On February 7, 2024, after minimal discussion, the Uttarakhand Assembly passed the bill, and in March 2024, the President gave his assent. However, it took ten more months to implement it due to the need for drafting rules.

The BJP-RSS has been trying to use the notion of uniformity in civil codes to their own advantage to turn India into a regressive and communal country. In the name of ensuring Uniformity in civil laws, the BJP has been trying to intervene in personal laws of minorities, especially Muslims to feed their communal narrative aimed at otherising the Muslims. The progressive women's movement in the country has very categorically stated that while gender just reforms are needed in every personal law and secular civil laws, uniformity is only aimed at serving the hate filled majoritarian motive of the BJP-RSS.

Now that the Uttarakhand UCC has been implemented, it is for everyone to see that ensuring gender justice was never in the agenda for BJP. UCC has been implemented in Uttarakhand to normalise a regressive moral code that will not only unjustly portray the country's Muslims in a negative light, but also intensify the state's intervention in free will of adult citizens in choosing whom they marry or love.

## Constitutional Provision on UCC

Before examining the provisions of the so-called UCC introduced by the Uttarakhand government, it is important to understand what the Constitution says about UCC. The UCC is mentioned in Part IV of the Indian Constitution under the Directive Principles of State Policy in Article 44. While the fundamental spirit of the directive principles in guaranteeing socio-economic well being of the citizens, equality and justice are being pushed back every day by the present regime, UCC is being tweaked to further the regressive social norms espoused by the RSS.

## Constituent Assembly Debate on UCC

On November 23, 1948, the Constituent Assembly debated UCC. At that time, it was Article 35, later renumbered as Article 44 in the final Constitution. Minority community members of the Constituent Assembly expressed concerns over uniformity in personal laws, which have now become a reality. The BJP's bias against minorities is evident in the UCC,

something that was already anticipated in the Assembly debates.

In response to this debate, Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, Chairman of the Drafting Committee, clarified that UCC would not be imposed on anyone. He stated: "*It does not say that after the Code is framed the State shall enforce it upon all citizens merely because they are citizens. It is perfectly possible that the future Parliament may make a provision by way of making a beginning that the Code shall apply only to those who make a declaration that they are prepared to be bound by it, so that in the initial stage the application of the Code may be purely voluntary.*"

Dr. Ambedkar pointed out two essential aspects of UCC being proposed in the Directive Principles of the constitution-

1. UCC was never meant to be imposed on anyone, which is why it was placed under the Directive Principles; and 2. Parliament, not state assemblies, was supposed to legislate on UCC. However, in Uttarakhand's case, the law was forcibly imposed on all communities through the state legislature (except Scheduled Tribes).

## **21st Law Commission: UCC is Undesirable**

During the first tenure of Modi rule, the Government of India tasked the 21st Law Commission in June 2016 with examining UCC related issues. On August 31, 2018, the Law Commission, led by retired Justice B.S. Chauhan, stated in its consultation paper:

*"The different aspects of existing personal laws disadvantage women... The root cause of inequality is not diversity but discrimination."*

The Commission further noted:

*"India is known for its cultural diversity, and this must be preserved. Marginalized groups should not be deprived in this process. Resolving contradictions does not mean eliminating diversity. Hence,*

*this Commission has focused on eliminating discriminatory laws rather than enforcing a UCC, which is neither necessary nor desirable at this time."*

Similarly, the High Level Committee on the Status of Women (HLCSW) studied women's conditions and submitted its report in June 2015. The report stated:

*"The approach should not be to impose a single law on everyone, but rather to ensure that all women - whether governed by secular or personal laws - attain the equality promised by the Indian Constitution. Instead of imposing uniformity in a fundamentalist or majoritarian way, legal frameworks should address specific aspects in a nuanced manner."*

Despite categorical comments by the 21st Law Commission warning about imposition of uniformity in personal laws, the 22nd Law Commission restarted the discussion to benefit the patriarchal and communal discourse created by the current regime.

## **Uttarakhand's UCC Violates Federalism**

Not only has the Uttarakhand Assembly passed the UCC, but the BJP government has exceeded its jurisdiction by making it applicable even to Uttarakhand residents living outside the state.

In India's federal structure, states can only legislate within their own territorial limits. A state law cannot extend its jurisdiction to other states. However, the Uttarakhand government has overstepped this boundary.

## **A Criminal, Not Civil Code**

Although termed a 'civil' code, the law includes punitive measures. It criminalizes non-registration of marriages, divorces, and live-in relationships. The process of registering a live-in relationship has been made

mandatory and excessively complicated. The registration requires police notification, landlord details and proof of residence, among other formalities. Failure to register a live-in relationship within a month carries a penalty of three months' imprisonment and a fine of Rs 10,000. These provisions are nothing but the state's forcible intervention in the lives and choices of adult citizens. Live-in relationships are chosen by couples who do not want to enter formal marital engagements. Those who cross the rigid caste, class and religious boundaries to choose their partners are going to be at the target of the punitive provisions under UCC.

On the day of UCC's implementation (January 27, 2025), Chief Minister Dhama made a communal remark, saying that UCC was necessary to prevent cases like 'Aftab committing barbarity against Shraddha'. However, he conveniently ignored a similar crime that happened years earlier in Uttarakhand itself - an engineer Rajesh Gulati killed his wife, stored her body in a deep freezer, and gradually disposed of her remains. What Mr. Dhama shamelessly hid that violence against women is not restricted to any religion or live-in relationships. It is a reality of a patriarchal society that systematically subverts women's equal status in the society. It is this patriarchal structure that clamps down on anyone who transcends the regressive social code of caste, class and communalism to love and live their lives. The Uttarakhand UCC has been implemented to ensure state's sanction to that systematic violence.

## **Strict Regulations Even on Marriages**

Not only the registration of live-in but also marriage has been made very complex. People of Uttarakhand, whether living there or outside, have to fill a 16 page form regarding their marital status- whether they are

married, divorced, widow or widower. They must either register their marriage or get an acknowledgement for the same. The list of procedures does not end here. If the person changes his/her house, e-mail, telephone number, the information should be updated. Even the list of new children should be updated! A fine of rupees ten thousand would be imposed on those who fail to register their marriage. Additionally, such persons would not be eligible to avail benefits and subsidies from government schemes. The government employees are beginning to feel the pinch of UCC. A letter was issued by the district magistrates, directing employees to register their marriage, failing which their salary for the month of March would be withheld!

### Targeting Minorities Under the Guise of UCC

The BJP's bias against minorities is evident in UCC. The drafting committee did not include a single member from a minority community. While claiming to protect minority women, an example of the contempt towards minorities is the fact that not a single member of the UCC committee belonged to the minority community. A party that eulogises the mass rapists of Bilkis Bano of Gujarat and garlands them on their release from jail is making a cruel joke about these women.

### Surveillance State

Under UCC, every resident of Uttarakhand is effectively under state surveillance. Private relationships are deemed valid only if certified by the government. UCC, in its current form, is not about gender justice, but about increasing state control over people's personal lives. It is another tool in the hands of a fascist government to tighten its grip over citizens. Thus, opposing UCC is not just about resisting communal policies—it is about defending fundamental civil rights. ■

## Declining Wages, Rising Unemployment, Reduced Spending Capacity: The Poor in Modi's India

▲ MADHURIMA KUNDU

In recent years, India is seeing a disturbing trend with the rich becoming richer and the poor poorer, and the middle class shrinking, that is, a K-shaped recovery marked by rise in stark inequality. A report published in March 2024 titled "Income and Wealth Inequality in India, 1922-2023: The Rise of the Billionaire Raj" found that by 2022-23, the top 1% of India's population controlled 22.6% of total income and 40.1% of total wealth. In addition to existing inequality, rising inflation has made things worse, especially for the poor. While the Modi government is trying to mask this inequality behind numbers of GDP growth, the on-ground realities are different.

Dissecting the growth of GDP is important to understand what is actually going on. The Blume Venture Capital's Indus Valley Report 2025 has looked into GDP in two ways – by expenditure component and by sectoral split. Breaking down GDP by expenditure components reveals that in Financial Year 2023-24 (FY24), GDP is dominated by private consumption (56% of GDP), followed by investment (33% of GDP) and then by government spending (9% of GDP). Breaking GDP into contributions by various sectors shows that it is dominated by services (54% of GDP) and then by industry (31% of GDP) and agriculture (15% of GDP). Over the last decade, private consumption as a proportion of GDP has been in the 55-60% range. Therefore, India's GDP is driven by private consumption and by the service sector.

Blume's report further analyses the consumption spending and finds that the top 10% of the population contributes to two-third of discretionary spending. While non-discretionary spending is expenditure incurred on essential items or needs, discretionary spending is expenditure incurred on non-essential items. For example, expenditure on rent, food, healthcare and even low-cost education are examples of non-discretionary spending, and expenditure on luxury cars, high end education are examples of discretionary spending. The next 23% of the population contributes to one-third of discretionary spending, while the remaining population does not have the capacity for discretionary spending. This means that the bottom two-third population has the capacity to spend only on essential items. The basket of 'essential items' varies with the extent of poverty. For example, with increasing poverty, educating the girl child may no longer be an 'essential' expenditure. Similarly, expenditure on fruits and vegetables also becomes difficult with rising poverty, and people's 'essential' items reduce to grains and lentils, denying proper nutrition for the poor.

If we understand this with the state of unemployment and real wage stagnation, the picture becomes grimmer. A recent FICCI-Quess Corp report suggests that while profits of private companies have surged by four times in the last four years, annual growth rate of wages during this period was merely 5.7%. In this same time period, inflation grew at an average annual rate of

5.7%. Effectively, real wage actually declined in the past four years. As corporate profits soar, wages of employees decline!

On the front of employment, the situation is equally grim. While the BJP government is trying their best to fudge data and show increasing employment through the Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) data, thorough reading of the data exposes the sham that it is. PLFS considers a person who has worked even for one hour in the preceding week of the date at which the person is surveyed as employed! The BJP government claims that the female labour force participation rate has risen from 23.3% in 2017-18 to 41.7% in 2023-24. The Worker Population Ratio (that is, share of working population in total population) is shown to have risen from 22% in 2017-18 to 40.3% in 2023-24. Out of this, 67.4% women were 'self-employed' in 2023-24 as compared to 51.9% in 2017-18. The figures seem encouraging; at least that is what the Modi government wants us to believe. Let us dig deeper into being 'self-employed'. A self-employed worker includes a worker who is an own-account worker or works as a helper in a household enterprise, either paid or unpaid. Now, women's labour has always been used as 'free unpaid labour' for years. Including this in official statistics does not translate into more women being employed for wages. The women who are entering the workforce are actually doing it out of distress, to earn more as a family since wages have declined to such levels that meeting basic necessities have become a hassle. By changing definitions and survey methodologies, the Modi government is creating the illusion of rising employment, wherein more and more people are becoming unemployed.

Massive layoffs in the IT sector shows even white-collared jobs are not safe anymore. More than 27,000 layoffs happened in India among tech employees in the first half of 2023 itself, and this trend is continuing. We witnessed how hundreds of Infosys trainees were evicted overnight in the month of February. More and more people are joining the gig economy where jobs have no safety net. While the Modi government shows this as avenues of employment, this portrays distress; people are forced to take up such jobs in the absence of any other alternate source of income.

Rising inequality, declining real wage and rising unemployment has taken a toll on the people. The Modi government is doing everything to ensure that Adani's profits boom, while leaving the poor to fend for themselves. ■

# Chhava and the Mughal-Maratha Conflict

▲ AKASH BHATTACHARYA

## Uses of the Conflict

The Bhartiya Janata Party's vilification of the sixth Mughal emperor Aurangzeb seems to have reached a crescendo. Following the release of the Bollywood blockbuster Chhava, there has been a heightened hate campaign targeting Aurangzeb's tomb. The film elaborately picturises the brutal killing of Shivaji's son and the second Maratha ruler Shambhaji by Aurangzeb. BJP ministers and leaders including CM Devendra Fadnavis have subsequently endorsed the demand for removal of Aurangzeb's tomb. The Mughal-Maratha conflict is important to the Hindu nationalist narrative of Indian history because it can be (mis)interpreted to bolster two important pillars of this narrative: the assertion of political Hinduism as an ideology and the othering of Muslims.

Like all ethnic nationalisms (e.g. Zionism), Hindu nationalism invokes a constructed past of lost Hindu glory at the hands of an external enemy and its eventual resurgence. The Mughal-Maratha conflict, occurring towards the end of the medieval "Muslim" period and at the dawn of the modern – a time period which Hindu nationalists associate with the Hindu renaissance – is conveniently situated.

Read exclusively through the lens of the Hindu-Muslim binary, this conflict invisibles two important histories: the history of medieval anti-caste assertions and that of the Brahminical underpinning of Maratha rule. Both help bolster the Hindu nationalist narrative which thrives on downplaying caste conflicts in Indian society and generalizing the Brahminical social order without necessarily calling it so. Let us see how well the key elements of this narrative hold up when examined against historical evidence and interpretations.

## How Evil was Aurangzeb?

Aurangzeb has been a subject of Hindu nationalist popular histories ever since the nineteenth century. Certain aspects of his life and career lent themselves to the image of a bigoted and brutal ruler: war with his brothers and father, non-patronage of the arts, destruction of temples, imposition of the Jizya (tax on non-Muslims living under a Muslim king), and vast and bloody conquests.

Upon close historical inspection, these features of Aurangzeb's life and career lend themselves to alternate

explanations. Intra-family feuds were common among ancient and medieval rulers irrespective of religion. Aurangzeb was hardly an exception.

Temple destruction was not specific to Muslim rulers. It was common in warfare between Hindu kings in late ancient and early medieval India. Above all, temple destruction was more of a political act rather than a religious act. Prior to the birth of the secular state, divine kingship formed the basic of political rule. Demolishing the temple of the conquered ruler's patron god was a way of demolishing the defeated king's political legitimacy.

Aurangzeb's detractors often ignore the fact that he gave the highest number of grants for maintaining Hindu temples. He himself was two-thirds Hindu by blood because Akbar, his great-grandfather, had married a Rajput. There were more Rajputs in higher echelons during his rule than that of any other Mughal, and he preferred Indian Muslims in his nobility over Turkish and Persian nobles. In other words, Aurangzeb Indianized the Mughal administration far more than any other Mughal ruler.

### **Why Aurangzeb Taxed and Conquered**

Aurangzeb's predecessors, in the course of their patronage of art and architecture, and fruitless wars to re-conquer the Mughal homeland in Central Asia, had left the empire on the verge of bankruptcy. Aurangzeb imposed not only jizyah but all possible taxes available to him in order to revive the financial strength of the empire. In doing so, he often employed religious rhetoric – much more than his predecessors – because alongside the ulema he had to contend with the increasingly popular purist stream of Sufism: the Naqshbandi.

Aurangzeb was not the first Mughal emperor to impose the jizya. Akbar too has used this tax in the early years of his reign in order to stabilize the empire's finances and abolished it when he no longer felt it to be necessary. Those were times before the arrival of secular class-based taxation, a time when all domains of life were enchanted by religion. Hence to view jizya as an exceptionally discriminatory tax would be anachronistic.

Aurangzeb's zeal to conquer was hardly the result of brutish enthusiasm. His hands were forced by the needs of his empire. The revenue and administrative systems of the Mughal empire were based on jagirs – revenue districts administered by the Mughal bureaucrats (mansabdars). The grant of jagirs to mansabdars was an essential part of the system. By the time of Aurangzeb's rule, the empire was beginning to run out of land to grant jagirs to new mansabdars and to the descendants of the old ones. Conquest of fresh land was essential.

### **How Glorious was Maratha Rule?**

Far from being sworn enemies with Aurangzeb, Shivaji was a Mughal mansabdar at one point of time who, like several others, took advantage of the weaknesses of the Mughal empire to carve out independent kingdoms. Shivaji belongs to the class of rulers who built effective post-Mughal regional states, such as Asaf Jah Nizam-ul-Mulk (Hyderabad), Saadat Khan (Awadh), and Alivardi Khan (Bengal).

Among all of them, the Marathas came the closest to succeeding the Mughals as pan-India rulers, but they ultimately fell short. Defeat in the third battle of Panipat (1761) effectively ended their quest to control the Indo-Gangetic plains and the Punjab. Beyond the Deccan, the Marathas,

like other rulers of the post-Mughal states often marauded in search of revenue. The historical memory of these brutal Maratha invasions continues to be etched in folklore.

Their use of the Hindu idiom in their quest for an independent kingdom does stand out. This was in fact quite similar to use of Islamic idioms by Muslim rulers.

Caste was a key factor behind the Maratha efforts to play up the Hindu idiom. Belonging to an agricultural caste, Shivaji and his successors struggled to obtain the sanction of local Brahmins. The lack of clear religious sanction bothered them no end. Hence the Marathas richly rewarded Brahmins, to the extent of ceding substantial political control to a succession of Brahmin Prime Ministers – the Peshwas.

Maratha rule prepared the ground for an assertion of Brahmin dominance in the society and politics of the Deccan. This dominance morphed into social and institutional power of Brahmins under the British rule. This was the social context within which first Jyoti Rao Phule and later Babasaheb Ambedkar challenged the Brahminical caste order. Maratha rule was hardly glorious for Dalits, hence their celebration of their role in securing victory of the British over the Peshwas in the Battle of Bhima Koregaon.

### **Were Marathas “Hindu Warriors”?**

Does the use of Hindu idiom make the Marathas “Hindu warriors”? Not any more than the use of Islamic idiom makes Muslim rulers “Islamic warriors”. While the Sultans and Mughals often used the language of religious conquest to gain legitimacy within the Islamic world, all Muslim rulers in Delhi since Ala-ud-din Khilji maintained that conversion of non-Islamic faiths to Islam was not the



objective of their rule.

Khilji wrote this into state policy and no one after him changed it. Political power, statecraft and governance were the key concerns of the Sultans and the Mughals, and it was no different for the Marathas.

History tells us that back then Shivaji's descendants had no problem with Aurangzeb's tomb or other Mughal monuments. There are records of Shambhaji Maharaj's son Shahu I, the fifth Chhatrapati of the Maratha Empire, visiting Aurangzeb's tomb to pay his respects and even commissioning a mosque in memory of Aurangzeb's daughter Zinat-un-Nissa (Begum Masjid of Satara).

The relationship between the Maratha and Mughal empires was not one of blind unmitigated conflict, it was much more nuanced where clashes coexisted with collaboration, and war did not permanently disrupt diplomacy.

Neither were the Mughals, and especially Aurangzeb as villainous as they are portrayed to be, nor were the Marathas as glorious. Both sought political power and used clever methods to attain the same. Their rhetoric, strategies and choices were guided by the possibilities and limitations of the early modern world. To make heroes and villains out of them today would not only be ahistorical but also reflect poor politics. Justice must be sought within the conditions of the present, and not through fanciful narratives of the past. ■

## **Badlo Bihar Mahajutaan: An Encouraging Expression of Growing Unity and Determination of the Working People in Bihar**

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

**I**t's election year in Bihar. The NDA has been in power for two decades now. Since Modi's ascent to power in Delhi, Bihar has become another 'double engine' dispensation. After recent victories in Haryana, Maharashtra and Delhi, the BJP is in a very upbeat mood about turning Bihar into another Maharashtra where the party has successfully split regional parties, including its old ally Shiv Sena, and used them as stepping stones to install a BJP-led government in the state. It is hopeful that Nitish Kumar's prolonged alliance with the BJP for the last three decades, which has already enabled the latter to gain considerable ground and grip in Bihar, will now pave the way for a new phase where the BJP can form a government under its own direct leadership to turn Bihar into another laboratory of Bulldozer Raj to unleash the trident of feudal coercion, communal violence and state repression.

The first pre-poll survey from Bihar however has indicated a different public mood in the state. 50 percent respondents expressed not just their disapproval regarding the performance of the government but also their desire for a change of government. Another 22 percent are unhappy with the government though still not ready for change. In other words, more than seventy percent respondents are thoroughly disappointed and disillusioned with the NDA government in Bihar. The NDA government is aware of this ground reality. Neither the BJP nor Nitish Kumar's JDU is ready to face the people on their issues. The

BJP is busy with its sinister design of communal polarisation while Nitish Kumar is resorting to increased police terror and bureaucratic high handedness to suppress the voices of popular dissent.

The working people of Bihar fighting for secure livelihood and improved living conditions, who have been at the receiving end of the 'double engine' regime's prolonged reign of betrayal, are no longer ready to accept the empty NDA rhetoric of 'development with justice' and 'good governance'. The anger is turning into a resolve for change, disparate demands related to the rights of diverse sections of people are crystallizing into a combined charter of change, separate organisations and struggles of the working people are coming together to forge ties of solidarity in collective action. The Badlo Bihar Mahajutaan on March 2 in Patna's historic Gandhi Maidan became a powerful statement of this growing unity and resolve of the fighting people of Bihar. While the budget and the customary Governor's address in the beginning of the budget session once again turned a blind eye to the reality of Bihar, the Mahajutaan turned into a grand assembly of the people raising their just and longstanding demands. To foil the BJP's bid to do a Maharashtra in Bihar, the spirit and agenda of the Mahajutaan will now have to be taken to every nook and corner of the state.

For years Nitish Kumar raised the demand for special state status for Bihar which would have given Bihar a bigger federal share. This was a perfectly legitimate demand in view of Bihar's

historical backwardness and the loss of minerals and industry following the bifurcation of the state and creation of Jharkhand as a separate state. Following Narendra Modi's ascent to power when the NDA regime in Bihar clearly should have had the 'double engine' power, Nitish Kumar however dropped the demand and substituted the idea of a 'special package'. This special package is turning out to be a deceitful slogan of special betrayal for Bihar. The massive and deeply entrenched incidence of poverty in Bihar has most recently been revealed again in the socio-economic household survey done by the Bihar government which found thirty-four percent of Bihar surviving on a monthly family income of less than six thousand rupees. Nearly another thirty percent had an income level of less than ten thousand rupees per month.

The survey findings present a picture of chronic poverty, which must also mean massive indebtedness, a crisis that has not yet attracted due attention in economic studies on Bihar. If one measures the performance of Bihar in terms of the much trumpeted sustainable development goals 2030, the state sits on the lowest rung among all Indian states. In terms of the core

five development goals of no poverty (SDG1), zero hunger (SDG2), good health and well-being (SDG3), quality education (SDG4) and decent work and economic growth (SDG8), Bihar's score remains the lowest in India with just 43.2% achievement of minimum targets that are meant to be met by 2030. Any meaningful package must attack Bihar's deep rooted poverty and unemployment and address the core development goals of quality education, living wages, social security and public health and not just showcase airports and expressways.

Election season in Bihar means caste rallies. The BJP is always keen to cement its agenda of communal polarisation with caste-based social engineering to divide and align people according to its electoral game plan. The 'double engine' dispensation has been playing cynical games with caste identities, shifting people across SC/ST/EBC categories to earn electoral dividends, all the while subverting and truncating the only constitutional caste-based right of reservation in education and jobs. Bihar must foil this cynical divisive and deceitful games in the name of social engineering and insist on the fulfillment of the 65 percent expanded reservation which will give

increased share to all sections of the bahujan society and the common demands of education and jobs, increased wages and improved living conditions, cutting across caste boundaries.

The election year has just begun in Bihar. The BJP juggernaut is ready with all its tricks, trying to brow beat Bihar with its customary bravado and braggadocio. Bihar and India deflated its '400 paar' balloon in the last Lok Sabha elections. In the Assembly election, Jharkhand has again shown how the BJP can be stopped in its tracks by sticking to an agenda of the people. Bihar in 2025, West Bengal in 2026 and Uttar Pradesh in 2027 will be the three most crucial battles before the next Lok Sabha polls. A decisive defeat of the BJP/NDA in Bihar will bolster the spirit and strength of the entire Indian people in the battle to free India from the clutches of fascism. And the energetic and spontaneous participation of the masses and the involvement of hundreds of activists throughout the Badlo Bihar Campaign has sent out a strong message of hope and confidence that Bihar is once again preparing itself for this vanguard role in national politics. ■

## The Clarion Call to Transform Bihar

**O**n March 2, 2025, Patna's Gandhi Maidan witnessed historic gathering of thousands of people from nooks and corners of Bihar representing various ongoing people's movement and struggles. The gathering under the banner of CPIML's Badlo Bihar Mahajutaan (Transform Bihar Gathering) marked

a pivotal movement in the landscape of people's struggle in the state.

The gathering brought together a vast coalition of workers, farmers, students, youth, and marginalised communities. The gathering, forged through the struggles of the last year October's Badlo Bihar Nyay Yatra and regional assemblies, marked a decisive rejection of the ruling NDA

regime's policies of betrayal and injustice.

On the eve of the gathering, all streets and roads leading to Gandhi Maidan was filled with sea of people carrying the red flags as they began reaching Gandhi Maidan.

"Multiple issues, but one resolution — Bihar must change," declared CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya as he addressed a massive gathering at Patna's Gandhi Maidan. He said that the BJP regime is seeking to impose

a regime of loot, repression, police brutality, and feudal oppression in the state. "Bihar will not turn back; this land is a laboratory of struggles, and change is inevitable," he asserted.

## **Mahajutaan: A beacon of hope**

The Mahajutaan began with the series of cultural and revolutionary song presentation energising the thousands of people carrying the red flag of struggle. As chants of "Badlo Bihar" echoed through Gandhi Maidan, the Mahajutaan stood as a beacon of hope — a promise that Bihar's people will not be silenced, and change is inevitable. The gathering symbolised the unity of multiple movements, with diverse sections and organisations joining forces to present their issues collectively.

The Mahajutaan witnessed a large number of Scheme workers and their on-going struggles. ASHA workers were one of the largest contingents at the event. They play a crucial role in the state's healthcare system, and their primary demand was the reinstatement of the Rs. 2,500 honorarium that was granted during the Mahagathbandhan government. Poonam Devi, speaking on behalf of the ASHA workers, emphasised the need for this increase and urged the government to fulfil their promise. Anjusha Devi from Gaya highlighted that Jeevika cadres were instrumental in bringing Nitish Kumar to power. She warned that if the government ignored their rights, they had the strength to oust it from office. This statement resonated as a message of solidarity and determination among the protesters.

Saroj Chaubey, representing the Rasoiya Sangh (school cooks union), raised concerns about the dire conditions faced by cooks preparing midday meals for children.

She demanded better working conditions and dignified wages to enable them to perform their duties effectively.

Meeta Devi, representing the Martyrs' Widows Association, voiced the struggles faced by widows of fallen soldiers. She demanded facilities and support for martyrs' families, hoping to bring attention to their hardships and secure government assistance.

Nal-Jal Pump Operators' Union highlighted poor working conditions and demanded better facilities. Bihar Progressive Electrical Workers' Union called for improved work conditions and rights for electrical workers. Bihar State Motivators' Union advocated for the protection of their professional rights. Bihar State Sanitation Supervisors and Workers' Union demanded better living and working conditions for sanitation workers. Flood, Drought, and Erosion Victims' Front called for relief and long-term solutions for those affected by natural disasters. Unorganised Workers' Union represented informal sector workers and pushed for their rights and welfare.

AISA, AIPWA, AICCTU, AIPF, AILAJ, AIARLA, Insaaf Manch, RYA, AIKM and Social Justice Movement joined the historic gathering. They addressed issues of social justice, women's rights, and rural workers' entitlements, further amplifying the collective voice of the Mahajutaan.

## **"Time has come": CPIML GS**

In his address, Com. Dipankar highlighted the mounting distress of the marginalised: the poor, farmers, workers, Dalits, Adivasis, women, Muslims, and street vendors. "The time has come to transform this pain into power. The various movements and struggles must converge, and

today, from Gandhi Maidan, we resolve to bring change to Bihar."

According to a recent survey, 50% of respondents believe the Bihar government has completely failed, while 25% consider it ineffective but lack a concrete vision for change. "If 75% of people feel this way, let the BJP live in their fantasy world. Bihar will choose the same path as Jharkhand, where the BJP was ousted. The journey that paused in 2020 will resume, and despite Nitish Kumar's departure, our victories in multiple 2024 Lok Sabha seats show that change is already underway," he added.

The rally marked a critical step towards uniting Bihar's fighting forces. Com. Dipankar reminded the audience of the farmers' victory in Delhi, where sustained protests forced the Modi government to repeal the farm laws. "If Bihar's workers and farmers resolve, they can repeal the four anti-labour codes and restore the old pension scheme," he said.

He lambasted the BJP's communal politics, referencing Giriraj Singh's divisive Seemanchal tour. "We won't be distracted by their communal conspiracies; we will fight on our issues," he vowed. He condemned the Modi regime's hollow promises of housing during 'Amrit Kaal', noting that homes were demolished instead of being built, and smart meters were imposed. "If Jharkhand can give elderly women Rs. 2500, why can't Bihar?" he asked.

Com. Dipankar warned of the BJP's attempts to dismantle reservation through lateral entry and privatisation. "The one right that caste oppression could not snatch away — reservation — is now in danger. Without government jobs and public education, where will reservation exist?" he asked.

He criticised the delay in implementing the 65% reservation policy passed in the Bihar Assembly. "If BJP and JD(U) agree, let them pass it in Parliament and place it in the Ninth Schedule of the Constitution. Dalit reservation should rise to 20%, and Adivasis, who form 2% of the population in many districts, should be counted. Don't just give Bharat Ratna to Karpoori Thakur; protect the reservation he fought for," he demanded.

Com. Dipankar exposed the farce of 'special status' and 'special packages' promised to Bihar. "What special package? No colleges, schools shutting down, ASHA workers and rural health workers neglected. Minimum wages remain unpaid, and crop procurement doesn't happen at MSP rates. What kind of package ignores basic survival?" he asked.

He denounced the state's failure to deliver Rs. 2 lakh and land rights to the poorest, as promised. "In 20 years, Nitish Kumar has become indistinguishable from the BJP. Bihar's people have given him multiple chances, but he chose to hand the state to the BJP, which now dreams of turning Bihar into a laboratory of oppression and mob lynching. But Bihar has always been a laboratory of struggle. We will not let their conspiracy succeed. Bihar will march forward, and it will change," he concluded.

## Resolutions

'Badlo Bihar Mahajutaan' was a significant and impactful event where various social, political, and professional groups from Bihar came together to raise their voices and pressure the state government to address their demands. The gathering giving the clarion call to end the rule of oppression and injustice in the state adopted

following resolutions:

1. For two decades, the NDA government in Bihar has functioned as a "double bulldozer" regime — crushing people's aspirations while serving corporate interests. Basic necessities have been sidelined, and Bihar has been reduced to a cheap labour zone. The Mahajutaan resolved to turn this tide, with the people's assembly vowing to make public issues the central agenda for the upcoming Bihar Legislative Assembly elections.
2. The gathering highlighted the unfulfilled promises to nearly 9.5 million poor families — the promised assistance of Rs. 2 lakh, 5 decimal plots of land, and permanent housing with clean drinking water and electricity by 2022. These unfulfilled pledges, coupled with rising violence against Dalits, women, and the poor, have fuelled a collective call for change.
3. From the first war of independence in 1857 to the Rajwar rebellion, the anti-zamindari movements, and the struggles led by socialist and communist movements, Bihar has been the cradle of resistance. The Mahajutaan asserted that this legacy would continue, with a united front determined to defeat the BJP's fascist agenda and prevent Bihar from being plunged into the flames of communal violence, as witnessed in Uttar Pradesh.
4. The Mahajutaan issued a call to defend the Indian Constitution against the RSS-BJP's attempts to dismantle secularism and socialism. The gathering condemned the 75th anniversary

insults to Dr B.R. Ambedkar by BJP leaders and denounced the RSS chief's assertion of the Ram Mandir as a symbol of true freedom. The people vowed to safeguard Ambedkar's vision of an egalitarian society where dignity, rights, and equal opportunities are guaranteed to all.

5. The Mahajutaan fiercely criticised the Modi government's silence on the mistreatment of Indian migrants in the United States, labelling it a betrayal of the nation's dignity and sovereignty. The assembly demanded immediate intervention to ensure the safe and respectful return of all affected migrants and insisted on guarantees to protect Indian citizens from injustice on foreign soil.
6. From state-sponsored violence against Dalits and women to the brutal police repression of protesting BPSC candidates, the Mahajutaan exposed the systemic rot of feudal-criminal elements and bureaucratic corruption. The people of Bihar pledged to build an even stronger unity among all progressive forces to dismantle this oppressive regime and usher in a new era of justice, equality, and people's power.

The Mahajutaan also witnessed presence of from leaders outside Bihar, including Arup Chatterjee (MLA from Nirsa, Jharkhand), Vinod Singh (former MLA from Bagodar) and Sudhakar Yadav (UP state secretary). Senior party leaders like Swadesh Bhattacharya, KD Yadav, Rameshwar Prasad, Prabhat Kumar Chaudhary, Meena Tiwari, and Manju Prakash, and CPI(ML) MPs Rajaram Singh and Sudama Prasad were also present at the Mahajutaan. ■

# *All India Conference of AICCTU:* **Build a Militant, Revolutionary Workers' Movement**

**T**he 11th All India Conference of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) (24-26 February 2025) began with an Open Session on the morning of February 24, 2025, in New Delhi. A well decorated Talkatora Stadium, the largest hall in Delhi, was filled to capacity with thousands of workers. Various trade unions, organized and unorganized workers, public and private sector workers joined the Open Session. The conference delegates from across the country also attended the Open Session.

## **Open Session**

"Reclaim Workers' Rights," and "This Land is Our Land, We, the People of India" were the main theme of the Open Session.

The All India President of AICCTU, Comrade Shankar, presided over the Open Session. The General Secretary Rajiv Dimri invited the guests to the stage. Sucheta De introduced the central theme of the session and called upon to free the country from the clutches of Modi led company raj. Sucheta De and Maitreyi coordinated the session.

AICCTU Delhi President Santosh Roy welcomed the participants. In his speech, he stated that the political power of the country should be in the hands of the workers. He emphasized that factory workers, agricultural labourers, and urban toiling masses must unite to fight for their rights.

Inaugurating the Open Session, Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya, the General Secretary of the party,

CPI (ML) (Liberation), recalled the 1998 All India Conference held at Delhi when he was the General Secretary of AICCTU. He regretted that we lost some of the leading comrades since then. He pointed out that the situation of workers today is similar to the situation before the independence and before the adoption of the constitution and the pro-labour legislations. Rights that were secured through hard earned battles are being snatched away. The right to an 8-hour workday is being taken away. Equality, dignity, and respect for labour are being undermined. Workers are being forced to work for more than 12-hours a day. The future of workers, and the future of the country, has become a huge question mark. We have to prepare for a long battle.

He further stated that whenever the working people demand their rights, the ruling class becomes fearful because workers would demand education, healthcare, equality, and dignity. Hence, the ruling class oppresses workers and suppresses their struggles. However, workers rise up against these injustices and fight back. The true owners of this world, and of this country, are the workers. This world belongs to us. Instead of honouring workers and their contributions in the nation building, the ruling class demolishes their homes with bulldozers. Indian workers are being expelled from the United States, and Indian workers are being exported to the frontline of genocidal war being waged by Israel against the people of Palestine.

Even after 75 years of independence, we are forced to fight for our rights, education, health care and freedom once again. This country is ours, it belongs to the working people, and we must wage a sustained battle again to make it truly ours.

We must fight for our rights. We must fight for women workers' rights, safety, and rights at workplaces. We must fight against injustice, against Hindu-Muslim division, against communal hatred, and against the politics of hate and violence. We must fight to protect the unity of the people. Comrades from various parts of the country have gathered here. They are, the people are, and the people's struggles are our only hope. We should raise our voices for our rights, for the unity of the people. We will unite, we will fight. The struggles should continue. Let AICCTU raise the banner of struggle!

Comrade Dipankar concluded by saying that we must rise and fight against communal hatred, caste discrimination, and exploitation. He also greeted the conference to become a huge success and declared it open. [Full speech is annexed at Page 24]

The Honorary President of the World Federation of Trade Unions (WFTU) and President of International Workers Institute, George Mavrikos, was supposed to attend the conference. However, the Modi government refused to issue him a visa. His message of greeting was read aloud. In his greeting message, he condemned the Israel's genocidal war on Palestinians,

which is backed by the European Union and the United States. He also emphasized the need to fight against capitalist exploitation.

Comrades Krishnaman Shrestha, Senior Vice President, and Dhruva Prasad Paudel, Treasurer, of the Confederation of Nepalese Professionals (CONEP), Purna KC, a Central Committee member and Padam Rijal, a Province Committee Member, of the General Federation of Nepalese Trade Unions (GEFONT), Mahbubur Rahaman Moznu, Foreign Affairs Secretary, and Idris Ali, GS, Dhaka City committee, of the Bangladesh Trade Union Centre (BTUC) also joined the occasion and extended their solidarity greetings for the success of the conference.

Several European trade union leaders, including from France, shared their messages of solidarity. Trade unions from Assam, defence sector unions, and others also extended their greeting messages.

The leaders of various central trade unions, including INTUC, AITUC, CITU, AIUTUC, TUCC and UTUC addressed the Open session of the conference.

Ashok Singh, the Vice President of INTUC, criticized the Modi government for the injustices meted out to workers. He said that anti-worker laws are being passed without any debate. Real wages drastically fall due to inflation. He appealed to workers to prepare for another round of struggles.

Amarjeet Kaur, the General Secretary of AITUC, highlighted the importance of protecting pluralism and mentioned that, in the current situation where workers' rights are being taken away, the slogan "This Land is Our Land, We, the People of India" is more relevant than ever. She warned that the workers of the country will resort to a major strike if the Modi government implemented

the anti-worker Labour Codes. She also said that workers are the creators of wealth and they will intensify struggles if the same is denied to them.

K.N. Umesh, All India Secretary of CITU, said that the capitalists implemented neo liberal policies in order to evade their crisis and thus have burdened the workers with their crisis. He also said that workers and farmers must unite to resist attacks of the capital.

Ramesh Parashar, All India Secretary of AIUTUC, spoke about the increasing imperialist attacks on democracy and the need to defeat fascism. He emphasized that in the given objective situation, economic struggles alone are not sufficient and we must also wage political struggles.

Indu Prakash Menon, the president of TUCC, said that the united struggles should be intensified to counter the attacks of the Modi led BJP government at the centre.

Ashok Ghosh, General Secretary of UTUC, expressed hope that this conference would mark the beginning of a new path for workers' struggles. The right to life should be unconditional and we should march with the red flag to snatch it.

The economist Atul Sood said that neo-liberal policies, unemployment, informalisation, exploitation, elimination of government and public sector are the challenges before the workers movement today.

Bezwada Wilson of Safai Karamchhari Andolan (Sanitation Workers Movement) called the conference a historic one. The exploitation and communalism can be fought out only through united struggles. The country's wealth is being looted by the corporates. The children of sanitation workers shall not be allowed to continue the same family job. He also asserted that the

workers movement is the only hope today.

The General Secretary of All India Kisan Mahasabha (AIKM) and a Member of Parliament of CPI-ML, comrade Rajaram Singh recalled the dead in the genocidal war on Palestinians by Israel. He protested the export of Indian workers to the war torn Israel by the Modi government. BJP is hell bent on securing overwhelming majority in the Parliament to change the constitution. All sectors are being handed over to the private corporate houses on a platter. He also said that we should strengthen the unity of workers and farmers and increase the fire power of workers struggles to end the exploitation.

CPI-ML MP comrade Sudama Prasad said that the new Labour Codes lead to contractualisation and rampant informalisation of the workforce which should be stopped. It makes workers life and future uncertain but workers and their movement have a great potential and power to defeat it.

Bihar MLC and General Secretary of All India Scheme Workers Federation comrade Shashi Yadav demanded regularisation of the services of the scheme workers, including ASHAs, and workers engaged in Anganwadis and Mid-Day Meal programmes. She explained the struggles of scheme workers across the country to secure their demands and benefits. She appreciated that the women are at the helm of leadership in such struggles and asserted that such struggles will continue unabated.

Vakeel Hassan, a worker who saved miners trapped in Silkyara, spoke at the conference about the inequality in the country and the need for workers to unite and fight against it.

The leader of the All India Municipal and Sanitation Workers Federation, comrade Nirmala, explained that sanitation workers

face triple oppression in terms of caste, gender, and class, and called upon to dismantle the structures that perpetuate this oppression.

General Secretary of the Indian Railways Employees Federation (IREF), comrade Sarvjit Singh, spoke out against the ongoing privatization and contractualisation in the Indian Railways. He also elaborated the IREF struggles against NPS and for OPS. He underlined the determination to make the Indian Railway Employees Federation (IREF), affiliated to AICCTU, as the centre of left and democratic forces in railways. He explained the emergence and victories of IREF as a third force, next to AIRF and NFIR, pushing the BRMS to fourth position in the recently concluded railway union elections for recognition. He also pointed out that railway workers have rejected the divisive politics of the BJP and RSS by rejecting BRMS which failed to win even a single zonal union elections in railways.

The representative of the Palestinian BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement, Apoorva Gautam explained the problems being confronted by the people of Palestine in the genocidal war being waged by the Israel.

The Guests were felicitated in the session by AICCTU leaders.

### **Some Major Resolutions**

The conference condemned the BJP government for the denial of VISA to comrade George Mavrikos, Honorary President of WFTU, to visit Delhi to attend the 11th all India conference of AICCTU.

The conference condemned the Delhi police action of tearing off the poster in the conference venue expressing solidarity with the suffering people of Palestine without any logic or reason.

The conference passed a resolution for an unconditional

release of comrades, Pricol workers' leaders, Manivannan and Ramamurthy who are languishing in Tamil Nadu jails for almost 10 years under conviction for fabricated cases. The conference resolved to launch a campaign for their release.

The conference resolved to make the all India convention of workers of all trade unions in the country at Delhi on 18 March and to make the all India workers strike on 20 May against implementation of the anti-worker Labour Codes by the Modi led BJP government, a great success.

### **Delegates Session**

On the evening following the conclusion of the Open Session on 24th, the Delegates session began with the election of a presidium to conduct the conference in a democratic manner. Comrade Shankar V was elected as the Chairman of the 15 member presidium for the conference comprising comrades Shyamlal Prasad, Shashi Yadav, Saroj Chaube (Bihar), Gita Mandal, Baijnath Mistri (Jharkhand), Atul Dighe (Maharashtra), Vijay Vidrohi (UP), Aruna (Andhra Pradesh), Nirmala (Karnataka), S. Balasubramanian (Puducherry), T. Sankarapandiyan (Tamil Nadu), Radha Kant Sethi (Odisha), NN Banerjee (West Bengal) and Sucheta De.

A Technical Team was also formed comprising Brijendra Tiwari, Saurabh Naruka, Ranvijay Kumar, Avani Choksi, Uday Kiran, Neha Tiwari and KK Bora.

More than 600 comrades (including observers) attended the conference against all odds due to obstacles created by Maha Kumbh Mela. Several delegates from major states like UP, Bihar, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Odisha could not make it to the conference either because the trains were cancelled or were unable to board or were

unable to continue their journey up to Delhi.

All India Vice-President S. Balasubramanian read out the condolence resolution paying tributes to comrades who passed away since the last conference. AICCTU All India General Secretary Comrade Rajiv Dimri presented the conference draft report.

On the second day, the session resumed on the morning of February 25 with flag hoisting by AICCTU senior most leader comrade Shyamlal Prasad and after paying tributes to martyrs. The Nagar (City) was named after comrade Swapan Mukherjee, the hall named after comrades N. K. Natarajan - Ramkishan and the stage named after comrades Munna Yadav - Om Prakash Sharma. Delegates came forward to put forward their opinions and suggestions to enrich the draft documents. The whole day was spent on deliberations of the delegates.

On the morning of the third day, General Secretary Rajiv Dimri summarised the suggestions and debates of the delegates and explained the reasons for amendments to be accepted and rejected. The conference unanimously adopted the work report with the accepted amendments.

AICCTU All India President Comrade Shankar V delivered the concluding speech of the conference.

### **Election of Committees**

An Election Commission was formed with comrade Shankar Lal Chaudhary, an observer, as the Chair-Person which comprised of Niraj Kumar, Abhigyan, Chanda and Dolan.

A National Council of 229 members was elected by the conference with full play of democracy. Of these, 78 members formed the Central Working Committee, and 37 members were elected as the Committee of Office

Bearers. Comrade Shankar V was re-elected as the All India President, and Comrade Rajiv Dimri was re-elected as the All India General Secretary.

The conference formed a central advisory committee comprising senior comrades Shyamal Prasad, N. N. Banerjee and Dibakar Bhattacharya. The committee may be further expanded later. The conference honoured the volunteers who worked tirelessly day and night for the success of the conference. The 3-days conference was enthused with revolutionary songs by comrades from various states. A booklet "Bharat mein Asha Andolan" (Asha Movement in India) in Hindi was released in the open session.

The conference reaffirmed its determination to fight against caste domination and communal hatred, to protect the constitution and democracy, and to overthrow the corporate, communal, Manuvadi Modi led BJP government. In the struggle to achieve these goals, the conference resolved to build a militant, radical workers' movement across the country. It also vowed to unite with farmers and agricultural workers. The conference expressed its resounding commitment to heighten the workers' struggles.

The 11th All India Conference of AICCTU concluded successfully with a pledge to continue the struggle to reclaim the rights of workers. ■

## STRIKE!

National Convention of Workers, convened by Central Trade Unions and Independent Sectoral Federations on 18 March 2025 in Delhi has **announced a nationwide general strike on 20th May 2025**, following a two-month-long mass campaign against the anti-worker, anti-farmer, and pro-corporate policies of the BJP-led government.

## “We Are Not Tenants, We Are Owners, and There is No Place for Religious, Communal Division Among Us”

*Full text of the speech by Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary of CPI(ML) Liberation at the Open session of 11th All India Conference of AICCTU held at Talkatora stadium in New Delhi on February 24, 2025.*

**B**irsa Munda gave the slogan, "Abua Dishum, Abua Raj," our right, our rule in our own country: this is the same voice that resonated in 1857, in 1949, when the constitution was passed in the country, and in 1950 when the republic was established.

Today, there is a need to raise this voice even louder! Because today, in our country, there is a government that stands against dissent, against the workers and farmers of this country, against those who build this country, those who run this country, against the common people of this country.

And that is why you will see that today not only are our rights being snatched away – the rights of workers, farmers, youth, women – not only are all the assets of the country being handed over to Adani-Ambani, but the entire pride of the country is being auctioned off to America.

There is a song from 1857, which says – 'Aaya firangi door se, aisa mantar mara, luta dono haath se yaara watan hamara' (The foreigner came from afar, casted such a spell, looted our beloved country with both hands). Today, the Prime Minister of our country grovels before USA, and that same USA is continuously sending back our citizens to the country in American airplanes, handcuffed like criminals, shackled like slaves.

I want to say that all those who are being sent back are workers of our country. They used to work there. Whether they have papers or not is irrelevant – we saw how Colombia and Mexico said that if America does not want our citizens, we will definitely take them back to our country, but with full respect! They said our plane will go and bring our citizens back to our country. We saw how Colombia and Mexico displayed the pride in their workers and citizens of the country. But in India, on the 5th, Modi ji was taking a dip in the Kumbh, Delhi was witnessing assembly elections, and in Amritsar, our people, our women, were coming back with handcuffs on their hands and shackles on their feet.

That is why a crucial question is before us today: the struggle of workers is a long historic struggle. Since the independence movement of India, Amarjeet Kaur is present here, the General Secretary of AITUC which was established in 1920, in the course of the independence movement of the country. The freedom movement of India was the movement of the working people of this country. Carrying such a great tradition, 105 years of the organized trade union movement of this country. As far as the rights of trade union are concerned, those are even older. Through those struggles, we have arrived here today.

We have many questions before us today. Today when working conditions are discussed, someone says one should work 70 hours, someone says one should work 90 hours. In reality, people are working 100-100 hours, but there is no conversation around fair wages for that work. There is no concern for the workers. There is no conversation on our workplace,



on safe working conditions, on equal and democratic workplaces. The sole focus, the biggest conspiracy in the country today is how to extract more and more cheap labor.

In such times, there is no denying that rallying for worker rights is very important today. We however need to begin from the beginning, we have to start from, 'Hum hain iske malik, Hindustan hamara' (This land is our land, we the people of India). We are the rightful owners of this country, and as the main stakeholders, when the workers demand their rights; Faiz had said that when we will demand our share, we will demand the whole world. We are the working class, which Karl Marx said, Workers of the World, we are not limited to India, we are a class across the world, the class that runs the entire world. So when we think about our future as owners today, we will think about ourselves, we will think about the farmers, we will think about the youth, we will think about the students, we will think about their education, we will think about the whole country. The constitution of the country is under attack today. In such a situation, there is a great challenge before us, there is a need for greater unity.

Today's working class composition has undergone major changes. In older times, we used to talk of the public sector, of the organized sector. In the public sector and the organized sector, the workers had achieved some victories by waging long struggles. The circumstances are quite different today: the public sector is under heavy attack, the organized sector has completely shrunk, there is a very large informal economy, a very large unorganized sector, there are many workers who are so-called 'self-employed', they have no employer. There is huge unemployed mass

of people, and workers working in very insecure, humiliating and harsh conditions.

There are all kinds of workers within the working class. Half of our country's population is women. Women of India also form half of the working class. And we can see today that a large number of women are present here today. Yet there is a need for even larger numbers to come, there is a need to fight beside each other in the future.

Today's workers movement is for everyone: all scheme workers, ASHA, Anganwadi, Mid-Day Meal, Livelihood Mission, crores of women workers, this organization is for you, this movement is for you. This movement is for all agricultural laborers, for all those crores of rural laborers, for whom MNREGA was implemented, but you see that their wages do not increase at all. The government itself declares the minimum wages, like today as per law, 26,000 minimum wages should be ensured for all. However in this country, no scheme worker, no MNREGA worker, anywhere, gets this minimum wage. The government itself announces the minimum wage and takes work from people in exchange of very little money, token money. All those people who are fighting for minimum wages today are with us, the workers movement is for everyone. Those people whose land is being snatched away, whose houses are being demolished; today Vakil Hassan is with us, who along with his team rescued the workers trapped in the tunnel, but instead of honouring him, today the country is such, the government is such, that his house was demolished by a bulldozer. We are witnessing such great injustice in the country, to the farmers, to a leader like Vakil Hassan, to all the slum dwellers of the city, whose shelters are being

demolished, whose shops are being set on fire in riots, all those questions have become the questions of the workers movement today.

Therefore, I appeal to you comrades that alongwith the issues and demands of the workers, if anyone has the biggest heart in this country, it is the worker. If anyone has the greatest responsibility, it is the workers who run the country. We are the owners of this country, so we have to think about everyone, we have to think about the whole country. We have to prepare ourselves so that we can save and liberate this country from the clutches of Adani-Ambani, Trump and Elon Musk. Babasaheb Ambedkar gave us the constitution, and he fought for the rights of the workers: the right to strike, the right to protest, the right to organize, all these are rights on the path of which the constitution of India was developed. The constitution that should have been strengthened is being constantly attacked and neglected in the conspiracy of this government.

In such times, AICCTU is having its conference today. This conference should send a message of unity; today there is a need for great unity in the whole country: unity of trade unions, unity of workers and farmers, unity of workers, students, and women, unity of workers and citizens. We are workers and the citizens of this country. We say: eight hours of work, eight hours of rest, eight hours for participation in democracy. Therefore, the question of democracy in the country at this time, the question of protecting the constitution, the question of protecting the freedom and pride of the country, which is before the workers movement; today the time has come that along with the issues of our trade union, we have to become a part of the bigger struggle. There

was a similar phase in the freedom movement, at that time trade unions were being formed, but to fight for an independent India. And today, the country needs the same unity to fight against a different threat: protection of the constitution, protection of democracy, and absolutely clear protection of the freedom and pride of our country: we have to go into this struggle.

I believe that the atmosphere is changing in front of us. Laws are caducous, but I believe today the situation of the country for the workers movement is not that bleak, but better. 30-35 years ago, when the New Economic Policy came, the country was misled in the name of privatization, globalization, liberalization. Many people had started to believe that privatization would lead to India's progress, that globalization would lead to India's progress. This policy came in 1991, and from then until today 2025, 35 years have passed. You have the experience of 35 years. These 35 years have shown that privatization is a path to destroy this country. Today, not only trade unions are fighting against privatization, but the entire India is fighting against Adani and Ambani. And I believe that it is a matter of strength for you that everyone is fighting your battle together. When the struggle to form the Maruti workers Union began, farmers from Haryana were not standing with you. But today, I believe that the farmers' movement has created a new awareness among the farmers. Today, farmer comrades will stand with Maruti workers, today, farmers and Khap Panchayats from Haryana are standing with women wrestlers. We are witnessing an expansion and development of consciousness in the country.

Today, our country has a new education policy, and this

new education policy is about privatization. It is about making education expensive, inaccessible and depriving workers and the poor of the country of the right to education. So that the children of the workers don't get educated. Babasaheb Ambedkar had said, 'Educate, organize, and agitate,' and there is no other path before you. This policy of privatization, the new education policy, has come to block that path. The contract system is continuously increasing: in railways, in banks, where there used to be permanent jobs, today, young people are being given work on contract. You will see that farmers are standing with you in these struggles too.

Today, there is a possibility and need for a bigger fight. We appeal to you to unite all the people within the workers movement. Wherever there is oppression in the name of caste in this country, attacks on Dalits, attacks on tribals, stand firmly against that oppression, with those Dalits, tribals, and all the backward classes. Wherever there is injustice against women in this country, the issue of safety of women at the workplace is not just an issue for women, make it a central issue of the entire workers movement that half of the country's workforce is working in unsafe workplaces.

They are dividing workers into Hindu-Muslim. Against this conspiracy to divide the workers of the entire country into Hindu-Muslim, we shall rally with the same slogan, 'Hum hein iske malik, hindustan humara'. We are not tenants, we are owners, and there is no place for religious, communal division among us. This is your conference, and I know that you people, especially comrades from UP, Bihar, and Bengal, have come here facing a lot of difficulties due to Kumbh. At this time, people in this country have their own faith, and

certainly, as the constitution says, freedom of religious worship is for everyone. But today, the business of religious faith, the cultivation of hatred that is happening, the people who were called to Kumbh from all over the country, for whom no arrangements were made, who got injured, who got trampled, the people of the country, preys of these cruel jokes. We will definitely have to stand with them. And if superstition is spread in the name of religion, if there is hypocrisy in the name of religion, then against such hypocrisy, against such superstition all over the country, the workers movement shall fight against this, shall fight and move forward!

I would like to rest my words here. Today, our veteran leaders are not here. Comrade Swapan Mukherjee, Comrade DP Bakshi, from the very beginning of AICCTU, under the leadership, guidance, and hard work of these comrades, this organization was built. Today that organization is holding its eleventh conference. People have come from every corner of the country. The number of women has increased. I appeal to you to keep this momentum going, move forward, unite everyone, unite every section. Unite people in every small union, in every unorganized sector, unite AICCTU against the ruthless way people were fired from IT sector, like slaves, champion the cause of the new generation of workers. Wherever there is oppression, injustice, atrocities, move forward together. May your conference become a center of unity, a center of struggle. May your conference be successful. Wishing all of you comrades the best, I conclude my speech.

LONG LIVE REVOLUTION!  
LONG LIVE AICCTU!  
LONG LIVE WORKERS' UNITY! ■

# India's Reckless Push for Risky Nuclear (Fission) Power

▲ SOUMYA DUTTA

*[With new products like Bitcoin and AI requiring mind-boggling amounts of electricity, recent years have witnessed a sudden spurt in demand for energy. Global tech giants like Microsoft, Google and other are therefore moving into the power sector in a big way, while also tying up with traditional power companies. Sensing the mood of the market, Indian power oligarchs such as Adani, Tata Power, L&T are venturing into power plants and associated projects (coal mining for example) like crazy. In the process, they are evicting thousands of farmers, fishermen, forest dwellers and others and polluting the environment in brazen violation of the directive principles set out in the Constitution of India and laws of the land. While securing the support of the Union and State Governments, and in most cases also the Judiciary, everywhere the masses are up in arms against them. Notable examples of such protests include those against the Kudankulam Nuclear Power Plant (Tamil Nadu), Jaitapur Nuclear Power Project (Maharashtra), Bargi Dam and Anuppur Thermal Power Plant (Madhya Pradesh), Mundra Thermal Power Project (Gujarat), Kakrapalli Thermal Power Plant (Andhra Pradesh), and so on. At this moment, a vigorous movement is going on in Assam's Karbi Anglong against anticipated eviction drives for a solar power project of the State Government and a Compressed Biogas (CBG) project of Mukesh Ambani's Reliance Group.*

*In yet another big step ahead in the Modi government's reckless privatisation drive, in December last year the NPCIL was ordered to open the door to nuclear sector for Indian private firms. And already Adani Power has rolled out plans to set up 30 GW of nuclear power capacity with foreign technology. In this overall context, Soumya Dutta zeros in on the most hazardous but relatively less understood segment of the power sector: nuclear (fission) power and explains why India must steer clear of this path and espouse other alternatives. - Ed.]*

## New Push for Nuclear Energy

**I**n the recently presented Union Budget for 2025-26, the Indian government announced a "Nuclear Energy Mission for Viksit Bharat", with a significant budgetary support of Rs.20,000 crores for R&D to develop an 'indigenous' Small Modular Reactor and install at least five such SMRs by the year 2033. The budget also announced a target of installing 100GW of Nuclear Energy capacity by 2047 (!) from today's just over 8 GW. As part of the Nuclear Energy Mission, it was also proposed to amend the Atomic Energy Act and the Civil Liabilities for Nuclear Damages Act, to enable and attract private investments in the nuclear energy sector and reduce liability of nuclear power

plant operators in case of any accidents. In the light of massive nuclear power plant disasters like Fukushima, Chernobyl, Three Mile Island etc. (also many others smaller ones including in India's Rawatbhata in Rajasthan, Narora in UP), it is obvious that these steps go against all accepted risk reduction and response principles,

throwing all caution to the winds.

Why it is that governments of several countries are still pursuing this dangerous dream? And most importantly for us, we the Indian Citizens must ask: Why our country? The "reason" offered by the government and Nuclear lobbyists was that "a power-starved country" like India needs a "reliable source" of electricity in nuclear energy. That "logic" was false earlier, and even more senseless now. If we recollect the earlier claims of Indian nuclear establishment, this country was to have an installed Nuclear (fission<sup>1</sup>) power capacity of 20GW by around 2000, and 63 GW by 2030. Today, at the beginning of 2025, our total installed Power capacity is about 430 GW (with a tiny part, just 8.2 GW, about 1.9% of installed capacity contributed by nuclear),

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**Exactly fourteen years ago, on the 11th of March 2011, 'all hell broke loose' in the Pacific coast of Japan.**

while the peak summer demands touch about 250 GW. Clearly, we have a huge excess installed capacity. Many of the coal-fired power plants are therefore being operated at low Plant Load Factors of less than 60%, wasting installed capacity built with taxpayer money. Why then waste our hard-earned savings into so-called “assets” that are non-productive as well as dangerous? Why indeed!

### **Nuclear Heydays Are a Thing of the Past**

During the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, the world went gaga over nuclear power. There were few alternatives then, and the mainstay coal power was known to be heavily polluting. The situation has changed completely. Today, the cheapest source of new electricity plants is Solar Photovoltaic and Wind Turbines. Their per MW installation costs have come down to less than Rs.5 crores/MW, while even a comparatively less costly PHWR (Pressurised Heavy Water Reactor) nuclear power plant costs around 10-12 crores/MW. At Rs.2.80 - 3.00 per KWhr, Solar and Wind power is also the cheapest. Nuclear power, taking subsidies into account, costs nearly double. Then there is the continuous stream of radioactive byproducts, which is poisoning our land-water-air, and will keep poisoning us for thousands of years to come. Apart from the massive costs and dangers of radioactive leakages and regular emissions (even when the NPPs OR Nuclear Power Plants are running ‘normally’), the cooling water consumption for nuclear (and thermal) power plants are very high. In the face of critical summer and winter water shortages accentuated by Climate Change, this decision to push nukes in a big

way is nothing less than suicidal.

The devastation that the entire nuclear fuel chain causes, starts right at the beginning - the mining and refining of Uranium. One has only to visit the Indian mine sites of Jaduguda, Turamdih and Tummalapalle to witness the untold sufferings the local populations are undergoing. Lots of diseases and birth of severely deformed babies are commonplace in Jaduguda, the oldest of India's Uranium mining sites. Even the newest - Tummlapalle in Andhra Pradesh, has started causing devastation within 8-9 years of operation. Anyone visiting the nearby villages like KK Kottala and Mabbuchintalapalle will be struck by the cancerous lesions on skins of dozens of children, domestic animals strangely dying by the hundreds, the only cash crop of these poor villagers - banana plantations - being devastated by contamination from the mine wastes.

### **Looking Back at Fukushima**

Exactly fourteen years ago, on the 11th of March 2011, ‘all hell broke loose’ in the Pacific coast of Japan. A huge tsunami, triggered by the monstrous ‘Tohoku earthquake’ (of magnitude 9 in Richter scale), swept away towns and villages near the coast, killing about 20,000 people. The gigantic tsunami waves also hit the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear power plant on the coast, overwhelming the ‘defensive sea walls’, cutting off power supply, disabling backup generators and triggering a devastating nuclear accident. What followed is now well known to the whole world, as the live television coverage of the apocalyptic events streamed into all homes around the globe. Three of the six boiling-water nuclear

reactors went into meltdown, spreading deadly radioactive materials. Lakhs were evacuated, huge areas became uninhabitable for decades or even centuries, massive amounts of radioactively contaminated water was (and is still being) dumped into the Pacific ocean causing untold damage to marine life. An area with a radius of 30 KMs from the devastated NPP still remains heavily contaminated by radioactivity and practically out of bounds for normal living. The pains and sufferings of lakhs of Nuclear Refugees, the first in the 21st century (after the disaster of Chernobyl in 1986) were seen almost live by people on their TV screens, throughout the world.

And that disaster is still unfolding fourteen years down the line, with no certainty about when the technologically and financially sound Japanese government and the Tokyo Electric Power Company (TEPCO), which owns and ran the Fukushima Daiichi NPP will be able to fully contain and decommission these reactors. The Pacific ocean, which came to be a big help in trying to cool the melted down reactors with their nearly infinite supply of water, was itself subjected to massive discharges of ‘radioactively contaminated water’. One was reminded of the 1986 Chernobyl disaster in the then Soviet Union, as the only comparably horrendous nuclear disaster, both being classified at the highest rank of Level-7 in the deceptively named “International Nuclear and Radiological Events Scale” (INES). These are not just events, these are apocalyptic events. Many such nuclear disasters have happened every decade, in many countries operating nuclear power projects, in various smaller scales.

Closely linked to nuclear (fission) power is nuclear bombs. So let's not forget the cataclysmic nuclear bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. That's not the end of nuclear bombs destructive story though, as the 'nuclear powers' have tested over 2000 of these nuclear weapons of mass destruction in several designated areas of the world. Another horror story is that of the major US testing site-- the Marshall Islands-- and how unsuspecting citizens were used as nuclear-exposure guinea pigs. There are similar but lesser known stories from the Soviet nuclear test sites of Semipalatinsk, Novaya Zemlya and others; the French nuclear test sites of Reggane and Akker in Algeria and the Mururoa Atoll in the Pacific; the British test sites in the Australian territories of Monte Bello, Maralinga, Emu Field, and the Chinese test site of Lop Nur in the Uyghur Autonomous Region.

Global nuclear fission power industry was in decline for the past three decades but has started being revived – with the spectre of Climate Change Crisis staring down the world. From its glory days in the 1960s to the 1980s, many countries built these reactors, with scientists hoping that they will find some 'solution' to the intractable problems of nuclear wastes. Then

happened the Three-some – Three Mile Island, Chernobyl and Fukushima – to show the world that this is a very dangerous genie out of the bottle. In a desperate effort to revive itself, the dying nuclear fission power industry tried to present itself to be Carbon-neutral and thus, a solution to the Climate Change Crisis. Even that claim has since been debunked, with clear calculations showing the significant amounts of carbon emission through its entire fuel cycle, from mining, refining, fabrication, very high embedded emission of construction etc.

India is a party to the International Thermonuclear Experimental Reactor or ITER, the biggest scientific experiment so far to harness the power of another and much safer form of nuclear energy, that of hydrogen fusion<sup>2</sup> – the process that powers the Sun and most other stars. Controlled Thermonuclear Reactor experiments – with no possibility of explosion and minimal radioactive footprint – is a promise shown to us for the last fifty-plus years, but is nearing the first scientific breakeven demonstration only now. The predecessor Tokamaks<sup>3</sup> before ITER – the Joint European Torus in UK, the Chinese Tokamak EAST (Experimental Advanced

Superconducting Tokamak), and the French WEST Tokamak, have already come tantalisingly close to a 'technical break-even'. If scientists are successful in harnessing this with commercial viability, which is expected by the year 2045-50, humanity's need for energy can be tackled for many millennia.

So, for now, we have to shift out from the climate damaging fossil fuels to the emerged Renewables, in a manner empowering the millions of landholders in the country, not by dispossessing them for the large land requirements of Renewables. In the meantime, the old, highly dangerous and toxic technology of Nuclear Fission power must be placed where it belongs – in the "tried and failed" bin of history as one more dangerous and failed experiment. We the Citizens must demand from our governments – scrap all planned nuclear (fission) power projects and phase-out the existing ones in a planned manner.

*- In memory of all the people of the world who suffered terribly from this 20th century legacy of Nuclear bombs and nuclear reactors, and with respect to many future generations who will have to contend with large amounts of long lived radioactive waste materials. ■*

<sup>1</sup>Fission occurs when a neutron slams into a larger atom, forcing it to excite and split into two smaller atoms—also known as fission products. Additional neutrons are also released that can initiate a chain reaction. When each atom splits, a tremendous amount of energy is released. Uranium and plutonium are most commonly used for fission reactions in nuclear power reactors. This is the process used in atom bombs and like them, fission-based NPPs are also potential sources of death and destruction.

<sup>2</sup>Fusion occurs when two atoms slam together to form a heavier atom, like when two hydrogen atoms fuse to form one helium atom, generating huge amounts of energy—several times greater than fission. Moreover, it doesn't produce highly radioactive fission products. This is the process that powers the Sun – the source of light and life. However, the process is difficult to sustain for long periods of time because of the tremendous amount of pressure and temperature needed to join the nuclei together. Scientists are hopeful of overcoming this difficulty, but more attention and funds are required for that.

<sup>3</sup>A tokamak is a device that uses strong magnetic fields to confine and arrest plasma – an extremely hot, ionized state of matter – for achieving controlled nuclear fusion. Put in another way, it is a device for producing controlled nuclear fusion, which involves the confining and heating of a gaseous plasma by means of an electric current and magnetic field.

## Income Tax Bill 2025: Missed Opportunities, Surveillance Weapon

**T**he Income Tax Bill 2025, presented to Lok Sabha floor on February 13, 2025, is a tale of missed opportunities. It was supposed to bring into shape unwieldy 1961 Act, invigorate investors, be fair to taxpayers, reduce litigation and increase self-compliance. Instead, it's done some housekeeping - regrouped provisions scattered over different chapters and tabulation of rates etc., for ease of comprehension, but introduced some provisions of overarching surveillance. Set to roll out by April 1, 2026—this bill in addition is likely to have the usual issues related to implementation.

The bill has 536 sections instead of 819, words slashed by lakhs, and tables (57, to be precise)—that's all that has been “simplified”. Your rent's 2% TDS above Rs 50,000 a month can now be referred from a table instead of wading thru the text. Rules related to salary (like gratuity deductions) and no. Profits are in tidy chapters.

But here's the catch: it doesn't go far enough. Your tax bill stays

the same—no lower rates or bigger exemptions to ease the pinch of rising prices. If you're an investor, the bill doesn't touch tricky areas like capital gains taxes, which recently jumped from 10% to 12.5% for long-term gains on stocks (thanks to the Finance Act 2024). That's real money out of your pocket—Rs 25,000 extra on a Rs 10 lakh profit—while this bill stays silent on relief. There are no simpler ways to handle international deals or transfer pricing disputes for businesses. Critics, including tax experts and newspapers like The New Indian Express, say this could've been a chance to make India a magnet for investment or lighten our load—but it's more of a reshuffle than a rethink.

For the average person, it's like getting a tidier desk but no relief in taxes otherwise. The promise of fewer court fights with tax officials is there, thanks to clearer wording, but some experts worry the leftover complexity—like reusing old definitions of “income”—might keep the lawyers busy anyway. It's a half-step forward when we needed a leap.

The bill gives tax officials power to peek into your “virtual digital spaces”—think emails, WhatsApp chats, social media, or even your cloud-stored photos—anytime they suspect you're dodging taxes. Clause 247 says they can bypass passwords and grab whatever they want, no judge's permission needed. The absence of judicial scrutiny is an overreach ad leads to arbitrary and intrusive investigations without clear evidence of wrongdoing. The Income Tax bill provides a new weapon to Modi government in its onslaught against dissenting voices.

This is “surveillance state” move, that could target critics or settle political scores—shades of past scandals like Pegasus spyware. Imagine a tax officer scrolling through your chats because you forgot to report a small crypto trade—or just because they can. The Supreme Court said privacy is a right in 2017, but this bill doesn't seem to care much about guardrails. No clear rules stop them from keeping your data or using it beyond taxes. For the middle class, who live so much of life online, it's a quiet worry. ■

## Delimitation Exercise Must Ensure Fair Representation of All States & Regions

**A**t the all-party meeting convened by the Tamil Nadu Chief Minister on the question of the proposed delimitation, CPIML emphasised on retaining the existing political representation of the states to strengthen federalism and democracy.

The decadal census due in the year 2021 was deferred by the BJP government citing reasons of COVID and the consequent lockdown. Now,

the union government has proposed a census by 2026 and subsequent delimitation of constituencies based on the population of each state.

The more developed states like Tamil Nadu where the population control measures were effectively and successfully administered will find a decrease in their proportional share in the parliament if population is taken as the only basis for delimitation. The states like Tamil

Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, Andhra, Telangana, Odisha, West Bengal and Punjab effectively controlled the population growth owing to effective policy implementation, and now central government's proposal of population based delimitation will place these states in an unfavourable situation as they are bound to lose several constituencies. This, in effect, will amount to truncate the voice of the people of these states in the Parliament and assemblies.

In an unevenly developed and diverse country like India, the norms of democracy require an equal political representation for all states and

regions so that their voices can be heard. This is one of the fundamental aspects of democracy.

The proposed delimitation will not only alter the geographical boundaries of constituencies, but also the number of constituencies of each state. This will give the BJP an advantage to deny non-BJP ruled states their due share undermining federalism. The states like UP, MP, Bihar and Rajasthan which utterly failed to control the population and lagged behind developmental parameters are expected to get a larger share of the total number of constituencies.

If the existing strength of the Parliament was retained at 543, then Tamil Nadu is likely to lose eight seats proportionally while an increase to 848, according to the seating capacity of the new Parliament building, they

are likely to gain only 10 instead of 22 seats proportionally, if the population criteria was followed. The total representation to the Parliament from southern states is bound to fall drastically, thereby drastically reducing the bargaining power and representation of the states which are mostly unfavourable to the ruling party BJP.

CPIML considers this proposal to be a conspiracy to suppress the voice and rights of the non-BJP ruled states which will destabilise the system of parliamentary democracy by denying the equal franchise harming federalism. The Home Minister Amit Shah must respond to the concerns of these states by declaring to retain the existing proportion of seats for each state.

The party has also criticised forcing three language formula

on unwilling states, curtailing the powers of state government, over-centralisation of powers at the hands of the union government denying the due share of the states, terming as a design of a larger fascist project of establishing a corporate, communal, Manuvadi Hindu Rashtra. The CPIML appealed to the state Government of Tamil Nadu to pass a resolution in the forthcoming assembly session to restrain the central government from disturbing the status quo of 543 constituencies or from disturbing the proportion and ratio of existing share of seats of each state. The assembly resolution should also demand a constitutional guarantee to prevent any destabilisation of the existing balance.

- Tamil Nadu State Committee,  
CPI(ML) Liberation ■

## Waqf Amendment Bill: It Must Be Resisted by All

*Excerpts from the speech of Dipankar Bhattacharya at the protest against the Waqf Amendment Bill organized by AIMPLB at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, on March 17, 2025.*

**T**he Waqf Amendment Bill has been unilaterally brought in by the BJP government to further target the collective identity and dignity of the Muslims in the country. Despite dissent note sent by all opposition members, the Joint Parliamentary Committee has recently adopted the bill. Just like today's Bulldozer Raj, the Waqf Amendment Bill is being bulldozed on us.

The CPIML stands firmly against the Waqf Amendment Bill. Our MPs have spoken out against the bill inside the parliament. The Waqf Amendment Bill is aimed at targeting one community, that is the Muslim community. The land under Waqf Board is certainly linked to the

practice of collective charity and welfare of the Muslim Community. However, what must be emphasised in the current context is that the present fascist regime targets each section separately. They want us to remain divided, they want us to fight our separate battles while they enact their script of snatching away rights of farmers, tribals, Dalits, Muslims, adivasis, women and the oppressed masses. It is our task, at this juncture, to realise that these are not separate battles. We must stand with each other in defending our constitutional and civil rights.

Today, the autonomy of every institution, like the Waqf Board, is being taken away. The BJP led Uttarakhand Government has implemented the regressive and communal Uniform Civil Code. They are creating a narrative to otherwise the Muslims and target their personal laws. But in effect, individual liberty

and civil rights of all citizens from Uttarakhand are being violated through the UCC.

Through the Waqf Amendment Bill they want to clamp down on the identity of Muslims in the country. Let us remember, when the Citizenship Amendment Act was passed, it targeted the Muslims at large, but in effect, the CAA was linked with NPR and NRC. Thus, making citizenship rights of a vast section of the country vulnerable at mercy of the state machinery run by the fascist government in power. The mass upsurge against CAA at Shaheen Bagh and all other places in the country correctly identified the CAA to be an attack on our constitution. It is a time for all sections of the society to stand with each other's battle to defend our constitutional rights. The Waqf Amendment Bill is an attack on our constitution. It must be resisted by all of us. ■

# Trump's Fascist Attack on US Universities

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Within a few days of assuming office in January 2025, Trump began a relentless assault on free speech, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) programs, and pro-Palestine activism on US campuses. Among the flurry of executive orders (EOs) issued in his first 100 days of office were those targeting “non-merit-based opportunity,” which effectively ended Civil Rights-era affirmative action policies in higher education, and those revoking visas for foreign students found to be engaging in “anti-Semitic” activities. On the latter, a fact sheet published by the White House on January 30, 2025 following Trump’s EO on anti-Semitism threatens to “deport Hamas sympathizers and revoke student visas.” It warns ominously: “To all the resident aliens who joined in the pro-jihadist protests, we put you on notice: come 2025, we will find you, and we will deport you.”

The latest detention of Columbia University alumnus Mahmoud Khalil by Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) agents suggests that Trump is willing to go to extreme, unlawful, and unconstitutional measures—including forced disappearances—to silence critics of Israel. The goal is to instill fear, confusion, and panic on university campuses. On the evening of March 8, Khalil, a former graduate student of Columbia and leader in the Gaza encampment and campaign for Palestinian rights on campus, was returning to his apartment in New York City with his 8-month pregnant wife. ICE agents

dressed in plain clothes cornered him and demanded his surrender. He is now being held in an ICE detention center in Louisiana as lawyers battle out this illegal arrest.

What is remarkable about this incident is that ICE agents first told Khalil that his student visa was being revoked and he was facing deportation. When Khalil told them that he is a green card holder (and his wife a US citizen), they appeared confused, shifting quickly to threatening to revoke his green card, a status that bestows US permanent residency privileges, and is not so easily revoked. The apparent ineptness of the ICE agents suggests that they were not only misinformed, but they were likely operating on the basis of misinformed, rumor-mongering rants from Trump and his MAGA-aligned social media trolls. A few days prior to his detention, Khalil reached out to his university administration, pleading that he had become fearful for his safety because of doxing and surveillance by rightwing and Zionist sympathizers on the platform X. Columbia professor, Israeli-origin Shai Davidai, previously banned on campus for harassing pro-Palestinian students, had reposted a photograph of Khalil on X on March 6 tagging Secretary of State Marco Rubio, urging the Secretary to deport Khalil for his “terrorist propaganda.” It is no surprise that ICE agents showed up at Khalil’s door 48 hours later. It has to be assumed that Zionist and rightwing faculty on campus seem to have a direct line to the federal government, and are more than

willing to hand their students on a platter to agents of state terror.

## Liberals Paved the Way via the “Palestine Exception”

Universities tend to be thought of as bastions of free speech and critical thinking. They are often understood to be “liberal” in the sense that many departments in the humanities and social sciences embrace a progressive, inclusive, and democratic politics and ethics in their pedagogy and research. At the same time, Palestine has always served as the litmus test for western academic liberalism. “The Palestine Exception” refers to free speech, social justice, and human rights concerns extended to all areas of academic inquiry except Palestine—to all subjects except the history of the Nakba and US-backed Israeli aggression, illegal occupation, and apartheid. While Trump and Musk have certainly escalated this authoritarian repression on university campuses, the Biden administration is guilty of setting the process in motion. It was under Biden, after all, that the disingenuous equating of criticism of Israel—a rogue, genocidal state with zero accountability in international law—with anti-Semitism became formalized in institutional policies. The Biden Administration fell in line with a long history of American liberals who have punished anyone who is willing to stand up to the Palestine Exception.

Liberal academics are also notoriously conservative when it comes to critiques of capitalism, racism, and empire, choosing in many departments a reformist curriculum that tinkers at the edges: sprinkle a Black faculty here, launch a DEI committee there, and hopefully all the boxes will be checked. Sadly, this reformism is easily cooptable. DEI has



now been weaponized against the very Black, Brown, Native American (barely present in universities in the first place), and queer faculty and students who were once celebrated on university campuses. It is the faculty, staff, and students of color and those who are working class, Muslim, non-binary, and queer who have most been at the frontlines of pro-Palestine protests and boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) campaigns over the past 18 months. They understand how state violence works. They know their liberation is entangled with that of others. It is these students who have therefore most been under assault. In short, in the guise of policing anti-Semitism, DEI has been repurposed by liberals under the Biden Administration to dehumanize and police the very people for which DEI was ostensibly created. This has successfully paved the way for Trump's more naked fascism.

### **Corporate and Zionist Donors Drive the New McCarthyism**

In the last few days, Trump announced that he is cutting \$400 million in federal funding to Columbia University because of the university's failure to clamp down on the Gaza protests. Almost immediately, the university's rich donors and alumni celebrated the government's decision. This seems a strange response coming from those who are supposed to have the university's financial interests in mind. But it is not strange if you consider the enormous political power that donors, endowments, and boards of trustees wield on campuses like Columbia. Like all corporate entities, private universities are beholden to their shareholders. In *Bankers in the Ivory Tower*, sociologist Charlie Eaton traces the rise of

elite personal interconnections between Ivy League institutions and Wall Street in the 1980s that fed the growth of new private equity and hedge funds on which university endowments increasingly depend. Over the last four decades, endowments have ballooned into the billions and become core to university governance decisions. Even public universities have turned increasingly to private philanthropy and endowments.

Wealthy trustees and donors with ties to Israel have put pressure on university presidents to discipline and suspend student activists—or risk losing donor money. Gifts to Harvard University saw a 15% drop in in the fiscal year 2024, the largest drop in donations in a decade, due to pro-Palestinian protests. At Columbia, a wealthy donor, Avi Kaner, owner of the American food retail chain, Morton Williams, redirected his donations from the university at large to its Institute for Israel and Jewish Studies. Another anonymous pro-Israeli donor and Columbia alumnus went further, donating \$260 million to Bar-Ilan University in Tel Aviv in 2024 as a snub to his alma mater. Bar-Ilan University announced that it will use the generous donation for research on artificial intelligence (AI) and cryptography, among other “deep tech” research agendas, fueling the very technology that is used to police and surveil students and faculty in America. Secretary of State Marco Rubio recently announced that the government is launching an AI-fueled “Catch and Revoke” effort to cancel the visas of foreign students who appear to support Hamas or other purportedly “terror” groups. When we follow the financial flows, when we connect the dots between wealth and universities, we can understand the disproportionate influence of corporate and Zionist donors in

driving the new McCarthyism on campuses.

### **Students, Unions, and the AAUP Fight Back**

All signs point to a bleak situation: universities are ground-zero for the Trump-Musk fascist take-over. In red states, especially the southern part of the country, entire departments and programs, such as sociology, African American studies, and critical race theory, have been dismantled by state governments. Red states have created a bogeyman out of critical race theory and its traveling companions—gender and queer theory and “radical Marxism”—blaming these theories for indoctrinating students. This is ironic, since, as mentioned, most universities are really not radical at all, and increasingly pliant to politically blunt and financially opportunistic frameworks, if not downright authoritarian diktats. There is legitimate cause for concern. Even faculty and students who are citizens are not safe from forced disappearances when they are pegged as “anti-national” or “enemies of the state”, as the stories of 20th century European and 21st century Indian fascism warn us

But universities are also spaces of vibrant organizing and activism. Students have long been the vanguard of anti-Nazi, anti-apartheid, and anti-colonial movements. Divestment from South African apartheid offers a useful historical example. The University of California rejected calls for divestment through the 1970s. But, in 1985, responding to police crackdowns in South Africa, UC Berkeley students staged a weeklong sit-in that ended with police arresting 158 students. The police crack-down helped to propel further student action, and a year later—with political momentum finally building against apartheid across the world—the university pulled \$3.1 billion from companies

doing business with South Africa. Years later, when he visited the US, Nelson Mandela told students how pivotal their activism had been in bringing down the apartheid regime. It is a source of retroactive pride for universities today, of course, though many of them were against divestment at the time.

Though some Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) chapters have been suspended or banned throughout the country, these and other student organizations and coalitions forge valiantly on. Students

have also begun to recognize how important it is to fight for fair labor practices on their campuses and are supporting local unions representing dining, janitorial, administrative, and other workers. Many of these unions are also standing against ICE sweeps and deportations, the slashing of federal government jobs and welfare, and state repression. Finally, the American Association of University Professors (AAUP), a non-profit dedicated to the protection of academic freedom with chapters across university campuses, has also

decided to stand on the right side of history. In February 2025, the AAUP successfully filed a lawsuit to block Trump's EOs ending DEI programs. The US District Court for Maryland granted a preliminary nationwide injunction on key parts of the EOs, arguing that Trump's orders violate constitutional provisions on free speech. The lawsuit opens with: "In the United States, there is no king." Trump, Musk, and their cabal of oligarchs may not understand this basic principle, but universities must continue to defend it. ■

## Palestine Solidarity Protest in Delhi Calls for an Immediate End to Genocide in Gaza

**O**n 21 March, a Palestine solidarity protest was organised at Delhi's Jantar Mantar, demanding an immediate end to Israel's genocidal war in Gaza. The protest saw participation from CPI(ML), CPI(M), other left parties, student organisations, and progressive groups, all expressing their steadfast solidarity with the people of Gaza and the Palestinian struggle for liberation.

The scale of destruction in Gaza is staggering. In the first wave of Israel's genocidal war, over 50,000 Palestinians, most of them women and children, were slaughtered. Thousands remain buried under the rubble. 90% of Gaza's total population has been forcibly displaced from their homes. Entire neighbourhoods have been reduced to dust, hospitals and schools have been systematically targeted, and Israel has deliberately blocked food, water, and medical aid, pushing Gaza into an unparalleled humanitarian catastrophe.

The protest came in response to Israel's renewed bombardment of Gaza, which has resulted in the deaths

of hundreds of innocent Palestinians, including children and women.

CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, addressing the gathering, condemned Israel's unilateral violation of the ceasefire and held the United States responsible for enabling the ongoing massacre.

"This genocide is happening with the full backing of the US and the Trump administration. Meanwhile, the Modi government remains complicit through its silence. We demand an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and accountability for Israel's war crimes. We also strongly condemn the persecution of pro-Palestine voices in the US and elsewhere," he stated.

He further criticised the Modi government's foreign policy, pointing out that Indian citizens in the US—including students and professionals—are facing deportation, yet the Indian government has chosen to remain silent. He called upon the government to publicly condemn Israel's war crimes and the crackdown on pro-Palestine activism worldwide.

AIPWA Delhi President Shweta Raj urged India to immediately sever

all military and economic ties with Israel, denouncing the Modi regime's growing alliance with the Zionist apartheid state.

AISA Delhi President Abhigyan highlighted the long history of Israel's occupation, apartheid, and ethnic cleansing against Palestinians. He emphasised that Israel's latest escalation is not an isolated event but part of its ongoing project to erase Palestine. "The people of India will always stand with the people of Palestine. We demand that our government stop being a pawn of US imperialism and take a strong stand against Israel's war machine," he declared.

At the protest, CPI(ML) also strongly condemned the Israeli forces and settlers' escalating campaign of terror in the occupied West Bank. Settler militias, backed by the Israeli military, have been rampaging through Palestinian villages, torching homes, destroying farms, and killing civilians with impunity. Mass arrests, extrajudicial killings, and military raids have intensified, further entrenching Israel's apartheid rule.

The protest concluded with a vow to continue mobilising in solidarity with Palestine and resist India's growing alignment with the US-Israel axis. ■

# OBITUARY

## Comrade Prabir Haldar

With deep sorrow, we bid farewell to Comrade Prabir Haldar (67), a committed revolutionary and Central Committee member of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation. As the Secretary of the Hooghly District Committee, he played a crucial role in organizing and strengthening the party in the region.

Comrade Prabir passed away this morning at Kolkata's SSKM Hospital, where he was undergoing treatment for cancer. His journey as a full-time organizer in the Howrah-Hooghly region spanned more than four decades, during which he tirelessly built the party and people's movements with unwavering commitment. Under his leadership, the Konnagar-Uttarpara committee recently constructed a permanent party office, inaugurated last year on December 18, Comrade Vinod Mishra Memorial Day.

To veteran comrades, he was known as Comrade Sumit - soft-spoken yet deeply committed to the cause. His life was one of relentless struggles, quiet determination, and revolutionary optimism. His loss leaves a deep void, but his legacy will continue to inspire generations of comrades.

Red Salute, Comrade! ■



## Comrade Sanyasi Oraon

Comrade Sanyasi Oraon, one of the key organisers of the Naxalbari movement in Nadia, and a leading figure in Adivasi awakening and peasant resistance, passed away on March 21. In his final years, he suffered from age-related ailments, yet he remained steadfast in his revolutionary spirit until his last day.

He transformed his village, Miraipur, into a stronghold of the Party. From the 1970s and 1980s onwards, it served as a safe haven for the Party's top leadership and played a crucial role in the peasant movement. Comrade Sanyasi and his comrades fearlessly plunged into countless struggles, often risking their lives. His resolute and astute leadership struck fear into the hearts of the enemy, and he became a legendary figure across the region. Despite lacking formal education, he was a political mentor to us on the battlefield of class struggle.

As we bid farewell to this remarkable leader, we reaffirm our commitment to his unfinished mission—the fight for the rights of Adivasis, landless peasants, and the oppressed. Red Salute to Comrade Sanyasi Oraon! ■



## Comrade Singi Khalkho

Comrade Singi Khalkho, a senior activist of the CPI(ML) and a prominent leader of AIPWA, passed away on March 17, 2025 at RIMS, Ranchi. She had been battling illness for the past few years and was in critical condition in recent days. She was 60 years old.

Comrade Singi Khalkho had been a steadfast pillar of the party since the 1980s, dedicating her life to the struggle for justice and equality. She not only shaped her life around the party but also made her home a centre for the movement. Her unwavering commitment to the working class and women's struggles remained an inspiration for generations of activists. Despite facing immense personal hardships, she stood firm in every battle waged by the party, from its early struggles to its present-day fight for justice.

As a key leader of AIPWA, she served as a National Council Member and President of the Ranchi District Unit, playing a crucial role in mobilising women and strengthening the movement. Her deep political understanding, resilience, and quiet strength made her an invaluable leader, mentor, and comrade.

Her passing is an irreparable loss to CPI(ML) Liberation and AIPWA. The party salutes her lifelong dedication to the cause of the oppressed. Red Salute to Comrade Singi Khalkho! ■





## International Women's Day: Massive AIPWA Rally in Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu state unit of AIPWA took out an impressive rally of hundreds of women at Thanjavur on 8th March, the International Women's Day. The rally held after a long gap was led by Comrade Revathy, the state convener, flagged off by senior leader Santhana Mary and the public meeting was presided by Phelomena. The protestors condemned the continuing violence against women, demanded stern action against the culprits of sexual violence in various places and universities and release of innocent Dalits in Vengai Vayal incident.

The protestors criticised the Modi led BJP government's conspiracy to replace the constitution with the anti-women Manu Smriti. CPIML State Secretary Asaithambi appealed to the women to turn 2025 into a year of women's struggles. CPIML CC Member Comrade Balasundaram greeted the rally and called upon AIPWA to fight for fearless freedom, equal rights, equal remuneration and equal opportunity. The women's rally kindled a lot of enthusiasm and ended with a determination to carry forward struggles against the reactionary, patriarchal, male chauvinist forces that uphold Sanatan Dharma and Manu Smriti.



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