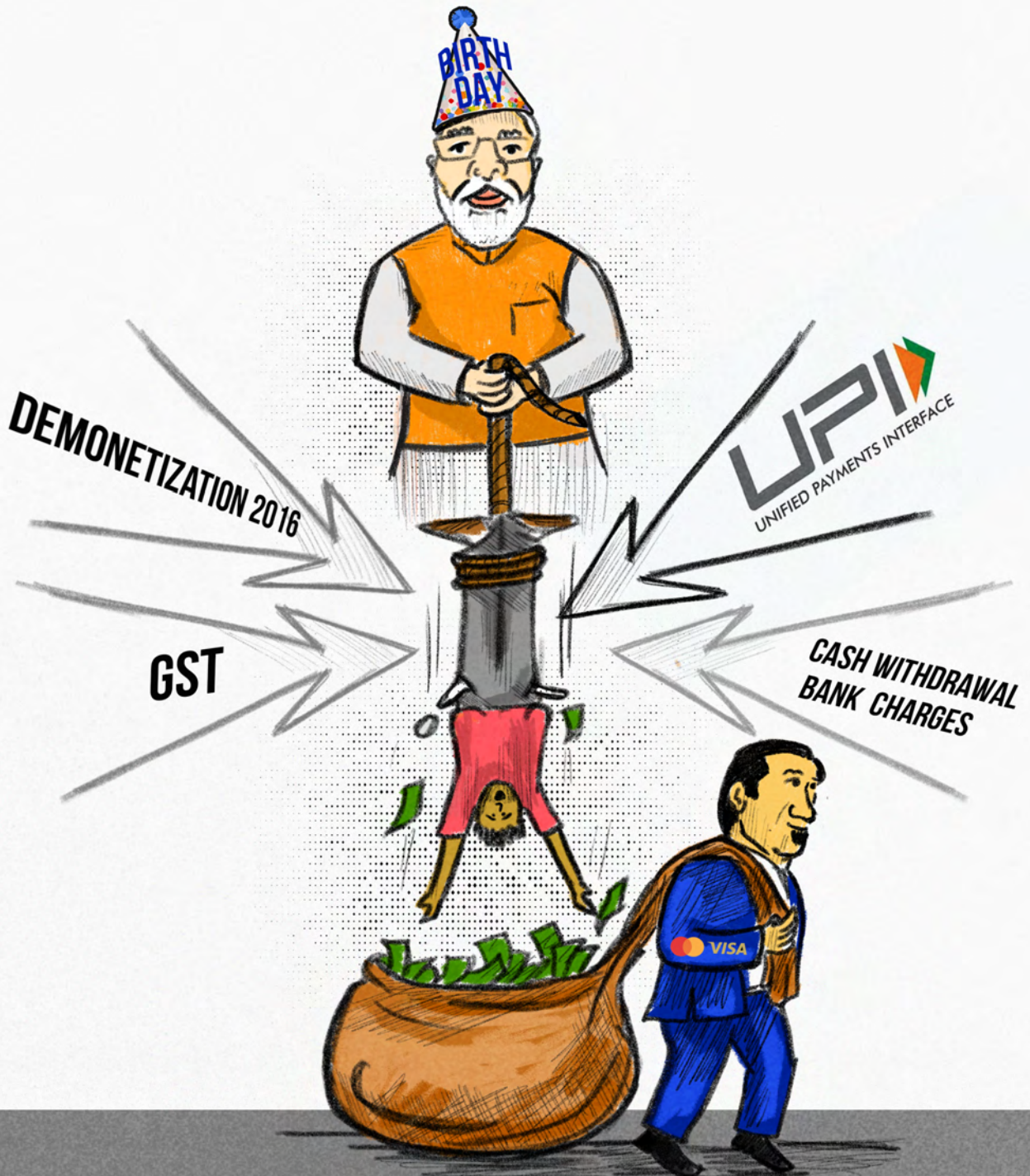


Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

OCTOBER 2026
Rs. 25



Conviction of Com. Afroz Alam & 7 Others is Grave Injustice

The CPI(ML) Liberation strongly condemns the 3-year imprisonment and fine imposed by a Pilibhit Court on party leader Afroz Alam, member of the Uttar Pradesh State Standing Committee and UP State Convenor of Insaf Manch, along with 7 other party activists in a 2011 case. These comrades had to bear brutal torture, including the use of rollers on their thighs, during the course of this case.

The case arises out of their struggle against the illegal occupation of Gram Sabha land. Instead of acting against the influential encroachers, the police implicated the protesting villagers and CPI(ML) activists and subsequently invoked the Gangsters Act against them. Though the court has granted interim bail to all eight comrades, the conviction comes against the backdrop of increasingly vindictive targeting and repression of workers' and farmers' movements in Uttar Pradesh under the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government.

Such criminalisation of dissent and democratic voices, the imposition of draconian laws, and targeting of activists fighting for people's rights must be firmly resisted.

UP Police's Surveillance Dossiers on Left Activists

The Yogi government in Uttar Pradesh has launched a crackdown against activists of Left parties and farmers' movements, with the state police directing its intelligence wing to prepare detailed surveillance dossiers on political activists across the state before August 20th, and was a direct result of the dog whistle of "dimagi naxals" on Independence Day.

The dossier would contain personal information about activists, including their Aadhaar, PAN and passport details, bank account details, family tree and lineage information, criminal history, occupation, property disputes social media accounts and contacts with administrative officials, among other such details.

These information sheets have been sent to CPI(ML) and other Left activists in Uttar Pradesh, and are being warned against non-compliance. CPI(ML) condemned the political targeting and surveillance as violative of right to privacy, and being against dissent and democracy; and demanded that this action to bring a complete surveillance state be stopped immediately.

Saharanpur Mosque Demolition: Left Parties Protest

CPI(ML) condemns the illegal bulldozing of a 70-year-old mosque in Saharanpur during early hours of September 5th. All left parties jointly organised a state-wide protest against this illegal demolition on September 15th and demanded strict compliance with the Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991.

Hundreds of madrasas, mosques and mazars in districts along the Nepal border have already been demolished or shut down in the name of regulations. In Rampur, a conspiracy was hatched to demolish Mohammad Ali Jauhar University on technical grounds. The action was temporarily halted following student resistance and a stay order from the Divisional Commissioner, but the threat of bulldozer action against the university remains. The Saharanpur mosque had become a target of the Sangh Brigade, who obtained a City Magistrate's order to carry out the demolition.

Protests were held in Ghazipur, Moradabad, Varanasi, Lucknow, Pilibhit, Behat tehsil in Saharanpur, Nagina and Bijnor. CPI(ML) demands an immediate halt to such bulldozer actions and the restoration of democratic and constitutional rights. The politics of communal hatred and the targeting of minorities must be resisted and defeated.

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UPI Tax: Modi's Birthday Blow to the Indian People



Barely three months after celebrating Narendra Modi's 'record' as India's longest serving elected Prime Minister, the Modi government, various BJP-led state governments, and the entire Sangh-BJP establishment turned Modi's 76th birthday into a grand national spectacle. Never before has India seen such crude and brazenly coerced state-sponsored celebration of megalomania and personality cult. A huge unknown sum of public money was spent and institutional norms were misused in every possible way to force people to light lamps in honour of the birthday. In IIM Jammu, students not participating in the event have been slapped fines.

Despite such coercion, the 'spectacle' however turned out to be a spectacular flop. For a beleaguered government facing popular opposition on every front for its utter failure, incompetence and apathy, there could be no spontaneous support for such enforced celebration. In fact, the festive drill of the regime seemed to be mocking India's immediate reality with vast areas battling floods and, just days earlier, students pigeonholed in an insecure paying guest accommodation in South Delhi being crushed to death in a building collapse that should actually be seen as an utter collapse of municipal governance.

Preceding the PM's birthday bash, Delhi hosted the 18th summit of BRICS countries. Over the years India's role in BRICS has become rather peripheral with the Modi era foreign policy virtually turning India into a strategic appendage of the US-Israel axis. India offered only a delayed muted condolence after the targeted assassination of Iran's supreme leader in a joint US-Israel airstrike and remains shamelessly quiet on both the war on Iran and the continuing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. There was therefore little to the New Delhi BRICS summit except yet another photo opportunity for Narendra Modi to 'showcase' his much-hyped 'personal equation' with global leaders and a carefully drafted 'consensus' declaration which talked about reforms in the UN Security Council without any explicit condemnation of the US-Israel axis of war that currently poses the greatest threat to world peace and humanity.

Meanwhile even as the Modi birthday celebrations were on, the US threatened India yet again on the issue of oil purchase from Russia,

this time with tariffs of up to 100%. The threat came in the form of a bill passed by the US House of Representatives giving President Donald Trump broad powers to impose sanctions on Russia and tariffs of up to 100% on countries buying oil and gas from Russia. In response to the tariff threat, the Modi government has formally responded by invoking India's 'independent foreign policy', but it is always action that speaks louder than words. And on that score, the government has yet again succumbed to American pressure.

Nothing could indicate this more starkly than the latest extortionist tax diktat of the Modi government. Just after the conclusion of the BRICS summit in New Delhi and ahead of the lamp-lighting festival on Modi's birthday, the government announced 0.4% tax on every commercial payment above ₹2,000 through India's most popular digital payment platform, UPI or Unified Payments Interface. The tax has of course been camouflaged as a 'discount rate' and that too for 'merchants'. The 'discount' however refers to the threshold of payments below

₹2,000 which will still not attract any fee. And 'merchant' is only a codeword for consumers for no merchant is going to bear the tax burden without transferring it to the purchaser.

It is well known that US credit card giants Mastercard and VISA had long been complaining about India's free UPI payment system. The Modi government had launched the UPI system in April 2016, six months before the disastrous demonetisation move, and it gradually became India's biggest substitute for direct cash transaction. While the common people and the MSME sector bore the brunt of the massive disruption caused by demonetisation, there has been no dent in the black money that the withdrawal of the big notes was touted to curb. Indeed, the only tangible long-term effect of demonetisation has been the rise of UPI as India's default alternative to the use of cash. For the Modi government, the UPI was the biggest 'atmanirbhar' success story of digital India. Now with the introduction of the UPI tax, widely believed to be a precondition for India's ongoing trade deal negotiations with the

US, the government itself will begin to disincentivise the use of UPI and promote the use of cash all over again.

Demonetisation was the Modi government's first application of 'shock therapy'. Delivered just before the UP Assembly elections of 2017, demonetisation had played a significant role in facilitating the BJP's return to power in the state after a gap of fifteen years. From demonetisation, GST and lockdown to the SIR and now UPI tax, the Modi era has meant serial shocks for the Indian people. But the Modi era has also been witness to some of India's most memorable and powerful protest movements - from the Shaheen Bagh sit-ins against the divisive and discriminatory citizenship amendment act, the historic farmers' protest against the laws of corporate takeover of Indian agriculture and just the other day the unprecedented Gen Z upheaval in Jantar Mantar that forced the Modi government to drop education minister Dharmendra Pradhan. Cannot India rise again with the same level of unity and resolve to stop the SIR assault and get the UPI tax rolled back? ■

CPI(ML) Liberation Condemns Saffron Fascist Attack on Ananda Bazar Patrika Office

CPI(ML) Liberation strongly condemns the fascist saffron attack on the Kolkata headquarters of Ananda Bazar Patrika, the fourth pillar of democracy. On September 1, Goons of the BJP-RSS attacked the newspaper office and smeared its walls with saffron paint, openly displaying their hooliganism and exposing their fascist character.

We demand the immediate arrest of the saffron goons responsible and a speedy investigation and exemplary punishment for those involved.

On August 19, a saffron force led by the local MLA and the former acting Vice-Chancellor illegally entered the Jadavpur University campus. They remained inside

the Administrative Building until midnight, setting it on fire and attempting a deadly attack on hostel-residing students. The following day, their attempt to enter the campus again through a procession was defeated by the united resistance of the university's left student organisations, alumni and local residents.

When Ananda Bazar Patrika described this unprecedented and disgraceful attack as "saffron hooliganism," BJP-RSS goons launched an open attack in broad daylight, determined to strike at the newspaper's constitutional right to freedom of expression and establish a regime of fear. The direct threats and incitement against the newspaper by the state's Chief Minister further provoked this attack. ■

The Election Commission of India Must Be Held Accountable for Independent India's Biggest Scam

What began as a sudden pre-poll review of the electoral roll ahead of the Bihar elections in 2025 has now grown into India's most shocking campaign of electoral exclusion. In just about a year since the Bihar exercise, the SIR campaign has deleted some 130 million names from the electoral roll that was used in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections. The outcome of 2024 clearly upset the BJP's calculations, and the regime has struck back with a template that is designed to defeat all calculations. In Bihar the Supreme Court compelled the Election Commission to accept Aadhaar as a valid identification document, but by the time the SIR expedition came to West Bengal, the EC had discovered an unpredictable bug called logical discrepancy that could challenge and invalidate any document.

The biggest design fault of SIR is its refusal to accept any error. Every statistical exercise accepts the possibility of human error and provides for corrective mechanisms. In SIR, the EC asks every wrongfully deleted voter to apply afresh for inclusion by filling up Form 6, a form meant for enrolment of first-time voters. The Supreme Court intervention created a mechanism of tribunals in West Bengal, but the process is so opaque and slow that not even 100,000 appeals (out of a total of nearly four million) have been decided till date by the nineteen tribunals set up in the state. We are told that the tribunals have given favourable verdict on more than 90 per cent of the appeals that have been considered so far. But it is also reported that some three million appeals pending before the

tribunals are actually appeals for further exclusion! In other words, the appellate route to restoration of the right to vote is almost blocked or indefinitely delayed.

The Supreme Court had hypothetically acknowledged the possibility of electoral outcomes being affected and even potentially reversed by SIR in the event of the scale of deletion being higher than the margin of victory. Were the Supreme Court to take suo moto cognizance of such irregularities and order repoll we would have seen several repolls already in Maharashtra, Bihar and West Bengal. It should also be noted that electoral outcomes are being affected not just by deletion but also by fraudulent or unfair inclusion of names. Intensive audits and post-poll physical verification of electoral rolls are revealing a significant incidence of dubious inclusion of names. With the Supreme Court effectively giving the Election Commission a free hand, with the SIR process, electoral democracy in India has thus become a permanent hostage to utter opacity and fraudulence.

Every election since 2024 has been subject to this systemic electoral manipulation. Even before the formal launch of SIR, the Election Commission made a crucial change regarding the submission of Form 7. While electoral roll is organised on the basis of polling booths, any voter in an Assembly Constituency can object to the existence or proposed inclusion of any number of voters not in his or her booth but in any booth of the same Assembly constituency. By expanding the scope of complaint from a particular booth to an entire constituency, the EC enabled the weaponisation of

Form 7 on an industrial scale. The BJP is using it to the hilt to target potential opposition voters, especially those belonging to the Muslim community and various marginalised groups. While according to established legal provisions every voter who faces an exclusion complaint or appeal is entitled to receive a notice and get an opportunity of self-defence, millions of names are being deleted without compliance with this due legal process. There has been no redressal against such violations so far from the Supreme Court.

Ahead of the crucial forthcoming round of Assembly elections in Uttar Pradesh, Punjab, Uttarakhand, Goa and Manipur, India must get to the bottom of the SIR scam. Former Chief Election Commissioner S.Y. Quraishi has made out a strong case for criminal liability of the ECI for the ongoing tampering with the electoral roll in the name of SIR. If students can force the government back on the issue of paper leak, a determined and united resistance of the people can also halt the SIR expedition. A manipulated electoral roll will lead to permanent hijacking of India's electoral system and brazen subversion of democracy. The Supreme Court must hold the EC accountable for every unfair exclusion and ensure all deleted voters a fair chance to be rehabilitated in the electoral roll and exercise their voting right during the pendency of their appeals. This concerted assault on the right to vote strikes at the very foundations of electoral democracy. The growing precarity of democratic rights demands that citizens across the country stand up and resist this systematic attempt to disenfranchise people and capture the electoral process. ■

SIR PHASE III: Anatomy of a Vanishing Electorate

▲ LEKHA ADAVI

Across sixteen states and three Union Territories, from Karnataka to Delhi, from Mizoram to Maharashtra, nearly 36.64 crore voters have spent the last four months being asked to prove they still deserve a place on the electoral roll. The Special Intensive Revision (SIR), now in its third and largest phase, has already stripped more than 6.15 crore names from draft rolls, part of a cumulative national toll that has crossed 13 crore deletions since the exercise began in June 2025 with Phase I in Bihar. Behind the Election Commission of India's (ECI) language of "purification" lies a process that is opaque in design, arbitrary in execution, and, as the evidence from state after state shows, disproportionately punishing to the poor, the migrant, the minority and the oppressed.

WHERE PHASE III STANDS TODAY

Phase III was rolled out from 14 May 2026 in a staggered manner across Delhi, Odisha, Mizoram, Sikkim, Manipur, Uttarakhand, Andhra Pradesh, Arunachal Pradesh, Haryana, Chandigarh, Telangana, Punjab, Karnataka, Meghalaya, Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Nagaland, Tripura, and Dadra and Nagar Haveli and Daman and Diu. By mid-September 2026, these 19 states and Union Territories sat at markedly different stages of the exercise.

Of a total 36,64,88,908 voters across these 16 states and 3 Union Territories, a striking 16.80%, i.e., 6,15,70,102 voters, were placed on the ASDDO list. That is one in every six voters marked for deletion.

A further 5,26,96,413 voters received notices in the second stage of claims and objections, across 14 states. In other words, another 14.37% of voters have had to prove, all over again, that they are citizens of this country with an existing right to vote! (see Table-1).

The chaos among voters trying to map themselves to a previous revision, the relentless pressure on BLOs, the lack of clarity in the SIR process, the opacity of senior EC officials and their refusal of accountability meant CEOs were forced to extend SIR timelines, especially in large states such as Andhra Pradesh, Maharashtra, Delhi, Karnataka and Jharkhand. That nearly every major Phase III state needed its deadline extended within days of the original schedule is itself an admission that the ECI's own timeline could not withstand contact with reality on the ground.

ISSUES FACED BY VOTERS

a. No one told the voters that submission of the enumeration form was only step one.

Across Karnataka and Telangana, it was widely reported that voters believed submitting their enumeration form marked the end of their obligation under SIR. Many did not know their name could still be flagged under the ASDDO (Absent, Shifted, Dead, Duplicate, Other), 'no mapping' or 'anomalies'/'logical discrepancy' categories; each carrying its own procedure of filing forms, receiving notices, attending hearings, producing documents.

The ECI's public messaging around SIR has focused almost entirely on form-distribution and collection targets, rarely explaining the obstacle race including ASDDO marking, mapping verification, hearing-based adjudication, etc., that a voter must survive even after submitting their form.

b. The Absent/Shifted category and the "mahazar" loophole.

The single largest category of exclusion in every Phase III state is 'permanently shifted', followed by 'absent/untraceable', a determination made not by the voter but, by a BLO on the strength of a 'spot mahazar', which is a field memo signed by the BLO and, supposedly, five other witnesses – usually neighbours – attesting that the voter no longer lives at the registered address. In Bengaluru alone, more than 49% of voters in some areas were placed under ASDDO this way, with 12.88 lakh of Bangalore Urban's 17.7 lakh exclusions attributed to 'permanently shifted' status. At one polling booth in Bangalore Rural's Anekal constituency, only a single voter was left standing after the ASDDO list was drawn up!

Karnataka's CEO has repeatedly cited the mahazar as adequate evidence for these mass deletions. But, the mahazar is drawn up without the voter's knowledge, in their absence, and the voter typically discovers the deletion only weeks later, when the ASDDO list is published. This procedure has so far been reported only in Karnataka; no other state appears to have adopted it.

Table 1

NO.	STATE	ELECTORAL ROLL (as on 12.05.2026)	ASDDO	DRAFT LIST	NOTICES	STAGE OF SIR
1	Manipur	20,93,076	1,58,677	19,34,399	12,21,833 No Mapping: 91,178 Anomalies: 11,30,655	Final Rolls Published with 19,60,620 voters
2	Maharashtra	9,86,64,413	2,06,88,487	7,71,65,562	1.22 crore No Mapping: 59,75,726 Anomalies: 62,48,281	Claims and Objections
3	Delhi	1,48,23,234	47,56,722	97,53,577	33 lakh No mapping: 1.4 lakh Anomalies: 1.9 lakh	Claims and Objections
4	Karnataka	5,55,74,064	1,07,96,339	4,46,35,975	~43.8 lakh Anomalies: 20,35,835 No Mapping: 23,45,500	Claims and Objections
5	Telangana	3,39,20,705	73.39 lakh	2,64,87,213	92.36 lakh Anomalies: 60.50 lakh No Mapping: 31.86 lakh	Claims and Objections
6	Andhra Pradesh	4,16,16,061	~44.9 lakh	3,71,38,182	44.28 lakh No Mapping: 8.55 lakh Anomalies figure not separately confirmed	Claims and Objections
7	Jharkhand	2,64,89,777	43.6 lakh	2,21,01,249	14,03,205 No mapping: 45,55,227 Anomalies: 3,65,684	Claims and Objections
8	Uttarakhand	79,76,466	8.32 lakh	71,33,785	20.27 lakh	Claims and Objections
9	Odisha	3,34,33,659	19.97 lakh	3,13,87,034	58 lakh	Claims and Objections
10	Haryana	2,06,63,155	33.84 lakh	1,72,72,627	44.86 lakh	Claims and Objections
11	Chandigarh	5,18,663	66,145	4,50,280	1,38,070	Claims and Objections
12	Punjab	2,14,56,297	20,66,635	1,93,94,408	37.29 lakh	Claims and Objections
13	Arunachal Pradesh	8,87,607	1,69,459	7,18,046		Claims and Objections
14	Meghalaya	23,43,252	1.8 lakh	21,69,243	No Mapping: 2,22,786	Claims and Objections
15	Mizoram	8,75,004	78,442	8,28,906		Final Rolls Published with 8,35,869 voters
16	Sikkim	4,71,094	37,737	4,33,294	1,24,519 No Mapping: 72,135 Anomalies: 52,384	Final Rolls Published with 4,18,467 voters
17	Nagaland	13,56,858				Enumeration Phase
18	Tripura	28,97,674				Enumeration Phase
19	DNH&DD	4,27,849		3,01,142		Final Rolls Published with 2,96,833 voters
	TOTAL	36,64,88,908	6,15,70,102	29,93,04,922	5,26,96,413	

Tellingly, the number of voters marked 'permanently shifted' bears little relation to the number who subsequently filed Form 6 or Form 8 after the ASDDO/draft list was published; a gap that points to deliberate voter deletion rather than genuine migration.

Interestingly, the percentage of deletions through ASDDO has only increased since Phase I and II through to Phase III, (as can be seen in Table 2 & 3 below) a telling symptom of the larger agenda:

Table 2

State	Voter Roll before SIR	ASDDO List	% of deletion
Bihar	7.89 Crore	65 lakhs	8.23%
West Bengal	7.6 crore	58.2 lakh	7.65%
Uttar Pradesh	15.44 crore	2.89 crore	18.71%

Table 3

State	Voter Roll before SIR	ASDDO List	% of deletion
Maharashtra	9,86,64,413	2,06,88,487	21.14%
Delhi	1,48,23,234	47,56,722	33%
Karnataka	5,55,74,064	1,07,96,339	19.48%
Telangana	3,39,20,705	73.39 lakh	21.70%

Table 4

List of Anomalies / Logical Discrepancies
1. Less than 15 years between parent and progeny
2. More than 50 years age gap between progeny and parent
3. Less than 40 years age gap between voter and grandparent
4. Different father's name between current electoral roll and last revision
5. Progeny age gap less than 9 months
6. Progenies six and above
7. In case of progeny mapping, if the parent is also present in the current electoral roll of SIR states and was considered invalid, then all mapped progenies linked to the last SIR record will also carry the anomaly
8. Different self-name in current and last revision
9. Different father's name in current electoral roll and last revision, in case of self

c. "No mapping" and "logical discrepancies" run higher in Phase III than in earlier phases.

SIR's central and most contested requirement is 'mapping'. This establishes a link between a 2026 elector and the 2002/2003 electoral roll, either through 'self-mapping' or 'progeny mapping' via a parent's or grandparent's entry. Former Election Commissioner Ashok Lavasa in an article pointed to the basic unfairness of this – "non-existence in the electoral roll of the reference year cannot

disqualify an elector who has been subsequently enrolled following due process." Yet the numbers show mapping failures piling up at scale through Phase III (see Table 1).

In Karnataka, chaos during enumeration stage ran so deep that the CEO issued a media byte asking voters to

submit their forms without mapping details – a decision so irresponsible that those very voters are now standing in hearing queues after receiving 'no mapping' notices. The list of 'anomalies', more commonly called 'logical discrepancies', has meanwhile grown to cover ever more categories, with no official clarity and no published guideline governing them (see Table 4).

d. Chaos at the hearings.

With deadlines compressed and then extended in the same breath, hearing centres have buckled under the load. BLOs issue notices fixing a date and time for the voter to appear before the ERO/AERO – often at short notice. Voters have been running from pillar to post trying to understand the process, assemble documents, and negotiate with authorities to clear their names.

In Karnataka, VIP voters were granted the convenience of house visits by BLOs and AEROs, with the CEO even posting on social media that such voters, given their stature, would not be issued notices at all. Meanwhile, the elderly, the disabled, the chronically ill, pregnant women and those living overseas were left to navigate the chaos on their own terms. The CEO eventually issued a directive exempting such voters from personal appearance but, only after the preferential treatment had already been laid bare.

Karnataka generated 43.81 lakh notices state-wide but, had delivered only 18.84 lakh, i.e., not even half, as of September 11. Are voters being given a genuine chance to respond before the window closes on 22.10.2026? Is the system even equipped to adjudicate these notices without leaving voters behind? In West Bengal, of more than 38 lakh appeals filed, only 82,782 have

been disposed of, restoring 75,443 names – and more than 20 lakh of those 38 lakh appeals were filed by the Election Commission itself, challenging the inclusion of voters who had already been cleared by judicial officers during adjudication.

e. An obstacle race with a finish line nobody can find.

SIR is an obstacle race for voters, who must clear one hoop after another simply to hold onto a right they already had. West Bengal's own appeal data lays bare how uneven that race is. Of the 38.2 lakh appeals filed before appellate tribunals, 22.2 lakh came from voters whose names had already been deleted, thus accounting for roughly 82% of the 27 lakh voters struck off the rolls and placed under adjudication. At least another 16.1 lakh appeals were filed contesting the "inclusion" of other voters, though the Election Commission has, tellingly, never disclosed who filed them. Of the full 38.2 lakh appeals, a mere 1.2 lakh, i.e., just 3.1% had been decided by the time this data was submitted, leaving the overwhelming majority of contested names to hang in the balance.

The confusion runs deeper still. On 6 August, The Telegraph newspaper quoted an unidentified poll official that only 7 lakh of the 38.2 lakh appeals before the tribunals were actually seeking restoration against deletion, with 31 lakh instead challenging other voters' inclusion – a claim sharply at odds with the Commission's own figures from weeks before. When the Election Commission cannot even offer a consistent account of who is appealing what, or why, adjudication stops looking like due process and starts looking like exactly what voters have experienced it as: an obstacle race, with the finish line kept deliberately out of view.

f. Famous deletions expose what ordinary deletions conceal.

When Aadhaar architect Nandan Nilekani, his wife Rohini and their children turned up on Karnataka's 'no mapping' discrepancy list, alongside Zerodha's Kamath brothers, Kannada cine actor Shivarajkumar and Bharat Ratna scientist C.N.R. Rao, it made national news precisely because of who they were. What made headlines even more instructive was what happened next: an Election Commission official confirmed a standing provision allowing "VIPs to complete the process without attending the hearing," with a BLO simply visiting their home.

Officials personally visited C.N.R. Rao's residence to "felicitate" him and resolve his discrepancy on the spot; his name was added to the final roll "noting his stature and contribution." Padma Shri awardee Harekala Hajabba received the same courtesy. No such provision exists in practice for the thousands of Dalit, Muslim and poor migrant voters in the very same city whose names sit in the same discrepancy lists. Voters must hope that a notice reaches them, then queue at hearing centres, produce documents, and again hope their names appear on the final rolls. This asymmetry is stark: it is Dalit colonies, Muslim-majority wards and migrant-worker settlements that carry the highest ASDDO and no-mapping burdens, while the state's most powerful and well-connected residents are quietly restored on the strength of their fame alone.

g. Displacement, eviction and migrant labour are being punished as electoral fraud.

Voters marked 'permanently shifted' or 'absent/untraceable' have been categorised with

striking arbitrariness. The EC has made no real effort to distinguish a voter who has genuinely relocated for good from a construction worker, domestic help or daily-wage migrant simply away for work – and this is precisely why urban areas have seen such disproportionate deletions. Gurugram's draft roll lost 29.3% of its electorate; Hyderabad's fell by 41%, from 47.36 lakh to 27.95 lakh; Bengaluru Urban constituency alone lost 17.17 lakh names. These are not just numbers; they map directly onto India's largest corridors of rural-to-urban and inter-state labour migration, where workers rent rooms, shift jobs and move between cities precisely because the economy demands this mobility of them, and where SIR's presumption of 'permanent' residence punishes exactly this.

At a press conference recently, when the Voter Adhikar Manch raised the issue of slum residents being unjustly displaced through bulldozer action, Delhi's CEO responded that such voters were free to submit Form 8 to be included in the rolls. Having already lost their right to housing, they now stand to lose their right to vote at the hands of the very same state.

h. Transgender and gender-nonconforming voters face a design that was never built for them.

Karnataka's draft electoral roll carries just 2,874 transgender electors out of more than 4.46 crore voters, a figure that has barely moved in years, despite far larger community estimates, because so many transgender people are disowned by their families, hold no continuous residence record, and cannot produce the very 'family mapping' documents SIR demands. A survey of 74 transgender and intersex individuals across Karnataka, conducted by My Vote, My Right, found that a majority of

respondents could not identify the polling booth where they had voted in 2002. The survey also found that most respondents did not possess any of the 11 documents a voter must produce upon failing to map themselves; and even where they did, the documents did not uniformly reflect their name and identified gender.

In Mumbai, a transgender voter's case reported by Citizen Matters shows how the stakes compound: unable to complete 'progeny mapping' because her parents never voted in 2002, she risks losing not just her franchise but, the voter ID that anchors her passport's gender marker. The Election Commission's SIR framework, built around a single reference roll and family-lineage verification, structurally erases people whose life histories do not fit conventional family structures. The same holds, perhaps, for those in inter-caste or interfaith marriages who have been disowned by their families.

FORM 7: THE WEAPON HIDING IN PLAIN SIGHT

Form 7, the statutory form for deleting a voter's own name or another elector's, has become SIR's most explosive and most misused instrument.

In Uttarakhand, BJP Booth Level Agents were found filing Form 7s in bulk, targeting Muslim voters across the state. A NewsLaundry investigation found that in Jhabrera, Haridwar, 35 people listed as applicants across 1,657 Form-7 objections, most of them against Muslim voters. These applicants later filed affidavits before the district administration stating that their names, EPIC numbers and signatures had been misused to file these forms. Thirty-one of the 35 applicants turned out to be BLA-2s for the BJP. A separate NewsLaundry report found that five men across five assembly constituencies in Uttarakhand had together filed close to 6,500 objections – again,

all targeting Muslim voters! The Manual on Electoral Rolls issued by the EC once capped a BLA at 10 Form-7 filings a day; in January 2026, the ECI revised this rule to remove the limit entirely, subject only to a mandatory review once an individual applicant crosses five forms. In Kichha, 99% of all deletion requests originated from a single BJP booth-level agent – Rajesh Tiwari – again, all against Muslim voters.

Maharashtra saw two distinct controversies converge. First, the INC pointed out a disproportionately high share of 'no mapping' voters in its traditional constituencies, and alleged that the BJP had colour-coded the electorate by political preference before the revision began with Form-7 applications then filed against voters identified as Congress supporters, or such voters' names pushed into the 'anomaly' category as a first step towards removal. Second, and more concretely, five BLOs were suspended after 3,400 enumeration forms – containing voters' photographs, personal details and official BLO signatures were found at a private photocopy shop in Navi Mumbai, in the custody of a BJP Yuva Morcha office-bearer. The incident triggered a physical clash between Shiv Sena (UBT) and BJP workers, an FIR under the Representation of the People Act and the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, and an admission from the district collector that the forms were "indeed original" and had been the BLOs' own responsibility.

These are not isolated local scandals. The same pattern has been witnessed in West Bengal and Bihar, where bulk, pre-printed Form-7 applications were filed en masse especially against Muslim voters.

'13% Unaccounted Deletions' Reveals SIR Social Audit

A house-to-house social audit of SIR across eight booths of Mangolpuri constituency was conducted between August and September 2026, by Jan Sarokar, MKSS, NFIW and Voter Adhikar Manch in Delhi. It was followed by a Public Hearing on September 5th, 2026, where a citizens' jury was chaired by Justice (Retd.) Madan B. Lokur.

The social audit found that only 58% of voters were retained in the draft SIR rolls, while 13% of voters were dropped entirely, with their names not even included in the ASDD removal list, which accounted for 28% of voters.

The ECI's own Manual on Electoral Rolls (2023) provides for a social-audit and states that draft rolls are to be verified publicly before finalisation of voter rolls. The same manual states that officials must make three visits to the voter's address before deleting records as ASDD. However, these procedures were not followed. Therefore, the public hearing adopted some demands, including the restoration of wrongly deleted voters, for every claim and objection to go through a collective public-verification process and for utilisation of Form-8 to restore voting rights, instead of Form-6, which is meant for fresh registrations.

PROCEDURE AS CAMOUFLAGE

What makes this exercise so difficult to contest is precisely its bureaucratic form. Every deletion is backed by a 'mahazar', a 'notice', a 'hearing' – a procedure invoked wherever injustice is pointed out, or by pointing to procedures under the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960. Officials insist, correctly, that "submitting an objection does not result in automatic deletion" and that due process of verification, notice, hearing, appeal to the District Magistrate exists on paper. But, due process that a voter never learns about is no due process at all. Karnataka's own hearing-completion data shows notices reaching barely half their intended recipients before the deadline closes. The burden-of-proof structure itself is inverted: a name excluded at the draft stage is presumed absent unless the citizen, and not the state, proves otherwise, within a compressed one-month window, often without having been informed the process was even underway.

Nor is the underlying data genuinely open to public scrutiny. Several state CEO websites that host the raw ASDDO, no-mapping and anomaly lists actively block automated access and publish figures only in scattered press notes rather than consolidated, comparable formats, making independent, state-by-state civil-society audit deliberately difficult. It is precisely this opacity that civil-society groups such as My Vote, My Right, Voter Adhikar Manch, MKSS, ADR and others have been resisting by demanding a 'social audit' of the lists. They have insisted that it is not merely that errors exist, but that only an independent, public audit, conducted booth by booth, with political parties, civil society and citizens present, can reveal the true scale and pattern

Left Parties Submit Memo Reg. Delhi SIR

The left parties have submitted a memorandum to CEO Delhi, in regard to the deletion of 48 lakh voters in SIR, which forms one third of Delhi's electorate. The memorandum stated that this overwhelmingly constitutes the poor and working population. It stated that BLOs skipped prescribed procedure, where forms were neither fully distributed nor collected, illiterate voters got no assistance and many had to pay Rs. 250 to 500 at cyber cafes to fill forms. Complaints to AEROs were futile. Deleted voters, despite holding valid documents, are fearing losing ration, pension and scholarship benefits, echoing the earlier withdrawal of free bus travel for women. Separately, 11 lakh names were deleted before SIR began, mostly via BJP-linked BLA applications, without notice. Left parties demanded assistance camps, proper notice, public deletion lists, an extended deadline and support for elderly, women and disabled voters. for utilisation of Form-8 to restore voting rights, instead of Form-6, which is meant for fresh registrations.

of wrongful exclusion that the EC's own procedure is attempting to suppress.

Moreover, the EC officers did not follow mandated procedures like ensuring a sticker outside the house of each voter – whether enumeration form was distributed or the mandatory three visits upon not finding the voter at the address. The 'mahazar' was also not uniformly implemented across booths, constituencies, districts or states. Such procedural lapses point to invoking procedures at the convenience of the EC officers, rather than uniformity that would ensure inclusion of voters.

BACKDOOR NRC

SIR is being conducted under the spectre of "illegal immigrants" looming large over the country's democracy. This revision of electoral rolls is not just a denial of right to vote, but will render a person stateless, as has been seen in the numerous cases of denial of passports to voters who have been deleted in the final rolls in Phase II, as also the threats of revoking ration cards. Recently, in Karnataka's Davanagere district, EC officers flagged 10 voters who

allegedly are Nepali citizens and that an enquiry was underway – the nature, procedure and competent authority conducting the enquiry are unknown. While the Supreme Court in its judgment dated 27.05.2026, stated that suspected foreign nationals should be referred to the competent authority under the Citizenship Act, 1955, the ECI, so far, has withheld any data on foreign nationals, if identified.

The entire SIR exercise has mutated from its stated objective of purification of voter rolls into a system casting suspicion on citizenship and initiation of proceedings which have immediate and grave social, economic, political, familial and fraternal consequences, including statelessness.

CONCLUSION

The Special Intensive Revision, as it has unfolded through Phase III, is not the neutral administrative "cleaning" exercise the Election Commission presents it as. It is a process whose default settings – a 2002 reference roll, family-lineage mapping, BLO-signed mahazars made in a voter's absence, an inverted burden of proof, and

Jharkhand: BDO Assaults Villagers during SIR Hearing, FIR Filed After Protests

During an SIR hearing at the Kusmadih panchayat in Saria block of Giridih district on September 3rd, 2026, BDO Lalit Narayan Tiwari misbehaved with women voters, the BLOs and assaulted three youths, which was captured in CCTV cameras. Villagers protested these incidents and senior officials assured stringent action against the erring officials. However, later a case was registered against the protesting villagers themselves. Another protest under the aegis of CPIML leader and former MLA of Bagodar Comrade Vinod Singh was taken to protest the injustice, that compelled the administration to register an FIR against the BDO. A complaint has also been lodged with the CEO, Jharkhand regarding the administrative accountability especially when voters are running from pillar to post to protect their right to vote. A demand to withdraw the FIR against the protesting villagers has also been raised.

a Form-7 objection mechanism with weak safeguards against bulk misuse – systematically disadvantage exactly those constituencies with the least institutional power: migrant workers whose mobility is misread as absence; Dalit and Muslim localities disproportionately represented on ‘no mapping’ and anomaly lists; transgender and queer citizens whose life histories cannot be mapped onto a nuclear-

family template; and the rural and urban poor who cannot always be home when a BLO calls or cannot travel to a hearing centre during working hours. That the state can, when it chooses, resolve a Bharat Ratna scientist’s discrepancy with a home visit and a felicitation is proof that speed, sensitivity and due care are entirely possible within this system – they are simply not being extended to everyone.

Submergence of voters into a complicated bureaucratic exercise, along with the cacophony on purging “illegal immigrants” have largely been an obstacle to build a mass movement against SIR. However, the demands of “say no to SIR” to “include every voter”, highlighting discrepancies in due process, etc., has stirred the consciousness of the politically aware constituents. It is pertinent for all voters to come together and fight against this exercise.

For the left, progressive and for democratic people, the task ahead is clear: demand independent, transparent, booth-level social audits of every ASDDO, no-mapping and anomaly list before any final roll is notified; organise mass Form-6 re-inclusion drives in migrant, Dalit, Muslim, transgender and working-class localities; build legal and political pressure to reverse the burden of proof back onto the state; and, above all, refuse to let procedural language obscure what is, at its core, a fight over who gets to remain a citizen with a vote. Universal adult franchise was won through struggle. It will have to be defended the same way. ■

The Impunity of Swatantra Bhardwaj and the Communal-Casteist Thugs of Modi Raj

▲ SUCHETA DE

"I cracked the skull of Nishu's father. Do you know which section this crime attracts? Section 307. He needed 60 stitches. The man was being taken away in an ambulance in a serious condition... But, I was not even jailed. The world should know this. I was out and about through the night," declared a cheerful and confident Swatantra Bhardwaj, a self-declared 'Kattar

Hindu' in one of the podcast interviews that surfaced in early September 2026.

On June 29th, he confessed to a crime against Sanjay Kumar, father of Nishu Azad, a teenage Dalit protester at the CJP-led movement against paper leak at Jantar Mantar. Swatantra not only boasted about the crime he committed, he also very proudly flaunted his association with

BJP leader Kapil Mishra and the Prime Minister himself. He claimed that the BJP leader and current minister at Government of Delhi, Kapil Mishra, made a phone call to the concerned police officers to stop registration of FIR against Swatantra Bhardwaj.

It is indeed noteworthy, that the crime Swatantra boasted about was an attempt to murder and a caste atrocity.

It was after a huge uproar that Swatantra was taken into police custody, briefly held and released on bail on September 15th. It is only after a manifestation of public pressure associated with the CJP leaders mass delegation to Delhi Police that an FIR was filed. Before that, Swatantra was roaming free without a police case against him, even after assaulting Sanjay Kumar for participating in a democratic protest.

Communal Casteist Goons Roam Loose Under Modi Regime

Swatantra Bhardwaj is only one of the many in the vast goon machinery that has been let loose under the BJP regime. These goons, who explicitly express loyalty to the ruling regime, are part of their organizational network, who unleash attacks on religious minorities, Dalits, women and political opposition to the ruling party.

Consider another statement by the likes of Swatantra, who has been a BJP MP for years. "Mere hath se ek hatya hui hai" (I have committed a murder), said Brijbhushan Saran Singh, former BJP MP from UP and more popularly known as the accused in sexual harassment charges by the country's top women athletes. Needless to say, no case of murder was ever filed against Brijbhushan. He was the chairperson of the Wrestling Federation of India when several women wrestlers brought out charges of sexual harassment against him. Olympic and Commonwealth games medal winning women wrestlers like Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat, Sangeeta Phogat and others, had to come down to the streets and organize a dharna in Delhi facing immense police brutality just to ensure that an FIR was filed against Brijbhushan. Amidst clear police complicity and systematic

attempt to shield the BJP leader, Brijbhushan was acquitted by a Delhi Court in August 2026.

Kapil Mishra, the BJP leader Swatantra Bhardwaj referred to in his (in)famous podcast, for having stopped legal proceedings against Swatantra, is another prominent person of interest in this regard. Kapil Mishra is presently a cabinet minister in the Govt. of Delhi. The violent Delhi Pogrom that unleashed in the localities and streets of east Delhi in February, 2020 killed more than 50 people, displaced hundreds and caused severe damage to houses, possessions of people as well as religious places. Kapil Mishra played a crucial role in triggering the violence. He gave an ultimatum at Maujpur, in the presence of DCP of North East Delhi, that if the peaceful dharnas against CAA was not cleared within a day, he and his followers will hit the street and listen to no one. Hours within such a threat, targeted attacks against Muslims began near Maujpur area, resulting in large scale killings and arson. Till now, no FIR has been registered against Kapil Mishra, who went on to communalise and polarize different parts of Delhi-NCR. And as the BJP government came to power in Delhi, this well-known riot instigator was rewarded with the post of Labour Minister.

Similarly, a vigilante by name Puneeth Kerehalli in Karnataka, heads a Hindutva outfit called Rashtra Rakshana Pade, was the main accused in the killing of a cattle trader Idrees Pasha in 2023. Recently, he was seen barging into migrant settlements and demanding documents from the residents and questioning them to be "illegal Bangladeshis". On August 26th, he and his henchmen obstructed an Eid Milad procession in Bangalore, with saffron flags and raised "Jai Shri Ram" slogans. All his crimes are done in the

presence of the police, and even when arrested, soon gets out on bail thus enjoying impunity.

In the late hours of August 19th this year, a mob armed with batons, sticks and rods entered Jadavpur University and attacked students, vandalized and set the campus on fire. West Bengal ABVP leaders were identified through CCTV footages of the incident. BJP MLA Sarbori Mukherjee was seen with a group of people at the gate of the university giving threats like 'aj sara rat tandav cholbe' (There will be carnage the entire night). At the same time, ABVP goons were launching their carnage inside the university. The BJP chose to begin its innings in West Bengal by unleashing carnage in the most credible academic institution of the state.

The reality remains that there are many such Swatantras who are let loose across the country by the RSS-BJP machinery, who know they are well protected by today's government.

This regime bolsters communal, casteist and misogynist attacks by religious fanatics, who feel emboldened to let themselves loose on voices that condemn caste oppression, communalism and class oppression. Gauri Lankesh, the well-known journalist from Karnataka, and an activist against caste and communal oppression, was assassinated in front of her residence in Bangalore. The 18 persons accused for her murder are associated with Sanatan Sanstha, a Hindu fundamentalist organization. It is noteworthy that all 18 accused of Gauri Lankesh's assassination are out on bail right now. The murder of Gauri Lankesh was preceded by murders of rationalists like Govind Pansare, Narendra Dabolkar and MM Kalburgi. Who else, but those who are driven by communal fanatic ideologies, often justified under the garb of Sanatana, are

the greatest enemies of rationalists and anti-caste activists. Who else, but the ideological gurus of today's regime like Hedgewar, Golwarkar and Savarkar have praised Manusmriti, adored Hitler and theorized Indian statehood from the prism of religious hatred? Who else carry the legacy of Nathuram Godse?

We cannot forget Komal Sharma and her associates, who launched brutal attacks on JNU students in January 2020, including the then JNUSU president Aishe Ghosh, whose skull was cracked open, are still roaming free.

It is not surprising that Sambhaji Bhide aka Bhide Guruji, founder of right-wing group Shri Shiv Pratishthan Hindustan, and the main accused in the 2018 anti-Dalit violence in Bhima Koregaon, has been let released of all charges.

An era of mob-lynching ushered in after BJP took power in 2014; series of attacks organized

through WhatsApp and rumour mongering, was unleashed on Muslims in different parts of the country, especially in BJP ruled states. Mohd. Akhlaq, Pehlu Khan, Rakbar Khan, Tabrez Ansari, Junaid and Zafar Khan are just few names in the long list of victims of anti-Muslim hate crimes. In several instances, the accused in mob lynchings were publicly felicitated by BJP leaders.

Systematic Incarceration of People's Activists and Voices

While well-known hate mongers are protected and rewarded, activists and voices that speak out for people's constitutional rights are being systematically silenced. Umar Khalid, a well-known face of the democratic movement is in jail for past six years, and has been repeatedly denied bail. Most notably, his trial has not even begun in last six years. He can be conveniently jailed without any

trial because he is an easy target under the hate-filled police system that structurally operates to deny justice.

It was the Delhi Police, under Amit Shah, that allowed the Delhi communal pogrom to take place.

Hundreds of workers are jailed in Noida since mid-April 2026 because they demanded an increase in wages and end to slavery-like situation imposed on them by the corporate nexus. The workers of the country become enemies of the government if they demand their rights. Farmers became Khalistanis when they protested against the three farm laws.

A governance of the goons, for the goons and by the goons is being operated under Modi Raj. Justice demands that the BJP regime is uprooted not only from the government, but from every single institution that they have captured today. ■

Seeking Revenge: Smarting from Jantar Mantar Defeat, the Sangh Brigade Attacks Jadavpur

▲ **DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA**

Narendra Modi rang the alarm bell on Instagram about young women protesters abusing him and his mother. It triggered a deluge of threats and abuses, both online and offline, directed against India's vocal Gen Z women. Narendra Modi then used his Independence Day Lal Qila address to call for immediate identification and isolation of Dimagi Naxals. The result was a spate of physical attacks on activists trying to inspect and audit India's schools and a midnight 'tandava' or violent

storming of Kolkata's celebrated Jadavpur University by a mob of Sanghi vandals led directly by the newly elected BJP legislator from Jadavpur. Clearly, Modi's dog whistles are not empty rhetoric, they are 'carry out' commands for his followers. It seems the Modi government is determined to reinforce its fading authority by applying greater doses of coercion and violence than before, but then the biggest message of Jantar Mantar has been young India's declaration of freedom from fear. The midnight Sanghi attack on

Jadavpur University reminded us of the attacks on Jamia Millia Islamia and Jawaharlal Nehru University in Delhi during 2019-20. The BJP is yet to make the kind of inroads among the Jadavpur University community - the faculty, students or employees - that it has succeeded in making in JNU, and hence the attack had to be orchestrated primarily from outside. But with the police giving a free hand to the attackers and the local BJP MLA leading it from the front, there could be no mistaking the lethal intent and power of the

attacking mob. There was only one collapsible gate that saved the students from the stormtroopers who had already breached the main gate. A couple of days ago a similar crowd had assembled outside the main gate with the purpose of smashing a statue of Lenin, blaming him for the partition of India which happened twenty-three years after Lenin's death.

The Sanghi thugs vandalised and trampled over the Jadavpur University emblem which had been designed by the great artist Nandalal Bose who had also illustrated the copy of the Constitution of India adopted by the Constituent Assembly. The public opinion of West Bengal has however been prompt and unequivocal in its condemnation of the Sanghi attack on Jadavpur University, a premier institution of academic excellence with a great historical legacy since the days of the freedom movement, forcing the BJP to backtrack for the time being. The state president of the party refused to take any responsibility for ABVP, calling it an unrelated organisation, and the very BJP MLA who had threatened a nightlong campaign of destruction ('tandava' was the exact word used) attributed the violence the next day to TMC mischief-makers using BJP flags!

Chief Minister Suvendu Adhikari however continues to demonise Jadavpur University as a bastion of anti-national ideas and forces vowing to establish the supremacy of 'nationalism' in the campus within six months!

How does the BJP judge a university's commitment to nationalism? The Modi government has started weaponising Vande Mataram in its little known longer version as the latest test of patriotism. It was none other than Tagore who had set novelist Bankim Chandra Chattopadhyay's original poem Vande Mataram to music and sung it in a Congress session and it was again Tagore who had suggested that only the first two stanzas of the poem were suited to be used as a national song. In fact the original version of the poem had only these two stanzas, the longer version resulting from the adaptation of the poem to the needs of the novel Ananda Math. The Modi government now seeks to weaponise the longer version as India's national song and subject the whole country to this new test of patriotism. After Rahul Gandhi's open questioning of Manusmriti for its blatant misogyny, the BJP may now well weaponise Manusmriti as a 'civilizational test' even as India is just a year away from the observance of the centenary of

the public burning of this code of slavery by Babasaheb Ambedkar.

While the Sangh brigade wages war on education, academic freedom and campus democracy, student protests against institutional apathy and injustice continue to intensify. The 'School Thik Karo' (fix the school) slogan has started growing into a nationwide campaign for urgent educational reforms. Massive protests have erupted in Delhi IIT over the mysterious death of second year student Rishikesh Kumar. The number of student suicides in IITs, IIMs and other premier institutes has risen alarmingly in recent years. More than 160 student suicides have been reported across IITs in last two decades, more than 70 in the last five years alone. And beyond the campuses of India lie 8.7 crore young Indians dubbed NEET by the government's own NITI Aayog. NEET here designates young Indians in 15-29 age group who are Not involved in any kind of Education, Employment or Training. 8.7 crore out of a young population of 37 crore means one out of every four young Indians. The government may weaponise Vande Mataram and Manusmriti, the people of India will fight on till there is universal quality education for Gen Alpha and secure and dignified employment for Gen-Z. ■

Maharashtra's Anti-Conversion Act: A Weapon to Oppress Muslims and Christians

▲ IRFAN ENGINEER

Maharashtra now has earned the distinction of being among 13 states that legislated anti-conversion laws, ironically named as "Freedom of Religion Acts". Tamil Nadu repealed its anti-conversion law

in June 2004 after the defeat of the BJP led coalition in the state. The BJP led state governments are competing with each other to pass a stricter anti-conversion law to be weaponized to oppress religious minorities, particularly

the Christians and the Muslims.

A narrative built around the anti-conversion legislations by the BJP regime and its supporters give an impression that it is meant to restrict only the Christians and the

Muslims from converting followers of other religions. That the Hindus have nothing to worry about as they can freely follow their religion, and even convert Muslims and Christians to Hinduism and call it 'ghar wapsi'. These laws in effect severely impair the rights of the Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized sections of the society from freely choosing their religion. They are forced to remain within Hinduism and suffer caste-based oppression. Forcing masses of people to accept their humiliating conditions without protest, when they seem to have made a conscious decision to opt out of the Hindu fold as a form of symbolic protest is morally and legally wrong.

The Dalits have often used conversion from Hindu religion to escape severe inhuman conditions of untouchability and caste-based oppression, with a hope to live a dignified life. Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar had declared in the year 1936 in his essay on "Annihilation of Caste" that the hierarchical caste system and the practice of "untouchability" was rooted in the Hindu religion. Therefore, inter-dining among various castes was necessary but insufficient to end the caste system. Dr. Babasaheb advocated that in order to annihilate untouchability, it was necessary to convert from Hinduism to a more egalitarian religion. He declared in his aforementioned essay that his birth as a Hindu was not in his hands. However, he would not die as a Hindu. Surely, on 14th October 1956, Dr. Babasaheb converted about 600,000 Dalits from Hinduism to Buddhism and administered 21 oaths to them. On 19th February, 1981, more than about 1,100 Dalits belonging to 300 Pallar community families in Meenakshipuram, Dist. Tirunelveli, TN, converted to Islam. They wanted to be accorded due dignity and be treated as equal

human beings. The Pallars were resisting oppression by the landed upper-caste Thevars. Arguments of use of force and the indelible 'foreign hand' in the conversion of low caste and poor people have been the impetus behind the anti-conversion enactments. In the case of the much agony over the Meenakshipuram conversion, the Home Ministry presented evidence of the extent of foreign support to these conversions. However, there were several reports including one by the Regional Director of the SC/ST Federation that this conversion was a protest against the humiliation of untouchability suffered by the community. The anti-conversion laws, including the one passed by the Maharashtra Assembly considers conversions of Dalits, Adivasis and women as a more heinous crime attracting higher punishment.

Let us read the provisions of the Maharashtra Freedom of Religion Act, 2026 (hereinafter, "Maharashtra law") which turn it into a weapon against Muslims and Christians on one hand, and prevent the oppressed castes to freely choose the religion they want to follow. The Maharashtra law largely copies the provisions of similar anti-conversion legislations in all other states as amended after 2014. Some salient features of the law are as follows:

1. The law's definitions are so broad, inclusive and vague that practically no religious conversion can escape being treated as an offence. Providing free education in an institution run by a religious body, offering a better lifestyle, or even praying for divine healing can be construed as allurement, while glorifying one religion or critiquing another's rituals could attract the law's stringent penal provisions.
2. The punishment prescribed is disproportionately severe, i.e., mandatory imprisonment of 7

years along with a fine of one lakh rupees, with no judicial discretion to award a lighter sentence. Where the person converted is a minor, of unsound mind, a woman, belongs to SC/ST, or where more than two persons are converted together, the mandatory fine rises to five lakh rupees, and repeat offences attract ten years imprisonment and a seven lakh rupee fine. Liability extends beyond the person converting to anyone who aided, abetted, or had even a remote link to the act, including institutions, which risk losing registration and government aid, and those who merely prepared related documents. This punishment exceeds that for many heinous crimes, such as culpable homicide not amounting to murder (5 to 10 years) or rioting (5 years), reflecting how the law treats conversion not as an exercise of religious choice but as a severe crime, what Hindu nationalists term *rashtrantar*, a revolt against Hindu nationalism.

3. The law inverts settled criminal jurisprudence by placing the burden of proof on the accused rather than the prosecution, unlike in serious offences such as murder and rape, where the accused is presumed innocent until proven guilty. A complaint can be filed on the flimsiest suspicion or no grounds at all, and if lodged by a blood relative, an undefined term, or a relative by marriage or adoption, the police are mandatorily bound to register it, with no discretion and no provision for preliminary enquiry; officers may also take suo motu cognizance. Since the offences are non-bailable and the burden of proof lies with the accused, these provisions make it easy to harass innocent persons with wild allegations, subjecting them to prolonged imprisonment before discharge or bail, a mechanism comparable to the blasphemy

laws in Pakistan, routinely used to settle scores against religious minorities such as Christians and Hindus.

Census figures prove that religious conversions have not threatened demography in the country in the last 78 years after independence. Yet, Mangal Prabhat Lodha – Minister in the state of Maharashtra – made baseless allegations without any data that there were over 100,000 cases of the so-called love jihad in Maharashtra. When a committee was formed to look into interreligious marriages, only 152

cases of interreligious marriages could be listed, and in which none of them had any complaint. More than 100 Sakal Hindu Samaj rallies were organised in most districts of Maharashtra levelling baseless allegations of love jihad and religious conversions by force, fraud or inducement. Such wild and baseless allegations were put to service to mobilise people and communally polarise the state for political outcomes. These rallies spouted extremely abusive and hateful language targeting minorities. No effective action was taken against hate

mongers in spite of Bombay High Court's orders. The BJP MLA from Jath constituency – Gopichand Padalkar, even announced a series of financial rewards for those who would attack Christians who enter their villages to attend Christian prayers. The Maharashtra law was enacted to satiate such elements and to render Muslims and Christians as second class citizens. The Maharashtra law, as indeed all anti-conversion laws, are un-Constitutional, however, the Supreme Court does not have time to hear the petitions challenging them. ■

Fighting Hindutva in the American Diaspora

**Mohan Bhagwat in New York City,
The RSS's US network, and organizing against it**

▲ SALAM (SOUTH ASIAN LEFT)

On August 29, the 'world's most famous arena' in New York City hosted Mohan Bhagwat, the chief of the RSS. Madison Square Garden had also hosted the German American Bund's rally in February 1939, flanked by Nazi swastikas. This time, five thousand people filled the hall for the RSS, financially propped by the wealthy Indian-American elite, to hear Bhagwat speak on "Universal Oneness." The gathering was organized by a group called AHEAD (American Hindus for Engagement and Dialogue), and it was mobilized by a dense diaspora network of Hindu temples and community centres that bused thousands to the venue. The program moved from drumming and dance to an 'interfaith' summit that seated Bhagwat among rabbis and imams. He then delivered a forty-minute homily on "unity in diversity," completing an afternoon of pluralist pageantry with the RSS chief at its centre.

Outside the hall, that cover fell apart. More than 250 people, mobilized by SALAM (South Asian Left) and coalition partners— across left-wing, Dalit, Muslim, Sikh, anti-caste, 'progressive' Hindu, and Palestinian solidarity organizations—rallied at the front doors of Madison Square Garden against the event and the man headlining it. The RSS had used the language of multiculturalism to fill the room; several US faith leaders later said they were misled into appearing alongside Bhagwat, and would not have joined had they known what the RSS is. The protesters named Hindutva for what it is: a project of expropriation, occupation, and caste domination that misdirects the anger of the exploited away from power and towards other oppressed people.

Indian Americans are the highest-earning ethnic group in the

United States. A segment of this diaspora has built up a highly resourced and organized network across industry and community life that is directly affiliated with the RSS. The United States is the financial and diplomatic command centre of the RSS's global wing, the Vishwa Vibhag. The RSS operates as an unregistered body with no membership register, letting an American hydra with tax-exempt trusts and societies carry out the work: recruitment, fundraising, political cover and lobbying, and the after-school and cultural programs that feed the rest. At the centre of its network is the Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh (HSS) which runs 267 shakhas across 33 states in the US, which is roughly one-sixth of all RSS branches outside India. Alongside it operates the American wing of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad (VHPA).

They rely on front organisations

like Ekal Vidyalaya and Sewa International, which channel money to the RSS under the guise of "tribal education" and "disaster relief." The profits of Indian-American tech professionals and physicians are routed through these channels to fund the infrastructure of pogroms. Money routed to Ekal builds single-teacher schools in central India designed to pull Adivasi youth from indigenous cultures and into a Brahminical Hindu fold, and to groom them as foot soldiers. Sewa funds the Bajrang Dal and VHP networks behind the lynchings of Muslims and Dalits, the burning of churches, and the bulldozing of working-class neighbourhoods. Diaspora dollars feed these swayamsevak.

The American Sangh is invested in building power at the imperial core. Its network funds election campaigns for both Republicans and Democrats, lobbies officials from the municipal to the national level, and builds coalitions with liberal civil-society groups. The Hindu American Foundation (HAF)'s full influence operation has spent hundreds of thousands of dollars on lobbying in Washington DC and acts as the BJP's diplomatic shield, while campus formations like Hindu Yuva groom the next generation of the diaspora elite. The network is coordinated by operatives like Saumitra Gokhale, who is listed in HSS filings as a "yoga instructor" earning \$36,000 annually, but actually functions as the Global Coordinator of the RSS's Overseas Department, travelling the world to convene the Sangh's highest bodies.

Opposition to the Sangh also has a long history and spans the spectrum from liberal advocacy, research, and national lobbying efforts to anti-fascist base-

building in neighbourhoods and cities. After Bhagwat's rally in NYC, liberal NGOs lobbied 90 elected politicians to reject RSS-linked donations. While exposing Sangh's vast network is necessary and lobbying elected politicians can be useful, these tactics are grossly insufficient on their own. We face a behemoth that is heavily resourced, remarkably organized, and deeply embedded in diaspora life while also running the government of India. Defeating it requires dismantling its institutional cover and organizing against it in workplaces, community centres, and the everyday social life of the diaspora. For instance, working-class South Asian members of DRUM Beats, among others, organized this year to help defeat New York State Assemblymember Jenifer Rajkumar, a New York state politician, in part over her Hindutva-aligned donors and advocacy.

The celebrated "Indian American success story" rests on wealth that is less a product of immigrant grit than the transfer of centuries of Brahminical land hoarding, educational monopoly, and the theft of oppressed-caste labour into global tech capital. The BAPS temple complex in Robbinsville, New Jersey, is a case in point. A national lawsuit in the US against this temple complex exposed the brutal trafficking of marginalized-caste stone workers from India. The workers were stripped of passports, confined to guarded compounds, and forced to labour over twelve hours a day for seven days a week, for \$1.20 an hour, to build the largest modern Hindu temple outside India. The same politics operates in law and in schools. When the HAF moved to defeat caste-discrimination protections (California's SB 403 and similar bills in other states) and to strip

caste from school textbooks, it weaponized the language of "Hinduphobia." This is a calculated manoeuvre to place dominant castes beyond legal reach, protecting their capacity to exploit marginalized labour and to enforce something akin to workplace apartheid in Silicon Valley.

The Palestinian organizers standing with South Asian groups outside Madison Square Garden were not performing solidarity in the abstract; they were exposing a real relationship that is at once ideological and material. Hindutva and Zionism share a lineage that began as ideological imagination and hardened into a material alliance. India is the single largest customer of Israel's arms industry, and Indian and Israeli firms increasingly co-produce those weapons on Indian soil. Scholars have documented how the Indian state has studied and imported Israel's architecture of occupation to Kashmir. The US-based Hindutva lobby built itself by studying and partnering with the pro-Israel lobby. The US-India Political Action Committee (2002) adopted the organizational model of the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) and the American Jewish Committee outright. The Republican Hindu Coalition, launched in 2015 with Steve Bannon as honorary co-chair, billed itself as "modeled after the highly successful Republican Jewish Coalition." As early as 1993, an Indian American political action group hired a serving AIPAC legislative liaison to help it navigate Washington DC.

Diasporic anti-imperialist formations are increasingly connecting the fight against Hindutva to the mobilization against Zionism. SALAM's "Tata Bye Bye" campaign, launched in New York in

October 2024 and endorsed by more than twenty organisations, demands that the Tata Group be dropped as sponsor of the New York City Marathon (TCS is the title sponsor) for propping up Israel's war machine through arms production (Tata Advanced Systems), armoured vehicles (Jaguar Land Rover), and IT and cloud services to the Israeli military (TCS). Such campaigns insist that confronting fascism means organizing against its

supply chain: the capital that props it up (Tata), the 'social service' network that underpins it (RSS), and the geopolitics that sustain it (the India-Israel alliance).

Mohan Bhagwat did not come to New York to introduce the RSS to America. He came to survey and consolidate territory it has already claimed. But outside Madison Square Garden, something else became visible: a working-

class, anti-imperialist, anti-caste South Asian diaspora that refuses to hand the "community" over. Our task is not only to tear the mask off "Universal Oneness," so that bulldozed homes, caste violence, and stolen land are not quietly buried beneath diaspora-elite platitudes. Our task in the imperial core thus also requires a politics of material confrontation and organizing neighbourhood to neighbourhood, city to city. ■

From Lying to Hiding – The Implosion of Mohan Bhagwat's International Image-Laundering Tour

▲ SOUTH ASIA SOLIDARITY GROUP

The British leg of Mohan Bhagwat's RSS centenary outreach tour, the last part of a three-country international propaganda exercise, was marked by fearfulness, secrecy and chaos as the protests by a broad alliance of diaspora groups continued to overshadow and undermine the curated messages prepared by the Sangh, reflecting that in the diaspora, once projected as a bastion of Hindutva, it is facing a growing crisis too.

Bhagwat's US trip had been planned on a grand scale, centred around his appearance at an 'interfaith' gathering at Madison Square Garden, but the fascist character of the RSS behind the blatant image-laundering exercise was thoroughly exposed by protests, political opposition, and revelations of the extent of deceit the organisers had engaged in to secure the participation of faith leaders. Even as this was happening, coalitions of diaspora groups in Canada (his next stop) and Britain were mobilising ahead of his arrival.

In Britain, 21 diaspora organisations wrote to the UK government's Envoy on Freedom of Religion

or Belief and the UK Foreign Office highlighting the RSS as an organisation modelled on European fascism which is currently at the heart of 'the largest far-right network in the world', its long and ongoing record of violence and persecution of Muslims, Christians, oppressed caste people and other minorities in India, and also the inspiration it provides to fascist violence elsewhere such as neo-Nazi Anders Brevik's 2011 massacre in Norway, the fomenting of Islamophobic violence in Leicester in 2022 by its diaspora avatar – the HSS, and the engagement of RSS-affiliated diaspora organisations in active transnational repression of critics and dissenters globally. Noting that "the threats posed in Britain by the RSS are real, active and ongoing. Mr. Bhagwat's visit will embolden RSS affiliates in the UK to promulgate hate speech, further polarise the diaspora, and create an environment of fear and intimidation for vulnerable communities across the country", the letter called for boycott, condemnation and sanctions against Bhagwat and other RSS leaders. South Asia Solidarity Group commented that

"The RSS has been responsible for Hindu supremacist violence from the assassination of Gandhi to the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 and the systematic ethnic cleansing of Muslims and other minorities today under Modi. Mohan Bhagwat must not be allowed to launder the RSS image internationally and whip up tensions among South Asians in Britain".

Your Party leader and veteran leftist MP Jeremy Corbyn released a statement condemning Bhagwat's London events, stating that "Britain should not be hosting the leader of a hate group with a grievous history of far-right violence. This is a deeply authoritarian, exclusionary and discriminatory organisation which has suppressed religious freedom and inspired horrific attacks on minorities. There should be no space for this kind of hatred in our city – and it is truly appalling that this is going ahead", while Labour MP Nadia Whittome tabled a Parliamentary question ahead of the visit.

Meanwhile, diaspora groups also wrote to the Mayor of London, Sadiq Khan, with several demands, including an assurance that

there would be no Mayoral or Greater London Assembly (GLA) engagement with the visit and no GLA land or premises made available for it.

With opposition clearly growing in Britain too, Bhagwat's appointments in the UK were kept carefully under wraps, and limited to interactions with close and trusted allies, prompting anti-fascist campaigners to point out that Bhagwat had gone from 'lying' in New York to 'hiding' in London. Not even the Indian press were told his itinerary and he did not address a press conference. The far-right pro-Israel Conservative MP Bob Blackman, who receives funding from the Sangh and is also a recipient of the Padma Shri, was among a select group of pro-Hindutva leaders and businesspeople who met Bhagwat soon after he arrived. After this, there was his main event on Sunday, 6th September, where he was supposed to meet 'the community', in other words, members of the UK Hindutva

network of organisations. The venue was kept secret and even journalists were banned from attending, and not informed of the venue in advance, eventually being told they could 'watch online from a separate room.'

With Mohan Bhagwat effectively hiding in Potters Bar on the outskirts of London, simultaneously a large demonstration against RSS fascism took place in Parliament Square in the centre of the city. South Asia Solidarity Group along with the UK Indian Muslim Council, Hindus for Human Rights, Indian Workers' Association, CasteWatch UK and several other Indian and Kashmiri diaspora groups joined hands for the protest and those participating raised powerful slogans of 'Mohan Bhagwat you can't hide: RSS means genocide' and 'Who are the fascists? BJP! RSS!', and held placards proclaiming 'Diaspora United Against Fascism in India'. A speaker from South Asia Solidarity Group spelled out the reality of Bhagwat's claim to be espousing 'Universal Oneness': 'it's the

oneness of global fascism; it's the oneness of global Islamophobia; it's the oneness of global Zionism!'. The protest culminated in a human chain of people holding letters spelling United Against RSS.

The following evening, Bhagwat's last in the UK, he attended a secret meeting for billionaire RSS donors in the Bentley Hotel, a lavish 'boutique' hotel in West London owned by the Sangar family, patrons of the Sangh affiliated Hindu Forum, and previously the location of a secret rendezvous between Sushma Swaraj and the fugitive Lalit Modi. But anti-fascist protestors tracked him down here and disrupted the meeting, with continuous slogans, including 'Mohan Bhagwat shame on you! Your hands are bloody too!', 'Inquilab Zindabad' and 'Fascists are not welcome here!'. In their familiar colonial style, the RSS then called the British police to protect them from diaspora Indians, prompting chants of 'Jab Mohan Bhagwat darta hai, police ko aage karta hai'. ■



Real Picture Beyond the GDP Boasts

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

September in India began with two big boasts, both quite stunning. The Modi government's claim of 7.8% GDP growth in the first quarter of the current fiscal year (April-June 2026) exceeded even the RBI's own prediction of 7%. No wonder Narendra Modi was quick to project it as a great achievement in the face of the global trade disruption and energy crisis caused by the US-Israel war on Iran. Even as economists were debating the veracity and implications of this claim, a podcast went viral on social media wherein a 21-year-old Hindutva 'influencer' from Patna, one Swatantra Bharadwaj, claimed to have got away without any punishment after breaking the skull of a man in Jantar Mantar, all thanks to a phone call from Delhi BJP Minister Kapil Mishra and his own close links with other NDA bigwigs from Chirag Paswan to Narendra Modi.

Both claims naturally merit close attention. The GDP claim is however harmless, since by now we have got so used to empty claims and false promises that India is no longer shocked by such boasts. It is the Bharadwaj boast and its unfolding aftermath that should alarm everyone about the growing police-criminal-terrorist nexus in the Modi-Shah era. In one of his interviews before being arrested, Bharadwaj thanks Modi for giving the order to 'identify and isolate Dimagi Naxals' and warns us that in the coming days we will be flooded with videos showing Dimagi Naxals being treated in a variety of ways - from being whipped by belts to being shot by kattas or country-made guns. And the next day, which happened

to be "teachers' day", we heard Narendra Modi return to the Dimagi Naxal label in his Shri Ram College of Commerce Centenary address. Modi called it a homeopathic dose to identify 'Dimagi Naxals', keeping conspicuously silent about the non-homeopathic violent brigade empowered by his government.

The dominant economic discourse in India has always been obsessed with GDP, never really paying attention to per capita GDP which is a much more meaningful indicator for a country mired in not just economic backwardness but also massive social and economic inequality. When we talk about GDP, India ranks sixth in nominal terms (behind the US, China, Germany, Japan and UK) and third in purchasing power parity terms (behind the US and China), but if we shift our attention to per capita GDP, India ranks 144-149 out of 200 countries in nominal terms and 121-125 in terms of purchasing power parity comparison. The 7.8% growth figure refers to a quarterly quick estimate which in all likelihood will come down when we look at the final annual estimate. But what has made the 7.8% claim particularly dubious are the two props supporting it - the assumed impact of inflation and the GDP of the last comparable quarter (April-June 2025).

Former Finance and Economic Affairs Secretary, Subhash Chandra Garg, has rightly pointed out that the 2025 first quarter GDP has been revised drastically downward to ₹80 trillion from the initial estimate of ₹86 trillion. Without this drastic downward revision of the 2025 first quarter figures, the rate of growth of nominal GDP would have been

only around 2.6% and almost nil in real terms. It is therefore this drastic downward revision of 2025 figures that needs to be explained first before we can trust the current growth figure of 7.8%. Likewise, the deflator used to derive real GDP estimates is also much lower than the actual inflationary impact on prices and incomes. From SC Garg to Raghuram Rajan, Kaushik Basu to Arvind Subramanian, eminent economists who are questioning the data and the lack of transparency in the entire exercise, are all people with high level experience of running India's economic administration in recent years, and only a government that does not care for credibility or accountability can arrogantly dismiss such questions.

To return to the boast of Swatantra Bharadwaj, it would be foolish to ignore it as an isolated example of a young man's loudmouth self-promotion fantasy. His close connections with the Delhi Police, with the BJP/NDA top brass, and his 'guest presence' in events like the PM's swearing in or Independence Day address are all documented as are his detailed accounts of violent assaults on Jantar Mantar protesters. By all accounts he was part and parcel of a violent Hindutva brigade busy meting out various doses of 'punishment' to people identified as internal enemies by the Modi government and the Sangh brigade, 'Dimagi Naxals' constituting the most recently identified targets. The mention of a civil defence force for the purpose of internal security by PM Modi in his latest Independence Day address from the ramparts of Lal Qila, widespread reports of men in plain clothes beating up

protesters coming in from Delhi and several other cities, and shocking revelations of alleged participation of prisoners in Jantar Mantar violence raise serious concerns that Swatantra Bharadwaj and his ilk comprise a veritable private army akin to the Brown Shirts of Mussolini's Italy or Black Shirts of Hitler's Germany or the Sangh brigade's very own Bajrang Dal.

A desperate regime asking the people to celebrate spectacular economic growth in the face of soaring prices, declining income and vanishing jobs, and squads of private armies attacking and threatening people protesting against the government on India's streets mark two sides of the same coin. The more the government fails and loses support on the

ground, the more the failed regime will resort to lies and violence, both state and private or in the PPP mode. The RSS supremo delivering liberal-sounding speeches for the international audience will no longer be able to camouflage this fascist aggression. We the people of India must stay firm and united in the course of democratic protests to foil this fascist design. ■

More on the Dimagi Naxal Paranoia and Witch-hunt

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

For years the Modi government, the Sangh brigade IT Cell and the Godi Media seemed to have perfected the art of creating fancy labels to influence and instigate the public against perceived internal enemies. From 'tukde tukde gang' to 'urban naxal', from anti-national to andolanjeevi, they just had to coin new terms and the media and public opinion seemed to be lapping them up. But the times have changed. The CJI used the word cockroach for the unemployed youth, later 'clarifying' that he only had lawyers with fake degrees in mind, only to invite the CJP backlash. A word used as a disparaging abuse for India's youth triggered India's first GenZ carnival of resistance. A similar backlash is now happening with the Dimagi Naxal coinage.

Instead of intimidating India's angry agitating youth, the Dimagi Naxal label evoked a response very similar to the 'cockroach' term. In no time we saw the digital appearance of a Dimagi Naxal Party with the motto "Think, Research, Resist" with citizens proudly flaunting the Dimagi Naxal label as a badge of

honour. Even opposition leaders including senior Congress leader and UPA era Home Minister P Chidambaram, whose Operation Greenhunt campaign was the forerunner of Amit Shah's Operation Kagar, declared themselves Dimagi Naxals. It was the BJP which found itself cornered on the issue and forced to offer explanations. The more they tried to explain, the more they entangled themselves in their own web of fallacies.

The first attempt came from Kiren Rijiju who tried to explain the Dimagi Naxal label in the specific context of Article 370 and the alleged threat to disrupt life in the North East by blocking the Chicken Neck, the gateway to the North Eastern region of India. Then we had the RSS mouthpiece Organiser tracing the term back to the National Advisory Council of the UPA period. None of the NAC members had any association with the Naxalbari peasant uprising of 1967 or the revolutionary communist current that broadly became known as Naxalism, let alone the more militaristic trend that identified itself as Maoism. The problem evidently was not

with the members of NAC and their track records, but with the rights-based welfare legislations advocated by the NAC and enacted during the UPA era.

Ram Madhav, the well-known ideological ambassador and political manager of the Sangh-BJP establishment, tells us there is no need to define the Dimagi Naxal. He turns it into a global phenomenon and manages to connect it ideologically and historically to a whole lot of well-known leaders of the international communist movement - from Mao and Che Guevara to Charu Mazumdar, Kanu Sanyal and Kanai Chatterjee in India and Pushp Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' in Nepal. 'A certain amount of ambiguity ... is harmless and enjoyable', argues Ram Madhav. And this 'certain amount of ambiguity' becomes a recipe for sweeping witch hunt in the hands of the BJP IT Cell where an entire range of dissenters, from journalist Rajdeep Sardesai to teachers' movement leader Nandita Narain can be painted with the Dimagi Naxal brush.

There would have been little discussion over a term if it were really discussed in what Ram

Madhav calls 'harmless and enjoyable' manner. In his Lal Qila address, Modi had talked about identifying and isolating Dimagi Naxals. The digital publicity campaign of various BJP handles has already unleashed a veritable blitzkrieg of memes and reels indicating a violent war to eliminate 'Dimagi Naxals'. And this violence is not confined to the digital mode, we have already seen its physical glimpses in the attack on Jadavpur University or assaults on the 'fix the school' campaign in West Bengal and Rajasthan. For a rattled government headed by a 'wounded strongman' ruler, Dimagi Naxal may well be a paranoid invocation of an anti-intelligentsia campaign of vigilantism, vandalism and violence.

The Jantar Mantar protests and the ongoing awakening and assertion of GenZ and Gen Alpha have signalled a major challenge to the Modi government and the Sangh brigade. Not limited to any region or specific social groups, this phenomenon has a broad geographical spread and social appeal across classes, cultures and generations. A rattled Modi regime is contemplating a multi pronged response, ranging from digital outreach campaigns and "one day, one university" ministerial assignments to Dimagi Naxal witch hunt. This is precisely when Mohan Bhagwat is trying his best to put up a liberal and inclusive facade in the course of his foreign trip to camouflage the hate-filled fascist agenda and aggression of the Sangh brigade in India. However, the people of India, the Indian diaspora and India watchers across the world have now enough experience of judging the RSS and the BJP not by their sugar-coated words but by the harsh experiences of facing the Sangh brigade in power for more than a decade at the Centre and for decades on end in states like Gujarat. ■

A Corporate Attack on States' Mineral Wealth

▲ MANOJ BHAKT & ADITYA KRISHNA

The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Act, 2026 ("2026 Amendment") seeks to alter the position which emerged from the Supreme Court's 2024 judgment in Mineral Area Development Authority v. Steel Authority of India Ltd. (MADA). In MADA, a nine-judge Bench recognised the power of States to tax mineral rights and, separately, mineral-bearing land. The judgment was delivered on 25 July 2024. The 2026 Amendment now seeks to place limits upon both.

The legal history of the dispute spans over three decades. In *India Cement v. State of TN* (1989), a seven-judge Bench treated royalty on minerals as a tax and consequently held the impugned State cess on royalty to be beyond legislative competence. However, in *State of West Bengal v. Kesoram Industries Ltd.* (2004), a five-judge Bench took the contrary view and treated the relevant observation in *India Cement* as a typographical error. The conflict was ultimately referred to a nine-judge Bench in MADA. By an 8:1 majority, the Court held that royalty is not a tax, but rather a consideration paid for the enjoyment of mineral rights. In other words, royalty is a contractual obligation owed by the mining lessee to the owner of the mineral and is intrinsically linked to the relationship governing extraction, whereas a tax is a compulsory payment exacted by the State in the exercise of its sovereign authority. Payment of royalty under the MMDR Act therefore did not exhaust the State's taxing power under Entry 50 of the State List. The Court further held that the MMDR Act, as it then stood, did not impose any limitation on that power. Furthermore, MADA recognised that Entry 50 itself permits Parliament, by a law relating to mineral development, to impose limitations upon the power of States to tax mineral rights. Therefore, Parliament could enact a law limiting taxation under Entry 50.

On the other hand, the position of mineral-bearing land was different. The Court held that land does not cease to be land merely because it contains minerals. It remains land within Entry 49 of the State List, and hence taxable thereunder. A tax on such land does not become a tax on mineral rights merely because mineral quantity, value or royalty is used as its measure. The subject of a tax and the measure by which it is calculated are not the same thing. This mattered because Entry 49, unlike Entry 50, is not expressly made subject to limitations imposed by Parliament.

For States such as Jharkhand, Odisha and Chhattisgarh, this was not an abstract question of constitutional entries. Large quantities of mineral wealth are extracted from these States, while mining regions continue to bear the costs of displacement, ecological destruction, pressure on public infrastructure and poor access to basic services. MADA itself referred to the "resource curse" and connected the fiscal powers of mineral-producing States with their ability to fund welfare, health, education and infrastructure. The burden falls most heavily on already deprived Adivasi communities in States such as Jharkhand,

Odisha, Assam and Telangana, for whom the environmental damage caused by extraction is likely to be permanent.

The stakes have been raised further by the growing importance of rare earth minerals, whose production and control have become significant with recent technological advancements. China accounts for about 70% of global production of rare earths and the United States for 13–14%, while India contributes only about 0.74 per cent. Large corporations are now looking towards States believed to be rich in rare earth minerals, such as Odisha, Jharkhand, West Bengal and Kerala. The timing is also significant. The ongoing wars and an energy crisis intensified by the USA–Israel war on Iran, have increased the demand for coal and iron, and have presented private capital with an opportunity for greater capture of natural resources, with fewer regulatory safeguards.

That contradiction has also been central to CPI(ML)'s position in Jharkhand and beyond. The party has repeatedly pointed to the coexistence of vast mineral wealth with poverty, unemployment, displacement and migration, and has argued that the benefits of extraction must first reach the people of the State through local employment, rehabilitation, environmental protection and regional development, instead of being transferred to large corporate groups.

Following MADA, the Jharkhand Assembly passed the Jharkhand Mineral-Bearing Land Cess Bill, prescribing different rates of cess for different minerals on the basis of the tonnage of the mineral extracted. CPI(ML) MLA Vinod Kumar Singh opposed this method and sought a levy linked to the market value of the

mineral instead. The objection was straightforward: tonnage measures quantity, not the value being extracted at any given point of time. Further, different grades of the same mineral may carry different prices at the same time. Therefore, a levy tied to the market value would move with the economic value of the mineral, rather than requiring the State to repeatedly revise a fixed per-tonne rate as prices change.

The 2026 Amendment now restricts the field within which States can make such choices. The newly inserted Section 9D prohibits States from imposing taxes, cesses or other levies on “mineral rights” or “mineral-bearing lands”, whether calculated with reference to quantity, value, royalty or otherwise, except subject to conditions or restrictions prescribed by the Central Government. The amendment also extends the declaration of Union control under the MMDR Act to mineral-bearing lands. It operates retrospectively against covered levies which had not already been paid or recovered before its commencement. The effect is that dues which had not been paid before the amendment came into force stand written off. The pending dues to Odisha are estimated at nearly Rs 1–1.2 lakh crore, and those to Jharkhand at Rs 1.36 lakh crore.

The amendment is also seen as loosening the regulatory framework applicable to mining lessees. A company which begins mining a mineral not originally specified in its lease would no longer need a fresh lease deed, a change defended as encouraging diversity in mining. The concern is that this secures the lessee's control over the land for the duration of the lease even where a change in the

course of mining may harm the environment and the availability of water, with consequences that may be irreversible and on which scientific literature is still scarce. It is doubtful whether the District Mineral Foundation would be able to contain any further environmental degradation caused by such a change.

In relation to mineral rights, the Union can rely upon the power contained in Entry 50 itself. The more difficult question concerns mineral-bearing land. MADA had specifically held that such land remains within Entry 49, and that the use of mineral quantity or value to calculate the levy does not convert the levy into a tax on mineral rights. Section 9D now seeks to subject such levies as well to conditions fixed by the Centre. Jharkhand, Kerala, Telangana and Karnataka have decided to challenge the amendment in court, and the treatment of mineral-bearing land is likely to receive close scrutiny in those proceedings.

The Union government has defended the amendment by arguing that multiple State levies increase costs, create uncertainty and discourage investment in the mining sector. It has also emphasised that nearly 90 per cent of mining revenues accrue to the States. But the dispute is not confined to the percentage of revenue which ultimately reaches a State treasury. Royalty, auction premium, DMF contributions and other payments made under a framework determined substantially by Parliament and the Union government are different from a State exercising a taxing power which the Constitution gives to it directly. MADA had recognised room for States to make fiscal choices of their own. Section 9D now seeks to place those choices under

Central conditions.

The manner in which the amendment was enacted has also drawn objection. CPI(ML) has condemned that it was passed without any debate or discussion in Parliament, in the name of transparency and ease of doing business, and that it allows private companies to extract ore at a fixed rate. The party has described this as reflecting a disregard for the federal structure and a colonial attitude towards the States, and as handing over existing and future mineral resources to corporate interests. The fiscal consequences for the States are considerable. Besides the dues written off, Odisha is expected to lose between Rs 12,000 crore and Rs 20,000 crore in revenue every year and Jharkhand about Rs 14,000 crore, with similar losses for Chhattisgarh, Assam, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh. A substantial fall in revenue would affect welfare schemes, education, health and basic infrastructure, which is precisely the connection that MADA drew between the fiscal powers of mineral-producing States and their ability to fund these services.

CPI(ML) in Jharkhand has opposed the amendment both as an attack upon the federal rights of mineral-producing States and as part of a wider process through which control over mineral resources is increasingly concentrated in the hands of the Centre and large corporations. Its opposition has linked the amendment to the older struggle over jal, jangal, zameen, and to the contradiction between the enormous value extracted from Jharkhand and the conditions in which large sections of its people continue to live.

The party has also linked this

question to the struggle of farmers in Gondalpur and Barkagaon against the Adani coal project, opposing the transfer of village and forest land for mining and the resulting threat of displacement. For the party, control over mineral resources therefore also concerns resistance to corporate acquisition of land and demands for local employment, rehabilitation and environmental protection.

CPI(ML) places these struggles within a longer history of the fight over land. Ownership of land in India has never rested wholly with the Union, and it was through people's struggles for rights over land, before, during and after colonial rule, that the country was freed from the feudal-zamindari monopoly over land. States' control over land has, in the party's view, to be understood from this perspective. It argues that changes in the laws on land ownership and acquisition over the past thirteen years have weakened community ownership and community rights over forests and other lands. In Jharkhand, community lands are being converted into government ownership through the Land Bank policy and through amendments to the Land Acquisition Act, 2013; the Panchayats (Extension to Scheduled Areas) Act, 1996 (PESA) is being systematically weakened; and the requirement of social and environmental impact assessment is regularly violated in acquiring land for mining and industrial projects. The 2026 Amendment, it is argued, will hasten this process of transferring land to corporations at the expense of the fundamental rights of local communities.

The question of State power over mineral revenue is therefore connected to a wider question of control over natural resources.

Who decides the terms on which minerals are extracted is not separate from who bears the costs of extraction, who obtains employment, how affected communities are rehabilitated and where the resulting wealth is spent.

This opposition has also taken to the streets. On 9 September 2026, CPI(ML) held a large rally in Dhanbad, Jharkhand's coal capital, demanding that the 2026 Amendment be scrapped. Politburo member Anand Mahto said that the transportation of minerals from Jharkhand would not be allowed if the Union government did not withdraw the amendment. The Jharkhand Mukti Morcha, the Biju Janata Dal and the Congress have also opposed it. The party has called for a countrywide movement against what it describes as the corporate appropriation of public resources, together with State-level struggles uniting local communities, to protect the constitutional rights of the States and to restore the rights of communities over land.

MADA had recognised the constitutional space available to mineral-producing States to answer those questions for themselves. The 2026 Amendment seeks to reduce that space by bringing both mineral rights and mineral-bearing lands within a fiscal framework subject to conditions prescribed by the Centre. For Jharkhand, the issue is not merely whether some share of mining revenue will continue to reach the State. It is whether the State will retain the constitutional power to decide the terms on which wealth extracted from its land contributes to its own finances and to the lives of the people who bear the consequences of that extraction. ■

Is Construction of Political Association a Security Concern?

▲ ADITYA KRISHNA

Akriti Chaudhary, a theatre artist and a DU alumna, was taken into custody on April 11, in connection with the April 2026 workers' protests in Noida. The agitation arose from demands concerning wages and working conditions in the industrial belt. Violence took place on April 13, leading to widespread arrests and a large number of criminal cases.

The Allahabad High Court's judgment in Akriti Chaudhary v. Union of India is a welcome change, because apart from quashing an order of preventive detention under the National Security Act (NSA), it records in direct terms how the machinery of preventive detention was used against a student activist involved in a workers' agitation. It goes one step further, and fixes responsibility upon the erring officers who exercised that power – most notably the DM Medha Roopam.

The administration's case against Akriti went considerably beyond alleging her participation in an unlawful assembly. She was projected as one of those responsible for organising and instigating the unrest, and inter alia, the NSA was subsequently invoked against her.

A Division Bench of Justices Atul Sreedharan and Achal Sachdev found that the material relied upon by the administration did not support this case. Despite the allegation that Akriti had incited workers to violence, the State was unable to show any message, video or other material in which she called upon anyone to indulge in arson, stone-pelting or destruction of property. The grounds of detention

were described by the Court as repetitive, speculative and opinion-based.

The chronology of Akriti's arrest made the State's case even more questionable. The Court found her version, that she had been taken into custody on the evening of April 11, probable on the basis of the State's own material. The principal incidents of violence occurred subsequently. There were serious irregularities in the paperwork relied upon to justify her custody as well. A notice purportedly issued before her arrest contained the number of a General Diary entry generated in connection with the arrest itself. The High Court held that the notice had, therefore, been prepared after the event and characterised the procedure as a "sham".

The policing of workers' movements has repeatedly relied upon the construction of an external instigator: the union activist, student, journalist, or political leader who is said to have introduced politics into an otherwise passive workforce. Such a formulation denies workers their own political agency. Material grievances concerning wages and conditions disappear from view and the agitation itself is reconstructed as the product of conspiracy.

The Allahabad High Court rejected this approach. Its judgment recognises that the possibility of a breach of peace cannot become a general prohibition upon people assembling and agitating for their rights. Where violence takes place, responsibility for that violence must be established against the persons alleged to have committed or instigated it. The mere fact of

participation in, or support for, a protest cannot substitute for such evidence.

The issue becomes sharper in the context of preventive detention. The NSA does not operate upon proof of an offence already committed. It permits incarceration on the basis of the executive's satisfaction that detention is necessary to prevent future conduct. The District Magistrate is, therefore, required to independently assess whether the material before her warrants recourse to an exceptional power rather than the ordinary criminal law.

The High Court found that Gautam Buddh Nagar District Magistrate Medha Roopam had failed to perform that function. Where the police dossier contained allegations unsupported by credible material, the Court held, the District Magistrate was required to examine the record "threadbare". Instead, the Bench concluded that the exercise of power appeared intended to make an example of Akriti and thereby deter others from entering public spaces in support of workers.

The judgment's observations concerning the bureaucracy are unusually severe. It reminded civil servants that their constitutional allegiance is not to the political executive and warned against the emergence of "despotic" administration. That warning is particularly relevant in cases of preventive detention, where executive power itself determines whether a citizen remains incarcerated.

The Court also refused to allow the consequences of illegality

to be borne entirely by the public exchequer. It awarded Akriti compensation of ₹5 lakh and directed that the amount be recovered from the salary of the District Magistrate and the police officers responsible for preparing the detention material, down to the concerned Station House Officer. It further directed that the Court's displeasure be entered in their service records.

The direction in Akriti Chaudhary clearly recognised that the deprivation of liberty was the result of decisions taken by identifiable public officials. Having found those decisions to be arbitrary and unsupported by material, the Court sought to attach consequences to the officials exercising the power. The wider circumstances of the Noida crackdown make such accountability more necessary. In the parallel NSA proceedings against journalist Satyam Verma, material forming part of the police dossier was found to reproduce text from a right-wing social-media account. The material sought to place labour organising, Marxist political activity, anti-CAA mobilisation, Palestine solidarity and other political protests

within a common narrative of anti-State activity.

The significance lies in how the ideological vocabulary of the Hindutva right can enter official police material and thereafter, acquire the status of information placed before an authority exercising preventive-detention powers. Political affiliation and participation in democratic movements then begin to function not as constitutionally protected activity, but as circumstances from which dangerousness is inferred.

The same District Magistrate approved the NSA proceedings against both Akriti and Satyam Verma. The Uttar Pradesh government decided to challenge the High Court's order, and Roopam separately approached the Supreme Court against the adverse findings and the direction for recovery of compensation from her salary. The attempt to impose personal consequences for an unlawful detention has itself become a matter under challenge.

Akriti and the other activists continue to face criminal cases arising from the Noida protests.

The question before the High Court was not whether political activists could be prosecuted for specific criminal acts. Its holding is narrower and more important: allegations of participation in political protest cannot be converted into grounds for preventive detention without material demonstrating the necessity of such detention.

The case points to a wider civil-liberties problem. The repression of protest increasingly operates not only through prosecution for specific acts, but through the construction of political association itself as a security concern. Workers organise; activists extend solidarity; journalists document the mobilisation; ideological affiliations are collected into dossiers; and exceptional laws are then invoked on the basis of the resulting narrative. Akriti Chaudhary places a constitutional limit upon that process. It affirms the right to protest, insists upon evidence before political activity is converted into conspiracy, and, importantly, refuses to treat unlawful exercises of coercive power as acts for which no individual officer needs to answer. ■

ISRO and the Privatisation of India's Space Sector

▲ SUVENDU GHOSH

A disquiet has recently surfaced within the Indian Space Research Organisation (ISRO) over its future. In September 2026, nine employee associations sought clarification from the ISRO leadership over the proposed transfer of manufacturing and operational functions to private entities, warning that ISRO could be progressively reduced to an R&D role. The concern followed remarks by IN-SPACe chairperson Pawan Goenka that ISRO would eventually cease manufacturing

launch vehicles and operating the spaceport now under development.

This controversy was preceded by another disturbing development. In July 2026, reports that more than 100 scientists and technical personnel, including senior scientists associated with major missions such as Chandrayaan and Gaganyaan, had left ISRO made headlines. Around 80 departures were reported from the U R Rao Satellite Centre in Bengaluru and about 20 from the Vikram Sarabhai Space Centre

in Thiruvananthapuram. The Department of Space (DoS) had to issue an office memorandum acknowledging a spate of requests for voluntary retirement and resignation from Group-A Scientific/Technical personnel. Centres were told that cases involving important projects should be forwarded to the DoS for a decision. The exodus is particularly significant because ISRO was already operating with 2,613 vacancies against 18,142 sanctioned posts, including 1,636

scientific and technical vacancies.

These two developments should not be viewed as separate phenomena. Both are rooted in the restructuring of India's space sector that began with the Union government's 2020 reforms, which opened space activities to substantially greater participation by non-government entities, and was subsequently institutionalised through the Indian Space Policy 2023. The policy establishes a new division of functions among ISRO, the Indian National Space Promotion and Authorisation Centre (IN-SPACe), NewSpace India Limited (NSIL) and non-government entities (NGEs). The present controversy over ISRO's changing institutional role and the contemporaneous crisis of personnel retention therefore need to be understood as interconnected manifestations of this wider restructuring.

A closer reading of the Indian Space Policy 2023 makes the direction of this restructuring explicit. NGEs, Indian as well as foreign, are permitted to undertake end-to-end space activities, including operating satellites, disseminating remote-sensing data, manufacturing and operating launch vehicles, and establishing and operating launch infrastructure. IN-SPACe, meanwhile, is constituted not merely as an authorising agency but as an active facilitator of this private ecosystem. It is empowered to authorise privately owned or leased launch facilities, promote industrial clusters, enable NGEs to access facilities and remote-sensing data created through public expenditure, and identify ISRO-developed technologies to private entities. Correspondingly, ISRO is directed to focus primarily on advanced research and development and to "transition out" of manufacturing operational space systems, with mature systems transferred to industry for commercial exploitation.

Furthermore, NSIL, a PSU under the DoS, is explicitly assigned the task of commercialising space technologies and platforms created through public expenditure. Thus, the whole design is nothing but to drain the public money and other resources to develop the private space sector. The public expenditure continues to sustain the costly processes of scientific research, technological development and infrastructure creation, while the resulting infrastructure, mature technologies, facilities and operational activities are made available for the profit making by the private sector. The issue, therefore, is not simply the entry of private firms into the space sector, but the fact that the expensive scientific and technological capacities created through public money are being converted into opportunities for private valorisation.

The opening of the space sector to the private players has created, virtually for the first time in India, a substantial private market for the highly specialised scientific and technical labour historically concentrated within ISRO. By mid-2026, the country had around 400 space start-ups, and scientists who had left ISRO pointed to substantially better remuneration and professional opportunities in the private sector as important reasons for doing so. Thus, private capital is not gaining access merely to technologies and infrastructure developed through public expenditure. It is also able to recruit the skilled labour-power produced and accumulated within the public institution over decades. At the same time, the policy-induced uncertainty over ISRO's future role can only aggravate the problem of retention as manufacturing and operational functions progressively migrate outside the organisation. The relationship between commercialisation and the resignations is, therefore, not accidental.

What is happening in ISRO, however, is not an isolated phenomenon. Rather it forms a part of the much larger framework called liberalisation-privatisation-globalisation (LPG) reforms of 1991. Gradual disinvestment, commercialization, and opening of public sectors to private investments have since become more explicit day-by-day. The Union government's New Public Sector Enterprise Policy, 2021 declares its intention to "minimise the presence of Government" in public-sector enterprises and retain only a "bare minimum" public-sector presence even in strategic sectors. Significantly, these strategic sectors include both "Atomic Energy, Space and Defence" and "Transport and Telecommunication".

The experience of BSNL is particularly illustrative. Its 2019 restructuring package combined asset monetisation with a large Voluntary Retirement Scheme (VRS) aimed at reducing employee costs, under which tens of thousands of workers left the company. Interesting to note that, in each case (BSNL then and ISRO now), VRS acts precisely as an instrument through which labour flexibility is introduced into public enterprises in the wider context of privatisation. The whole process has now reached even the nuclear sector: the SHANTI Act, 2025 permits private entities to build, own and operate nuclear power plants and undertake specified activities that had historically remained overwhelmingly within the state sector. The developments in ISRO must therefore be located within a broader critique of the LPG trajectory itself. Seen from this perspective, the Indian Space Policy 2023 is not an isolated administrative reform, but another step in a long-term policy direction that progressively opens publicly created assets, infrastructure, knowledge and productive capacities to private

accumulation. The struggle against such restructuring of ISRO, therefore, cannot be separated from the larger opposition to the LPG framework itself.

The Indian Space Policy 2023 was approved by the Union Cabinet in April 2023 and not enacted as

legislation by Parliament. In fact, the DoS is now preparing a Space Activities Bill that would give statutory form to the authorisation and regulatory architecture of the sector, including the powers of the proposed IN-SPACe Board and the regulation of NGEs. In this situation, every politically

conscious group and individuals, who are on the people's side, must oppose the Space Policy itself. When the Space Activities Bill will eventually be placed before Parliament, the present policy direction should therefore, confront a much wider democratic test. ■

5th National Conf. of All India Kisan Mahasabha

At the 5th National Conference held in Jalandhar on 20-21 September, the All India Kisan Mahasabha (AIKM) called upon farmers and farmers' organisations to unite to secure land, agriculture and freedom. The fragmented strength and the idea of staying away from politics are not sufficient to counter the organised attacks of the state power on agriculture, farmers and civil liberties.

On 20 September, more than 10,000 farmers and workers from every corner of Punjab participated in a Farmers–Workers Unity Rally held at the Shaheed Bhagat Singh Auditorium at Desh Bhagat Yadgar, Jalandhar. The response of the farmers and workers overwhelmingly exceeded the expectations of the organisers, and the rally had to be live streamed in the adjoining park and in an adjoining hall. Despite these arrangements, thousands of people stood outside the Desh Bhagat Yadgar Complex, on the road, to lend their voice to the movement.

The conference also marked the merging of two prominent farmers organisations of Punjab that were key constituents of the farmer struggle at the Delhi borders in 2021, Jamhoori Kisan Sabha Punjab (JKSP) and Punjab Kisan Union (PKU), into the All India Kisan Mahasabha.

The inaugural flag was unfurled by Ruldu Singh Mansa, National President of the Kisan Mahasabha. The central slogan of the rally was: "Save Fields, Agriculture and Freedom - End Corporate Loot."

The rally was addressed by leaders of the CPI(ML) Liberation, AIKM, the JKSP, the All India Agricultural and Rural Labour Association, the Mazdoor Mukti Morcha Punjab; and the Dihati Majdoor Sabha.

Addressing the rally, Comrade Raja Ram Singh, Member of Parliament and outgoing General Secretary of the AIKM, said that through attempts to establish control over Venezuela and attacks on Gaza and Iran, American imperialism was seeking to gain control over natural resources and fertile land across the world. He said that although the Modi government has bowed before the Trump administration

through a free-trade agreement, farmers and workers in the country would firmly oppose such efforts.

While farmers were fighting for C2+50% Minimum Support Price (MSP) for their crops, they were also fighting against the large-scale acquisition of fertile agricultural land, which posed a threat to the country's food security. By opposing air and water pollution, and the environmental destruction caused by corporate industries, farmers were not fighting merely for themselves but for the interests of the wider population.

Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary of CPI(ML) Liberation, highlighted the historical importance of the JKP and PKU becoming part of the AIKM, a development which would give new momentum to the farmers' struggle and popular movements against the "corporate-backed communal-fascist Modi government".

Comrade Mangat Ram Pasla, General Secretary of the Revolutionary Marxist Party of India, said that the waves of unity among farmers' organisations that had begun in Punjab would spread across the country and inspire farmers' and workers' organisations to unite. He said that a broad unity of the country's revolutionary, democratic and patriotic forces was essential to counter the anti-worker, anti-farmer, anti-Dalit, anti-minority, anti-democratic and anti-federal ideology of the RSS-BJP and to remove them from power.

He said that the need of the hour was for the people of Punjab to decisively reject BJP's false claims and elect genuine representatives committed to uncompromising struggles for farmers, workers and youth in the forthcoming elections.

The two-day conference was attended by 870 delegates and observers coming from 20 states. The report tabled by the outgoing General Secretary was passed unanimously after thorough discussions, incorporating various suggestions from the house. The Conference elected 148 members council which further elected 59 members Executive committee in its brief meeting. Dr. Satnam Singh Ajnala was elected All India President and Purushotam Sharma was elected General Secretary.

The conference passed various resolutions including a call to support the victims of the recent floods in Nepal; a demand that India not sign the anti-farmer one-sided India-US trade agreement; minimum support price to all farmers

and on all crops at C2+50% formula; loan waiver for farmers and agricultural workers; stopping of forcible acquisitions of agricultural land; withdrawal of the pro-corporate Seed Bill draft, draft Electricity Bill, and the draft Agricultural Trade and Marketing Policy.

The unity demonstrated by farmers' organisations in Jalandhar is fresh impetus to the farmers' movement across the country.

Let AIKM March Ahead with Greater Unity and Stronger Resolve

(abridged version of Comrade Dipankar's address at the 5th Conference of AIKM in Jalandhar)

The highlight of the 5th conference of All India Kisan Mahasabha is the coming together of Punjab Kisan Union, already affiliated to AIKM, and two leading farmer organisations of Punjab and Haryana, Jamhoori Kisan Sabha and Pagdi Sambhal Jatta, under the AIKM banner. This unification of three organisations that played a key role in the historic Delhi border farmers' movement into one single organisation, adopting a new red and green flag, is a very encouraging development at a time when the farmers' movement faces an intensified imperialist threat in addition to the relentless danger of corporate takeover of agriculture.

All these three organisations have emerged from the communist tradition and hence this unification also has great significance for the communist movement and the communist agenda of agrarian revolution as the answer to India's deepening agrarian crisis. It will therefore be in order at this moment to reiterate certain fundamentals about the communist orientation in the peasant movement.

Peasants by nature are patient and know how to wait for the crops to grow. Given the all pervasive infrastructural crisis of agriculture, farmers are familiar with frequent crop failures and have the tenacity and resilience to cope with a chronic crisis. Communists do not mistake this patience and tenacity of the peasants as signs of conservatism, communists do not see farmers as a citadel of social reaction, on the contrary they recognise the peasantry as a fighting force, engaged in a protracted struggle not just for survival but for social transformation. This is why the communist movement which began as a revolutionary movement of the working class soon discovered the great revolutionary potential of the peasantry and came up with the historic vision of worker-peasant alliance as the crucial foundation of socialism.

Communists also do not consider farmers as a homogeneous community. While all sections of society directly involved in agriculture share several common traits and vulnerabilities, communists never lose sight

of the fact that the farming community or agricultural population actually comprises several classes from the rich farmers down to the landless poor labourers and marginal peasants cultivating leased-in land.

From the days of Swami Sahajanand Saraswati, in whose name you have christened Jalandhar for the purpose of this conference, communists have focused, first of all, on the landless poor labourers and marginal farmers, who have historically constituted the most oppressed segments of our society. It was this focus which gave rise to the Naxalbari peasant uprising as the successor of the great Tebhaga movement of Bengal, Punnappra-Vayalar of Kerala, Telangana of erstwhile Andhra Pradesh or Muzhara Lehar of Punjab.

Forty years ago we had produced an authoritative account of the revolutionary peasant movement in Bihar called the Report from the Flaming Fields of Bihar. In the introduction to that book, Comrade Vinod Mishra had referred to the contention between the East and West winds in India's agrarian struggles. He adapted the East versus West wind metaphor used by Mao during the Great Debate in the international communist movement where the East wind referred to the advance of socialism and the West wind symbolised western capitalism. In the Indian context Comrade VM used the West Wind metaphor for the emerging movement of rich farmers started by Sharad Joshi from Maharashtra against the backdrop of the crisis of green revolution while the East Wind referred to the communist-led revolutionary peasant movement of Bihar.

The two winds met in the historic Delhi border movement and forced the government to repeal the pro-corporate farm laws. The underlying contention between the two winds clearly did not preclude their cooperation in the larger anti-corporate anti-imperialist context. The east-west contention is not a geographically delineated contention between the eastern and western regions of India, it permeates the whole of India. Within Maharashtra and Punjab, the communist-led farmers' movement has stood firm in championing the interests of the small and marginal farmers, and in Bihar the AIKM started its journey on May 10, 2010, on the 153rd anniversary of great 1857 War of Independence, even as feudal forces threatened a bloodbath following the submission of the Land Reform Commission report.

The journey of the revolutionary peasant movement enters a new phase today with greater strength and renewed resolve to defend India's agricultural population against corporate and imperialist aggression, to strengthen India's ongoing battle for freedom from fascism and to advance the protracted quest for an egalitarian social order. The CPI(ML) wishes every success to the 5th Conference of the All India Kisan Mahasabha in this historic long march. ■

Gen-Z Rising

Bihar's Youth Raise Their Voice Against Exam Irregularities, Repression & Assault on Education

Students and youth from across Bihar gathered at Shri Krishna Memorial Hall, Patna, on September 6, 2026, for the 'GenZ Rising' programme organised by AISA and RYA, to discuss education, employment, examination irregularities, police repression, democracy and the right to protest.

In the first session, 'Julm Phir Julm Hai, Badhta Hai To Mit Jata Hai', Vishal, who faced police brutality, Arif, a victim of police firing in Siwan, and Saba, a Patna University student leader jailed during the movement, spoke of repression and resistance, while Naveen, father of a NEET crisis victim in Jehanabad, questioned the education and examination systems. The second session, 'Awaaz-e-Aandolan', heard Professor Chintu Kumari, who demanded repeal of the new university legislation, Paliganj CPIML MLA Sandeep Saurav, RYA National President Ajit Kushwaha, JPSC movement leader Habiba and Irfan of the Jantar Mantar movement.

Comrade Saurav asked what kind of system leaves Class 6 children struggling with Class 2 books, citing budget cuts and the imprisonment of those who raise questions. Habiba said poor students prepare for years only to face paper leaks. Comrade Ajit said the government answers student-youth demands with lathis. Satirist and Professor Dr Medusa urged circulating truthful, progressive content online.

AISA All India President Neha said the repression unleashed by the Samrat government exposed its face, citing the assault on the father of students such as Aditya, the persecution of AISA leader Saba Afreen, including over her religious identity, and the portrayal of students as criminals in newspapers. The government, she said, would be held accountable for this repression, for violence and rape against women and girls, for questions on voting rights and citizenship arising from the SIR process, and for irregularities in the 70th BPSC and Daroga recruitment examinations. She urged students and young people to unite around rights, education, employment, democracy and social justice, and build a broader movement against repression, injustice and corruption.

CPIML General Secretary Comrade Dipankar called for the 'School Theek Karo, Shiksha Sudharo' campaign to become a broad people's movement, saying Bihar's school education has suffered its greatest destruction in two decades. He said renaming and upgradation of schools have brought no improvement, and "Upgraded

schools have been turned into oppressed schools in Bihar". He said Prime Minister Narendra Modi's Instagram comments on the movement reflected a cultural shock to the government and provoked hooliganism and violence. "Young people's questions cannot be answered through repression," he said and welcomed the Supreme Court's position on withdrawal of cases, and added that the cases against the farmers' movement and Shaheen Bagh must also be withdrawn.

Gen-Z Mahajutan Yatra in Uttar Pradesh

The Gen-Z Mahajutan Yatra in Uttar Pradesh began on September 9 in Allahabad and passed through BHU (Varanasi), Azamgarh, Gorakhpur, Faizabad, and Lucknow, before concluding in Rae Bareilly. In the yatra were AISA President Comrade Neha, AISA Uttar Pradesh President Comrade Manish Kumar, and JNUSU Joint Secretary Comrade Danish who joined the yatra in Allahabad.

It raised several important issues, including repression of student activists, teacher recruitment, withdrawal of new rules for TGT-PGT recruitment, issues pertaining to ASHA workers, panchayat assistants, aapda mitras, and others were raised, along with demands for dignified wages for these workers. The yatra also raised demands for restoration of student union elections, halt to fee hikes, end to fund cuts and number of seats, and to RSS interference in campuses.

The yatra also raised demands for the restoration of student unions in universities and colleges, a halt to fee hikes, an end to the increasing interference of the RSS in campuses, and a stop to cuts in educational funding and seats.

The yatra was successful despite police intimidation, repression, and harassment of AISA activists.

Life Threats to President Neha: AISA Lodges Complaint

AISA has condemned the series of threatening and abusive messages sent to AISA All India President Neha during the ongoing GenZ Rising campaign in Uttar Pradesh. A voice note explicitly stated that "her death is certain." This is an attempt to suppress political dissent through fear and violence, and on that note, AISA has written to the Director General of Police, Uttar Pradesh, demanding that an FIR be registered, that those sending the threats be identified, and to ensure Neha's physical safety during the course of the campaign.

AISA called upon all democratic-minded citizens, student organizations, and civil society to speak out against this culture of threat and intimidation targeting young activists. ■

Maharashtra's Adivasi 'Ulgulan' A Struggle For Education, Dignity, Rights, And Accountability

▲ **KARAN, DYANESHWARI, JEEVAN**

A growing movement among Adivasi students in Maharashtra's Vidarbha, Marathwada, and Pune districts has brought issues of education, employment, hostel conditions, forest rights, and administrative accountability to the forefront. What began as opposition to changes in rules governing government adivasi hostels has grown into a broader movement involving students, unemployed youth, and adivasi organizations across Nagpur, Amravati, Yavatmal, Gadchiroli, and other parts of Maharashtra. At the heart of this struggle lies a simple question: if adivasi students still have to protest for basic educational facilities, safe housing, employment, and dignity, what does the Constitution's promise of equality actually mean?

The immediate trigger was the Maharashtra government's order dated August 5, 2026, which tightened hostel admission rules and attempted to restrict hostel students from participating in hunger strikes, marches, and other forms of protest. More than 1,000 Adivasi students gathered outside the office of the Additional Tribal Development Commissioner in Nagpur, and the protest spread rapidly to other districts, forcing the government to withdraw the restrictions on students' right to protest.

The movement, however, did not stop there. A 29-point charter of demands submitted by the Adivasi Vidyarthi Sangh of Vidarbha-Nagpur, along with its Gondia and Bhandara branches, called for improved hostel facilities, recruitment, reservation, healthcare, safety, education, and accountable governance of adivasi institutions, including filling vacant reserved posts, upgrading hostel infrastructure, providing emergency medical facilities, enhancing security, and fixing accountability for deaths in ashram schools. One of the most politically significant issues concerns 490 government-run adivasi hostels. The Tribal Development Department has signed a three-year memorandum of understanding with the Laxmanrao Mankar Smruti Sanstha to run educational and personality-development programs for hostel students, while the government retains ownership and administrative control. Adivasi organizations and protesting students oppose this arrangement, viewing it as a step toward privatization, and have demanded its cancellation. The government insists

no privatization has occurred, leaving two opposing views: one sees it as a supplementary educational partnership, the other as gradual privatization.

The movement has also drawn attention to everyday conditions in hostels and ashram schools. Demands include scrapping the DBT-based food system in favour of functioning kitchens, safe and dignified accommodation, new buildings in place of unsafe ones, and relocation of ashram schools from remote areas lacking basic facilities. Students have demanded ambulances or round-the-clock medical transport, anti-venom medication, emergency medical supplies, and reimbursement of treatment costs, demands that have gained urgency following deaths and medical emergencies at ashram schools. Protesters want high-level investigations into these deaths, institutional accountability for food, health, and safety, along with CCTV cameras, security staff, fire safety, and properly equipped first-aid centres.

Among the most troubling issues raised are complaints of urine pregnancy tests being administered to girls. In 2025, allegations emerged that such tests were conducted at an adivasi girls' hostel in Wakad, Pune, under the guise of routine health check-ups, without consent from students or parents, a matter taken up by the Maharashtra State Commission for Women. Similar complaints have surfaced in Gadchiroli and other districts, though unconfirmed. The Tribal Development Department has clarified that no government resolution mandates such testing.

Economic security remains central to the movement. Students have demanded that 12,500 vacant posts reserved for Scheduled Tribes be filled, that the reservation roster be protected, and that a time-bound plan clear the backlog, alongside action against fraudulent caste certificate appointments and reinstatement of eligible PESA-appointed employees. In districts like Gadchiroli, adivasi life remains deeply tied to forests and community land, with conflicts over mining, forest land, and gram sabha rights central to regional politics. As of January 2026, 14,726 claims under the Forest Rights Act, comprising 6,158 claims and 8,568 appeals, remained pending in Maharashtra, according to central government data released in April 2026.

This new generation of educated adivasi youth is not simply seeking scholarships or welfare schemes but raising fundamental questions about institutional control, accountability, and dignity. Following protests and hunger strikes in Manjari, Nagpur, Nashik, and other districts, the Maharashtra government announced on August 29, after a 17 day hunger strike, that it had accepted the students' demands, giving written assurances on filling vacant ST posts, hostel food arrangements, medical facilities, and reservation issues. Implementation, however, remains the real test.

AISA All India President Comrade Neha visited the protest site in Nagpur, extending AISA's support and condemning practices like pregnancy tests that violate adivasi girls' dignity, calling for a sustained struggle against them.

This Ulgulan, which began in Vidarbha's ashram schools, has spread across Maharashtra and neighbouring states, now encompassing wider demands for jal, jungle, jameen and adherence to PESA provisions. It is not merely an outburst of anger but the voice of a new generation refusing to remain passive beneficiaries, demanding instead their rights as equal citizens. ■

Migrant Workers' Rights Convention Held In Delhi

▲ **AKASH**

The Migrant Workers' Rights Forum (Pravasi Shramik Adhikar Manch) was launched through an inaugural convention on 13 September, 2026 in Delhi, with an agenda to strengthen migrant workers unity, to ensure their right to work, dignity and security, and develop a militant movement among them. With an estimate 150 million, i.e., 30% of the 500 million strong total workforce in India, migrant workers form a significant part of the industrial working class, yet they are among the most exploited section of workers.

While there has been a steady erosion of workers' rights over 12 years under the Modi regime, the real exploitative conditions of migrant workers came to the fore during covid where the unplanned lockdown instigated a mass exodus, destroying lives and livelihoods. Despite this, the migrant workers were used as a vote bank by the BJP in the recent state and national elections.

'Noida just stopped pretending, the cracks were always there,' read a placard during the workers' protest in May-June 2026, where migrant workers were protesting the 12-hour workday for Rs. 10-12,000 wages a month. Living in a perpetual cycle of poverty and precarity, the protesting workers exposed the socio-economic vulnerabilities of migrant workers. The combination of socio-economic vulnerabilities and attacks on citizenship is creating a large pool of people who seemingly belong nowhere in a social and political sense. The irony is that while they face a crisis of belonging, their labour remains absolutely central to the economy.

It is in this context that the forum has been launched to ensure registration and protection at workplace, accountability of contractors and principal employers, safe housing and healthcare, timely return of workers, dignified repatriation of deceased workers, minimum

wages, 8-hour workday, social security, union rights, end to discrimination and xenophobia.

Inaugurating the convention, CPIML General Secretary Comrade Dipankar said that organising migrant workers in the present period is pertinent and called for a comprehensive and united effort at both the home and destination states. He said that the Manch should not limit its struggle to wages alone, and must also address political and social consciousness and questions of education, health, gender and other rights.

AIARLA General Secretary Comrade Dharendra Jha echoed Com. Dipankar's words and said, "In Bihar, we have discussed migration for a long time and have intervened whenever serious incidents have arisen, but this Forum gives us the base to launch this initiative". CPIML PBM and former MLA from Jharkhand, Comrade Vinod Singh emphasised on the need to provide assistance to Indian workers who have migrated to other countries as well.

Former MLA from Bihar Comrade Mahboob Alam welcomed the initiative and said that gradual disappearance of rural employment has forced people to migrate. Migrant workers are treated as outsiders or infiltrators, therefore the question of citizenship has to be integral to our work. Comrade Mahendra Parida from Odisha mentioned that migration affects about fifteen districts in Odisha and noted, "AICCTU interventions in these areas have brought workers' families into closer contact with us. What we now need is a platform that can help tie all this work together". Shweta Raj from Delhi said the condition of migrant workers in mega cities like Delhi raises questions about urban planning; that even though workers build cities, their homes are bulldozed. Transport, housing and ration must be treated as basic working-class infrastructure in every large city, she said.

Bihar's MLA Comrade Sandeep Saurav said that migrant workers are also being organised politically through their regional identity through this forum. We need a targeted political and organisational response based on the home state and work states of the workers. Migrant workers should remain connected to the struggles and political developments in their home states, and social media can be used for regular political communication.

AICCTU Vice President Comrade Clifton D'Rozario said there is a need to systematically understand migrant workers' issues and we need to develop evidence to support our advocacy efforts.

AICCTU All India President V Shankar concluded the convention calling for building a sustainable and militant movement of migrant workers for their rights, dignity, security and benefits. He also shared views of other speakers to orient the migrant workers movement as a politico-social and trade union movement. ■

Resistance, Decolonisation and Liberation Against a Rising Far Right

▲ N SAI BALAJI

The Ecosocialism 2026 Conference, titled "Resistance, Decolonisation, Liberation", was hosted by the Socialist Alliance in Brisbane. It carried forward conversations, built solidarities and charted a way ahead for social movements and anti-fascist resistance across the world.

The opening session, "Resisting Trump's New Colonialism", featured Helen Yaffe, Professor of Latin American Political Economy at the University of Glasgow, who spoke on resistance in the United States. Sabrina Fernandes, a Brazilian political economist and ecosocialist activist, described how the movement that defeated the far-right president Bolsonaro is weakening, with the threat of his son being elected. Speaking on behalf of the CPI (ML), N Sai Balaji highlighted the failure of the Modi government's foreign policy, that abdicated the country's interests to Trump's America. He also highlighted the hope offered by Gen Z students' movement in India.

Discussions ranged from the raging climate crisis in South Asia to building a new left in the Asia-Pacific region and global solidarity with Palestine. Prominent participants included Ayesha Ahmad, a socialist-feminist activist, researcher and labour-rights practitioner associated with the Haqooq-e-Khalq Party (HKP), Pakistan, and a founding member of the Women Democratic Front; Khyl Ramos, a deputy project manager and community-

development practitioner with the Transform Asia Gender and Labour Institute and Partido Lakas ng Masa (PLM), Philippines; Rocky, a death penalty abolition activist and organiser; and Yong Feng, a political-ecology and environmental-justice researcher associated with the Singapore Climate Rally. Activists from Australia, Canada, Cuba, Iran, Malaysia, South Africa, the United States, Western Sahara and Scotland also represented social movements in their countries.

The devastation in Nepal, where glacial lake outburst floods displaced thousands and killed many, raised questions about the survival of smaller nations. Climate-vulnerable populations bear the brunt of the impact, which fuelled the debate on loss and damage.

The Rise of the Far Right in Australia

The far right in Australia is challenging the country's multicultural, immigration-based development model, even as climate extremes grow more severe. This mirrors a global trend, in which the far right exploits the internal crises of capitalism to target immigrants and push xenophobic policies. Aligned with corporate interests and profit-driven motives, it denies climate change and seeks to perpetuate the exploitative policies of neoliberal economics.

Australia's growth has been built substantially by immigrants from East and Southeast Asia,

Europe and, over the last three to four decades, South Asia, particularly India. They continue to drive the service, technology and healthcare sectors. Yet Australia's far right, led by One Nation leader Pauline Hanson, has escalated attacks on immigrants, particularly Indians, falsely accusing them of stealing jobs.

The conference examined these challenges in depth. Young left activists from Singapore, Malaysia and Brazil, First Nations peoples and members of Australia's socialist movement gathered to outline a path forward. Delegates also studied the trajectory of US imperialism, especially in India, the Philippines and other Third World countries.

Housing was a prominent concern. Rising rents are directly linked to debt-based financing of housing, and the far right is channelling public anger over this crisis towards immigrants. The Socialist Alliance and other socialist parties are building campaigns for public housing. The government, however, is pandering to the far right by tinkering with immigration policies, which creates uncertainty for foreign students, skilled workers and others on work visas.

Students who have taken heavy loans to study in Australia, and who work to pay off the debt, are struggling under this constant attack. The Indian government, rather than intervening to protect their interests, appears to be lacking in its approach. ■

OBITUARY

Comrade Gurnam Singh Daud

CPI(ML) expresses deep shock at the death of Comrade Gurnam Singh Daud (69) in a road accident near Amritsar on September 1. Comrade Gurnam Daud was actively campaigning for the forthcoming All India Kisan Mahasabha Conference and Rally to be held in Jalandhar on September 20-21.

A member of the Central Committee of the Revolutionary Marxist Party of India (RMPI), Comrade Gurnam Daud was responsible for the party's rural labour front.

CPI(ML) paid revolutionary tribute to Comrade Gurnam Daud and expressed heartfelt condolences to his family, friends and all comrades of RMPI.



Comrade Shashi Prasad Jha

Comrade Shashi Prasad Jha passed away today at the age of 93 on September 4, 2026. From his student days, he was deeply influenced by Marxism and became a part-time worker of the undivided CPI. Later, he joined the CPI(M) in 1978 and worked in the Employees' Federation in the then Santhal Pargana district.

He subsequently became a member of CPI(ML) and helped strengthening the Federation's Gope faction and the party. A serious and dedicated reader, he remained deeply engaged in political discussion and debate throughout his life and remained firmly committed to the party and its revolutionary politics.

CPI(ML) pays revolutionary homage to Comrade Shashi Prasad Jha. His long life of commitment to Marxism, political education, teaching and the communist movement will remain an inspiration to comrades and future generations.



Comrade Kakara Ratna Kumari

The untimely passing away of Comrade Kakara Ratna Kumari, former State Committee member of CPI(ML) in Andhra Pradesh, on 21 September 2026 is an irreparable loss to the Party and the people's movements.

She hailed from Kodavali village in Gollaprolu Mandal of East Godavari, now Kakinada district, and presently was a member of the State Committee of the All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA).

As a National Council member of the All India Agricultural and Rural Labour Association (AIARLA), she extensively led struggles of Adivasi women, land struggles, house-site struggles, struggles for pensions, and the anti-liquor movement in Kakinada and Anakapalli districts.

She played an active role in the struggle against the Kakinada Special Economic Zones (SEZs) in 2006. During the course of the struggle, she was jailed in 2007 in false cases filed by the police. She again faced imprisonment during a house-site struggle in Kothapalli Mandal.

Comrade Kakara Ratna Kumari contested the 2009 elections as the Party candidate from the Kakinada Town Assembly constituency.

CPI(ML) pays revolutionary homage to Comrade Kakara Ratna Kumari and expresses its deepest condolences and heartfelt sympathy to her family members.

Red Salute to Comrade Kakara Ratna Kumari!



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