

Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

MAY 2025

Rs. 25



Statement on the Pahalgam Terrorist Attack

The CPI(ML) Liberation strongly condemns the terrorist attack on April 22 in Baisaran, Pahalgam, where unarmed tourists were targeted, resulting in several deaths and injuries. We extend our deepest condolences to the victims and stand in solidarity with their families.

The Modi government's claim of normalisation of the situation in J & K and chest-thumping on national security stands exposed, as such attacks continue unabated in the region. There has been a disturbing rise in attacks on civilians—residents, migrant workers, and now tourists.

The BJP's repeated proclamations of "complete normalcy" in Jammu & Kashmir ring hollow in the face of such continuing violence. While the ruling party has

declared on every platform that all issues in the region have been resolved, the reality tells a different story. Jammu & Kashmir remains heavily militarized, and terror attacks persist under the watch of this regime. The Modi government's strategy—suppressing democratic voices while indulging in aggressive posturing—has failed to deliver either peace or security.

We must reject any attempt to use this tragic incident as a pretext to stoke jingoistic and communal narratives. At this critical moment, it is essential for people across the country to stand united and push back the divisive forces seeking to exploit such tragedies for political gain.

— Issued by the Central Committee of
CPI(ML) Liberation on April 22, 2025 ■

BJP-Backed Upper-Caste Feudal Criminals Massacre Youth from Backward Communities in Bhojpur

On the night of 20 April, BJP-backed upper-caste feudal elements launched a premeditated attack on youths from the Yadav and Kushwaha communities in Laharpa village of Agiaon block, Bhojpur district. Three young people were killed and four others were seriously injured when the assailants—emboldened by the BJP-JDU regime's tacit support for communal violence—descended on the village with deadly intent.

Soon after the atrocity, Comrade Shiv Prakash Ranjan (MLA, Agiaon), Comrade Raju Yadav (CPIML Central Committee member), former Agiaon MLA Comrade Manoj Manzil, Comrade Bhola Yadav and several other local leaders visited the site to assess the situation and stand in solidarity with the victims' families. They joined the protests, demanding justice for the bereaved.

CPIML Member of Parliament for Ara, Comrade Sudama Prasad, met the grieving families at the Mahuli cremation ground. He condemned the attack, noting that under Bihar's current BJP-JDU regime, feudal-communal elements have grown bolder. Assaults on Dalits, backward communities and women, he warned, continue unabated—and the perpetrators no longer fear the police or the law. The Laharpa massacre, he added, was clearly premeditated.

In response to the killings, CPIML organised a district-wide protest on 22 April under its banner. Demonstrators called for the immediate arrest of all perpetrators and for justice to be served.

CPIML Bihar State Secretary Comrade Kunal observed that, under the so-called "double-engine government," violence against marginalised groups has steadily increased. This heinous act, he said, confirms that the BJP-JDU alliance remains anti-Dalit, anti-backward, anti-Muslim and anti-women—seeking to drag Bihar back to the pre-1990s era of unchecked caste massacres.

The CPIML has demanded the immediate arrest of those responsible and a speedy trial to ensure the harshest punishments. It also calls for Rs. 20 lakh in compensation for each victim's family and for adequate security guarantees for all bereaved households. ■





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Editor-in-chief

Dipankar Bhattacharya

Editor

Arindam Sen

Editorial Board

V. Shankar

Sanjay Sharma

Sucheta De

Ajit Patil

Clifton D' Rozario

Maitreyi Krishnan

Akash Bhattacharya

Editors' e-mail:

liberation@cpiml.org

Design: V Arun Kumar

Manager: Prabhat Kumar

Phone: 7042877713

Website: liberation.org.in

E-mail: manager.liberation@gmail.com

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Defeat the BJP's Sinister Anti-Judiciary Campaign

The Modi government's continuing war on the Constitution has now put it on a collision course with the Supreme Court of India, the custodian of the Constitution. In an unprecedented display of contemptuous arrogance, Vice-President Jagdeep Dhankhar has accused the Supreme Court of functioning like a super parliament. Dhankhar described Article 142 of the Constitution of India - which gives the Supreme Court the power to "pass any decree or make any order as is necessary for doing complete justice in any cause or matter pending before it" - as a 'nuclear missile' in the hands of an unaccountable authority to target an elected government! Even the pro-government Times of India had to editorially denounce Dhankhar's comments, asking the readers to discount them entirely.

It remains to be seen if the Supreme Court takes any cognisance of Dhankhar's unconstitutional remarks that undermine the very powers of the Supreme Court as upheld by the Constitution of India. As the TOI editorial put it, "This is extraordinary. Here's a constitutional post holder critiquing a constitutional provision that defines how the country's top constitutional court should go about its core business. There are more improprieties here than we care to count." Dhankhar's comments were no off the cuff passing remark, he made these remarks while addressing a group of Rajya Sabha interns and as part of an elaborate attack on the role of the judiciary. The salvos fired by the Vice-President have since grown into a loud anti-judiciary campaign by the Sangh brigade.

The role of the Supreme Court is pivotal in maintaining the federal balance of India's parliamentary democracy and protecting the constitution from executive aggression. What the Modi government wants is a conformist and docile Supreme Court lending its silent seal of approval to every violation of the Constitution by the executive. But for occasional belated and partial annulment of a few brazenly unconstitutional steps of the Modi government, like the scrapping of the Electoral Bond scheme ahead of the 2024 Lok Sabha elections, the Supreme Court by and large avoided any confrontation with the Modi government in its first two terms. But a few recent pronouncements by the apex court have made the Modi government somewhat jittery. The pronouncements against 'bulldozer (in)justice', the upholding of the constitutional status of Urdu and the indictment of the anti-Constitution role of the Tamil Nadu Governor RN Ravi have indicated some welcome potential of the judiciary to offer a degree of belated resistance to executive aggression.

The most significant of these verdicts has come against the extremely shocking partisan conduct of Tamil Nadu Governor R N Ravi who sat on a dozen bills passed by the TN Assembly for years. This has thoroughly undermined the legitimate legislative rights of the TN Assembly and the rights of the people of Tamil Nadu to have a functional government that discharges its legislative and administrative responsibilities. The Supreme Court invoked its special powers of judicial review under Article 142 to declare the bills enacted and fixed a time frame of three months for

Governor and President to decide on bills awaiting assent. In many ways, this SC verdict marks the strongest possible indictment of the Modi government's brazen subversion of the constitutional framework of parliamentary democracy. The Modi government now wants to strip the Supreme Court of its very powers of judicial review so that the executive can pass whatever law it wants and function as arbitrarily as it wishes without any institutional check or scrutiny.

Like the Citizenship Amendment Act, the stripping of statehood of Jammu and Kashmir and the now repealed farm laws, the recent Waqf Amendment Act - passed in utter disregard of widespread protests - has been another brutal assault on the basic character of the Constitution and the equal rights of minorities enshrined in it. While it is too early to predict the future of this sinister piece of legislation, the questions posed by the Supreme Court have already revealed the government's deep discomfort. The government has bought time by giving temporary assurances against deregistration of any existing waqf property and appointment of any non-Muslim in waqf boards, but even as the government has beaten a temporary retreat, the likes of Jagdeep Dhankhar, Nishikant Dubey and their ilk are using the breather to the hilt to mount a toxic campaign against the Supreme Court itself. Nishikant Dubey, the notorious BJP MP from Jharkhand and a habitual hate-monger, has blamed the current Chief Justice of India for 'all civil wars in the country', with the BJP President conveniently describing it as a personal opinion of the MP.

The 2024 Lok Sabha election results reflected the urge of large sections of the Indian people to stop the fascist aggression of the Modi regime and the Sangh-BJP brigade. With the dawning of the realization that the Constitution of India drafted under the stewardship of Babasaheb Ambedkar was no longer safe, the people began rallying around the Constitution and used their vote wisely to restrict the numbers of the BJP and its NDA partners. The BJP's no-holds-barred campaign against the Supreme Court should further alert the people about the grave threat to the Constitution and the basic character and foundation of the Republic. Even in the US, where the judiciary has historically been known for its independence, we now see signs of a calculated offensive to browbeat the judiciary. Fascist regimes worldwide have always survived with the support of a docile judiciary. At a time when most institutions of governance in India have been hijacked by the fascist regime and a palpable climate of fear subjects more and more people to self-censorship and submission, the Supreme Court deserves the fullest support of we the people of India in checking the marauding fascist bulldozer. ■

TN Governor Must Immediately Be Recalled After Supreme Court Indictment

▲ CLIFTON D'ROZARIO

The Modi government has left no stone unturned to undermine the Constitution and the core constitutional values, in particular federalism. One way has been to target opposition-party led state governments through the deployment of the ED and other central agencies. The other, and one which has become a central tactic, is the weaponization of the office of the Governor to frustrate the functioning of elected Opposition Party State governments in a veritable undermining of the federalism. In almost all such states, the Governors wilfully defeat the law-making right of State Legislatures by denying assent to Bills passed by the said Legislatures. The extreme partisanship with which the Governors have conducted

themselves, have finally led to the series of cases by Opposition-led State governments of Telengana, Jharkhand, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Kerala and Delhi (against the Lieutenant Governor) to approach the Supreme Court to intervene and direct the Governors to stop delaying the necessary assent. Now, in what can only be seen as

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This judgment is a telling indictment of not just the unconstitutional and treacherous conduct of RSS-nominee TN Governor R.N. Ravi, but the overall tactic of the Modi government to use the office of the Governor to undermine the authority of Opposition-led State Governments.

a telling blow to this unconstitutional phenomenon, the Supreme Court in its judgment in the Tamil Nadu Governor's case pronounced on April 8, 2024, has held that, the Governor, as a general rule, does not possess any discretion regarding the grant of assent for Bills passed by the State Legislature under Article 200, and has to mandatorily abide by the advice tendered to him by the Council of Ministers. The Supreme Court noted that granting any such discretion to the Governor regarding giving assent to bills, would turn the Governor into a "super-constitutional figure", who could "collude with the Union Government" and kill any legislation passed by the State Assembly.

This judgment is a telling indictment of not just the unconstitutional and treacherous conduct of RSS-nominee TN Governor R.N. Ravi, but the overall tactic of the Modi government to use the office of the Governor to undermine the authority of Opposition-led State Governments. The judgment comes as a boost in upholding the federal structure of governance as also the supremacy of the legislature as an expression of the people's will.

This judgment is the most recent in a succession of rulings issued by the Supreme Court in cases filed by Opposition-led State governments challenging the actions of Governors who have been delaying Bills passed by State Legislatures, neither granting assent nor returning them for reconsideration. In April 2023, while dealing with the dilatory tactics of the Telangana Governor, the Supreme Court reminded the Governor that Article 200 of the Constitution obliged that a decision on the Bill has to be taken "as soon as possible". Noticing that this advice was being ignored, in November 2023, the Supreme Court, in its judgment in the Punjab Governor's case, sternly observed that Governors, as unelected heads, cannot veto the legislature by simply withholding assent, and that if they choose to withhold assent, then they must promptly return the bills to the legislature with reasons.

Instead of complying with the law laid down in the Punjab Governor's case, Governors in opposition Party-ruled States continue to procrastinate on Bills passed by the State Legislatures and even devised a new dilatory tactic of referring Bills to the President. It is in this context that the recent Supreme Court judgment can be seen as one seeking to address all loopholes that recalcitrant Governors were taking advantage of. While clarifying the limited role and discretion that the Governors enjoy in regard to assent to Bills, the judgment also, and importantly, lays down mandatory timelines for the Governor and the President to act

on the Bills as per Articles 200 and 201 respectively. The Supreme Court then goes on to declare deemed assent to the 10 Bills pending with the TN Governor holding as follows: "In such a situation, it is difficult for us to repose our trust and remand the matter to the Governor with a direction to dispose of the bills in accordance with the observations made by us in this judgment. Article 142 empowers this Court to do complete justice and in the facts of the present case, more particularly, in light of the fact that the option of granting assent to the repassed bills was the only constitutionally permissible option available with the Governor, we deem it absolutely necessary and appropriate to grant that very relief by exercising our extraordinary powers. No meaningful purpose would be served by keeping the bills, some of which have already been pending for incredibly long periods, pending for more time. Therefore, we deem the assent to have been granted."

This is a scathing vote of no-confidence as far as the office of the TN Governor, RN Ravi is concerned. The Supreme Court also notes that the conduct of the Governor is "lacking in bonafides" and that the Governor "has failed in showing due deference and respect to the judgments and directions of this Court" before reminding that constitutional authorities are creatures of the Constitution and are bound by the limitations prescribed by it and that "it is only when the constitutional functionaries exercise their powers by and under the Constitution that they show deference to the people of India who have given the Constitution to themselves".

In conclusion the Supreme Court has taken the opportunity to quote from Dr. B.R. Ambedkar's concluding speech in the Constituent Assembly, which it states "is as relevant today as it was in 1949" – "However good a Constitution may be, it is sure to turn out bad because those who are called to work it, happen to be a bad lot. However bad a Constitution may be, it may turn out to be good if those who are called to work it, happen to be a good lot".

This judgment is a necessary step in reigning in the arbitrary actions of Governors and nothing less than a censure of the Modi government itself. After this telling Supreme Court verdict, Governor Ravi has lost all moral right to continue in office. The Modi government must immediately recall him and stop weaponising the office of Governors. As the Constitution clearly spells out, India is a union of states, and the Union government must honour the federal rights of all state governments. ■

Trump's Tariff Thuggery and Modi's Meek Surrender

▲ N SAI BALAJI

Neo-liberal economics that defined the world order for the last four decades, with its foundations in globalisation, trade linkages, and interconnectedness, finds itself in a quandary with Donald Trump coming to the presidency in America.

Since assuming office, Trump has consistently threatened countries with counter-tariffs, claiming that the US has faced discrimination in the hands of the rest of the world. The Bretton Woods consensus—which the US itself pushed the world to adopt through institutions like the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation (with GATT as its predecessor), and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)—is now being bulldozed by the very country that created it. The US is now afraid that it has lost the globalisation battle to China, even the minor gains made by India in sectors like IT, pharmaceuticals and the like are an anathema to a desperate Trump presidency. Hence this armtwisting of India into greater purchases of American goods and services and a desperate recourse to tariff threat and trade war even at the risk of triggering a global recession.

The Modi government, which openly batted for "Ab Ki Baar Trump Sarkar", has silently capitulated to the American tariff threats. Unlike other developing and poorer countries that have shown the spine to resist these tariffs, the BJP-led NDA government has surrendered the economic

interests of the country to Trump and his corporate allies. Instead of challenging Trump's America-first tariff thuggery, the Modi government is busy appeasing the Trump Administration.

Terming April 2nd as Liberation Day, Trump has imposed tariffs to the tune of 26–27% on key Indian commodities—affecting sectors crucial to India's growth and economic stability.

The range of commodities whose trade to America will be affected by Trump's move includes:

- Electronics (\$14 billion),
- Gems and jewellery (\$11.88 billion),
- Fisheries and processed seafood (\$2.58 billion),
- Chemicals (\$5.71 billion).

Similarly, agricultural products like basmati rice, shrimp, and buffalo meat—comprising 46% of India's farm trade with the US will be impacted. Other than this, US imports spices, tree nuts (primarily cashews), essential oils, fresh and processed fruits and vegetables. This wide range of agricultural exports from India will have a diverse impacts on the livelihood of farmers across the country. Notably, pharmaceuticals (\$9 billion in exports annually) and semiconductors were exempted by the Trump administration.

Expecting these harsh tariff measures, the Union Government had been negotiating a trade deal with the US, where it was willing to reduce tariffs on up to \$23 billion

worth of US goods in sectors like textiles, chemicals, jewellery, and gems.

What is ironic is that despite the Modi government's willingness to bow down to the US administration with these concessions, Trump still went ahead and imposed the tariffs.

This should have woken the Modi government from its misplaced dreams of placating the Trump administration. However, its mild and markedly non-confrontational statements that "negotiations are still on" and that "the government will protect Indian interests" only further demonstrate the meek surrender and capitulation of the Modi government.

The export driven sector is labour intensive, employing low-income workers. Any changes in the tariff regime will impact the profit margins thereby making retrenchment of workers inevitable. Take the gems and jewellery sector for example— it employs over 5 million people from economically marginalised backgrounds and is facing 27% tariff.

Similarly, another labour-intensive sector i.e. agriculture, which employs millions of people, faces a massive financial loss especially in rural areas for products ranging from rice to shrimp and other agricultural exports. The tariffs will be a blow to India's poor who rely on affordable goods. Consequences of tariffs will impact the supply chains, leading to price rise domestically and internationally.

The Modi government reducing

tariffs for inbound goods from America will mean that domestic industry will lose the protection it had from cheaper US products, especially in agriculture. India protects its agriculture sector from cheaper US products, which have greater state support, by levying an inbound tariff of 113.1% on various products. For example, US key agricultural exports to India include almonds (in shell - \$868 million), Ethanol (ethyl alcohol - \$266 million), Pistachios (\$121 million) and Washington Apples (\$21 million). Along with these, other products like cotton, soyabean, maize/corn are part of American agricultural exports. The financial burden created by reducing the tariffs on these US goods, at the very time the US imposes tariffs on our agricultural will fall disproportionately on the poor in our country.

We remember all too well that at the time of the anti-colonial struggle against the British raj, the Sangh not only failed to participate but even collaborated with the British rulers. Today as American imperialism takes a new turn it is no surprise to see the saffron regime meekly capitulating. We the people must give a fitting rebuff to Trump's imperial bullying and to the collaborationist Modi regime. ■

In Defence of Urdu: The Supreme Court Upholds Linguistic Diversity

On April 15 2025, the Supreme Court delivered an important judgment in *Mrs. Varshatai v. State of Maharashtra* [2025 INSC 486], upholding the usage of Urdu on a public signpost and clarifying that neither the Constitution nor the applicable statutory framework bars the use of Urdu or any other language on public signboards. In doing so, the Court has, in essence, upheld linguistic diversity and the linguistic rights of minority communities, while reaffirming India's constitutional commitment to fraternity and pluralism.

This case was a challenge by Smt. Varshatai, a former member of the Patur Municipal Council in Akola, Maharashtra, to the use of Urdu on official Municipal Council signpost. The said signboard displayed "Municipal Council, Patur", in Marathi at the top, with its translation below in the Urdu language. The matter came to the Courts after Smt. Varshatai's requisition to abstain from the use of Urdu on the Municipal Council signposts was rejected by a majority resolution on February 14, 2020, on the ground that the use of Urdu was in practice since long (1956 onwards), and that a significant section of the population was Urdu-speaking. This rejection was challenged before various fora culminating in the present judgment of the Supreme Court. The Court emphatically upheld the usage of Urdu on Municipal Council's signees and rejected the principal argument put forward by the petitioner that the Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022 only permitted the use of Marathi. The Court's reasoning was grounded in constitutional norms around linguistic diversity per Article 345, which permits respective states to adopt one or more languages for official purposes.

In Defence of Urdu

Urdu is a sustained target as Hindutva nationalism continues to project Hindi and Hinduism in opposition to Urdu and Islam. Nowhere is this more apparent than the renaming spree by BJP of historic places to erase its Muslim past. In Uttar Pradesh, Mughal Sarai Junction has become Pandit Deen Dayal Upadhyay Railway Station and Allahabad is Prayagraj. This renaming, as part of an unceasing propaganda of the Sangh Parivar, is meant to normalize the understanding that Urdu is alien and anti-Hindu. This violence against the Urdu language serves as a proxy for hate and discrimination against Muslims.

Amidst this rising tide of Islamophobia and anti-Muslim prejudice, the Supreme Court judgment asserting Urdu's deep roots in the country's linguistic heritage and constitutional imagination comprehensively dispels the Hindutva lie that Urdu is alien.

The Court disposes the exclusivity argument of the petitioner based on the Maharashtra Local Authorities (Official Languages) Act, 2022, and then launches into a powerful defence of the country's linguistic diversity and cultural coexistence noting that "language is the yardstick to measure the civilizational march of a community and its people" and in the case of Urdu it is the "finest specimen of ganga-jamuni tahzeeb, or the Hindustani tahzeeb, which is the composite cultural ethos of the plains of northern and central India". In arriving

at this conclusion the Court also underlines that language “belongs to a community, to a region, to people; and not to a religion”.

The Court calls upon the people to “respect and rejoice in our diversity, including our many languages” noting that Urdu is very much included in the list of languages in the VIII Schedule to the Constitution (at Entry 22), and is the sixth most spoken scheduled language of India and is “spoken by at least a part of the population in all States and Union Territories, except perhaps in our north-eastern states”.

The Court also notes that the Urdu language has come to be adopted by many States and Union Territories as the second official language in exercise of powers conferred by Article 345 of the Constitution. The States which have Urdu as one of the official languages are Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Jharkhand, Telangana, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal, while the Union Territories which follow this practice are Delhi and Jammu and Kashmir.

The Court also makes a telling comment that the language used by the common people of the country is replete with words of the Urdu language, even if one is not aware of it. “It would not be incorrect to say that one cannot have a day-to-day conversation in Hindi without using words of Urdu or words derived from Urdu”, concludes the Court while acknowledging that the exchange of vocabulary flows both ways because Urdu also has many words borrowed from other Indian languages, including Sanskrit.

In what seems an education for the ignorant, the Court recalls that according to linguists and literary scholars, Urdu and Hindi are not two languages, but one

language and as such “when we criticize Urdu, we are in a way also criticizing Hindi”.

The Supreme Court then comprehensively debunks the Sangh Parivar’s propaganda that Urdu is an alien language, and by extension Muslims too. The Court holds: “The prejudice against Urdu stems from the misconception that Urdu is alien to India. This opinion, we are afraid, is incorrect as Urdu, like Marathi and Hindi, is an Indo-Aryan language. It is a language which was born in this land. Urdu developed and flourished in India due to the need for people belonging to different cultural milieus who wanted to exchange ideas and communicate amongst themselves. Over the centuries, it attained ever greater refinement and became the language of choice for many acclaimed poets”.

In this sense, this is a brave judgment for the manner in which it explicitly confronts untruthful majoritarian propaganda about Urdu, and especially since it comes at a time of state-sanctioned endeavours to demonise Urdu as an alien language introduced by Muslim invaders. This judgment is nothing short of a judicial rebuff to the efforts to denigrate Urdu.

In Defence of Linguistic Diversity and Tolerance

The Court underlines India’s linguistic diversity and its status as the most multilingual country in the world, acknowledging that “we, the people of India, have taken great pain in resolving the language issue at the Centre, which is our unique achievement considering the linguistic diversity of the nation”. Importantly, even as Hindi imposition threatens linguistic autonomy, the Supreme Court has reiterated the need to celebrate this

linguistics diversity, holding that: “We must respect and rejoice in our diversity, including our many languages. India has more than a hundred major languages. Then there are other languages known as dialects or ‘mother tongues’ which also run into hundreds.”

Acknowledging that language is “both sensitive and delicate”, the Court crucially brings into play what it terms the one of the “principal Constitutional values” of “tolerance”.

In stating so, the Court has merely reiterated what Justice Chinnappa Reddy held in *Bijoe Emmanuel vs. State of Kerala* [(1986) 3 SCC 615]: “Our tradition teaches tolerance; our philosophy preaches tolerance; our Constitution practises tolerance; let us not dilute it.” Of relevance to is what the Court held in *Tehseen Poonawala vs Union of India* [(2018) 9 SCC 501] too: “Pluralism and tolerance are essential virtues and constitute the building blocks of a truly free and democratic society. It must be emphatically stated that a dynamic contemporary constitutional democracy imbibes the essential feature of accommodating pluralism in thought and approach so as to preserve cohesiveness and unity. Intolerance arising out of a dogmatic mindset sows the seeds of upheaval and has a chilling effect on freedom of thought and expression. Hence, tolerance has to be fostered and practised and not allowed to be diluted in any manner.”

Upholding Linguistic Citizenship

The Supreme Court holds that “a Municipal Council is there to provide services to the local community of the area and cater to their immediate day-to-day needs”,

and so “if people or a group of people, residing within the area covered by the Municipal Council are familiar with Urdu, then there should not be any objection if Urdu is used in addition to the official language”. In effect, the Supreme Court has upheld the right of people to participate in public life through their own language, what Christopher Stroud has described as “linguistic citizenship”. In doing so the Court has rejected a narrow exclusivist interpretation of language usage for public consumption and upheld an inclusive broader use of language to communicate as per demographic needs.

What makes the present judgment all the more important, is that this seal of imprimatur against narrow exclusivist language chauvinism is from the Supreme Court, and now constitutes the law of the land.

Conclusion

This judgment, coming on the heels of the judgment of the Supreme Court in the Tamil Nadu Governor’s case and followed by the interim order in the Waqf matter, reaffirms the crucial duty of the Courts as the final arbiter of the Constitution to uphold Constitutional principles instead of being remotely guided by majoritarian view or popular perception.

Interestingly, this is not the first time that the Supreme court was required to consider the legality of the use of Urdu language for official purpose. Previously, a Constitution Bench in *Uttar Pradesh Hindi Sahitya Sammelan v. State of Uttar Pradesh* [(2014) 9 SCC 716] upheld the declaration of Urdu as the second language in Uttar Pradesh. However, this second time around, the Supreme Court has gone beyond approving its usage. It has set about locating Urdu in the context of Indian and constitutional history, while interpreting its usage from the lived realities of India’s diverse linguistic demography and the principal Constitutional values of diversity and tolerance. This is not a judgment simpliciter – it is a resounding reaffirmation of the founding principles of the country – fraternity and pluralism – as also the linguistic diversity and multilingualism underlying the Constitution against any attempt to impose exclusivity, monolingualism and uniformity.

(The article is an abridged version of the statement issued by AILAJ) ■

Modi Government’s Attack on Citizens’ Right to Information

Securing statutory recognition for the right to information in the form of the Right to Information Act of 2005 was an important milestone in the relentless people’s struggle for accountability and transparency, and towards deepening democracy in the functioning of the Indian state. That the legislation came almost 60 years after the Constitution enshrined the right to information as a fundamental right, stands testament to the disenchantment with the lack of democracy that fuelled the RTI movement.

Over the past two decades the RTI Act has emerged as an optimal tool for public oversight against corruption and opacity. However, now, the RTI Act faces an existential crisis in the face of the Modi government’s draconian amendments to the RTI Act through the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act. As enacted, the RTI Act allowed for seeking information relating to personal information in larger public interest. The relevant provision and the other provisions of the RTI Act provided adequate safeguards for personal information to ensure accountability without allowing for its misuse.

However, through the Digital Personal Data Protection (DPDP) Act, the Modi government has comprehensively amended the RTI Act by imposing a blanket ban on disclosing personal information, threatening transparency and accountability. Incredibly the DPDP Act does not define “personal information” thereby allowing broad and arbitrary rejections. In effect, this amendment provides official sanction to an unconditional exemption for all personal information, restricting access to public data and information while denying people their fundamental right to seek accountability. The amendment is yet to come into force and there is a wave of opposition including from the Opposition parties and scores of organisations demanding the immediate rollback of these amendments and the strengthening of the RTI Act.

Ironically the Modi government that has left no stone unturned in becoming a surveillance state, invokes the very argument of privacy to justify the amendment. The DPDP Act itself, under the red herring of data protection, effectively sanctions state surveillance while allowing for the commodification of personnel data and granting excessive power to the State, and encroaching upon the

very essence of life, liberty and freedom itself.

However, even this attempt to fabricate a trade-off between transparency and accountability on the one hand and privacy on the other, does not stand scrutiny since these are complementary rights which the Supreme Court's Privacy judgment has emphatically held must be balanced. This is even more ironic given that the past decade has seen the Modi government make a mockery of the privacy verdict of the Supreme Court that emphasises citizens' right to privacy and autonomy by permitting and enabling restrictions on diet, dress, speech and expression, and faith.

The amendment effectively exposes the hollowness of Modi's slogan of "na khaunga na khane doonga" as it snatches away every weapon that people have wielded to expose financial irregularities and corruption among government entities and officials.

One of the most obvious beneficiaries of the amendment would be Prime Minister Narendra Modi. One would remember that in 2016, when Modi's alleged degree certificate was sought to be obtained under the RTI Act, the same remains elusive despite dogged efforts to make these documents public. The amendment provides official sanction for such arbitrary and illegal refusal to disclose information thus providing the government with greater control over RTI officials and exemptions.

This amendment is just the latest endeavour of the Modi government to defang the RTI Act. Over the past decade, scores of RTI activists have been killed while their harassment and intimidation has become commonplace. The 2018 amendments to the RTI Act have effectively removed the autonomy of the RTI Commissions by increasing the Union government's role in fixing the salary and tenure of RTI Commissioners. The functioning of the RTI Commissions has deteriorated to a great extent evidenced by the massive case backlog and inordinate delay in disposing of cases.

The Right to Information Act is being killed in the name of 'data protection'. Every inconvenient information can be arbitrarily suppressed as 'personal data' and every attempt to expose corruption and abuse of power can be penalised as a violation of privacy! This latest amendment is yet another example of the Modi government's characteristic intent to undermine the country's democratic institutions. ■



The Resolve of May Day 2025

The May Day 2025 is a day to resolve to wage a veritable counter war against the war of Modi government on the working class of the country and to make the 20 May all India Strike a great success. It is not only a strike of the working class but a strike in shoulder to shoulder with the farmers and agricultural labourers. Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) is also joining the strike to fight against the anti-farmer, pro-corporate, agricultural market reforms and with a call to organise protests on 20 May. All India Agricultural and Rural Labour Association (AIARLA) and All India Kisan Mahasabha (AIKM) extending their support to the strike have called for protests in rural areas across the country. All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) is joining the strike as a part of the call of the Platform of Ten Central Trade Unions of the country.

The latest news is that the Modi government is planning to release manuals on Labour Codes. It has assigned the BMS (Bharatiya Mazdoor Sangh, an affiliate of RSS) and the CII (Confederation of Indian Industries) to prepare manuals explaining the Labour Codes for and from the angle of, an employee and an employer. Thus, the Modi machine is preparing to unleash a Goebbelsian propaganda to create a

consensus among common workers on Labour Codes. BMS has been praising the Code on Wages and the Social Security Code and has extended complete support to the government. They only want to act as a buffer to reduce the dissent and anger of workers. The employee threshold limit of 300 workers strength for closure of factories is being removed by the Labour Codes so as to make the 'Hire and Fire' a norm. In order to minimise the impact of such a draconian clause, the government is also alleged to be planning to introduce the Codes in phases spanning some years. The idea appears to introduce the Codes in companies employing more than 500 workers first, then in establishments of 300 and above workers strength and then to implement the same in companies employing less than 300 workers. In the meanwhile, the propaganda machinery will keep repeating lies after lies so that lies themselves can become a truth.

The miseries of the working people have reached a limit under 11 years of the Modi regime. With joblessness, destitution and inequality skyrocketing, the wages have nosedived, and the rights and social security stands totally eliminated. There is a corporate clamour for 70 to 90 hour work-week. On the other hand, in the name of "Ease of Doing Business", the corporates are given free hand to loot the property and resources of the country. The profits of corporate sector grew by 22.3 percent in last few years. 5 percent of upper echelons of the population own 70 percent of the wealth whereas 50 percent of the population at the lower rungs share only 3

percent of total wealth. The third term of Modi regime has brutally intensified its attacks on the lives and livelihood of the people and further pushed the corporate servile policies. In essence, the achievements of freedom struggle against British rulers are being systematically done away with – from constitution, rights to welfare state, public-government sector and secured jobs.

After doing away with all hard-earned labour laws and replacing them with 4 Labour Codes, the Modi government claims that it is all set to implement them now. The implementation of labour codes will reduce the working class into slaves of the corporate class. These codes snatch away all rights and entitlements - including working hours, minimum wages, social security, etc.; the hire and fire becomes the law; The right to unionization, recognition, collective bargaining and all forms of collective expression of protests including the right to strike are being smashed. The enactment of 3 new criminal laws including Bhartiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), coupled with UAPA, PMLA etc., are aimed at criminalizing the collective action of working class. We have already started witnessing it in various degrees. Three criminal codes combined with 4 labour codes are bound to prove disastrous to the lives of the working class in the country. Simultaneously, the Police Raj and the Bulldozer Raj have become the mode of governance that brutally bulldoze the lives and livelihood of the poor and the downtrodden. The future of the "working class without any rights" is completely darkened.

While wages of the workers is drastically falling, the social

security in any form is being eroded. The welfare boards are being diluted towards being dismantled, as in the case of sectors like Beedi, construction, etc. The pension as a third benefit, like OPS (Old Pension Scheme) is eliminated and is replaced with NPS/UPS. The EPS pension still stands paltry and humiliating. The Labour Code on Social Security spells the doom on workers' right to any meaningful social security.

Already, crores of workers under social schemes of the central and state governments-honorarium/incentive based ASHA, Anganwadi, MDM, etc. - are made as "Forced Labour without wages". Moreover, these schemes are facing the danger of extinction, as the Modi government is slashing the budgetary allocation year after year in order to privatize the services of the government.

The unbridled Privatization is making Adanis and Ambanis the owners of the country while the real owners, the working people of the country, are being pushed to the margins. The National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) only facilitate the handover of the country's infrastructures, including lands of Public and Government sector, to corporates at a throw away price.

After being forced to withdraw the three draconian farm laws, the Modi government is attempting in a nefarious way to bring back the same through the recently released Draft National Policy Framework on Agricultural Marketing that snatches away the farm lands from farmers and hands it over to the corporates.

While continuing the attacks on all sections of common people to serve the interests of their

corporate masters, Modi-BJP-RSS combine is leaving no stone unturned to stoke up communal hatred and polarization aimed also at diverting the peoples' attention from basic issues and to divide the peoples' struggling unity. The enactment of Waqf Board Act is the latest in the series of brutal attacks on Muslims, including the UCC. The Modi-BJP-RSS combine is doing everything to establish a Corporate, Communal - Manuvadi Rashtra.

The Modi government has severely hurt India's national pride and sovereignty by meekly surrendering to the Trump administration's arrogant arm twisting and humiliation, in spite of the claim of Modi's special friendship with Trump and the rise of India as Vishwa Guru under Modi rule. Modi's complete silence on deportation of Indian workers with handcuffs and shackles from US and his acceptance of Trump's move to force the Indian government to lower import duties on American goods and increased tariffs on Indian goods to the US - are the glaring examples of Modi's capitulation to the US.

Defying the people's mandate against the BJP in the last Lok Sabha elections, defying the message of the powerful movements on the streets, the Modi government is desperately intensifying its corporate-communal offensive.

The need of the hour is a more powerful, determined movements, heightened resistance of the working people. Let us rise to the occasion, prepare to give a befitting reply to the anti-people, anti-worker Modi government. Make the 20th May all-India general strike a resounding success!

The Charter For the May Day and the General Strike

- Halt the implementation and Scrap 4 Labour Codes.
- Stop unbridled Privatization/ Corporatization, Stop Selling of the national wealth and infrastructure; Scrap the National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP); Withdraw the Electricity Bill and Scrap the Smart Pre-paid Electricity Meter Scheme.
- Declare Rs 41,000/- as Minimum Monthly Wage, 15,000/- as monthly Pension with DA. Ensure strict implementation of declared minimum wages and existing labour laws.
- Restore OPS, Withdraw NPS and UPS.
- Provide the status of govt. employee with all associated benefits to the honorarium/ incentive based (scheme) workers, and till then, grant the status of "Worker" and minimum wages to them; Stop privatisation and NGOisation of schemes. Recognise gig/ platform workers as "Worker".
- Stop Dismantling of Welfare Boards including construction, bidi, etc.
- Stop rampant contractualisation, outsourcing, closure; Withdraw Fixed Term Employment, Employment Linked Incentive Scheme (ELI); Abolish contract labour system and trainee - apprenticeship system; Equal wages, benefits and service conditions for the same and similar kind of work; Bring an exclusive act for the conferment of Permanent Status to all irregular workers, including contract workers.
- Strengthen MGNREGA by increasing the work days to 200 and wages to 600/day; Extend Employment Guarantee Act and schemes to urban areas.
- Strengthen and Implement the act for migrant workers.
- Immediately fill sanctioned vacant posts in government departments and PSUs and Withdraw the ban on recruitment and creation of new posts. Revive sick and closed Industries and Plantations.
- Withdraw the pro-corporate, anti-farmer Agricultural Marketing Policy; Implement Statutory MSP.
- Roll-back the price increases of all essential commodities. Universalization of food security and inclusion of all unorganized workers in the BPL (below poverty line) list.
- Ensure equal wages for equal work for women workers and strict implementation of the act against sexual harassment at workplaces.
- Put an End to Manual scavenging.
- Enact a comprehensive central legislation for Domestic workers; Strict Implementation of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, ensure Zero-eviction policy and social security for all street vendors.
- Repeal 3 criminal Laws (BNS), all draconian laws. Withdraw EDSA.
- Repeal the divisive Waqf Act. ■

The Call of April 22, 2025

This April 22 we are observing the 56th anniversary of the foundation of our great and beloved party and also the 155th birth anniversary of Comrade Lenin. Today we once again pay our homage to all our great martyrs and departed leaders and renew our pledge to fulfill Comrade Lenin's clarion call to defeat imperialism and build socialism.

Despite losing its independent majority and having to depend on allies including parties like JDU and TDP that have at times moved away from the BJP, the Modi government in its third term has further intensified its fascist offensive. It has rushed through legislations like the Waqf Amendment Act and Uniform Civil Code that directly target the Muslim community and has launched a brutal war on Adivasis and alleged Maoists in Chhattisgarh in the name of making India Naxal-free by March 2026.

The repealed pro-corporate farm laws are being attempted to be brought back through the backdoor as a new policy framework for agricultural marketing. All existing labour laws are set to be replaced by a set of four labour codes that will vastly erode many of the hard won rights of India's working class. The Right to Information Act is being amended in a manner that will take away the rights of citizens to demand transparency and accountability and allow the state to get away with arbitrary and corrupt practices and brazen abuse of power.

There are renewed attacks on campus democracy and academic freedom, to kill dissent and debates and promote bigotry, hate and superstition, so as to refashion India's universities and other institutions of higher education and research as laboratories of cultural regimentation and ideological indoctrination. And incited by hate-filled films and other means of propaganda, Hindutva mobs are ruling the streets with daily doses of anti-Muslim, patriarchal and casteist violence.

While we in India have to deal with the fascist assault of Modi 3.0, the US and the whole world are now faced with the reign of disaster unleashed by Trump 2.0. In an open alliance with Elon Musk, the world's richest person, Trump is waging a massive war on democracy within America, linking it up with a global tariff and trade war and a virulent anti-immigrant campaign including deportation, revocation of visa and various forms of persecution directed against undocumented immigrants and pro-Palestine activists. Like Modi's 'Achhe Din' rhetoric in India, Trump calls it MAGA or Making America Great Again.

In spite of Modi's claims of special friendship with Trump, and complicity with the Trump-Netanyahu combine in the continuing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, the Trump Administration seems to have singled out India for the most humiliating kind of treatment with the Modi government meekly capitulating to the American acts of arrogant armtwisting. No previous government in independent India has hurt India's national pride and strategic interests as much as the Modi regime. Meanwhile, Amit Shah makes derogatory remarks about Ambedkar on the floor of Parliament and Mohan Bhagwat negates the legacy of India's freedom movement by describing the Ram Mandir in Ayodhya as the symbol of India's 'real independence'.

Against this backdrop we will be facing the crucial Bihar elections later this year. The entire party must help Bihar comrades to score bigger victories in this all important battle. Our success in Bihar in the 2020 Assembly elections and in 2024 Lok Sabha elections has greatly enhanced the party's political profile and the Left ranks and the entire progressive camp are now looking to Bihar and especially our party to come up with a stronger performance to stop the Modi-Shah-Yogi juggernaut and save this bastion of people's movement from falling into the BJP's hands. From this

April 22 onward, let us resolve to work on war footing to give our very best to the election campaign.

With the fascist offensive intensifying by the day, the battle for democracy calls for greater unity, strength and determination. As revolutionary communists, we must play a vanguard role in this battle. We need to develop greater mass strength by forging closer ties with the people and taking up every issue related to their lives, livelihoods and liberties. We need a bigger and more vibrant and dynamic party organisation with greater ideological strength and courage.

2025 is the centenary of the organised communist movement in India. It is also the centenary of the foundation of the RSS. All through India's freedom movement and the subsequent decades of parliamentary democracy in independent India, the communist ideology has fought relentlessly against the fascist design of the RSS. For large parts of these hundred years, the RSS remained quite isolated, but today as it operates from the vantage position of state power, it is doing everything possible to tighten its ideological and cultural grip on the whole country. We must save India from the ravages of this growing fascist disaster.

During the freedom movement, the Indian bourgeoisie had succeeded in establishing its leadership in the national awakening, but today when the dominant sections of Indian bourgeoisie are rallying around the fascist project, it is for the working people to come forward with the banner of people's democracy and national advance to break free from the fascist and imperialist stranglehold. As inheritors of India's radical legacy of anti-colonial anti-feudal struggles, revolutionary communists must today emerge as the leading force in the anti-fascist surge of democracy and social justice.

All for a bigger, stronger and more vibrant CPI(ML)!

Down with fascism and imperialism, victory to democracy and socialism! ■

Waqf Amendment Act 2025: A Case of Bigoted Law Making

▲ MOHAMMED AFEEF

The Waqf (Amendment) Bill was introduced in the Parliament in August 2024, and was subsequently referred to a Joint Parliamentary Committee (JPC) for the purpose of examination. The JPC, consisting of 21 Members from Lok Sabha and 10 Members from Rajya Sabha under the Chairpersonship of Shri Jagdambika Pal, examined the bill, held consultations and received a total of around 97,27,772 memoranda, through both physical and digital modes. All Opposition members gave detailed dissents to the JPC report. The said JPC report, however, was tabled in the Parliament in February 2025, initially without the full Dissent Notes, thereby leading to furore which compelled the Union government to issue a corrigendum to the JPC reports with the Dissent Notes. Thereafter, the Waqf (Amendment) Bill 2025 was introduced, and after three days of intense debate, it was passed in the Lok Sabha and then the Rajya Sabha, immediately followed by presidential assent on 05.04.2025. Further, the Union government issued a notification to give effect to the Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025 ("the Amendment Act") on 08.04.2025.

The Amendment Act has made significant amendments to the Waqf Act, 1995 ("the Principal Act") by incorporating, substituting and omitting sections and provisions of the Principal Act thereby dismantling the Islamic institution of waqfs and

its governance. The Amendment Act is blatantly prejudiced and constitutes a frontal attack on the Muslim community, and the religious freedom and beliefs which they enjoy under the Constitution.

“

The Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025, under the guise of reform, institutionalizes systemic discrimination against Indian Muslims while facilitating state-sanctioned land grabbing.

Thus, the concern of civil society, in particular of the Indian Muslims, of the potential take-over of Waqf property by the government is now codified into law. There are two ways to look at the potential implications of the amendments. First, the problematic aspects of the amendments itself as infringing religious autonomy, diluting Waqf board/Tribunal powers and so on. Second, the propensity of the most anti-Muslim government in post-independence India to use seemingly innocuous provisions to either take over or exercise control over Waqf properties, either by itself or in coordination with Hindutva groups.

A closer look at the following key amendments can highlight the true intent of the Waqf Amendment Act 2025, which, however, is far from what it claims to aim for – that is, efficiency, transparency, and gender equity.

Change in the name

The Amendment Act has changed the name of the law from the Waqf Act, 1995 to the "Unified Waqf Management, Empowerment, Efficiency and Development Act, 1995". This change is justified by the Union government as necessary to "reflect its updated focus on improving the management of waqf properties, empowerment of stakeholders relevant to management of waqf properties, improving the efficiency in survey, registration and case disposal process, and development of waqf properties. While the core purpose remains to manage waqf properties, the aim is to implement modern and scientific methods for better governance". However, there is no justification whatsoever for changing the name with the use of phrases that are cosmetic in nature. The term "Waqf" doesn't just have a legal connotation, but it also culturally resonates with and among the Muslim community. The replacement of the term Waqf with UMEED is not just tantamount to cultural erasure, but is even contrary, for the Amendment Act has more to do with despondency than hope. Waqf is an integral

part of Islamic culture and religion and the word aptly conveys its meaning whereas the new, and elaborate, name can be seen to potentially take away from the religious and charitable objectives that Waqf traditionally serves, since the Waqf system is not merely about management and development; it is about fulfilling a religious obligation to serve the community.

This demand that was made across the board to not alter the name of the Principal Act has been deliberately ignored at the cost of the religious and cultural significance of Waqf within the Muslim community.

Foundational changes to Waqf

A Waqf, literally translated to “stoppage” or “to detain” (due to its irrevocable nature), is created when a person dedicates her self-acquired or inherited movable or immovable property in the name of Allah, for charitable purposes. Waqf properties can be created for religious and charitable purposes such as for mosques, madrassas, graveyards, hospitals, universities, libraries, orphanage etc.

The Amendment Act adds additional barriers to the creation of a Waqf in the definitional clause of the Principal Act. It denies the right of a non-Muslim to create a Waqf and states that only a person who can demonstrate that he is practicing Islam for the last 5 years prior to the creation of Waqf can dedicate his property for Waqf. This is both unheard of in Islamic law and an invalid intervention in the right to property (right to dispose/alienate) under Article 300A, an invalid restriction to freedom of

religion under Article 25 and is hit by the vice of arbitrariness on numerous grounds under Article 14. In that sense, the amendment also interferes with the tenets of Islam.

The Amendment to Section 36 of the Principal Act mandates the creation of a waqf deed, and registration of the same on a portal system under the control and management of the Central. This amendment applies to the creation of new waqfs; however, at the same time, it mandates the registration of older waqfs on the portal within 6 months of the amendment coming into force. Anyone having the basic idea of Waqf knows that there are Waqf properties which are hundreds of years old, and making oral Waqf part of practice. Given this, asking for the details of Waqf property is both unreasonable and disproportionate, thereby demonstrating the latent mischief of the law.

Removal of Waqf by User

Perhaps the most pernicious change the Amendment Act 2025 made is that of the removal of the concept of Waqf by user. The practice of Waqf by the user was recognized and explained by a 5-judge bench in the Babri Masjid judgment:

“1130. In some cases, courts were faced with a situation where property was used as Waqf property since time immemorial, and it was not practical to seek formal proof in the form of a deed of declaration. A specific document of dedication may be unavailable after a long lapse of time but the use of the property for public religious or charitable purposes may have continued since time

immemorial. Hence, despite the absence of an express deed of dedication, where the long use of the property as a site for public religious purpose is established by oral or documentary evidence, a court can recognise the existence of a Waqf by user. The evidence of long use is treated as sufficient though there is no evidence of an express deed of dedication”

Arguably, this amendment removing Waqf by user, leaves old Waqf properties without proper documentation vulnerable to being disputed, and pushing into a zone of perpetual litigation. However, to assuage the concern of the critics, the Narendra Modi government highlighted the fact that the Waqf Amendment Act 2025 has incorporated a prospective clause to the same by whereby removal of Waqf by user shall not be applicable to the already existing Waqfs. This assurance is a fig leaf, and its disingenuous premise becomes much more prominent when we read the exception attached to the prospective clause. For instance, even without Waqfs deeds, the Waqf is recognised in the list of Auqaf (Plural of Waqf), previously created by a surveyor and acknowledged by the Board. However, now, given that the prospective application has an exception of Waqf properties already in dispute, and if the Waqf is a government property., the entire logic of the prospective clause falls flat on its face.

Commentators have pointed out that similar concepts in other religious trusts/endowments continue to be recognized, such temple by user’, ‘math by user’ and ‘Hindu religious endowments by user’ found in the state legislations of Orissa, Tamil Nadu,

and Telangana etc. Yet it is only the Muslim version of a charitable trust that now statutorily loses the legal recognition 'by use' thereby making the omission of Waqf by user discriminatory against the Muslims.

Concentration of Powers

A newly added section holds that any Government property identified as Waqf, before or after the commencement of this act, shall not be deemed to be a Waqf property. In determining whether a government property was wrongfully declared as Waqf, the amendment grants sweeping powers to the District Collector, who is a government officer, by replacing the Survey Commissioner, to conduct an inquiry and determine the status of the property. Moreover, pending inquiry the property will not be treated as a Waqf. If the District Collector finds the property to be a government property, he has the power to make a correction in revenue record, followed by confirmation by the relevant state Waqf board. Interestingly, it does not make a provision to hear affected parties to be heard, unlike all other points in the amendment, when a Waqf is being registered or being made. That concentration of broad powers in the hands of the District Collector- a government officer, determination of the nature of land by him, and the task of surveying the Waqf land without the requisite expertise, tantamount to conflict of interest and separation of power.

Till now, in cases of a dispute, the determination of whether a property is a government property or Waqf property used to happen by the Waqf Board which could be challenged in the Waqf tribunal,

decisions of which, unlike the misleading impression given in the amendment (reasons given in press releases), could always be challenged before the High Court. This change, whereby the Waqf Board's and Waqf Tribunal's power has been reduced, is essentially taking away court jurisdiction and placing it in the hands of a District Collector. In other words, a judicial function is being handed over to the executive.

Under the 1995 act the survey of Waqf properties was to be done by a government-appointed surveyor was an important step for inclusion in the list of Waqfs. The functions of the collector came into the picture for ensuring that the Waqf property was protected against encroachment. This was done by creating a list of Waqfs that the Waqf board will verify and forward the same to State government for the details of the Waqf to be reflected in the revenue records. Under the present amendment, transferring the functions of the survey commissioner to the collector. Now instead of the surveyor, the entire exercise has to be done by the already overburdened Deputy Collector. However, what is more glaring, is the outright removal of a sub-section that granted a layer of protection to Waqf properties once notified in a survey, by holding that it shall not be reviewed again except where the status of such property has been changed in accordance with any law.

Introducing Public notice Requirements

No Public notice is required in order to hear affected parties when a disputed Waqf property is declared as government property. However, it becomes mandatory when reflecting Waqf properties in

revenue records (either through the survey route or direct registration). This double standard is yet another dangerous addition, thereby allowing unscrupulous individuals and groups, the Hindutva forces in particular, to interfere with Waqf registration and frustrate its entire purpose.

Infringing Autonomy and Weakening the Waqf Institutions

The amendment omits Section 40 from the Parent Act, which provided power to the Waqf Boards with respect to regulation and administration of Waqf properties. Further, it substitutes Section 9 of the Parent Act by mandating representation of non-Muslim in both the Central Waqf Council (Advisory body) and State Waqf Boards. Several commentators have argued, and rightly so, that this condition violates Article 26(b) of the Constitution, which guarantees rights to every religious denomination to manage its own affairs in matters of religion. As such, there are laws in Uttar Pradesh, Kerala, Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, etc., mandating the representation of a person professing the Hindu faith for managing Hindu Temples and their properties. Under the Bihar Endowment Act, for instance, there are provisions for three boards – the Hindu Endowment Board, Shwetambar Jain Endowment Board, and Digambar Jain Endowment Boards – and the members of these boards are mandated to be Hindus. The Gurudwara Parbhandak Committee members must also be from the Sikh community. The Waqf amendment 2025, therefore, arbitrarily reduces Muslim

representation and also mandates non-Muslim representation in the administration of the Waqf.

Moreover, it entirely omits the non-obstante clause added vide the 2013 amendment, thereby weakening the very act vis-a-vis other laws. The Amendment also reduces in severity of punishment in cases of alienation of Waqf property without the sanction of the board, from rigorous imprisonment to imprisonment and omits the sub-sections making it a cognizable and non-bailable offence.

Centralization of Powers

Religious endowments and institutions are listed under the Concurrent List of the Seventh Schedule of the Constitution, allowing both the Centre and states to legislate on the subject. This Amendment results in an increased centralization of powers in multiple ways. First, it creates a central portal system for registration of Waqfs, which is now mandatory for registration of Waqf. Second, it grants the Central government the authority to audit State Waqf boards and empowers the Comptroller and Auditor General of India to audit any Waqf at any time. Third, it permits the Central government to make rules in several significant areas of regulation of Waqfs, such as registration, publication of accounts of waqf and publication of proceedings of Waqf Boards. This would have otherwise been made by the State Government before the amendment.

Inclusion of Certain Unusual Provisions

Section 64, states the grounds on which a Mutawalli can be removed- this also includes

being convicted of any offence involving moral turpitude, yet another ground of removal is added; that is if the Mutawalli is a member of any association which has been declared unlawful under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967. This seems to be unique to the Waqf Act, and there seems to be no reason to include this, as the law already covers criminal conviction. The absence of the word conviction makes it ambiguous enough to remove a Mutawalli on a mere allegation.

Cumulative Effect of the Amendments

A comprehensive examination of the proposed changes to the definitions and conditions governing the creation of Waqfs reveals an intention to limit the rights of individuals to establish such endowments and to de-recognize land designated as Waqf. Adding additional hurdles to registration and recognition, from registration in the portal to permitting the public at large to object to reflecting a Waqf in Land records.

The removal of “Waqf by user”, puts at risk those Waqf which has been used as such and also those lands in respects of which documents may not exist, but which retain the character of Waqf property. Layers of protection given to existing Waqfs, have been undone, at any point, a collector can claim a Waqf is a government land, and adjudicate the same. It even reduces punishments to those that alienate recognized Waqf land. The intention seems to indicate a drive to claim Waqf land. Several amendments enable such a drive. Although the Bill claims that one of its objectives is to deal with the issue of encroachments

on waqf lands, there is absolutely no change brought in this regard. Reports say that while the Waqf board is the third-largest landowner in India, widespread encroachments have reduced its control to less than 25% of its original holdings.

The Waqf (Amendment) Act 2025, under the guise of reform, institutionalizes systemic discrimination against Indian Muslims while facilitating state-sanctioned land grabbing. By restricting Waqf creation to Muslims practicing Islam for five years—a requirement absent in Hindu, Sikh, or Jain endowments—it weaponizes legal frameworks to target minorities, violating Articles 25 and 300A. The abolition of “Waqf by user” erases protections for undocumented historical Muslim properties, rendering them vulnerable to expropriation, unlike Hindu trusts retaining “user” recognition.

Concentrating power in the District Collector—a partisan executive—enables state seizure of disputed lands without due process, while centralizing oversight enables bureaucratic collusion with Hindutva forces to erase Waqf claims. Mandating non-Muslim representation in Waqf Boards, contrary to faith-specific management elsewhere, dilutes institutional autonomy, paving the way for hostile takeovers. These amendments, cloaked as efficiency, expose a predatory agenda: leveraging procedural hurdles, biased inquiries, and discriminatory thresholds to legitimize majoritarian land grabs. By stripping judicial safeguards, politicizing registrations, and privileging state control over communal stewardship, the Act codifies a regime of dispossession,

transforming religious endowments into sites of contested sovereignty and structural erasure.

As stated earlier, several of the amendments are prima facie unconstitutional, while others may seem innocuous (Such as public notice requirements, digitization etc), but can be used to target Waqf land. This suspicion does not arise out of thin air, but the record of this government, in directly targeting Muslims homes in vindictive demolition drives (Bulldozer Raj), top brass politicians engaging in anti-Muslim Hate speech, enabling attacks on Muslim religious places, targeting all elements of Islamic practice, i.e. Hijab, Halal certifications, Namaz in Public (even initiating criminal prosecution for mere practice of faith) and so on. This government has left no opportunity to oppress and marginalize Indian Muslims, this is merely a continuation of the same.

The Supreme Court, through its interim order dated 17 April 2025 stayed any denotification of existing Waqf properties and appointment of any non-Muslim member to the Central Waqf Council or State Waqf Boards. We hope that this stay will culminate in the quashing of this bigoted piece of legislation.

(The article was first published as AILAJ statement) ■

The Contested Forests of Hyderabad: Land, Education, Urban Development

▲ AKASH BHATTACHARYA

On March 30 2025, the Telangana government sent dozens of bulldozers to the Hyderabad Central University (HCU) to acquire 400 acres (more than 160 hectares) of land for corporate use. Although the 400 acres in question were a part of the 2,300-acre parcel allotted to the University when it was established in 1974, legally, the state government is the sole owner of the entire land. Over the years, it has allocated pockets of land from these 2,300 acres for various purposes: constructing a bus depot, a telephone exchange, a IIIT campus, the Gachibowli sports stadium, a shooting range, etc.

The disputed 400 acres were handed over by the then united Andhra Pradesh government to a private sports management firm in 2003, only to be reclaimed in 2006 due to non-use. This triggered a lengthy legal battle, which eventually saw the SC reiterate that the Telangana government was the sole owner of the land. But the 400 acres have never been demarcated. Nor has it been notified as a forest, even though it is a part of the University's larger forest ecosystem. This was at the heart of the current issue.

Students and activists protesting against the Telangana government cite the SC's landmark verdict in *T N Godavarman Thirumulpad v Union of India* (1996). The apex court had held that any land with forest cover qualifies as "forest land", even if the

land is not notified as a forest.

A powerful students' agitation played a crystallizing role in compelling the media and broader public to take notice. Between April 2 and 3, three court hearings were held. On April 3, the Supreme Court of India took suo motu cognizance of the incident, expressing shock at the number of trees felled in just a few days in the Kancha Gachibowli Forest (KGF), asked if the required environmental clearances had been obtained, and subsequently directed the Telangana government to stop the "alarming deforestation activities". Status quo has been maintained ever since, as the apex court awaits the Chief Secretary's report.

The protests at HCU spread beyond students. It drew climate activists of various hues, and different sections of the civil society as well. These protests against the government's decision to auction the land off stemmed from the need to preserve existing carbon sinks in the city. Urban forests such as Kancha Gachibowli help regulate local climates by providing shade, reducing temperatures, and increasing humidity.

Many studies already show that the KGF is an ecologically sensitive area. A recent ecological heritage report by Arun Vasireddy compiled the rich biodiversity of KGF with more than 230 species of birds and numerous species of reptiles and mammals. Besides, KGF holds a

special hydrological significance. "Out of nearly 200 lakes in Greater Hyderabad, we only have 10 clean lakes left, of which four are in this forest and in HCU," Vasireddy explained.

Across Indian cities, water crises are increasingly becoming disruptive. Bangalore is just around 600 kilometres away from Hyderabad, which has been undergoing a massive water crisis. What turned India's green city into a dry one is primarily the over-extraction of groundwater and the disruption of the water network, including the encroachment, filling, and conversion of lakes into real estate.

Hyderabad is a dry city. It could invite the worst water crisis if some of the last remaining sources are not protected. While the lakes in KGF provide the drinking and irrigation water source, the natural rock formations in the landscape serve

as the sewage outlets of the city.

The forest lies bang in the middle of Hyderabad's financial district. Auctioning the land would not only fill government coffers, but also attract potential investments of Rs 50,000 crore, and generate as many as 5 lakh jobs, the government says. Notably, the Gachibowli IT corridor is one of the most expensive localities in Hyderabad, boasting extremely high property rates.

Over the last few years, the country has witnessed a pushback against the achievements in environmental conservation and fair use of land. EIA rules have been diluted, while the Forest Conservation Amendment Act, 2023 dilutes the protection accorded to forests and forest-dwellers. In addition, urban development has become synonymous with corporate led large scale infrastructure project which tend to benefit the rich and

dispossess and marginalize the poor.

This policy climate has been put in place by the Narendra Modi-led union government. The HCU incident reveals the extent to which these sensibilities have come to define the neoliberal and authoritarian policy architecture almost irrespective of which government is in power. That is a worrying sign. Pro-people, democratic parties must be able to think and act differently.

At the same time, resistance to anti-environmental and pro-corporate development have increasingly brought together various hues of civil society, climate activists, student organizations and labour movements. Such solidarities, often stretching across party affiliations, make us hopeful about these resistances defining a democratic political coalition that can provide a genuine alternative to the people in the times to come. ■

Auctioning of HCU Land and Brutal Police Crackdown on Protesting Students

The All-India Students Association (AISA) has strongly condemned the Congress-led Telangana government's decision to auction 400 acres of land belonging to the University of Hyderabad (HCU). This land, home to the iconic Mushroom Rocks, is part of the east campus of the university and is rich in biodiversity, making it an essential part of Hyderabad's ecosystem.

Students from the University of Hyderabad took to the streets in protest on 30 March, demanding that the government halt its plans. However, instead of engaging in dialogue, the state responded with brutal force. Police were ordered to assault the students, resulting in multiple physical assaults and the detention of over 20 protestors. In a disturbing display of state power, many students were subjected to violent manhandling, their clothes ripped, and their bodies bruised.

In a statement issued, AISA condemned the Telangana government's action as part of a broader pattern of prioritising corporate interests over environmental preservation. The auctioning of this prime land under the guise of 'planned development' is seen as a reckless move that compromises both the environment and the educational space at HCU. The sale threatens to displace vital green spaces that play a crucial role in maintaining the region's biodiversity.

The Telangana government's actions, including the illegal demolition of parts of HCU's land by JCBs, have been condemned as a direct violation of legal processes. A Public Interest Litigation (PIL) challenging the auction was already pending in court, making the demolition efforts not only unethical but also illegal.

AISA noted that the struggle is not merely a campus issue but part of a larger movement to safeguard the environment from corporate exploitation and an exploitative model of development that places profits above people and nature. ■

Justice Denied: 26,000 Teachers Terminated in West Bengal

▲ RANAJAY SENGUPTA

On April 3, 2025, the Supreme Court, in an unprecedented judgment, nullified the appointments of 26,000 secondary and higher-secondary government school teachers in West Bengal. These teachers were recruited through the West Bengal School Service Commission examination in 2016. Subsequent allegations of corruption in the recruitment process prompted a CBI-led investigation ordered by the Calcutta High Court in 2021. Following the CBI's report, the Calcutta High Court terminated these teachers in 2023. Since then, both the terminated teachers and aspirants for these vacant positions have protested on the streets, hoping for justice, while the central and state governments have remained largely apathetic to their plight.

This ruling is not only unprecedented in India but also contradicts the principles of the Indian Constitution, particularly the fundamental rights to life, livelihood, and employment. The judgment fails to critically examine the roles played by the central and state governments in this crisis and instead places the blame on deserving Indian youth. Furthermore, the ruling is ambiguous in several aspects. It orders corrupt individuals to return their salaries while exempting non-corrupt individuals, acknowledging that not all retrenched teachers were involved in corruption. However, despite the CBI investigation identifying corruption in only 14%

of higher-secondary and 8% of secondary appointments, the entire 2016 recruitment panel was scrapped. This decision affects not only the 26,000 retrenched teachers and their families but also denies aspirants their right to employment. The government has failed to conduct any schoolteacher recruitment drives in West Bengal since 2016, jeopardizing the livelihoods of many and the public education system. Additionally, this verdict pits retrenched teachers against aspiring jobseekers at a time when unemployment is at its highest since independence.

The responsibility for this disaster lies with the Indian judicial system and the corrupt state government, both of which have shown apathy toward the people of West Bengal. While the TMC-led state government has refused to expose those involved in corruption in SSC recruitments, the BJP has ensured that all 26,000 teachers lose their jobs to settle political scores with the TMC. This unprecedented verdict, targeting all 26,000 teachers, sets a dangerous precedent where the livelihoods of a massive number of people are sacrificed for the political interests of those ruling at the centre. The verdict contains several contradictions and discrepancies. For instance, it clearly distinguishes between tainted and untainted candidates, yet cancels the entire panel, denying natural justice to untainted candidates who were not linked to any corruption according to the CBI report. This is a gross violation of the Constitution's

foundational principles, which ensure the right to life, livelihood, and employment as fundamental rights.

In West Bengal, the teachers who have lost their jobs and face uncertainty about their future have taken to the streets, erupting in dissent and demanding justice and reinstatement. A continuous sit-in protest is ongoing at Esplanade in the heart of Kolkata. Several protests and gherao programs have been organized near the School Service Commission office in Kolkata. On April 8, during one such protest held across various districts outside the District Inspector of School Education offices, the state police resorted to lathi charges, particularly in Kasba, Kolkata. Several teachers were injured, and many were arrested. Despite this state repression, the teachers remain resolute in their fight against unjust victimization and the stymying of their careers due to the corruption of political leaders and a politicized justice system under the BJP regime.

On April 16, a contingent of teachers staged a one-day sit-in protest at Jantar Mantar in Delhi, with members of the Democratic Teachers Initiative (DTI) in attendance. Comrade Uma from DTI delivered a stirring speech, expressing fervent solidarity.

A protest erupted on 22 April outside the SSC building in Salt Lake, where qualified teacher candidates demanded the immediate release of the "eligible-ineligible" list without any further delay or excuses.

The mass termination of teachers has significantly crippled West Bengal's state education system. Most schools already have a skewed student-teacher ratio, falling far below the mandatory

30:1 ratio stipulated by the Right to Education Act. Many concerned citizens view this unjust termination as a deliberate attack on the state education system, which primarily serves students from poor and underprivileged backgrounds. Some believe this concerted attack on government education will pave the way for the privatization of education, further stigmatizing government and government-sponsored education, which is already plagued by corruption and inadequate infrastructure.

The teachers remain resolute in their fight to reclaim their jobs,

which have been unjustly stripped from them. Their struggle is not only for their individual survival but also against rampant state-sponsored corrupt practices in government examinations, which are prevalent in exams ranging from the West Bengal SSC to the all-India NEET. Their fight is also against the growing nexus between the judiciary and politics under the RSS-BJP regime, which sacrifices the lives and livelihoods of innocent citizens for political gain.

Our solidarity lies with the thousands of job-seeking youth

who have fallen prey to the corruption channels protected by the West Bengal state government, the CBI, and the Indian judiciary. We firmly believe that only a people's movement can bring justice to the agitating teachers and job-seeking youth. We remain committed to supporting their movement to safeguard their jobs and will stand by all their efforts for justice. We are also dedicated to ensuring that the future of 26,000 teachers is not sacrificed in the power struggle between the central and state governments. ■

CPIML GS Appeals to President for Justice to West Bengal's Terminated Teachers

In a letter addressed to the President of India, Droupadi Murmu on April 9, the General Secretary of the CPI(ML), Dipankar Bhattacharya, has sought urgent intervention to protect nearly 26,000 schoolteachers in West Bengal whose livelihoods have been destroyed by a controversial Supreme Court verdict.

The mass termination, ordered in the name of punishing corruption in recruitment processes, has been widely criticised as unjust and disproportionate. "The court and government themselves acknowledged that the overwhelming majority of those affected were recruited fairly," Com. Dipankar wrote. "Yet, they have now been stripped of their only source of secure and dignified livelihood."

The letter highlights the catastrophic impact on thousands of families who are now facing uncertainty, despair, and unemployment — all for no fault of their own. Moreover, the decision has left the public education system in chaos, creating further disruption for students in a state already grappling with chronic neglect of government schools and the privatisation push embedded in the National Education Policy (NEP).

"This collective punishment is not justice — it is a travesty," said Com. Dipankar, calling attention to

how the ruling not only penalises innocent teachers but also deepens the crisis of public education.

The CPI(ML) leader also drew attention to the wider context of rising corruption in education and recruitment systems across India, citing the Vyapam scam in Madhya Pradesh — where whistleblowers and witnesses were murdered — to the recent NEET and UPSC paper leak scandals. He argued that the state and judiciary have largely failed to deliver justice in these cases, and instead, victims are being punished.

"The rise of an education and examination mafia is indeed alarming," the letter reads. "But mass terminations cannot be the solution. We must distinguish between systemic rot and individual culpability. Justice must target the perpetrators, not the victims."

Com. Dipankar urged the President to urgently intervene to halt this injustice and help find a way forward — one that provides relief and reinstatement for the victimised teachers, while also strengthening public oversight and accountability in education and recruitment systems.

The CPI(ML) has vowed to stand with the dismissed teachers and students affected by this ruling, and to continue the struggle for a just, inclusive, and democratic education system.

Earlier on April 8, Raja Ram Singh and Sudama Prasad, Members of Parliament from CPI(ML) also wrote to President of India seeking intervention on the issue of termination of teachers. ■

Scrap the Draconian Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill 2024

Left organisations—including the CPI(M), LNP, CPI, CPM, and PWP—along with various lawyers, students, and civil-society groups, have jointly raised serious concerns over the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024. In a letter to the 21-member Joint Select Committee on the Bill, chaired by Shri Chandrashekhar Bawankule, these organisations describe the legislation as draconian, repressive, and unconstitutional. The letter points out that, under the guise of combating what the Bill terms the “menace of naxalism” and organisations alleged to be involved in anti-state activities, it seeks to create a police state and suppress democratic voices.

Originally introduced on 11 July 2024, the legislation was re-introduced in the Maharashtra State Assembly on 18 December 2024 and was then referred to the Joint Select Committee, which is mandated to present its report in the February–March 2025 Assembly session.

The letter also notes that the Bill—as introduced in December 2024—has not been placed in the public domain, thereby undermining transparency. All submissions to the JPC are premised on the understanding that the December 2024 text is identical to the version first tabled in July 2024.

Below is the full text of the letter:

1. The legislation is introduced avowedly to tackle “urban naxals”. The Statement

of Objects and Reasons of the Bill states that this new law is needed to stop the “menace of naxalism” and counter the activities of “naxal organizations or similar organizations through their united front” that “are creating unrest among common masses to propagate their ideology of armed rebellion against the constitutional mandate and disrupts public order in the State”. The Bill empowers the Government to declare an organisation as “unlawful”. The consequences of this are four-fold.

Firstly, persons who are members or not members but associated with the organisation are liable to be punished.

Secondly, the Deputy Magistrate or Commissioner of Police can thereafter notify any place which was used for the activities of such organisation, following which possession of that place is taken and remain in the possession of the Government for as long as it decides.

Thirdly, the Deputy Magistrate or Commissioner of Police shall take possession of all movable property found within such notified place, including moneys, securities and other assets, which could be forfeited to the Government.

Fourthly, any moneys, securities and other assets will be forfeited to the Government on its satisfaction that it is being used or is intended to be used for such organisation.

The Bill also provides provisions for aggrieved persons to challenge these orders and

actions of the State authorities. This, in sum and substance, is the “Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, 2024. Besides these draconian consequences, the Bill is problematic at so many levels.

2. Vagueness in definition at the cost of civil liberties and human rights: There are fundamental tenets and principles which guide the drafting of criminal statutes – principle of maximum certainty, principle of strict construction, principle of broader purposive approach, presumption of innocence, principle of fair labelling, principle of proportionality, principle of prior fault, nullum crime sine lege (no crime without law) and nullum poena sine lege (no punishment without law), the principle of non- retroactivity, right of Self Incrimination and the specificity of offences. It goes without saying that the formulation of criminal statutes proceed on the basis of these core principles with the crafting of provisions not inconsistent with them. It is shocking that this Bill falls short when gauged through the lens of these basic tenets and principles.

The Bill is marked by vague and broad definitions that are antithetical to criminal statutes.

An organisation can be declared an “unlawful organization” if it indulges in or has in pursuance of its objects abets or assists or gives aid, or encourages directly or indirectly through any medium, devices or otherwise, any “unlawful activity”. As such the centrepiece of the proposed legislation is the definition of unlawful activity”, which is extremely vague, broad and therefore problematic. It brings within its fold any action which “constitutes a danger or menace to public order, peace or

tranquillity”; or even “interferes or has a tendency to interfere with the maintenance of public order”; or “interferes or tends to interfere with the administration of law, or its established institutions and personnel”; or “encouraging or preaching disobedience of established law and its institutions”. Thus by this broad definition, every act of dissent including peaceful protests and non-violent civil disobedience could be criminalised. The basic freedom of speech and expression and right to dissent would be rendered illusory. Another aspect that is deeply problematic is that several of the terms used in this definition – danger, menace, encouraging, preaching, etc. are not defined in the Bill.

This vagueness in definition goes against the basic tenet of criminal jurisprudence, that a criminal act should be well defined and cannot be left for interpretation since that gives way to abuse of the law.

Vagueness also pervades the definition of “organisation” under the Bill. According to the Bill, an organisation is defined as meaning “any combination, body or group of persons, whether known by any distinctive name or not, and whether registered under any relevant law or not, and whether governed by any written constitution or not”. Going by this broad definition, the Government can use this law to target any group of people by claiming that they are part of some “organisation”, even though such organisation may not even exist!

3. Unbridled powers to the Government and authorities: Having provided vague and broad definitions, which can be used and abused to quell dissent, the Bill bestows unbridled powers on the

Government and authorities in the declaration of an organisation as an “unlawful organisation” and the consequences that flow thereon.

The Bill empowers the State Government to declare as an “unlawful organisation” any organisation if the Government is of the “opinion” that the organisation is, or has become, such! All it takes is for the Government to form such an opinion to altogether end the activities of that organisation. There is no burden of proof whatsoever that is required to be borne by the government in declaring any persons or group and their activities as unlawful. In effect, the Bill empowers the government to pursue any individual or organisation that it considers a threat, to declare all of its activities (including nonviolent activity, speech, or communications) illegal, to restrict its activities, and to punish some or all of its members.

To portray an illusion of procedural safeguards, the Bill contemplates an Advisory Board to review the Government’s decision of notifying an organisation as unlawful. The farce of due process is engrained in the provisions itself. While it is stated in the Bill that a notification declaring an “unlawful organisation” as such will not take effect until the Advisory Board has confirmed the decision of the Government, it also provides an exception to this “if the State Government is of the opinion that circumstances exist which render it necessary for the Government to declare an organisation to be an unlawful organisation with immediate effect”!

A question also arises at the possibility of the Advisory Board performing its duties in a fair and non-partisan manner. For this we

need to examine the constitution of the Advisory Board, which according to the Bill shall consist of “three persons who are or have been or are qualified to be appointed as Judge of the High Court”. Retired High Court judges and advocates qualified to be appointed as an High Court Judge would form this Advisory Board. This Bill comes at a time when we have seen a sitting High Court judge resigned and contested on a BJP ticket, and a couple of others declare their allegiance to the RSS after retirement. What more needs to be said?

Similar unbridled powers are given to the Deputy Magistrate/ Commissioner of Police in regard to notifying “any place” which in their “opinion” was used for the activities of an organisation declared as an “unlawful organisation”. Once this is done, any person living in the place stands to be evicted and possession transferred to the Government until such time that the organisation is not an “unlawful organisation” anymore. Such actions are also contemplated in regard to all movable property (including moneys, securities and other assets) found within such notified place, as also any moneys, securities and other assets even otherwise held to be used or intended to be used for such organisation. In all these scenarios, the Bill provides for an appeal by the aggrieved persons to the Government! So the Government that has formed the opinion and caused the declaration of an unlawful organisation would be Appellate Authority against any decision of the Deputy Magistrate or the Commissioner of Police, as the case may be. Thus, wide discretionary powers have been given to Deputy Magistrate/

Commissioner of Police regarding immovable and moveable property (including moneys, security and other assets), without any real procedural safeguard or remedy.

4. Arbitrary and disproportionate punishments: The penalties laid down in the Bill are grossly arbitrary.

Any person who is a member of an unlawful organization or takes part in meetings or activities of any such organization or contributes or receives or solicits any contribution for the organization, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term upto three years and fine of upto three lakh rupees.

Any person who is not a member of an unlawful organization but who contributes/receives/solicits any contribution or aid for such organization or harbours any member of such organization, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term upto two years and fine upto two lakhs rupees.

Any person who manages/assists in the management of an unlawful organization or promotes or assists in promoting a meeting of any such organization or indulges in any unlawful activity of such

organization in any manner, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term upto three years and fine upto three lakhs rupees.

Any person who commits/abets/attempts to commit/plans to commit any unlawful activity of such unlawful organization, shall be punished with imprisonment for a term upto seven years and fine upto five lakhs rupees.

What is of great concern is that these offences are defined without any element of mens rea i.e. intent. Even a draconian law like the UAPA has the element of mens rea included in the definition of offences, by qualifying acts with the phrase “knowingly and intentionally”. The Bill is hence, draconian, and grants excessive, arbitrary powers, as it empowers the state to jail anyone who criticises it or stands against its policies.

Conclusion

Reading this Bill, one is reminded of a previous legislation sought to be introduced in India. It was the Public Safety Bill ushered in by the British colonial rulers in 1918. The purpose of that legislation was to tackle the

independence struggle and to suppress the genuine aspirations of the people. It was when the Assembly was considering this and the other proposed enactment, Trade Disputes Bill, that Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt threw grenades and pamphlets shouting slogans of ‘Inquilab Zindabad’ in the Parliament. The 1918 Public Safety Bill was finally rejected by the Assembly, with Motilal Nehru strongly rejecting it on behalf of the Indian National Congress.

The present legislation introduced by the Maharashtra Government has similar draconian intent being a piece of legislation intended to suppress dissent and cause alarm amongst the citizenry. This attempt to enact the bogey of urban naxals into law, runs contrary to the freedoms guaranteed by the Constitution and reintroduces colonial tools of control and suppression at the cost of democratic norms and ethos and ought to be rejected in toto by this Committee. It is necessary that the Committee grant us a personal hearing to present our views. ■

Maharashtra Erupts in Protest Against Draconian Public Security Bill

On 22 April, massive demonstrations were held at 80 locations across 35 of Maharashtra's 36 districts, as nearly one lakh people protested the draconian Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill 2024.

The protest saw united participation from all Left parties, three MVA constituents, the Joint Trade Union Action Committee, and a wide range of civil society organisations. A memorandum addressed to the Chief Minister was submitted to government officials at various locations. Comrades from CPI(ML), AICCTU, and LNP actively took part in protests in Mumbai, Pune, Kolhapur, Aurangabad, and Nagpur, addressing the crowds and warning against the dangerous implications of the Bill. ■



The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Act: A Gateway to Privatisation

The Oilfields (Regulation and Development) Amendment Act, recently passed by the Parliament marks a decisive turn in India's management of petroleum and mineral-oil resources. Framed as a set of reforms to boost efficiency and domestic production, it in fact clears the path for large-scale privatisation: state control is cut back, environmental safeguards are loosened, and public-sector enterprises lose their historic primacy.

Foremost among the changes is the renaming of “mining leases” as “petroleum leases.” Whereas the former were governed by a detailed auction and oversight regime, the new category carries far fewer procedural checks, allowing private and foreign companies to acquire, transfer or aggregate leases with minimal transparency. The Amendment also streamlines lease assignments, transfers and sub-leasing, all but guaranteeing a flood of corporate capital into once-public assets.

Equally troubling is the Act's abolition of criminal sanctions for regulatory breaches. Under the 1948 Act, serious offences—such as unauthorised boundary extensions, safety lapses or environmental violations—entailed penal liability for company officers. The Amendment replaces these with civil penalties alone, effectively institutionalising a “pay-and-proceed” approach that treats fines merely as a cost of doing business.

By recasting “mineral oils” as an exclusively Union subject, the legislation strips state governments of their power to regulate, tax and

oversee extraction within their own territories. States have traditionally derived substantial revenues from royalties, sales levies and cess; under the new scheme, those revenues accrue instead to New Delhi or to private leaseholders. This centralisation undermines cooperative federalism, deprives resource-rich regions of fiscal autonomy and weakens local accountability for environmental and social protection.

The Amendment builds upon earlier pro-corporate frameworks—most notably the New Exploration Licensing Policy (NELP, 1997) and the Hydrocarbon Exploration and Licensing Policy (HELP, 2016)—but discards even their modest safeguards for public-sector undertakings (PSEs). Enterprises such as ONGC and Oil India Ltd have long carried out the riskiest upstream work—preliminary surveys, seismic studies and exploratory drilling—only to cede the bulk of commercial gains to private consortia. For example, ONGC first confirmed hydrocarbon reserves in the Krishna–Godavari (KG) Basin in 1983; yet Reliance Industries Ltd and its partners realised the largest profits during later production phases. A similar case is the Panna–Mukta oilfields in the Gulf of Khambhat: although ONGC carried out the initial discovery and bore the full exploration risk, the 1994 production-sharing contract awarded ONGC only a 40 per cent stake, leaving Reliance Industries and BG Exploration & Production (formerly Enron) with the remaining 60 per cent. As a result, the Reliance-led consortium now captures the majority of operating revenues

and profit shares from these fields. Furthermore, the Directorate General of Hydrocarbons in 2017 earmarked 149 “small and marginal” ONGC fields (aggregate reserves ~791 million tonnes crude, 333 billion m³ gas) for auction to private and foreign firms, on the premise that specialised operators could boost production.

Allegations of corporate rent-seeking in the KG-D6 block illustrate the risks ahead. Reliance's KG-D6 concession, once India's largest gas discovery, was projected to yield 80 million m³/day (cubic metres of gas per day) at peak. By 2013, actual output had fallen below 15 million m³/day—an under-production documented in Gas Wars by Paranjy Guha Thakurta, Subir Ghosh and Jyotirmoy Chaudhuri, which argues that RIL deliberately throttled output to force higher gas prices. A Comptroller and Auditor General report later criticised “gold-plating” of costs by nearly US \$6 billion, thereby delaying profit-sharing and inflating the company's price requests.

This Amendment forms part of a broader corporate-driven energy strategy under the Modi government. In the nuclear sector, proposed amendments to the Atomic Energy Act, 1962 and related liability legislation would permit private manufacture of reactor components and joint ownership of nuclear plants alongside NPCIL—a departure from decades of state monopoly. The Electricity (Amendment) Bill, 2022 similarly opens distribution to multiple licence-holders and cross-subsidy pools, enabling private firms to “cherry-pick” high-margin urban areas while leaving loss-making rural grids to flounder. In coal, 100 per cent foreign direct investment is already permitted for commercial mining, drawing conglomerates such as Adani Enterprises into extraction

despite environmental and social concerns. Even in renewables, public units like NTPC RE have been sidelined while private giants secure the majority of subsidies and contracts.

The human and ecological stakes could not be higher. With criminal penalties removed, companies face little deterrent against spills, groundwater contamination or habitat destruction. Local authorities—long better placed to judge regional sensitivities—are stripped of enforcement powers. On the labour front, privatisation promises contract-based jobs with lower wages, fewer benefits and weaker safety standards, replacing the stable employment and collective-bargaining rights that PSU workers currently enjoy.

Far from a mere technical overhaul, the Act represents a wholesale transfer of India's strategic energy assets into private hands. It threatens to deepen regional inequalities, erode national self-reliance and sacrifice both workers' rights and environmental integrity on the altar of short-term profit. ■

Working Class in a Scorched Climate

▲ SOUMYA DUTTA

[India is once again in the grip of deadly heatwaves—and once again, it is the poor who suffer the most. As temperatures climb past survivable thresholds, the country's vast informal workforce continues to toil under an unforgiving sun. They do so without access to protective gear, safe drinking water, rest breaks, or even shade. From blistering heat waves and flash floods to unsafe housing and precarious livelihoods, the working class is on the receiving end of this escalating crisis.]

While news coverage often focuses on IMD forecasts and record-breaking temperatures, the deeper crisis unfolds on the margins, where workers face the collapse of their health, income, and dignity with little institutional support. Climate change, as climate and energy researcher Soumya Dutta reminds us in this article, is not a distant threat. It is here, and it is devastating.

A recent report by Down to Earth reveals that official figures vastly understate the toll of heatwaves on the toiling population. These figures fail to account for deaths indirectly triggered by extreme heat—such as cardiac arrests or kidney failure among already vulnerable groups. This erasure weakens public urgency and limits necessary policy action, further deepening the crisis for those most at risk. – Ed.]

Climate Change crisis has become one of the biggest challenges facing humanity, and there is no 'relief' in sight as mitigation actions (sharply reducing the emission of greenhouse gases) by almost all governments and businesses are way short of those required, sharply increasing the threat levels on all vulnerable communities across the world. With the weak climate pledges from governments, the world is set for about 2.9 °C average temperature rise by the end of the century. And the march of 'hottest years on record' are converging more on all the recent years, with 2023 and 2024 breaking the hottest year records. The year 2024 was about 1.58 °C warmer than the pre-industrial average temperature (average of those between 1850-1900). Sadly, facing an advancing climate catastrophe, the global GHG emissions have kept rising even after the over hyped Paris Climate Change Agreement (PA) of 2015.

Out of the approximately 146 crore (1.46 billion) people who inhabit India today, a major proportion belong to the poor working class who are forced to engage in physical labour to earn a basic living, even in extreme weather and climatic conditions. These include construction workers, street vendors, farm labourers, porters, rickshaw drivers, small scale fish-workers, Gig workers, domestic helps, sanitation workers, and so on. And these are the people worst affected by the increasing impacts of extreme climates, with the least resources to cope with the impacts. One of the fastest rising climate change impacts is the rise of heat-waves and heat index (simultaneous rise of air-temperature and relative humidity).

Heat waves and Heat Index

Over the past several years, heatwaves (and the less publicized but more lethal - heat index¹, which is a deadly combination of high temperature and high humidity) have adversely affected and even killed an increasing number of people across the Gangetic basin, north-west India and parts of the peninsular India. There has been some research on this, and several international publications have highlighted the extreme seriousness of the threats. One of the well researched papers on the increase in heat-wave days and mortality due to heat-waves (including heat index) published in the journal Science Advances² analyzed changes in summer temperatures, the frequency, severity, and duration of heat waves, and heat-related mortality in India between 1960 and 2009 using data from the India Meteorological Department. The study warns that even slight increases in average temperatures significantly raise the risk of heat-related deaths, especially in densely

populated and economically vulnerable regions.

It is to be noted that some of the worst affected regions are also those where the population densities are relatively higher with a larger working class population. Today we have a world where over 56% of the global population lives in cities, and a significant part of these people in cities of the developing countries belong to the poor. Out of a number of climate change impacts, urban poor are impacted most by sharply increasing heat waves, dangerous heat index and urban flooding incidents. And when the average temperatures become high, urban areas suffer from even higher temperatures, not least because of the Urban Heat-Island Effect, which keeps city temperatures about 4 to 6°C higher than surrounding open areas.

The Urban Heat Island Effect occurs because of heavy use of steel, concrete, glass etc in cities and the black-top and concrete roads – all of which traps the heat and stores it for longer periods. By some estimates, in the year 2023, about 550 million or roughly 37-38% of the Indian population are living in cities. All these 550 million, poor or rich are exposed to sharply increasing climate change impacts (recent devastating Bangalore floods being just one example), but the poor and working class are far more exposed and have much less wherewithal to cope.

The global temperature rise is also causing more heavy downpours and flooding events, along with more heat-waves. It was found by some extreme event attribution studies that the 2022 extreme heat wave incidents in India and Pakistan were made 30 times more likely due to climate change, and these happened during a La Nina year, supposed to be cooler than normal.

In India, it is the IMD who determines and announces if and when a heatwave condition has started in any place and time by the Maximum temperature recorded - for the Plains

40°C, for Coastal areas 37°C and for Hills 30°C, with these conditions prevail for at least 2 days, with recorded temperature 4.5°C above 'normal' for the time. Severe heat waves occur when the departure from normal is significantly higher (5-6°C or 7°C or more, depending on the normal maximum temperature), or if the actual maximum temperature reaches 45°C or more.

A recent (2020) comprehensive assessment of climate change impacts and trends over the Indian region, by India's Ministry of Earth Sciences, shows a frightening scenario projection in terms of both extreme precipitation and extreme heat incidents, as we go past the coming decades. On top of these, coastal cities and towns are now facing more frequent and more intense tropical storms and cyclones, driven by higher sea surface temperatures in both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea and these trends will worsen.

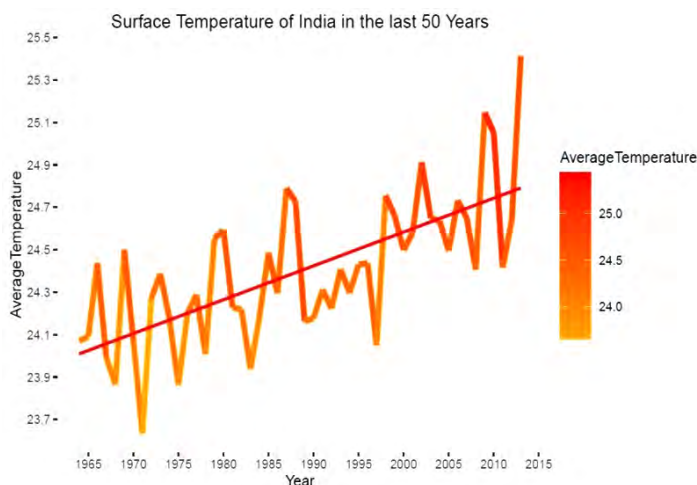
There is ample empirical evidence of these increases in India, as the graph here shows the sharply rising surface temperatures over the 50 year period from 1965 to 2015. The urban heat island effects are also increasing due to increasing construction density and decreasing open green spaces. Again, the working class are packed in cramped unsafe housing and forced to work exposed to the elements.

Impacts on Working Class

As mentioned briefly, the three climate impacts that are directly and increasingly impacting poor working class people the most, more in urban India but also the rural poor workers, in both their workspaces and their unsafe residential areas, are longer and more severe heat waves, rising heat index, sudden heavy rainfalls and flooding (accompanied with landslides in hilly areas).

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO), population exposure to heat is increasing due to climate change, with extreme temperature events becoming more frequent, longer, and intense. While rising global temperatures affect everyone, certain populations, such as the elderly, children, pregnant women, outdoor workers, athletes, and the poor, are more vulnerable to heat-related health risks. Gender also plays a role in heat exposure.

The human body cannot easily tolerate ambient conditions exceeding 37°C. At temperatures of 37°C and a relative humidity exceeding 40%, healthy individuals may begin to experience heat stress with prolonged activity or exposure, which most physical workers are forced to do as their only means of livelihood. Heat stress causes fatigue, headache and muscle cramps, while heat stroke can lead to death, even among healthy people. Those with chronic health conditions like



diabetes or high blood pressure, heart and kidney conditions etc are at greater risk of suffering heat stress and heat stroke.

Data and Advisories are Not Enough

Manual workers have to spend a large part of their often long working hours in some of the hottest regions of an urban area (black-top streets and concretised pavements are often much hotter than the temperature records given by the meteorological department as these records are 2-meter air temperatures, not the hotter surface temperatures). Thus they are exposed to a greater degree to the impacts of heat waves and heat index. After a long day of tiring work in hot surroundings, they are often denied a chance to cool off and recoup at home, as the tightly packed and poorly ventilated houses many of them live in also become centres of heat and humidity build up.

Thus, in many places in a city where people are doing manual/physical work, they face heat stress and severe heat-wave like conditions due to Urban Heat Island effect, even if the official data has not recorded heat-wave conditions. Heat and humidity build-up is another serious risk factor.

Unfortunately, many of the Heat Action Plans prepared by State governments and Urban Local Bodies do not take into cognisance these factors. There is no clear mechanism to monitor at micro-spatial scales where these workers are located, many recording stations being located at spacious shaded areas. These preclude early detection and preventive measures. Neither is the met department able or willing to declare a “heat wave” if a zone in the city with heavy concentration of exposed outdoor workers exceeds dangerous temperatures or humidity levels.

The advisories that the government issues when IMD announces a heat-wave condition is inadequate to deal with the problems. One, advisory regarding avoiding outdoor work, especially for

several days places the workers in severe economic stress. They should be compensated for the loss of working days, as these people are in no way responsible for creating global heating and climate change, while suffering the most from its impacts. Second, if it is a high temperature and humidity condition, the advice of “drink plenty of water” will not help cool the body enough, as evaporative cooling from the skin surface will be very low. These conditions put a lot of stress on both the heart and kidneys. If high temperature and high relative humidity conditions severely affect someone, external cooling of the person is needed to save that person.

Similarly, during urban flooding incidents, it's the streets which become water carriers and submerged, in the absence of adequate storm drainage in most Indian towns and cities. Most of the rain water is channelized to the streets and they often become mini rivers, damaging any unsecured belongings over them. On top of that, the housing areas of urban poor are often located near the drainage channels of cities, and the flood waters regularly damage their weakly built dwellings. As the IMD studies have shown, climate change has already changed the monsoon rainfall patterns, with fewer but more intense rainfall days, interspersed with long dry periods. This is again a cause for more severe urban flooding and increased fires.

A fourth climate change impact is increasing in recent years, and that is the rising cases of urban (also forest) fire incidents, as many of the ‘informal’ settlements are littered with flammable materials, and the hot and dry periods make conditions ideal for both accidental or other fires.

Need for Action

- **Local Monitoring:** Implement local temperature and humidity monitoring in working areas, especially for street vendors, using simple and affordable instruments.

- **Dialogue and Awareness:** Employers and the government must engage with unions and workers' organizations to raise awareness about heat-related health risks and the science behind them.
- **Compensation for Lost Work:** There should be provisions to compensate workers for lost working days due to heatwaves and similar climatic events.
- **Emergency Cooling Rooms (ECRs):** Establish ECRs in heavily populated working areas (e.g., markets, railway stations) to help prevent heat stress and heatstroke. This must be expanded to all working-class work areas.
- **Heatwave as a Notified Disaster:** Push for the government to declare heatwaves as a notified disaster to trigger automatic remedial actions.
- **Urban Flooding:** Improve localized weather monitoring, early warning systems, and action plans to address urban flooding effectively.
- **Elevation Mapping and Drainage:** Focus on mapping flood-prone areas and enhancing storm drainage capacities to reduce flood damage.
- **Urban Fire Prevention:** Monitor local temperatures and humidity for early fire warnings; prepare communities and review fire department equipment to respond effectively in vulnerable and narrow lane areas.

All or most of these will require not only responsive governance, informed policies and action plans, but crucially – local level capacity building of the vulnerable communities too. ■

1. Also known as “feels-like” temperature. High humidity hampers sweat evaporation, making even moderate temperatures dangerously unhealthy by sharply increasing the risk of heat-related illnesses.

2. “Increasing Probability of Mortality During Indian Heat Waves” ” Published in *Science Advances*, VOL. 3, NO. 6

Fact Finding Report on Recent Incidents of Violence in Murshidabad

Dhulian municipality is an important centre under the jurisdiction of the Samserganj police station in Murshidabad. Adjacent to it lies the village of Jafarabad, part of the Tinpakuria Gram Panchayat, where on April 12, 2025, an extreme outburst of communal violence occurred. Two individuals from the Hindu community were brutally murdered. On the same day, in the Dhulian market, under the direct protection of the BSF, RSS workers unleashed terror on the Muslim community from morning till night. Prior to this, over several days, the Samserganj and neighboring areas under Suti police station witnessed severe state-sponsored repression on the spontaneous movement opposing the Waqf Amendment Act. On the day before the Jafarabad incident, April 11, in the Suti police station area, a muslim youth was shot dead by the police, and many others were injured by gunfire by BSF in Tarbagan on April 12.

In this context, on April 18 and 19, 2025, a delegation from CPI(ML) Liberation conducted a fact-finding investigation across the affected areas. Our observations are as follows:

1) A deep conspiracy to orchestrate planned communal violence in the region of centuries old harmony and peaceful coexistence

On April 12, in broad daylight, a frenzied mob dragged Haragobind Das and his son Chandan Das from their home in Jafarabad and hacked them to death. Their house was vandalized, with visible damage to the front door. Villagers reported that the mob consisted of over a hundred people. Jafarabad has around 100–125 Hindu households, many of which were attacked, some were set on fire, and several were looted. Simultaneously, in the neighboring

villages of Betbona, Ranipur, and Digri, Hindu localities were targeted, with houses set ablaze and looted. Women were subjected to obscene and abusive language. The attackers hurled communal slurs while vandalizing and throwing bombs. In Betbona, a similar pattern was observed; where Hindu-owned shops were selectively targeted while adjacent Muslim shops were left untouched. For nearly three to four hours, this mayhem continued, during which villagers repeatedly called the Samserganj police station but received no help or protection. The SDPO's office was just 1 km away, and the police station was 3 km away. The BSF, deployed to suppress the anti-Waqf Amendment Act protests, was stationed nearby in Dhulian but remained inactive.

This violence was not the result of any pre-existing communal tension. The Hindu residents of Jafarabad, especially the women, repeatedly emphasized that for many years, people of both communities have lived together harmoniously in social life—participating in each other's festivals and celebrations with warmth and camaraderie. Similarly, the Muslim residents of Kashemnagar in Suti Block No. 1 also affirmed that 'no one has ever even spoken ill of the other.'

There was no specific provocative incident or communal tension between the two communities in Jafarabad immediately preceding this attack. The nature of these killings and acts of terror suggests this was not a spontaneous outburst of mob violence, but rather a meticulously planned campaign of terror aimed at inciting communal hatred. Jafarabad is a Muslim majority area. As our vehicle passed through the area towards the attacked Hindu localities, Muslim youth gathered on both sides of the road repeatedly helped guiding

our way. Their body language showed no signs of hatred or hostility and their sympathy for the victims was evident. We found no evidence that local residents, driven by religious animosity, would attack their own neighbors in this manner.

When asked about the attackers' identities, villagers said all faces were covered, making recognition difficult. Even if some recognized the perpetrators, fear of future harassment likely prevented them from speaking out. However, a few villagers hinted at involvement from a particular community, mentioning the neighboring Shulitola village - an area locally referred to as the "anti-social quarter." No villagers named any political party or leader as being behind the attacks. All expressed deep distrust on the police administration and feelings of insecurity. Everyone recounted fleeing in different directions to save their lives.

The critical question remains: Was there a calculated political agenda behind this attack? Were the attackers mobilized to serve this purpose? Who were the real forces behind this violence? Was the objective to establish narratives like "Hindus under attack" or "Jihadi assault"? No clear answers or evidence emerged regarding these questions and it needs further deep social investigation. We learned several affected families had gone to Malda camp, with the reported intervention of BJP leaders. Others said they had taken refuge with relatives in Jharkhand. Six days after the incident, reassured by neighbors, some families began returning to the village. It was also reported that, many families were brought back from the camps by the administration.

2. Criminal Inaction of Police Administration and the TMC Government's Deplorable Tactics

Why did the police and the patrolling BSF forces stationed nearby fail to intervene during the four-hour-long frenzy of violence? Was this

sheer administrative incompetence, or deliberate inaction? The matter demands investigation. While no credible evidence confirms whether the attackers were outsiders, the inter-state and border-adjacent geographical location makes this possibility plausible.

The Samserganj assembly constituency falls under the Malda (South) Lok Sabha seat, currently held by Congress. However, the panchayats and municipality are under TMC control. The ruling party displayed complete inaction in addressing the situation. The FIR filed by the bereaved Hindu family names four individuals from Shulitola and two from Digri, all from minority communities. The police invoked Section 103 related to murder during property-related robbery. Most arrests were minority youths from Shulitola.

Earlier in Murshidabad district, communal violence had erupted in Beldanga as well. No proper investigation was conducted, nor were the perpetrators arrested. Here too, the state administration's shockingly silent role follows the same pattern. Does allowing violence to escalate and then projecting themselves as protectors constitute the Trinamool government's strategy? This question remains unanswered.

3. Not just "Hindus Attacked"! Muslims also face large-scale violence, Unprecedented State Terror on Waqf Protests

The anti-Waqf amendment movement began in Dhulian on April 8. Over subsequent days, protest marches continued. In Dhulian market, under BSF protection, RSS workers with swords openly carried out attacks, while at Tarabagan, BSF personnel opened fire, injuring several protesters.

The day before the Jafarabad incident, on Friday afternoon, April 11, a protest march against the Waqf amendments was organized at Saju More in Suti block. When police began lathi-charge, clashes erupted between protesters and police. During this

confrontation, police firing killed Ejaz Ahmed, a migrant laborer who had joined the protest. Our team visited Ejaz's home and conducted house-to-house visits in his neighborhood and across the affected area to document these events.

From the midnight of April 11 till dawn, extensive police raids were carried out in the villages of Kashemnagar and Kumrapur in Suti. Numerous villagers, especially women, described these police operations as horrific. The forces arrived not only with heavy firearms but also carrying crowbars and thick sticks. Some were seen wearing half-pants, and a few had on flip-flops. They used crowbars to break down doors and entered homes, unleashing widespread terror. They began beating up all the young men indiscriminately and hurled obscene, vulgar abuse at the women in the houses. Even small boys were severely beaten. Several motorcycles were broken. A total of 71 people, including many minors, were taken away by the police. In no case was any arrest receipt or documentation provided to the families. When women went to the police station to inquire about the paperwork, they were driven away. The fear was clearly visible on their faces. Later, through inquiries, the villagers came to know that they were charged under extremely serious criminal sections, and 9 of them were placed in 9 days of police custody. Villagers from Kashemnagar reported that at least 30 of those taken were minors.

Although there were some destructive and aggressive elements involved in the movement, they were not the dominant force. The people of Kashemnagar said that the day before the shooting incident, the officer-in-charge of Suti police station had come and warned them to stop the protest rally. Villagers questioned whether they no longer had the democratic right to peaceful protest. Driven by a sense of rights, a large number of people, particularly the youth had gathered for the rally, much like in other parts of the state.

Even five days after the terror, people remained deeply afraid. Young men could not stay at home at night. It was observed that there was growing anger among the minority community against the ruling Trinamool Congress. A few Muslim organizations were seen gaining ground in the area.

4. The claim that the Waqf movement turned violent and suddenly took the shape of a communal riot is an absolute falsehood.

In Suti, one of the main centers of the Waqf movement, where the police shot and killed a young man and many others were seriously injured by gunfire, there is not a single report of communal violence. In that area, it was a joint operation of police and BSF that unleashed terror. The Waqf movement is entirely anti-state; it is not at all directed against the Hindu community.

In conversations with Muslim citizens across various areas, no evidence was found of any anger or aggression directed at Hindus over this issue. Notably, in Dhulian Bazaar, acts of terror were carried out openly by RSS workers under the protection of the BSF, and incidents in Tarabagan (under Dhulian Municipality) are also worth mentioning.

On the morning of April 12, in Tarabagan, the BSF forces or, in the words of the locals, "a group dressed in BSF uniforms" opened fire on protesting people. Twelve individuals were shot. Four of the injured were admitted to Baharampur Medical College Hospital, among whom one, 12-year-old Hasan Sheikh, is in critical condition as informed to the fact finding team when they visited the homes.

On April 12, Muslim-owned shops were set ablaze and being looted in Dhulian market. However, no Hindu homes were attacked there. The fact-finding team visited and inspected those shops owned by minorities and spoke with local people. It was not large businesses that were targeted, but mostly small shops that faced destruction and looting. In the

entire Shamsherganj region, incidents of attacks on Hindus were reported only in Jafrabad, Betbona, and two adjacent villages. Had the Muslim community truly engaged in "communal riots," many more Hindu-populated villages would have been attacked. In that particular legislative assembly area, 82% of the voters are Muslim.

5. The Rise of Hindutva Forces

In this region, Hindutva forces have been steadily increasing their activities. This became even more evident during the Waqf movement. In this context, the inaction of the BSF and police administration was noticeable. In fact, the ruling party and the administration seemed to be working hand in hand with them. On the day of the incident, a scuffle broke out during a protest march in Dhuliyān town, under Shamsherganj police station, over an incident of stone-pelting.

The Shamsherganj police station is located right on the main road of Dhuliyān town. From the morning till late at night on April 12, acts of terror against the Muslim community were carried out openly in the Dhuliyān Bazaar area, right under the nose of the police. In front of selected houses, sword-wielding mobs roared threats, shops were set on fire, and looting took place. The Hindutva extremists did not hide their faces or identities. These events were executed with clear premeditated planning. RSS workers from Ghoshpara carried out acts of terror in broad daylight, without concealing who they were.

The state BJP leadership and its propaganda machinery openly spread communal hatred. On the second day of the visit of fact-finding team, it was observed that these same leaders, along with the Governor, were actively fueling divisive politics among the affected and outraged people. The Governor visited the Hindu neighborhoods of Jafrabad but did not go to the home of the slain Muslim youth in Suti. The message was clear.

The state government has

completely failed to curb the deep and direct influence of RSS and conspirators within the police force.

6. The Role of the BSF

The BSF is authorized to enter up to 50 kilometers inside the border areas (previously it was 15 km). Large parts of Shamsherganj and Suti fall within this zone. According to protocol, they are supposed to coordinate with the state police to maintain law and order. But why did they not play any effective role?

In the Hindu-populated areas that were attacked, the BSF was stationed very nearby yet remained completely inactive. They allowed the attackers to commit murders, arson, and other acts of violence with impunity.

In contrast, their behavior in Muslim areas was drastically different. There, the BSF launched direct and terrifying attacks—shooting and killing people, injuring many, entering homes, vandalizing property, and making indiscriminate arrests. In one word, in those areas, the BSF represents fear and hatred.

Meanwhile, in Hindu neighborhoods, the BSF is seen by many as a protector. It was evident that Shamsherganj police station had effectively handed over control to the BSF, which then allowed terror to be unleashed—against Muslims on one side and, simultaneously, against Hindus on the other.

Conclusion and Emerging Demands

Mainstream media has widely broadcasted the narrative of "Hindus under attack" in relation to the violent incidents in Jafrabadh, portraying it through a communal lens. However, the police-led (or police and goon-backed) terror in Kashemnagar and Kumrapur, where young boys were beaten, arbitrarily detained, and charged under severe criminal sections; along with the acts of terror against Muslims in Dhuliyān Bazaar, have been entirely suppressed.

We appeal to all democratic organizations and responsible

independent journalists to stand with the affected people of Shamsherganj and Suti. It is imperative to expose the criminal inaction of the police on one hand, and the blatantly violent, communal nature of their operations on the other, and to bring these truths before the public. The events in Shamsherganj and Suti are being used by the BJP and RSS to spread lies and poisonous hatred in the state. We must stand united against this saffron conspiracy.

Demands

1. The criminals were allowed to carry out murder and terror so freely right under the nose of the police in Dhuliyān and Jafrabadh. The ruling Trinamool government must take its responsibility. A judicial inquiry must be conducted, and a report published within a fixed timeframe. The attackers must be identified and severely punished.

2. Symbolic transfers are not enough. The Officer-in-Charge (OC) of Shamsherganj and Suti police stations, along with the Sub-Divisional Police Officer (SDPO), must be suspended and brought under investigation immediately.

3. Raise your voice against the BJP's despicable communal politics that seeks to blame an entire community for the violence.

4. Unite against the BJP's conspiracy to spread hatred and provoke riots.

5. The TMC govt. must answer why the state unleashed terror against the just and constitutional protest against Waqf amendment, beating up innocent youth, arresting them on false charges, and conducting police raids on homes. We demand the immediate release of the unjustly detained youth and minors.

The Fact finding team led by CPIML CC member Comrade Jayatu Deshmukh comprised of Comrades Malay Tewari, Ranajay Sengupta, Chandrasmita Chowdhury, Barsha Baral, Madhurima Bakshi, Ritam Maji, Manbhola Chowdhury, Rajib Ray and Priya Ram. ■

Protests held Against Anti-Constitutional, Communal Waqf Amendment Bill

The RYA observed a protest day on April 5 against the Waqf Amendment Bill tabled by the Modi government in Parliament. Protest marches were held across several cities and towns, drawing large participation from students, youth, civil rights activists, intellectuals, and concerned citizens.

Addressing a public meeting in Bihar's Muzaffarpur, RYA National President Aftab Alam stated that the Waqf Amendment Bill forms a part of the RSS-BJP's long-term fascist agenda, aimed at transforming India from a pluralistic, multi-religious democracy into a communal, majoritarian state. He criticised the bill for seeking to dismantle the autonomy of Waqf Boards and for proposing the inclusion of non-Muslim members in these bodies — a move he described as a deliberate communal intrusion, undermining constitutionally guaranteed religious freedoms and minority rights.

The RYA slammed the government for pushing this bill without any democratic discussion, public consultation, or engagement with concerned stakeholders — neither with the Central Waqf Council, nor with State Waqf Boards, nor with representatives of the Muslim community. “This

deliberate bypassing of democratic procedure exposes the authoritarian and communal nature of the present regime,” he added.

In Gopalganj, RYA Bihar State President Jitendra Paswan lambasted the JD(U) for backing the bill despite the BJP's lack of a clear majority in the Lok Sabha. “Nitish Kumar and his party's support for this bill is not only a betrayal of Bihar's composite Ganga-Jamuni culture but also a historic backstab to the state's minority communities,” he said.

He strongly condemned the JD(U)'s opportunistic politics and warned that the people of Bihar would never forgive such treachery. “From the streets to the assemblies, this betrayal will be answered,” Jitendra affirmed.

Students Rise Against Modi Govt's Communal Ploy

On 4 April 2025, AISA along with other student organizations held a demonstration in Delhi's Jamia Millia Islamia University in protest against the unconstitutional and communal Waqf (Amendment) Bill, 2025.

In a shameful display of authoritarianism, Delhi police along with CRPF and RAF were also deployed outside the gate in large numbers since

morning to alarm the students, creating a threatening environment. Moreover, the Jamia administration locked down the campus—shutting all gates and preventing students from both entering and exiting.

As an act of symbolic resistance, the bill was burned. In a desperate attempt to drown out student voices, the proctor instructed campus guards to blow whistles continuously during the speeches—a cheap tactic that only further exposed the administration's fear of dissent. Despite these suppressive tactics, the protest was held with a participation of large number of students. Protests were also held in Delhi's Jawaharlal Nehru university and various varsities across the country.

CPIML Condemns the Repression in UP

CPIML has strongly condemned the brazen and unconstitutional crackdown on peaceful Muslim protestors in Muzaffarnagar, Uttar Pradesh, where hundreds have been booked by the police merely for wearing black armbands in opposition to the unconstitutional and communal Waqf Amendment Bill. This is an outrageous attack by Modi-Yogi regime on democratic rights and a clear attempt to criminalise dissent and target the Muslim community.

CPIML has demanded that all false cases against protestors be dropped immediately, and that the right to dissent be upheld. ■

Protests Against Price Hikes in Uttarakhand

Protesting the rising cost of living, CPI(ML) held a protest at Uttarakhand's Bindukhatta on April 8 carrying empty LPG cylinders to symbolise the crushing burden placed on the poor by the Modi government's latest price hike. The demonstrators vocally demanded an immediate rollback of the recent Rs. 50 increase in cooking gas (LPG) prices and the Rs. 2 rise in petrol and diesel rates.

Dr Kailash Pandey, CPIML's Nainital District Secretary, strongly criticised the decision, stating, “At a time when ordinary citizens are already grappling with skyrocketing inflation, this latest hike is nothing short of daylight robbery. The Modi government is wrecking household budgets while oil prices in the international

market are at historic lows. It proves beyond doubt that this regime is beholden solely to corporate interests — not the people.”

Vimla Rauthan, AIPWA convenor said that On one hand, Prime Minister Modi sheds crocodile tears through schemes like Ujjwala, and on the other, he pushes cooking gas beyond people's reach. This hypocrisy is intolerable.

The increase in price comes despite the fall of oil prices in the international market. This exposes the sheer callousness and profiteering agenda of the Modi government. Instead of passing on the benefit of reduced international rates to the public, the regime has chosen to further burden the working class and poor. ■

CISF Violence on Anti-Displacement Protesters in Bokaro

CPI(ML) has strongly condemned the brutal lathicharge carried out by the Central Industrial Security Force (CISF) on displaced protesters in Bokaro Steel City in Jharkhand on 3 April. In a press statement issued by Jharkhand state office in Ranchi on 5 April, CPI(ML) has termed the assault a "bloody beginning of a new phase of state-sponsored repression" aimed at crushing anti-displacement struggles in favour of corporate interests under the Modi regime.

CPI(ML) noted the central government is launching an offensive against Adivasis and local communities resisting forced displacement. CPI(ML) asserted that Jharkhand will not tolerate such repression, and that the intensified people's resistance in Bokaro and surrounding areas is proof that the struggle will continue.

CPI(ML) has also called on the Hemant Soren-led Jharkhand

government to break its silence and take a firm stand in favour of the displaced. The party announced a statewide protest on 7–8 April and urged broader mobilisation in defence of the democratic rights of displaced communities. The short-term relief is not enough—instead, a comprehensive strategic policy review on displacement by both central and state governments is urgently required.

The state committee also warned against opportunistic political manoeuvres by the BJP and AJSU who are cynically exploiting the movement for narrow electoral gains."

Death of Protester and Failed Negotiations

The lathicharge led to the tragic death of a protester, Prem Mahato, and injuries to several others. CPI(ML)'s Jharkhand state committee has expressed deep condolences to the bereaved family and demanded

immediate compensation for the victims and punitive action against the CISF officers responsible. The party has demanded that the Union Home Ministry and Ministry of Steel accept responsibility and has called for the resignation of Union Home Minister Amit Shah and Steel Minister Kumaraswamy.

Senior CPI(ML) Politburo member Haldhar Mahato visited the injured protesters and the family of the martyred comrade Prem Mahato, expressing solidarity and reaffirming the party's commitment to the struggle.

Following intense protests, all gates of the Bokaro Steel Plant have been blockaded for over 30 hours, bringing the plant's operations to a halt and trapping over 5,000 workers inside. Despite the urgent need for dialogue, the first tripartite meeting convened under Bokaro DC Vijaya Jadhav failed to yield any results. According to union representatives, BSL management has offered only contractual jobs to the family of the deceased and other apprentices. However, protesters

► *Continued on Next Page*

CPIML GS Meets Family of Bokaro Protest Martyr

On April 22, CPI(ML) General Secretary Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya—accompanied by Comrades Vinod Singh, Haldhar Mahto, Manoj Bhakt, Shashi Yadav and Deodeep Singh Divakar—visited the grief-stricken household of Prem Mahto, who was killed by the CISF during the April 3 Bokaro Steel Plant protest.

Prem, a B.Tech graduate who had completed his apprenticeship at the Bokaro Steel Plant, had joined a peaceful sit-in with fellow apprentice workers to demand permanent absorption in the plant. He and his friends never imagined that their non-violent protest would be met with a violent lathi charge.

At the Mahto residence, Prem's parents, Veeru and Gomti Mahto, and his younger brother, Prashant, spoke through their tears. They asked who had ordered the assault and why the CISF targeted the heads of unarmed protesters. Although the hospital lay only five minutes from the protest site, nearly an hour passed before the critically injured were finally admitted. Prem's distraught mother Gomti Mahto told that Prem was engaged to be married in April, but today the family has only one agenda - justice for their lost son.

The delegation assured the family that CPIML would continue to press for a full, independent inquiry into Prem's killing. They pledged to stand with all jobless, displaced, and deprived people of Jharkhand and across India. ■

are demanding direct employment within Bokaro Steel Limited (BSL). The management claims that no policy or authority exists to provide permanent jobs, which has led to a deadlock.

Condemning the brutal assault on displaced protestors in Bokaro,

CPI(ML) General Secretary Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya asserted that the CISF has repeatedly been weaponised against the working class of Jharkhand. “Under the Modi regime, draconian Labour Codes, reckless privatisation, mass layoffs, and large-scale displacement have

become the norm — and the CISF is being deployed as an instrument of repression to crush resistance,” he said. He demanded swift and decisive action to punish the perpetrators, ensure justice for the victims, and uphold the rightful demands of the displaced. ■

ASM Against ‘Operation Kagar’ and State Violence in Bastar

The Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha (ASM) held protests across multiple states on April 21 against the brutalities being carried out under “Operation Kagar”, condemning the targeted violence against Adivasis and the growing militarisation of their homelands. Demonstrations took place in Karnataka, Tamil Nadu, Odisha, Bihar, Jharkhand, Kerala, and West Bengal, while in Chhattisgarh, memorandums were submitted to the District Collector in Durg and the Tahsildar in Karora.

The Morcha has raised alarm over the use of advanced warfare equipment, including Israeli drones, and the increasing frequency of fake encounters and extra-judicial killings in Adivasi regions, particularly in Bastar. These developments come in the wake of Union Home Minister Amit Shah’s declaration to make India “Maoist-free” by March 2026—an announcement that has been widely criticised as a licence for unrestrained military operations in Adivasi areas.

The Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha has warned that there is no space left for democratic dissent. The large-scale deployment of security camps without the consent of Gram Sabhas in Fifth Schedule Areas, in violation of constitutional protections,

represents a systematic assault on Adivasi autonomy. Instead of development, the state is offering militarisation, while people continue to demand basic facilities such as schools, health centres and access to essential services.

In October 2024, the Chhattisgarh government took the draconian step of banning the Moolvasi Bachao Manch, a people’s rights organisation, under the Chhattisgarh Special Public Security Act. More recently, the Chhattisgarh’s police has targeted Manish Kunjam, prominent Adivasi leader in the Bastar region, who has been at the forefront of the struggle seeking investigation into the irregularities of distribution of tendu patta bonus amounting to crores of rupees.

Under the guise of ‘Naxal-mukt Bharat’, the BJP-led government has launched an all-out war against the Adivasi people. The so-called counter-insurgency campaign, in reality, serves as a front for facilitating corporate exploitation of the mineral-rich Adivasi belt, particularly Bastar. Reports of plans to convert military camps into “integrated development centres” have been met with scepticism by locals and rights groups, who view this as a thinly-veiled attempt to legitimise a permanent military presence in the area.

As part of the coordinated protests, the Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha submitted memorandums addressed to the President of India, Smt Droupadi Murmu, highlighting the collective punishment being meted out to Adivasis in the name of national security. The memorandums condemn the brutality of Operation Kagar, which seeks to dispossess Adivasis of their land, forests, and dignity.

The Morcha has called upon President Murmu to immediately intervene to halt this war of extermination and ensure democratic space and constitutional rights for Adivasis in Bastar and beyond. It also demands a full stop to the practice of awarding bounty money that incentivises killings over arrests in these so-called encounters. The targeting of Adivasi protestors, under the pretext of combating Maoism, is nothing short of a subversion of constitutional rule of law.

The President is urged to stand with the Adivasis in their struggle against corporate plunder and state violence, and to ensure the release of all human rights activists, people’s movement leaders and innocent Adivasis who have been falsely incarcerated in politically motivated cases.

The Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha’s nationwide mobilisation marks a sharp rebuke to the state’s war-driven policies at the behest of corporates in the heartlands of India. ■

Seshagiri Rao

The CPI(ML) is deeply saddened to announce the passing of Comrade Seshagiri Rao, affectionately known as Master Garu, a founding member and State Committee member of the Party in Andhra Pradesh. Comrade Rao breathed his last at a hospital in Vijayawada on April 21, where he had been undergoing treatment following brain haemorrhage surgery.

Born with a physical disability due to polio in childhood, Comrade Seshagiri never allowed his condition to hinder his resolve. Endowed with exceptional willpower, he consistently outperformed expectations and inspired all those around him with his determination and energy.

During his student days at the Sanskrit College, where he was enrolled in the Telugu Pandit course, he fearlessly challenged casteist and Brahminical structures entrenched within the institution's management. Later, he came into contact with the Party, CPIML, around the year 1978–79. He formed a student group in his college and used to conduct Red Guard activities in those days. Throughout the underground phase of the Party, Comrade Seshagiri's home became a hub of revolutionary activity and a shelter for national and state-level leaders. His contributions to the Party's publishing efforts were particularly remarkable. He played a foundational role in bringing out Bolshevik, the State organ during the underground period, and later in publishing the Telugu edition of Liberation.

From the days of the Indian People's Front (IPF) to the present, he remained at the helm of the Party's state office activities, performing every task with steadfast commitment. A lifelong adherent of communist values and principles, Comrade Seshagiri's life was a model of ideological clarity, personal simplicity, and political dedication. He did not limit his commitment to himself—he actively encouraged and mentored his family into the fold of the movement. His life partner, Nagamani, and son, Uday Kiran, were nurtured by him into becoming full-time party workers.

Comrade Seshagiri Rao's untimely demise is a grievous loss to the Party and to the entire communist movement. His unwavering commitment, ideological rigour, and humility will continue to inspire future generations of revolutionaries. The CPI(ML) pays heartfelt tribute and extends its deepest condolences to his comrades, friends, and family. Red Salute to Comrade Seshagiri Rao! ■



Anil Chaudhary

CPI(ML) mourns the passing of Anil Chaudhary, a lifelong people's activist, who breathed his last on 14 April 2025. Anil Chaudhary was a leading figure in grassroots people's movements and a passionate advocate of democracy, secularism, and justice. His journey began in the student movement, where he served as the General Secretary of the Jawaharlal Nehru University Students' Union (JNUSU). As a key figure in the Bhumi Adhikar Andolan and People's Union for Civil Liberties (PUCL), he stood by farmers, Adivasis, and all struggling communities. In 1995, he founded the Popular Education and Action Centre (PEACE), a capacity-building organisation dedicated to popular education. He was also involved with the Indian Social Action Forum (INSAF) and was a founding member of the coordination committee of the Coalition for Nuclear Disarmament and Peace (CNDP). Red Salute to Anil Chaudhary! ■



Karulal Meena

Comrade Karulal Meena, CPI(ML) District Secretary of Pratapgarh (Rajasthan), passed away on March 29. A dedicated party member for over four decades, he played a crucial role in strengthening the organisation in Rajasthan. Though his health had limited his activism in recent times, he was instrumental in organising the Pratapgarh District Conference in 2022. He was particularly committed to the expansion of irrigation facilities for farmers through the Bhanwar Semla Dam in Pratapgarh. Beyond his political contributions, Comrade Karulal Meena was a strong advocate of education and social equality. His lifelong dedication to the struggles of the working class and oppressed will remain an inspiration. Red Salute to Comrade Karulal Meena! ■



Hiralal Chaudhary

We mourn the passing of Comrade Hiralal Chaudhary, a veteran comrade from the 1970s and former branch secretary of the party in Bathani Tola (Sahar). He passed away on 16 April 2025 at the age of 70, after battling diabetes and liver-related illness. Comrade Hiralal leaves behind a proud revolutionary legacy, dedicating his life to the struggles of the oppressed and standing firm as a committed figure in the people's movement. Red salute to Comrade Hiralal! ■



CPI(ML) DELEGATION VISITS VIOLENCE-STRICKEN AREAS OF MURSHIDABAD



At house of Jafrabad victims (Haragobindo Das and Chandan Das)



At house of Ejaz Ahmed killed in police firing on 11 April in Suti

PROTEST AGAINST 'OPERATION KAGAR' AND STATE VIOLENCE IN BASTAR



TAMIL NADU



KERALA



ODISHA



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liberation@cpiml.org
www.liberation.org.in
PH.: 91-11-42785864