

SAVE INDIA, CHANGE INDIA

With the country inching closer to polls in five states followed by the parliamentary elections, the situation remains quite dire and critical. The sinister design of the powers to be to transform the country socially and politically in the mode of theocratic order of the Hindu Rashtra is already underway. Religious majoritarianism, curtailing press freedom, decimating the public sector to give leeway to private corporate interests, increased violence against historically marginalized communities, and heightened misogyny are just some of the phenomena in the long list of symptoms of a crumbling democracy. The prevailing reality looming large before all of us is the strangling of the ethos of justice, equality, and democracy, the cornerstone in the imagination of the new nation-state, India.

Drawing from the experiences and lessons of the anti-imperialist struggle, the nation-state was drawn up as a modern Sovereign Secular Socialist Democratic Republic. The preamble which is the keystone of the Constitution states this in the most unambiguous manner. Each of these words signify the lessons we have learnt in our great struggle against colonialism and how those lessons were to become the foundations for a plural, federal and egalitarian India. These lessons were multifaceted but intertwined in such a way that removing one could debase the foundations of the very essence of the nation that was arrived upon through long deliberations. Today, when the constitutional setup is under unprecedented strain and the idea of India threatened, it is imperative to look back at the vision and take inspiration from it to save the country from the autocratic clutches it is in and also change India.

The polity today faces a grave crisis spearheaded by the Sangh Parivar, who persists with its sectarian

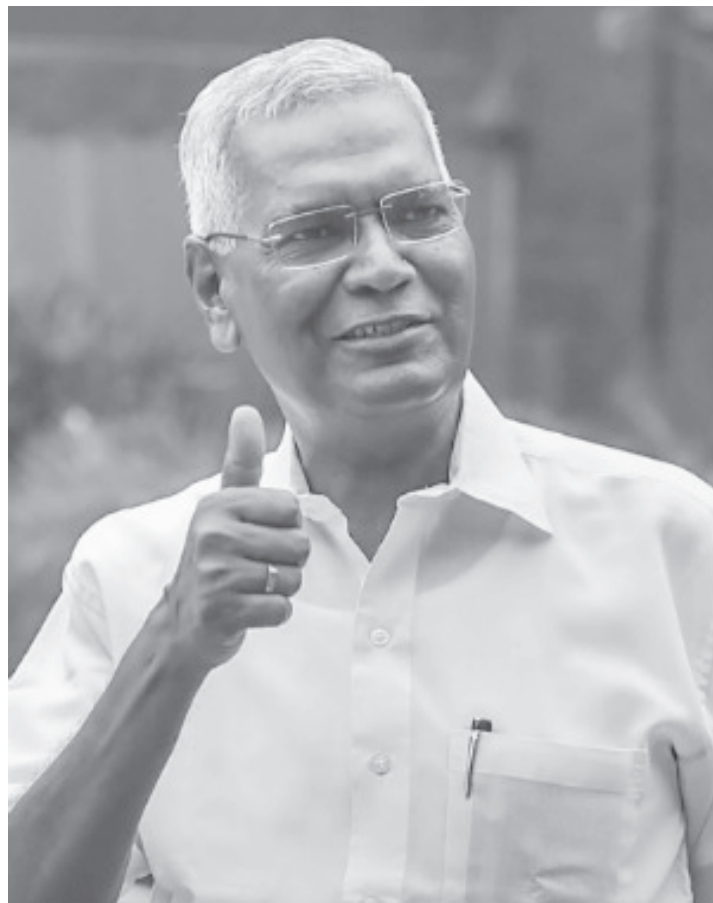
tradition, remain contemptuous and dismissive of the Constitution. Absolute lack of accountability and transparency is the flavor of governance, impunity to generate and sustain violence and hate is fast becoming the normative value. The freedom movement was never a linear or homogenous one. While the uprooting of foreign rule was central, the question of imperialism as a system of oppression, landlordism and the feudal mode of production, caste hierarchy were all placed in the larger discourse by varied actors at various moments.

It is this diversity that culminated in the making of the modern republic with the firm understanding that nation building is a dynamic process that must be constructively continued while keeping with principles of equality, justice, and liberty at the Centre. The RSS and Hindu Mahasabha stand woefully in denial of this rich history. They in fact have actively sought and occupied the wrong side of

D Raja

history. And it continues to do so.

It is essential that we understand what is to be protected from this all around attack. When our freedom struggle was coming to an end and the British departure was made imminent by the Quit India movement and the



Communist Party backed RIN naval rebellion, a very narrow and specific group started demanding that India be declared a Hindu Rashtra. This demand also reached the Constituent Assembly and was met with emphatic rejection by none other than Dr Bhimrao Ambedkar who declared, "If Hindu Raj does become a fact, it will, no doubt, be the greatest calamity for this country. Hindu Raj must be prevented at any cost."

Instead of opting for a theocratic, hierarchical state,

Constitution makers placed great premium on equal citizenship of all based on democratic-secular principles. The proponents of divisions among people were defeated and India embarked on a journey where citizens from all backgrounds worked hand-in-hand towards peace and progress. Such was the commitment of our freedom

fighters including Bhagat Singh, Ashfaqulla Khan, Makhdoom Mohiuddin, Aruna Asaf Ali, Subhas Bose, Abdul Gaffar Khan, Gandhi, towards secularism that even the horrors of partition could not shake their faith in the essential unity of Indians. This perspective of unity and harmony is being erased by giving de facto state religion status to one religion while openly discriminating others.

The second and linked part of this is Ambedkar's strong advocacy of a welfare

state and state-led socialism. Ambedkar understood these measures as not only economically uplifting for a country with dire poverty, but also with far-reaching consequences for the class and caste structure of the country. He argued for a state that should actively take initiatives to demolish structural inequalities and divides. Inequality of any kind is a precursor to unrest and Ambedkar understood that if the country is to embark on a democratic journey, inequalities of class, caste, gender, and region have to be bridged. To that end, Ambedkar saw welfare state as essential and focused on details such as labour rights, nutrition, minimum wages, drinking water, and maternity benefits as constituents of a harmonious society.

These thoughts also found place in Directive Principles of State Policy but are in complete peril today. The retracting social sector of the country is producing great insecurity among people, especially the youth, and acting as a catalyst for lumpenization of society falling in the trap of right-wing extremism. The Right ideologues are already making their efforts to rewrite our history and redefine our nationhood.

The RSS emphasis on divisions is aimed to keep the society strife-ridden. Receding social sector and unqualified support to corporates are part and parcel of this agenda.

Third is Constitution makers' very strong

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Fascism Embarks on a Wide Offensive

‘...In a more or less developed form, fascist tendencies and the germs of a fascist movement are to be found almost everywhere,’ said Georgi Dimitrov, while presenting his report in the annual conference of Communist International (Comintern) in 1936, and then, cautioned, “With the development of the very deep economic crisis, fascism has embarked upon a wide offensive.”

The late thirties in the last century had witnessed fascism spreading its steely hold all over. History repeats itself. Economic crisis, one of its precursors ruling over, corporate sector is the one that reaps the benefits. Financial Times, in its investigative report said that Adani group has raised the price of coal imports exorbitantly, with the aim of getting back huge profits.

It points towards the use of the “offshore intermediaries” once again which it had done earlier also in January this year. This time it is to get back five million dollar worth of coal at prices that were at times more than double than the market price. The owner of one among these firms is a Taiwanese and shareholder in Adani firms.

The report published in Financial Times is called “The mystery of the Adani Coal imports that quietly doubled in value,” and discovered that Adani is not only one among the biggest coal importers, but also is instrumental in raising the fuel cost. It has been targeting keenly the numerous crowd of country’s leading “millions of Indian consumers and businesses overpaying for electricity.”

Gautam Adani is the owner of India’s biggest private thermal power company and biggest private port operator. And hence, the FT report has described him ‘Modi’s Rockefeller’, referring to his sharply rising fortunes in the past ten years, when his 10 listed companies had blossomed and Adani himself emerged as “India’s biggest private thermal power company and biggest private port operator.”

Back in January, Hindenburg Research report had brought up queries about functioning of Adani and why the questions that are quite serious are raised all over the world, not only about Adani, but globally about the regulatory mechanism in India. Stock market watchdog Securities and Exchange Board of India (SEBI)

came under fire even when the Supreme Court expert committee pointed to certain changes in rules that may have made it easier for Adani to escape scrutiny.

Denying the charges, both those levelled by Hindenburg and then of coal import over-pricing by the Financial Times, Adani has said that all of it has been vindicated by the Directorate of Revenue Intelligence (DRI’s) decision this year to withdraw an appeal to the Supreme Court in a case against one of the 40 importers named in 2016. It said, “The issue of overvaluation in the import of coal was conclusively settled by India’s highest court of law.”

Financial Times cites the “unresolved nature of the DRI investigation and the apparent continuation of the alleged practices” raises “fresh questions about the relationship between Adani and the administration of Prime Minister Narendra Modi.”

Editorial

It is a fact that India has complex regulations on disclosing related-party transactions have been in place for eight years, but it is also as true as that the spirit of the law may still not be filtering into corporate behavior.

When tendencies of finance capital mature, fascist tendencies and the germs of a fascist movement are to be found almost everywhere. That is perhaps the explanation for spirit of law not getting filtered into the corporate behavior.

Adani Group, India’s top infrastructure player, that has been embroiled in governance issues, should have been more forthcoming about doing business with a legal firm where the chairman’s daughter-in-law is a partner. The Adani Group has rejected charges of wrongdoing. Adani has termed the investigation as being based on an “old, baseless allegation”, and is “a clever recycling and selective misrepresentation of publicly available facts and information.”

The inflation in imported coal that Financial Times alleges Adani has been doing may have sometimes, per the report, allowed it to make 52 percent profit margins in an industry where profit margins are otherwise considered low.

In all cases that Financial Times examined,

it says “prices in import records were far higher than those in corresponding export declarations.”

During the journeys, from where they were imported back to a port in India, usually owned by Adani, “the value of the combined shipments unaccountably increased by over 70 million dollars.”

Among the specific instances the Financial Times London-based financial daily has found, it says that in January 2019, coal meant for Adani, departed “the Indonesian port of Kaliorang in East Kalimantan carrying 74,820 tonnes of thermal coal destined for the fires of an Indian power station. During the voyage, something extraordinary occurred: the value of its cargo doubled.”

While “in export records the price was 1.9mn dollar, plus 42,000 dollar for shipping and insurance. On arrival at India’s largest commercial port, Mundra in Gujarat run by Adani, the declared import value was 4.3mn dollar.”

This allowed for “52 percent profit margins” as a result of over-invoicing, and leading to unusual profits.

Financial Times says, “annual profits at Adani Enterprises quadrupled over the past five years, to earnings before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation of 1.2bn dollar in the most recent financial year.”

The London based daily says that Adani Enterprises, the group’s oldest and most valuable company, generates the lion’s share of its sales and profits from its coal trading division called Integrated Resources Management (IRM).

This division, “boasts of its expertise in logistics and commodity trading” based in four global offices and 19 Indian locations.

Meanwhile, Gautam Adani’s brother steps down from three companies linked to Australia coal mine.

These resignations, which have not previously been reported, happened just days before the SC ordered a committee to probe if regulators had failed to oversee Adani Group. Meanwhile, SEBI is examining whether some transactions between the group and Vinod Adani were properly disclosed.

CPI Condemns Israeli Attack on Gaza Hospital

The national secretariat of the Communist Party of India (CPI) issued the following statement on October 18, 2023, condemning the cold-blooded attack on the Gaza hospital killing hundreds by Israeli forces:

The national secretariat of the Communist Party of India strongly condemns the cold-blooded attack on the Baptist Hospital in Gaza city by Israeli forces, killing hundreds of Palestinians, including women and children. Zionist Israel has been continuously violating all international norms and agreements and the hospital massacre is the most inhuman and cruelest attack.

The party appeals to the international community to stand with the Palestinians in this critical time and force Israel to halt the inhuman attacks on the innocent Palestinians.

The party urges the Union government led by Narendra Modi to strictly adhere the Indian stand on Palestine agreed upon at the United Nations and not to deviate from the age-old stand of supporting the Palestinian cause.

The party appeals to party units, well-wishers, and peace-loving people to protest against the barbarous attack on the Gaza hospital.

BKMU Holds 14th Maharashtra State Conference

Call to Stop Eviction of People From Their Land

The 14th State Conference of Maharashtra Rajya Lal Bawata Shetmajur Union affiliated to Bharatiya Khet Mazdoor Union (BKMU) was held at Aurangabad on October 7-8, 2023. The conference began with a rally in which hundreds of agricultural workers, landless labourers, activists of mass organizations, and delegates participated. The rally began with BKMU national secretary Gulzar Gorla garlanding the statue of Sambhaji Maharaj. The procession attracted the attention of people.

The flag was hoisted at Manohar Taksal Nagar, the conference venue by senior BKMU leader Haribhau Hatkar. A revolutionary song paying tribute to the red flag, "Jaanki spe bajilagana, Apnazhandana niche zhukana" was sung by Namdev Chavan, Vasudha Kalyankar, Amarjit Baheti, and others on this occasion. The proceedings of the conference began with the presentation of a revolutionary song by young artists. The dais was named "Karmaveer Dadasaheb Gaikwad Manch." Dadasaheb Gaikwad was a close associate of Dr B.R Ambedkar and one of the prominent leaders of the historic struggle of landless labourers jointly led by red and blue flags during the 1970s.

BKMU Aurangabad district secretary Ganesh Kasbedelivered the welcome address. A homage was paid to "father of Green Revolution in India" MS Swaminathan, and also late Manohar Taksal. Ram Baheti expressed his feelings briefly about the holding of the 14th

conference and the response given by the people for its success. BKMU state general secretary Shivkumar Ganvir gave an introductory speech while CPI Aurangabad district secretary Ashfaq Salami welcomed all the guests by presenting them with a rose flower and a book on late Manohar Taksal.

The conference was inaugurated by BKMU national general secretary Gulzar Gorla. In his address, he attacked the casteist and communal politics of RSS and the Union government.

Ram Baheti

is fully controlled by RSS. He also appealed to the people to bring down BJP in the coming 2024 general elections. BKMU Maharashtra state president Namdev Chavan presided over the inaugural session while Mirza Aslam proposed a vote of thanks.

Fraternal greetings were presented by Devidas Tuljapurkar, leader of AIBEA, Ranjan Dani for BSNL employee organization, Bhimrao

AIDRM state general secretary and national vice president Mahadev Khude, AITI state secretary Ashfaq Salami, national joint secretary of All India Lawyers' Association Abhay Taksal, senior leader of the agricultural labourers movement from Shirampur Shridhar Adik who greeted the conference.

The delegate session of the conference began with the election of the presidium, and the other committees. Political, organizational and working reports were presented by BKMU state

associate professor of Social Work College in Dhule and one book by K.T. Updeshe, who is an Aurangabad-based activist were released in the conference.

The concluding session of the conference was inaugurated by CPI national secretary Dr Bhalchandra Kango and CPI national council member and agricultural laborer's leader Tukaram Bhasme were the chief guests. Namdev Chavan presided over the function. BKMU state joint secretary and district secretary of Ganesh Kasbe felicitated the guests.

In his address, Dr Kango congratulated the state leadership of BKMU for holding and making this conference a success which was attended by more than 200 delegates from 24 districts. He said that it is a matter of great satisfaction that we had our district conferences in almost all the 24 districts except very few where the extended meetings were held. Dr. Kango underlined the necessity and significance of unity and a strong union of the rural toiling masses and wished success for the expansion of the BKMU unit in Maharashtra.

Tukaram Bhasme also appreciated the efforts of the BKMU unit of Maharashtra and especially the Aurangabad unit for holding a good conference. He explained the issues of landless, homeless and destitute rural people and held to RSS-controlled BJP government responsible for the bane pain of this class. He also appealed to the delegates to prepare to hit back the attacks and pull down the Modi government from power. Namdev



He vehemently criticized the nexus between corporate houses and Narendra Modi. RSS-controlled BJP government under the leadership of Narendra Modi is implementing policies that are against the working class, among whom are also the farm labourers, MNREGA workers, homeless and unemployed people. Narendra Modi's government does not have any solid plan to deal with the issues and demands of marginalized sections. The life of the proletariat is becoming difficult day by day, Gorla said. He underlined the necessity to oust this government which

Bansod of Lal Nishan party and agricultural workers, Bhausaheb Shinde, leader of District Dam Affected Committee, Subhash Lomte-leader of farmer-farm labour panchayat and Swaraj Abhiyan and finally prominent leader of the agricultural workers' movement Shantaram Pandere.

Among the others were, Communist Party of India (CPI) state secretary Subhash Lande, AITUC state general secretary Shyam Kale, NFIW state president Smita Pansare, AIKS state general secretary Rajan Kshirsagar,

general secretary Sivakumar. There are 24 districts, and from every district, about 25 to 30 delegates attended the conference. Discussions were held on the reports presented by the state general secretary.

A seminar on the 'Exclusion of children of farmers and agricultural labourers from Education' was held in the second half of the session. The speaker for the seminar was Dr Vikas Gupta, professor of History, at the University of Delhi and a member of the praesidium body of the All India Forum For Right To Education. Two books by Dr Dilip Ghongade, who is an

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Telangana Parties Protest Israeli Attacks

Secular parties and organizations including CPI, CPI(M), Congress party and Tanzeem Insaf organized a protest meeting to condemn the Zionist Israel. The meeting was held in Raj Bahadur Gaur Hall in Himayatnagar in Hyderabad on October 15, 2023. Communist Party of India national council secretary Azeez Pasha, a former member of Parliament, condemned the barbarous attack of Zionist Israel that has turned Gaza as a killing field besides stopping the channels of water, food, medicines and fuel to the ordinary citizens of Gaza including children and women who have nothing to do with the war.

Azeez Pasha in his address said that more than 2,50,000 people fled away from the place to save their lives. The attack and retaliation are the result of

blockade of peace process in Palestine. Till now more than 2,200 have died and 3,418 persons injured. Israel is augmenting its forces by adding 3,60,000 reservists

Ram Narsimha Rao

ago for a peaceful settlement are behind the recent flare up. The war monger

is no hope of an earlier settlement.

CPI(M) state secretariat member D G Narsingh Rao lashed out against Prime Minister Narendra Modi

violating the international laws and escalating the tension in the region.

Md Afzal advocate and president of Pukar organisation vehemently criticised the Israeli forces that blocked the entry point from Mediterranean to supply basic needs. This has created a colossal human crisis.

Osman Al Hajiri from Congress party gave certain instances of barbarism of Israeli forces including how they poured petrol in the mouth of a 20-year youth and ignited him in order to shatter him in parts. Munir Patel, president of Telangana state All India Tanzeem Insaf took strong exception to the inhuman attitude of Israeli forces that stopped two tons of medical supplies to the sufferers in Gaza. Sanullah, S A Mannan and Najeeb Khan also spoke in the meeting.



CPI national secretary Azeez Pasha addressing the protesters

to its ground forces. The attempts on Masjid Aqsa and non-implementation of Oslo accord signed 30 years

ago for a peaceful settlement are behind the recent flare up. The war monger

is no hope of an earlier settlement. CPI(M) state secretariat member D G Narsingh Rao lashed out against Prime Minister Narendra Modi

What the Others Say...

Helping the teacher

Where do they feel greater stress, at home or in school? Are they able to complete the syllabus on time? How does stress impact their teaching? These are some of the questions that the over four lakh teachers in Bihar's government schools will be asked as part of a mental health survey to be conducted by the end of the month. The State Council of Educational Research and Training has been tasked with this job in response to the growing number of complaints about rising teacher absenteeism and inability to teach the syllabus in time as well as reports of corporal punishment meted out to students.

While the challenges that teachers face, especially in government schools, are well known, any policy that seeks to relieve some of their pressure would require identifying the factors involved. The Bihar government's survey is an important step towards that. Teachers have pointed to the demands of non-teaching assignments such as election duty and the conduct of the recent caste survey in the state, as well as the management of the midday meal scheme which all too often keep teachers from doing justice to their primary duties. Addressing these concerns will ensure that teachers are equipped to perform the demanding job of nurturing young minds. It could also mark a turnaround for a state that has, in the past, benefitted from creative interventions in the field of education: For example, the 2006 Mukhyamantri Balika Cycle Yojana, one of the pet schemes of the Nitish Kumar government, under which girls from Class 9 to 12 were given free bicycles to go to school, resulted in the secondary school enrollment of girls increasing by 30 per cent within a year.

A majority of the students who enroll in government schools belong to socially and economically backward sections of society. It is important that they not only stay in school, but also receive quality education. The role of the teacher in creating the right environment cannot be overlooked. For Bihar — and, indeed, for other states — this is an end worth pursuing.

Helping teachers do their jobs better would serve the larger cause of ensuring a better education for the nation's young — a vision outlined in the National Education Policy, 2020 as well. Not just children — adults in the classroom need the right environment too.

Courtesy: The Indian Express

Watch out for global headwinds

India's trade deficit, goods and services combined, in the first half (April-September) of the current fiscal year has almost halved to 39.9 billion dollars compared to 75.3 billion dollars in the same period in 2022-23. Even in goods trade — India almost always has a trade surplus in services trade — the deficit has fallen from 115.6 billion dollars to 140.8 billion dollars. This is clearly good news on the external balance front. A research note from Barclays has projected India's current account deficit at 1.1 per cent of GDP in 2023-24 compared to two per cent in 2022-23.

A cushion on external account, however, is only one aspect of the trade numbers. The latest reduction in trade deficit is a result of a reduction in both exports as well as imports. Merchandise exports are down 20 billion dollars and services exports are down almost nine billion dollars in the April-September period compared to last year. With the global economy "limping rather than sprinting", which is how the IMF described things in its World Economic Outlook projections released last week, the export deceleration will likely become stronger. Not only will this mean growth headwinds in the export-oriented manufacturing sector, but it could also slow down employment growth in IT services. There is already talk of a decline in the workforce of India's biggest IT companies and muted hiring by them this year. The Indian economy will have to rely on domestic drivers for growth until the global economy rediscovers its mojo. It is important, though to ensure the latest trade numbers should not be used to argue against India's efforts to promote import-substituting domestic manufacturing through policies such as the Production Linked Incentive (PLI) scheme. It is too early to start counting the benefits of these policies.

Courtesy: The Hindustan Times

Rampages in West Asia: Zionist Onslaught of Palestinians

On October 7, 2023, the areas of Ashdod, Ashkelon, and Negev situated in the south of Israel were attacked by Hamas. More than thousand Israelis were killed and more than 150 people were taken as captives. The tactic adopted by Hamas was quite different from their usual suicide bombings and guerilla warfare. The attack which subverted the so-called brilliant and efficient Mossad, Shinbet, and Aman (intelligence units of Israel) and the surpassing of the internationally acclaimed iron dome by Hamas has shocked the whole world.

Corporate-funded media around the globe and in India are discussing the failure of Mossad and Israeli intelligence. However, it is imperative to understand the events and circumstances that led Hamas to launch an offense of this velocity.

The Israeli Defence Forces had tried to encroach into the Al Aqsa Mosque twice in 2021 and 2022.

The 11-day-long clash that happened in 2021 due to the encroachment attempt resulted in the death of more than a hundred Palestinians. The death toll was more than 150 in 2022. For the past 75 years, the Israeli government has been creating tensions in the Palestinian-dominated provinces of East Jerusalem, West Bank, and Gaza in order to divert the people's attention from internal instabilities and political failures. Anti-Palestinian rhetoric is the political weapon of Benjamin Netanyahu, current prime minister of Israel and leader of the Likud party. The winning strategy of this right-wing party is solely based on igniting clashes with Palestinians. Netanyahu has been facing a serious political crisis since 2019 due to

strong charges of corruption and leakages. His 15-year tenure is notorious for the atrocities against Palestinians. According to BT Salem, a human rights organization in Israel, 2022 is regarded as the most painful and deadly year for Palestinians in West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem. In 2022 only nearly thousands of Palestinians were killed.

To cover up his political downslide Netanyahu colluded with far-right wing of Zionist forces. In return for the support, he promised

*Dr Ginu Zacharia
Oommen*

court of Israel. In 2022 such an attempt in Sheikh Jarrah was stopped by the court. So Benjamin Netanyahu tried to bring the judiciary into the control of executive through legislation. This legislation received heated backlash from the people.

People came to the streets and huge protests were organized. For the first time in the history of Israel, military personnel took part in a people's movement. It was in this catastrophic

liberation movement was secular throughout its history.

After the collapse of Ottoman Empire Palestine came under British control. The British colonial triumph card of divide and rule was applied here by them. As the result of the nexus between Britain, France and the Zionist movement that began in 1896, the migration and settlement of Jews from Europe to Palestine was encouraged in the same century. The aim of Zionist movement was to establish a country for Jews. Britain promised Theodor Herzl,

and cruelties. Through the wars that happened in 1956 and 1967, the Palestinian territories including West Bank and Jerusalem were annexed by Israel. Millions of Palestinians were forced to migrate. In 1959 Fatah the organization for the resistance of displaced Palestinians was formed. Following this, the organizations fighting for the liberation of Palestine came together under the umbrella of the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO). Under the leadership of Yassar Arafat, the modus operandi of the armed resistance changed. The first independence movement, known as the First Intifada began in 1987 and resulted in the Oslo Accord of 1993. In the elections held subsequent to the peace treaty, Arafat became the president of Palestinian National Authority comprising the areas of West Bank and Gaza.

The Oslo Accord had promised the facilitation of the return of displaced Palestinians and formation of an independent Palestine with East Jerusalem as its capital. But the attempts for this fizzled out after the assassination of then-Israel prime minister Yitzhak Rabin in 1995. The discussion that was held between the succeeding prime minister and Labor party leader Ehud Barak and Yassar Arafat had no robust plans for implementing the Oslo Accord. Utilizing this juncture, Likud party leader Ariel Sharon entered Al Aqsa in 2000 which resulted in the second Intifada. The control of the second Intifada was taken by Hamas through its suicide bombing tactic.

It was in the 1970s that Israel began to fund Sheikh

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them the land of Palestinians and their forced eviction. Encroachment in West Bank and Jerusalem is a long-standing agenda of Zionist-led settler colonialism. Far-right-wing settler leader Itamar Ben Gavir was appointed as the minister for

national security, and Settler movement leader Bezalel Smotrich was appointed as finance minister by the Netanyahu government. Along with this, his government permitted the demolition of houses and properties owned by Palestinians. These measures were targeted to appease Zionist vote banks.

The forceful eviction of Palestinians is often disrupted by the supreme

context Hamas made its attack.

A number of lies have been speculated about the Palestinian people's liberation movement and resistance against Zionism. The claim that the issue is a religious conflict between Jews and Muslims is a baseless and blatant lie. The issue is completely political and related to the motherland of Palestinians. For more than 70 years the Palestinians have been fighting against the Zionist occupation of their motherland. The Palestinians are a diverse and harmonious community comprising of Christians, Muslims, Shias, Ahmadiyya and orthodox Jews. The Palestinian resistance and

the founder of Zionist movement, a Jewish country, combining the geographical areas of Uganda and Kenya. But ultra-Zionist leaders of the movement rejected the proposal. The inception of Chaim Weizman who had deep ties with the British officials in the leadership of Zionist organization resulted in the Balfour Declaration of 1917. In 1947 before the departure of British from Palestine the decision to bifurcate Mandatory Palestine into a Jewish nation and Palestinian nation was adopted in the United Nations with the support of imperialist powers. In 1948 the nation of Israel was declared by the Zionist forces and they subjected Palestinians to occupation

Rampages in West Asia...

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Yasin, who was the part of Muslim Brotherhood to start an Islamic centre and Islamic university in Gaza.

The aim of this was to weaken the global acceptance and reputation of Yassar Arafat and Fateh. To convert the Palestinian resistance from a secular movement to a communal clash between Jews and Muslims was a part of Israel's sinister game. Towards the end of 1980s, Sheikh Yasin established the religious but fundamentalist party of Hamas which reflected itself as an alternative force to PLO.

In the elections held in Palestine in 2006, Hamas was elected as the largest party in Gaza. To this date, Gaza has been under the economic sanction imposed by Israel. Israeli government's tactics of negotiating directly with Hamas through Egypt has weakened the authority of Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas. The instabilities in Middle East and the demise of

Yassar Arafat were great setbacks to the dream of independent Palestine. The support of PLO to the Iraqi invasion of Kuwait led to a decline in the historical support that was extended by the GCC countries to Palestinians.

The intervention of USA in Iraq, Arab Spring, and the instabilities it caused in Syria, Yemen, and Libya, with the rise of ISIS, there came fissures in the friendship between Iran and Saudi Arabia, and the economic sanctions imposed on Qatar by GCC countries also affected the Palestine resistance.

All these internal dissections were exploited by Israel. For the past 15 years, Israel has been committing unendurable cruelties towards Palestinians. The "Abraham Accord" that was brokered by Donald Trump between Israel and the Arab countries of Bahrain, UAE, Sudan, and Morocco was signed at the cost of the dreams of Palestinians.

The attack of Hamas happened during the

diplomatic attempts to normalize relationship between Israel and Saudi Arabia. During these times only Iran,

Qatar, and Syria stood with Palestine. The misadventurism of Hamas is taken as an excuse by Israel to collectively punish Palestinians. Operation Iron Sword, the counter-offensive launched by Israel has turned Gaza into a burning furnace.

The supply of food, water, and necessary materials to Gaza has been notched by Israel. Already more than a million people have been displaced in Gaza and hundreds are wounded. The UN officials termed it as the worst humanitarian crisis in West Asia. Thousands of Palestinians have died in the military attack by Israel. There are 60 lakh Palestinians residing in Gaza and West Bank.

However it is not at all sensible to support the atrocities committed by Hamas towards women and children. Any attack on

civilians are highly condemnable.

With the entry of Hezbollah, a militant group operating in the borders of Lebanon the current clash has developed into a geo-political war. Along with this, there are reports of Arabs residing in Israel being subjected to attack. There are nearly 20 lakh Arabs in Israel. Due to the extraordinary situation, Netanyahu has created a unity government including opposition parties. Benjamin Gantz leader of an opposition party joined the unity government. But Yer Lapid the prime opposition leader has refrained his party from joining the wartime government.

The reason is because of the ignited people's anger towards Netanyahu government, a great section of people believes that the warning about the attack provided by Egypt was purposefully neglected by Netanyahu for political gains. Another prominent sinister name is that of US behind the ruckus. The support for Israel provided by USA in

every issue is to ensure an upper hand for US in the West Asian politics. But the influence of China and Russia in the current situation of Middle East is a hindrance for US in pushing its plans.

Historically India has sided with Palestinians in their struggles. In 1974 India became the first non-Arab country to endorse PLA. In 1980 PLA established its Embassy in New Delhi. In 1988 India was among the prominent countries that recognized Palestine. But the unilateral position of supporting Israel taken by Prime Minister Narendra Modi in the current issue is deplorable. This is a great betrayal to the Palestinians, especially when Narendra Modi boasts himself to be the leader of global south.

The only solution for permanent peace and stability in West Asia is the establishment of an independent Palestine. There should be proactive attempts for peace, the de-escalation of violence, and building consensus for the establishment of independent Palestine.

Call to Stop Eviction...

Chavan gave concluding remarks and Ram Baheti delivered vote of thanks.

A new state committee of 41 members was elected by the delegates. Nine office bearers were elected in the meeting of the newly elected state council. Namdev Chavan and Shivakumar Ganvir were re-elected as the president and general secretary respectively. Ram Baheti was elected as the Working President. Hauslal Rahangdale, Ishwar Patil and Sanjay Mandavadhare were elected as vice presidents while Kalpana Dongre, Ganesh Kasbe and Vijay Bachate were elected as joint secretaries.

Resolutions

■ Stop eviction of 2 lakh people from their land and regularize their ownership over the land.

■ Pre-primary to higher education should be made free for the children of agricultural labourers, employment guarantee workers and all rural labourers. The brahminization and commercialization of education at all levels be stopped immediately.

■ Strengthen the National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme, stop the reductions of the annual budget of the scheme, and provide employment guarantee to laborers with

a minimum wage of Rs.600 and 200 working days annually.

■ Children belonging to the tribal Pardhi community should not be forced to use an Aadhar card to get admission to school. Everyone from the Pardhi community should be given a Ration Card, Voting Card, Resident Certificate and Aadhaar Card.

■ The policy, under the public distribution system of transferring the cash amount instead of grain food in the account of ration card holders of 14 districts including Marathwada be cancelled immediately.

■ Strengthen Public Distribution System in Maharashtra.

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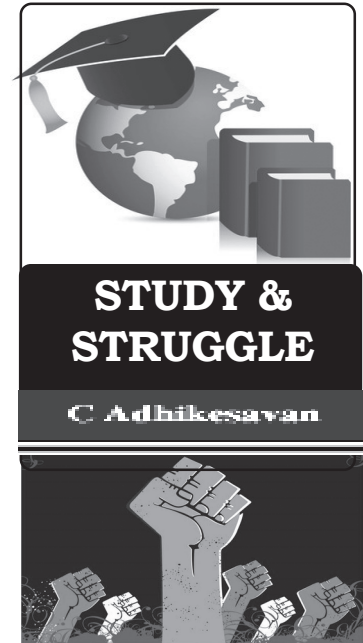
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New Forms of Inequality in Indian Education System



The Indian education system is creating new forms of inequality based on caste, class line which are more defined now. Besides, huge tuition fees and increased living costs in urban areas where there is these desirable educational institutes are situated are segregating student bodies along caste and class lines.

Now-a-days there are a few news items featuring that students belonging to economically weaker sections cracking toughest examinations to become an elite-class bureaucrats. The corporate media wants to say that there is both equality and inequality in the education system in the country. It wants the people to believe that there is equality because hard work of such successful candidates has paid off and education has been empowering for those students and their families.

There is inequality because they represent the exceptional ones among their communities, castes and classes. Such is the sensational reporting of the successful candidates from poor communities which show how dreams of a new India are being sold by highly commercialised and privatised education and coaching system. It also displays a strange elite world of well-paid, respectable jobs where the entry of poor worker's children are in news item, rather than a norm.

Such sensationalization presupposes an education system that has significant learning gaps between students from different classes and social profiles. India's current education system is witnessing a twin phenomenon: greater access to public education by India's socially marginalized castes and classes and a greater privatization drive of the education sector from bottom

to top. As spaces for affordable education get limited and competition grows for seats and employment, India's social and economic inequalities are becoming more prominent at the site of education. An extended reflection of this anomaly can also be seen when successful students from socially marginalized backgrounds are not seen as legitimate claimants of this educational empowerment because they are inherently viewed as less "meritorious" than their



socially well-off background peers. Their success is often attributed to special favour due to their socially marginalized backgrounds. From these perspectives, India's education system is both open and close to marginalized students.

India has undergone a slow education revolution to become a dynamic education system now. Yet the society is still suffering from extreme forms of socio-economic inequality that continues to plague its educational achievements.

Currently the Indian literacy rate is 77 per cent. It was 18.3 in 1947. India was referred as a nation of illiterates in the 90s. Though the India has produced the

most intelligent and renowned software engineers, scholars and doctors, there are people who have never gone to schools, could not read a book and face hardships to send their children to school. A narrative is being set up in modern India. It is seen through a nationalist or caste struggle perspective. It is framed as the greater democratisation of the education system at the expense of questioning the

nature of education itself. However, when socially and economically marginalized students enter education, their struggles do not necessarily remain about equal access to education but become about gaining equal opportunities and knowledge like their peers from socially and economically well-off backgrounds. Understanding and recognizing this latter issue, both as an educational problem and policy concern, is key to reforming the existing education system.

Language training, cultural capital, curriculum learning achievements, ability to buy educational resources to continue education, unequal student life experience due to class

and caste variation, and norms and safety for women on campus are some of the issues that emerge while making claims for equal opportunities and knowledge. These issues affecting education equity place education in a broader socio-economic framework from which we cannot abstract education. Education shapes society and economy.

Elites assumed that the workers were illiterate group

who were indifferent to projects of education thus portraying the working class is also reflective of the subalternity and marginality of labour from the world of reading, document production and school experiences, which have been associated only with the world of cultural elites, literate upper-castes and upper-classes. Thus it has become basic division between mental work and manual labour which crept into the history and educational studies, thus characterising that illiteracy of the working subalterns as failures to participate in modern economy and society. In official writings, illiteracy and ignorance was

featured as justification for the poverty and backwardness of Indian labour. But modern economy demanded for a trained, disciplined, and skilled labour force. This is was also under colonial economy. This demand resulted in setting up of varied types of industrial and technical schools. Thus there was necessity to educate the marginalised workers and labours. Examples include industrial and technical schools to train industrial artisans, factory schools to train factory children, night schools to train the urban poor classes, depressed-class schools to educate Dalits, craft and trade schools to reskill hereditary artisans, and Christian mission industrial schools to train converts from socially and economically poor backgrounds. Up until now, these schools catered largely to labouring castes who were destined to perform labour. For the educated and traditionally literate castes, literary schools and college, along with a few higher technical institutes such as engineering colleges and vocational institutes, were established.

The modern education system that emerged in the nineteenth century in industrialised colonies including India needed a curriculum to produce a professional and literate class, creating a blue-collar working class. Caste inequalities and caste prejudices marked who should do manual labour and who should not, who was a literate caste and who was not.

Israel-Palestine Conflict Hits Indian Exporters, Maritime Industries

The Israel-Palestine conflict has sent ripples through the shipping and maritime industry, leading international companies to issue cautionary advisories and adapt their operations in the region. In view of the missile attacks and the incursion of opposing militias, the security of transporting goods through the port of Haifa has become uncertain. The transit of containers, especially hazardous materials, and the arrival of commercial vessels greatly emphasize the importance of security on this route and this could lead to a shift in the transportation of goods.

Maersk, a major player in the industry, reassured stakeholders by announcing that its port operations across Israel's key terminals are functioning without disruption. MSC echoed this sentiment, asserting that Israel's major terminals are operational, enabling them to facilitate cargo delivery. However, the maritime industry is aware of the security situation, and companies such as MSC remain vigilant, pledging to monitor the situation closely and heed government guidance. This underscores the industry's adaptability and resilience in the face of geopolitical tensions. For a start, the conflict serves as a testament to the shipping and maritime industry's ability to adapt, demonstrating that despite challenges and disruptions, trade and operations can persist, albeit with the necessary caution and vigilance.

According to Container Xchange, the ports directly

affected by the action include the ports of Ashdod, situated a mere 50 km from the Gaza border; Israeli port and shipyard Haifa, operated by India's own Adanis, Ashkelon, located just 15 km from the Gaza border and has been severely impacted, rendering it incapable of normal operations due to missile threats; Hadera, which in comparison carries on without disruption, and port of Eilat, which similarly remains operational. Beyond the ports, several global companies with a presence in Israel have been forced to adjust their operations. Chevron, the second-largest U.S. oil and gas

K Raveendran

disruptions in Israel's exports to India. Key Indian exports to Israel include diesel, cut and unpolished diamonds, electronics, and telecom components like integrated circuits and photovoltaic cells. Conversely, India's imports from Israel consist mainly of rough diamonds, fertilizers, and herbicides. This evolving trade relationship extends beyond traditional sectors, encompassing electronic machinery, high-tech products, communication systems, and medical equipment.



producer, was directed by Israel's energy ministry to shut down the Tamar natural gas field off the country's northern coast. Adani Ports, operator of the Haifa Port, assured stakeholders of operational readiness while closely monitoring the situation and having a business continuity plan in place.

India is a crucial trading partner for Israel, with 3.94 billion dollars in Israeli exports. The conflict could have an impact on bilateral trade, potentially leading to

The Israel-Hamas conflict has raised concerns about increased costs for Indian exporters, such as higher insurance premiums and elevated shipping expenses. These expenses stem from the heightened risk associated with shipping goods to regions experiencing geopolitical unrest. While the conflict may result in higher expenses for Indian exporters, the impact on trade volumes is expected to be limited unless the war escalates significantly. The primary

concern is the financial burden on exporters, which may reduce their profit margins.

Israel's trade with China is characterized by a notable trade imbalance, with China being a major importer of Israeli goods. While Israel's exports to China are substantial at 4.68 billion dollars, the conflict may disrupt trade flows, particularly concerning Israel's high-tech exports. The disruption could affect Israel's exports and potentially hinder access to China's vast market.

The United States is a critical trade partner for

Israel, with a strong focus on exports. Israel exports goods worth 18.67 billion dollars to the U.S., including high-tech products and defense-related items. Germany also is a key European trade partner for Israel. The conflict might impact Israel's exports to Germany, valued at 1.88 billion dollars. As Israel navigates regional instability, German imports from Israel could be affected. It is pointed out that the conflict could serve as a reminder of

the uncertainties facing ambitious trade projects like the India-Middle East-Europe Economic Corridor (IMEC), positioned as a Western counterpart to China's Belt and Road.

IMEC, involving railways, ports, and green energy, aligns with the G7's plans to mobilize 600 billion by 2027 for global infrastructure investments. India's trade with Saudi Arabia has doubled in two years, reaching 53 billion dollars in 2023, but the corridor's true potential lies in strengthening Indian-European trade ties. To fully realize IMEC, a reliable link between Saudi Arabia and Israel is essential. However, the ongoing regional complexities make it riskier for Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman to normalize diplomatic relations with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

In the near term, the Suez Canal remains the primary route for goods from India to Europe. This conflict underscores the enduring complexities of reshaping global trade and financial routes, highlighting the unpredictable nature of such endeavours. Geopolitical conflicts and global health crises, unfortunate as they are, often lead to unintended consequences, boosting profits in specific sectors. Wars tend to inflate returns for defence contractors, while the pandemic brought substantial gains for select pharmaceutical companies. The maritime industry is not immune to these dynamics, with shipowners reaping unexpected benefits from both types of crises.

Opposition Leaders Meet Palestinian Ambassador, Express Solidarity

A delegation of opposition leaders including Communist Party of India general secretary D Raja met Palestinian ambassador in India Adnan Abu Alhaija on October 16, 2023 and expressed solidarity with the Palestinians. The other leaders in the delegation included CPI(M) politbureau member Nilotpal Basu, Congress party leader Mani Shankar Aiyar, CPI(ML) general secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, JD(U) leader K C Tyagi, former Union minister Jena Srikanth, SP leader Javed Ali Khan MP, Danish Ali MP, Muzaffar Shah of J&K, Rashtriya Lok Dal leader Shahid Siddiqui, BSP leader Mohammad Adeb, Mohammad Afzal, ex-MP, Santosh Bhartiya ex-MP and Nadeem Khan.



In a joint resolution the leaders said: “We believe that violence is never a solution as it leads to a cycle of destruction and suffering. Therefore we emphasise the need for increased efforts by the international community in bringing about a peaceful resolution to the conflict. The international community must exert pressure on the state of Israel to abide by international laws and respect the rights and dignity of the Palestinian people. We call for intensified diplomatic efforts and multilateral initiatives to ensure a lasting peace in the region.”

The resolution added: “We express our deep concern regarding the ongoing crisis in Gaza and the suffering of the Palestinian people. We strongly condemn the indiscriminate bombing of Palestinians in Gaza by Israel, which we believe amounts to an attempt to genocide. We urge an immediate cessation of all hostilities to prevent further loss of innocent lives and

the destruction of homes and infrastructure.”

The resolution further said: “Furthermore, we call for urgent and unimpeded delivery of humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza. The dire humanitarian situation demands immediate attention and action. All necessary measures must be taken to ensure that essential supplies, including food, water, and medical aid, reach the affected population without hindrance.”

“We strongly believe in the statement of Mahatma Gandhi, “Palestine belongs to the Arabs in the same sense that England belongs to the English or France to the French,” which reflects his belief in the importance of recognizing the sovereignty and territorial rights of the Palestinian

people, just as any other nation’s right to their homeland.

“Recognising that the Palestinian people have endured immeasurable suffering for over 75 years, we firmly assert that now is the time to end their plight. We urge the international community to recognize the establishment of an independent Palestinian state along the 1967 borders in accordance with the UN resolutions. Such recognition is a crucial step towards ensuring a just and lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, providing the Palestinian people with the opportunity to determine their own destiny and live in peace and security.”

End Israel’s Occupation of Palestine: AIPSO

All India Peace and Solidarity Organization (AIPSO), Delhi State Committee, held a protest against Israel’s atrocities on the people of Palestine at Jantar Mantar on October 14, 2023. The protest was attended by workers, students, teachers, lawyers, teachers and common people. General secretary of AIPSO Delhi state committee, Adv Subhash Chandran KR welcomed the gathering and introduced the speakers. He spoke of the relevance of the solidarity programme and how the police tried to disrupt it at the last moment.

AIPSO national general secretary Arun Kumar briefly introduced the history of ongoing settler colonialism in Palestine. He

Shejo Varghese

extended the solidarity of AIPSO to the suffering

spoke about the issue from its very roots. He talked about how Israeli Zionist forces committed Nakba or ethnic cleansing and forced

events, Israel has blocked the supply of food, water, and electricity to Gaza.

AIPSO national vice president G Devarajan spoke about how the land of Palestine was systematically snatched by Israel. He warned about the speculative role of BJP IT cell and national media which are trying to use the current issue to affect domestic electoral politics. He strongly came down on those who tried to portray the issue from a communal angle and said that this is the fight of Palestinians for their homeland and dignity.



talked about the agonies of the Palestinian people and

masses. AIPSO presidium member Nilotpal Basu

eviction of Palestinian people. After the current

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Restore Peace in West Asia: IDPD

The Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD) organized a 'Demonstration for Peace' on October 13, 2023 at Aarti Chowk, Ludhiana and demanded immediate stop to violence between Israel and Palestine. Any escalation would have serious humanitarian consequences. The recent violence has already killed

thousands of people on both sides in a very short period.

It is understandable that without resolving the long standing issue between the two, there can be no lasting peace in the region. This is possible only through initiating dialogue at the behest of the UN. The UN Security Council should immediately take cognizance of the humanitarian crisis and

ensure immediate cessation of violence by both the parties. As expected several countries of the world are getting drawn in

unfortunate that India's Prime Minister has openly supported Israel. This is against the accepted policy of India for a peaceful

using it as an anti-Muslim rhetoric whereas there is no such thing in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Such narrow approach is very dangerous and purposefully being done for electoral game by splitting the society



Rail Safety Being Repeatedly Compromised: CPI

Communist Party of India national council secretary Binoy Viswam MP wrote the following letter on October 12, 2013 to Union minister for railways Ashwini Vaishnaw on railway safety:

I write to you about the regrettable ways in which railway safety is being compromised despite repeated warnings on how this neglect can gravely impact the people of the country. When the wounds of the Balasore train crash are yet to heal, the derailment of North East Express on October 12 in Buxar district of Bihar came as another grim reminder of where the priorities of the government are going wrong. Luxury trains are being introduced in a frenzy while the infrastructure for the trains of the common people is being sorely forsaken.

Buxar tragedy has already claimed six lives and more than 100 are injured. The monetary cost of the derailment is estimated to be above Rs 50 crores. Fatalities from train related accidents are over 23,000 per year between 2010 and 2021 according to NCRB data. For 2021 alone, 88 collisions and 21 derailments were reported. Despite these alarming numbers, the government is engaged in photo-ops and PR management instead of taking concrete measures. The Rashtriya Rail Sanraksha Kosh (RRSK) which was created with the aim to clear the backlog of critical safety and related works of the ministry, including track renewals, strengthening of bridges, and signalling improvements among others remains critically unutilised. It is flagged by many including the CAG saying that RRSK's execution is lagging behind short deployment of funds which has defeated the objectives of improving railway safety. It is common knowledge that critical jobs related to railway safety are being handled by outsourced or contractual workers reflecting poorly on the seriousness of the government about the safety of citizens.

In this context, I urge you to realign the priorities of the railways towards the common people. I also request you to sanction generous compensation to the kin of the victims of the Buxar accident and to the injured. Those responsible for this tragedy should be brought to book and this should serve as a delayed reminder that these mishaps should be prevented at any cost in future.

the conflict.

The decision of the US government to heavily arm Israel will only add to the escalation of humanitarian crises. The US should instead talk of peace. It is

settlement through dialogue by ensuring legitimate rights of the Palestinians and for the peaceful co-existence of the people of Israel and Palestine.

The Hindutva forces are

on communal lines. This is casting a negative image of our country which has been the leader of Non Aligned Movement. The continued tension in the region has

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Save India...

From Front Page

inclination towards the elimination of social structural hierarchies manifesting themselves through disabling structures of caste and gender. Dr Ambedkar's life-long struggle towards annihilation of caste is well known and documented along with his famous saying on gender justice that "I measure the progress of a community by the degree of progress which women have achieved." Both these views found expression in the Constitution along with enabling provisions of affirmative action by the state for discriminated groups. Today, the RSS-BJP is using these structures to lure the so-called lower and intermediary castes into the Hindutva fold without altering with the inherently oppressive nature of caste segregation which Ambedkar wanted to annihilate in totality.

BJP-RSS retain their Brahminism and allegiance to Manusmriti while putting

people from the lower stratum against minorities. This is profoundly anti social justice politics. A lesser discussed part of this issue is the role of public sector in upholding social justice and equality of opportunity. Introduction of the public sector was a route to achieve social justice, economic justice and emancipation. What is being lost today amid sharpening identities is that the Modi government is defeating social justice by selling the public sector to their corporate friends. Affirmative action will mean little without public sector and stable employment.

It needs reminding here that secularism and social justice in India were built on the bedrock of a strong welfare state. By diluting the welfare component, RSS-BJP is moving towards a theocratic and Brahminical state, openly calling for the replacement of the present Constitution. The fight to save the character of our Republic

should have to focus on this often neglected but singularly important variable as well.

To sum up, the fight ahead to save India as we know and love, has to be a multifaceted struggle against forces of communalism, casteism and cronyism all together. The legacy of our freedom movement compels us in that direction of a holistic struggle as we did against the British when we confronted them not only politically but by also rejecting their divisions of communities and enforced deprivations. This battle will not only unite people by removing hatred from their minds but it will also bring the deprived together against assaults on their rights. Along with secularism and social justice, the battle against hunger, unemployment, cronyism, inequalities and destitution will defeat the RSS-BJP. We all have to be conscious of the interlinked and inclusive social, political and economic vision of our freedom struggle. That is the best remedy for the ills RSS-BJP is spreading in our society socially, politically and economically.

WHO Report on Possibility of Deadly X

The World Health Organization (WHO) calls it Disease X. It does not exist now, but it is a concept floated by WHO to gauge the readiness of any country to fight a pandemic in the future. The model underscores the importance of vigilance, research, and preparedness in the face of emerging infectious diseases that may have a fatality rate of Ebola and is as infectious as measles.

The Covid-19 pandemic killed 6.9 million people, and for Disease X, the fatality rate can be much more. Presently, there are eight families of viruses on WHO's priority list, each one mutating in an unknown way and becoming more virulent because of climate change, which may lead to the occurrence of Disease X.

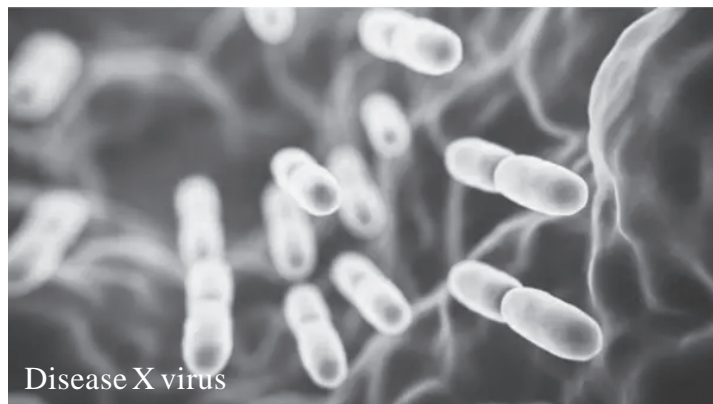
How prepared is India to deal with an outbreak of such a virus? In a counterfactual setting, we identified factors that led to a broken supply chain at the time when the second wave of Covid-19 hit India. Back then, Covid-19 was similar to Disease X, testing India's preparedness to fight the pandemic. There was a shortage of hospital beds and doctors.

Disruption in the medical supply chain impacted the availability of medicines, oxygen cylinders, vaccines, PPE suits, and medical equipment such as ventilators.

In a paper titled, 'Need for Policy Reforms in the Aftermath of COVID-19: An Analysis of Indian Pharmaceutical Sector' released in August, we took a detailed look at the factors that led to disruption in the supply chain at the time of Covid-19. Besides, through factor-loading analysis, we ranked these factors — the

higher the weight the more disruptive the factor impacting the vaccine supply chain. The results can serve as a policy toolkit next time there is a call for a mass vaccination drive and delivering the doses on time.

The factors were categorised into operational, financial, and logistic issues. A stratified sampling



approach was followed. The sample comprised medical doctors (300 in number) and pharmaceutical corporate executives (100 in number) selected from the National Capital Region (NCR) of Delhi.

Given India's supply-chain exposure to China on active pharmaceutical ingredients (APIs), all the pharmaceutical companies selected in the survey either import APIs from China and use them to manufacture medicines and vaccines, or import medicinal equipment from China. Some firms are also dependent on imports from the US for certain critical inputs used in vaccine manufacturing. The stratified nature of the sample (random sampling without replacement) suggests that the results hold true across India.

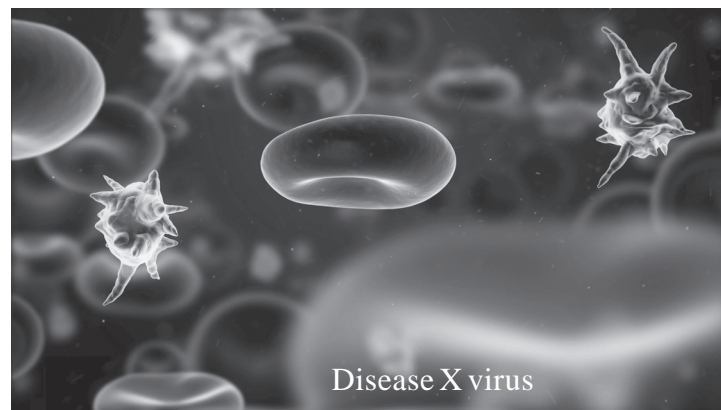
The empirical results on supply-chain challenges in India reveal that logistical issues are quite important. For instance, people were unwilling to take vaccines due to fear emanating from a lack of trust, side effects, and concern regarding the

Nilanjan Banik

efficacy of the vaccines.

Interestingly, religious beliefs as a reason to opt out of vaccines was not found to be significant. In addition to these demand-side factors, there were supply-side issues, too. For instance, RT-PCR testing

facilities were seldom available in primary healthcare centres (PHCs), particularly in rural India. During the peak of the second wave of Covid-19 during the months of April, May, and June 2021, there were inadequate RT-PCR



testing centres even in urban areas. This led to inconvenience for patients and delay in getting test results, and hesitancy in getting tests done. Among operational issues, lack of cooperation and collaboration among multiple stakeholders, including public-health officials, government agencies, pharmaceutical manufacturers, and distributors, gets a higher weight. Public health is a state subject in India. However, it is the central

government that is responsible for drafting health policies and vaccine-delivery mechanisms. During the pandemic, there was a mismatch between the number of vaccines available for distribution and the demand for vaccines.

India's pandemic response suffered because of a lack of policy clarity, transparency, and accountability between the central and state governments, and manufacturers of vaccines.

Initially, there were problems with the online registration portal when the government opened up registration for vaccination to Indian citizens above 18 years of age group on April 28, 2021. Thereafter, there was difficulty in online booking for vaccination when the government portal started functioning from early May 2021.

At a company level, there

were problems in scaling up production, particularly with respect to getting access to skilled labour and inputs needed for vaccine production.

Among the financial issues, although tariffs resulted in an increase in the price of medicines and vaccines, non-tariff measures (NTMs) got higher weights, implying that they played a bigger role in supply-chain disruption. Interestingly, the US embargo on exporting

Covid-19 raw materials for vaccines had a lower weight. Trade data shows that India's imports of Covid-19 raw materials from the US increased between October 2020 and March 2021. However, the higher price of Chinese APIs was negatively impacting the supply. The extent of price-led disruptions becomes clear from the fact that Chinese suppliers of APIs and para amino phenol (used to manufacture paracetamol) increased prices by 20% and 27% in comparison to the pre-Covid-19 days.

In the light of these issues, the government took a right decision by launching the production-linked incentive (PLI) scheme for pharmaceutical products. India is dependent on APIs and is not yet as competitive as China with respect to many pharmaceutical products.

There is a need to build domestic capability and competitiveness in the API segment. Moreover, to ease supply-chain issues in the event of a pandemic, an independent task force comprising specialists such as doctors, economists, pharmaceutical corporate executives, and engineers has to be set up. This group can take inputs from the Integrated Health Information Platform, a Web-enabled information system tracking viral outbreaks.

All state governments should be made equal participants in such government initiatives, with their inputs considered for policymaking. Once in a while, this task force can engage in mock viral-outbreak scenarios to identify problems and ensure how to make the system work better.

Falling Household Savings Hurts Consumption, Investments

Net financial savings of households as a percentage of the gross domestic product (GDP) slumped to the lowest in 47 years in 2022-23. According to the Reserve Bank of India's September bulletin, net financial savings were down to 5.1 per cent of GDP in 2022-23 from 7.2 per cent in the previous fiscal year. This is a cause for serious concern as the figure was 11.5 per cent in 2020-21, indicating a severe income crunch and a likely transience of the post-pandemic rise in consumption.

Disturbingly, the financial liabilities of households also sharply increased by 5.8 per cent last fiscal compared with 3.8 per cent in 2021-22, suggesting a larger-than-usual recourse to debt-driven consumption. In fact, the rate of increase in financial liabilities last fiscal was the second highest since Independence. It is true that owing to the development objectives, access to affordable credit for the household sector can alleviate the liquidity constraint, enabling them to smoothen their consumption. So, household borrowing plays a critical role. But it's equally true that excessive leverage beyond sustainable levels may start impacting the health of the financial system adversely causing economic disruptions.

The prospects of a boost in demand from higher consumption do not appear very bright as the reality is of falling or stagnant household incomes when

inflation is raging. At 6.83 per cent in August, inflation as measured by the consumer price index (CPI) has stayed above RBI's flexible inflation target of 2-6 per cent for two consecutive months. In its August monetary policy, RBI has projected CPI inflation at 5.4 per cent in 2023-24. The stress on incomes is relatively more in the countryside as real rural wages contracted for 12 straight months to March. Though there is a likelihood of a reversal of these trends if overall economic growth picks up and real household incomes grow, the financial year 2022-23 figures have a potential bearing on private investments over the near term at least. Nikhil Gupta, economist at Motilal Oswal, believes the combination of weak income growth and falling financial savings, led by borrowings, is unsustainable.

As consumption weakens, its impact on a private sector-led investment push is obvious. The Union finance ministry's latest monthly economic report highlights the "emergence of the green shoots of a private capex upcycle" based on high-frequency indicators such as rising capital goods imports, steel and cement consumption, and auto sales. Proposals to set up new investment projects in the first quarter 2023-24 were 11.6 per cent higher than in the corresponding period of the previous fiscal according to CMIE's capex database. The official narrative also factors in the incentivization of higher private investments through production-linked

incentives in 14 key sectors, PM Gatishakti and the National Infrastructure Pipeline.

Yet the fact remains that the corporate sector is not driving the current growth story as it did earlier — a point underscored by Pronab Sen, chairman of the standing committee on

statistics, in an interview. That was possible because there was a lot of excess capacity in the system. This has not yet been fully used up. In manufacturing, capacity utilization rates rose to 76.3 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2022-23 from Covid-related lows of 47.3 per cent during first quarter

of 2020-21. They need to go up much further to a point where private industry requires additional capacity. This can happen only if demand improves as the year-on-year growth curve for new orders is sloping downwards. Thus, a private capex upswing is only likely further down the road.

End Israel's Occupation...

From Page 09

AIPSO deputy general secretary and Communist Party of India (CPI) Rajya Sabha MP P Santhosh Kumar said that the United Nations has come out with the fact that this year is the deadliest year for the Palestinian people after 2005-06. Israel has turned Gaza into a slaughterhouse of humanity. Israel has expanded its territory three times and has been continuing its onslaught in a terrifying manner. He also said that AIPSO is a movement that is proactively working among people and we express our solidarity. He also spoke on how Prime

Minister Narendra Modi has diverted from the historical position of supporting Palestine. He criticized the stance of the prime minister and the role of speculation played by the pro-BJP Godi media.

Prof Saswathi Majumdar from DU, AIKS (Canning Lane) leader Krishna Prasad, AIDWA Delhi President Maimuna Mollah, Adv Dharendra Kumar Tiwari from AIYF, Sanjeev from DYFI, SFI national president V P Sanu, Alan Paul representing AISE, AILU general secretary Adv Surendranath, Tanzeem-e-Insaf national social media convenor Vivek Srivastava,

Tanzeem-e-Insaaf Delhi state general secretary Shakeelur Rahman, Sai Prasad representing WFTU also addressed the well-attended protest gathering. AIPSO Delhi state general secretary Vivek Sharma conveyed vote of thanks at the end of the meeting while criticising the manner in which media in India is making this a communal issue while completely neglecting gross human rights violations at home in Manipur. The meeting concluded with a call to continue and intensify the struggle in solidarity of people of Palestine on all fronts.

Restore Peace in West Asia...

From Page 10

already witnessed death of 5,590 Palestinians and 251 Israelis between 2008 and 2020 as per the data provided by the UN. The siege of Gaza Strip by the Israel and blocking of supply of food, electricity, water and medicines, etc, will have very grave consequences on the life of people in Gaza. It is therefore essential to

establish a humanitarian corridor for safe passage of emergency services and aid including water, food, electricity and medicines.

Those who addressed the gathering include Dr Arun Mitra, D P Maur, M S Bhatia, Ranjit Singh, Dr Rajinder Pal Aulakh, Jaswant Zeerakh, Ramesh Ratan, Dr Balwinder Singh Aulakh, Dr Suraj Dhillon, Dr Gurveer Singh, Dr Ankush

Kumar.

Prominent among those who were present include Dr Gursharan Singh, Dr Tajinder Toor, Dr Gurpreet Rattan, Adv Naval Chibber, Avtar Chibber, Dr S K Nagesh, Malkit Singh Malra, Dr Hitesh Narang, Ajit Jawadi, Daan Singh, Kewal Singh Banwait, Anod Kumar, Randhir Singh Dheera, Sanjiv Malik, Satnam Singh and Rajpal Verma.

Hamas Attack Can't Be Used for Ethnic Cleansing: UN

*Diary of
International
Events*

C. Adhikesavan

After the Gaza hospital was bombed by the Israel, UN says, ' Hamas attack cannot justify collective punishment of the people of Gaza or that of Palestine. How to fight terrorism! 500 killed in bombing of Ahil Arabi Hospital in Gaza. Most of the dead were admitted in the hospital suffering injuries from earlier attacks. 'Children of light ' indeed! More than 7,000 missiles have been dropped on Gaza; thousands of Palestinians killed and more dying by the minute ; thousands of children in graves. More than 152,000 Palestinians have been injured since 2008 up to September 21, 2023. Even prior to the IDF evacuation order, 400,000 people had been internally displaced in Gaza in the last week.

Hospitals are under attack. Isn't the beast of revenge satiated or is your thirst for blood still not quenched. The people of Gaza Strip are being dispossessed from their own land. The Israeli attack is just an illegal occupation. For demonising 'human animals' , reduce oneself to a barbarian sub-human, particularly for self-preservation!

In the face of apartheid, the Palestinian resistance in Gaza removes the barriers imposed on the people inside. In the face of regime normalization agreements, they reaffirm to the whole world that they have not abandoned their causes.

The battle of the Palestinian resistance is waging is the battle of all the free people of the world. It is an international battle in the face of imperialism and its Zionist tool in the region, and also against the collaboration of the

capitalists in their own countries with the Zionist aggression.

All should support all the means adopted by the resistance to accumulating for liberation, and call on all leftist and progressive organisations in the region and the world to support the Palestinian people's fight against the occupation by all possible means, regardless of their position, and one should salute the peoples



who began to move to support our international cause in Palestine. These peoples confirm every day that there is no choice but to resist.

Today, it is more necessary than ever to redouble solidarity with the struggle of the Palestinian people for their liberation, for the end of the occupation, for the return of the refugees and the recovery of their property, for the release of prisoners and detainees, and for the construction of a Palestinian state based on the will of its people and its youth without imperialist interference of any kind.

Israeli reservists are amassing on the border with Gaza, where there are increasingly dire warnings over dwindling water supplies and the

displacement of hundreds of thousands of people.

Israel has announced an impending, open-ended operation to invade the Gaza Strip, with plans to remove and destroy the military capabilities and leadership of the Hamas militant group through ground invasion.

Benjamin Netanyahu's reservist troops preparing for the ground invasion. They will not only be killing

available for 2 million people. Unless military operations stopped there was going to be a "public health catastrophe.

Israeli society has been deeply divided in recent years, with anger directed towards Netanyahu's coalition government – described as the most right-wing in Israeli history – and particularly its judicial reforms. In the name of self-

Hamas men but ordinary children, women and other civilians. The Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) has ordered the roughly 1.1 million residents of Gaza City to evacuate to the southern half of the thin, densely populated coastal strip, despite concerns by human rights groups, the United Nations, and aid workers that such a move might amount to ethnic cleansing of a civilian population. Israel has cut deliveries of food, water, fuel and medical supplies from the strip. Gaza was now at risk as water supplies run out due to supplies from Israel being cut, and desalination plants in Gaza running out of fuel. It has become a matter of life and death. It is a must; fuel needs to be delivered now into Gaza to make water

defence, Israel is seeking to justify what would amount to ethnic cleansing. Any continued military operations by Israel have gone well beyond the limits of international law. The international community must stop these egregious violations of international law now, before tragic history is repeated. Time is of the essence. Palestinians and Israelis both deserve to live in peace, equality of rights, dignity and freedom. In a classic case of blaming the victim and brazenly whitewashing the Israeli regime's atrocities, many western leaders including Indian Prime Minister Narendra Modi have again jumped in defense of the apartheid. They are hailing and standing with the aggressor.

They openly say 'Finish Them'.

Hamas is the creation of Israel

Yitzhak Segev, who was the Israeli military governor in Gaza in the early 1980s, revealed that he had helped finance the Palestinian Islamist movement as a "counterweight" to the secularists and leftists of the Palestine Liberation Organization and the Fatah party, led by Yasser Arafat (who himself referred to Hamas as "a creature of Israel.") According to the confession of the retired brigadier general the Israeli government gave him a budget and the military government gives to the mosques.

"Hamas, to my great regret, is Israel's creation," Avner Cohen, a former Israeli religious affairs official who worked in Gaza for more than two decades. Back in the mid-1980s, Cohen even wrote an official report to his superiors warning them not to play divide-and-rule in the Occupied Territories, by backing Palestinian Islamists against Palestinian secularists. They didn't listen to him. And Hamas, as I explain in the fifth installment of my short film series for The Intercept on blowback, was the result. To be clear: First, the Israelis helped build up a militant strain of Palestinian political Islam, in the form of Hamas and its Muslim Brotherhood precursors; then, the Israelis switched tack and tried to bomb, besiege, and blockade it out of existence.

In the past decade alone, Israel has gone to war with Hamas three times — in 2009, 2012, and 2014 — killing around 2,500 Palestinian civilians in Gaza in the process.

CTUs and SKM Condemn Attacks on Journalists

The Platform of Central Trade Unions/ Sectoral Federations/ Associations (CTUs) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) issued the following statement on October 16, 2023:

The brazen raids on the offices of Newslick media offices, arrests of journalists, Prabir Purkayastha and Amit Chakravarty and the raids conducted in 46 houses including those of Abhisar Sharma, Bhasha Singh, Urmillesh, Aunindyo Chakravarty, Sohail Hashmi in Delhi on October 3, 2023 need to be

condemned in the strongest terms. It is not surprising that the reasons given include the coverage given to historic kisan movement, the anti-CAA movement and so on.

We stand by the victimised journalists, writers, intellectuals and satirists and the stand-up comedians, who have been fearlessly expressing their views in support of the common masses and exposing the ruling dispensation's misdeeds and corruption.

The journalists and the media are known as the 'fourth estate' in a

democratic set-up. They are the conscience-keepers of the society. Freedom of expression is one of the vital fundamental rights guaranteed by the Indian Constitution and needs to be protected in the interest of a healthy and vibrant democracy.

The raids conducted at the residences and the offices of several social media activists, confiscating their mobile phones, laptops and other electronic devices and tools and arresting them under the draconian provisions of Unlawful Activities Prevention Act

(UAPA) that deny even the basic right to secure bail against the arbitrary arrest by the State, is a blatant misuse of state power by the BJP government. This is nothing short of creating a fear-psychosis among the bona fide journalist community which amounts to muzzling of democracy in our country. These acts also deprive the rights of the people to have access to authentic information and news from the print and electronic media, including the 'social media' in our country.

We stand by the Editors Guild of India, and the press

club of India, the working journalists and reporters as well as the social media activists in this hour of crisis.

It is heartening that demonstrations were held across the country condemning the arrests and demanding ouster of Modi government in 2024.

This is an act in the long chain where the Central government has used its executive powers in blatant disregard of the rights guaranteed under the Indian Constitution, with a sole aim to silence all voices of opposition prior to the election in 2024.

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Kisan Movement for Implementation of Guarantees



AIKS president Ravula Venkaiah addressing the convention

BANGALORE: All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) President Ravula Venkaiah pointed out that there are promises made by the prime minister to the farmers' organisations, given in writing, but they are not implemented, even after a year. The promises were made when the peasants were protesting against the three black agricultural laws.

Ravula Venkaiah, AIKS leader, in his address to the Karnataka State Convention of Kisan Morcha (SM) unit, held at Konda Basappa Hall, asked the government to get the promises implemented immediately.

The state convention of Karnataka Kisan Morcha (SM) was attended by more than 500 farmers'

representatives from different districts. Among the chief guests were Ravula Venkaiah, AIKS National Secretary Biju Krishnan and Kisan Kranti Union President Avtar Singh. In the presidium were HR Basavarajappa, Rasamali Patil, V Baswaraj, Syed Mujeeb, Swarnabati and Ramyamalik.

Among the others who took part in the convention were AIKS President and Secretary from Karnataka State, Siddanna Gouda Patil, Lokesh, Diwakar from AIKS (CPM), Nagendra from AIKKM. One of the kisan leaders Yeswant introduced a resolution that was passed by the conference.

In his speech in the conference, Ravula Venkaiah

Ravula Venkaiah

said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi must apologize to the farmers while withdrawing the three laws as none of the promises made have been fulfilled in last one year. C2+50 has not been made a legal guarantee for crop prices. LDF government in Kerala add support price for food crops per quintal and also Rs 780 for bonus. To help the farmers in getting relief from heavy debts, they want to bring Kerala type of debt relief under legal guarantee authority by the government at the Centre.

They also want withdrawal of the Electricity Reforms Bill which is most

harmful to the farmers. The convention also demanded that minister of state for home affairs and his son who is responsible for the Lakhimpur Kheri incident should be punished severely. He said that in order to achieve these, there is a need to expand a strong farmers movement across the country. As a part of that, a program is being conducted to unite SKM, which is limited to two or three states, in the form of conferences in all states across the country.

Karnataka is the 15th state to organize conference out of 16 states. It is taking place in Bangalore. He called for indefinite initiations to be held across the country on November 26, 27 and 28.

AIKS president Ravula

said, "If you want to achieve this, you have to defeat Narendra Modi. It is the only solution. And that is why all the farmers should come forward unitedly to restart the nationwide movement with the slogan of 'Narendra Modi Hathao, Desh Bachao, Kisan Bachao'".

Biju Krishnan said that he wanted to see the peasant movement regain its strength as a nationwide movement. President of Kisan Krantikari Union Avtar Singh said that the farmers of Punjab were at the forefront of the movement that took place at the borders of Delhi for more than a year and called upon the farmers of South India to be key participants in this movement again with the same spirit.

On Record ...

The Supreme Court bench led by Chief Justice of India (CJI) DY Chandrachud granted a 'final opportunity' to Speaker of Maharashtra Legislative Assembly Rahul Narwekar to give a 'realistic time schedule' for disposal of disqualification petitions arising out of the Shiv Sena rift. A three-judge bench said the Speaker "is not doing his job" but "goes on to give interviews that we are a co-equal branch of the government, the Supreme Court is supreme in its own way". It went on to note, "We are not satisfied with the time schedule indicated before this Court previously. The time schedule as proposed will not result in a foreseeable conclusion of disqualification pleas at a reasonably early date." – *The Indian Express*, October 18.

CIVICUS, a global civil society alliance, has called on the Indian authorities "to end the crackdown against NewsClick and release its editor and staff held" under the UAPA (Unlawful Activities Prevention Act). NewsClick's editor-in-chief, Prabir Purkayastha, and its HR head, Amit Chakravarty, were arrested under charges of

terrorism and criminal conspiracy by the Special Cell of the Delhi Police after the latter raided over 70 locations connected to NewsClick, including the homes of its employees and consultants.

CIVICUS is a global alliance "of over 10,000 civil society organisations and activists dedicated to strengthening citizen action and civil society throughout the world."

During the October 3 raids by the Delhi Police on NewsClick, electronic devices (including mobile phones, laptops and hard disks) of journalists were seized. The Police questioned at least 46 journalists associated with NewsClick. – *newsclick.in*, October 14.

The Delhi High Court recently came down heavily on Delhi University for revoking a Class XII 'meritorious student' admission in an undergraduate course B.A. (Hons.) Geography, for the Academic Year 2023-2024 at Kirori Mal College, citing 'non-fulfilment of subject mapping criteria' as the student due to the non-availability of an examination in English Literature chose



History as per the DU exception/flexibility rule. Noting that the decision was based on the undue arbitrariness exhibited by the admissions authority, which contravened the stipulations of the information bulletin/prospectus they themselves had issued, the High Court directed the University to grant admission to students against existing vacancies or by increasing the number of seats in case of no vacancy. – *verdictum.in*, October 12.

Compiled by: C Adhikesavan

22nd UP State Conference of NFIW

IMPLEMENT WOMENS' RESERVATION IN 2024 POLLS



NFIW general secretary Annie Raja alongwith the delegates

ALIGARH: The two-day 22nd state conference of Uttar Pradesh unit of National Federation of Indian Women (NFIW) was successfully held here on October 7 and 8, 2023 in Habib Garden.

Inaugurating the conference NFIW general secretary Annie Raja said that Prime Minister Narendra Modi betrayed the women while presenting the Nari Shakti Vandan Adhiniyam 2023 when he said that the women's reservation will not be implemented now but only after 10 years.

Annie Raja demanded that the women's reservation must be implemented in the ensuing Parliament elections in 2024 as well as in state assembly elections.

She said that the Narendra Modi government is responsible for rising prices of all essential

commodities, galloping unemployment, spread of communal hatred and increasing atrocities on women. Prime Minister's 'Beti Bachao, Beti Padhao' slogan and claim of being a well wisher of women have also been exposed with the inhuman crimes against women, gang rape and parading them unclothed on streets. When women in Manipur were undergoing loss of dignity, barbaric torture, prime minister remained silent for 80 days. The facts that he failed to take any action against WFI chief who is also a BJP member of Parliament only disprove his tall claims.

National secretary Aruna Sinha said that the Central

Kanti Mishra

government is selling away the national and natural assets of the country. The government is also taking away the rights of the traditional way of livelihood by snatching away their means of livelihood.

Presiding over the inaugural session NFIW Uttar Pradesh state secretary Asha Mishra said the people of the state are fed up with the policies and programmes of Narendra Modi government. Inflation is fast rising. While on the one hand the profits of corporates and capitalists are continuously increasing, on the other hand in Uttar Pradesh atrocities against women, gang rapes and dowry killings are deepening. The state administration and the

police are protecting the offenders and because of that the attacks on women are widening.

The state secretary said that the two day conference has decided to further strengthen the organization and spread it widely in the state. The conference also decided to launch struggles against spiraling pricerise and increasing atrocities on women. The decision was also taken to ensure communal amity and to save the Constitution and democracy.

CPI national executive member Dr Girish Sharma and party state council secretary Arvind Raj Swarup greeted the conference at the inaugural session and wished the delegates all success.

The 22nd conference began with the welcome

address by reception committee president and Aligarh University Women Studies professor Tauseef Fatima.

The conference adopted resolutions on price rise, unemployment, atrocities against women, communal polarization, education and demands of Anganwadi and Mid-day meal workers.

The conference unanimously elected a 41 member council for the coming three years, Nisha Rathore as president, Kanti Mishra as general secretary, vice presidents Sasibala, Prameela Bajpai, Seema Parveen, Geetha Choudary, Sunita Mohdanwal,

The conference concluded with Annie Raja urging the new council and delegates to make the orgainsation strong and vibrant.

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