

LETTERS

FREEDOM OF RELIGION BILLS

The spate of “freedom of Religion” legislations in BJP ruled states, MP, Rajasthan etc. are totally against the spirit of Indian constitution, which guarantees the freedom of preaching and conversion. These ‘Freedom Bills’ aim at just the opposite of what their title conveys. Had Orwell been alive he could have added a line more to his classic formulations, where the intent of the term is very opposite of what it conveys. After the initial one in MP in the aftermath of the Niyogi commission report, the present ones have come in the after RSS affiliates’ intensification of their propaganda about conversions of Adivasis by force and fraud. The attacks on the Christian missionaries in the Adivasi areas is a part of Hindukaran of Adivasis, and keeping that in mind while these legislations are making it mandatory to seek prior permission for converting, the Adivasis coming to Hindu fold are exempt from permission or scrutiny, as that is called homecoming, *Gharvapasi*, to the parent religion. Surely these legislations will increase the insecurity of those working in the Adivasi areas and also will trample upon the constitution in a serious way.

All India Secular Forum

THEY ARE REFUGEES...

The State of the World’s Refugees: Human Displacement in the New Millennium examines the changing dynamics of displacement over the past 50 years. The challenges include the plight of tens of millions of internally displaced people (IDPs); widespread confusion over migrants and refugees; and tightened asylum policies and growing intolerance.

In his foreword to the report, High Commissioner Antonio Guterres notes that inter-State conflict is less prevalent today than internal strife and civil war, resulting in fewer refugees crossing international borders but more displaced within their own countries. Although the world’s estimated 25 million internally displaced people do not fall under the 1951 Refugee Convention, they are in urgent need of help.

‘People who would otherwise seek safety in neighbouring States are more frequently compelled to remain within the borders of their own country, most often in similar conditions as refugees,’ Mr Guterres wrote, noting that internal displacement is the international community’s ‘biggest failure’ in humanitarian action. ‘Two long-running conflicts in Africa—the Democratic Republic of Congo and Sudan—alone accounted for an estimated 7.5 million internally displaced people in 2005.’

The number of international migrants has been estimated at more than 175 million, with asylum seekers and refugees comprising only a very small proportion. ‘In public opinion, there has been a blurring of illegal migration and security problems with asylum and refugee issues,’ the High Commissioner said. ‘This demonstrates the importance of combating intolerance and challenging the notion that refugees and asylum seekers are the agents of insecurity, rather than its victims.’

TWNF

NUCLEAR INSANITY

It's just sheer insanity and perversion that nuclear weapons are being touted as instruments of national sovereignty. Utterly mindless of the fact that these are no weapons of defence. These are weapons of deliberate and indiscriminate mass murder on a mind-boggling scale. Even unborn generations in faraway lands would become its victims. A huge stockpile of nuclear weapons could not save the USSR from extinction. Perhaps it was a facilitating factor. India was attacked from across the border within less than a year of going nuclear after a long gap of 34 years. Its position internationally became weaker and not stronger and became subject to far intensified foreign interventions. Pakistan had to meekly submit to US threats after the 9/11 as confessed by its reigning dictator himself. This, however, does not lighten the burden of criminality of the existing nuclear weapons states. In fact it goes to underscore the fact that gross hypocrisy on their part, and obstinate refusal on the part of the Bush administration to directly deal with the North Korean regime, which itself considers its weapon capability as a bargaining counter to break out of the political-economic embargo and not as a weapon of self-defence, are largely responsible for the present predicament.

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