

frontier

Vol. 55 : No. 47

ISSN 0016-2094

May 21-27, 2023

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
THE ILO REPORT 2022 Continuing Violence against Labour Farooque Chowdhury	4
UN POPULATION REPORT 2023 How to Use the Demographic Dividend Kishore Kumar Biswas	8
TICKING TIME BOMB A Big Population: Boon or Bane? Somesh Jha	9
A HERETICAL INTELLECTUAL More on Ranajit Guha Arup Kumar Sen	11
LIVING DANGEROUSLY The Sundarbans and Its People Sukanta Sarkar	13
THE GREAT APOCALYPSE Limiting Economic Growth Joseph Tharamangalam	14

Editor : **TIMIR BASU**Assistant Editor : **Subhasis Mukherjee**

Published weekly for Germinal Publications Pvt. Ltd. by Sharmistha Dutta from 44, Balaram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006 and Printed by her at Laser Aid, 35A/3, Biplabi Barin Ghosh Sarani, Kolkata-700 067.

E-mail : frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in
frontierweekly@hotmail.com

Telephone : 2530-0065

[Typeset by THE D-COMLASER, 60 Sikdar Bagan Street, Kolkata-4, Ph : 98361-58319]

Ethnic Rioting

NORTH EAST IS AN ETHNIC CAULDRON. AT THE TIME OF writing the death toll in the Manipur riots reached 54, going by hospital figures though government officials downplayed the tragedy by acknowledging only '20-30' deaths. Ethnic violence is somewhat endemic in what is known as seven sisters—seven tiny states with dozens of minority ethnic and religious groups struggling hard to keep their identity alive. Today it is between Meiteis and Kukis. Tomorrow it might be between Kukis and Nagas. Churachandpur district, Moreh and some areas bordering Burma are still tense. The sudden spurt in tribal population in some regions is being seen as a destabilising factor for the existing demographic pattern. Many think it may outnumber the original inhabitants creating a situation of permanent antagonism between the communities. Chakma refugees, the victims of state-sponsored communal persecution in Bangladesh, have largely settled in Mizoram and Arunachal Pradesh, creating social tensions. Chakmas lost their ethnic identity at the very moment of Bangladesh's birth as Mujib would ask them to become good Bengalis, not ethnic minorities.

The 3 May riot in Manipur began as a clash between the Meitei and Kuki people. In truth the rioting started in Churachandpur district during the "Tribal Solidarity March" called by the All Tribal Student Union Manipur (ATSUM) in protest against the Manipur High Court order directing the state government "to consider appeal of the Meitei community to be included in the scheduled Tribes (ST) list". That 60,000 people joined the march substantiated the gravity of the problem for which so many Kukis took to the street. The chief minister, however, said misunderstanding between the two communities led to the riotous situation. It is easier said than done. The issue was not that simple.

After the riots on May 3 personnel from the Assam Rifles, the Army and Para-military forces were deployed in large number. As per the statement of the Additional Director of Police (Intelligence) of Manipur 23 police stations mostly in mountainous districts of the state were identified as most vulnerable and sensitive while over 20,000 affected people of different communities were evacuated and sheltered in safer places. The Internet services in the state were suspended for a period of five days and the Section 144 of the IPC was promulgated.

The flare-up was sudden but it was not unexpected. The Kukis fear that if the High Court verdict gets implemented the ST status would allow the

Meiteis who are politically and economically dominant to purchase land in the prohibited hilly areas. The Meiteis control 40 out of 60 seats in the Manipur Legislative Assembly. So ultimately it is the land question that matters. The space is finite and they are fighting over limited land-mass leading to riots–arson, loot and murder.

Meanwhile, a ruling Bharatiya Janata Party MLA has challenged the High Court order on the issue of scheduled tribe status to the Meitei community. The Kukis alleged that the Hills Area Committee of the Manipur Legislative Assembly was not made a party to the case. As a result they failed to present their opinion.

The Meiteis who are largely Hindu make 53 percent of the population, are barred from settling in the hilly

regions as per the Land Reforms Act of Manipur which limits them to inhabit in the Imphal valley constituting 10 percent of the state's land. On the contrary tribals are entitled to settle in the valley region. The tribal people, Nagas and Kukis to be precise, reside in the reserved and protected hilly tracts consisting of the rest of the 90 percent of the state.

Meiteis too have their grievances. The huge increase in tribal population in recent years which cannot be explained by natural birth is problematic. The rapid Christianisation of tribal people of Manipur has contributed to the socio-cultural gap between the two communities. During the violence houses and churches of the mostly Christian tribal people were destroyed.

If anything India lives at many levels. Tribal land alienation is a

national phenomenon. There are laws, mostly enacted during the British rule, to protect tribal land but laws can be easily circumvented as one can see it in Jharkhand. Despite the existence of the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act tribals are being systematically deprived of their land rights.

The ethnic question is essentially the identity question and in the Indian context it is the land question as well. It should be addressed within the broader ambit of nationality problem. There are many ethnic and national minority groups in China but they have solved the problem to a large extent. In India the persons in authority have no idea as to how to tackle the ethnic issue and simmering discontent brewing all the time among these marginalised people. □□□ 07-05-2023

COMMENT

A Labour Leader sans Labour Values

KEIR STARMER, AS THE LABOUR leader, pledged to create a better future based on several progressive policies, including nationalisation, higher taxes, and cancelling of tuition fees. These policies were crucial to persuading Labour Party members to elect him as their party leader. However, Keir Starmer has abandoned the policy promises that helped him win the leadership position.

Laissez-faire attitude of the Labour leader baffles many and amuses Tories. Under Keir Starmer's leadership, the Labour Party has completely abandoned its commitment to the progressive transformation of politics, society, and the economy in Britain. Starmer argues that he is not ideological about progressive policies, such as public ownership over national resources, which matter to people and their well-being. Instead, he focuses on "growth,

growth, growth". However, he does not define the direction of his growth trajectory, leaving many questions about who benefits from his policies and which path he will take to achieve growth.

Starmer's approach sounds like that of a committed conservative leader who is following in the footsteps of reactionary Sunakianism or Trussonomics, which only works for a few. This is neither an ideological free zone nor political junk; these are clear political projects to uphold the political and economic hegemony of the ruling elites over the working masses. His political positions on the free movement of people and migration sound like those of an entrenched reactionary Tory. He has abandoned the progressive policy promises on the nationalisation of rail, water, and energy in the UK. This is why so many Tories love

Starmer like a true Conservative.

The National Health Service is crumbling under pressure, with doctors, nurses, and other health workers overworked and underpaid. Schools, colleges, universities, and other educational institutions are also in a state of ruin, with teachers, researchers, and educational workers struggling to make ends meet on low salaries. Public services are becoming directionless, while banking and financial institutions face crises on a daily basis. Train travel and utility bills are a daytime robbery of working people, and the falling living standards are the legacy of decades-long practices of neoliberal economics and conservative politics. The question remains: does any of this matter to the Labour Party under Starmer?

As the cost-of-living and climate crises loom large, nationalisation is the only available policy framework that can help countries recover from economic crises and work for the working masses. Public ownership and control help stabilise the economy

and protect the strategic industries, infrastructures, and assets crucial for the economic security of the country and its people. Nationalisation injects stability, innovation, and an entrepreneurial spirit into the economy, whereas privatisation is a legal plunder of national resources that breeds inequality, exploitation, and marginalisation of the labouring masses.

In abandoning nationalisation as a policy framework, Keir Starmer has not only abandoned working people but also taken the Labour Party to an ideological zone con-

comitant with the Conservative Party. Starmer's politics is not pragmatic but rather plays to the conservative gallery. His political pledges are like British weather, changing four times in a day and bringing four bankrupt seasons in politics. His dishonesty defines his politics of conservative populism. The list of his policy reversals is long, reflecting his regressive leadership practices. The rightward shift of the Labour Party under Starmer's leadership strengthens the Conservatives and destroys progressive potentials. □□□

[Contributed]

NOTE

Governors and Governance

I Satya Sundaram writes:

OF LATE, THE ROLE OF the Governors has become polemical as their appointments are purely political. Most Governors act as agents of the Centre. What is surprising is that this issue is not taken up seriously. The Governors seldom act as the guardians of the constitution. At present, they are appointed, taking into account their loyalty to the party in power at the Centre.

The Governor is entrusted with some important functions—appointing ministers, summoning the legislatures, assenting the Bills, and calling for President's rule. He also decides, in a crisis situation, which party should get the right to form the Government.

Strangely, no serious discussion took place on the true role of the Governor. Although Article 154(1) of the constitution vests in the Governor the executive power of the State, he is required to exercise that power in accordance with the constitution. Thus, the Governor can act only on the aid and advice of the Council of Ministers.

The constitution makers never thought of empowering the Governor to deal with a difficult situation. Ambedkar lamented in the Constituent Assembly: "The Governor under the constitution has no functions which he can discharge by himself: no functions at all".

The Sarkaria Commission too expressed the position of the Governor thus: "It is a well recognised principle that so long as the Council of Ministers enjoys (the) confidence of the Assembly its advice in these matters, unless patently unconstitutional, must be deemed as binding on the Governor".

In a few cases, the Centre (the party in power) used the office of the Governor to topple the State Governments, paving the way for fresh elections. It happened in the case of undivided Andhra Pradesh. When N T Rama Rao was the Chief Minister, Indira Gandhi used Governor Ram Lal to topple the Government. Of course, the move boomeranged.

A staid blemish of Governor's role is that he reads out the Address prepared by the State Government.

BOOKS BY T VIJAYENDRA

Just Released

REQUIEM FOR OUR TIMES Rs. 100

AFTER ALL IT IS ONLY HIM!

AND OTHER STORIES Rs. 70

AN INTELLIGENT BIRD'S GUIDE

TO THE BIRDWATCHER AND

OTHER STORIES

Second reprint Rs. 40

THE LOSERS SHALL

INHERIT THE WORLD

Third Reprint Rs. 60

REGAINING PARADISE:

TOWARDS A FOSSIL FUEL FREE

SOCIETY Rs. 120

THE TEACHER AND

THE CHILD LABOUR Rs. 50

For Copies Contact :

MANCHI PUSTAKAM

12-13-439, St. No. 1 Tarnaka,

Secunderabad 500017

Email: info@manchipustakam.in

Cell: +91 73822 97430

Is this the role assigned to the Governor by the constitution? If the Governor alters some paragraphs, his move is described as undemocratic by the Government!

Pending Bills is another problem. The State leadership believes some Bills are pending with the Governor purely for political reasons. The Telangana Government is worried about this. It brought this to the notice of the President of India, and the Centre. The "war" between the Chief Minister and the Governor is going on in Telangana. Of course, if the legislature again passes the Bill without accepting any of the amendments suggested by the Governor, he/she is constitutionally bound to give assent to the Bill. However, no time limit is mentioned for the return of the Bill.

In a Southern State, the ruling party activists damage the properties of the opposition leaders. The police are silent spectators. They even arrest the activists of the opposition parties, even when the newspapers carry news with photos. Even when there is a law and order problem,

the Governor is silent. Of Course, the High Court did take them seriously. The point is, the High Court is burdened with too many cases. If the Governor interferes, the situation would improve.

The sad truth is that today's Governors are beholden to the Centre. One may not argue for the abolition of the institution of Governor. However, the practice of appointing the very old (above 80 years) as Governors should go. Generally, the Governor should be a top intellectual whose duty is to safeguard the Constitution and ensure good governance. Surely, the Governor can muzzle the misdeemeanors of the State government.

There are constitution experts who can define the true role of the Governor. It has been said: "As the constitutional head of the State, there are innumerable concerns, particularly the Directive Principles of State Policy that could be the frame of conversation of the Governor with his Government. Such a conversation, however, needs to be in the form of an engagement with his Government and the State legislative rather than harping on constitutional status". (Valerian Rodrigues: "Changing Politics, Incompatible Governors", *The Hindu*, January 23, 2023).

Through their appointments and

removals, the Governors must be made accountable to the Union, the State and the Rajya Sabha (Lalith Panda: "Remove Raj from Raj Bhavans", *The Times of India*, January 13, 2023).

When the ruling party enjoys absolute majority, the State Government may indulge in fiscal profligacy for publicity, keeping in view the next elections. Should there be no check on such counter-productive moves? If the State Government is most corrupt, should the people suffer in silence till the next elections? Why the Governor should be deprived of showing his strength and sagacity? □□□

THE ILO REPORT 2022

Continuing Violence against Labour

Farooque Chowdhury

VIOLENCE AGAINST LABOUR is as old as capital dominating labour. The tool-violence-is older than the rise of capitalism. Capitalism has sharpened the tool: made it more threatening, made it more mischievous, and, at times, has made it appear non-violent.

A recent ILO report, *Experience of Violence and Harassment at Work: A Global First Survey* (Geneva: ILO, 2022, ISBN 9789220384923 (web PDF), said: "Violence and harassment in the world of work is a pervasive and harmful phenomenon, with profound and costly effects ranging from severe physical and mental health consequences to lost earnings and destroyed career paths to economic losses for workplaces and societies".

The report is based on a survey-ILO-Lloyd's Register Foundation-Gallup survey.

According to the report, the "survey is the first attempt to provide a global overview of people's own experiences of violence and harassment at work. The results provide a

first glance at the magnitude and frequency of violence and harassment at work, providing insights into the main forms of violence and harassment (that is, physical, psychological and sexual) and on the main barriers that prevent people from talking about it".

"To fill this evidence gap and to advance understanding of and action against violence and harassment in the world of work", the survey jointly carried out the first global exploratory exercise "to measure people's own experiences of violence and harassment at work across the world". This survey aimed to explore the prevalence and frequency of violence and harassment at work, including its main different forms-be it physical, psychological or sexual-and respondents' experiences with disclosing such occurrences. The ultimate goal of the survey and the report "is to raise awareness on a long-standing and highly complex issue rooted in wider economic, societal and cultural contexts, including those surrounding the

world of work and entrenched gender roles".

Under the survey, "interviews were conducted in 2021 with nearly 125,000 individuals aged 15 years or older in 121 countries and territories using probability-based random sampling to ensure nationally representative data and results. However, the findings of this report focus exclusively on the 74,364 respondents who were in employment at the time of the interview".

Regarding methodology, the report informs: "The survey is likely to have been influenced by a range of macroenvironmental factors (national politics, institutional norms, historic traditions or cultural norms) and by microenvironmental factors (for instance, the location of the interview or the presence of others during the interview), as well as by individuals' willingness or reticence to reveal such information. For instance, some questions were not asked or were asked differently in a few countries due to political and cultural sensitivities". The comments concerning the way the survey framed the questions themselves states the reality labour faces: plain facts can never be told, not even be asked, in certain circumstances. That means all

environments don't even allow labour to talk, or even to hear facts freely. There may be a political or cultural environment that represses the opportunity for labour to express itself.

However, the camp against labour can't claim that "the survey focused and its findings stand on a small sample size, it represents a small size of population, or a small number of countries". The camp against labour has to come up with similar survey to counter claims of violence against labour.

The report said: "Violence and harassment at work is a widespread phenomenon around the world, with more than one in five (22.8 percent or 743 million) persons in employment having experienced at least one form of violence and harassment at work during their working life. Among people who had experienced violence and harassment at work, about one-third (31.8 percent) said they had experienced more than one form, with 6.3 percent having faced all three forms in their working life". [Emphasis added]

The ILO report finds three forms of violence in working life:

- [1] "Nearly one in ten (8.5 percent or 277 million) persons in employment has experienced physical violence and harassment at work in their working life. Men were more likely than women to report experiencing physical violence and harassment".
- [2] "Psychological violence and harassment was the most common form of violence and harassment reported by both men and women, with nearly one in five (17.9 percent or 583 million) people in employment experiencing it in their working life".
- [3] "One in fifteen (6.3 percent or 205 million) people in employment has experienced sexual violence and harassment at work in their working life. Women were particularly exposed to sexual

violence and harassment at work. The data around sexual violence and harassment demonstrate the largest gender difference by far (8.2 percent of women compared to 5.0 percent of men) among the three forms of violence and harassment".

The summary of results of the survey includes:

- [1] "Violence and harassment at work is also a recurrent and persistent phenomenon. More than three in five victims of violence and harassment at work said it has happened to them multiple times, and for the majority of them, the last incident took place within the last five years".
- [2] "The risk of experiencing violence and harassment at work is particularly pronounced across certain demographic groups. Youth, migrant, and wage and salaried women and men were more likely to face violence and harassment at work, and this can be particularly true among women. For instance, survey results show that young women were twice as likely as young men to have experienced sexual violence and harassment, and migrant women were almost twice as likely as non migrant women to report sexual violence and harassment".
- [3] "Persons who have experienced discrimination at some point in their life on the basis of gender, disability status, nationality/ethnicity, skin colour and/or religion were more likely to have experienced violence and harassment at work than those who did not face such discrimination. Those facing gender-based discrimination have been particularly affected: Nearly five in ten people who have been victims of gender-based discrimination in their life have also

faced violence and harassment at work, compared to two in ten of those who have not been discriminated against on the basis of gender".

- [4] "Talking about personal experiences of violence and harassment is still challenging. Only slightly more than half (54.4 percent) of victims have shared their experience with someone, and often only after they have experienced more than one form of violence and harassment. People were also more likely to tell friends or family, rather than using other informal or formal channels".
- [5] "Multiple factors and barriers may prevent people from disclosing incidents of violence and harassment at work. Among survey respondents, 'waste of time' and 'fear for their reputation' were the most common barriers discouraging people from talking about their own experiences of violence and harassment at work".

The facts that the ILO report exposes tell unequivocally the condition labour lives in in its working life—the time-period in which labour sells, or to be factual, is compelled to sell, its labour power, that without which nothing will come out for the rich, for those who exploit the labour.

If the search for violence in labour's life is not confined within the

For Frontier Contact

D.K. AGENCIES (P) LTD.

Booksellers, Publishers & Subscription Agents since 1968

CIN: U74899DL1983PTC017169

"DK" is a registered trademark

Regd. off: A/15-17, D.K. Avenue,

Mohan Garden, Najafgarh Road,

New Delhi-110059. INDIA

Metro Station: Nawada (Blue Line)

Web: <http://www.dkagencies.com>

Ph: (011) 25357104, 25357105

Fax: (+91-11) 25357103

working life of labour, and is widened into labour's entire life, the presence of violence in labour's life is, no doubt, much more brutish, more in number, much in extent, more intense in force, more widespread. The reason behind this hostile reality is, in brief, the level of power, actually, no power, of the labour-labour holds no power in a socio-economic-political-ideological reality controlled by exploiting interests.

This reality needs a brief elaboration:

- [1] The social position labour occupies is, in real sense, nothing, a complete zero. Labour has no social position in a society with exploiting relationship, where the dominant power is the exploiting capital.
- [2] Labour has no control, no say, no choice, nothing in an economic reality with exploiting relations. Full control of the economic reality, again, is by dominating capital. Labour has not a single word to say on this exploiting economic reality. Even, its bargaining capacity before it sells itself is mostly denied by an overpowering market. Whatever little space labour can make, if ever, is due its organising power and its struggling force. That's the reason behind capital's all-out effort to coerce labour, bribe a part of labour-leadership, control labour's organisations, and hinder labour's initiatives to get organised. Thus, the over-presence of non-radical labour organisations, as these non-radical organisations don't go for tearing down the chains of exploitation, which is a radical change in production relations, which is the only path to labour's emancipation.
- [3] The same reality, labour's lack of voice and participation, prevails in the plane of politics,

which is also controlled by exploiting interests. Politics is an area of life fully controlled by dominating capital. Whatever voice of labour is raised in politics is raised under the control of capital, and without questioning the fundamental question of dismantling the system of exploitation. Whatever participation of labour is shown is done to validate the rule of capital. Participation of all is impossible in an unequal political sphere. Mainstream scholarship doesn't cite this fact, while mainstream media sells capital's tales. Unawareness of the trampled, the working classes, is one of the powerful weapons that the mainstream uses to establish its claim-participation of all, which is a lie.

The major aspect that goes unnoticed is the narrow definition of violence, as the ILO report has done. Violence against labour is operated first of all by capital, as capital chains labour, as capital appropriates labour, as capital keeps labour tamed in an environment of fear and coercion. The reality in which labour is pushed into by capital is itself violent. It's everywhere in labour's life; it's not confined to the workplace.

"[A]ctions", writes Benjamin Roberts, "driven by capital, harm human life, brutalise communities, and reinforce oppressive hierarchies—forms of violence that make property damage pale in comparison". ["Capital and violence", *Harvard Political Review*, June 6, 2020.] Benjamin Roberts adds: "If you believe that poverty is not violence, then I urge you to ask yourself what violence is".

He further argues:

"Violence is the force of capital visited upon the people to create conditions of precarity. Capital

can so easily plunge people into poverty, breaking them with jobs that extract long hours in exchange for simple survival. And poverty in turn brutalizes its inhabitants, dehumanising them as they sacrifice their individuality to a faceless system that demands more cheap labour".

The argument goes still further:

"Capitalism requires violence to maintain itself, abroad and at home".

"The former [capital] reduces individuals to 'human capital stock'. It is painful to have nuance boiled away and to be accused of not caring if people live or die. But neither capitalism—nor the poverty it causes—cares about good intentions. Capitalism does not care whether people live".

The market's violent impact on the lives of the labour is undeniable today. Imperialist war's impact on the lives of the working classes is also violent. Shall not impact of these be counted?

Then, there's the use of violence against [1] unions genuinely organising labour, and [2] initiatives to organise unions. It's capital's age-old mode of operation. Cinto Brandini and nine of his associates were killed in 1345 in Florence. What was their sin? They tried to organise wool combers. That was very likely the first known killing of labour organisers. Years and centuries followed with experiences of labour massacres and killings in countries. Who can forget the Thibodaux Massacre (Louisiana, US, November 23, 1887), where the slaughter of the striking workers and their neighbourhood went on for nearly three hours, with 60 dead? Howard Zinn tells about the Ludlow Massacre in *A People's History of the United States* (Longman, London, 1980):

"[S]hortly after Woodrow Wilson took office there began in Colorado one of the [most] bitter and

May 21-27, 2023

FRONTIER

7

violent struggles between workers and corporate capital in the history of the country [US].

“This was the Colorado coal strike that began in September 1913 and culminated in the ‘Ludlow Massacre’ of April 1914”. Eleven thousand miners worked for the Colorado Fuel & Iron Corporation owned by the Rockefeller family. “Aroused by the murder of one of their organisers, they went on strike against low pay, dangerous working conditions, and feudal domination of their lives in towns completely controlled by the mining companies. Mother Jones, at the time an organiser of the United Mine Workers, came into the area, fired up the miners with her oratory, and helped them in those critical first months of the strike, until she was arrested, kept in a dungeon like cell, and then forcibly expelled from the state.

“When the strike began, the miners were immediately evicted from their shacks in the mining town. Aided by the United Mine Workers Union, they set up tents in the nearby hills and carried on the strike, picketing from these tent colonies. The gunmen hired by the Rockefeller interests—Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency—using Gatling guns and rifles, raided the tent colonies. The death list of miners grew, but they hung on, drove back an armored train in a gun battle, fought to keep out strike breakers. With the miners resisting, refusing to give in, the mines not able to operate, the Colorado governor (referred to by a Rockefeller mine manager as ‘our little cowboy governor’) called out the National Guard, with the Rockefellers supplying the Guard’s wages.

“The miners at first thought the Guard was sent to protect them,

and greeted its arrivals with flags and cheers. They soon found out the Guard was there to destroy the strike. The Guard brought strikebreakers in under cover of night, not telling them there was a strike. Guardsmen beat miners, arrested them by the hundreds, rode down with their horses parades of women in the streets [...] And still the miners refused to give in. When they lasted through the cold winter of 1913-1914, it became clear that extraordinary measures would be needed to break the strike.

“In April 1914, two National Guard companies were stationed in the hills overlooking the largest tent colony of strikers, the one at Ludlow, housing a thousand men, women, children. On the morning of April 20, a machine gun attack began on the tents. The miners fired back. Their leader, a Greek named Lou Tikas, was lured up into the hills to discuss a truce, then shot to death by a company of National Guardsmen. The women and children dug pits beneath the tents to escape the gunfire. At dusk, the Guard moved down from the hills with torches, set fire to the tents, and the families fled into the hills, thirteen people were killed by gunfire.

“The following day, a telephone linesman going through the ruins of the Ludlow tent colony lifted an iron cot covering a pit in one of the tents and found the charred, twisted bodies of eleven children and two women. This became the Ludlow Massacre”.

Anti-union agencies began organising violence against labour movement since late-19th-early 20th century. (Robert Michael Smith, From Black-jacks to Briefcases—A History of Commercialised Strikebreaking and Union busting in the United States, 2003) In the Third and Fourth World

countries use of violence against the labour in the area of union and union organising is more rampant, crude and forceful. The labour raises voice when law stands opposed to the labour’s rights; and, then, law executes its force against the labour to keep it in chains. Isn’t it violence against labour? These types of violence against labour should be considered while having a stocktaking of violence against labour.

It’s not the only violence against labour, the part of humanity that produces all essentials, resources, comforts and luxury for all parts of society, while they go hungry-half-fed-unattended during sufferings with diseases. Similar incidents of killings and massacres abound in many countries today. But, these aren’t told, aren’t interpreted. Yet, this—tell this incidents of killings of working people—is the need. It is an essential message to workers everywhere.

Capital, itself, is violent by its very existence, and as it expands, as it must or die, the violence must increase as well. While expanding, capital encroaches upon all types of space, beginning from geographical and ecological space to essentials of life and ideology, And in its this expansion campaign, as in militant campaigns, capital turns violent to chain all, to win over all, to engage all in its service. Market, market’s

Just Published
WITH THE
PASSING TIME

by **Farooque Chowdhury**

Published by : **NGG Books**

4, Aati Bazar, Keraniganj,
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Email: nggbooks@gmail.com

Website: www.nggbooks.wordpress.com

Price: 400tk

[300tk for teachers and students,
if collected from the publisher.]

expansion, the free flow of capital and free transfer of profit, etc take violent form whenever these encounter hindrance. This violence goes not only against the workers, but, against all in capital's respective societies. It's, therefore, essential to define violence from labour's perspective, from the perspective of capital coercing and chaining labour.

This May Day, under the cloud of imperialist war and efforts to expand the imperialist war machine's

brute hands crossing oceans, from Europe to Asia, from the Atlantic to the Indo-Pacific, requires as its essential task to oppose capital's violence, oppose war-capital's violent campaign against all of humanity, as the military campaigns are hurting all of the human comity from Ukraine to countries in Africa, hurting people in Cuba, who are striving to have a dignified life, but in exchange are experiencing merciless sanctions that have created acute

fuel shortages in the island-country. The fuel shortage is so acute that Cuba has had to cancel its central May Day celebrations in Havana.

Yet, labour, the working people in countries, in factories and foundries, in mines and industrial agriculture fields, will pay homage to their heroes, to their sacrificing activists, and redeem the dream for a dignified, joyful, happy life free from exploitation.

□□□

UN POPULATION REPORT 2023

How to Use the Demographic Dividend

Kishore Kumar Biswas

THE LATEST STATE OF World Population Report 2023 was released a few days ago by the United Nations. As per the report India will become the most populous country of the world by mid-2023. India is poised to overtake China to become the world's most populous country, with more than 1.4 billion citizens in April, the United Nations has predicted. How has the estimate been made?

It is based on official data as well as extrapolating the trend of birth, mortality, and international migration. China had the highest global population for quite some time. However, China reported that in 2022, its population has declined by about 8.5 lakh. Historically, China had never experienced a decline of population, except in 1961, at the time of famine. This is why India is going to surpass China's population even at a time when India's population has almost stabilised. There was a time, in the 1960s or 1970s, when it was thought and many people still believe that India's high population has been the primary cause of its poverty and distress. It is known that due to this overwhelming fear, a forceful sterilization

policy was adopted in the 1970s. This policy was resented by a large section of the population and eventually culminated in weakening of the popular base of the Indian National Congress.

In truth India's population growth is not that high. The National Family Health Survey reported in 2021 that the total fertility rate had, for the first time, dipped below the replacement rate of 2.1. This means to keep the population size stable; a country needs to attain the rate of 2.1. That means on an average, one woman in a country gives birth to 2.1 children in her lifetime. It should ideally be 2. But due to some accidents or diseases some people may die untimely. This is why 2.1 has been taken as an established figure as a replacement rate.

The projection of India's population by the United Nations is important. The forecast has been to grow the population level from its current 1.4 billion to 1.67 billion in 2050. It will be peaked at 1.7 billion in

2064 and will settle at 1.53 billion in 2100. But many demographers believe that India's population will stabilise much earlier and it will start declining much earlier as well.

The most prominent figure in population theory has been Thomas Malthus, a British economist. About 240 years have passed since the publication of his *Essays on the Principles of Population* but his ideas are still the objects of heated ideological and political discussion. Malthusianism stands for "the population theory which maintains that all human disasters are the result of overpopulation regardless of social order" (page 260, *A Science in its Youth* by A Aniknin, Progress Publisher). Aniknin also says that Malthusianism maintains that the central problem of the developing countries is a surplus and an excessively rapid growth of population.

The World Population Report 2023 points out a very important message. It observes that population fluctuations are not new archaeological evidence which indicates that there have been periods of rapid population growth followed by population declines throughout human history (Shennan and Sear, 2021).

But most historical population busts were driven by periods of mass early mortality, induced by events such as war, famines, and epidemics. Still almost all current causes of falling population size are attributable to declining fertility and emigration rather than mass mortality events. Today most experts agree population changes are normal, and

May 21-27, 2023

FRONTIER

9

population sizes are neither good nor bad, what is needed are resilient systems that can respond to the needs of the population.

The Report 2023 emphatically points out that whether a country has “too high” or “too low” population is a matter of perception of individual members of a country. It depends on the state of the economy and its historical position. The world with eight billion population fears about ageing anxiety. At the same time, many countries like India where the share of young population has been high cannot utilise the so-called demographic dividend by properly utilising its youth in the production system. India with its 65% of work-

ing age population, almost half of which is less than 25 years of age, has the potential for remarkable socio-economic development.

Recently a report mentions an IMF working paper titled, ‘Demographic Dividend: Evidence from the Indian states’. This is written by Sekher Aiyar and Ashoka Modi. They observed that demographic dividend could add up to 2% points to per capita GDP growth per annum.

One can look at the development path of East Asian countries like Japan, South Korea, Taiwan or even China. They followed the path of state sponsored capitalism. However, before moving in that direction, they had already achieved strong human

quality by emphasising on the need for developed education, health, etc. India can follow that path and lower the dependence on automatic inflow of capital by opening the economy. The first target

should be to produce items of high mass consumption for daily use for India’s own people at very reasonable prices. This will naturally create a stronger industrial base and employment opportunity and strong effective demand in the economy. So, a high population is not necessarily an obstacle to development but is a favourable factor for development. □□□

[kkbbe64@gmail.com]

TICKING TIME BOMB

A Big Population: Boon or Bane?

Somesh Jha

INDIA HAS THE WORLD’S LARGEST workforce. But without enough good jobs, that unmatched advantage could prove a catastrophe.

For decades, India ran family planning programmes aimed at curbing its population growth amid limited resources.

Then, after liberalisation in the 1990s, the country’s policymakers changed tack: The country’s vast, young labour pool, New Delhi argued, was a “demographic dividend” that would pay out handsomely for the Indian economy.

Now, that promise is set to be tested like never before. India will soon surpass China to become the world’s most populous country, with more than 1.4 billion people.

Though India’s birth rate has slowed down in recent years, the country has a larger working-age population in absolute numbers (1.1 billion) and proportion (75 percent of the population) than any other major economy.

Meanwhile, China is ageing, with its population declining in 2022 for the first time in more than 60 years. Its economic growth, which had skyrocketed at an average of nearly 10 percent a year since 1978, is now anaemic: The country’s gross domestic product (GDP) grew just 3 percent in 2022, and even by Beijing’s own estimates, is expected to increase by just 5 percent this year.

The disruptions of COVID-19 and rising geopolitical tensions with the West have also made industries and investors consider destinations other than the world’s second-largest economy for their supply chains and plants.

So could India’s population and potential labour force make it the next big economic story—one capable of capitalising on China’s economic struggles? Or does the world’s largest democracy have an Achilles heel that could derail those dreams?

India’s youth bulge is a double-edged sword. To gain from it, India

will need to create enough jobs for the millions who enter its workforce every year—a challenge at which it is currently failing. For that, India needs to attract global investments. The window of opportunity is shrinking, and unless India moves quickly, its demographic dividend could easily turn into an unemployment nightmare.

Soon after independence, India—its population at the time was about 350 million people—adopted the world’s first national family planning programme in 1952. The focus at the time was on encouraging families to have two children.

But by the 1960s, the Indian government under former Prime Minister Indira Gandhi started taking more aggressive—even repressive—measures to control birth rates, which stood close to six children per woman, compared with two at present. The country’s economic growth was slow at the time—it averaged 4 percent from the 1950s to until the start of the 1990s. A surging population was seen as a problem, Mahesh Vyas, the chief executive of the Mumbai-based data research firm Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE), said.

“The greatest obstacle in the path of overall economic development is the alarming rate of population growth”, India’s health and family planning minister S Chandrasekhar said in 1967. The West, which viewed Indian democracy as a counterweight to Chinese communism, agreed. The World Bank loaned India \$66m for sterilisation programmes, while the United States linked its food aid to a hungry India to the country’s success at population control initiatives.

In the 1970s, India carried out forced sterilisation on millions of men, thousands of whom died from botched surgeries.

Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, India began opening up its economy to the private sector. The country’s growth rate picked up, first to 5.5 percent through the 1990s, and then beyond 7 percent on average from the late 2000s.

Policymakers began viewing a growing young population in the form of the so-called demographic dividend—when a majority of a country’s population falls within the working ages (15-64 years)—as an engine for further economic development.

In fact, according to Vyas, that dividend has already helped India’s economic growth since the 1990s. “In the 1990s, India succeeded quite well in moving people from farms to factories”. “This was a cultural change caused by policy interventions and helped by the demographic changes”.

In addition to a large workforce, a significant young population could, in theory, also become a source of investments in the future, Vyas said, if it earns well and saves.

“Many studies have shown that the economic growth that has happened in many other parts of the world, historically and even recently, is largely attributable to the demographic dividend”, he said.

Yet for that young workforce to

earn and save well, it needs enough well-paying jobs designed to serve the modern economy. That’s increasingly proving a struggle for India.

India’s official unemployment levels touched a 45-year-high of 6.1 percent in 2017-18, jumping up from 2.7 percent from the previous estimate of 2011-12, according to official data. The government’s annual jobs data suggests that unemployment levels improved to 4.1 percent in 2021-22.

But other data suggests that India’s jobless numbers are much higher. Close to five million workers enter the labour force every year in India, according to an analysis of the official estimates. The government’s own production-linked incentive scheme for selected sectors is expected to create six million jobs in five years—which will not be sufficient to cater to India’s growing labour market.

“Unemployment has been one of the biggest challenges for the Indian economy in the past two decades and it’s not showing signs of improvements”, said Himanshu, an associate professor in economics at New Delhi’s Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), who goes by one name.

Meanwhile, according to a World Bank report, investment growth in India has almost halved from an annual average of 10.5 percent between 2000 and 2010 to 5.7 percent between 2011 and 2021. The report attributed several factors to this decline in investment growth, ranging from worries about power supplies and road and rail networks to the bureaucratic demands placed on businesses.

COVID-19 lockdowns hit 40 million workers from rural India who were working in cities, forcing a giant internal migration wave as they returned to their villages. This, coupled with an underwhelming revival in the jobs market after the

pandemic waned, has led to a situation where the share of farm jobs in India’s total employment has been increasing, while the proportion of manufacturing sector jobs has been declining.

That move from cities to villages is a reversal of the successful strategy that worked for India starting in the 1990s. “More people are actually joining the agricultural sector compared to the non-agricultural sector”.

Not everyone is as pessimistic. As companies look at diversifying their businesses and investments beyond China, India is well positioned to take advantage, said Radhicka Kapoor, visiting professor at New Delhi-based think tank Indian Council for Research on International Economic Relations.

China is ageing so quickly that the share of its population above the age of 60 is set to increase from 20 percent at present to 30 percent by 2035. Vietnam, which in recent years has emerged as a manufacturing hub, is also ageing rapidly. India has a slightly higher segment of its population in the 15-64 age group than the Philippines, another country long seen as a possible contender for a piece of China’s manufacturing pie.

A large working-age population makes India attractive, not just from the labour market perspective but because the country could act as a large market for goods and services.

Taiwanese contract manufacturer Foxconn has reportedly won an order to build a factory in India to produce Apple’s wireless earphones, known as AirPods. Last year, Foxconn signed an agreement with Indian mining giant Vedanta to invest \$20bn in setting up the country’s first private semiconductor and display production plant in the state of Gujarat.

“At the same time, a lot of investors are also looking at skills

and a lack of skilled workforce can really hurt India's prospects". While India has "very highly skilled labour in the services sector"—including areas like information technology, where the country is a global leader—its workforce lacks the training needed for the high-end manufacturing industries.

India's workforce will not remain young forever. With fertility rates falling, India's working-age population (20-59 years) is expected to peak at 59 percent of the overall population by 2041, according to projections made in the country's economic survey of 2018-19.

As things stand, countries like Bangladesh and even Vietnam—despite its ageing population—stand to gain more than India when it comes to attracting investments and creat-

ing jobs, according to CMIE's Vyas. In fact, public investment in Bangladesh, at 6.5 percent of GDP between 2011 and 2020, was double India's public investment-to-GDP ratio, according to the World Bank.

"These countries offer a stable business environment and are a lot more quick in decision-making", Vyas said. India's biggest problem is unpredictability. For instance, if a business which has taken a bank loan goes bad and the loan becomes a non-performing asset, it is stigmatised really hard and hounded.

Opportunity could equally develop into a crisis. India must "ramp up investments and absorb all the people into the workforce". Otherwise, its much-vaunted dividend "can turn into a demographic disaster". □

[Natalia Shulga/Al Jazeera]

A HERETICAL INTELLECTUAL

More on Ranajit Guha

Arup Kumar Sen

RECENTLY, A MAJOR THINKER of present time, Ranajit Guha, passed away a few days before his centenary. Being famous all over the world as a historian, his intellectual journey spread to literature, philosophy and other disciplines of knowledge.

Born in a khas talukdar family in undivided Bengal, he witnessed the symptoms of 'semi-feudal culture' in his everyday life. The structure of power relationship between the praja (peasant) and the manib (lord), witnessed by him in his childhood years, persisted in his memory and influenced his heretical scholarship in later years. In his own Bengali words: "The manib is not supposed to do the work done by the praja; the praja is poor, so his survival depends upon the food provided in the rich manib family; the manib calls the praja by name, the praja calls him 'babu';

(the praja) stands up in the presence of the 'babu'; the old-aged praja touches the feet of the 'babu', prepares his tobacco for smoking, does not smoke in his presence; the 'babu' rebukes, the praja swallows it without protest, and so on. After a few decades the dialectical relation of domination and subordination and historical forms of peasant insurgency will be conceptualised in my mind in the light of this symbolic relationship". (English translation mine)

Ranajit Guha left his village in the 1930s and came to Calcutta (now Kolkata) for his studies. While being a student of Presidency College, he got involved in the activities of the undivided Communist Party. He became interested in tracing the origins of the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, while pursuing his studies in the MA class. In the 1950s, he became disillusioned with the politics

FRONTIER

44, Baram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

Phone: (033) 2530-0065

Mail: frontierweekly@yahoo.co.in

frontierweekly@hotmail.com

Site: www.frontierweekly.com

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

India [Annual] Rs. 500

Frontier Associate [Annual] Rs. 1500

Life Subscription [Inland] Rs. 5000+

Make payment by Cheque/Draft
in favour of FRONTIER or
GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

or
FRONTIER [GERMINAL
PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.]

MO should be addressed to Frontier
Please add Rs. 50/- to inland outstation
cheques towards bank charges, all
remittances to FRONTIER

Payment could be made directly to
our bank accounts as given below.

Check the bank details before
transferring money. Also inform us
through e-mail after sending money.

Beneficiary Name:

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name: CENTRAL BANK OF INDIA

Address: 8, Lenin Sarani, Kol-700013

Branch: Esplanade Branch

Current Account Number: 3116713216

IFSC Code: CBIN0280098

Swift Code: CBININBBCAL

OR

GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD.

Bank Name: PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Address : 223, C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001319

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBB0BC

OR

(GERMINAL PUBLICATIONS PVT. LTD)

Bank Name: PUNJAB NATIONAL BANK

Address : 223, C. R. Avenue, Kolkata-6

Branch: Jorasanko Branch

Current Account Number: 0085050001378

IFSC Code: PUNB0008020

Branch Code : 0008020

Swift Code: UTBIINBB0BC

*For MO, Regd. Post and Speed Post
mailing address should be written in the
following fashion :

To

FRONTIER

C/o Durbar Mahila Samanawya Committee

44, Baram Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

West Bengal

Contact Number : 8240016324

of the Communist Party and resigned from his membership. Then he embraced the world of teaching and research to address his mental vacuum. His unfinished research project in Bengali—‘*Chirasthayi Bandoboster Sutrapat*’ (Beginning of the Permanent Settlement) led to his path-breaking book, *A Rule of Property for Bengal*. It was published in 1963 when Ranajit Guha was settled abroad for his research. The book explored the debates among the colonial officials for land settlement in Bengal before it took final shape in the form of the Permanent Settlement of Bengal, introduced by Lord Cornwallis in 1793. This book is a landmark in the agrarian history of Bengal. In the Preface of the book, Guha observed how the society of Bengal carried the signature of the Permanent Settlement in later years: “In the early youth the author, like many others of his generation in Bengal, grew up in the shadow of the Permanent Settlement: his livelihood, like that of his family, was derived from remote estates they had never visited; his education was oriented by the needs of a colonial bureaucracy recruiting its cadre from among the scions of Lord Cornwallis’s beneficiaries; his world of culture was strictly circumscribed by the values of a middle class living off the fat of the land and divorced from the indigent culture of its peasant masses”.

Ranjit Guha’s later heretical writings were also influenced by his social life. The peasant insurgency in Naxalbari in the 1960s/1970s had a major impact on his thought. Recently, it is known from Sumanta

Banerjee’s letter to Ranajit Guha, carried in *Frontier* (Autumn Number, 2022), that Guha visited India in 1970-71, addressed the students of Delhi University in a meeting and urged them to come forward in support of the movement. In his interview with Milinda Banerjee in 2010, Guha stated: “...I became something of a Naxal intellectual. I still consider myself to have been inspired by Charu Majumdar’s ideas which, I think, contain a lot of validity. But Charu Majumdar and his followers were weak in organisational capacity, which resulted in the movement being crushed”.

Ranjit Guha’s book, *Elementary Aspects of Peasant Insurgency in Colonial India*, published in 1983, was a classic book that initiated new frontiers of research in peasant insurgency. Guha theoretically analysed in novel ways the peasant insurgencies and peasant consciousness in colonial India. Going beyond the conventional Marxist framework, he argued that the peasants revolted against the oppressions under British colonial rule, being propelled by their own political consciousness.

Under the leadership of Ranajit Guha, *Subaltern Studies* started its journey in the early 1980s, with a group of mostly young scholars. Questioning the dominant paradigms of history writing—colonial, nationalist and Marxist—the writings of Ranajit Guha and his associates established the *Subaltern Studies* collective as an alternative school of history writing and influenced scholars from other disciplines in India and abroad.

Ranjit Guha boldly wrote against the state violence in the 1970s. In 1971, he wrote a critique of state violence against the Naxalite youths in his article ‘On Torture and Culture’, carried in the *Frontier* weekly. This article exposed the repressive character of the Indian State

and theorised it. His famous article, ‘Indian Democracy: Long Dead, Now Buried’ was first published in *Journal of Contemporary Asia* in 1976. Guha made a critique of the State repression of the ‘Emergency’ years in the article. It may be mentioned in this connection that the editor of *Frontier*, poet Samar Sen, wrote to his friend Ranajit Guha around that time (April 6, 1976) that *tamasahas* increased a lot in Kolkata after the declaration of ‘Emergency’ and many of his Coffee House friends started avoiding his company. Paying tribute to Samar Sen after his death, Ranajit Guha wrote in Bengali: “Possibly Samar-da wanted to communicate the message in his poems and work—‘*O Dhrupadi Shanti Amader Noy*’ (That Classical Peace is not Our Motto)”. (See Pulak Chanda edited *Anustup* Special Samar Sen Number, 1988, for Ranajit Guha’s article on Samar Sen, titled ‘*Shanti Nei*’).

In the last days of his life, Ranajit Guha started writing on Bengali language and literature in his Bengali books. In his introduction to Ranajit Guha’s Bengali writings (Ananda Publishers, 2019), Partha Chatterjee emphasised the rare cosmopolitan character of Guha’s Bengali literary writings and sound theoretical foundations of his literary criticism.

Ranjit Guha’s quest for social justice continued even in his advanced age. This is evident in the Preface of his Bengali book, ‘*Rammohan Roy O Amader Adhunikata*’ (2010), where he argued that he thought of writing this treatise sometime after the communal killings in Gujarat in 2002, when nothing could be properly visualised in the blind environment of power-crazy violence.

Ranjit Guha’s heretical tradition of scholarship and activism will survive in his admirers’ collective memory in the coming years. □□

CORRIGENDUM

The author of the article ‘**THE WAVE OF SOCIALISM IN LATIN AMERICA**’, published in May 7-13, 2023 (Vol 55 No 45) issue is Subhamoy Ghosal, not Subhasis Mukherjee as printed wrongly. Error is regretted. —Fr

LIVING DANGEROUSLY

The Sundarbans and Its People

Sukanta Sarkar

THE SUNDERBANS, A CLUSTER of low-lying islands in the Bay of Bengal, spreading across India and Bangladesh, is an active delta measuring about 10,000 sq km of which about 4000 sq.km belongs to India. There are 102 islands in the Indian part of Sundarbans. But human settlements are only in 54 islands.

Area is covered with wide swathes of rare mangrove vegetation. This is also an ecologically fragile and climatically vulnerable region that is home to over 9.5 million people, including about 4 million women.

The Sundarbans is an UNESCO World Heritage site, known for its wide range of flora and fauna, including the Royal Bengal tiger and other threatened species such as the estuarine crocodile, the Indian python and about 260 bird species. Struggle for survival of the people of this region is very tough and hazardous. Main livelihood of the people of the Sundarbans is agriculture and fishing. Also, honey collection from the forest is another means of livelihood for the local people, which is a very risky job for the inhabitants of the Sundarbans because of the man-eater Royal Bengal tiger. Natural resource-based livelihoods such as agriculture and fishing predominate in the Sundarbans. Due to paucity of fresh groundwater, monocropping is common, which exposes them more to climate hazards such as floods and cyclones. Because of this for many, migration is a way out. Researchers on the Sundarbans also claim, 'one in every five households now has at least one family member who has migrated'.

Successive studies in the past

two decades have shown the precarious rise of sea level in the region that has forced the coast to retreat at a fast pace. In a study conducted in 2012, the Zoological Society of London observed that the Sundarbans coast has been retreating up to 200 metres (660 ft) in a year. This has led to destruction of 17,179 hectares (42,450 acres) of mangroves within three decades (1975–2010) to accommodate agricultural activities; shrimp cultivation has destroyed another 7,554 hectares (18,670 acres).

Researchers from the School of Oceanographic Studies, Jadavpur University, estimated in the Indian part of the Sundarbans the annual rise in sea level to be 8 millimetres (0.31 in) in 2010. It had doubled from 3.14 millimetres (0.124 in) recorded in 2000. The rising sea levels had also submerged around 7,500 hectares (19,000 acres) of forest cover. This coupled with an around 1.5° C (2.7° F) rise in surface water temperatures and increased levels of salinity, have posed a problem for the survival of the indigenous flora and fauna. The native Sundari trees are exceptionally sensitive to salinity and are being threatened with extinction. In truth Sundaris are rarely found. Trees are mostly Garan variety.

The Sundarbans has been hit by four major cyclones in the last three years—Fani (2019), Bulbul (2019), Amphan (2020) and Yaas (2021). These cyclones killed nearly 250 people and caused a loss of nearly USD 20 billion, a PTI report claimed. Because of cyclones and high tide saline water comes in rivers while submerging some islands. With frequent storms over the years, the

salinity of water of most of the rivers and ponds has increased in almost all areas of the Sundarbans.

Climate change has turned the water of rivers in the Sundarbans saline, making agriculture unviable and forcing inhabitants to turn to fishing. Especially for women in most of the islands of Sundarbans, this switch is not just about livelihoods but also coping with the debilitating health impact on their lives. To collect the prawn women standing in waist-deep water every day for about four to six hours. Caught in a vicious trap that means spending hours waist-deep in the very waters that no longer nurture their fields, the women face a battery of menstrual, urinary tract and other infections. With agriculture becoming unviable due to the increase in salinity of the water, more and more women are becoming dependent on fishing. This means their exposure to saline water is also increasing.

A local resident told this correspondent that the husbands of most of these women are migrant workers and based somewhere else. The women meet their day-to-day expenses by selling prawns and fish they catch in the river for which they have to remain in waist-deep water for four-six hours per day which is the main cause of the health hazards they are facing.

Unfortunately, in so many cases, these women shy away from telling their problems to doctors. They come to even ASHA workers only when it turns severe and require much more intensive treatment. Some women have also reported miscarriages due to repeated infections. Most of the affected women don't go to doctors or consult the ASHA workers. One of such women told, 'I am separated from my husband and have to fend for myself and my two children. Earlier I was ashamed to dis-

cuss my menstrual problems with ASHA workers or doctors but after the situation became intolerable I had no option left'.

Thousands of women in the Sundarbans have no alternative; they are compelled to work in the saline water every day to run their family because either their husbands migrated to other state for livelihood or lost to the tiger while collecting honey in the deep forest. The widows of the tiger victims and spouses of migrant labourers have to feed their children; so they have to do hard and hazardous work. Lakshmi Naiya's husband has gone to Rajasthan as a daily-wage labourer.

He comes twice in a year. When comes he gives some money to Lakshmi but that amount is meagre. So, Lakshmi has to go to river and stand in waist-deep water which is highly saline to collect prawn for more than 4-5 hours a day throughout the year. Lakshmi told, 'there is no way to earn money in this area. Panchayet doesn't provide any work throughout the year. Sometimes in the rainy season when river embankment is broken only then people get some work from Panchayet to rebuild the embankment. But that is for a few days only'.

Lakshmi and other women who collect prawn in the salt water, more

or less everyone suffers from skin diseases. 'Skin diseases are very common to most of the women, who collect fish in the salty water', said Arun Sen who has been running Sundarban Shramajeebee Hospital at Sarberiya for the last 22 years. Most of the affected women don't want to come to hospital or Health Centre. When the disease becomes intolerable then they go to rural quacks or use local herbs usually. Lack of doctors, Health Centres and ignorance of local government which means Panchayet, are the main problems in this region to combat this situation. There is no alternative path of income for these women. □□□

THE GREAT APOCALYPSE

Limiting Economic Growth

Joseph Tharamangalam

This article attempts to explore the concept and project of de-growth and of its relevance, indeed urgency, at this historical juncture. It will provide the current context of the world facing an existential environmental and climate crisis as the finite earth has already exceeded its bio-capacity by about 50 percent. Climate scientists warn people that the crisis is fast approaching irreversible levels and there is very limited time left to take serious action. It is in this context that concerned scholars and activists are engaged in the discourse of limiting economic growth, using concepts ranging from sustainable growth to post-growth.]

THIS PAPER IS ORGANISED in four parts. After this brief introduction in Part I, Part II offers an overview of the concept and history of the project of continuous GDP growth that began with what Polanyi (2001) has called "the Great Transformation", the rise of industrial modernity some 3 centuries ago, and became a taken-for-granted common-sense across the world. It will briefly discuss how this project of achieving continuous and strong GDP growth received a new life in the post-war period of high growth and a new interest among development scholars and policy makers in promoting rapid growth in the developing or underdeveloped "third world". Part III provides a brief overview of the debates about the "growth problematic", the impact of "development" across the world, and the scholarly discourse

about sustainability using concepts that range from sustainable growth to de-growth. Part IV summarises the paper and concludes with the assertion that there is now no option but to embrace the project of de-growth and reduced consumption if people want to avoid the impending collapse of the planet earth.

GDP Growth

Is GDP growth a natural phenomenon in all societies? The answer is a decisive "no", based on whatever one can learn from sciences such as history, pre-history, and Anthropology as well as from the traditions of still surviving indigenous communities across the world. To cite one such example, when this writer visited an Andean community in Bolivia, he was introduced to their cherished philosophy of "buen vivir" (also "vivir bien") or "live well" (not better) in harmony with mother earth

(Panchanmama) and the community.

In fact, there are no instances of continuous GDP growth anywhere till about three centuries ago. The average GDP till then was estimated to be 158 USD. The idea that humans as homo sapiens are called upon to make continuous progress, seen as increasing extraction and consumption of the earth's resources, was a novel one that arose only in the wake of "The Great transformation" (Polyani, op.cit) that followed the so-called "Enlightenment". A new group of scholars advancing the newly popular science of "Economics" seized the moment and developed the technically sophisticated measure of GDP (Gross Domestic Product) or GNP (Gross National Product) to gauge and monitor progress in "economic growth", the sum of goods and services. It is possible to identify some of the radically new ideas that were developed by them, including some that seem to have proposed new ways of seeing even the very nature of the human person, of human society and culture and the meaning and goal of human life itself.

Four important such ideas are: 1) the idea of progress, the idea that humans as rational beings are called upon to aim at continuous progress

/improvement in all spheres of life, 2) the idea of growth, now defined as GDP growth, that is, the idea that the economy needs continuous and endless growth, empowering the society to extract and consume more and more of the earth's resources, 3) the idea of an "economy" that is now conceived as "dis-embedded" (Polanyi) from nature and society, from such domains as those of the moral, the religious and political, and 4) perhaps the most novel and radical idea was that all these would be driven by the now dis-embedded "homo economicus", an economic man, a utility-maximising, instrumentally rational actor whose sole goal is to increase production and profit. To the question, who, then, would serve and look after the "common good"? The now famous answer was "the invisible hand". While Adam Smith seems to have made a casual reference to this "hand", the idea of an invisible market serving the "common good" despite the individual homo economicus pursuing "his" (this actor was seen as male) selfish goal of maximising utility and making profit. These ideas are well known to people as these became entrenched in neo-classical economics and has seen a revival in present time with the rise of neoliberalism and the vigorous promotion of liberal, "free-market" economics by the world's capitalist powers.

Armed with this ideology of progress and growth, European entrepreneurs embarked upon a path of "growth" and "progress" through the industrial revolution—travelling the world, looting, colonising and eventually creating two worlds and the so-called developed and underdeveloped (developing) ones. The post- World War-II period of high growth saw the rise of new theories and programmes about how to accelerate growth with a special focus on the development of the latter. WW Rostow's Stages of Growth that became the handbook for many development theorists and policy

makers proposed five stages of growth that could, and should, be followed by all countries (Rostow, 1990). These stages that ranged from the 1st stage of "traditional society" through one of "take-off" to the final 5th stage of "mass consumption" envisioned and predicted this golden age of mass consumption for all people in all parts of the world.

Sustainable Growth to De-growth

It is a fact that the post-war period saw a period of high growth across the world, including the rise of a few newly developed countries, for example, in East Asia. But it became clear that such development was very uneven, creating unprecedented inequalities within and across countries, a world of opulence and hunger, of the "stuffed and the starved". Obesity and malnutrition became the two major health issues even in the richest country, the US. Today 50% of the world's wealth is owned by just 1% of the world's people, 85% by the richest 10%. India, a country that did experience relatively high growth has the single largest pool of hungry people among all countries in the world. Its rank in the Global Hunger Index slipped from 94 to 101 between 2020 and 2021. It also is known for the world's highest rate of child malnutrition. The most devastating consequence of the growth path has undoubtedly been its impact on the environment, on the finite earth that is now exceeding its bio-capacity by 50 per cent. It is estimated that if all people in the world were to consume at the same rate as the people of the US, people will need 5 earths to sustain that (UNDP, 2020). No wonder that there are rumours about some super-rich entrepreneurs dreaming of colonising new planets in space! This also raised the issue of "inter-generational Rights". Do people have the right to ruin the lives of their children and grandchildren, to "steal their dreams and childhood" in the words of the 16-year-old climate

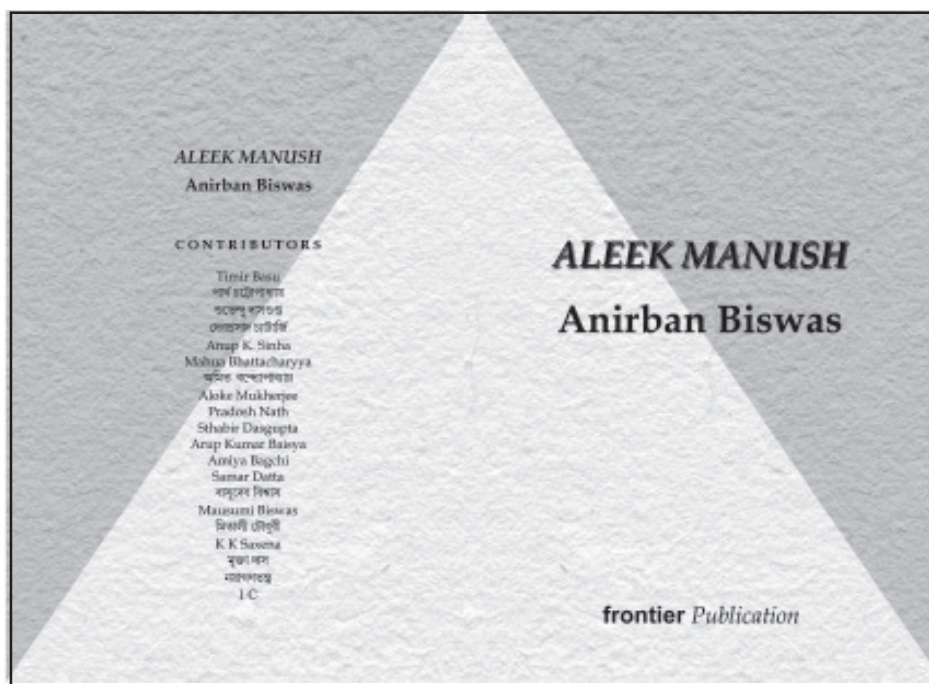
activist Greta Thunburg (2019) who gave her famous and angry "how dare you speech" to the world leaders at the United Nations Climate Action Summit Conference. The crisis of climate change and global warming has been a wake-up call that has triggered the urgent debate about the need to end growth. The Meadow's Report on "Limit to Growth" that was submitted to the Club of Rome 50 years ago was the first to highlight the negative impact of growth on the vulnerable planet earth. This debate has since metamorphosed into different, but related narratives and concepts such as Human Development, sustainable growth, no-growth and finally to de-growth.

Conclusion

Even a cursory overview of the current climate crisis provided above shows why all people of the world, need to seize the moment and act, and act now, if they want to save themselves and the planet from the impending apocalypse. While the small steps, taken by the UN and other international organisations, as well as by some of the relatively progressive countries may be in the right direction, these are not only grossly inadequate, but in danger of attacks from the likes of Trump, Bolsonaro, Modi, and other "strong" far-right ideologues. More important is the entrenched interests of the corporate world, the military-industrial complex that controls the global economy. When their spokespersons, even global organisations including the UN, offer plans to cut carbon emissions and find more sustainable growth-paths, can one blame a cynic or critical theorist for seeing this as the proverbial arsonist playing the role of the fire-fighter? And now 'Democratic' US President Biden has recently approved a very controversial project to extract fossil fuel from the Arctic despite dire warnings from climate scientists about the irreversible consequences of such a project on the world's environment. □□□

A **frontier** Publication

Just Released



ALEEK MANUSH

Anirban Biswas

COMPILATION TEAM:

TIMIR BASU, ARUP SEN, NABINANDA SEN, TARUN BASU

CONTRIBUTORS:

TIMIR BASU, PARTHA CHATTOPADHYAY, SHUBHENDU DASGUPTA,
DEBAPROSAD CHATTERJEE, ANUP K. SINHA, MAHUA BHATTACHARYYA,
AMIT BANDYOPADHYAY, ALOKE MUKHERJEE, PRADOSH NATH, STHABIR
DASGUPTA, ARUP KUMAR BAISYA, AMIYA BAGCHI, SAMAR DATTA,
BASUDEB BISWAS, MAUSUMI BISWAS, MITALI CHOWDHURY, K K SAXENA,
MUKTA DAS, NAYAGANATANTRA, I C

Available at:

Frontier Office, Patiram Stall (College Street), Dhyانبindu
and other book stalls selling issues of frontier.

Contribution: INR 100