

frontier

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Article 370 is Dead

THEY ARE DEBATING OVER A DEAD ISSUE—ARTICLE 370. Gone is the legacy of Sheikh Abdullah and Jawaharlal Nehru. The Article that has been a point of controversy in Indian politics ever since its inception is no longer a headache for the Delhi rulers—present and future. The so-called autonomy is now history. In truth the 1954 addition of Article 35A empowering State Law makers to grant special rights and privileges to permanent residents is the real bone of contention. While giving the verdict unanimously upholding the scrapping of Article 370, the top court didn't dwell on the question of whether the bifurcation of the state of Jammu and Kashmir into two union territories of Ladakh and Jammu & Kashmir is permissible under Article 3 of the Constitution.

Senior lawyer Kapil Sibal who was a counsel for petitioners challenging the abrogation of the special status of J&K posted a cryptic message on his social media account. Mr Sibal, representing the petitioners argued that Article 370 had assumed permanence after dissolution of the Constituent Assembly of J&K, and therefore, the Parliament did not have the authority to declare itself as the legislature of J&K for the purpose of abrogating Article 370. How could it be a temporary measure when it was used 50 times in the last 70 years? The court didn't discuss it.

The apex court, however, maintained that Article 370 was a temporary arrangement as J&K lost its internal sovereignty through the Instrument of accession of 1947. In reality the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party [BJP] has legalised a de facto arrangement into a regular one. And the saffron brigade is hoping, not against hope to get enormous dividends in the coming Lok Sabha polls in 2024.

Quite expectedly, people in Jammu region celebrated the judgement but the mood in the valley of death was opposite as the people marked their disapproval through silence. It may be interpreted as a silent protest. As for mainstream parties of J&K they were totally disappointed and expressed their desire to continue struggle. These regional parliamentary outfits are more concerned about restoration of statehood and early elections. Without parliamentary privileges they are more like political orphans. They are not at all serious about limited autonomy.

Congress, the main opposition party in Parliament, is diabolical in its approach to the Kashmir question. The grand old party expressed disappointment over the Supreme Court's reluctance to decide on the dismem-

berment of Jammu and Kashmir but they actually disagreed with the judgement on how Article 370 was abrogated. They are not against abrogation; they have raised the way it has been abrogated, implying that they were not consulted before abolition of the contentious Article. The party never intended to restore Article 370 to the Constitution. What they failed to do in 70 years, Modi did it within a few years earning 'secret applause' from some leading members of the party. Many young Congress leaders openly supported Modi's move to integrate Kashmir fully with Indian union.

Unlike August 5, 2019, when the announcement of abrogation of Article 370 led to strikes and

clampdowns that lasted for months in Kashmir, this time the people didn't react in that way. They didn't expect a favourable verdict either and life in the valley was business as usual. Union Home Minister's insistence that abrogation of Article 370 has improved law and order situation as the militancy in Kashmir is on the decline is anything but baseless as the ground reality tells a different story. Martyrdom of Jawans is a regular phenomenon.

The Pandits of Kashmir never liked Article 370 though they are the major beneficiaries of permanent resident clause. They have cornered most government jobs because of their permanent status. If they are out of the valley today it is because

they could not resist the communal militancy of the jihadists—ordinary Kashmiris don't support the militants—despite the huge presence of Indian Security Forces.

Meanwhile, international reaction to the verdict was on expected lines as the General Secretariat of the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation [OIC] criticised the judgement and India routinely rejected the OIC statement dubbing it foreign-inspired alluding to Pakistan. This OIC is more like a paper tiger today; with diverse elements having no unified agenda even to extend solidarity to the hapless Palestinians who are now facing the second catastrophe because of Israel's relentless bombing campaign in Gaza. □□□ 15.12.2023

COMMENT

COP 28: 'A Litany of Loopholes'

FINALLY THE COP 28 UNITED Nations Climate Conference clinched a deal after two weeks of furious debate over the wording of the text. The summit chair Sultan al-Jaber of UAE hailed it as historic while most diplomats gathered at the venue congratulated him for the 'success'. But the oil lobby did everything to alter the language of the statement by replacing 'phasing-out of fossil fuels' in the original draft with 'transitioning away from fossil fuels'. For one thing the text does not speak specifically to fossil fuel phase-out and mitigation in a way that is in fact the step that is urgently needed. No doubt 197 nations supported the declaration but many retained their reservation.

Amidst the congratulations and speeches, some countries expressed their outrage at not being allowed to comment on a final text they felt did not go far enough to address the immediate threat from global warming, especially to developing and

poor nations. The Alliance of Small Island States [AOSIS] which represents countries that have contributed little to global climate change but are already being overrun by sea-level rise said it saw a 'litany of loopholes in the final text'.

In truth the text is somewhat vague. Scientists and environmentalists hoped a clear-cut document with a specific dead line to say 'goodbye' to oil and coal would emerge this time. No this didn't happen. Fossil fuels—Oil and Coal—cause 75 percent of global warming. "It is not enough for us to reference the science and then make agreements that ignore what the science is telling us we need to do", Anne Rasmussen of Samoa told the delegates as the meeting ended with 'cheers'. Speaking on behalf of AOSIS coalition, she pointed out that the final deal does not require countries to stop using fossil fuels by any particular date. It's too optimistic and too early to call the agree-

ment 'signalling the eventual end of the oil age'. It is one step forward in the sense that the previous 27 UN climate summits failed to come to a consensus.

Scientists say the world has already warmed roughly 1.2 degrees Celsius. Weather it is still possible to keep 1.5 degrees Celsius target alive, the oft-repeated goal of these climate summits is open to question. The only breakthrough of COP 28 is that for the first time, millions of dollars will be disbursed to developing countries that are suffering damage from climate change.

For years, developing countries have argued they're paying for devastating impacts that rich nations are largely responsible for. As weather extremes get worse and sea level rise, developing countries are shouldering the cost of what is known as "loss and damage". At climate talks a year ago, parties agreed to establish a new loss and damage fund. Now, more than \$ 700 million has been announced for it, most from European countries and \$100 million from the United Arab Emirates, the host of COP 28.

Two years ago at COP 26 in Glasgow, negotiators could barely agree on the need to wind down coal power. Now all fossil fuels are unambiguously on the chopping block. Previously they targeted NET ZERO by 'mid century' whereas the pledge of COP 28 is to fix the date at 2050. The signed deal also calls on the parties for tripling renewable energy by 2030 and doubling energy efficiency. It also recognises that the costs of renewable are falling fast. Much, however, depends on whether

big polluters and users of fossil fuels put their promises into practice. It is still hard to say the international community is taking this enormous challenge as seriously as it should.

Oil and extracting mining industries apart, 'health care and pharma industries make huge profits at the expense of human health, crop yield loss and other environmental injury due to fossil fuel based power generation. What they are doing is ecocide and genocide'.

□□□

NOTE**Khurram Parvez***Gursimran Kaur Bakshi writes:*

PARVEZ, THE MOST PROMINENT human rights defender of his generation from Jammu and Kashmir (J&K), was arrested on charges under the Indian Penal Code, 1860 and the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 on November 22, 2021.

His arrest was seen as part of the larger crackdown on human rights defenders and journalists in J&K in the lead-up to and aftermath of the deoperationalisation of Article 370 of the Indian Constitution on August 5, 2019.

Parvez's house was raided in connection with alleged funding of secessionist and separatist activities in 2020.

Two months prior to the raid, the Jammu & Kashmir Coalition of Civil Societies (JKCCS) released a report Kashmir Internet Siege: an ongoing assault on digital rights, which traced how the disruption of the internet led to the denial of many human rights to the people of J&K.

Parvez is a founding member of the JKCCS, one of the only functional organisations in J&K that documents human rights abuses by Indian armed forces and militants

belonging to various local and Pakistan-supported outfits.

Parvez is chairman of the Philippine-based Asian Federation Against Involuntary Disappearance and has been named one of the 100 most influential people of 2022 by the Time magazine. He was the recipient of the 2006 Reebok Human Rights Award.

He has been involved in decades of investigative reporting highlighting the impunity enjoyed by Indian armed forces in J&K because of the Armed Forces (Jammu and Kashmir) Special Powers Act, 1990.

The National Investigation Agency (NIA) registered a case against Parvez in October 2020. In November 2021, the office of the JKCCS in Srinagar was raided and Parvez was arrested.

Charges against him range from Sections 120B and 124A of the Indian Penal Code, 1860 to Sections 17 (punishment for raising funds for terrorist acts), 18 (punishment for conspiracy), 22A (offences for companies), 22C (punishment for offences by companies, societies or trusts), 38 (offences relating to membership of a terrorist organisation),

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39 (offences relating to support given to a terrorist organisation) and 40 (offences for raising funds for a terrorist organisation) of the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967 on November 22, 2021.

He has been accused of supporting "secessionist agenda run by his organisation JKCCS and promoting larger interests of the terrorist organisation, Hizbul Mujahideen" among other things.

The UN Human Rights Office of the High Commissioner condemned the arrest of Parvez.

It recognised that Parvez has become a victim of reprisals for reportedly sharing information with the United Nations on serious violations of human rights including forced disappearances and unlawful killings in the Indian-administered J&K.

Amnesty International also issued a statement. It stated:

"The arrest of Kashmiri activist Khurram Parvez is yet another example of how anti-terror laws are being misused to criminalise human rights work & stifle dissent in India. Instead of targeting HRDs [Human

Rights Defenders], authorities should focus on bringing accountability for human rights violations.”

Since then, two years have passed and the case has made little progress. In fact, the charge-sheet was filed

only a couple of months ago.

Parvez was also arrested in September 2016 under Public Safety Act, 1978 (a preventive detention law that allows authorities to detain a person without trial for up to two

years) to prevent him from participating in the session of the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva. He was released after a 76-day detention without trial. □□□

[Courtesy: *The Leaflet*]

ASSEMBLY ELECTIONS 2023

Dress Rehearsal for 2024?

Ram Puniyani

THE RECENTLY CONCLUDED Assembly elections of Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh, Telangna and Mizoram have been the matter of great interest for various reasons. As the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) has been ruling at the centre for close to ten years, it has implemented policies, which have a frightening impact on the country. Be it the demonetisation, GST implementation or the sudden ‘Corona lockdown’ the average people have suffered a lot. The rising authoritarianism and decline in freedom indices is a matter of great worry. The increasing hunger index and declining wellbeing tell the rest of the story. The ruling BJP has also abrogated Article 370, with the claim that it will reduce militancy, but the results are far from what they claim. The targeting of Muslim minority continues unabated, the scattered anti-Christian violence is another painful phenomenon. It is in this background the opposition parties have been trying to form an INDIA alliance. It was expected that the opposition parties would try to preserve ‘the Idea of India’ as envisaged in the Constitution. A lot has been hoped from this alliance in the 2024 Lok Sabha elections.

But the assembly election results seem to have put a spanner in this hope. The Congress party state level leaderships, in a high handed manner ignored the other parties of alli-

ance, in the process of annoying them and putting a lot of challenge to the process of resuming the journey of alliance in times to come. Congress could win only Telangana, while losing the Hindi heartland states. Though Congress lost in these three states, the results are a bit surprising. Most of the Exit Poll results were giving a fair edge to Congress in these states. So the defeat of Congress is a bit enigmatic on one hand.

True, its alliance with other national and smaller parties would have improved its performance; still, its defeat in these states is beyond logical explanation. This is the aspect which the allies of INDIA have to keep in mind while chalking out their strategy for Lok Sabha election.

A side aspect of these results is that now most of South Indian states are BJP mukt (free from BJP rule). Some commentators are arguing that the appeal of Hindu Nationalist BJP politics is restricted predominantly to Hindi speaking states, the Cow belt. Congress on its part and other parties have also to see that despite its claims BJP is not on a very solid wicket. In the present elections if one sees the total votes polled in the five states, Congress has polled 4.92 Crore in comparison to 4.81 Crore votes of BJP. At the top of that Mizoram, which was part of the NDA alliance has now slipped out of NDA.

Various speculations in the air are about demoralisation of Congress party workers. It may sound true as an instant reaction. As the time passes the party workers can not only feel spirited with the win in Telangana and significantly having polled more votes than the rival BJP. With time the feeling of depression will get over, as now the new leadership is trying its best to proactively deal with the situation. ‘Bharat Jodo Yatra’ was a major step in this direction. The background work of many Congress workers and its reviving the spirit of dynamism may yield a positive result in strengthening the spirit of the party.

The core point remains: can all those parties who committed to the formation of INDIA alliance, will repose the faith in the alliance yet again, which has partly been shaken by election results? In a way the defeat of Congress in three major states, will make the Congress leadership sit-up and try to rectify the slips due to which the parties which committed to the alliance are showing reservations. These opposition parties know it well that alone, left to themselves, they cannot take on the mighty electoral machinery of BJP, well armed with manpower, money power, muscle power and the media, which is bowing to the feet of the current ruling party at the centre.

The opposition parties also realise that BJP is not alone as it is well assisted by the Swayamsevak and Pracharaks of RSS. They also know that all RSS affiliates, VHP, ABVP, Bajrang Dal, Vanvasi Kalyan

Ashram and a large number of RSS affiliates make it a point to totally commit to the victory of BJP at every election. They also have realised the power of electoral bonds, the NRI support to Hindu nationalist ideology, the big Corporate solidly standing with BJP, as BJP is giving them lots of concessions, beyond what is obvious.

The opposition parties also realise that BJP has been inching towards a Hindu Nation. It has been eroding the values of the Indian constitution in an overt and covert way. The use; rather abuse, of ED, IT, CBI against the opposition parties is yet another point which will make these parties try to stick together with some give and take. It is well known that among top Congress leadership, Rahul Gandhi, Mallikarjun Kharge in particular, the spirit of accommodation is very high. Though this duo could not fully prevail over state leadership in the state Assembly Elections, they are most likely to put their foot down and try to stitch an alliance. Rahul Gandhi has stated that Congress will be willing to do any sacrifice for the united opposition. He has correctly stated that it is an ideological battle and not just an electoral fight.

So at the moment it may seem that different opposition parties are pulling in different directions. Much before the Lok Sabha election dates are announced, it is very much possible that the INDIA alliance will be stitched together with solid glue and it will make itself ready to take up divisive politics of BJP-RSS. The hatred spread by this majoritarian politics is not compatible with the survival of multi-party democracy. Opposition should be worried by the deep infiltration of Hindu nationalists in different institutions of the state, including the education system.

One can assume that putting all these things together the opposition

will come together, and if that happens they will certainly be able to win the election and ensure that the first step in coming out of the grip of Hindu nationalist agenda, which is on ascendance at present, is achieved.

Cold Electoral Numbers

Yogendra Yadav adds:

The next general election is not a done deal. Not yet. Unless the Opposition surrenders to this psychological warfare and gives a walkover before the match begins.

There is no doubt that the outcome in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh is a setback for the Congress, and all those who wish to see restoration of democracy in 2024. The BJP's victory in three north Indian states does overshadow the Congress party's historic comeback in Telangana. It creates favourable optics for the BJP in the run-up to the national polls. But this does not translate into cold numbers. The outcome of these four states does not change the electoral calculus as it stood before the results.

No doubt a 3-1 victory for the BJP is a ringing endorsement of the regime by the voters. Of the 12.29 crore votes polled, the BJP secured 4.82 crore, while the Congress had 4.92 crore (5.06 crore, if one includes all INDIA parties). Except in MP, the margin of the BJP's victory is very small in terms of popular votes. Congress's lead over the BJP in Telangana is large enough to make up for its deficit in the rest. So the BJP has not received a massive popular endorsement in the latest round.

These states have 83 seats in the Lok Sabha, of which BJP had as many as 65 and Congress secured only 6 seats in the last Lok Sabha elections. If the citizens of these states vote exactly the same way next year

as they did in the recent assembly elections, the net gainer will be Congress, not the BJP. Even after this hat-trick, the BJP's performance is way below its post-Pulwama support in 2019. If one adds assembly-wise votes for each parliamentary seat, the tally will be 24 for BJP and 5 for the Congress in Madhya Pradesh (compared to 28-1 in 2019), 8 for BJP and 3 for the Congress in Chhattisgarh (9-2 in 2019), 14 for BJP and 11 for Congress in Rajasthan (24-0 in 2019) and 0 for the BJP and 9 for the Congress in Telangana (4-3 in 2019). In all, it would mean 46 seats for the BJP (loss of 19) and 28 seats for the Congress (gain of 22). If one merges the votes of the INDIA partners, there would be 38 seats for the BJP and 36 for INDIA. This notional calculation puts to rest the idea that the BJP has sealed its victory.

In 2019, the BJP won 303 seats, just 30 seats above the majority mark. The BJP faces significant depletions in its unprecedented tally in Bengal (where it faces a meltdown), Karnataka (where, going by assembly election results for BJP-JDS combine, Congress would gain 10 seats), Maharashtra (where it faces the MVA), Bihar (pitted against a new Mahagathbandhan) and Uttar Pradesh (even a repeat of the 2022 Assembly results would mean a loss of 10 seats to BJP). Add to it near-certain but minor losses in Himachal Pradesh, Haryana, Telangana and Assam. Put any number to these losses for the BJP and it is sure to exceed 30. The hard question is: Where can the BJP possibly add to its 2019 tally and make up for these losses? □□□

For Frontier Contact

DHYANBINDU

COLLEGE SQUARE

THEY ARE NO MORE

The Children of Gaza

Richard Hall

Ariana Baio

[One little girl desperately wanted to be a YouTube star. Her brother adored football and his favourite player, Cristiano Ronaldo. Their cousin was a teenage electronics wiz. Since the start of Israel's offensive in Gaza, more than 7,000 children have been killed in airstrikes, artillery and mortar fire. Often entire families disappeared in an instant. Here are the stories of four Palestinian children who've been killed in the war, as told to Richard Hall and Ariana Baio.]

BEFORE THE WAR BEGAN, Gaza's streets teemed with children. Roughly half of the two million people who call the narrow strip of land home are under 18. At the weekend, and when school was out, the beaches, parks and playgrounds were full of the sounds of children laughing and playing.

But Gaza's children have had to endure so much in their short lives. A 15-year-old will have lived through five wars in their lifetime, including the current conflict. Many have been displaced several times because their homes were destroyed by bombing.

Even so, they had never experienced destruction like this.

Since the start of Israel's offensive in Gaza, more than 7,000 children have been killed in airstrikes, artillery and mortar fire. That number only accounts for those who have been identified, and many more likely lie beneath the rubble. Thousands have been injured. The United Nations has described Gaza as "a graveyard for thousands of children," and "the most dangerous place in the world to be a child".

Lost in those unfathomable numbers are the faces, the names, the lives, and the moments of joy those children brought.

Siwar Almadhoun, 13

Siwar was tall for her age, and she put it to good use. Basketball was her passion. She played whenever she could—at school, in her own time, in the summer—and she won trophies. There's a video of her,

taken after winning a basketball tournament, showing her dancing on a big stage in front of a crowd while confetti sprays around her and music blares. The whole team jumps up and down with their medals. She used to wear an old basketball jersey from a Florida high school all the time because it had a hoop and a ball on the front. She loved volleyball, too—another sport where her height gave her an advantage.

She was the most outgoing of all of her siblings; despite only being 13, she brimmed with confidence. Hani remembers her always wanting to help her parents.

Siwar loved to picnic. If she had a dollar in her hand she would go to a nearby restaurant with her girlfriends where they would order the same meal every time: a shawarma sandwich, pickles, a corn salad and fries. It came in a clamshell container.

She was everybody's favourite, everybody was her friend. Siwar was a middle child, and was fiercely protective of her younger brothers and sisters. She loved looking after her younger cousins when they came to visit, too, Hani's own daughters used to spend all of their time with her when they visited Gaza from their home in the US.

Omar Almadhoun, 9

Omar was crazy about football. He used to fight with his father, Majid, about who was the greatest player in the world. Omar was certain it was Cristiano Ronaldo; his father

thought it was Karim Benzema. They were both Real Madrid fans, so Lionel Messi did not enter into the discussion.

Omar spent most of last year obsessing over the World Cup, but he couldn't buy any of the jerseys or merchandise worn by his favourite players in Gaza, which has been blockaded by Israel since 2007. So he asked his uncle, Hani, to help.

Hani went to the store and got him some goalkeeper gloves, a football and a bag, which he sent to Gaza with someone he knew. Omar was thrilled.

"He wasn't even a goalkeeper. He played offence. He just wanted to show off," Hani says.

But Omar took it seriously. He was attending a summer football camp so he could practise his skills.

When he wasn't playing football, Omar liked to stay close to his dad. He would hang around him in his store, where he sold general household goods. He was always trying to get his dad's attention, which made work difficult.

Omar was particularly close with his grandfather. On the night that he was killed, Hani says, his grandfather had a dream about young Omar. He awoke in the middle of the night. Not 10 minutes later, Omar was dead.

Ali Almadhoun, 7

Ali was the troublemaker of the family. He was small, but he had an athlete's physique, and he was always fighting. His father used to joke it was a full-time job having to go around to his neighbours' houses to answer for Ali's latest fist fight. His uncle, Hani, says his father was just the same when he was a kid.

No one could figure out where he got his energy from. When the family would go to the beach, he would always disappear out of sight.

"He was the hardest to have him

listen to instructions. He would go crazy and run off into danger and he would not listen. He was very stubborn,” his uncle Hani says.

But he was the youngest of the family, so he was doted on by everyone: cousins, grandparents, parents, older siblings. Ali got away with so much by flashing his cheeky smile.

He was inseparable from his dad. He would follow him everywhere.

Ali, Omar and Siwar were killed in an Israeli airstrike on 24 November, together with their older sister Rimam and their parents Majid and Safa. They were killed just an hour before the first ceasefire of the conflict began, in their family home, where they had been sheltering for 40 days.

The strike would have killed more, but half of the family was visiting Majid and Hani's sister in hospital. She had been injured by a separate airstrike and was receiving treatment. The family stayed there overnight because they were worried about snipers on the way home.

Ghina Alkrunz, 8

Ghina desperately wanted to be a YouTube star. At just eight years old, she was already making videos that demonstrated her humour, irreverence and confidence. In one that she never got to post, she gesticulates like a seasoned presenter

as she shows the viewer around her home. She takes us into the kitchen and shows us her favourite chocolate doughnuts her mother has made for her. Ghina was always making videos like this, says her uncle, Mahmoud Alkrunz. Whenever she saw a microphone, she would grab it. You never knew when you were going to get a song or presentation.

“She wanted to document her daily life and show people her sisters and brothers and her toys,” he says. “She had a lot of dreams, but most of all she wanted to be a famous YouTuber or maybe a journalist.”

Ghina was incredibly smart, too; she always got high marks at school. Being the youngest in the family meant everyone looked after her, and her strong personality ensured she had a ton of friends. Ghina was close with her aunts and uncles, so Mahmoud got to spend a lot of time with her. He used to take her to the local pool and taught her how to swim. It was their special time together.

“She was so attached to me; she used to call me ‘Mahmoud Pool’ because we always went swimming together.”

Ghina was killed in an Israeli airstrike on the building where she was sheltering with her family in Rafah, southern Gaza, on 23 October. The family had fled from bomb-

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ing further north in search of safety. After her death, her mother told Mahmoud about the day she died.

That day, though, her mom was cooking one of Ghina's favourites: beans with tomato soup. Ghina used to call it “red food” because of its deep red colour. She was deliriously happy at the prospect of the meal. As her mother stirred the pot on the stove, she was jumping around shouting “Red food! Red food! Red food!”

Just minutes later, she was killed by an airstrike that collapsed the building. Her body was found under the rubble 24 hours later. Her mother was lucky to survive. Ghina died hungry. □□□

[Courtesy: INDEPENDENT]

SMOKE CANISTERS IN PARLIAMENT

Recalling Central Assembly Bombing

Dipankar Bhattacharya

ON THE TWENTY-SECOND anniversary of the December 13, 2001 terror strike on India's Parliament, the new parliament building witnessed a stunning smoke scare. A young man, identified as Sagar Sharma from Lucknow, suddenly jumped from the visitor's gallery and opened a yellow smoke canister leaping across tables before

being overpowered and handed over to the police by parliamentarians even as the zero hour was underway. Sagar had a companion, D Manoranjan from Mysuru, who too opened another smoke canister spraying yellow gas remaining seated on the visitor's gallery.

A few minutes earlier, two other young persons, Neelam Devi from

Hisar, Haryana and Amol Shinde from Latur, Maharashtra, had burst red and yellow smoke canisters outside the building and raised slogans against unemployment and atrocities on women, hailing the motherland and denouncing dictatorship. Two more persons have been named involved in this smoke canister episode—Lalit Jha, at whose Gurgaon home the group stayed before undertaking the operation, and Vicky Sharma, also from Gurgaon. Manoranjan and Sagar Sharma had secured visitor's passes at the recom-

mendation of Pratap Simha, BJP MP from Mysuru since 2014. Manoranjan is known to be an engineering graduate who used to help his father with their family farming. Neelam is said to have been preparing for Haryana state civil services.

On the face of it, the smoke canister episode seems designed to invoke memories of the historic Central Assembly bombing by Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt on 8 April 1929. Just as Bhagat Singh and Batukeshwar Dutt wanted to draw the people's attention to the injustices of British rule, Neelam, Manoranjan and their companions ostensibly tried to protest against raging unemployment in today's India. But why would protesters choose the anniversary of a terrorist attack on Parliament to make their point?

What the smoke scare has anyway exposed is a major breach in Parliament security. There has been a lot of talk about the tight security system of the new parliament building. Given this, the entry of smoke canisters into the building inevitably

raises serious questions. It is a matter of great relief that Sagar and Manoranjan who breached the security had no intention of causing any harm and carried only coloured smoke to make their point. For the Godi media, the smoke canister episode became yet another occasion to indulge in competitive sensationalism, with reporters literally jostling among themselves to grab the canister as a propaganda war trophy.

It is not difficult to imagine what the media reaction would have been like had the visitor's passes been obtained using a recommendation from some opposition MP or if the group of six included any Muslim name. Surely, the media would have lost no time discovering some major terrorist conspiracy, maybe even some act of 'jihad' attributed to Hamas. Even now people see an orchestrated media campaign and BJP IT cell propaganda to use the smoke canister episode to discredit the farmers' movement.

The Modi government surely owes

an urgent explanation to the people about the entire episode and the questions it has raised. An opposition MP has just been expelled allegedly for jeopardising national security by sharing her parliamentary login ID, another MP has been admonished for publicly commenting on the Ethics Committee proceedings. What happens now to a BJP MP for recommending the entry of visitors who caused a smoke scare right inside the Lok Sabha?

How the Reichstag fire was used by Hitler in consolidating his rule and unleashing the horror of Nazi Germany is known to all. The Reichstag fire, later exposed as a state-sponsored false flag operation, was attributed to communist agitators and mass arrests of communists and trade unionists followed. Democratic India must make sure that the smoke canister episode cannot be used in a similar manner to further suppress people's movements in India. □□□

*[The author is General Secretary,
CPI(ML) Liberation]
[Source: Liberation]*

PLAN FOR A PEACE INITIATIVE

Why Isn't the World Listening?

Bharat Dogra

CAN A YEAR WHICH EXPERIENCED such terrible although entirely avoidable violence and conflict still end on a note of peace and hope? Yes, it can if the remaining few days can be used for a significant peace initiative to take place around Christmas or the arrival of the New Year.

This is the time of the year when people, and hopefully world leaders, are likely to be more inclined toward ideas and plans of peace and harmony. Efforts should be made to make the best use of this limited time-span.

There is another reason why such

an effort should be made. The calendar for the next year 2024 is full of several important elections and issues of critical importance. It is important that such a year should begin on a note of peace and goodwill.

Although the present world scene is characterised by several deeply worrying conflict situations, at the same time there are some indicators that the time may be favourable for some peace initiatives.

In the context of Ukraine, for example, the enthusiasm of several western supporters of Ukraine for continuing weapons supply and con-

tinuing conflict appears to have diminished in recent times after taking a more realistic view of the situation. Hence this may be an opportune type for declaring an unconditional ceasefire on the basis of the present line of control, accompanied by some gestures of goodwill, to be followed after a short gap by negotiations to resolve all contentious issues. American military aid is not coming to Ukraine after a stalemate in the Congress. Now Hungary is said to have blocked the European Union from giving more financial assistance to Ukraine, but EU leaders agreed to open membership talks with Kyiv. The EU failed to agree on a \$ 52 billion aid package to Ukraine, effectively affecting Ukraine's counter-offensive in the war theatre.

As this writer has argued consis-

tently, the territorial and perhaps some other issues are so contentious that if a ceasefire is to be based on such conditions then it may be delayed indefinitely, leading to further highly distressing, avoidable loss of life. Hence unconditional ceasefire is really the way forward and the likelihood of acceptance of this has improved in recent times. If this idea is promoted in an unbiased way with due respect and dignity for both sides and with true, sincere commitment to peace, then it is just possible that surprising good results can be achieved very quickly in current conditions.

In Gaza the situation is even more distressing just now. However many journalists, activists and others have been working with deep commitment to draw attention to the terrible human tragedy being enacted here and as a result world opinion has also been changing, to the extent that even the USA policy makers and President Joe Biden could not remain entirely unaffected

by it. One should not forget that within Israel also there have been some very sincere voices of peace. True, Netanyahu with his extremely aggressive agenda is a big problem and obstacle for any peace initiative. But can just one obstinate leader stand in the path of peace if the peace effort is strong enough?

As the people of Gaza have suffered so much recently and there is increased worldwide sympathy for them, this may be just the right time to speed up the peace efforts to stop the Israeli aggression while securing the release of remaining hostages, to be followed by gestures of peace and goodwill (such as release of prisoners). This in turn can be followed by talks to secure some kind of a two-state solution which is based on peace and justice, even if only to a limited extent, for all sides.

While these two are the most worrying conflict situations, both in terms of the distress caused and the threats of escalation and widening of conflict, there is the ever-present

threat of the blowing up of the USA-China rivalry into a serious conflict situation, and so peace efforts should give due attention to this too.

There are several other costly conflicts too, whether in Sudan, or the wider Horn of Africa region, or in Yemen or Myanmar or elsewhere. Significant efforts for ending conflicts and moving toward peace should be attempted around this time of the year in all conflict zones.

In the extremely important context of disarmament too the world has been moving in the wrong direction as even some of the existing treaties, including some of the most crucial ones concerning weapons of mass destruction, have been weakened or have collapsed. Hence any major step forward in the direction of strengthening disarmament would also be a very welcome and reassuring way of ending a year that has seen so much of highly distressing conflict.

□□□

LIMITS TO GROWTH

Ecology and the Entropy Law

Saral Sarkar

A FEW WEEKS AGO, I READ an amusing (though saddening) correspondence between two professional economists: HF, a sustainability economist, and Dr. C, an ecological economist:

HF had criticised Dr C for not even mentioning the name of Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen in his book on a green economy. Dr C replied: "Naturally, Georgescu-Roegen, who had been honoured with the Nobel Prize for his work on the subject, is known to us." But, while writing a book, one cannot mention every relevant author etc.

Thereupon; HF thanked Dr C for his kind reply, but added, *inter alia*: "... Please allow me the following

comment on your knowledge about Georgescu-Roegen: The remarkable, in order not to say the grotesque, point here is that Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen, as pioneer of ecological economics, was not even regarded by the committee in charge as deserving of receiving this honour."

This triggered off the following pages from my memory:

Who is this late Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen (in the following, NGR)? Among environmental activists and ecologically interested persons, there are very few, who not only came across the name but also read his main book *Entropy Law and the Economic Process* and some of his other writings. I

guess, not all professional economists nor all who studied economics at the university level have heard a lecture on his theory and his views. They might be of interest and useful, even very important for the very frustrated young environmental and climate activists of today and those who are associated with them in groups like Fridays for Future, X'tinction Rebellion, Last Generation etc. So let me try to make a simple presentation thereof. Not being a good writer, let me try it in the style of a grandfather telling a story from his young days to his grandchildren. I am after all 87 years old and the activists of Fridays For Future etc. could be my grandchildren. I hope my readers will excuse me the inexactitudes and the paltry reference details.

I was nine or ten years old when the following occurred: We were then

living in a village in West Bengal (India). We were six children; I was the fifth of them. One day, I and my immediately elder brother were standing alone in front of one of the many ponds that southern West Bengal villages generally have. My brother Dilip, although barely one-and-a-half years older, was much smarter than I, who was reputed in our family to be the simpleton of the lot.

Now, I had a question that was troubling me for many days, and I thought Dilip might be interested. The question that troubled me was as follows: My parents were two in the beginning, and then we six children came. I asked Dilip: How can it work?: Originally my father's salary must have sufficed for him and his wife, my mother. It was a two-member family. But then, within 12 years, it became an eight-member family.

Dilip was really smart. He said: You are stupid. Look at this pond. Four months ago, in April, the pond had this little water (he showed the then water level with his fingers). And now? Look at it after five months, it is full. Millions of rain drops fell from the sky in the pond; they will vanish again. No problem. This happens every year. I understood the logic of his example. I fell quiet, but I was not really satisfied. I could not understand the similarity between the pond and the growth of our family.

Decades later, I would understand it. Dilip was talking of a sustainable system, whereas I was perturbed by the exponential growth of an unsustainable one. Little did I know then that we were discussing one of the big issues of ecology and economy.

The same question came up in college where I had political economy as one of my subjects. One day, the lecturer was teaching us about the Malthusian theory of population. You should know it, in the 1950s; India was a very poverty-stricken country. I

could see it in the village where we lived in my childhood as well as in Calcutta, where we lived in the 1950s. I was seventeen years old, and Calcutta was in the 1950s a hotbed of leftist politics. All kinds of communist and socialist parties had a strong following there. And the social science and humanities faculties of our college were full of communist and Marxist lecturers. As expected, this particular lecturer rejected the Malthusian theory of population. I remember only one sentence of his lecture: "A man is not only born with a mouth, but also with two hands."

In those days, at the impressionable age of 17, in a poverty-stricken huge country like India, it was impossible for a young person not to be influenced by communism and Marxism, particularly in Calcutta. I absorbed much Marxist and socialist/communist ideology. But I was not satisfied with the Marxist rejection of Malthus. Much later, I thought, Marx simply was obstinate, unjust to another thinker who had expressed one part of the truth about the human condition. But the 1950s, also the 1960s, were the era of faith in eternal progress, development, and miracles that science and technology were bringing to us, also in India.

That faith was shattered in the 1970s.

I did not become an economist, or a political scientist. I studied German, also in Germany, and became a lecturer in German in Hyderabad, a large city in South India. Once, in the late 1960s or early 1970s, a famous actor and dramaturge of the Bengali stage happened to be in Hyderabad. The man was also known as an intellectual. So the Bengalis of Hyderabad invited him to speak at a meeting of theirs, on whatever he wanted to speak. It was an intellectual rambling talk. But one thing that I still remember from that talk is as follows:

Shambhu Mitra—that was the name of the famous actor—said in the course of his talk: he had recently read a very interesting small book, actually a lecture, by a British intellectual called C P Snow. In the lecture entitled *The Two Cultures*, Snow regretted the fact that in his country, generally, scientists had no interest in literature and humanities and *littérateurs* generally ignored the sciences, that there was hardly any exchange of thoughts between the two groups of intellectuals. Snow called upon the two elite groups to be more interested in the thinking of each other. He said, in the general sense, to be more effective in their role as the elite of the country, "not only should a professor of physics read some works of Shakespeare, but also a professor of any of the humanities should e.g. know what the Second Law of Thermodynamics says." (in exact quotation—SS)

I had thought I belonged to the educated elite of India, and I did not know what the Second Law of Thermodynamics was. I wanted to know something about it. In the early 1970s, there was no computer in India and also no Wikipedia. So I began asking my students, many of whom were Engineers or students of engineering; among them were also some lecturers in physics. But none could give the answer. They mostly said, they had heard of it, but it was not so important for their studies, or for their future profession. After some failed tries, I met a geophysicist who seemed to know what it was. But he was in a hurry then. He said: O, if you want to know that, you must first learn what entropy is and he went away. And all the time I was asking myself why it should be so important for me to know what these things said. I understood it a few years later.

In 1972 or 1973, I read the famous book *Limits to Growth* (Meadows et al.), the first report to the Club

of Rome. That was a shock for me, just as it was for many who had all along been talking of economic development, progress, scientific development, socialism, capitalism with a humane face and things like that. I thought, if what the book says is true, then nothing will help. No amount of scientific discoveries and inventions, no amount of planning will help, if the essential resources are limited and exhaustible.

But was all that true? There were many who refused to be perturbed. To take just one example: Prof Beckerman, the head of the faculty of economics at the University of Oxford, wrote that the minerals contained in the top one mile of the Earth's crust would suffice for continuous economic growth for the next 100 million years. Others wrote about the possibilities of substituting rare resources with more abundant ones. More optimistic people thought of 100 percent recycling of exhaustible resources. In sum, the vast majority of economists and experts in relevant fields, as well as men in the street, refused to share the view that there are limits to economic growth.

I also read the protocol of a meeting of relevant Soviet scientists attached to the highest political bodies of the state. They agreed with Meadows et al. so far as facts and analyses were concerned. They agreed it was a problem, the limits, but they criticised the authors for not considering that a socialist society approaches the problem in a different way than a capitalist one. They did not elaborate, in which different way.

So far as energy was concerned, nobody disputed that the fossil fuels or fissionable materials such as uranium and thorium were exhaustible. And everybody agreed that spent energy cannot be recycled. But the main problem with nuclear power plants was more the risk of nuclear accidents and radioactive pollution

than exhaustibility of the resources. The only question here was whether the risks were acceptable or not. From 1974 onwards (e.g. in Wyhl, Germany), there was vehement opposition from the people to construction of further nuclear power plants. Also the huge construction costs of such plants and the necessary safety measures were a strong deterrent.

So what was the solution of the energy problem that the optimists came forward with? Fossil fuels were out, because they were not only exhaustible but, also polluting and responsible for global warming, power from nuclear fission was too risky and too costly. Nuclear fusion power was (is) not developed yet. Deforesting the whole world for wood as source of energy was not a proposition at all.

The kinetic energy of wind and the heat (warmth)-energy of sunshine are known to humans from time immemorial—both resources are inexhaustible (renewable) and nonpolluting. Also producing electricity from them is possible. For some decades now, all kinds of environmentalists and Greens have been proposing an ecological economy based mainly on electricity produced by means of these two resources. Today, “clean energy,” “decarbonisation” of the economy, “green hydrogen”, “energy transition”, “green growth”, “hundred percent renewables”, “sustainable development” etc. have become buzz words, articles of faith, so to speak, though actually, till now, they are largely mere slogans.

These propositions were so attractive that at first, that is, in the early 1980s, I too superficially thought that it was a plausible idea. But soon doubts also started cropping up. If these were not mere slogans, but hopes with substantial scientific justification, then why were some activists still advocating for natural gas as a fuel to replace coal? Natural gas is

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of course a lesser evil than coal and oil, but it is a fossil fuel nonetheless. Or why were some reputed environmental scientists, such as the late James Lovelock of Gaia fame, advocating for more nuclear energy, and not wind energy, to replace fossil fuels in the UK?¹

In the mid-1980s, finally, I found a popular science book entitled *Entropy* written by Jeremy Rifkin. In this book I also found a reference to a scientific paper of NGR on the question of solar energy,² which had, in 1978, when the paper had been written, not yet become an article of faith of all environmentalists and Greens. I read the paper as soon as I got it. In it, NGR drew a distinction between feasibility and viability, and came to the conclusion that solar electrical energy is of course feasible, but it is not viable. I cannot here quote the whole paper of NGR. But there is space here for a few short passages—from NGR's original paper and my book,³ in which I have summarised his argument. NGR, who had, for this paper, examined the case of solar energy produced with aluminum collector technology, wrote (paraphrased by SS): Can the second generation of solar power plants be built using the solar energy produced by the first generation? NGR's answer was no, at least not yet. A viable technology is one that is capable of "reproducing" itself after it has been brought into existence by means of an earlier technology. Illustrating the point, he writes: "The first bronze hammer ... was produced by some stone hammers. However, from that moment on, all bronze hammers were hammered only by bronze hammers." (NGR 1978: 18). To take an illustration from the energy sector, the first ton of coal was extracted by using human and animal muscle power. But soon, machines driven by coal energy were producing the capital equipment necessary to extract

coal, and such equipment was itself to be driven by coal energy. This is not the case with solar energy. All the necessary equipment, including solar collectors, are produced through processes based on sources of energy other than the sun (coal, oil, uranium etc.). Solar energy is, therefore, feasible only so long as other sources of energy are available. That means it is not viable.

Later, when photovoltaic solar energy started dominating the scene, the argument remained the same. They are feasible, but not viable. Currently, we know that 70 percent of all photovoltaic-panels sold in the world are made in China, where coal is by far the greatest source of energy, not the sun (nor wind or flowing water).

Same is the case with electricity from wind energy. The turbines, rotor blades, concrete towers etc.—are all produced with energy based mainly on conventional sources.

I have dealt with the subject in numerous articles, all published on my blog-site.⁴ So there is no need to elaborate on it any further. To sum up, according to NGR, it may be impossible to solve the problem, for the intensity of solar radiation reaching ground level is extremely low. And neither sunshine nor blowing wind is available all the time.

Here enters the Second Law of Thermodynamics (often also called the Entropy Law).⁵ In and on the surface of the sun, the temperature is unimaginably high. But when it reaches the surface of the earth, it is extremely low. What happens is that on its way to the earth solar radiation (sunshine) dissipates, its entropy increases. In order to make it useable for producing electricity, we have to collect (concentrate) the dissipated solar radiation—by means of aluminum mirrors or photovoltaic solar panels. These and all the related equipment from A to Z has first to be

produced, for which energy from other sources has to be spent, the quantity of which is usually more than what is finally produced by the solar thermal and photovoltaic power plants. That means their energy balance is negative. Same is the case with wind electricity.

NGR pointed out that when we use matter (materials) for any purpose, it also undergoes entropy increase. In common parlance, we call it wear and tear. In industrial production processes it leads to waste production. Waste can of course be recycled, but that again requires expenditure of energy. Moreover, some part of the matter always gets irretrievably dissipated, which is why hundred percent recycling is never possible.

All scientists agree that the Entropy Law is a universal law, and that it can never be overridden. It is having its effect everywhere, even in societies as a whole. Much later, I read a book entitled *Social Entropy* by Manfred Wöhlke, where the author maintains that it is the Entropy Law that is in effect when we observe that formerly well-functioning cohesive societies are breaking down (dissipating, so to speak) and states becoming failed states.

I also read in the 1980s a debate in the pages of *The Ecologist*—in those days the leading theoretical journal of the ecologists and environmental activists—in which Edward Goldsmith (the editor of the journal and a leading writer on ecological issues) tried to refute the universality and incontrovertibility of the Entropy Law that NGR was asserting. Goldsmith gave the example of plants which sprout by themselves from the soil after the previous generation dies away.

To Goldsmith's "refutation" NGR replied that plants do not reproduce themselves through any mystical unending source of energy, but that it is

the suns' energy that is enabling them as well as any life that exists, not only to live, but also to reproduce themselves, and that the life process would end when the sun dies out due to the effect of the Entropy Law. NGR had entitled his main theoretical book *The Entropy Law and the Economic Process* (1971).

Conclusion

In the 1960s and 1970s, when NGR wrote his main theoretical book and the papers that I could read, his focus was on the non-renewability and hence exhaustibility of the resources that we need. He calls the supplies of non-renewable energy sources and other minerals in low-entropy state "the limited dowry of mankind's existence on earth". A dowry is not only a limited but also a one-off gift. Therefore, Georgescu-Roegen comes to the logical conclusion:

"Even with a constant population and a constant flow per capita of mined resources, mankind's dowry will ultimately be exhausted if the career of the human species is not brought to an end earlier by other factors." (1971)

By "other factors" he must have meant a nuclear war between the superpowers. Global warming was not a matter of concern until the second half of the 1980s. But today, as we know, scientists are afraid that due to global warming and climate change the Earth may soon become an "uninhabitable planet"—title of a three to five years old book. But the resource problem has not disappeared. I think it cannot be solved, for our whole present-day economy has been built up and is running on the basis of mined resources, all of which, especially the fossil fuels, will ultimately be exhausted sooner or later.

On the prospect of mankind on the Earth, NGR wrote in a fit of pessimism,

"Will mankind listen to any programme that implies a constriction of its addiction to exosomatic comfort? Perhaps the destiny of man is to have a short, but fiery, exciting and extravagant life rather than a long, uneventful and vegetative existence. Let other species—the amoebas, for example—which have no spiritual ambitions inherit an earth still

bathed in plenty of sunshine." (1972)

I think NGR has here made a small mistake. What will come to an end is not exactly the career of the human species on the Earth, but that of the industrial society. The human species is living on the planet since before any resources were mined. □□

Notes :

1. See also my article. *The Ecological Clarity that the Ukraine War brings—A Paradox and Its Explanation* on my blog site. (see note No. 4)
2. Nicolas Georgescu-Roegen: *Technology Assessment: The Case of the Direct Use of Solar Energy*.
3. Saral Sarkar: *Eco-Socialism or Eco-Capitalism*.
4. My blog site: <http://eco-socialist.blogspot.com>
5. "The second law of thermodynamics says that entropy always increases with time". (quote from internet).

I prefer to use the term Entropy Law, for the term thermodynamics may erroneously suggest that the law applies only to heat transmission. But, as NGR pointed out elsewhere, dissipation inevitably occurs also when we use matter (materials) for any purpose.

AGAINST NATIONALISMS

Of War and Class War

Tridni-valka

THE ATTACK BY HAMAS ON Israel on Saturday, October 7, has provoked an immediate military response from the Netanyahu government, which has declared a state of war and has begun the systematic bombardment of the Gaza Strip. Meanwhile, under the cheers of the regime of the Ayatollahs', Hezbollah has taken advantage of the situation by launching missiles into Israel from the Lebanese border. The confrontation has already (October 9) caused more than a thousand deaths between the Israeli State and the Gaza Strip, in

addition to thousands of wounded and kidnapped. The coming days and months will see the misery and suffering of the workers on both sides increase, aggravating the harsh general conditions of the majority of the population, both those of the Strip and the impoverished proletariat of Israel.

And in addition to the misery that the Palestinian proletarians have to endure both inside and outside the Strip, under the existing segregation regime in Israel, there is a more general process of pauperisation of the proletariat in the region as a

whole after the covid-19 pandemic and the beginning of the war in Ukraine: a rise in the price of raw materials, of energy and of food which already keeps half of the Arab families in Israel, more than a fifth of the Jewish families and practically the entire population in Gaza—that large refugee camp that maintains itself with the crumbs of the United Nations—under the threshold of poverty.

What has led Hamas to act now? Certainly not the defence of the interests of the proletariat in Gaza, who once again find themselves under Israeli bombardment. Its surprise attack, which has come to intensify an already long-standing conflict, cannot be understood as a response motivated by popular rage against

the Israeli occupation. There is no “Palestinian people”, nor an undifferentiated unit of aggrieved people who respond heroically to their old aggressors. The proletariat in Gaza which just a few months ago was protesting against the Hamas regime, against power cuts, food shortages and the government’s fierce repression, does not share the same interests as the apparatus subordinate to the Ayatollahs’ regime, nor the “brave” militias that use the civilian population of both sides as human shields. The Israeli response to the attack may revive the nationalist closing of ranks on both sides of the conflict, but it cannot deny this fact.

Because it must be said clearly and distinctly: the forces at work on both the Palestinian and Israeli sides are profoundly reactionary. Since the very formation of the State of Israel in 1948, the region has not ceased to be one piece more on the chessboard of the global inter-imperialist struggle. Israel quickly positioned itself as a pawn in the service of U.S. interests. Since then, whether under Ben-Gurion’s Labor Party or under the various conservative governments, it has pursued a systematic segregation and repression of the Palestinians within and outside of its borders, as well as a militaristic and securitarian policy that has served up till now to divert attention from the profound

social inequalities within the Jewish population. For their part, the various factions of Palestinian nationalism after the British Mandate emerged under the auspices of the pan-Islamism of the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and later under the secular umbrella of Stalinism under Nasser, to pass on after the fall of the USSR to be under the orders of Iran as a regional power. In the form of political Islamism, the military apparatus of Palestinian nationalism has always been linked to the most reactionary manifestations of the 20th century. After all, it could not be otherwise: As Rosa Luxemburg had already pointed out decades earlier in her debate with Lenin; any nationalist movement can only, outwardly, fall under the wing of one of the great powers in the imperialist struggle, and inwardly repress all class expression in order to fix internal cohesion against the national enemy.

For reaction feeds reaction and both need each other. Whether Netanyahu had any knowledge or not of the Hamas attack, whether he ignored or underestimated its magnitude or directly decided to allow it to happen, in any case it has not failed to be very convenient for him to favour a closing of ranks in the midst of a political crisis of his government while he himself is threatened with a corruption trial.

For their part, Hamas and Hezbollah, like the Iranian regime itself, obtain as such a moment of respite from the growing social discontent in the three territories, which in Lebanon was expressed by the slogan of All of them means all of them—that is, also Hezbollah—during the 2019 protests and which in Iran has been propelling strikes and mobilisations since 2018, exploding last year in the protests against the hijab mandate following the assassination of Mahsa Amini.

When at night the anti-aircraft sirens sound, and the Israeli and Palestinian military apparatuses hold their population hostage under bombs, revolutionaries must oppose this barbarism with all our strength. To the flags of nationalism, no matter the colour of each one, progressives counterpose the joint struggle of the Palestinian and Israeli workers. For the Israelis, their bitterest enemy is the apparatus of the Jewish state, just as the PNA and Hamas are implacable enemies of the Palestinians. Only by confronting them directly will they be able to get out of the hellish labyrinth in which they find themselves. In short, against imperialist war—and this is one—there is only room for its transformation into a class war. □□□

[Translated in English from Spanish by Malcontent Editions]

LETTERS

Expulsion of Mahua Moitra

The decision of the house to expel Mahua Moitra by a legally untenable voice vote was based on the report of the Ethics Committee which recommended expulsion. The ethics committee had no conclusive evidence of a cash trail leading to Moitra, and asked the investigating agencies such as the Central Bureau of Investigation and Enforcement

Directorate to unearth this trail. The sharing of password and login details to the parliamentary website did not violate any existing rule or law. The Committee vaguely surmised that this sharing of credentials compromised national security without providing any evidence. Mahua Moitra was not given a chance to cross-examine the complainant or the other witnesses. Without following due process, the committee went

on to recommended expulsion in a decision in which six members voted for while four members submitted dissent notes.

It was this partisan report which formed the basis of the Lok Sabha deciding to expel Mahua Moitra. Most damningly, Mahua Moitra was given the serious punishment of expulsion without giving her a chance to respond or answer in her defence, in the Lok Sabha.

Why is the Modi government so troubled by Mahua Moitra?

Mahua Moitra has been particularly tenacious in targeting someone she calls as Mr A and his group the 'A company', who travels with the 'Prime Minister on delegations' and 'meets heads of state on visits to India' and makes it appear that 'India is the Prime Minister and the Prime Minister is him' and 'makes it appear to the world' that he is the 'remote control behind the Prime Minister' and that 'by obliging him, you oblige the Prime Minister'.

**Kavita Srivastava, President, PUCL
V Suresh, General Secretary, PUCL
Cash for Query**

The Ethics Committee since its formation in 2000 had in the past never recommended expulsion of a parliamentarian. The Privileges Committee did it last time in 2005, only on finding a "smoking gun"—a video recording of the "cash-for-query" deal. This time, there's no such evidence. The privileges committee took such steps, including recommendation of 10 MPs in 2005 cash-for query scam.

So much so that the committee has (reportedly) recommended investigations by agencies to dig out any such evidence. Yet it has recommended expulsion by 6-4 voting on purely party lines!

Regardless of the brute majority that the ruling party is enjoying in the Lok Sabha, the Speaker may even disallow any debate/discussion on the issue and get the committee report adopted by just a voice vote! This would really be the height. Action paves the way for expulsion of any such inconvenient member in the future on any flimsy and fabricated ground, just on the strength of numerical majority.

The committee had on November 8 [or 9?] adopted a report recommending Mohua Moitra's expulsion from the lower House over 'cash-for-query' charges.

Sukla Sen

Crime & Conviction

Cases of crimes against people belonging to communities in the Scheduled Castes (SC) and Scheduled Tribes (ST) categories have risen progressively and steadily between the years 2018 and 2022, according to figures by the National Crime Records Bureau [NCRB].

These include crimes such as murder, assault on women, sexual harassment, stalking, kidnapping, and assault of children among others. NCRB—a government agency responsible for collecting and analysing crime data — released its latest report on 4 December, 2023.

An analysis of this data between 2018 and 2022 revealed that even as cases of atrocities against SC, ST communities went up, the conviction and charge-sheeting rates remained abysmally low.

As per the 2022 numbers, Uttar Pradesh (UP) with 15,368 cases recorded the highest total cases of atrocities against people from the SC category. Rajasthan with 8,752 cases stood second, whereas Madhya Pradesh (MP) with 7,733 cases was on number three.

It must, however, be noted that the crime rate (crime per lakh population) in Rajasthan was 71.6 — more than double that of UP which recorded a crime rate of 37.2. At the same time, Rajasthan's charge-sheeting rate was 45.9 percent, which means that a charge-sheet was filed in only 45.9 percent of recorded cases. In UP, charge-sheeting rate stood at 84.9 percent.

A comparison of conviction rate also showed that while Rajasthan saw only 39.5 percent convictions, in UP, the rate was 80.2 percent.

MP recorded a high crime rate (68.2) and high charge-sheeting rate (99.5 percent) but the conviction rate remained low (22.9 percent).

Most cases of atrocities against

people belonging to the ST category were recorded in MP (2,979) followed by Rajasthan (2,521) and Odisha (773).

Himanshi Dahiya

Protest during COP28 Summit

About 25 activists took part in the protest, holding up pictures of Emirati prisoners Ahmed Mansoor and Mohamed al-Siddiq and Egyptian-British political activist Alaa Abdel Fattah.

Human Rights Watch described the protest as historic for taking place in the UAE, which tolerates little public dissent and bans organised groups such as political parties and labour union

As a condition of hosting COP28, the UAE had agreed to allow protests to take place there under U.N. guidelines that require any demonstrations to be approved in advance and limited to the summit site.

Unlike at past U.N. climate talks that sparked huge protest rallies, including 2021's COP26 in Glasgow and 2015's COP21 in Paris, there have been no demonstrations outside the venue.

Siddiq was jailed in the UAE in 2013 along with 68 others on charges of plotting to overthrow the government after a trial that rights group Amnesty International described as grossly unfair.

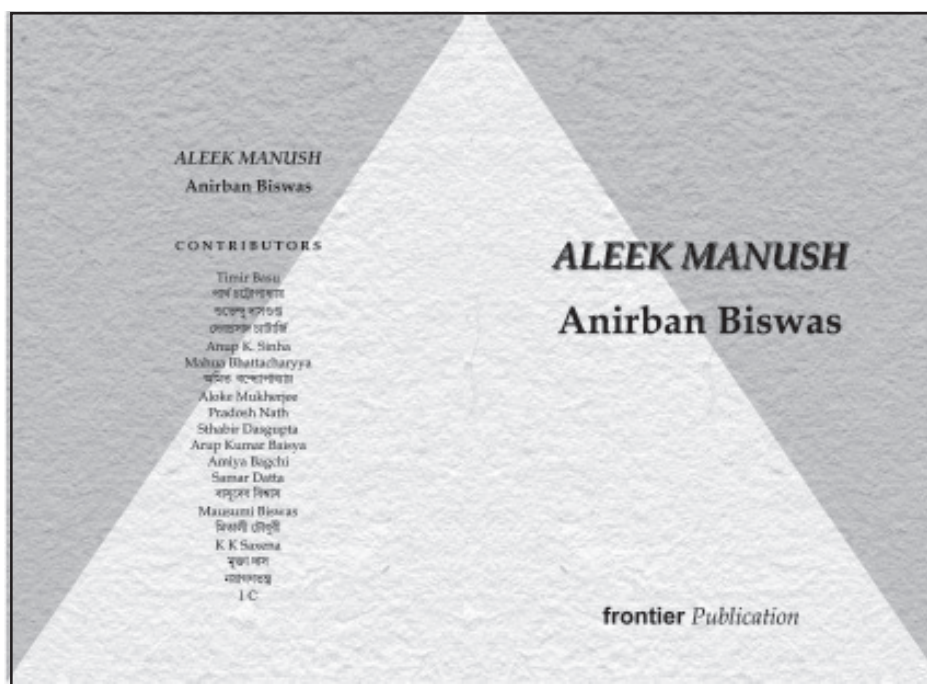
An Emirati court sentenced Mansoor to 10 years in prison in 2018 after being charged with crimes including using social media to harm national unity and social harmony and damage the country's reputation.

Abdel Fattah, who has been repeatedly detained in Egypt since the 2011 "Arab Spring" uprising, was most recently sentenced to five years in prison in 2021 on charges of spreading fake news.

Angus McDowall, Reuters

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