

# frontier

Vol. 56 : No. 6

ISSN 0016-2094

August 6-12, 2023

Founder-Editor : **SAMAR SEN**

On Other Pages

Comment	2
Note	3
TOILERS' PERSPECTIVE Manipur: Towards a Just and Peaceful Solution Vijay Singh	4
'INDIA'-I Alliance of 26 Parties Bhabani Shankar Nayak	5
'INDIA'-II Hope and Street Aggregation Yogendra Yadav	8
THE GENIE IS OUT OF THE BOTTLE AI and the Fate of the World Richard Heinberg	9
TIT FOR TAT Russia Exits Grain Deal Hanna Duggal	10
MEDIEVAL BARBARISM Kuki Women Wanted To Be Heard Kavita Krishnan	11
Letters	13

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]

## *Defending Barbarism*

**A**FTER 84 DAYS PRIME MINISTER NARENDRA MODI HAD some time to comment on the on-going ethnic clashes in Manipur and expressed his deep anguish over a viral video of two women being paraded naked by a mob. Perhaps he reacted after the apex court took suo moto cognisance of the matter threatening to intervene in case the government fails to act. Expressing his shock Chief Justice D Y Chandrachud, heading a bench also comprising Justices Pamidighantam Asti Narasimha and Manoj Misra said that using women as an instrument in area of communal strife to inflict gender violence was simply unacceptable. In his view this was the grossest of constitutional abuse and human rights violation. In a bid to shield his party's government in Manipur Prime Minister tried to focus on atrocities on women in the Congress -ruled states of Rajasthan and Chattisgarh. He was actually trying to defend the indefensible.

National Commission for Women (NCW) chairperson Rekha Sharma said she had reached out thrice in last three months to authorities of Manipur over the incidents of violence against women but no response was received from them. This is the ground reality of the much touted double engine government of Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP). In a similar situation in any opposition-ruled state they would cry themselves hoarse demanding immediate imposition of president's rule. They lost no time to send a fact-finding team to investigate rural poll-related violence in Bengal. But no fact-finding team for Manipur because it is BJP ruled. Even NCW was not allowed to visit Manipur.

What started as popular resistance to the controversial High Court verdict to include non-STs (Meitis) in the Scheduled Tribes list, soon snowballed into a state-wide ethnic riot of unimaginable proportions, with the Meiti and Kuki communities at the centre of the conflict. The violence has so far left at least 150 people dead, entire villages razed down, churches burnt and tens of thousands of people displaced amidst untold suffering for both the communities. What seems to have finally 'shaken the nation' is the recent viral video.

While an FIR was filed 2 months back after national and international outcry despite the fact that a large mob of identifiable men can be seen in the video. Surprisingly, Chief minister Mr Biren Singh had no regret as he would assert at the press meet that the much publicised video episode was just one instance which came to light. From Singh's own admission it

was just the ‘tip of the scary iceberg’. What is needed is a comprehensive inquiry by the retired judges to ensure due legal process and accountability of violators and authorities in all such cases. Instead of clamping down on the perpetrators of crimes the BJP government has stopped internet services not allowing law-abiding citizens to have access to actual happenings.

The court order that triggered violence was essentially a land question. If the Meitis get the ST status they will be able to purchase land in the hills otherwise reserved for the Kukis. It will also allow the corporates to exploit natural resources of the area affecting the economy severely. So for the Kukis it is a life and death question.

That this continuing collision has a communal overtone that suits BJP agenda has been completely over-

looked. Nobody talked about why only churches were destroyed. For one thing 246 churches were burnt down.

Some organisations and activists associated with National Alliance of People’s Movements in their appeal have sought President Draupadi Murmu’s urgent intervention and visit for restoration of peace and justice in burning Manipur and support to violated Kuki -Zo women.

Meanwhile, Assam Chief Minister and BJP leader Hemant Biswa Sarma came forward in defence of his Manipur counterpart Biren Singh by espousing a conspiracy theory hatched by the opposition to discredit the BJP dispensation before the beginning of the monsoon session of parliament. What is more he cited comparative rape incidents in opposition ruled states of West Bengal, Rajasthan and Chattisgarh to

justify his friend Biren Singh’s inability to stop heinous crimes against women. Biren Singh is the 12th chief minister of Manipur representing Heingang constituency in the Manipur Legislative Assembly since 2002 as a member of BJP. He was given the champion of change award in 2018 for his ‘exceptional service’ to the nation. So it is unlikely for the BJP central leadership to take any action, minor or major, against their commander-in chief in the North East which has been an ethnic cauldron for decades.

Prime Minister Modi exemplifies democracy abroad while dismantling democracy at home. But his global image that has been assiduously cultivated by the pliant media, of late, has been tarnished, nationally and globally, for what is happening across the country. □□□

23-07-2023

---

## COMMENT

### ‘Friends of Socialist China’

FRIENDS OF SOCIALIST CHINA (FoSC) is one of many websites, podcasts, and video channels devoted to praising the capitalist regime that rules China. Most of the praise is set against criticism of US imperialism. They reason that if US imperialism does something evil—which it most certainly does—then the rising monopoly capitalist power in China must be doing good things. FoSC’s almost daily posts use this illogic over and over.

So FoSC publishes titles like, “Campaigning against the New Cold War is crucial for all who value peace and justice” and “The Western left must reject anti-China propaganda and join the progressive global trend.” Talk of a New Cold War casts the US as the instigating power eager for a clash. The actual situation is a growing, unavoidable contradiction be-

tween expanding Chinese monopoly capitalism and established, decaying US monopoly capitalism.

One FoSC article of special interest is “A community of shared future is the only viable option for humanity,” by Keith Bennett, published July 12, 2023. Bennett is a co-editor of FoSC. He calls himself a “researcher and consultant on China’s international relations.”

In line with his consultancy, Bennett Associates, Bennett promotes Chinese trade and investment to British businessmen. “The economic and commercial relationship with China is intrinsic to the economic health of the UK and the economic well-being of the British people. ... Business people, civil society, and others [but no mention of the working class] all have their roles to play.” Apparently, Bennett

does not care what de-industrialisation does to British workers following the export of capital.

Bennett is also vice-chair of the 48 Club, a London-based group of more than 600 businessmen, parliamentarians, government bureaucrats and diplomats. According to a statement once posted on its website, “The Club offers an important – and often key – network of contacts for those active in building relations [with China] through any field from commerce to culture.”

In his post of July 12, Bennett took direction from recent PRC propaganda emphasis on the notion of civilisation. He wrote:

“Humanity has a history of civilisation dating back millennia. Civilisations arose and developed on different continents and at different times. But they prospered and innovated through mutual exchanges and mutual learning. The ancient Silk Road, which began in China, is one of the greatest examples of this.”

“Countries, the Chinese President [Xi] explains, need to keep an open mind in appreciating the values of different civilisations and they should refrain from imposing their own values or models on others and from stoking ideological confrontation.”

“Socialism with Chinese characteristics offers a new option for those countries that wish to rapidly develop their economies while maintaining their independence.”

No, China’s rapid industrialisation was capitalist industrialisation. Deng Xiaoping and crew pushed two hun-

dred million people onto the market for labour power. Driven from their families, they were on their own to migrate in search of work in construction, Foxconn and other sweatshops, and high-pressure, piece-rate delivery work. Their toil enriched a new class of billionaires and millionaires, including the family of Xi Jinping. Today, the Gini index of income inequality in China is close to that of the US. This industrialisation was the opposite of Soviet socialist industrialisation in the 1930s. □□□

## NOTICE

We are getting regular complaints from subscribers that they are not getting their copies by post. Postal dislocation is rampant. It is particularly endemic in greater Kolkata postal district. Local post offices don’t really deliver in many cases because of acute shortage of staff. We request our subscribers to lodge complaints to the post offices of their localities and send their e-mail IDs, if any, so that we could also send our on-line version. —Fr

## NOTE

### Wrongly Arrested Activists

*Bharat Dogra writes:*

**A** HEAD OF THE INDEPENDENCE Day, it would be a much appreciated gesture on the part of the government if it releases several dissenting activists, including distinguished scholars and lawyers, who are widely believed to have been wrongfully arrested or implicated in wrong cases. Some time back the Supreme Court’s firmness in upholding the Bombay High Court’s order granting bail to a distinguished scholar Anand Teltumbde arrested under the Elgar Parishad case was widely appreciated, as was an earlier court order granting bail to another widely acclaimed public interest lawyer Sudha Bhardwaj known to have taken up many cases of poorest persons. However there is a strong feeling in human rights circles in India that there is need for much more to be done in this case. In this context one may recall what the 74-year-old distinguished scholar activist Anand Teltumbde, coming out after spending 31 months in prison, had to say regarding the case in which several other distinguished activists, scholars and lawyers have also been implicated—

“the sad thing is that this is the fakest case and it put us behind bars for years.”

16 activists known for their pro-poor leanings and work, including human rights lawyers and scholars, were arrested in this case on issues relating to events in Pune in 2017-18, which essentially related to mobilisation of a large number of pro-poor organisations for cultural and related celebrations. Unfortunately there was some violence later at another gathering with several common participants. Several of those arrested, for example Fr Stan Swamy who died in the course of imprisonment, leading to worldwide expression of dismay, were completely at a loss to understand why they were being arrested in this case.

One main accusation has been that the Elgar Parishad event had Maoist links. This allegation should have been dismissed at a very early stage as two retired, highly respected senior judges had clearly stated that they were the organisers and fund mobilisers.

Justice P B Sawant was earlier a judge of the Bombay High Court and subsequently of the Supreme Court

of India. He then became the Chairperson of the Press Council of India and showed high concern for ethical issues relating to media. Justice (Retired) Sawant breathed his last some time back, after having been very distressed in his last days at the way in which the Elgar Parishad case had been built up and pursued by the authorities. Justice B G Kolse-Patil was a judge of the Bombay High Court at a relatively young age. Both of these judges immersed themselves in pro-poor, communal harmony and national integration activities after their retirement.

While Fr Stan Swamy died in the course of his imprisonment in this case, serious medical problems of several other imprisoned activists have also been highlighted from time to time by their family members as well as lawyers.

Such cases which appear prima facie to involve a lot of injustice are bringing a lot of avoidable disrepute to the human rights record of the country at a time when, particularly due to its presidency of G-20, the country should do all it can to improve its human rights record.

There are some cases relating to some protests which were very peacefully organised. Then there have been reports of some cases relating to Delhi riots in which some activists

known for their record of communal harmony and justice have been wrongly implicated. There are several less known activists from adivasis and other weaker sections who have been wrongly imprisoned for quite some time and due to the poverty of

their families have not been able to arrange even for bail and legal help, left to languish in jail as under-trials.

Some time back President Droupadi Murmu said very rightly, "Our job is to think about the poor undertrials languishing in jails. We all

have to think and come out with a way..."

One hopes that the government will quickly initiate the long overdue process of release of several activists and other dissenting persons who are widely believed to have been victims of injustice. □□□

---

#### TOILERS' PERSPECTIVE

---

## Manipur: Towards a Just and Peaceful Solution

**Vijay Singh**

**L**ABOURING PEOPLE ALL over the country need to be aware of the developments in Manipur state and its long term implications for the movements of the working people. As was to be expected the ruling classes led by the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) are fomenting fratricidal warfare in which they actively support or constitute the leadership of both sides. The result is a process of fascist inspired ethnic cleansing accompanied by arson, rape, killing of ordinary working men and women, by infuriated mobs led by armed 'militants'. This is a part of the pattern of neo liberal economic and political policies which incite anarchic identity based politics in place of organised national or class interest based struggles.

The genuine problems faced by the people of Manipur, both the majority Meiteis and the minority tribal people like the Kukis or Nagas need to be understood historically. The majority community faces severe problems arising from being confined to a geographically very limited space; the lopsided concentration of 'development' i.e. of services (not employment opportunities) in the valley resulting in the immigration of tribal people from the hills and beyond the national borders; legal restrictions on acquisition of tribal land in the hills by the non-tribal communities; sustained spread

of drug addiction, based on opium produced in the hills but peddled by drug mafia of all communities and so on. The result is severe restriction of opportunities for mobility, employment, and a perceived threat to the language, culture and traditions of the majority community, and concern over the degeneration of unemployed and drug addicted youth. The already stressed land situation has been aggravated by the acquisition of land by the state for the so-called 'development projects' leading to eviction of people engaged in traditional land use.

The Kukis and other tribal people inhabiting the hilly regions face an apparently different set of problems but which are in actual fact generated by the same processes of lopsided 'development' which seeks to impose a regime of 'zero employment development' while simultaneously depriving the people of their traditional livelihoods and reducing them to the status of 'informal' workers in the so-called 'unorganised sectors'. Indian Kukis are a part of a larger tribal ethnic group inhabiting the border regions between India, Myanmar and other neighbouring countries and historically there has been a movement of population across the porous borders. Declaring some of them as 'foreigners' or 'infiltrators' and subjecting them to harassment and criminalisation has been a long standing problem not

just of the Kukis but also of a large number of such people who live astride international borders. Living in hilly areas with difficult access, they have been deprived of modern services like tertiary education, advanced medical facilities, roads, electricity and other civic amenities. As noted above most of these have been concentrated in the plains, which effectively means that those who want to avail of them have to move to there. Since there has been no planned development of sustainable productive potential of the hills, the hills people have been left to their own resources to augment their incomes. In a large number of cases this has taken the form of deforestation, poppy cultivation for drug lords, trans-border arms smuggling to feed militant outfits, with the connivance of armed forces on both sides. The Kukis are mostly Christian and they have accessed English education and also the public employment made possible by reservation for tribal people. This may have had symbolic value but given the very limited public employment, this does not mean much in real terms. In recent years the Indian state and the state government have constantly been encroaching upon tribal lands on one pretext or the other. The latest set of provocation has been in the form of declaring large tracts of hill lands as reserve forests and national parks and bringing them under the control of the state. Similarly the action of the state to 'identify' foreign settlers and oust them. Another provocation has been in the form of declaring parts of the tribal lands as



August 6-12, 2023

FRONTIER

5

being sacred to the Meiteis and claiming control over them.

The Meiteis look upon the hill regions as potential areas for their expansion and residence and seek removal of legal constraints to their acquisition of land there and also access to privileged employment and education which the legal 'tribal' status will give them. Understandably this has alarmed the Kukis and other tribal people who stand to lose both their land and also public employment. Further the assumption of control of forest lands by the state which is seen to be controlled by the Meiteis is also a source of anxiety. On the other hand the Meiteis feel a sense of alienation and frustration within their own state, and look at the Kukis as potential threat to their culture and religion and also a conduit for illegal immigration of 'foreigners' and drug and arms peddlers. These perceptions have been fanned on both sides to create fear psychosis and mutual distrust and animosity.

The BJP came to power in the state by independent negotiations with the Meitei and Kuki leadership playing upon their anxieties and demands and promising both of them support in their fight with the other. The armed forces like the Assam Rifles and the Manipur Police have also been playing partisan role overtly supporting one against the other.

The issue is not to enter the blame game of who started it all or which

party has suffered more or which side has been more brutal or violent. Suffice it to say that the state institutions including courts of law have played an active role in fomenting the crises and pushing people into this fratricidal confrontation.

Labouring people need to approach such situations keeping in mind three basic principles:

- i. Right to Self-determination of peoples: One should recognise that the state of Manipur which inherited the history of the kingdom of Manipur is a composite state which brought together diverse people with some guarantees to the hill-tribal people. Violation of those guarantees will only help to break the political compact and lead to fragmentation. When one community forces others to forgo their guarantees, the other community can seek to go on its own. Such guarantees which become historically obsolete may be eased out through mutually respectful dialogue.
- ii. Planned development of productive forces and employment which enable people to improve their economic and cultural life in an equitable and sustainable manner.
- iii. Spirit of internationalism and fraternity of labouring people and abjuring violence in settling mutual differences. Labouring

people also need to keep in mind a historical truth that regions and societies which take the path of rapid development and economic transformation, especially the path of capitalist development need to be prepared for immigration of people with capital, skills, knowhow and distressed people who come to sell cheap labour for basic livelihood needs. Historically societies and regions that have undergone such transformation have sites of intermingling of diverse peoples and cultures and they cannot have both 'development' and ethnic purity. This historically inevitable process would certainly give rise to tensions but need to be resolved with insight and compassion.

Whenever labouring people are made to target each other, it is imperative that class conscious leadership should identify the class interests that it serves and persuade the mass of the people from desisting from violence against fellow working people and instead turn their wrath against those who seek to divide and exploit them.

It is important for all democratic organisations, trade unions and democratic cultural organisations to send peace keepers to such trouble-torn areas and conduct democratic political propaganda and also actively prevent violence against common people. □□□

[*Revolutionary Democracy, 15th July 2023*]

---

'INDIA'-I

## Alliance of 26 Parties

**Bhabani Shankar Nayak**

**I**N THE NINE YEARS THAT have passed since the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP)-led Modi government assumed office, there has been little or no opposition to the Hindutva fascist doctrine at work in India. This has allowed the govern-

ment to implement most of its reactionary agendas and transformed India into a party state. The lack of serious political opposition has provided Hindutva with the opportunity to remain as a dominant political force, effectively concealing the glar-

ing failures of the Modi government on every front. The Indian National Congress, as the main opposition party, has failed to counter the BJP effectively. Despite their ideological differences, their economic policies are indistinguishable from each other. Additionally, many regional political parties, apart from the left parties and Lalu Yadav's RJD, have formed direct or indirect alliances with the BJP, further aiding the growth of

Hindutva forces. After the 2019 general elections, the BJP managed to govern the country with just 37.4% of the votes, while the National Democratic Alliance, led by the BJP, secured nearly 45% of the vote. It is within this context that one should analyse the foundations, sustain-ability, and future of the 'Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance' (INDIA).

The twenty-six opposition parties have come together to form the Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance (INDIA) with the goal of challenging the BJP in the 2024 general elections. This unity among the opposition parties is a much awaited and significant step towards safeguarding India's present and future as a constitutional, secular, and liberal democracy. While the electoral alliance has the potential to defeat the BJP, it is essential for the opposition parties to establish an ideological core and coherence to effectively counter Hindutva politics. Currently, these opposition parties lack a common ideological foundation or common minimum programme to combat the BJP and its reactionary Hindutva agenda. Some of the political parties within the alliance hold outright reactionary stances, characterised by regional chauvinism and a lack of progressive principles. For the long-term vi-

ability of the INDIA as a political platform, it becomes imperative to establish a common ideological coherence based on Indian constitutional values. By doing so, the alliance can strengthen democracy in India and present a unified front against the divisive and authoritarian forces of Hindutva politics.

The future of the 'INDIA' alliance can draw its political missions, visions, and agendas from the Preamble of the Indian Constitution, which promises to transform India into a sovereign, socialist, secular, and democratic republic. It also pledges to secure social, economic, and political justice, liberty of thought, expression, belief, faith, and worship, equality of status and opportunities, and promote values of fraternity and dignity for all individuals. These values are central to the unity and integrity of India, as well as the deepening of its constitutional democracy and the protection of democratic rights for all citizens, irrespective of their backgrounds.

Indian sovereignty has been shaped by its freedom struggle, which vehemently rejected Yankee imperialism, European colonialism, and their racist ethno-nationalism. For the 'INDIA' alliance as a political platform, it is imperative to reject Hindutva and its commitment to European ethno-nationalism, as they clash with India's multicultural ethos. Instead, the alliance should uphold the values of internationalism and demonstrate solidarity with the marginalised and persecuted, making them core values of Indian sovereignty. Furthermore, the 'INDIA' alliance should strive to expand the concept of sovereignty beyond just being a nation state, to encompass the sovereignty of its citizens. This means ensuring that all citizens have equal rights, opportunities, and representation, irrespective of their backgrounds, and guaranteeing their participation in the demo-

cratic process. By adopting such principles and values, the 'INDIA' alliance can pave the way for a more inclusive and just society, standing against divisive ideologies and promoting the true spirit of Indian sovereignty that is rooted in freedom, equality, and solidarity.

The BJP has not only adhered to but also expanded the neoliberal economic policies of the Indian National Congress. Additionally, most regional political parties and political outfits have also embraced neoliberalism as a means to achieve economic growth without critically examining its unequal outcomes for Indian citizens. However, these neoliberal policies have essentially facilitated a wealth transfer from the people to the crony capitalists associated with both the BJP and the Congress Party. Consequently, public resources have been diverted into the hands of Indian and global corporations, perpetuating income inequality. Furthermore, the implementation of neoliberal economic policies has had detrimental effects on various sectors in India. It has led to the destruction of agriculture, industry, and state-led educational and health infrastructure across the country. To ensure economic justice and uphold socialistic values that prioritise the welfare of all citizens, the 'INDIA' political alliance needs to unequivocally reject the neoliberal market economy. Instead, the alliance should advocate for a welfare state that works towards the betterment of all people in India, providing equitable access to education, healthcare, and economic opportunities. By rejecting neoliberalism and promoting a socialistic approach to economic policies, the 'INDIA' alliance can address the pressing issues of income inequality and foster a more inclusive and fair society for all.

The Brahminical social order, built on a rigid caste hierarchy, not only serves as the foundation of

**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

August 6-12, 2023

FRONTIER

7

Hindutva politics but also poses a significant obstacle to achieving social justice in India. This caste-based society marginalises a majority of the population and undermines the very idea of political justice that should be based on equal citizenship rights for all, which is essential for the advancement of democracy and economic justice in the country. For the 'INDIA' political alliance to create a more just and inclusive society, it must develop policies with unwavering commitment to combat caste discrimination. This entails reinforcing and expanding affirmative actions at every level of state and government functioning. Such actions are crucial to achieving social, economic, and political justice, fostering the deepening of democracy, and ensuring equal citizenship rights for all individuals in India. By actively addressing the issues of caste-based discrimination and implementing affirmative measures, the 'INDIA' alliance can work towards dismantling the violently oppressive caste system and fostering a society that values and upholds the principles of equality and social justice. This approach will not only strengthen democracy in India but also create an environment where every citizen can thrive and contribute to the nation's progress, regardless of their caste or social background. The patriarchal Hindutva is detrimental to the empowerment of women. It is central to uphold gender justice and equality to mainstream gender in development. Equal accessibility and availability of resources and opportunities are central to egalitarian and sustainable development of India as a country.

The exclusionary and divisive nature of Hindutva politics has severely eroded the foundational ideals of fraternity, liberty, individual dignity, and solidarity in India. By promoting a monolithic linguistic,

cultural, social, and religious outlook, Hindutva politics undermines the rich diversity that defines India's national identity. The notions of Hindu, Hindi, and Hindutva can never serve as unifying forces for the nation's unity and integrity. Instead, they exacerbate divisions and hinder the country's progress. To ensure the survival of India as a diverse and inclusive nation, it is essential to confront and defeat the monolithic ideology propagated by Hindutva politics. For the 'INDIA' political alliance to have a sustainable future, it must unequivocally reject the monolithic ideology of Hindutva. Embracing diversity, promoting inclusive policies, and upholding the principles of pluralism and secularism are essential for the alliance's success and the well-being of the nation. By standing against divisive ideologies and fostering an environment that celebrates India's diversity, the 'INDIA' alliance can lay the foundation for a more united and prosperous future for the country. This approach is critical for safeguarding the core values of India and sustaining the alliance as a force for positive change and progress in the nation.

Coalition electoral politics can play a significant role in strengthening the processes of decentralisation and deepening of democracy in India. By forming alliances across regional, religious, cultural, social, and sexual orientation lines, coalition politics can empower citizens and ensure their voices are heard in the governance of the country. This approach promotes inclusivity and equal representation for all, aligning with the ideals outlined in the Preamble to the Constitution of India. To defeat Hindutva and its ideological foundations, the 'INDIA' political alliance must avoid falling into the trap of opportunistic and populist politics solely for electoral gains.

## FRONTIER

44, Balam 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 Samanwya Committee

44, Balam Dey Street, Kolkata-700006

West Bengal

Contact Number : 8240016324

Instead, it should focus on using coalition politics as a tool for social, political, and economic transformation, advocating for policies that prioritise the welfare and development of all citizens.

The potential for transformation lies in the ability of the 'INDIA' alliance to address the root causes of Hindutva and challenge the divisive ideology espoused by the BJP. To achieve this, the alliance must maintain an unwavering commitment

to inclusivity, peace, and egalitarian development for all, fostering a society that values diversity and upholds the principles of social justice. The future and sustainability of the 'INDIA' political alliance depend on its ability to remain true to these core principles, working collectively towards an inclusive and progressive India that benefits both its people and the planet. By doing so, the alliance can pave the way for positive change and advancement in the

country, transcending divisive ideologies and creating a more harmonious and prosperous society for everyone.

The electoral defeat is the first step to halt the forward march of Hindutva and its crony capitalism in India. India and its citizens eagerly await the 'INDIA' political alliance's promises and commitments to put an end to the despairs caused by Hindutva and its fascist upheavals.

□□□

---

'INDIA'-II

## Hope and Street Aggregation

*Yogendra Yadav*

**T**HE FORMATION OF INDIAN National Developmental Inclusive Alliance( INDIA ) can be a turning point for India in 2024, provided it does not remain merely an exercise in opposition unity. As an old-style pre or post-poll coalition—arithmetic addition of votes in the election or simple accumulation of seats after the elections—the formation of INDIA offers rather modest additional dividends. But INDIA can be a game changer if it begins to articulate the idea of India and channelise all the dormant energies, if it ignites the aspirations of those at the bottom of the pyramid.

It has already taken the first two steps in the right direction. The 23 June meet in Patna showed that the major opposition parties were not as hopelessly divided as they appeared, and that they could not only sit together but also initiate some coordinated action. The 17-18 July Bengaluru meeting demonstrated their collective ability to sort out or set aside smaller differences, develop a consensus statement and find a new name for the coalition. The BJP's knee-jerk revival of the near-dead NDA and the PM's reaction suggests that the ruling party is

troubled. That is a good beginning.

The name INDIA—forget the mouthful Indian National Developmental Inclusive Alliance, no one would remember anything but the acronym—is brilliant, one of the smarter communicative moves made by the opposition in a long time. It begins a symbolic recovery of the idea of India and wrong-foots the BJP and its courtiers in the media. The first reaction from the BJP camp shows its discomfiture. The BJP cannot let go of 'India'—what with Start-Up India, Make in India, Skill India, Digital India and so on. Modi is smart enough to know that the India vs Bharat binary cannot be played with the younger generation. Nor can it let the opposition run with the name.

A good name, though, does not assure a decent career. The prospects of the new coalition depend on how it builds upon this initial advantage. That, in turn, depends on how well it recognises this basic truth: INDIA must not be seen through the old prism of opposition unity, of vote aggregation or seats aggregation; the new political unity is about hope aggregation and street aggregation.

Two years ago, reacting to some premature attempts at drawing room opposition unity, this writer wrote that old-style opposition unity was a lazy idea. The article had recounted all that was wrong with the assumption that a pre-electoral alliance of all major opposition parties, was necessary or sufficient to defeat the BJP. Much of that reasoning continues to hold today. Division of votes among the disunited opposition parties is not the main reason for the BJP's electoral success. The old logic of the Index of Opposition Unity that used to work against the dominant Congress does not work anymore.

The reason is India's electoral geography. There are many states (Kerala, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Telangana and Andhra Pradesh) where the BJP is still not a major electoral force, so it is pointless and counterproductive to unite the entire opposition against it. Then there are states like West Bengal, Chhattisgarh and Odisha, where the dominant non-BJP party does not need an alliance partner. There is also the vast region that the BJP dominates in a direct BJP-Congress contest (Madhya Pradesh, Himachal Pradesh, Uttarakhand, Gujarat, and Rajasthan) where there is no other opposition party to ally with.

Most of the states where vote division could help the BJP—Maharashtra, Jharkhand, Bihar and



Assam—already have opposition alliances at the local level. That leaves only Delhi and UP as states where vote aggregation through a fresh pre-poll coalition among parties that have joined INDIA can make a big difference. Given the peculiarities of these states, these are bound to be tough and uncertain negotiations. It is best not to expect a dramatic breakthrough here from the new INDIA formation. In any case, one cannot assume that voters are ready to vote the BJP out or just waiting for a joint opposition candidate.

The challenge of seats aggregation is relatively simpler and more relevant to the existing electoral geography. Different parties win seats in their region on their own and then form a post-poll alliance to form a government. This is how UPA-1 was formed post-election in 2004. The formation of a pre-poll coalition like INDIA can help for any post-poll seats aggregation. But an over-emphasis on government formation can be counter-productive and can be used by BJP for its propaganda that this coalition is all opportunistic and

that all the opposition has come together to dislodge one man. At any rate, it is too early to anticipate the post-poll scenario of 2024. It is not yet clear where all the 26 parties that met in Bengaluru, or the 39 that met in the newly revived NDA, for that matter, would stand post-2024.

Thus, the principal value of INDIA does not lie in the traditional arithmetic of coalition politics, that of vote or seats aggregation. Its potential to change the electoral equation for 2024 lies in the message that it can send to the voters by way of its communication and ground action, by street aggregation and hope aggregation.

The first statement, or Samuhik Sankalp issued by the 26 parties that constitute INDIA, lists a series of issues on which it would combat and confront the ruling dispensation. The list includes authoritarian politics (assault on the Constitution, federalism, democratic rights and political opposition), social exclusion (hatred and violence against minorities and other socially marginalised sections and the tragedy in Manipur)

and economic crisis (price rise, unemployment, cronyism, sale of national assets and the condition of farmers). All these are real and pressing issues that need a response.

The real challenge for INDIA now is to prioritise a few issues for imaginative national collective action, for these issues would not become electoral salient issues for Lok Sabha elections unless there is some nationwide movement before 2024. Protests against the victimisation of opposition leaders and governments would be justified, but could easily be discredited as self-serving actions to defend vested interests. Price rise and unemployment suggest themselves as the most obvious candidates for a nationwide movement. Coordinated action with peasant movements has the potential to reach every village.

An alternative agenda is, of course, a must for fostering hope. But that begins to register with the people only when they trust the sincerity and feasibility of this alternative agenda.

□□□

---

## THE GENIE IS OUT OF THE BOTTLE

---

# AI and the Fate of the World

*Richard Heinberg*

EVERYONE DOES AGREE that Artificial Intelligence [AI] represents a qualitative as well as a quantitative shift in technological development. It's not just an improved computer with more speed and power, but a software architecture that enables computers to teach themselves how to learn, and to continually improve and expand their abilities. AI systems now write computer code, making them, in a sense, self-generating. AI is essentially a "black box" from which thought-like output emerges; people can't figure out why and how it does

what it does after the fact. Further, AI systems learn from each other almost instantly, taking in vastly more information than any human can. A crucial threshold will be reached with the development of artificial general intelligence (AGI), which could accomplish any intellectual task humans perform, and greatly exceed human abilities in at least some respects—and which, crucially, could set its own goals. Already, computers can defeat any human chess grand master.

Some AI risks are fairly obvious. Machines will increasingly replace

information workers, destroying white-collar jobs (full disclosure: this article was not written by AI, though this writer did use Google and Bing for research). Inevitably, AI will enrich owners and developers of the technology while others will shoulder the social costs, resulting in more societal wealth inequality. The proliferation of deepfake images, audio, and text will make it increasingly difficult to tell what's true and what isn't, further distorting present-day politics. And a dramatic expansion of computer number crunching will likely demand more overall energy usage (though not everyone agrees on this point).

Then, there is the prospect of accidents. Every new technology, from the automobile to the nuclear

power plant, has seen them. Writing in *Foreign Affairs*, Bill Drexel and Hannah Kelley argue that an AI accident crippling the global financial system or unleashing a devastating bioweapon might most readily happen in China, because that country is poised to lead the world in AI development but seems utterly unconcerned about risks surrounding the technology.

Even if it works exactly as intended, AI will enable already powerful people to do more things, and do them faster. And some powerful people tend to be selfish and abusive. Cognitive psychologist and computer scientist Geoffrey Hinton, who is sometimes called the “godfather of AI,” recently quit Google. In subsequent interviews with multiple news outlets, including the *New York Times* and *BBC*, Hinton explained: “You can imagine, for example, some bad actor decided to give robots the ability to create their own sub-goals.” One of these sub-goals might be, “I need to get more power.”

However, Hinton chose not to endorse another recent open letter, this one calling for a six-month pause in the training of all AI systems (though many of his colleagues in the AI development community did sign on). Hinton explained that, despite its risks, AI promises too many good things to put it on hold. Among those likely benefits: potential advances in pharmaceuticals, including cures for

cancer and other diseases; improvements in renewable energy technologies; more accurate weather forecasts; and a greatly increased understanding of climate change.

High school and college students are already resorting to OpenAI’s ChatGPT to write their term papers (savvy students give their computer-generated papers a quick re-write in order to defeat AI-detection software that teachers are now using). Unfortunately for students, their computer-generated papers tend to be riddled with fake quotes and sources. A lawyer representing a client who was suing an airline recently used ChatGPT to write his legal briefs; however, it later turned out that the AI had “hallucinated” every one of the legal precedents it cited. Automobile manufacturers are building cars with more AI-based self-driving functions. Microsoft, Google, and other tech companies are rolling out AI “personal assistants.” Militaries are investing heavily in AI to make superior weapons, to plan better battle strategies, and even to shape long-term geopolitical goals. Thousands of independent computer labs run by corporations and governments are developing AI for a constantly widening array of purposes. In sum, AI is already far along its initial learning curve.

AI’s potential perils are not limited to lost jobs, fake news, and hallucinated facts. There is another pro-

found risk that is getting little press coverage—one that, systems thinkers should be discussing more widely. That is the likelihood that AI will be a significant accelerator of everything humans are already doing.

Neoliberal economists hail the Great Acceleration as a success story, but its bills are just starting to come due. Industrial agriculture is destroying Earth’s topsoil at a rate of tens of billions of tons per year. Wild nature is in retreat, with animal species having lost, on average, 70 percent of their numbers in the past half-century. And people are altering the planetary climate in ways that will have catastrophic repercussions for future generations. It’s hard to avoid the conclusion that the whole human enterprise has grown too big, and that it is turning nature (“resources”) into waste and pollution far too quickly to sustain itself. The evidence suggests people need to slow down, and, in some cases at least, reverse course by reducing population, consumption, and waste.

Eliezer Yudkowsky has a simple solution: shut down all AI development immediately. Stop all research and deployment through an emergency international agreement. □□□

*[Richard Heinberg is a senior fellow at the Post Carbon Institute and the author of fourteen books, including his most recent: “Power: Limits and Prospects for Human Survival” (2021). Originally published by CommonDreams.org]*

---

## TIT FOR TAT

---

# Russia Exits Grain Deal

*Hanna Duggal*

**R**USSIA HAS SAID IT WILL not extend an international deal to allow the safe shipment of Ukrainian grain through its ports in the Black Sea.

The accord, which has expired, has been credited with helping curb

food prices around the world in the wake of Russia’s special military operation in Ukraine last year. The two countries are two of the world’s largest agricultural producers.

Almost 33 million metric tonnes of grain were exported since the

Black Sea Grain Initiative was brokered by the United Nations and Turkey a year ago.

The Kremlin said that Russia would “return” to the deal “immediately” if its demands to improve its own grain and fertiliser exports are met.

Prior to the war, in 2021, Russia and Ukraine were the world’s first and fifth largest exporters of wheat respectively, according to the Observatory of Economic Complexity.

In July 2022, the UN and Turkey arranged a deal that would see Ukraine export grain through the Black Sea. The agreement would allow ships to travel safely from the Ukrainian ports of Yuzhny, Odesa and Chornomorsk to the Bosphorus without being attacked.

With it came a separate agreement to facilitate shipments of Russian food and fertiliser. Russia has long complained that parts of the deal relating to these exports have not been implemented.

On October 31, Russia temporarily pulled out of the agreement, citing drone attacks on its Black Sea fleet in Sevastopol. Shortly afterwards, Moscow rejoined the pact for a further 120 days on November 2. In March 2023, it agreed to extend its participation in the deal for another 60 days, a commitment it renewed in May.

Since the deal was struck, UN data show that about 32.9 million metric tonnes of grain have left the Black Sea.

The majority of grain has been corn and wheat. They accounted for 16.9 million tonnes and 8.91 million tonnes, respectively.

Ukraine is often referred to as the breadbasket of Europe, with more than 55 percent of its land being arable. It was the eighth-largest producer of corn and the ninth-largest producer of wheat in the 2022-2023 period.

Other food commodities exported over the same period included sunflower meal (1,857,917 tonnes), sunflower oil (1,650,092 tonnes), barley

(1,268,298 tonnes) and rapeseed (1,000,859 tonnes).

According to the UN, 45 countries across three continents have received food commodities under the deal.

The average size of shipments leaving the Black Sea is about 32,450 tonnes.

The highest tonnage to date has been exported to China (7.96 million tonnes, or almost 25 percent of the total); followed by Spain (5.98 million tonnes); Turkey (3.24 million); Italy (2.1 million); the Netherlands (1.96 million); and Egypt (1.55 million).

The UN says the deal has helped reverse spiking food prices by more than 20 percent, but Russia says food supplies transported via the grain corridor are not reaching the world's poorest countries.

Nearly 44 percent of the exports have been shipped to what the UN calls high-income countries.

According to the World Food Programme (WFP), pre-war Ukraine produced enough food to feed 400 million people per year. In 2021, almost two-thirds of the UN food agency's overall grain procurement came from Ukraine.

The UN says the deal allowed the WFP to transport more than 725,000 tonnes of wheat to help people in need in countries hit by wars and extreme weather events.

Ethiopia received more than a third of that (262,759 tonnes), with more than 20 percent going to Yemen (151,000) and 18 percent to Afghanistan (130,869).

#### 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

In 2022, in monetary terms, Ukraine provided the third-highest amount of the total food procured for the WFP and the most metric tonnes, at 643,189.

Nana Ndeda, humanitarian policy and advocacy lead at Save the Children, said the deal had enabled the stabilisation of global markets and the lowering of food prices in many parts of the world.

What is likely to happen now is that those food prices will go up again. In other words countries will no longer be able to supply food to children and their families will no longer be able to access food and the world will see an increase in malnutrition and food insecurity. □□□

[Source: Al Jazeera]

#### MEDIEVAL BARBARISM

## Kuki Women Wanted To Be Heard

*Kavita Krishnan*

**A**LMOST 80 DAYS AFTER the outbreak of violence in Manipur, the nation suddenly woke up to the tall leaders of this

country mentioning the northeastern state of Manipur for the first time in the current context—and spelling things as they are.

But one may wonder why are the Prime Minister and Manipur Chief Minister N Biren Singh suddenly telling the world about the state of their hearts—'Manipur'? Or why that strange, unfamiliar word 'humanity' is coming out from the mouths of other Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders such as Smriti Irani?

Wasn't it seditious or outright treason to suggest that rapes could happen in Manipur or that crimes against humanity could take place in PM Modi-ruled India? Wasn't it just the other day that women's rights activists who visited the state found themselves in danger of being arrested for sedition, for saying that women had been raped as part of organised, 'state-sponsored' violence?

The other day, there was no video of Kuki women in Manipur being paraded naked by a Meitei mob. If it's not on video, it's not TV-worthy. And if it's not TV-worthy, it didn't happen.

This time, a video is viral. On millions of Smartphone screens, people can watch the worst moment in the lives of these women: being stripped of human dignity and paraded by a mob. Like a Game of Thrones 'walk of shame', it has all the elements to induce horror, pity, and excitement that make for viral video content. Who knows this better than that master of the TV and Smartphone screen—PM Modi?

Hurting hearts must be displayed without delay, tears expertly shed at the temple of democracy. At least until Madhu Kishwar writes her expose narrating the women and the video were 'sacrificial victims' of a terrorist conspiracy aimed to defame and persecute Hindus.

**Just Published**  
**WITH THE**  
**PASSING TIME**

by **Farooque Chowdhury**

Published by : **NGG Books**

4, Aati Bazar, Keraniganj,  
Dhaka, Bangladesh

Email: [nggbooks@gmail.com](mailto:nggbooks@gmail.com)

Website: [www.nggbooks.wordpress.com](http://www.nggbooks.wordpress.com)

Price: 400tk

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

Here is Biren Singh's tweet. He says, Manipur Police took 'suo-moto cognisance' (i.e., didn't wait for a formal complaint to initiate an investigation) of the incident 'immediately after the video surfaced'. They went out and promptly 'made the first arrest'.

But that tweet is a lie. Manipur Police didn't get to know of the atrocity when the video 'surfaced'. Rather, the police was in the loop beforehand.

A little context would help establish how. On 3 May, violence broke out in Manipur and people of the Kuki community began to face attacks from the Meitei community. A day later, a Meitei mob allegedly stripped, paraded, and gang-raped these three women from the Kuki-Zo community, while they were under the protection of a police team.

The police knew—their team witnessed this atrocity, after all. They must also have seen the perpetrators gleefully film the atrocity: a trophy of their triumphant exploit.

If the police knew so did Biren Singh. But he said nothing. The video wasn't viral yet, at least outside Manipur.

The survivors were not silent. They filed a complaint with the police as several reports suggest. They wanted to be heard so badly but were noticed by the state and central governments—and television media in India—only when once the video of them being paraded naked, stripped of clothes, dignity, went viral. Their active voices seeking justice didn't count—seeing them naked, helpless, humiliated, and silent did.

On 15 May, for instance, a YouTube channel of the Zomi Students' Federation carried an audio account of a 13-minute interview with survivors of this incident. It's a piece of sober documentation which responsibly avoids revealing the speakers. But this was not picked up by India's electronic media.

A survivor's voice, telling her story in an emotionless voice, in a language that is 'foreign' to Delhi/Mumbai newsrooms is boring. And, of course, Biren Singh took no notice.

On 18 May, the complaint was finally registered by the police in an FIR. Now it was official. Yet, no word from him. On 1 June, a survivor of this particular atrocity told Hoineilthou, a sociologist at the University of Hyderabad, and narrated her ordeal in detail.

Sithhou spoke to several women over call and in her written account, included testimonies of survivors of rape and of brutal assaults that could have been fatal. She also spoke to the family members of these women who were raped and killed.

All in all, based on oral testimonies, she documented four separate incidents of violence against Kuki women: the stripping and parading of three women; the rape and murder of two very young women; the murder of a woman shot down whose body was found burnt, and dismembered; and the abduction, rape and brutal thrashing of an 18-year-old woman.

Accounts of these atrocities documented by Sithhou had one thing in common: Meitei mobs committing these crimes, telling their victims (and perhaps, themselves) that they were avenging rapes and brutal killings of Meitei women by Kuki men. She listed several instances where Meitei supremacist militants circulated images from other contexts, as well as fabricated claims of rapes and killings of Meitei women.

Each of these viral claims had been disproved—but they had done their job, strengthening the racist trope of Meitei womanhood being violated by 'hordes' of rapist Kuki-Zo men.

After that detailed account on 1 June of so many horrific rapes, atrocities, and murders of 'Manipur's daughters' and 'Manipur's mothers',



people did not hear from either Biren Singh or PM Modi.

Sitlhou's account has since been vindicated. Each of the incidents she documented has been confirmed—in some cases by FIRs registered by the Manipur police and in others by rigorously vetted stories by investigative journalists of reputed international and national news publications some of whom have personally met and listened to rape survivors, mothers who heard their daughters being raped and killed, and witnesses—for hours and published those stories.

And yet, not a sound from Indian leaders' anguished hearts. Even today, those other victims are forgotten—because videos of them being tortured, raped, beaten, and murdered have yet to be seen by the world.

When asked by India Today why he had remained silent, Biren Singh responded, saying, "There are hundreds of similar cases, that's why we banned the internet," he said.

It is chilling to hear a Chief Minister casually declare that he knows of "hundreds of cases" of rape by violent ethnic mobs during the last two and a half months. It makes PM

Modi's whataboutery about Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh look absurd.

Sexual violence and police apathy is a serious issue in any part of India. But that is a very different problem from what the CM himself suggests is an 'epidemic of rapes' by ethnic mobs.

The question that Biren Singh needs to answer is: how many of those 'hundreds' of rape victims has he met or tried to meet? How many have been helped to file complaints with the police? How many FIRs have been registered; and what is the progress with investigation in each of those FIRs? Will the Meira Paibis who dramatically stopped Biren Singh from resigning as CM, ask him these questions? Whether these 'hundreds' of women are the Kukis or Meiteis, he doesn't seem to care much.

On top of all, why should he remain CM if he admits that hundreds of rapes and atrocities have happened on his watch?

PM Modi has not said anything about the "hundreds of cases" of which Biren Singh spoke. He has not said a word about all the other rape survivors and victims, the ones who were not seen in a viral video.

Biren Singh's promise of the death penalty is another deflection tactic of course—as the death penalty for rape always is. And it works if people's conscience needs a viral video of an atrocity to take notice of rape.

If moral gaze can only be held by a sensational spectacle of women stripped and paraded on camera, then political leaders find it easy to escape accountability for their complicity in sexual violence, especially when such violence is an integral part of the majoritarian politics of these same leaders.

They can simply deflect public attention by offering the hope of another satisfyingly sensational, publicly staged spectacle: one in which the rapists are hanged, or shot dead on TV in custodial killings (as in the Disha case in Hyderabad).

In this instance, the story of the police 'making a first arrest' immediately after the video became public, is suspicious. Has the police really arrested someone based on an investigation and evidence? Or have they, as so often happens, grabbed someone at random to appease the video-induced outraged?

□□□

## LETTERS

### **An Institutional Murder**

Students at the Indian Institute of Technology, Delhi (IIT-D) organised a candlelight vigil outside the main gate of the campus in South Delhi on July 16 demanding concrete measures in the alleged suicide case of a 20-year-old B.Tech student Ayush Ashna, who was found dead in his room in institution's Udaygiri hostel.

The students' outfits at the institute including the Ambedkar Periyar Phule Study Circle (APPSC), the Ambedkar Students Collective (ASC), and others came together to protest what they called the 'institutional murder' of Ashna, a Dalit student.

During the protest, a portrait of Ashna was placed before the candles

lit by the students, along with posters of other Dalit, Bahujan, and Adivasi students who had died by suicide at academic institutions in the last few years across India including Rohith Vemula and Darshan Solanki.

The students' groups demanded that the matter should be highlighted and condemned at all levels and the circumstances around the death of the student should be made clear by the institution and a fair probe should be initiated by the police.

The news about Ashna's death broke out among the students when they received an email from the institute's director informing the students of the "sad and untimely demise" of Ashna.

The protesting students alleged that the condolence message from the Dean of Students did not reveal the caste identity of the student and that he is from Scheduled Caste (SC) community. They also maintained that a thorough investigation should be done if he faced caste-based discrimination.

Moreover, Ashna's family member claimed it to be a murder, "Ashna was asked not to stay in the hostel, and the mess was not providing him with food. Therefore, Didi used to send him food from home. The warden and the Dean of Academics were troubling him. He was not so weak as to commit suicide; he was killed and hanged on a table. His body was sitting with an extension wire wrapped around his throat. The earphones

were in his ears but unplugged, and the laptop was open but turned off. He was sitting in a position as if he were watching the laptop”, Bahujan Lives Matter quoted.

**Maktoob**  
[maktoob.com]

## EU Resolution on Manipur

Following recent violent clashes in the state of Manipur, India, which since May 2023 have left at least 120 people dead, 50 000 displaced and over 1 700 houses and 250 churches destroyed, European Parliament strongly urges the Indian authorities to put in place all necessary measures to promptly halt the ethnic and religious violence and to protect all religious minorities.

The resolution notes that intolerance towards minority communities has contributed to the current violence and that there have been concerns about politically motivated, divisive policies that promote Hindu majoritarianism in the area. The Manipur state government has also shut down internet connections and severely hindered reporting by the media, while security forces have been implicated in the recent killings, something that has further increased distrust in the authorities.

Members call on the Indian authorities to allow independent investigations to look into the violence, to tackle impunity and to lift the internet ban. They also urge all conflicting sides to cease making inflammatory statements, re-establish trust and play an impartial role to mediate the tensions.

Parliament reiterates its call for human rights to be integrated into all areas of the EU-India partnership, including in trade.

he text was approved by a show of hands.

**Faizi S**

## 246 Churches Were Burnt Down

The truth is, somebody strong is playing a game behind the violence in Manipur.

It is a pre-planned attack on churches, Christian organisations and Christians.

By destroying all the structures belonging to one community, somebody wants to wipe out any trace of that community from the history of that place.

Had it been a conflict between two ethnic communities, there would be damage on both sides. But only churches were destroyed.

If it is not a pre-planned attack, how is it that in just two nights, 246 churches were burnt down?

Is the state government turning a blind eye to what is happening to the Christian community?

More than 35,000 army personnel are posted in Manipur. Then there is also the state police and Assam Rifles.

Still, why is it that Christians and churches are being attacked?

It is very cruel. The prime minister's silence is frightening. Why is he silent? Who is forcing him to keep quiet?

**Shobha Warriar, Rediff.com**

## Hollywood Strike

The Businessmen Broke Hollywood. And now they don't want to pay their employees.

The Hollywood machine—from script writing, to shooting and production, to late-night talk-show PR—has officially ground to a halt.

On July 13, the actors went on strike. The 160,000 members of SAG-AFTRA, led by Fran Drescher, stopped working after talks with the studios collapsed. They join the ranks of the Writers Guild of America, whose members (myself included) have been on strike since May.

Two unions have not been on strike together since 1960. The writers' pickets at shooting locations had already shut down an estimated 80 percent of productions. Now SAG's strike rules dictate that actors not only can't shoot or do voice-over work for productions; they also cannot attend red carpets or promote any Motion Picture Association

projects—something that was already a challenge, given that the writers' strike had shut down the nighttime talk shows that were such a staple of the press circuit.

Much like the writers, actors are looking for increases in their residual pay—compensation—once-reliable income that has all but vanished in the pivot to streaming. Actors are also seeking protections against artificial intelligence using their voice and image.

**Xochitl Gonzalez,**  
**Hollywood**

## A Kargil War Warrior

In The husband of one of the two tribal women who were paraded naked and molested in Manipur is a Kargil war veteran. A soldier who fought in Kargil today lamented the incident, saying he protected the country but could not save his wife from humiliation.

The soldier, who served in the Indian Army as a Subedar of the Assam Regiment, added,

'I fought for the country in the Kargil War and was also in Sri Lanka as part of the Indian Peace Keeping Force. I am disappointed that after my retirement, I could not protect my home, my wife and fellow villagers. I am sad and sad'.

The soldier further said, "The police were present but did not take any action. I want severe punishment for all those people who burnt houses and humiliated women."

The Meitei people account for about 53 percent of Manipur's population and live mostly in the Imphal Valley, while the tribals, including the Nagas and Kukis, account for 40 percent and live mostly in the hill districts.

**Mahen Khanna,**  
**Jagran**

## Ambedkar and Phule Return

With the change of regime in Karnataka, the work of overturning the old laws has also started. As soon as the month passes, the Congress government has not only made a complete plan to repeal the conver-

August 6-12, 2023

FRONTIER

15

sion law brought by the previous BJP government, but the Karnataka cabinet has also approved it. Soon this proposal will be brought in the assembly. Along with this, the cabinet has also decided to remove chapters on RSS founder KB Hedgewar and Hindutva ideologue VD Savarkar from the textbooks of classes 6 to 10 in the state.

Law and Parliamentary Affairs Minister HK Patil told reporters after the cabinet meeting that the anti-conversion law brought during the BJP was discussed in the meeting. To cancel it, the government will bring a bill in the upcoming session of the assembly. Significantly, this controversial bill was implemented in 2022 amid opposition from the Congress. Violation of its provisions is a cognizable and non-bailable offence and is punishable with severe punishment.

Explaining the decision related to textbooks, Patil said that apart from removing the text on Hedgewar and Savarkar in Kannada and social science textbooks, other amendments made during the BJP government will also be changed. Social reformer Savitri Bai Phule, Nehru's letter to Indira and poetry on Ambedkar will again be part of the syllabus. However, it did not answer the question whether there would be a chapter on Tipu Sultan.

At the same time, it will be made mandatory to read the Preamble of the Constitution daily in all government and non-government schools and colleges. Not only this, a picture of the Preamble of the Constitution will be displayed in all government and semi-government offices of the state. Social Welfare Minister HC Mahadevappa said that this will increase the feeling of brotherhood among the youth.

### **Siddharth Gautam, Delhi** **Manual Scavenging**

This is the story of a Dalit woman who cleaned dry toilets manually for four decades.

"It felt disgusting when I began cleaning dry toilets. I had no option,"

said Santosh, as she remembered the day her mother-in-law took her to a neighbourhood home to clean a dry toilet in Meerut's Sardhana.

She had been married for barely a week when she was told that this was the work she would be doing. For the next 40 years, Santosh, a member of the Valmiki community, continued to clean dry toilets in Sardhana.

The existence of manual scavengers, who continue to pick human faeces from toilets which have no flush, has been denied by the central government, which claims that "all identified and eligible manual scavengers have been provided assistance for their rehabilitation." But Santosh's story tells otherwise. Manual scavenging continues to haunt the Balmiki community people even in Modi's digital India.

"I have five sons and two daughters. I did this work and raised them... I don't want them or any other family member to take this up," she said.

In 1993, India banned dry toilets and their cleaning. And yet, many like Santosh found themselves cleaning toilets manually.

"From each house, I earn a monthly salary of Rs 30-Rs 50 only. If I ask for more, they threaten to fire me. Is it written in the fate of Valmikis that they must do this job? Times have changed; we want to do something different... But we don't get opportunities".

### **Anthony Rozario** **Madras Mahajana Sabha**

The Madras Mahajana Sabha was instrumental in consolidating the national movement in South India. Men from the professional class like G. Subramania Iyer, Viraraghava Chari, Ananda Charlu, Rangiah Naidu, and Balaji Rao established the Madras Mahajana Sabha on May 16, 1884. Members of the mercantile community also joined it. The Sabha admitted any native above the age of twenty-one who was proposed by two of its members. The Sabha extended its influence by affiliating in-

terested local associations across the Madras Presidency. The local associations were, however, allowed to keep up their character. The Sabha's objective was to safeguard the public interest. This was carried out through its writings, lectures, public meetings, and memoranda submitted to the government.

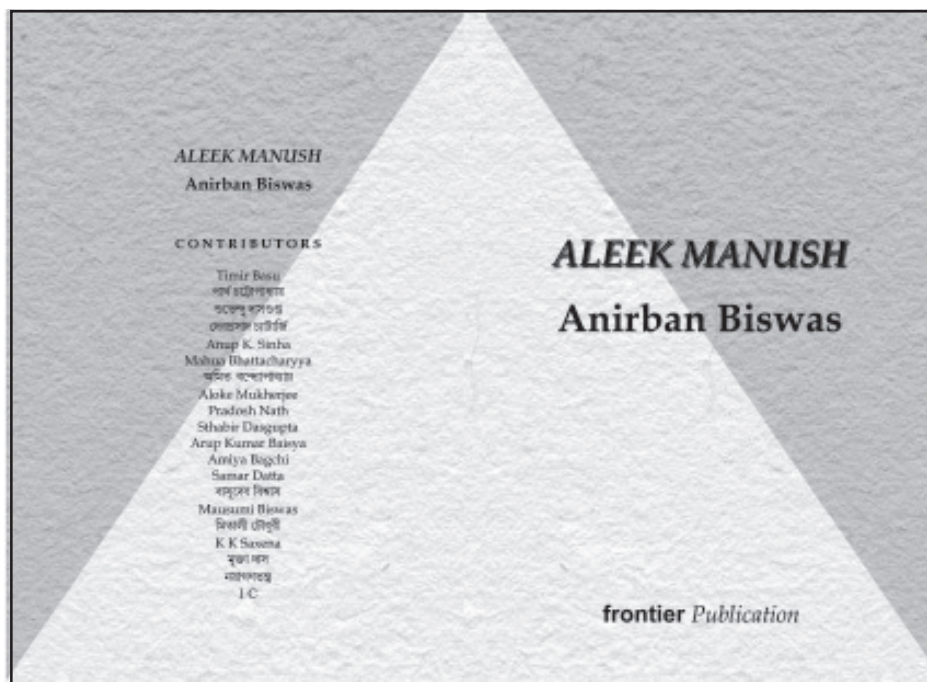
The Sabha organised a provincial conference in Madras on December 29, 1884. More than seventy delegates from affiliated associations participated in it. The conference criticised the Indian Councils Act of 1861. It highlighted the inability of the legislature to affect executive decisions. It also pointed out that the nominated nonofficial members had little role in the legislature. The conference instructed the Sabha to prepare a scheme for reforming the legislature. The second provincial conference was held in Madras on 23, 24, and 25 December 1885. Around forty-four delegates attended it. The conference accepted the Sabha's scheme on legislative reforms. The scheme recommended the election of nonofficial members to the legislative council. The conference also debated the salt and forest laws. Narasimulu Naidu, a delegate who had studied the effects of the forest laws in the Coimbatore district, condemned these laws. He pointed out that the forest administration was a burden on the villagers. The conference demanded an investigation into the operation of the forest and salt laws in South India. Such conferences galvanised the public sphere in the Madras Presidency.

Evaluating the Sabha's performance, the historian D A Washbrook, in his work *The Emergence of Provincial Politics: The Madras Presidency, 1870-1920*, writes, "The Mahajana Sabha built up a considerable provincial following and pilloried the government on every possible occasion, ridiculing its inefficiency and demanding elective representation."

**Visakh S M,**  
**Thiruvananthapuram**

# 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