

# frontier

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## *Is the Ukraine War Finished?*

A WORLD WITHOUT WAR IS UNTHINKABLE. NO MATTER which warring party wins or loses, no matter under what name or reason, the war is waged, in the end people suffer. No matter how wars are justified or defended or trivialised, they all serve the interests of ruling classes which are in conflict with other ruling classes. No war, past or present, has ever been started to serve the toilers, even if they are and have sometimes, been fought for national interests. Not that those who are hawking jingoism and in combat mood round the clock don't talk of peace. They do. But their peace is continuation of war by another means—diplomacy. All the tens of thousands of people crossing the Mediterranean and English Channel, fleeing conflict, hunger and poverty are dying. How many war orphans are roaming around the world, in refugee camps is anybody's guess.

Speculation is rife that with Donald Trump in the White House the chances of freezing the Russia-Ukraine war seem bright though experts are divided over the fate of Middle East escalation in recent months.

For the first time, Zelensky has said the war could be ended without getting back all of Ukrainian territories from Russia. In an interview with Sky News on November 29, Zelensky said the "hot phase" of the war could end if NATO offered security guarantees for the part of Ukraine currently under Kyiv's control. He reiterated the same stance while talking to the Japanese news agency Kyodo News. This is a major shift in Zelensky's war policy. His victory plan seems to be falling flat. He made a rare admission to Kyodo News that it would be difficult for the Ukrainian army to retake land they have lost to Russia through military means. All this frank admission after huge military aid from the US. America under Biden has been the largest provider of weapons and technical expertise to Ukraine. According to the US State Department, Washington has so far provided \$64 billion in military 'aid' to Ukraine since February 2022.

Russia already controls all of Crimea, having unilaterally seized it from Ukraine in 2014 and has since taken about 80 percent of the Donbas—which is comprised of Donetsk and Luhansk—as well as more than 70 percent of Zaporizhzhia and Kherson, and small parts of the Mykolaiv and Kharkiv regions.

For one thing, public opinion in Ukraine is also shifting. More and more Ukrainians are too eager to see an end to the war, rather than an all-out

victory. According to a Gallop poll released on November 19, 52 percent of Ukrainians would like the war to end as soon as possible, even if it involves conceding territory.

Russia is unlikely to drop its conditions for a truce and negotiations, including Ukraine abandoning its NATO quest and surrendering the four provinces Moscow claims as part of Russia but doesn't fully control, a demand rejected by Ukraine.

Whether Russia's western adversaries like it or not, Putin is in no hurry. He can now bargain from a position of strength. The hard reality is against Zelensky; he is steadily losing land and facing manpower shortages. While still intent on NATO membership, he has no option but to go to the negotiating table.

For the time being nobody is offering any realistic plan to end the war. The Trump lobby is shooting arrows

in the air. The American defence industry has benefited enormously from this war at the expense of Ukrainians and now construction boom is likely to follow if war stops—it will take decades to rebuild Ukraine.

Trump advisers propose Ukraine concessions to Russia. And NATO membership for Ukraine is now off the table but analysts doubt feasibility of Trump's quick resolution promise, in 24 hours. □□□ 05-12-2024

## COMMENT

### The Strategy of Inaction

THE VIOLENCE WHICH SHOWS no sign of abating in the ongoing Meitei-Kuki conflict in Manipur is a matter of concern. The alienation of the two communities and hatred generated for each other is unprecedented. The Meiteis cannot leave Manipur by road because the next district North on the way to Kohima in Nagaland is Kangpokpi, a Kuki dominated area where the young Kuki men and women are guarding the district borders and would not let any Meitei pass through the national highway. So, any Meitei who has to leave Manipur has to use the air way. Similarly, *Meira Paibis*, the Meitei mothers' organisation would not let any Kuki enter Imphal coming in the opposite direction. Any Kuki living in Churachandpur, 60 km South from Imphal can only leave Manipur by air way via Aijwal in Mizoram, which is a good day's drive on a difficult mountain road. Sometimes it may take upto 17-20 hours. Imagine a pregnant woman using this route. There is a weekly helicopter service between Churachandpur and Aijwal but that is not very regular. And how many common people can use these expensive ways of travel? Clearly the fundamental right guaranteed to citizens under the Constitution, of be-

ing able to move about freely in the country, is being violated. The conflict has taken a heavy toll on the lives of common Meiteis and Kukis, many of whom languish in relief camps and face an uncertain future.

One single factor which sticks out is the failure of the Manipur and Union governments to curb violence. Both Meiteis and Kukis say that had the Chief Minister N. Biren Singh wanted to control the violence he could have done so within the first two days of it starting on 3 May, 2023. A nagging question remains why the government was reluctant then or remains even now? The CM has raised concerns about narco-terrorism and targeted poppy cultivation by Kukis. But what action has been taken by the Union government to check drug trafficking across the international border with Myanmar or for that matter at Mundra port in Gujarat and Pathankot in Punjab. If the drug trafficking stops obviously poppy cultivation will stop. Many people, even among the establishment believed that Biren Singh would be replaced after the Lok Sabha elections. But that has not happened. Had it been an opposition party run state, by now President's rule would have been imposed. Prime Minister

Narendra Modi has visited close to two dozen countries since the violence erupted on 3 May last year but hasn't found time to visit Manipur.

People are told Modi is playing a role in bringing about peace between Russia and Ukraine and various 'world leaders are requesting him to take an initiative'. He also probably has some advice to offer to Palestinian and Israeli leadership. But he has not demonstrated the same concern for Manipur, in spite of continuous voicing by the people of Manipur, and this puts a big question mark on his intentions as well as the condescending attitude of ignoring the problem of Manipur. He or his party colleagues never cease boasting about how militancy in J&K, Kashmir has been curbed since the dilution of Article 370 but don't seem to care about militants, with ten times the number of arms compared to those present in J&K, roaming about freely openly displaying them in Manipur, endangering the lives of common people. □□□

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## NOTE

## Digital Currency

*Rahul Sinha writes:*

**C**ENTRAL BANK DIGITAL Currency [CBDC] is a concept which lies on the foundation built by cryptography and blockchains. Various nations like Bahamas, China, Singapore and Switzerland have already established their hold on Central Bank Digital Currencies.

Central Bank Digital Currencies will not only help in advancing digitalisation of payments but retail, wholesale and Cross-border CBDCs will expand choices and diversify payment option for the users.

Retail CBDCs not just facilitates instant settlements but also reduces the risk of inherent batch clearing of retail payments. To issue Retail CBDCs the Central Bank can also partner with telecom operators to directly roll out digital currencies for public use.

Private operators can undoubtedly deliver near universal payment services. Retail CBDCs amplify financial inclusion and prevents terrorism funding by encrypting transactions, restricting use for certain purposes and enabling traceability.

It provides a token-based platform to offer settlement conditions. The CBDCs can replace RTGS for peer to peer, easy, diversified, transparent system of payments. This change will help to overcome network barriers and control of access. It will nullify the time consumption of payment technologies and provide atomic delivery with respect to transactions.

Factors like diversification of national payments, resilience, security in large value payments and reduction of counter-party credit along with liquidity risk are a few key features among many.

Remittances are the amounts (earnings) sent by foreign workers to an individual in their home country, it not only is a key factor in a nation's development index but also helps to maintain a stable foreign reserve.

Use of CBDCs and blockchain technologies will help in the following ways:

- It will reduce the processing of payments.
- Eliminates all transaction costs.
- No money will be trapped in pre-funded nostro accounts.

The Crypto space has witnessed the entry of various nations in the past few years.

### **Bahamian Sand Dollar**

The Bahamian Sand Dollar is a success story that motivates people to delve deeper into the space of central bank-backed digital currency. The aim of the Bahamian Sand Dollar was to promote inclusive access to regulated payments and other financial services for "Unbanked" and "Underbanked" communities of the country.

The introduction of CBDC' helped the service providers to reduce service delivery costs and increase transactional efficiency.

### **China: Digital RMB**

The recent developments by the Chinese economic and technological entities have gained attention all around the world. The official CBDC of China is called DCEP/Digital RMB. It is a structure built on blockchain and cryptographic technology. The digital currencies will be directly issued by the People's Bank of China (Central Bank) with a goal to increase the circulation of RMB and reshape the current cross-border payment system.

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The DCEPs would be transferred through electronic wallets rather than bank accounts.

The Chinese DCEP is in its final stage of pilot surveys where test runs have been made by issuing DCEP to a sample of customers who were selected by a lottery.

While it has been noticed that the Reserve Bank of India has not favoured crypto-currency issuance and trading within the domestic borders, it has also been noticed how the RBI has shown interest in forming its own Digital currency using the fundamentals of blockchain technologies and cryptography. India can implement their CBDC to facilitate various transactions.

The main challenge which can slowdown India's CBDC on boarding is spreading awareness and convincing the public to go cashless. □□  
[Rahul Sinha, a BA (Honours) student St. Xavier's University, Kolkata]

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 HUMRA QURAIISHI'S COLUMN
 

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## Azmer–Gharib Nawaz

*Humra Quraishi*

**H**ORRIFIC DISTRACTIONS are getting used so that the masses don't cry out for rotis and rozgaars! No bread and bread-earners, only diggers equipped with hammers and all possible digging material.

Sambhal in Uttar Pradesh stands out as last week five of its citizens were killed and many more injured and arrested. There rages a huge controversy whether those arrested are the actual culprits or victims of the communally charged atmosphere, dripping with obnoxious comments...lows reaching such lows that a particular police officer even terming a certain section of the aggrieved minority citizens of Sambhal as "jaahils"/ uneducated and uncouth! He should be well aware of the basic fact that he is a civil servant and cannot treat the minority community with such gaudy arrogance and use of third class terms!

Why is it that nobody can visit Sambhal till December 10? If the administration and the political rulers have nothing to conceal then let us visit the town and see for ourselves the ground realities. Needless to add that by then the victims and their entire clans and families could be threatened and made to keep shut and not to speak out. They would have little choice but to agree to all the *sarkari* commands otherwise the aftermath could ruin their lives for times to come.

It is getting much too dangerous to see how the Agenda seems unfolding. Mosques and dargahs and age-old historical structures are being brought into focus, to be targeted by the Hindutva brigades under the various alibis. And then utter

chaos and communal atmosphere is bound to spread out, overtaking all possible strains of governance.

Communal virus and the connected onslaughts unleashed right from 6 December 1992, when the Babri Masjid was targeted, are spreading out as never before. The Rightwing brigades and their men have connectivity with the political rulers, so one can well imagine the havoc that could unfold.

And with news of the Hindutva men also questioning the basis of the Dargah of Ajmer Sharif, I have been thinking of the numerous occasions when I visited this dargah of Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti—also known as Gharib Nawaz. I had met hundreds of non-Muslims, who had travelled to this dargah from the various States of the country, praying for the fulfilments of their *mannats* (wishes)...Complete bonding between the Muslims and the non-Muslim devotees...such a touching sight.

It is relevant to know details to this Sufi mystic, Khwaja Moinuddin Hasan Chisti—also known as Gharib Nawaz. He had travelled from the Middle East and settled in Ajmer. He reached there when he was in his middle age but stayed on till his last years. It's said that that he was born in East Persia around 533 Hijri (1138-39 A.D.) and lost his parents at an early stage. Though he had inherited an orchard and a windmill but no sooner he had come in contact with a *dervesh* Sufi, Ebrahim Qandoosi, he gave up all worldly belongings and travelled towards Samarkand and Bukhara that were centres of great learning. From there he travelled further, towards

Mecca and Medina and it is whilst he was there that he decided to travel down towards India.

And at that time Ajmer was ruled by the Rajput ruler Prithvi Raj Chauhan. Khwaja Saheb settled down at a hillock, close to the Ana Sagar Lake. Soon the local people started visiting him, who were totally taken up by his simplicity and piety. As the power of his blessings made way, even the mighty rulers and rajas made way towards the humble dwelling of this Sufi. It's amazing how this practice continues to this day. Though Khwaja Saheb passed away in 1236 AH, at the age of 97 but till date thousands visit his *dargah* on a daily basis.

Till date a large number of visitors and devotees to the dargah are non-Muslims. This could be because this Sufi believed that there should be no compulsion in religion and that there should never be any demarcations and biases along religious lines.

Tradition states that this mystic Sufi would state: "The closest to Allah is one who possesses the following three qualities: magnanimity of the river, kindness of the sun and humility of the earth. He had also said "noblest of character is possessed by one who is bountiful in poverty, content in hunger, cheerful in grief and friendly in hostility" and the "surest way to keep off punishment in hell is to feed the hungry, to redress the aggrieved and to help the distressed." Khwaja never ever brought up any issue related to religion. He is known as *gharib-nawaz* because he reached out to anybody in need and distress, irrespective of caste or creed.

Legend states that the Mughal Emperor Akbar was blessed by a son after he offered prayers at this *dargah*. And thereafter his son, Jehangir, was a regular visitor to this dargah. Mughal emperors have left



very obvious traces of their visits in the form of buildings, compound walls, mosques, *darwazas* and gates.

Together with this the concept of free distribution of food to those assembled in the *dargah*. An ongoing tradition is that of food cooked on a daily basis in two huge *degs* (huge cooking vessels) for

free distribution. It's said that that Mughal emperor Akbar had presented a huge 'deg' in which enough rice could be cooked to feed 5000 people. Emperor Jehangir had also presented another deg. And till date food cooked in them, is distributed to those assembled. And Mughal Emperor Shahjahan's daughter, Prin-

cess Jahan Ara, was not just a regular visitor but is said to have written a book on the Khwaja.

And Queen Mary, Empress of England, at the time of her coronation in India in 1911 A.D. had visited this *dargah* at Ajmer and left a trace of her visit by having a roof constructed over a tank. □□□

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#### "PRIVILEGE OF HISTORICAL BACKWARDNESS"

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## Rise of China and World Order

*Arup Baisya*

CHINA POSSESSED WHAT Trotsky called the "Privilege of historical backwardness" when it opened up its economy in 1978. In the initial phase of neoliberalism, China dragged the labour force from the countryside into the big cities to work as cheap labour in export processing zones. China made nearly 300 million rural migrants work like slaves in sweatshops. Au Loong Au, an activist and author, in his book 'China's Rise: Strength and Fragility' stated that the creation of two-tiered labour system was facilitated by the *hukou* system, a fairly ancient residency system which predates the 1949 revolution. In the early years of the Maoist regime the new working class in urban centres received certain job, housing and educational protections. In the post-Tiananmen era centres on the continuing role of the *hukou* system in dividing the working class. He rightly summarised that China has two dimension of capitalist development accumulation. Advanced foreign capital has invested enormous sum of money over the last thirty years initially in labour-intensive industries and more recently in capital-intensive ones. But China simultaneously treaded a path of autonomous accumulation.

From the very beginning, Chinese state enormously funded research and

development, maintained indirect control over the private sector and systematically conducted reverse engineering to copy western technology to develop its own industries. But China's backwardness and colonial legacy also made it possible to adopt a method of development with advanced capitalist ones. China reoriented its production within global capitalism in the 1980s and found a way to benefit from its colonial legacy. Britain controlled Hong Kong up until 1997, Portugal controlled Macau up to 1999 and the US continues to use Taiwan as a protectorate. China used Hong Kong for foreign currency and high technology to take advantage of its skilled labour force, Macau for smuggling goods to mainland China and Taiwan for capital investment and technology transfer, especially in the semiconductor industry. This ensured rapid growth of the Chinese provinces of Jiangsu, Fujian and Guangdong.

During the three decades of neoliberal phase, China became the second largest in terms of GDP, but in terms of GDP per capita, it was still middle-income countries. China's dependent development nature was markedly visible in corporate functioning. During the first term of Trump in office of the US presidency, China was lagging far behind in technological front despite its policy drive of

catching up to advanced capitalist power. For instance, Huawei mobile phone, a world brand, was developed not just by its own Chinese scientists, but more importantly by hiring four hundred Japanese scientists. When Trump imposed trade ban on China's telecom company ZTE denying access to American-designed software and high-tech component with an accusation of violating trade sanction on Iran and North Korea, the company was on the verge of collapse overnight and China had to work-out a deal with Trump to save the company. These facts revealed the vulnerability of China's technological dependence. In this backdrop, the left in the rest of the world had to recognise that China's capitalism has a colonial legacy though China was overcoming this colonial burden to be a rising global power.

China's economic modernisation and premodern political culture must give rise to cliques within the regime. In 2005, ICAC (Independent Commission Against Corruption) prosecuted Liu Jinbao, the head of the Bank of China in Hongkong. Beijing was trying hard to take control of ICAC which can be used by western imperialism to advance its agenda and on the other hand, Beijing's move to take control will not serve the interest of the working class. Xi who belongs to a generation from old bureaucracy is a *reactionary blue blood*. Xi Jinping's family had 23-million-pound worth real estate property in Hong Kong and Xi's brother

once owned two shell companies based in British virgin island and this is also called round “trip investment” to be recycled back to China.

Minqi Li, in an article in 2021, made an assessment on China’s position in capitalist world system based on data up to the period of 2018. His assessment was based on the data pertaining to return on China’s foreign investment for the period from 2012 to 2018, labour transfer and labour term of trade for the period from 1990 to 2017, comparative data between per capita GDP of world hierarchy for the period from 1870 to 1970 and 1990 to 2017, data on transfer of values etc and the position of China was evaluated based on World system theory.

“According to world system theory, the capitalist world system is divided into three structural positions: Core, Semi-periphery and Periphery. The core countries specialise in highly quasi-monopolistic and high profit production process, and the peripheral countries specialise in highly competitive and low-profit production process. Surplus labour is transferred from the peripheral producers to the core producers, resulting in unequal exchange and concentration of world wealth in the core. By comparison, semi-peripheral countries have a “relatively even mix” of core-like and periphery-like production process.”

Though he has drawn a general conclusion that, given the develop-

ment of the globalised capitalist division of labour and complex interaction of trade and capital flow, it is difficult (if not impossible) in today’s world to be either a “100 percent” exploiter in its economic relations with the rest of the capitalist world system or “100 percent exploited, he described China as a semi-peripheral country as China transfers more surplus value to the core (historical imperialist countries) than it receives from the periphery. From this position, China can move up in the global income hierarchy to join the western core imperialist countries with divers’ consequences. The recent data of Harvard Business Review indicates the China’s rise towards this direction. □□□

## ‘JUNGLE RAJ’ IN BASTAR

### Dead ‘Maoist’ Talking

*Malini Subramaniam*

[Deep inside the forests of Bastar in southern Chhattisgarh, Maoist insurgents drawn from local Adivasi communities have been locked in a low-intensity war with the Indian state for nearly four decades. This year, Chhattisgarh police claim to have killed 141 Maoists in 38 encounters, higher than any annual tally seen in the past, barring 2009.]

**A**ROUND NOON ON APRIL 4, 2024, the Bijapur district hospital compound was overflowing with people: elderly men, women with breastfeeding babies, infants chasing their mothers and clinging to their dhotis, young boys running after every police vehicle that drove in.

Two days before, the police in this southernmost district of Chhattisgarh claimed to have killed 13 Maoists in a gunfight in the Korcholi-Nendra forests near Gangalur village.

Their bodies had been brought to the Bijapur district headquarters, along with village residents who had been detained as part of the security operation. Although the police had not officially declared a number, locals said 25-30 people had been

detained from seven to eight villages in the area.

It was in search of their family members that the residents of these villages had poured into the hospital compound.

“I have come looking for my brother,” said Hemla Lachhu, a young man from Todka village. “He was with the party, and we knew he had gone for a meeting.” By party, he meant the banned Communist Party of India (Maoist), which has been waging an armed insurgency in the forests of Bastar for decades, with both cadres and leaders drawn from the local Adivasi communities that live there.

Unga Parsi’s family had come from Kawadgoan village to look for him. They said he had joined the party less than a year ago.

The honesty of the villagers was striking – when asked if their missing family member was with the party, they promptly answered with a straightforward yes or no. There was no attempt to hide an affiliation with the insurgent group. But, equally, there was no hesitation in declaring that a missing person was a civilian, not a Maoist.

“We have come looking for our chacha, Chaitu Potam,” Bodu Potam from Korcholi village said. “Wo Naxali nahi hai, uski to biwi aur chhe bachhe hain.” He is not a Naxali. He has a wife and six children.

Potam had first gone to the Bijapur police station in search of his uncle. While he did not find him there, he spotted other familiar faces. “We met Sarila Potam, a girl from our village,” he told this correspondent.

Unlike the practice followed in other encounter cases, the Bijapur police had not released photographs of those killed in the Korcholi-Nendra gunfight as part of its press statements. Instead, it had displayed to local journalists 13 body bags lying alongside an array of weapons – light machine guns, .303 rifles, 12

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bore rifles, barrel grenade launchers, codex wires, cartridges, vessels, walkie-talkies, Maoist literature, solar panels. There were also daily-use items like soap, toothbrush, oil, creams and medicines.

At the hospital, when the policeman finally held up his phone to show photos of the dead, many winced at the sight of their bloodied, battered faces. Said Bodu Potam, in frustration: “Kuchh pehchan me hi nahi aa raha.” It is hard to recognise anyone. “The faces are swollen, there is blood all over.”

Soon, masked hospital staff opened the doors of the morgue, pulling out bodies still wrapped in plastic bags, laying them on the floor. As the edge of the plastic sheet covering them was pulled back to reveal their faces, the villagers stepped forward tentatively, with women using their sari pallus and men their gamchas to cover their noses to ward off the stench.

Among those who died in the gunfire, not all were Maoists, the villagers said.

The village of Nendra lies about 35 km south of the Bijapur district headquarters. It falls under the jurisdiction of the Gangalur police station. Surrounded by several forested hills such as Masumeta, Gorgonmeta, Reten, Marker, Pendemeta and Kaaurmeta, the village is home to about 60 families.

On April 1, Nendra hosted the annual festival or *karsaad* held in honour of a local deity connected to the Kunjam clan, known as Kohla Kosum Pen Devi.

Thousands of people from villages spread across the Gangalur and Basaguda areas had descended on Nendra to take part in the festival, said Sonu Lakku, the perma or community priest. The festivities took place in permapara, the hamlet where the perma lives. The ceremonial rituals went off peacefully in the morn-

ing, he said, followed by dance and drinking at night.

But next morning, around 4.30 am, everyone woke up to the sound of guns booming on the nearby Masumeta hill.

As soon as there was light in the sky, Lakku recalled rushing to the ground where the deity was kept. Then, to their alarm, they saw security forces descend from the hills.

In southern Chhattisgarh, residents of forest villages like Nendra, which lie in Maoist-dominated territory, tend to be fearful of the security forces – for good reason. Several times, as judicial enquiries have established, security forces out on Maoist operations have ended up gunning down civilians instead.

In its press statement about the encounter, the police claimed to have killed 13 Maoist cadres from company no 2 of the People’s Liberation Guerilla Army, the armed wing of the Communist Party of India (Maoist).

But the villagers had prepared another list, according to which 10 of the 13 killed were Maoists. But three others, including Kamli, were civilians.

Another civilian, according to the list, was Chaitu Potam, the 25-year-old.

Now, at home in Korcholi, a neighbouring village of Nendra, his wife, Somi Potam, said that she had found it difficult to identify her husband among the battered faces at the hospital, till she saw his toe.

On April 4, they found his body in the hospital morgue, wrapped in plastic, with the police identifying him as a Maoist. Somi said she protested on the spot, telling the police that her husband was a civilian, but they did not listen to her. Quietly, she returned with his body.

Asked if she planned to seek justice for her husband’s killing, Somi said: “I would, if I get support.”

The other body was of a young man from the nearby Metapal village, who Lakku said was a Maoist.

Most bodies were hard to recognise since the faces were battered, bruised, covered with blood, he noted. As they spoke among themselves about the state of the bodies, the police heckled them and asked them to quickly load the bodies, he recalled.

The six men were not the only ones that the security forces had detained.

As a police statement released on April 5 noted, a man named Sudru Kunjam and two women named Ayti Punem and Malti Kunjam had been “rounded up as the three were trying to run away as they saw the force”. Another two men, Aytu Punem and Enku Punem, had been arrested since the police had a warrant pending against them, the statement added.

But the police statement was silent on another detention.

Jogi Kunjam was at home when the security forces barged in.

Soon, security personnel followed in her footsteps. Entering the house, they pulled out the woman, took her to the backyard, made her wear a Maoist uniform, Jogi recounted. Where did the uniform come from? The security forces were actually carrying it.

A detailed account of the Maoist meeting came from – believe or not – a man featured on the police list of the 13 dead. □□□

[Source: Scroll.in]

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## WAR AND PEACE

## From Kennedy to Biden

*Bharat Dogra*

**6** 2 YEARS BACK A TRULY great President of the USA John Kennedy made a never-to-be-forgotten contribution to saving the world from nuclear war. Today an outgoing US President Joe Biden who really has no true democratic and ethical rights to take any major policy decisions in his last days in office is going ahead unashamedly with the kind of decisions which are increasing the chances of a direct confrontation with Russia and thereby increasing the risks of nuclear war and third world war.

Kennedy knew that he was making very powerful internal enemies by standing up for peace with firm determination, but he was willing to sacrifice not just his career but also his life for the cause of world peace. The policy makers under the Biden administration have shown time and again how, in conditions of shocking levels of corruption of the military-industrial-politician complex, they have been repeatedly obstructing the prospects for peace, even increasing possibilities of third world war. What a huge decline from Kennedy to Biden, what a shocking decline in the quality of policy making and in the functioning of the Democratic Party too.

As USA policies have increasingly been in glaring violation of concerns of world peace and safety, in memory of better times a speech made by President John Kennedy on June 10, 1963 at the American University, Washington has been widely cited in the context of the peace efforts made then particularly to improve US-Russia relations. However the wider significance of this

memorable speech is sometimes missed.

This wider significance rests partly in the greatness that Kennedy had already achieved while, together with Nikita Khrushchev, pulling the world back from the very edge of a likely exchange of nuclear weapons in the context of the Cuban missile crisis. In the case of Kennedy the credit was even greater than that for Khrushchev because Kennedy had to take this step in the face of opposition of some of his own top military and intelligence officials. He was thus taking a great personal risk in this effort (as events later proved the series of steps he took to make the US systems more responsive to peace and justice ultimately led to a very severe backlash by entrenched powerful interests, culminating in his assassination).

Kennedy's deep commitment to peace was enhanced by his wisdom in maintaining a dialogue with Khrushchev to increase trust which was of vital importance for securing a deal that relied a lot on verbal assurance—while the Soviet Union was to withdraw nuclear missiles immediately, the USA made secret promises to withdraw its nuclear missiles from Turkey after some time, a promise it kept. Thus with their wisdom and mutual trust these two leaders were able to save the world from nuclear war despite a flashpoint having been reached.

Thus President Kennedy was very sincerely and firmly on the path of world peace when he made this speech; he had a lot of moral strength to back what he said. This cannot be said of any recent Presidents, whether Clinton or Obama or

Bush, who reminded one of hypocrisy whenever they spoke of peace, and as far as Joe Biden is concerned, the least said the better. Of course even in the speech of Kennedy sometimes the USA's commitment to peace at that time is described to be more than the reality, but this is because the President is trying to take his people forward on the path of peace in a more gentle and less controversial way, knowing well how much opposition there is from powerful interests. Let us not forget that when this speech was made, the previous president Eisenhower's famous warning regarding the military industrial complex had already been voiced.

While making a strong pitch for world peace, President Kennedy asked—"what kind of peace do I mean? What kind of peace do we seek?" He replied—"Not a Pax Americana enforced on the world by American weapons of war. Not the peace of the grave or the security of the slave. I am talking about genuine peace, the kind of peace that makes life on earth worth living, the kind that enables men and nations to grow and to hope and to build a better life for their children—not merely peace for Americans but peace for all men and women—not merely peace in our time but peace for all time."

This definition of peace—the kind of peace President Kennedy advocated—must be considered by the present US leadership because at present when they speak of peace it is the kind that was very specifically negated by President Kennedy.

Then he spoke words which are clearly even more relevant today—"Total war makes no sense in an age when great powers can maintain large and relatively invulnerable nuclear forces and refuse to surrender without resort to those forces. It



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makes no sense in an age when a single nuclear weapon contains almost ten times the explosive force delivered by all the allied air forces in the Second World War. It makes no sense in an age when the deadly poisons produced by a nuclear exchange would be carried by wind and water and soil and seed to the far corners of the globe and to generations yet unborn."

Looking at some contradictions of world's understanding of security he said, "Today the expenditure of billions of dollars every year on weapons acquired for the purpose of making sure we never need to use them is essential to keeping the peace. But surely the acquisition of such idle stockpiles—which can only destroy and never create—is not the only, much less the most efficient, means of assuring peace."

Then he spoke of the great importance of the agenda of peace and why it should not just look at rivals or supposed enemies but must look inwards at our own attitudes. President Kennedy said—

"I speak of peace, therefore, as the necessary rational end of rational men. I realize that the pursuit of peace is not as dramatic as the pursuit of war—and frequently the words of the pursuer fall on deaf ears. But we have no more urgent task.

"Some say that it is useless to speak of world peace or world law or world disarmament—and that it will be useless until the leaders of the Soviet Union adopt a more enlightened attitude. I hope they do. I believe we can help them do it. But I also believe that we must reexamine our own attitude—as individuals and as a Nation—for our attitude is as essential as theirs. And every graduate of this school, every thoughtful citizen who despairs of war and wishes to bring peace, should begin by looking inward—by

examining his own attitude toward the possibilities of peace, toward the Soviet Union, toward the course of the cold war and toward freedom and peace here at home."

Speaking on more practical aspects of a peace programme he invited his audience to focus on "more attainable peace— based not on a sudden revolution in human nature but on a gradual evolution in human institutions—on a series of concrete actions and effective agreements which are in the interest of all concerned. There is no single, simple key to this peace—no grand or magic formula to be adopted by one or two powers. Genuine peace must be the product of many nations, the sum of many acts. It must be dynamic, not static, changing to meet the challenge of each new generation. For peace is a process—a way of solving problems.

"With such a peace, there will still be quarrels and conflicting interests, as there are within families and nations. World peace, like community peace, does not require that each man love his neighbour—it requires only that they live together in mutual tolerance, submitting their disputes to a just and peaceful settlement. And history teaches us that enmities between nations, as between individuals, do not last forever. However fixed our likes and dislikes may seem, the tide of time and events will often bring surprising changes in the relations between nations and neighbours."

Speaking of Soviet Union, he asked his people to go beyond narrow view to see the common stake of both countries in peace, He said—"Among the many traits the peoples of our two countries have in common, none is stronger than our mutual abhorrence of war. Almost unique among the major world powers, we have never been at war with each other. And no nation in the

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history of battle ever suffered more than the Soviet Union suffered in the course of the Second World War. At least 20 million lost their lives. Countless millions of homes and farms were burned or sacked. A third of the nation's territory, including nearly two thirds of its industrial base, was turned into a wasteland—a loss equivalent to the devastation of this country east of Chicago.

“Today, should total war ever break out again—no matter how—our two countries would become the primary targets. It is an ironic but accurate fact that the two strongest powers are the two in the most danger of devastation. All we have built, all we have worked for, would be destroyed in the first 24 hours. And even in the cold war, which brings burdens and dangers to so many nations, including this Nation's closest allies—our two countries bear the heaviest burdens. For we are both devoting massive sums of money to weapons that could be better devoted to combating ignorance, poverty, and disease. We are both caught up in a vicious and dangerous cycle in which suspicion on one side breeds suspicion on the other, and new weapons beget counterweapons.

“In short, both the United States and its allies, and the Soviet Union and its allies, have a mutually deep interest in a just and genuine peace and in halting the arms race. Agreements to this end are in the interests of the Soviet Union as well as ours—and even the most hostile nations can be relied upon to accept and keep those treaty obligations, and only those treaty obligations, which are in their own interest.”

President Kennedy pleaded—“If we cannot end now our differences, at least we can help make the world safe for diversity. For, in the final analysis, our most basic common link is that we all inhabit this small

planet. We all breathe the same air. We all cherish our children's future. And we are all mortal.”

Now we come to words which are very relevant in the context of very recent events. President Kennedy said, “Above all, while defending our own vital interests, nuclear powers must avert those confrontations which bring an adversary to a choice of either a humiliating retreat or a nuclear war. To adopt that kind of course in the nuclear age would be evidence only of the bankruptcy of our policy—or of a collective death-wish for the world.”

Expressing commitment to diversity of views and systems, President Kennedy said—“We are unwilling to impose our system on any unwilling people—but we are willing and able to engage in peaceful competition with any people on earth...There can be no doubt that, if all nations could refrain from interfering in the self-determination of others, the peace would be much more assured.”

Calling for increased understanding with the Soviets, he said that increased understanding will require increased contact and communication. One step in this direction is the proposed arrangement for a direct line between Moscow and Washington, to avoid on each side the dangerous delays, misunderstandings, and misreading of the other's actions which might occur at a time of crisis.

President Kennedy said, “We have also been talking in Geneva about the other first-step measures of arms control designed to limit the intensity of the arms race and to reduce the risks of accidental war. Our primary long range interest in Geneva, however, is general and complete disarmament—designed to take place by stages, permitting parallel political developments to build the new institutions of peace which would take the place of arms.”

Finally, President Kennedy drew a close link between the pursuit of world peace and domestic reforms, something that is all too often ignored in foreign policy. He called upon fellow Americans—“let us examine our attitude toward peace and freedom here at home. The quality and spirit of our own society must justify and support our efforts abroad. We must show it in the dedication of our own lives... Wherever we are, we must all, in our daily lives, live up to the age-old faith that peace and freedom walk together. In too many of our cities today, the peace is not secure because the freedom is incomplete. It is the responsibility of the executive branch at all levels of government—local, State, and National—to provide and protect that freedom for all of our citizens by all means within their authority. It is the responsibility of the legislative branch at all levels, wherever that authority is not now adequate, to make it adequate. And it is the responsibility of all citizens in all sections of this country to respect the rights of all others and to respect the law of the land.”

Thus at various levels President Kennedy seeks to chart out a path of peace and disarmament which is idealistic yet also practical enough to be implemented in real conditions and goes on to make important announcements which are significant breakthroughs in this direction on their own and also clear the path for further actions. It is also an exceptionally well-written speech, an inspiring document that still gives hope. As a historical document, it provides firm evidence of how firmly committed President Kennedy had become to the pursuit of world peace at a relatively early stage of his presidency. Surely he would have achieved much more by the time he completed his first term, and much, much more if the highly popular

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president was re-elected, as was likely, to serve two full terms ( 8 years).

Very sadly, very unfortunately, President Kennedy was assassinated less than six months after making this speech. However so many years later, his speech continues to inspire all those who are committed to world peace and safety. However just compare these inspirational words of President Kennedy with the recent statements that have been made by several US leaders in high positions in recent times, who have been saying more or less that their aim is to harm Russia and if they can continue doing so by using Ukrainian soldiers it suits them fine (re-

gardless of the human costs for both neighbours Ukraine and Russia).

When he was Vice-President Biden played an important policy role on Ukraine affairs based on promoting hostility between Russia and Ukraine. When he became President he increased the same role, taking steps that would ultimately increase the chances of war and refusing to consider urgent communications from Russia aimed at preventing war. At an early stage of the war he ensured that peace negotiations were sabotaged. The policies aimed at continuation and accentuation of war continued unabated. Finally when Trump won the elec-

tion on an agenda including early peace in Ukraine, Biden took the decision to permit US missile systems for longer-range strikes into Russia, ensuring that peace prospects are sabotaged as much as possible even in his that remaining days in office. Kennedy was a President who was willing to sacrifice his life for world peace and safety. Biden is a president who is willing to sacrifice world peace for his very narrow vision and interests. □□□

*[The writer is Honorary Convener, Campaign to Save Earth Now. His recent books include Planet in Peril, Protecting Earth for Children and Man over Machine—A Path to Peace.]*

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#### PURGING THE ELECTORAL ROLL

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## After Bulldozer Comes Eraser

**Rokibuz Zaman**

**I** BRAHIM ALI WAS AMONG those evicted from Kachutali in September. His name may also be struck off the voter list of the area.

In September, Ibrahim Ali's home in Assam's Kamrup district was flattened by bulldozers.

This was part of the state government's eviction drive against alleged illegal settlers in Kachutali village. Three days later, two men were killed in police firing when the officials returned to chase the displaced families off the land.

For Ali, a 33-year-old driver, that was not the end of his difficulties.

Around November 17, Ali, his elder brother Saheb Ali and sister-in-law Jorina Begum received separate notices from the electoral registration officer, informing them that their names might be deleted from the voters' list of the Dimoria Assembly constituency.

The reason cited by the electoral registration officer was that they had "ceased to be ordinarily resident" in

the constituency after their eviction. However, Ali has been living in makeshift huts made of tin and covered by tarpaulin sheets in the same village, not far from his earlier home.

Such notices were served on over 1,000 Kachutali residents—one-third of its voters—many of whom had been evicted in the September drive.

The election officer of Kamrup Metropolitan district, Manash Jyoti Bora, said that the notices were sent as part of a special summary revision of the electoral roll.

Such an exercise involves reviewing the voter list annually and unveiling a draft electoral roll.

"A re-verification process of 3,000 voters from Kachutali, where the eviction took place, is going on," Bora said. "The verification of 500 people has been done and most of their names will be deleted."

The notices written in English, seen by *Scroll*, summoned Ali and the others to appear before the

Dimoria electoral registration officer on November 20, to record their opposition—if any—to the proposed deletion of their names. If they did not appear, their names would be deleted without informing them, the notice said.

Even though the notice was issued on November 5, they were handed over to the residents three-four days before the hearing.

"The notice was in English. Initially, we did not understand what it said," Ali said.

Over 400 residents, all of them from the Bengali-origin Muslim community in Kachutali, went to appear for the hearing. Ali was among them. During the hearing, Ali and others signed the notice they had received and a register book.

According to Ali, an official told them that their names would be deleted from the electoral roll in Dimoria. "Our homes have already been demolished," Ali said. "If they delete our names from the voter list, our harassment will only increase. They anyway call us outsiders, and doubtful voters. Our citizenship will be doubted even more."

In Assam, Muslims of Bengali-origin are often vilified as illegal

immigrants and their citizenship is contested even though their ancestors migrated to the state before Partition.

This is a rare instance of authorities purging the electoral roll of the names of those turned homeless by an eviction drive. In truth “eviction or demolition cannot deprive an eligible person of his right to vote.” But in Assam government officials hardly bother about law of the land

According to leaders of the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party, the drive was being carried out on the instructions of Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma. “These people have come from different places and started to live in this tribal belt in the last 20 years,” said Dibyajyoti Medhi, a BJP member from Sonapur. “This has changed the demography significantly. They have availed government benefits and schemes. Their names have been included in the electoral rolls and they got government houses. All these issues were brought to the notice of the chief minister and he immediately instructed for reverification [of the electoral roll].”

Ali’s family had settled in Kachutali from Rajapukhuri area in

Darrang district around 23 years ago. “My parents voted at Rajapukhuri but we first voted in Kachutali only,” Ali said. “I voted in Kachutali two or three times.”

Medhi added that Kachutali had been declared a tribal belt in 1950, and so the evicted, most of whom are Bengal-origin Muslims, could no longer stay there. “After the eviction, only those who have documents proving they came here prior to 1950 can stay in Kachutali.”

The notices to Ali and other Kachutali residents were issued under the provisions of the Representation of the People Act, 1950, and the Registration of Electors Rules, 1960.

Under Section 22 of the Representation of the People Act 1950, the electoral registration officer for a constituency can correct the entries in electoral rolls if any erroneous or defective entry is found, or if voters have changed their “place of ordinary residence” within the constituency—provided voters have been given “a reasonable opportunity to be heard”.

Bora explained: “As the eviction took place, they are not ordinary residents of Kachutali anymore, their

names will be deleted. They have to register themselves under different polling stations.”

However, according to the Election Commission of India’s manual, a homeless resident does not need to provide documentary proof to be able to vote.

The EC manual says: “In case of homeless persons, the booth level officer will visit the address given in Form 6 at night [for two nights in a row] to ascertain that the homeless person actually sleeps at the place which is given as his address. If the officer is able to verify that the homeless person actually sleeps at that place, no documentary proof of place of residence shall be necessary.”

To avoid “an eventuality of a homeless foreign national getting registered,” as a voter, “the booth level officer should record the person’s statement about the place of his birth and the place of previous residence.”

Several Kachutali residents, already struggling with the challenges that come from being uprooted, were worried about the difficulties in getting their names back on the electoral roll in a new place. □□□

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ASA BRIGGS

## Imagining ‘Social History’

Arup Kumar Sen

THE WELL-KNOWN BRITISH journal, *The Guardian*, carried an obituary of Asa Briggs, the eminent British historian, by Nigel Jones (March 15, 2016). The intellectual and political inclinations of Briggs were highlighted in the obituary: “The social historian and educationist Asa Briggs... was one of the last survivors of a wartime generation who not only wrote groundbreaking works but helped to make history themselves... Never a

Marxist like his fellow Oxford historians, Christopher Hill and E P Thompson, Briggs retained a sentimental attachment to old Labour ideals throughout his life.”

Asa Briggs’ seminal book, *A Social History of England*, was published in the early 1980s. (1983: Second edition, Penguin Books, 1987) In the Preface of the book, he stated his understanding of the emerging field of ‘social history’: “Social history has now become a

favourite kind of history, and as its range and methods have expanded, it has attracted more and more serious study...Furthermore, the subject has come to attract theoreticians, many of whom use concepts and techniques derived from current sociological analysis. There are dangers in the new approach just as there were weaknesses in the old. In particular, it sometimes concentrates more on abstractions than on people.”

Briggs shared with his readers his imagination of the method of writing ‘social history’: “Although there is an obvious necessity to relate it to economic and demographic history,



both of which are concerned with human subsistence, it cannot ignore cultural history, which reveals how a society expresses itself in arts, crafts, folklore and religion. Nor can it ignore geography...As for the political element in social history, which in my view should never be left out, it

is important that it should be comprehensive in coverage..."(ibid.) While focusing on his own approach of writing 'social history' of England, he stated: "First, I try to focus on experience, the experience of individuals and of groups, shared or contrasting, rather than on concepts,

although these must be part of the scaffolding."

The paradigm of writing 'social history' has undergone transformations in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. However, the insights of Asa Briggs should not be lost sight of in the 'Historian's Craft'. □□□

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#### VERSE OF LINE

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## Solo Exhibition of Subimalendu Bikash Sinha

*Atanu Basu*

**I**N THE FIELD OF VISUAL ART, Dr K G Subrmanyam was made an UGC Emeritus Fellow in 1989. After him, Subimalendu Bikash Sinha became the sole recipient of this honour when he was selected as a fellow in 2013 and till date, Sinha remains the only fellow in this field. He taught in Government Art College and Indian Art College as well, as a reader and later on, as the Principal. Though his forte was drawing and painting, he authored numerous articles and books on aesthetics, which are scattered in a number of journals in various parts of the country. He trained himself from the Banasthali Vidyapith Gyan Vijnan Mahavidyalaya of Jaypur in

the Jayapuri Fresco. In 1982, he trained himself in Italian Tempera. Very recently, in Academy of Fine Arts, his solo exhibition was organised under the theme: **Verse of Line**. The exhibition showcased about a hundred of his works in lines displaying his prowess in the realm of void feelings through drawings and paintings with a neat partition of the two media. His drawings of nude female figures, had expressed more a poetic sense and a rhythm than an open nudity per se. In a two dimensional surface, with black, sharp and thick lines he had presented his work which transcends beyond open nudity, and there lies his poetic rhythm. He does not attract his viewers with calcu-

lated twists, but with beautification through a human figure and this was his uniqueness. There were no symbolic character in the sense of applied art present in his work; the individual pieces were an amazing abstraction mingled into a pleasing composition giving rise to a rare aesthetic quality.

In his drawings, where solid black lines and tonal variations are quite apparent, he used dot tone, vignette, sometimes scratches to achieve variations with absolute brilliance. Particular pieces worth mentioning are the portraits of Arabinda, Rabindranath, Bangabandhu Mujibur. One would be filled with an ecstasy, an elation when one views his series of running animals, particularly the pieces depicting frogs, ducks and birds. His use of brush, nib, pen, sketch pen, felt pen, marker pen in rendering the lines are undoubtedly things to be remembered.

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#### A TIMELESS POLITICAL SATIRE

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## 'Welcome to Sajjanpur'

*Scroll Staff*

**W**ELCOME TO SAJJANPUR appears to be a departure for director Shyam Benegal. Tucked into Benegal's thought-provoking, socially conscious filmography is the rambunctious comedy *Mandi* (1983) and the meta-narrative *Suraj Ka Satvan Ghoda* (1992). Both types of storytelling are present in his satire *Welcome to Sajjanpur* (2008).

The Hindi film can be rented from Prime Video. To *Welcome to*

*Sajjanpur* can be traced the line that inspired the name of the comedy group Aisi Taisi Democracy (with democracy pronounced to rhyme with aisi-taisi, or any which way). Ashok Mishra's brilliant script updates *Palkon Ki Chhaon Mein* (1977) to examine the seriocomic goings-on in a village that is a microcosm of India.

Despite having undergone a name change from Durjanpur to Sajjanpur, the village is packed with unscrupulous types, starting with Mahadev

(Shreyas Talpade). Although Mahadev wants to be a novelist, he is stuck with writing letters on behalf of Sajjanpurians. He does so with reluctance or, depending on the circumstances, perverse relish.

Mahadev's lust for Kamla (Amrita Rao) compels him to doctor the loving messages she sends her husband in Mumbai. Mahadev also plays messenger between Ramkumar (Ravi Kishan) and the child widow Shobharani (Rajeshwari Sachdev Badola).

When Ramsingh (Yashpal Sharma) wants to grab an election by sending an official complaint that his wife's Muslim rival is a Pakistani

spy, Mahadev obliges – and proves to be all too effective. Sadly for Ramsingh, the hijra Munnibai (Ravi Jhankal) steps up to the challenge – and gets Mahadev to write her election song. Nearly everyone in the village has “Ram” in their names – Ramsakhi (Ila Arun) is desperately trying to get her supposedly cursed daughter Vindhya (Divya Dutta) married.

Some of Ashok Mishra’s satire, about two-timing politicians, false piety and the perilous state of Indian democracy, is so sharp it would not pass muster today. Nuclear energy is coming, it seems, which will power even humans. Mishra also writes a song about the joys of electoral democracy, but the meta-climax takes the film in another, unexpected direction.

Benegal directs an excellent ensemble cast from different schools of acting. From Shreyas Talpade to Yashpal Sharma and Ila Arun to Ravi Kishan, the actors are in top form. (Kishan’s hilarious performance in *Laapataa Ladies* is surely a tribute to this movie.) Ravi Jhankal is outstanding as the sassy and sensitive Munnibai, who skewers Sajjanpur’s hypocrisy like nobody else. □□□

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#### A SPOKESPERSON FOR THE OPPRESSED

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## Remembering Amiya Kumar Bagchi

(1936-2024)

*Aditya Mukherjee*

PROFESSOR AMIYA KUMAR Bagchi passed away on November 28 at 88. If there was one quality that distinguished Professor Bagchi, it was his ability to stand up boldly against the dominant current, however powerful and pervasive it may be, if his own research and conviction pointed the other way. In the discipline of economics, India began to witness by the late 1960s and early '70s a turn away from the study of Political Economy, (which was the hallmark of India’s early nationalists, people like Dadabhai Naoroji and R C Dutt, a tradition kept alive by later economists like Bhabatosh Datta, B N Ganguli, K N Raj and several others), towards econometrics, mathematical modelling, game theory, etc. It was at that time that Bagchi, as a doctoral student at Cambridge, switched from being a game theorist to probing issues of political economy, particularly economic history. Economic history proved critical in making major theoretical breakthroughs, as is evident from the writings of Karl Marx, Dadabhai Naoroji, Maurice Dobb, Ernest Mandel, Andre Gunder Frank, Paul Baran, Daniel Thorner and so many others. Bagchi too used his deep foray into economic history to make important theoretical generalisations.

Bagchi’s magnum opus *Private Investment in India, 1900-1939*, published in 1972 was his first major work as a result of his shift in focus to economic history. Based on research from a variety of sources in India and England, the book immediately became a must-read for every student of history and economics and it remains so till today, more than 50 years after it was published. After a deep and thorough study of all major sectors of the Indian economy, Bagchi demonstrates, proving many current supply-oriented hypotheses wrong, that the reason for the lack of industrial investment and overall growth in colonial India was not what economists had been repeating ad infinitum. That is, the lack of supply of capital, or its “shyness”, lack of entrepreneurship, unsuitable social traditions and values in contrast to the so-called “protestant ethic” in England, overpopulation and so on, but the imposition of the priorities of British imperialism in India which constrained demand severely, limiting the profitability or even viability of investment.

Professor Bagchi’s foray into the economic history of the modern period led him inevitably to look at the capitalist system as a global phenomenon, which explained the development of some parts of the world

and the underdevelopment if not decimation of other parts. Among his numerous publications, the next major contribution came in the form of the book ‘*The Political Economy of Underdevelopment*’, published in 1982. It is a study that looks at various parts of the world which became victims of colonialism at different points of time for varying periods, under different colonial masters, but all sharing certain underlying similarities and structural disabilities. The study covered Latin America, Indonesia, China and India.

From here, the logical next step was his masterly overview of the emergence of world capitalism and its impact, not only in the early stages of the rise of capitalism but also its devastating consequences on a large part of humanity up to the current millennium. It was to be his last magnum opus, ‘*Perilous Passage: Mankind and the Global Ascendancy of Capital*’, published in 2005. In this work, Bagchi, in his inimitable polemical style backed by huge amount of empirical evidence, demolishes several Eurocentric myths promoted by the dominant Western world, such as that Europe went ahead of the rest of the world centuries before the Industrial Revolution, or that Europe shot ahead of the rest of the world with the Industrial Revolution because of some intrinsic advantages or capabilities. On the contrary, he shows that the Great Divergence, the rapid rise of the West was in fact predicated upon surplus extraction and decima-

tion of the rest. Through a detailed calculation he shows that between 1871 and 1916, Britain extracted as tribute from India about £3.2 billion while total British investment abroad was about £4 billion, a large part of it going to the White colonies and

the US. The blood and sweat of the Indian people thus contributed, in no small measure, to the “peopling of the United States” through massive migrations from Europe “and its rise as the most economically advanced country in the world (and

also helped improve the living conditions of the Europeans left behind.”

The world will miss a great spokesperson for the oppressed. □□□ [The writer taught contemporary history at JNU. His latest book is *Nehru's India: Past, Present and Future*. Courtesy: Indian Express]

## LETTERS

### 'Just For Exposing Hate'

Mohammed Zubair, a prominent fact-checker and co-founder of *AltNews*, expressed his shock at the Uttar Pradesh police not just filing a case against him but also adding serious charges that amount to sedition.

While speaking to The Quint, Zubair recalled how he may have become accustomed to threats and complaints filed in the past, but the UP police on 26 November informed the Allahabad High Court that they added section 152 of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS) — “act endangering unity, sovereignty and integrity of India”, which carries life sentence or a prison term for up to seven years and a fine.

“This was alarming as ‘endangering sovereignty’ crosses the limits. I had only posted about Yati Narsinghanand which was done by many other handles before or even after me. But his Narsinghanand’s supporters filed the case against me,” said Zubair

Notably, on 3 December, a Bench of Justices Mahesh Chandra Tripathi and Prashant Kumar of Allahabad High Court recused from hearing a plea filed by Zubair seeking protection from arrest in the case.

### Aliza Noor, The Quint Protest in Delhi University

On 27th November, AISA along with other organisations of Delhi University held a protest at the gate of the Vice Chancellor’s office demanding immediate termination of the Principal of Shaheed Bhagat Singh College, Arun Kumar Attree. Since there has been a complaint filed by Sumit Chauhan, a Dalit student of SBSC of physical assault and casteist abuse, the police are yet to file an FIR. Even after ten days.

Students and teachers demanded that Attree be removed from a position

which gives him access to tamper with evidence and inquiry. At the protest, AISA DU President Shantanu spoke, “We have filed the complaint more than a week back. The police are shamelessly delaying the inquiry giving enough time to Attree to play his move. We demand that he be immediately removed from his position of power which he is known to abuse.”

Prof Abha Dev Habib, Faculty at Miranda House said, “our University has been surrendered to casteist lumpens who feel that they have complete immunity. We stand with Sumit and we will make an example out of Attree that DU will not tolerate casteism!” Prof Rudrashis Chakraborty, faculty at KMC said, “we salute Sumit and his brave fight against casteism. The VC must answer how Attree gets this liberty to do so to a student.”

A delegation consisting of Prof Abha Dev, AISA DU President Shantanu and Sumit along with other students submitted a memorandum at the VC Office demanding the removal of Arun Kumar Attree from SBSC and aid in the police inquiry.

### ML Update Targeting Children

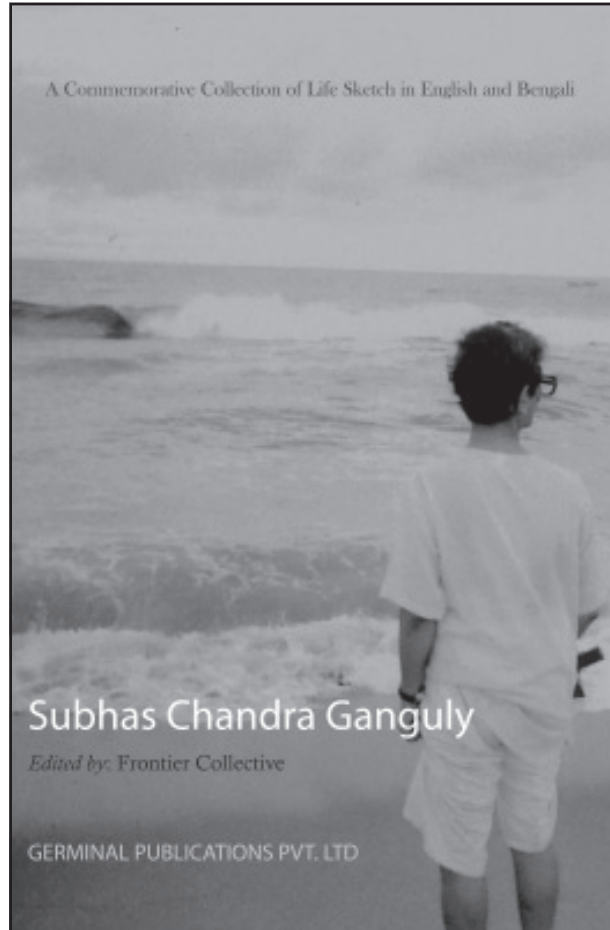
The Palestine-Global Mental Health Network is now launching an international campaign to demand world governments hold Israel accountable for its *war crimes against Palestinian and Lebanese children*—to the principles of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child—principles which prioritise the inherent right to life and uphold the best interests of all children. The former Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant has derogatorily referred to Palestinians as “human animals”, while Israeli President Isaac Herzog has stated, “there are no innocent civilians in Gaza”. Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has further inflamed this narrative by com-

paring Palestinians to Amalekites and describing the situation in Gaza as a struggle between the “children of light and children of darkness”. In 2015, a Facebook post by Israel’s Justice Minister Ayelet Shaked’s described Palestinian children as “little snakes” to justify their collective punishment UNICEF reports that the war on Lebanon continues to wreak havoc on the lives of children, causing serious physical injuries and lasting psychological trauma. In Gaza, the situation is particularly dire, with **clear evidence that children are deliberately targeted. A poignant letter to President Biden from 45 doctors who volunteered in Gaza described treating children with injuries that appeared to be deliberately inflicted. They unanimously reported, “Specifically, every one of us on a daily basis treated pre-teen children who were shot in the head and chest.”** Every day, children face violence, fear, loss, displacement, hunger, and devastation. They are being killed at an unprecedented rate. They are dying because of forced starvation and disease. They have lost homes, loved ones, and the safety to which they have a right. Those who survive are being stripped of their childhood. In the West Bank and East Jerusalem, Palestinian children face escalating violence and displacement due to Israeli military actions and systematic settler violence (Human Rights Watch, April 2024). This situation has seen increasing levels of child casualties, with a threefold spike in the killing of children since October 2023—since then, a child has been killed every two days. *Israel remains the only country that systematically prosecutes children in military courts*, a clear violation of international law.

**Palestine-Global Mental Health Network**

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