

frontier

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'Palestine is Not for Sale'

AS TRUMP AND NETANYAHU WERE DISCUSSING THE FUTURE of Gaza on February 4, hundreds of protesters outside the White House began to chant: 'Palestine is not for sale. Gaza belongs to the Palestinian people, not the United States'. No, it is no longer a casual statement by Trump that he wants to resettle Palestinians from Gaza Strip to Egypt and Jordan, demolish remaining buildings—69 percent of Gaza structures have already been destroyed as per UN estimates—to make way for Riviera-style development project and place the occupied territory under US ownership. Trump's approach to the Palestinian issue seems to have surprised his friends and foes alike. But Palestinians are not interested in Riviera; they need a homeland of their own. Forcing people to leave their land and taking over their territory are prohibited by long-standing treaties and international law. What Trump is proposing is anything but ethnic cleansing, much to the satisfaction of the Israeli far-right. The very concept of ethnically cleansing Gaza of its 2.2 million people sends shivers down the spines of the strip-inhabitants.

For one thing Gaza Strip is recognised by the United Nations and its highest court, the International Court of Justice, as part of the Palestinian territories under military occupation. The threat or use of force against the territorial integrity or political independence of any state is violative of International Law but international law is for the weak; it is not for Trump's America. They have the divine right to execute their imperial design by using force. Forced displacement of a population under military occupation is a war crime according to the 1949 Geneva Conventions. Then America and Israel don't bother about Geneva mandate; they follow their own rules of coercion.

Palestinians suffered mass dispossession in 1948. Now they fear another round of displacement or what they call Naqba. In truth most people in Gaza are displaced persons in the first place. These Palestinians became nation-less refugees placed under the care of the UN Relief and Works Agency which is also under attack by Israel. There are eight refugee camps in Gaza to support 200,000 Palestinians who had been forced out of over 190 towns and villages. Then Palestinians have a permanent envoy to the United Nations.

Meanwhile, Israel's defence minister ordered the army to prepare a plan to allow the "voluntary departure" of residents from Gaza, after Trump's announcement. In other words the US-Israel project to depopulate Gaza

has begun. The Oslo accords of the 1990s rejected the notion of removing Palestinians from Gaza. In fact, keeping the refugees in Gaza was central to the premise of a two-state solution. At the same time, questions over the right of refugees to their original homeland in what is now Israel were shelved. Resettlement means total denial of two-state solution as well.

The road to recovery in Gaza will be long. The UN estimates that rebuilding Gaza will cost US\$50 billion and take at least 10 years. But Gazans

refuse to abandon their shattered homes despite hardships. "We would rather die here rather than leave the land". That is how Palestinians express their sentiment and attachment to the Strip. Resettlement schemes have a long history, yet Palestinians have thwarted them at every turn. There is no reason to think that this time will be any different and Trump's plan will succeed.

The idea of removing the Palestinians from Gaza is not new—but neither is Palestinians' resolve to remain in their tiny homeland, other-

wise overcrowded. For almost 80 years, Palestinians in Gaza have resisted various proposals to displace them from the enclave. So militancy is growing not out of nothing—there are real reasons for Palestinians to take up arms. Israel's mediaeval barbarism has failed to destroy Palestinians' determination to keep their identity as a nation. If Hamas is wiped out completely, the possibility of which seems remote, new militant outfits will emerge to save Palestinians' national identity. □□□

11-02-2025

COMMENT

Why Modi is Silent on Deportation

AS DELHI WAS VOTING for the assembly and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was taking a ceremonial dip in Prayagraj, around the same time, 104 Indians were repatriated to India on a US Air Force plane. According to the deportees, they were sent here with their hands in handcuffs and feet in shackles. Even for meals, their hands were not freed. When they needed to use the restroom, they were pushed into the plane's only toilet with the door opened. Among them were men, women, and children. Fortunately, the children were not tied with handcuffs and shackles. India's External Affairs Minister S Jaishankar, however, defended US action, somewhat shamelessly, by citing standard procedure followed in case of deportation. But Indians deserve dignity, not handcuffs.

Their fault was that they crossed the seven seas to America in search of employment and a respectable life. Little did they know that the agencies that showed them a beautiful dream and extracted millions of rupees from them would escape, while they would be caught in America for staying there *illegally*?

Since Trump assumed office, there has been a relentless crack-down on those living illegally. He had promised to do so and intensified the actions upon taking office. Just as India is troubled by infiltrators like the Rohingyas, America is troubled by those who have entered illegally instead of coming through proper visa channels. According to 2022 data, more than ten million people were living unauthorised in the US. This number must have increased. The highest numbers are from Mexico, followed by El Salvador and India. This means that in terms of infiltration, India stands third in the world's largest economy. Recent reports indicate that more than 20,000 Indian infiltrators have either been caught or are awaiting final decisions on deportation. Reports suggest that India has agreed to take back 18,000 of these individuals.

Last year, during Biden's term, more than 275,000 infiltrators were arrested, including 6,402 Indians. Surprisingly, fewer than 500 Pakistanis were arrested for infiltration. In Trump's new term, the crack-down on infiltrators has not only

intensified but is being carried out with much fanfare, unlike before when it was done quietly. Even raids are being conducted in gurdwaras and temples to apprehend them, which goes against their principles. It is evident that Trump wants to demonstrate that he is fulfilling his electoral promise. However, this has subjected the infiltrators to inhumane conditions. Previously, no batch of infiltrators had been sent bound in handcuffs and shackles, nor was a military plane used to deport them. Deporting infiltrators from one's country is the right of any government, but the question is whether they also have the right to flout human values in doing so.

It is noteworthy that Colombia and Mexico have strongly objected to such inhumane treatment of its citizens. On the other hand, countries like India have acquiesced to Trump's orders. Colombian President Petro refused to allow two US military planes to land. Petro insisted that the deportees travelling hand-cuffed in a military plane were not criminals and ought to be treated with dignity.

It is noteworthy that among the first batch of 104 people who arrived, the most were from Gujarat, followed by Punjab. Why did these people from the so-called prosper-

ous states need to go to America via illegal means is for them to explain. For now, people await the return of other Indians, hoping that they will not have to endure such torture and that Prime Minister who is scheduled to meet Trump shortly will request his 'friend' to be considerate in this matter.

Prime Minister Modi told a Pravasi Bharatiya gathering in Bhubaneswar last month that overseas Indians are "Bharat's Rashtradoot"—Indian Am-

bassador. But the Indian emigrants, who have been charged with entering the United States illegally and have been forced to return home, are ambassadors of a different kind. They remind the world not of Indian talent and enterprise, culture or civilisation but of the lack of opportunity, of discrimination of one kind or another and of the unease of living here that makes them undergo the hardship of illegal migration. □□□

[Contributed by Muktkanth Ranjan]

NOTE

Converting Tibetans into Chinese

Lobsang Gelek writes:

CHINA IS ALLEGEDLY forcing 1 million Tibetan children to forget about their language and culture in indoctrination boarding schools where they face abuse and anxiety. They are trying to cover it up but a UN investigation could force the truth out into broad daylight.

Tibetan students in the first half of the century were typically educated at home or in the hundreds of monasteries that dominated Tibetan culture and traditions. Some Tibetan children still attend schools where the medium of instruction is Tibetan.

But the vast majority is thought to now go to schools where the lessons are in Mandarin, with Tibetan courses limited to a single language class.

The Gangjong Sherig Norbu School and the two Sichuan monastery schools are among dozens of Tibetan institutions that have closed in recent years. Others include the Sengdruk Taktse School in Amdo Golog, Qinghai province, and the Drago Monastery in Kham Karze, Sichuan province. According to a Human Rights Watch report, the

number of non-Tibetan-speaking teachers jumped in areas with ethnic Tibetan students. One goal, according to the report, appears to be to quiet restive regions through assimilation with the majority Han culture.

Visitors say young children who attend Chinese boarding schools are unable to easily communicate with older relatives who grew up studying Tibetan, creating a generational rift and worries about the loss of a unique Tibetan identity.

China has come under increasing international criticism for its educational policies both in the Tibetan Autonomous Region and in Tibetan areas in the Chinese provinces of Qinghai, Sichuan, Gansu and Yunnan.

Tibetan students attending boarding schools risk an "erosion of their identity."

In truth China's "coercive policies seek to eliminate Tibet's distinct linguistic, cultural and religious traditions among younger generations of Tibetans."

China bristles at the complaints. Officials note that much of the Tibetan population remains scattered, leaving boarding schools as the only

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effective way of ensuring students have access to quality teachers and educational resources.

Beijing says Tibetans aren't forced to attend and many also include instruction in Tibetan language and history.

Officials also point to figures that show the number of Tibetans who can read and write (in Mandarin or another language) has increased dramatically, although official statistics are hard to verify and other surveys show varying literacy rates.

Gyal Lo, a Tibetan activist and sociologist who studied the boarding school system in China before fleeing into exile in Canada, told 'Radio Free Asia' that the schools serve to sanitise Tibetans, including children as young as 4-years-old.

At that age, it's easy to overwhelm the Tibetan language the students use at home with the Mandarin instruction they are bombarded with every day in school. Attendance is compulsory in everything but name, as families that don't send their chil-

dren to the schools may be cut off from government benefits or job opportunities, he has said.

“The Chinese government has

repeatedly tried to convert Tibetans into Chinese by eliminating the Tibetan way of life and identity. Now they are educating the youngest

members of society to eradicate Tibetan identity,” Gyal Lo said. “This is the most dangerous policy”. □□□

[Courtesy: Radio Free Asia]

INDIA WAITS!

The Union Budget 2025 and The New International Order

Anup Sinha

THE NATIONAL BUDGET, IN any private-enterprise, market-driven economy, is supposed to ensure that the state facilitates capital accumulation and keeps the other classes under hegemonic control. In economies where the reproduction of the system is stable and predictable, the budget is passed without much fanfare, with minimum media-attention. In India, however, the exercise receives a lot of attention from the press and the electronic media precisely because state power is a heterogeneous mix of classes and interest groups that do keep changing over time. In India there is an added complexity triggered by poverty and deprivation. The budget is looked upon as a distributional game where the privileged producers and affluent sections of the population must receive their share of the fiscal resources, while the large multitude of the relatively poor and deprived have to be pacified and kept in control. Political stability demands a sharing of the total fiscal resources – the tax revenues collected as well as the expenditures planned. Hence the keen anticipation with which the budget is awaited every year and the loud discussions that follow its presentation. If the economic elites are pleased the stock market reacts positively, otherwise it tanks. Budgets do not change the structure of the economy or address systemic problems.

This year’s budget is no exception to this pattern. The finance minister

had two basic premises that were a little different from that of the previous year. The first was that the NDA government is no longer controlled exclusively by the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). Coalition politics would have to be addressed squarely especially for the states of Andhra Pradesh and Bihar. The second, arguably a more important fact was that economic growth had slowed down this year with savings and investment turning south as well as producers experiencing inventory pile-ups. Interest rates were considered high, inflation was still not at comfortable levels, and a persistent noise about the shrinking Indian middle class. Capital does not like macroeconomic growth to slow down. The economy must be stimulated to increase demand and hence sales and profits. This can be done by cutting taxes so that people have more take-home income to spend. The other method is to increase government spending on goods and services so that demand from the public sector increases. However, tax cuts are hugely popular. Spending hikes are looked upon with suspicion. Two reasons for this: it enhances the presence of government in the private economy, and it increases the burden of debt, since the bulk of the extra spending is undertaken through increased market borrowings through the sale of government bonds, which have to be paid back at a future date with accumulated interest.

In this year’s budget Nirmala Sitaraman has done the expected things, given the context of the budget. First of all, she has reduced some amount of personal income taxes for the middle class. This class is vocal, votes for the ruling parties, and if treated well could become a strong political base. This act of cutting taxes would have some effect on total demand in the economy, where it is expected that these people with a bit of extra money in their pockets would purchase more of consumer goods, especially the fast-moving consumer goods, sales of which were languishing in the recent past. However, there are a few things that ought to be kept in mind about this cut. The number of people to be affected by this rise in disposable income is really a tiny part of the total population of the nation. The total impact could be insufficient to turn the sluggish aggregate demand around. The bulk of India’s population are not required to pay direct taxes since their incomes and earnings are far too low. It is some part optics that gives a message that the minister cares for the rate of growth and is facilitating growth by boosting demand. Simultaneously, she has kept the overall fiscal deficit at 4.4 percent, down from 4.8 percent as estimated to be the result for the current fiscal year. She gives the picture of being disciplined and mindful of debt obligations not getting out of hand because that would signal instability, a situation disliked by the powers that be.

In the context of instability, this year’s budget came at a time when global uncertainties are elevated to an extraordinary level because of Donald Trump taking over the presi-

dency of the USA and coming to power with an absurdly (almost lunatic) disruptive agenda, which he is implementing with almost a vengeance against the American state and people. Trump has begun, as he had promised, to impose trade tariffs and upend the entire global supply chains, and trade patterns. It is not clear where India fits in, in Trump's scheme of friends and enemies. From India's point of view, it is good to wait and watch what Donald Trump's playbook is really like. One strategy would be to prepare for more "expensive exports" from India if the nation faces restrictive US tariffs. Hence letting the rupee float and depreciate, and keep customs duties as low as possible would be of help as India will have to reduce dependence on the USA for international trade. The rationalisation of customs duties announced in this budget is reflective of a signal sent by the Indian state that it is aware of what is likely to come. The optics of it: a signal to the producers and the owners of capital that the Indian state will provide needed support. In this context, one longer term issue remains. India will have to look for more enduring trade partners and take a re-look at its foreign policy and its assessment of China as a friend or foe.

As far as expenditures are concerned, there is no basic change in the patterns of disbursement. As in every budget speech, some schemes are announced with great fanfare whose political impact may be much more than their economic worth. Every sector and every class must get some gifts, like old Santa Claus distributing toys to children waiting eagerly. Old toys and new toys are mixed up. Agriculture receives something, public investment in infrastructure gets a bit, social sector gets some, and new toys like Artificial Intelligence (AI) receives something too. However, when all toys have

been pulled out, and one examines the granular data on the increases and cuts in expenditures, most expenditure hikes will be cosmetic, spread thinly, and more often that not the items that really matter hardly receive hikes that cover the inflationary impact on the real value of the number.

Budgets are never meant to be a tool of structural change. It is a tool for perpetuating the essential structure of the economic system. Changes can happen, but always these are within the system's limits. Hence, as expected, the budget did not address any fundamental challenges faced by the economy. There are many such that might be listed. For instance, India's economy, like much of the world's nations, is experiencing a massive rise in economic inequalities – both in terms of wealth, as well as, in terms of income distributions. The number of dollar billionaires is on the rise from two-digit numbers to four-digit numbers. On the other hand, the number of people whose real income is declining and bringing them closer to the poverty line has been increasing by millions, especially since the pandemic when many structural features of the economy changed. Hence, the talk of a vanishing middle class which was supposed to be the pillar of the market economy. Economic inequality necessarily reduces demand for what is called wage-goods which the poor and most of the middle class consume. On the other hand, a tiny (but the absolute number may look impressive in a populous nation like India) super-rich class buys the latest gadgets, the ultra-expensive cars, branded designer clothes, watches and shoes. That demand is limited. In such a situation, therefore, the aggregate rate of growth cannot be very high and will require state interventions frequently.

A second feature of the changing pattern of demand is that in the

world of rapidly changing technologies, the employment potential of this luxury sector is low, and shrinking as labour saving techniques fuelled by robotics and AI gain ascendancy. Structural unemployment might even rise with macroeconomic growth. The country has already been experiencing what is referred to by analysts as 'jobless growth' where employment growth is not a good as the rate of growth warrants. The labour market has changed considerably. There are informal workers in the gig economy with no stable income or benefits. There are other low-productivity low-earnings jobs like shop assistants, delivery riders, or security guards who can be seen all over the place. These jobs are risky, low paying, long hours and have no benefits attached to them. Even many of such jobs are likely to disappear with the large-scale adoption of AI and related technologies. The budget is eerily silent on the problem of unemployment and poor quality of available jobs.

A third feature is the condition of Indian agriculture. The much-touted Green Revolution is over. The land-holding patterns and access to credit remain as complicated as they were twenty years ago. There has been, on top of this, since the pandemic, a pressure of return migration on land. Hence, even with a shrinking non-

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agricultural aggregate demand, internal consumption of the agricultural sector has increased. Hence the marketed surplus is not growing fast enough, leading to a rise in food price inflation. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has been partially successful in controlling the inflationary momentum. However, a fallout of that has been a long-continuing high-interest regime. Now, the message came loud and clear for the new RBI governor to cut rates (which he has done in his first Monetary Policy Committee meeting) to stimulate credit off-takes. This is of course, if commercial banks pass on the cut on to their lending rates. The finance minister has made it clear that she does not mind seeing the independence of the RBI getting diluted a bit and wanting that the RBI governor work in unison with the government.

What might the impact of the budget and the expected headwinds

from the global economy be for the forthcoming year? Three impacts can be considered. First of all, the boosting of demand and growth is likely to be small since domestic investors will be reluctant to invest heavily in new projects in an extremely uncertain and unpredictable international atmosphere. These uncertainties will impact India too. The second impact would be how India navigates a changing alignment of international trade forces, especially moving away from the USA towards China. In both cases India will have little choice in determining favorable outcomes. On top of it, if India decides not to bow-down to the whims of Trump, the government of India will have to eat humble pie and mend fences with China. This is not a pleasant solution for Narendra Modi. The third possible impact in the near future will be whether India can, in the disruptive situation, get hold of foreign partners

who might look favourably to India as an alternative to China to produce or make in India. There are bound to be opportunities that open up. There will be hard costs too that India might have to bear.

The forthcoming year that is 2025-26 may well be marked by the rise of a variety of fascism in the world's largest economy. There are many miniature Trumps that are visible in many countries of the world. It remains to be seen whether they feel emboldened to consolidate their arbitrary powers on their peoples, or they allow Trump and his high-tech battalion to rule the world – a world likely to be marked by new rivieras and golf courses, as well as, by large new prisons and many detention camps. The liberal order has come to an end, but capitalism has not. It is time, as an old sixties song urged, to “send in the clowns”. India waits.

□□□

1982-83 TEXTILE STRIKE

Unmaking of the Working Class in Mumbai

Arup Kumar Sen

MAKING THE WORKERS footloose is the central strategy of Capital under neoliberalism. The failure of the 1982-83 textile strike in Mumbai and the accompanying displacement of workers is a classic case of the neoliberal journey of Capital in the city. Hub van Wersch's study based on fieldwork conducted in the mid-1980s provides a rigorous analysis of the strike. The long preface of Wersch's book— *The 1982-83 Bombay Textile Strike and the Unmaking of a Labourers' City* (Speaking Tiger, 2019) —written by Sumeet Mhaskar bears testimony to the forward march of Capital and unmaking of the working class in Mumbai. The following account is a broad summary of insightful observations made by

Mhaskar in this context.

To put it in the words of Mhaskar: “The 1982-83 strike was the last attempt by the Mumbai mill workers to display a unified militant resistance against the Indian state and the capital. However, the millowners were able to put down the strike by colluding with the state and the Rashtriya Mill Mazdoor Sangh (RMMS), the officially recognised trade union and the sole bargaining agent for the workers.” A significant observation was made in this context: “...there were no immediate riots after the strike was over in 1983. However, anti-Muslim riots did take place in 1984 in Bhiwandi, where the private mill owners had sub-contracted the production of cloth. Parts of Mumbai

that had a substantial Muslim population were also affected by the 1984 riots...Muslim workers' expulsion was nearly complete during and immediately after the 1982-83 strike...Most of the Muslim mill workers I met (in 2008-09) had lost their jobs during or before the 1982-83 strike and diverted to other occupations such as taxi driving, selling perishable commodities and engaging in wide-ranging repair work.”

Mhaskar narrated the outcome of the defeat of workers in the 1982-83 strike: “The gentrification of Girangaon following the closure of textile mills resulted in a gradual expulsion of the residents to city's far-away suburbs and to the villages where workers have returned after the shutdown...The transformations of Mumbai into a world-class city has whittled down the proletarian Mumbai (read Girangaon) that was dominated by the textile industry, working-class neighbourhoods, popu-

lar theatres, smaller restaurants and local tea shops. 'World-class' Mumbai is marked by huge shopping malls, multiplexes, upscale bars, restaurants, and nightclubs that ca-

ter to the needs of the newly emerging middle and affluent classes."

The tale of 'accumulation by dis-possession' and anti-Muslim riots in Mumbai, narrated by Mhaskar, is the

general story of the journey of Capital and marginalisation of subaltern Muslims in other Indian cities in recent years. The Indian state is playing a significant role in this journey. □

SUDHIR DHAWALE INTERVIEW

'The Law Remains Blind to Injustice...'

Tabassum Barnagarwala

ON JANUARY 24, WHEN Sudhir Dhawale walked back into the narrow lane in the Mumbai neighbourhood of Govandi where he lived until he was arrested in June, 2018, young men welcomed him with the beat of the dhol.

His neighbours then marched in a celebratory procession to a statue of BR Ambedkar 100 metres away. Dhawale garlanded the statue and gave a short speech about the importance of safeguarding Dalit rights. And just like that, he said, his life returned to normal.

That day, activist and writer Dhawale, aged 56, and researcher Rona Wilson had been released on bail from Taloja prison in nearby Navi Mumbai, six years and seven months after the police arrested them on charges of inciting caste violence in Bhima Koregaon village near Pune on January 1, 2018. One person died in the clashes.

Sixteen academicians, writers, activists and lawyers were arrested in the case. Nine of them have received bail so far.

Dhawale said the prison gave him time to write. He authored five books while in jail. Two of them have already been published.

After the death of 84-year-old Jesuit priest father Stan Swamy in July 2021, who was a co-accused in the case, Dhawale also turned to poetry.

Sitting in his office in Govandi a few days after his release, he read one of his couplets from a notebook.

"Pehle kanoon andha tha, ab ankhein khol kar bhi andha hai." Earlier law was blind; it continues to remain blind even with the blindfold gone.

It was a reference to a new statue unveiled in the Supreme Court last year, featuring Lady Justice without a blindfold, with her eyes open.

Dhawale is the publisher of Marathi magazine *Vidrohi* and the founder of the Republican Panthers Jatiantachi Chalwal, an organisation that works for Dalit rights. He was amongst the organisers of Elgaar Parishad, an event held to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the battle of Bhima Koregaon. The police claimed speeches made during the event incited violence the next day.

Dhawale disagrees.

Dhawale says the violence was triggered by events in a village called Vadhu Budruk, 3 km from Bhima Koregaon. Two days before the Elgaar Parishad, the tomb of Govind Gaikwad, a Dalit who is believed to have conducted final rites of the 17th-century ruler Sambhaji, was desecrated in Vadhu Budruk.

Dalits had filed a complaint about this, naming 49 people.

Dhawale said that he and several of the organisers of the Elgaar Parishad demanded a judicial investigation into the clashes. "Right-wing groups, incited by Milind Ekbote and Sambhaji Bhide, charged at the people walking towards Bhima Koregaon," Dhawale alleged.

Ekbote is the president of an organisation called the *Samasta*

Hindu Aghadi, while Bhide is the founder of Shiv Pratishtan Hindustan.

Dhawale said that the Elgaar Parishad was organised with police permission and was conducted smoothly with police personnel attending the event. In the meeting, he called for an end to Peshwa-style rule. The Peshwa regime in Maharashtra in the 17th and 18th centuries were noted for its persecution of Dalits.

Dhawale said that his reference to Peshwa rule was directed towards Hindutva leaders who sought to oppress Dalits and were allegedly involved in desecrating Gaikwad's tomb.

"The event has no link with what happened the next day," Dhawale said. "There were no speeches that provoked violence – politicians in our country make even more provocative statements."

Dhawale and others made a representation to Devendra Fadnavis, the chief minister at the time, asking for Bhide and Ekbote's arrest. "Instead the state arrested us," he said.

He said that many of the people arrested in the case had no connection to the Elgaar Parishad.

"It was a clear set-up the government had planned well in advance," he said.

On the day he was arrested, he got an inkling that he would be in

For **Frontier Contact**

ALAIGAL VELIYEETAGAM!

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jail for a long while when he realised that he had been charged under the draconian Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act.

Dhawale had been arrested under UAPA once before, in 2011, on charges that he had links with Maoists. He was acquitted of all charges after spending 40 months in prison. He says that at that time, just like this time, the police did not have any evidence against him.

“But under UAPA, you can’t expect easy bail,” he said. “The Congress brought this law and the BJP is making full use of it.”

In 2011, the police had seized his electronic devices and phone without giving him their hash values – the unique numeric code that identifies how much data they contained. This time too, Dhawale claimed, his devices were seized without giving him hash values.

Yet, despite these similarities, there is a stark contrast between his two arrests.

“In 2011, the police went about collecting evidence to show Naxal links after my arrest,” he said. “This time it seems they had begun to plant evidence much before our arrest. It was a set-up.”

However, even though Dhawale’s bail pleas were dismissed several times, he did not lose hope.

“We continued our fight even inside the prison,” he said.

For one-and-a half year in Pune’s Yerwada prison and three years in Talaja prison, he was kept in the

notorious egg-shaped high security “anda cell” with no cell mates. But in his time in the common barracks, Dhawale said he tried to fight for prisoners’ rights.

Dhawale and others accused in the Bhima Koregaon case staged several protests. In 2020, they went on a hunger strike in support of the farm protests in North India. Last year, they held a two-day hunger strike to demand that they be produced in court. They also protested several times against the high prices of food in the prison canteen and corrupt practices there.

Dhawale is now in process of filing a writ petition in the Bombay High Court about the shortage of guards in jail, which is an excuse wardens offer for failing to transport prisoners to court.

There were also everyday humiliations. “In Talaja prison the superintendent expected prisoners to remove their footwear when they met him during his rounds,” Dhawale said. “I refused and protested against it. Casteism was rampantly practised there.”

Dhawale was transferred to the *anda cell* after this episode.

Sagar Gorkhe, a member of Kabir Kala Manch cultural troupe who is also accused in the Bhima Koregaon case, was shifted to the *anda-cell* after he protested against being forced to take off his footwear in the presence of the superintendent.

“Oppression of Dalits and Muslims is openly practised in prisons,”

Dhawale said. Dalits, he said, are made to clean the prison gutters. The Supreme Court’s *verdict* in October 2024 banning the caste-based work allocation has had no impact on the jail practices, Dhawale said.

Dhawale claimed that at least three inmates have died in Talaja prison in the last four months. “Delay in treatment is the biggest problem,” he said. “Many don’t even reach the hospital for treatment. They die in jail.”

When the Covid-19 pandemic broke in 2020, prisons in the initial months had no kits to test inmates. “Many had fever in the barracks,” Dhawale said. “I had too. The prison staff gave us paracetamol. That’s it.”

While each prisoner is entitled to 145 litres of water per day according to jail manuals, Dhawale said they would receive 16 litres to 20 litres and were forced to pay for water.

The idea of a prison is to deflate all hope, he said. “If the government is able to arrest senior politicians, we don’t really matter,” he said. “These arrests make one thing clear: dissent will not be tolerated.”

Dhawale said the Bhima Koregaon arrests are an example of how the state can conspire against its own citizens and plant evidence to implicate them. “Our arrest was the beginning,” he said. “This will continue for them to remain in power”. □□□

[Source: Scroll.in]

KUMBHA DEATH TOLL: 30, 54 OR MORE?

Recalling ‘Mother of 1084’

Vikas Kumar

MAHASHWETA DEVI’S novel *Mother of 1084* tells the story of a mother who discovers that her son lies in a police morgue as corpse number 1084. A similar situation has unfolded in the aftermath of the Maha

Kumbh stampede, where bodies in the morgue have been marked with numbers. The story of *body number 54* is one such case. If the official death toll stands at 30, then what does *number 54* signify?

Anil Sarathe did not receive a

government ambulance, so he had to spend nearly Rs 40,000 to take his loved one’s body home.

At the very Maha Kumbh where flowers were showered from helicopters, grieving families struggled to find a government ambulance to transport the bodies of their loved ones. The same event, hailed as the largest high-tech fair on sand, handed out handwritten scraps of paper instead of official death cer-

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tificates to the deceased's families.

Despite the deployment of 50,000 police personnel and AI-based 360-degree surveillance cameras, authorities claimed a stampede had occurred, yet police officials stated they had no knowledge of it. In a gathering where real-time pilgrim counts were available, why did it take 17 hours to report the death toll?

The stampede on 29 January claimed many lives. While the official death toll is 30, eyewitnesses and documents obtained suggest the number is significantly higher. Additionally, the list of missing persons is long.

How many more stories of separated loved ones need to be told? The real question now is about accountability—exposing the truth behind official claims and determining responsibility. The answers must come from those in charge of the Maha Kumbh.

Mahendra Mishra from Azamgarh was handed a small piece of paper along with his wife's body. It contained her Aadhaar number and the date.

But the most striking detail was the number 54 written at the bottom. This raises two key questions:

1. Why is there no signature from a doctor or any official on the paper?
2. What exactly does number 54 signify?

"Apart from the paper, my mother also had the same number written on her hand. Not just that—this number was also marked on the covering in which her body was wrapped", said son of the deceased Ravi Kala.

No one knows what this number represents. Is it a body number or something else? The government has officially stated that 30 people died in the tragedy. But if this number represents a corpse count, does that mean the actual death toll is 54—or even higher?

Mahendra Mishra's case is not the only one. Surjeet Poddar from Kolkata and Dulal Bhuniya from West Medinipur, who lost his sister in the tragedy, also did not receive official death certificates.

Instead, Mahendra was given another handwritten document from his local police station. Yet again, no official signature was present. However, the document clearly stated that Ravi Kala died in the Prayagraj Maha Kumbh stampede.

Anil Sarathe, a resident of Narmadapuram, Madhya Pradesh, lost his brother Umesh Sarathe in the stampede. When he reached Prayagraj to claim the body, he was not provided a government ambulance.

Neither the UP government nor the MP government helped the people who lost their relatives. W

Anil Sarathe, Resident of MP, lost his brother

The government claimed to have deployed 7,000 buses for the Maha Kumbh. Yet 70-year-old Balikaran Singh and his 60-year-old wife, Devi Singh, had to walk 60 kilometres on foot to return home after the stampede.

Senior Superintendent of Police (SSP) Rajesh Dwivedi outrightly denied that a stampede took place.

'There was heavy crowding, due to which some devotees were injured.'

Officer on Special Duty (OSD) Akanksha Rana admitted that some barriers at Sangam Nose had broken, causing a chaotic situation, but insisted: "Some people were injured. There is no serious situation."

UP Minister Sanjay Nishad, a cabinet minister dismissed the incident.

'In such a massive event, minor incidents happen.'

UP CM Yogi Adityanath's post on X:

An official post claimed that

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bathing at all ghats was peaceful and urged people not to believe in rumours.

Despite the tragedy occurring overnight, there was no official acknowledgment of deaths throughout the next morning and afternoon. Meanwhile, as the Shankaracharyas performed the 'Amrit Snan' and Naga Sadhus waved their swords; helicopters continued showering flowers on the devotees.

Yet, no official death toll was released for nearly 17 hours.

Finally, at a press conference held much later, Maha Kumbh DIG Vaibhav Krishna revealed:

- 30 devotees had died
- 60 were injured

The authorities effectively blamed the crowd for the incident.

But the real question is: Who was responsible for controlling the crowd?

The biggest unanswered question remains:

- What does Number 54 mean?
- Did the government truly not know the actual number of deaths?
- What about eyewitness accounts stating that the death toll could be 100-150?

The question remains—who is responsible for this massive tragedy and so many deaths? □□□

(Source: *The Quint*)

BOOKS IN BRIEF

'Lal Chowk' Joydip Ghosal 'Gaza: A History' Shahruk Ahmed Mazumdar

LAL CHOWK, THE STORY of the Ongoing Conflict between New Delhi and Kashmir (Speaking Tiger) by Dharmesh Chaubey encompassed recent history as well as numerous stories of discontent and torture and of course muffled voices. All the pains and cries remained subdued under the humongous weight of jingoism.

This living and comprehensive document tried to view Kashmir from the perspective of Kashmiriyat with its fearless depiction of terrifying reality of the land. With utmost honesty he showcased Kashmir not merely as a piece of land but had tried to delve deeper into the cause of the sob and agony of the people cutting across different sections of society. Everyone had their own opinion about Kashmir. These opinions often excluded the Kashmiris. Used as convenient ruse Kashmir was used to spread communal discord. Sources of information were so filtered that it was hard for an average Indian to comprehend what an average Kashmiri felt. In this book the author tried to look at the

politics of optics. This book tried to offer multiplicity of reality that was kept hidden in the heart simmering discontent. He discussed how the people of Jammu and Kashmir perceived Kashmir and how Kashmir was viewed in New Delhi. This book also threw light on the human rights situation in Kashmir and it contained a detailed discussion on the condition of women in conflict. Apart from that this book tried to document the situation that prevailed after the abrogation of article 370. This book also contained detailed interviews with the leaders of mainstream political parties.

This book was originally written in Hindi. The author Rohin Kumar is an eminent journalist who has written for The Telegraph, Asia Democracy Chronicles, Al Jazeera. The translator Dharmesh Chaubey is a queer poet, activist and translator from Allahabad. Placing Kashmiris at the centre of narrative this incisive book raised certain pertinent questions regarding elusive normalcy, identity. Manoj Kumar Jha had written the foreword. According to him this book had tried to capture the es-

sence of Kashmir. As a non-partisan account this book has done a commendable job in trying to capture multiple perspectives on Jammu and Kashmir. Through a meticulously built narrative it placed Kashmiris at the centre. The author intimately conversed with Kashmiris from all walks of life- parents seeking justice for the dead, security personnel who justified their excesses, youths resorted to stone pelting. This book deftly peeled off the layers like human rights abuses and increasing militarisation in the valley. This book is an intrepid depiction of harsh truth. Sensationalist coverage of Kashmir had helped the author understand more about how not to report than how to report. The book brought out the human aspect of Kashmir in people's consciousness and produced a constructive discourse.

GAZA: A HISTORY

Professor Jean-Pierre Filiu's book, 'Gaza: A History', which John King translated, is divided into five sections and sixteen chapters. It covers the history of Gaza from the time of the Pharaohs to the arrival of Islam and the period when Palestine was under British Mandate.

The second section examines the period from 1947 to 1967. The Nakba of 1948 is regarded from the perspective of all of Palestine, with a focus on how it affected Gaza, which became an area for refugees from

other regions of the country following the foundation of the state of Israel.

Prof Filiu begins his description of the region's history by tracing its position at the crossroads of empires for thousands of years. He then soon shifts the focus to the 20th century and the beginnings of the ongoing conflict, which has not only been a source of contention for several decades but has also dominated news headlines for more than a year. The British advance into Gaza under General Allenby coincided with the Balfour Declaration's announcement on November 2, 1917. Britain was occupying Gaza while also promising it to other people.

Gaza is situated between Egypt, Israel, and the Mediterranean Sea. A little over 1.6 million people spend their days in what has been called "the largest open-air prison in the world." The author emphasises how the Palestinian forces themselves are divided, with the Palestinian Authority, led by Fatah, governing the West Bank and Hamas essentially controlling Gaza.

Hamas has had control of Gaza

for nearly 20 years. After winning 74 of the 132 seats in the Palestinian Legislative Council (PLC) in the January 2006 elections, Hamas was met with conditions from the West in exchange for acknowledgment of their electoral victory. These included a commitment to nonviolence, recognition of Israel, and adherence to existing agreements.

The Israelis' plan to bar any Hamas delegates from Gaza from attending PLC meetings in the West Bank contributed to the group's forced withdrawal into Gaza and deepened divisions already prevalent in the Palestinian camp. In

In June 2007, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas declined to visit Gaza, adding to the division between Hamas and Fatah, with Hamas controlling Gaza and Fatah controlling the West Bank.

However, the history of Gaza and the Palestinian cause is a history of Israel's failure to acknowledge the Palestinians' rightful claim to their own state. It is a history of Israel upholding that stance and behaving without consequence for many years, despite multiple UN resolutions stating Palestinians' rights

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to their own state. It chronicles the international community's failure to take any enforcement measures that would force Israel to engage in meaningful negotiations over a two-state solution.

At a time when Israel's blockade and corrupt politics are causing Gaza to become more and more isolated from the rest of Palestinian society and the outside world, resulting in a humanitarian crisis, this book not only demonstrates that Gaza has always been and will continue to be relevant in history, but that it has also been destroyed numerous times but has rebuilt itself and survived.

□□□

SHER SINGH

'Many Straws Make a Nest'

Harsh Thakor

SHER SINGH'S DEATH, ON January 25th at the age of 75, left an irreparable loss to the labour movement in Faridabad and the areas around NCR Delhi. Wherever there was a labour struggle going on, the workers would find Sher Singh participating with heart and soul.

His character blended the tenacity and courage of a soldier with the originality and imagination of an artist. Rebellious against conventional norms and innovating new methods characterised his life's work.

Even if one disagreed with him, he was ever tolerant and opened avenues for a critical debate. He had immense patience even with those who did not respond to his outreach and messages.

Ideologically he was at cross roads with many of his colleagues harbouring deep disagreements with him on the issue of labour organising.

He profusely professed and engaged in breaking away from all past conventions in trade Union movement, with his work sowing

seeds to breed innovative experiments.

Everyone who visited him in Autopin slum, Faridabad, felt at absolutely at home with him. One could meet him at any time, without any prior appointment. The slum was small and cramped, with low ceilings, just like hundreds of thousands of similar places around the country where the working poor made homes for themselves in wretched surroundings.

Sher Singh was brought up in Hisar, with his father serving in the British Army. He had the rich grounding of excelling in an elite military school in Belgaum; higher education in BITS Pilani and elsewhere. He

earned his baptism into political activism during the Emergency. He recounted his incompetence and failures in working for social and political change, with his views and activism were shaped by agreements and disagreements with fellow travellers.

Faridabad Mazdoor Samachar [FMS] was an epitome of innovation. Publishing it every month without a break since 1982 and then distributing it among workers in Faridabad, Okhla, Kapashera and Manesar along with his colleagues was his most commendable achievement.

FMS mainly concentrated on the lives and concerns of daily wage workers.

After ceasing publication of FMS during Covid, he engaged on a mission of interacting with workers and friends of workers across the country, resurrecting his youthful spirit of yesteryears. He began documenting important materials from previous issues while sharing them with people on WhatsApp. For the last 2 years, he was regularly touring the whole of India and kept narrating his journey and conversations with labourers on WhatsApp.

His German colleagues had made a film on his work, 'Many Straws

Make a Nest': A Documentary about Proletarian Unrest in Delhi's Industrial Belt.'

His analytical critique of the bureaucracy and rigid structure of the central and established trade unions drew many students/youth towards formulating alternative trade union concept and politics.

Long before the intervention of social media, scores of people were drawn by Sher Singh's personality and charisma. When referring to trade union movement, he diagnosed that in this phase of the capitalist era when the Factory Fortress System was replaced by an Industrial Hub like IMT-Auto Hub, the union of organised and unorganised workers would serve no purpose.

Sher Singh affirmed that there should be a common ground or place where formal and informal workers can assemble and share their experiences and ideas.

He was equally critical of harbouring personality cult of leader in trade unions as well as analysis of mysterious spontaneity.

Sher Singh was sceptical of unrepresentative and hierarchical unions, where the rank-and-file workers had no role other than following the diktats of the leadership. Instead, he advocated self-activity

among the workers, a key theme running through the length and breadth of the Faridabad Majdoor Samachar archive.

He advocated "Morphic Resonance", suggesting organisation could function without conventional meetings, speeches and leaders. His slogan was "Synergy, Exchange, Dialogue, Invitation."

A pamphlet (online) titled A Ballad Against Work, published by Majdoor Library in Autopin Jhuggi conveys the changing nature of employment and how the workers reconciled themselves with such changes. It navigated acts of resistance against the backdrop of the dynamics of the country's broader labour movement.

He played a pivotal role in steering of the Maruti movement. In June 2011, when Maruti workers staged a sit-in strike for 13 days inside the company, everyone, including the progressive media, acknowledged that Maruti workers had established control over the factory.

Sher Singh reported in his magazine and in conversations that "In June 2011, the workers of A and B shifts together eradicated the control of the company and the government from the factory."

□□□

LUIGI MANGIONE

Health Business—the Vicious Circle

Aunindyo Chakravarty

AMERICA HAS A NEW FOLK hero who happens to be a murderer! And it is because he has struck right at the heart of the most desperate aspect of life in the US—health insurance.

Now, people are writing viral songs about Luigi Mangione, the man who allegedly murdered the CEO of a big health insurance company, shooting him dead.

But there's virtually zero sympathy for the man who was killed in cold blood. All because he led a health insurance company which had rejected a large number of claims.

While the health system in the US has been a sore spot for American capitalism for decades, now it seems to have reached a tipping point. Insurance companies have taken off the names and photo-

graphs of their CEOs from their websites, fearing copycat attacks.

The US might be an extreme case, but when it comes to the cost of health, India seems to be heading that way.

Take me, for instance. I have paid Rs 1, 62,500 as health insurance premium for my family of four. This includes something called 'critical care' insurance, where you get a lumpsum in case you are diagnosed with a life-threatening condition. Spread this across year, and my monthly average cost of medical insurance comes to about Rs 13,500.

And this does not cover outpatient visits to a doctor, or medicines that we buy for common ailments, or periodic vaccines.

So, I am paying through my nose not for an illness that I have actually got, but to derisk myself for the possibility that I might fall ill sometime in the future. That is because one episode of hospitalisation, in any big city, can wipe out a significant chunk of a family's savings

What is worse is that, even after paying these hefty premiums, there is no guarantee that your insurer will pay out the full cost of hospitalisation. While Indian insurers have a decent claim settlement ratio—the number of payouts per 100 claims—they often don't pay the full amount that a hospital charges.

This is because insurance agreements often have a clause which says that the insurer will only pay if hospitalisation was necessary, and the patient was being 'actively' treated.

To understand why this can be a huge problem for a patient, let's take a hypothetical, but highly probable case.

Imagine that you go to your doctor with chronic pain in your left flank. Your doctor sends you for a scan to see whether you have kidney stones. Indeed, there are two large stones in your left kidney – and there's one that has descended and is stuck in the ureter.

Your doctor says she wants to keep you under observation and see if the stones can be flushed out without surgery. You get admitted into the hospital. A battery of tests is run in the first two days. You are given a lot of liquids, but to no avail. Finally, on the third day the stones are removed in the operation theatre.

Normally, you would be discharged after 24 hours of treatment, but you are mildly diabetic and have high blood pressure. So, your

doctor says she would like you to stay on in the hospital for another day.

By the time you leave, you have run up a huge bill. Luckily you have medical insurance. But your insurance company says it won't pay the entire amount.

Your surgery and the next 24 hours would be covered, but nothing else, since the rest of the tests and the days in hospital were neither necessary, nor were you being 'actively' treated.

So, despite paying a hefty health insurance premium, you might still end up paying as much as 30-40 percent of your hospital bill out of your own pocket.

Who is to blame for this? Unfortunately, it is built into the health business itself.

Hospital managements are willing to pay doctors high salaries and bonuses provided they can get more of their patients admitted to the hospital. This is sometimes referred to as the IPD/OPD conversion ratio, or the rate at which a visiting patient can be converted into an 'inpatient'.

Hospitals also gain when a patient is prescribed several diagnostic tests. An admitted patient gets all their tests done in house, instead of going to some other diagnostic lab. This increases the hospital's earnings.

It is also an open secret in medical circles that the real money is made by surgeons. Medical students are willing to pay crores in capitation fees to learn surgery. They then are tempted to be trigger-happy with surgical procedures to earn back the massive fees they had paid as students.

Of course, hospitals encourage this too, leading to an epidemic of unnecessary surgeries across the world. One report suggests that over 200,000 unnecessary back surgeries were done in the US in just three

years between 2019 and 2022. Similarly, an Indian study from 2015 estimated that more than 40 percent of surgeries it examined were unnecessary.

Medical insurance companies are aware of this. Long hospital stays and surgical procedures that could have been avoided force them to pay much more than they plan for. This eats into their profits. So, the only way they can deal with it is to reject claims or pay less than what a hospital bills the patient.

It's the patient who is squeezed between the two. They can neither question an authority figure like a doctor, nor can they stop paying their health insurance premium.

Only strict oversight, and regular intervention, by the state can solve this problem. But instead of doing that, the government seems to be happy to join in the game of extracting rent from the average citizen. What else can explain that we still pay 18 percent GST on the already bloated medical insurance premiums?

(Source: *The Quint*)

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LETTERS

“A Republic Must Not Kill Its Own Children”

Four student activists (Gaurav, Gauraang, Kiran and Rahul) of Bhagat Singh Chhatra Ekta Manch (bsCEM) from Delhi University were detained by the police and taken to Vasant Kunj police station at 3am on 4th February and their phones were seized. They were doing wall paintings against **Operation Kagar**—a genocidal military operation undertaken in Bastar by the BJP government which is claimed to be the “final solution” to the Maoist insurgency but murdering numerous adivasis as well as the revolutionary communists. The wall paintings also condemned the recent Tolimeta fake encounters in Bijapur district of Bastar and wrote the famous Supreme Court verdict given upon fake encounter of Maoist leader Azad—“A Republic must not kill its own children”.

The activists were kept in illegal detention for more than 12 hours and were not allowed to contact anyone. Around 12 pm the police lied about releasing them but they were still not picking up calls. After further enquiry, it was discovered that the students concerned were still kept in Vasant Kunj police station and were being illegally investigated by the same NIA and IB team that had carried out the previous illegal investigation of bsCEM in May 2024. The four had been brutally assaulted by the police and intelligence officers for hours before and during the investigation. Gauraang had been beaten up so much for more than half an hour that his ear was bleeding.

The walls of JNU are everywhere adorned with wall paintings by ABVP, NSUI and even left student groups. But it is because of the content of the wall paintings that bsCEM is being targeted and attacked by the government and its

repressive agencies like NIA and IB. There is a complete suppression of any news of the genocidal war being waged by the government in Bastar to facilitate corporate plunder of the land, forest and water of adivasis. More than 300 people were killed in 2024, most of them being adivasi civilians killed in fake encounters. Even the maoists that were killed were killed in staged encounters and mostly were unarmed combatants. There have been proven cases of gross violations of human rights and democratic rights. At such a time the attempt by bsCEM to register dissent against the war being waged against the people of the country by the government was an obstacle for the government’s genocidal and pro-corporate agenda.

Gurkirat Kaur

Executive Committee Member

Bhagat Singh Chhatra Ekta Manch

AAP is Gone

Financial Times pointed out that the Aam Aadmi Party (AAP), once seen as a strong regional force, now faces an existential crisis. “Delhi was AAP’s last stronghold. Losing it to the BJP puts serious questions on its national ambitions”.

For one thing the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP) was all through this period, i.e. 2014 onwards, outright sweeping the parliamentary poll in Delhi.

The AAP is still running a (full-scale) state government in Punjab. But, this big electoral defeat in Delhi—its presumed home ground—is no doubt a stunning setback.

The AAP was a middle class fantasy come true. An apolitical, or even anti-political, (post-ideology?) political party.

There’s a large overlap between the BJP and AAP constituencies.

So much so that in November 2014, in the run-up to the Delhi state poll, for a (short) while, the AAP slogan was: Modi for PM, Arvind for CM.

During the campaign for the last Gujarat poll, Kejriwal raised the demand that Indian currencies must carry the images of goddess Lakshmi and Lord Ganesha—together with that of Gandhiji, in order to cure the ills of the Indian economy.

AAP supported the scrapping of J&K’s special status while most of the opposition parties, especially Congress, firmly opposed.

The Delhi government run by the AAP provided the requisite permission to book student leader Umar Khalid under the draconian UPA in the context of the Delhi riots.

And this time round, Kejriwal has promised Rs18, 000 per month to (only) temple priests and gurudwara granthis if reelected. Kejriwal’s penchant for sensationalising issues is also quite similar to that of the BJP.

Modi is, however, a true-blue autocratic ruler pretty much implementing the RSS agenda and thereby falls in a different category altogether.

Quite significantly, this time round, no one has yet screamed EVM! Not even Kejriwal.

14 of the 22 seats won by the AAP out of the total 70 come from the constituencies dominated by the poor/Dalits/Muslims.

These had once been traditional Congress strongholds.

Once the AAP is ousted from power, it remains to be seen whether the loyalties of these constituencies would again switch back.

Sukla Sen

Low Voter Turnout

Despite having a total voting population of 96.8 crore, only 64.2 crore voted during the hot summer months of April and May. This is highly disheartening and raises the question of why such a large number of eligible voters chose not to exercise their democratic right.

The months of April and May in India are characterised by scorching

heat and high temperatures. This makes it difficult for people, especially the elderly and those with health issues, to venture out and stand in long queues to cast their vote.

Also many people have to travel to their native villages or hometowns to vote, which can be a costly and time-consuming process.

Moreover, the summer months are also peak season for agriculture and many people, especially in rural areas, are occupied with farming activities, leaving them with little time to vote.

Apart from time(months), efforts should be made to spread awareness about postal and proxy voting options, which can be utilised by individuals who are unable to physically go to the polling booths.

Additionally, the government can also provide incentives or concessions to those who make the effort to vote during these hot summer months.

T S Karthik, Chennai Oppose All Wars

“The war massacre in Ukraine continues, affecting populations on both sides of the war line. While Putin’s army bombs Ukrainian cities, the Ukrainian government has turned them into prisons for a significant portion of the local population. People are being maimed, imprisoned, raped and murdered as a result of the actions of the rulers in the Kremlin and Kiev.

War and nationalist propaganda are deceiving and manipulating people, while at the same time obscuring important facts. Among other things, for example, the fact that the State borders in Ukraine are closed to men of conscription age. They are guarded by the army, which sends men to prison, shoots them and drowns them in the river when they try to cross the border to safe place. Army gunmen also chase men in the streets to drag them to the front and use them as “cannon

fodder”. Yes, this is the same Ukrainian army that is praised by many as if it was a noble form of liberation institution. If one looks to Russia, one can see a similarly disturbing reality. For the slightest protest against the war, people end up in prison; forced mobilisation has obliged many proletarians to flee or go into hiding. Deserters, saboteurs and conscientious objectors are massacred, judged and imprisoned in Russia, as well as in the Ukraine.

It is necessary not only to condemn and criticise it, but also to give practical support to those who are concerned, i.e. deserters, rebels, saboteurs, refugees, those who avoid forced conscription to the front and many others. It is necessary to stand consistently against Putin’s aggressors, as well as against aggressors acting at the instigation of the Ukrainian Government.

The *Anti-Militarist Initiative (AMI)* is therefore launching a public fundraising campaign starting the 1 February 2025. The money raised will support proletarians from Russia and Ukraine who are trying to avoid mobilisation, who have deserted, who face repression or are trying to save their lives by fleeing a war zone.

Anti-Imperialist Initiative 4th Dalit Literature Festival

11th February 2025. A press conference was held at Aryabhata College, University of Delhi (South Campus) for the 4th Dalit Literature Festival (DLF), where the dates for the festival were officially announced with the theme, “World Peace is Possible through Dalit Literature”. The festival would take place on February 28th and March 1st, 2025, at the Aryabhata College, University of Delhi (South Campus), which is organised by Ambedkarvadi Lekhak Sangh (ALS) in collaboration with Aryabhata College, University of Delhi (South Campus), Dalit Adivasi Shakti Adhikar Manch

(DASAM), and other organisations.

At the press conference, Prof. Suraj Badiya and Sanjeev Kumar Danda, founder of the Dalit Literature Festival, stated, “As the world faces various conflicts, the theme of this year’s DLF stands as “World Peace is Possible Through Dalit Literature”.

[For more information, please contact: 8491052270, 9599295017, 7503655071]

Ambedkarvadi Lekhak Sangh,
Aryabhata College,
University of Delhi (South Campus),
Dalit Adivasi Shakti Adhikar
Manch (DASAM), Ridam Patrika,
Magadh Foundation, PMARC

Spreading Misinformation

Citizens for Justice and Peace [CJP] looks back on a year of tackling hate speech and media bias. News channels repeatedly aired divisive content, prompting protest action. From misrepresenting communities to spreading inflammatory rhetoric, CJP filed multiple complaints against Aaj Tak, Zee News, India TV, and Times Now Navbharat, holding them accountable. And these efforts led the News Broadcasting Standards Authority (NBSA) to issue warnings and mandate content removals, reinforcing the need for responsible journalism.

CJP complaints led to landmark NBSA rulings:

*Hate-filled broadcasts removed: Content falsely portraying ‘Mazaar Jihad’ and ‘Madrasa Terrorism’ was ordered to be taken down from platforms.

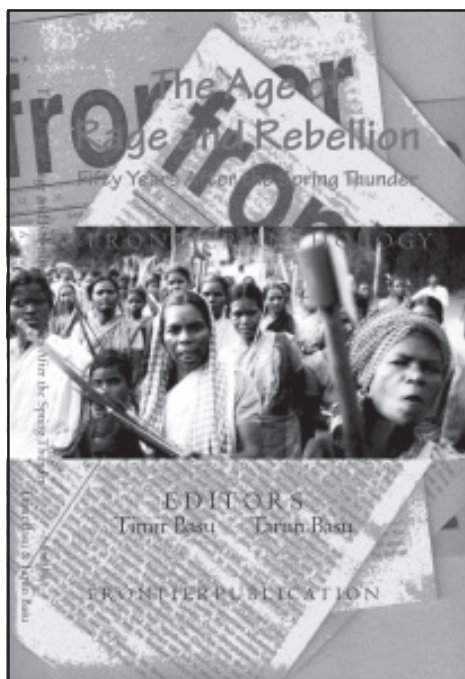
* Broadcasters held accountable: Channels received warnings for failing to maintain journalistic objectivity, with directives for corrective measures.

*Precedents set for media responsibility: The NBSA’s strict stance signals to news outlets that spreading misinformation will not go unchecked.

Citizens for Justice and Peace

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