

frontier

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Justice and Punishment

CONCERNS ARE MOUNTING AS INDIA REPLACES COLONIAL-era laws with new criminal codes. The new laws are likely to throw the age-old criminal justice system into total disarray. The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023 has replaced the Indian Penal Code, 1860; the Bharatiya Sakshya Adhinyam, 2023 replaces the Indian Evidence Act, 1872; and the Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Sanhita, 2023 has been implemented in place of the Code of Criminal Procedure, 1882.

The new laws were approved by parliament in December, 2023 during Modi's previous term, with the government saying they aim to "give justice, not punishment". It says they were needed as colonial laws had been at the core of the criminal justice system for more than a century.

Among the key changes is replacement of the sedition law frequently used as a tool of suppression, after its enactment under British colonial rule to jail Indian freedom fighters. Kashmiri people know how sedition law is used indiscriminately.

Laws dealing with sexual assault have been strengthened, while a previous law criminalising sodomy has been removed. Other key changes include the amount of time police can hold a suspect rising from 15 days to 60, and, in some special cases, up to 90. One's chances of getting bail before 60 or 90 days will be remote as new laws are being implemented. The revised laws removing old sedition laws will be more cumbersome and oppressive than ever. Any person talking about federalism may be booked as separatist and tried under the provision of 'Separatist Activities'. The provisions are scripted to give jail, not bail.

These codes were rolled out without a discussion in the parliament. In truth it would worsen an already glacially slow pace of justice. There was no debate in parliament before passing the crucial laws. The bills were never sent to a Parliamentary Standing Committee for review but submitted as a supplementary agenda item and passed when 146 members were absent due to their suspension by the speaker.

For one thing the new laws will give power to the police to decide on a case when previously it was up to the judge to decide if a case could proceed to trial. For offences that award imprisonment from three to seven years, it would be at the discretion of the police completely whether to register an FIR or not. Every complaint must be registered as a First Information Report (FIR) as per Supreme Court order. No, it is no longer necessary under the new

legislation. Those who come from the marginalised and economically backward sections of society or live far away in rural areas with little communications will be at the tender mercies of police stations. They are now transferring judicial functions to police. And they call it modernisation.

India already has a notoriously slow justice system, with millions of cases pending in courts at any time. Experts say, the changes could increase the number of cases awaiting trial by 30-40 percent, if not more.

Today, 34 million cases are pend-

ing before the courts across the country, and no end in sight. With every passing day the number is increasing. 1.7 millions are in different High courts, and 18,122 cases are in the Supreme Court. The oldest case still pending in the Indian court system goes back 38 years. 'Justice delayed is justice denied'. But it has no relevance in the judicial realm of Indian society.

The claim that the changes decolonialise the criminal procedure code is at worst spurious. Change in nomenclature from English to San-

skrit or Hindi doesn't make it modern or for that more Indian. Under the garb of modernising British era laws and Indianising them Modi's Bharatiya Janata Party in reality has made them more draconian. The new laws pose a serious threat to civil liberties and freedom of speech. Surprisingly, political parties, including left parties are not seriously opposing the new 'Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita'. They have taken it granted that Modi's authoritarianism cannot be challenged on the streets.

□□□

COMMENT

NATO Means War

NATO OBSERVED ITS 75TH anniversary in Washington reiterating its fresh commitment to war. The war business is going on for the last 75 years, since the war alliance began its journey. At times, it was cold, and at times, it was hot. Nato member states poured \$1.34 tn into their militaries last year—an increase of \$126 bn from 2022.

The summit had a specific backdrop—the Ukraine War. The military alliance likes to continue with its war in Ukraine. Its strategic target is strategic defeat of Russia. Ukraine is that move's staging ground.

Donald Trump formed another background of the war alliance, as the alliance leaders fear that there shall be problem with conducting the Ukraine War if Trump turns victorious in the upcoming US presidential election. Hence, the US domestic politics played a role in forming a backdrop of the summit. They like to have an arrangement that shall not flounder in its war in Ukraine if the US staggers due to Trump.

That means war shall continue in Ukraine, as is told by the summit promises, at least up to the end of current year.

But, the reality is different, which is difficult to find in the MSM—the mainstream media. Within the war

alliance's European members, confusion about prospect of their war's victory is gaining ground. There are sceptic members—not sure about the war alliance's victory. There are alliance members having another assessment—this war in Ukraine is impossible to win. Already, a number of experts in the mainstream have opined: Ukraine can never recover its lost territory. Today, a part of the mainstream is admitting what the Russians side reported months ago: Ukraine does not have the soldier-power to carry on the war, and Ukrainian armed forces are over-stretched, tired. This is the reality overwhelmed with real numbers, which none now denies.

Despite that, there were promises in the summit: the military alliance would send arms to Ukraine, so that Russia could be decisively beaten back. How far those promise shall materialise, and how far those promises can satisfy the war leaders is a real question, as arms sent to the Kiev regime could do no miracle—push back the Russians. There were a number of "game changers", as the mainstream media claimed. These "game changers", weapons claimed to be powerful, smart and unmatched, were sent to Ukraine, one after another, with the hope

that the "game"—war with Russia—would change.

But, the game denied to change. A few were not even sent in full strength to the war fields to face the Russians. But, alas! The Russians crippled those, whatever was sent to the war fronts. Within weeks, at least one weapon, touted as well-developed and precision-smart, was withdrawn from the war front, as it was found that the Russians were making them useless.

Rumours of removing Zelensky from the Kiev throne is abound for the last few weeks. But, removing this Kiev leader is not as easy as told. The complex operation has many factors involving many actors, as number of stakeholders in the Ukraine Theatre is many—from arms traders to bankers, from this country to that country.

However, the war alliance did not give up its unwritten fundamental position: expand the alliance, and find out excuses for self-existence by finding out new enemies. Now, the war masters' enemy is China. It has also been told that the alliance has possibilities to expand. Are not there areas expansion along the Western Balkans and the Black Sea? Alternatively, is it in Asia, Indo-Pacific region?

Anti-war peace movement should spread its message among the peoples in countries. □□□ 13-07-2024

[Contributed by Farooque Chowdhury]

NOTE

People Need a Different World

Bharat Dogra writes:

IT IS A WORLD WHERE WAR and conflict cause enormous distress, and in addition preparation of future war causes colossal waste of resources in the form of relentless, never-ending accumulation of weapons with ever-increasing capacity of destruction. Billions of dollars are wasted every year on creating this capacity of destruction which, if used more wisely and safely, can end all hunger, homelessness and deprivation. Already enough weapons of mass destruction exist to destroy almost all life on earth several times over but still the completely irrational destructive pursuit continues to take more and more sinister forms including moving towards preparations for space warfare. About a dozen serious environmental problems seriously endanger life on earth as also the basic life-nurturing conditions. An unacceptably high number of people suffer from hunger, homelessness and extreme forms of deprivation. Prevailing conditions of injustice and inequality also result in very high levels of economic difficulties for a very large number of people. High levels of social disintegration, alienation, depression, violence and self-violence in daily life every year cause enormous distress to increasing millions of people including children. Human actions lead to the greatest suffering, dangers and survival risks for

other forms of life.

Along this the need for military expenditures will decrease greatly and about 1500 billion dollars a year may be released for reducing environmental problems and meeting the basic needs of all people worldwide.

There must be a continuing worldwide campaign centered in all educational institutions and communities regarding rebuilding a world based on peace, environment protection and sustainably meeting the basic needs of all people.

For resolving environmental problems, the widely prevailing acquisitive and consumerist tendencies are a huge obstacle and instead the social values of frugality and voluntary acceptance of a simple life are needed. These social values should emphasise seeking happiness in good social relations and sharing rather than in endless pursuit of greed and luxury.

Resolving of all serious environmental problems and protection of all life forms should get very high priority.

The objectives of ending hunger, homelessness and other serious forms of deprivation should get equally high priority and must remain on top of the agenda till achieved.

A lot more effort should go into improving social relationships at all levels (family, community, workplace etc.), based on closer and more compassionate relations, while end-

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ing all forms of discrimination. Women should get much higher respect. All discord based on religions should end with leading spiritual leaders from all parts of world contributing to this and emphasising harmony among people of all religions.

In my book 'Earth without Borders' I have raised several possibilities of alternative world governance structures that may be needed for some of the most essential tasks like ending all weapons of mass destruction and resolving the most serious environmental problems. However at a broader level it is important to emphasize the need for a big and broad-based, continuing, sustained mobilization of people worldwide on the most important issues of peace, justice and environment protection. □□□

HUMRA QURAIISHI'S COLUMN

Hope against Hope

Humra Quraishi

AMIDST ALL THE DISTASTAKING place, with hundreds dying in the midst of stampedes and horrific road accidents and floods and the collapse of

big and small buildings and bridges and roads, what's more than worrying is the fate of those live!

Yes, it is an extremely worrying scenario where joblessness and un-

employment are concerned. Also, worries surmount on the educational sphere. What happens to our young! To the upcoming generation! In fact, the immediate focus should be on this. There ought to be every single effort on by parents and immediate family and also counsellors and support groups to keep the young going

strong, no matter how very bleak the future seems. Hope has got to stand out!

2 Birth Days

Come August and stand out the birthdays of two distinguished persons—writer & journalist Khushwant Singh and poet Gulzar.

Khushwant Singh

Khushwant Singh celebrated two birthdays—February 2 and August 15 ...Before I write any further let me hasten to add the 'why' to the two birthday celebrations. As he would explain: My father was certain I was born at the start of Spring, so February 2, my birthday date. But my paternal grandmother was more than sure that I was born in the midst of bhandon/monsoon, so August 15th my second birthday!

Born in 1915, in village Hadali in the Undivided Punjab, Khushwant lived life at his own terms. He spoke fearlessly. He wrote along the same strain. No contradictions. Just no hypocrisy. None of the modern day complications or gadgets. Till the end he hadn't got himself a computer and nor a secretary and not a mobile phone. As he would say, "Mere bas kanaheenhaiyeh sab ... I'm happy writing on a note pad."

The years that I'd been interacting with him there were those several of those offbeat aspects that had stood out. There were never

any sermons. Only subtle relays—that is, No wasting of time in gossip or in those useless wanderings. No facades, no communal biases, no lies and no deceit.

Khushwant detested the communal lot. "Today, my only worry is the rise in Right-wing fascist forces in the country ...the young, the present generation should be aware of the rise in communal politics and the dangers involved."

In an interview given to me shortly after his book 'The End of India' (Penguin) was published in the spring of 2003, he had said, "If we love our country we have to save it from communal forces. And though the liberal class is shrinking, I do hope the present generation rejects the communal and fascist policies."

Khushwant's views on death were stark, "I'm not scared of death. Death is inevitable so no brooding about it, be prepared for it, as Asadullah Khan Ghalib has aptly put across—'raumeinhairaksh-e-umarkahaandeykheeyethammey/naihaathbaag par hai nah pa hairakaabmein (age travels at a galloping pace/who knows where will it stop/we do not have the reins in our hands/we do not have our feet in the stirrups.)"

Poet Gulzar

Gulzar was born on 18 August, 1934. It's rare to come across a

poet whose eyes relay poetry. Look towards Gulzarsaab's emotion laden eyes ...There's something about his eyes, his very personality that impacts. Heady that impact, as one begins to read his verse, together with his views.

The more I read his verse I am left amazed by the expanse, that sheer sensitivity... Also, there's that stark simplicity in his words and verse. With that, that instant connect... Little wonder, his fans are spread out, right from our land to those other lands. After all, poets don't believe in boundaries or barriers.

And as I sit and read, rather re-read this volume which carries his 'conversations' with Nasreen Munni Kabeer, I feel it ought to be introduced in the school syllabi. Why? Because this volume carries not just his views and verse, but an entire philosophy to life".

And several years when Gulzar's story collection—'Half a Rupee Stories' (Penguin) was released in New Delhi, I couldn't attend its launch as one of my cousins had met with a fatal road accident in Uttar Pradesh so I had to rush there. On getting back it was touching to see that Gulzarsaab has dedicated one of his short stories in this collection, to me, with this accompanying one-liner—"We shared a lot of Kashmir though neither of us is from there." □□□

THE TROIKA DICTATORSHIP

Europe after the Global Financial Crisis

Marcello Musto

IN 2007, THE UNITED STATES was hit by one of the gravest financial crises in history, which soon affected Europe and plunged it into a deep recession. As the soaring public debt increased the dangers of insolvency, many countries had to resort to credits from the (so-called) Troika, consisting of the European

Commission, the European Central Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Nations at risk of default were granted loans in return for the introduction of rigid austerity policies, beside which the 'restructuring' measures of the 1990s seemed quite restrained.

The very term 'structural reforms'

underwent a radical semantic transformation. Originally, in the vocabulary of the workers' movement, it had indicated a slow but steady improvement in social conditions, but now it became synonymous with a profound erosion of the welfare state. The pseudo-reforms in question—regressions would be a better word—have cancelled a host of achievements and re-established legal and economic conditions reminiscent of the rapacious capitalism of the nineteenth century. This was

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the setting for a terrible recession.

The dominant classes fought with great determination against the subaltern classes, while the resistance of the latter has often been feeble, disorganised and fragmented. This has been the case both in the most developed capitalist heartlands, where the curbs on workers' rights have exceeded anything imaginable thirty years ago, and in the periphery of the world economy, where corporations (many of them multinational) exploit their workforce in extreme forms and ruthlessly strip countries of their precious natural resources. This has led to a huge growth in inequalities and a major redistribution of wealth in favour of the wealthiest inhabitants of the planet. Social relations have undergone profound changes, driven by job insecurity, competition among workers, commodification of every sphere of life, social warfare among the most impoverished strata, and a new, more invasive capitalism that corrupts people's lives and consciences in ways never seen before.

At the same time, the crisis in Europe has rapidly spread to the world of politics. In the last thirty years, decision-making powers have been increasingly transferred from the political to the economic sphere; economics now dominates politics and is often depicted as a separate realm unsusceptible to change, setting the agenda and ensuring that the key choices are outside popular control.

What used to be seen, not so long ago, as a field for political action is now governed by economic pseudo-imperatives, which, behind their ideological mask of non-politics, actually present a dangerously authoritarian form and a totally reactionary content. The most emblematic case in point is the Treaty on Stability, Coordination and Governance in the Economic and Monetary Union (TSCG)—the 'fiscal compact', as it is widely

known, that rammed the obligation of balanced budgets into the law of EU countries.

In building a wall to prevent national parliaments from taking independent decisions on political-economic objectives, the TSCG thus serves to undermine the social state in the most heavily indebted EU countries and threatens to deepen still further the economic recession.

Already the shift from proportional electoral systems towards others based on majority 'bonuses' of one kind or another, as well as anti-democratic tendencies to strengthen the executive against the legislative power, have undermined the representative character of national parliaments. But this latest transfer of power from parliament to the market and its oligarchic institutions is the gravest impediment to democracy in present times.

Stock-exchange indices, rating-agency assessments and the yield spread between government bonds are huge fetishes for contemporary society: they have acquired greater value than the people's will. Hence the decisions that cause most harm to the mass of the population are presented as absolutely indispensable for 'restoration of market confidence'.

At the most, politics is summoned to lend support to economics, as in the case of the banking bailouts in the US and Europe in the wake of 2008. The representatives of high finance needed public intervention to mitigate the devastating effects of the most recent capitalist crisis, but they stoutly refused to reopen discussion on the underlying rules and economic options.

Not even the rotation of centre-right and centre-left governments has changed the basic social-economic direction, since it is increasingly economics that determines the formation, composition and purpose of the administrations holding the reins of

power. Whereas, in the past, the main factor was the large sums of money given by 'vested interests' to the governments or parties they sought to control, as well as the shaping of the mass media in their service, the key element in the twenty-first century is, rather, the edicts issued by international institutions.

The clearest evidence of this came with the season of 'technocratic governments'. Luca Papademos and Mario Monti were appointed as prime ministers of Greece and Italy respectively, without the benefit of elections. During those years, some forces in the Socialist International took a path that ended in a similar way. Ideologically convinced that there was no alternative to neoliberalism, they allied with the forces of the European People's Party (EPP) group of centre-right parties and uncritically adopted the main elements of its approach to the economy and society.

The prototype of this tendency was the Grosse Koalition in Germany, the agreement whereby the German Social Democratic Party, in supporting Angela Merkel as chancellor from 2005 to 2009 and from 2013 to the present, has to all intents and purposes given up its autonomy. Other experiments in 'national unity' have occurred in southern Europe.

Since the election of Jean-Claude Juncker and Ursula von der Leyen as presidents of the European Commission, the grand coalition between the European People's Party and the Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats (S&D) has continued to govern the main institutions of the European Union. □□□

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STOP GENOCIDE!**Dismantle Injustice, Not Encampment**

[Following is a press statement sent by Dolores Chew on behalf of Women of Diverse Origins, Canada]

AT DAWN ON JULY 5, 2024, riot police from the Service de police de la Ville de Montréal (SPVM) forcibly evicted campers from the Palestine solidarity Al-Soumoud encampment, destroying part of its facilities. Later the same day, the homeless camp in Parc des Faubourgs was also dismantled.

Other Palestinian solidarity encampments have also been dismantled in Quebec and Canada in recent weeks. And today [July 9] McGill University has deployed private security to take down the Palestine solidarity encampment at the university that has been in place since April 29th.

Those opposed to the solidarity encampments spuriously but deliberately resort to issues of law and order, use of public space and fabricated allegations of fear and intimidation to distract from what needs to be the focus—the genocide that is continuing to unfold in Palestine and the way in which we as Montrealers, Quebecers, students,

workers by default are being made complicit in that genocide by taking our savings, etc. investing in businesses and financial institutions that are directly linked to the mass murder and on-going physical elimination of Palestinians.

The recently dismantled Al-Soumoud camp and the Désinvestir pour la Palestine collective pointed the finger at the 14.2 billion invested by the Caisse de dépôt et placement du Québec (CDPQ) in 87 companies linked to violations of international law and the rights of the Palestinian people. The Quebec government, for its part, is still holding out for the opening of a Quebec office in Israel.

This is part of a repressive logic of control and policing of public space and social struggles, particularly the struggle for Palestine and decolonial struggles on the unceded lands of Turtle Island by governments and institutions that carry out the bidding of corporations and financial elites, while ignoring the public will and the thousands who are opposed to them.

Rather than cease their complicity with the ongoing genocide in Gaza, and listen to the sounds and voices of the street, occupied by hundreds of thousands of protesters over the past 9 months, the regal institutions of Quebec and Canada refuse to accept their responsibilities and stubbornly endorse the crimes committed by the Zionist Entity against the Palestinian people. This is not democracy. This is not justice.

To date, in Gaza more than 186,000 have been killed (The Lancet) and over 80,000 wounded since the genocide in Gaza began. Many of the dead are women and children. There is also deliberate mass

starvation. Children are dying of starvation in staggering numbers. (UNICEF) Gaza, home to close to two million Palestinians has been turned to rubble by continuous attacks and bombardment. The massive destruction of infrastructure—homes, sewage treatment plants and destruction of hospitals have made life impossible, even as mothers try to provide some food in the most unimaginably difficult situations. The impact will be felt for generations as survivors live with amputations and trauma. At the same time attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank by Israeli army and Jewish settlers with fatalities, arrests and destruction of homes and sources of livelihood continue apace.

No other mass killing, destruction, consistent and deliberate attacks on hospitals and schools would be tolerated elsewhere. The dehumanisation of Palestinians and the prevalence of Islamophobia and Arabophobia contribute to the current situation. Palestinians are seen as expendable. And encampments are seen as the problem. Instead of addressing the reasons for the presence of encampments.

Women of Diverse Origins (WDO) denounces this complicity and calls for an immediate end to the financing of genocide and the various links with Israel. It also denounces the dismantling of various camps and the repression and violence that characterise the state's treatment of defenders of social causes, particularly Palestinian ones. WDO extends deepest solidarity to Palestinians and salutes the courage and steadfastness of those who have taken action via encampments to draw attention to the mass murder that is happening. 'Never Again' means 'never again' for all people. As a poster at the Parc des Faubourgs encampment put it, "Let's dismantle injustice, not encampments"!

Long live Palestine and all just causes! □□□

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NO BATHROOM BREAKS

Bashing Labour at Amazon India

Shahana Yasmin

NEARLY 90 PERCENT OF Amazon India's warehouse employees say they are not allowed sufficient time to use the restroom, according to a new survey that adds to a growing body of evidence of poor working conditions at the multinational corporation.

The results of the survey—conducted by the UNI Global Union, the Amazon India Workers Association and Jarrow Insights, a workers' cooperative based in London—are detailed in an exhaustive report on the conditions that warehouse workers and drivers of the e-commerce giant in India have to daily endure.

The survey, conducted online between 2 February and 22 March this year, records the responses of 1,238 Amazon India warehouse workers and 600 delivery drivers, accounting for 2 to 5 per cent of the company's warehouse and delivery workforce in the country.

It comes on the heels of a series of reports about hazardous working conditions at Amazon India's warehouses.

The Independent last month reported an incident at the company's Manesar warehouse in the northern Haryana state where workers were allegedly asked to make a pledge that they would not take any breaks, including to drink water or go to the bathroom, until they met their targets as they worked amid a brutal heat-wave.

India's labour ministry intervened after the national human rights commission asked for an investigation.

Responding to the ministry, Amazon India confirmed the incident but played it down as "unfortunate and isolated".

The survey paints a contradictory picture.

Nearly 81 percent of Amazon India warehouse employees say work targets set by the company are difficult or very difficult to achieve.

The targets are so demanding, in fact, they barely have time to rest, socialise and sometimes even eat.

"We aren't even able to talk to anyone at work due to work pressure," one warehouse worker tells The Independent, speaking anonymously for fear of reprisal.

The workers describe labouring for 10 hours straight on their feet in 35C heat, all for pay of Rs 10,000 (£94) a month.

A typical workday at the Manesar warehouse starts at 8.30am and ends at 6.30pm, with two 30-minute breaks in between. A worker in the inbound department unloads four trucks a day on average, each containing around 10,000 parcels. The number can go up when Amazon offers sales, according to The Indian Express.

Nearly 87 percent of the company's warehouse workers say they do not have enough time to use the toilet at work.

A worker who spends her day sorting products says managers come looking for employees they think take too long in the bathroom.

"The designated break rooms are small and unbearably hot, so many female workers end up resting in the bathrooms during their breaks," she says, responding to the survey.

"But managers come searching for us if they feel we have stayed too long, pressuring us to return to work."

Another worker says they are

ticked off for being late if they take more than 10 minutes in the wash-room.

Amazon claims the allegations are "factually incorrect and unsubstantiated".

"We have not been given access to the material being quoted by The Independent," a spokesperson for the company tells The Independent, referring to the survey.

"However, from the small amount of information that has been shared with us, we believe these claims are factually incorrect, unsubstantiated, and contradict what our own employees tell us directly. Moreover, the methodology to gather this data appears at best questionable and at worst deliberately designed to deliver on a specific narrative that certain groups are trying to claim as fact."

An internal survey conducted by the company shows that 87 percent of the workers at the Manesar facility are satisfied with their jobs, the spokesperson claims, "with as many as eight out of 10 recommending Amazon as a great place to work".

"The reality is there's nothing more important to us than the safety and wellbeing of our employees and associates, and we comply with all relevant laws and regulations. Our facilities are industry-leading and provide competitive pay, comfortable working conditions, and specially designed infrastructure to ensure a safe and healthy working environment for all," the spokesperson says.

The report by the worker associations, however, notes that Amazon enforces productivity targets through a "combination of human managers and automated systems" which creates an uncompromising structure and penalises workers for human error.

Amazon workers have previously said the rigid nature of the targets

and the attendance policy leads to many being blacklisted.

A blacklisted worker is essentially barred from ever working for Amazon again.

“They blacklist people on small issues, issue warning letters and terminate them from the company,” a worker says, responding to the survey. Another says workers “are placed in the identity blacklist” if they do not meet targets.

“If we miss a day due to health reasons or family emergencies, our IDs are blocked, impacting our livelihoods,” the Hindustan Times newspaper quoted an unnamed worker as saying.

The Amazon spokesperson claims the productivity targets are in keeping with industry practice.

“Like most companies, we have performance expectations for every employee and associate and we measure actual performance against those expectations. When setting those targets we take into account time in role, experience and the safety and wellbeing of our employees and associates,” the spokesperson says.

“We support people who are not performing to the levels expected

with dedicated coaching to help them improve. We are confident that our targets are comfortably achievable by the trained associates. We also expand the associate pool whenever we find it necessary.”

Worker associations, however, note that 44.9 percent of warehouse workers and 47.3 percent of delivery drivers feel the working environment at Amazon is unsafe.

The drivers say they have to resort to unsafe driving to meet targets. “Sometimes, due to delivery targets, we have to drive fast. Then, whom should we ask to look out for our safety? There is no hearing of our grievances,” the report quotes a driver as saying.

“The company says that the weight of an order is up to 40kg but we are given up to 70kg,” says another. “While carrying it, we have to take care of our own safety and that of others which sometimes leads to situations that can become very difficult.”

The report records 46.4 percent of Amazon India warehouse workers and 37.2 percent of drivers complaining that their salaries are insufficient to meet basic needs.

The financial strain is exacer-

bated by stagnating pay amid rising inflation. “I have been with Amazon for eight years. There has been no pay raise in four years. Now the new joining associates and the old associates are on the same salary,” says a warehouse worker.

Amazon says that it provides “fair and competitive wages” and regularly reviews its wage structure against industry benchmarks, “ensuring adherence to all applicable wage laws across the states where we operate”.

“Our comprehensive wage package aims to incentivise and reward our associates through a combination of fixed pay, monthly attendance bonuses, and additional incentives, enabling them to enhance their earning potential,” the company spokesperson tells The Independent.

“In addition, all associates working at our buildings are entitled to Provident Fund and Employees’ State Insurance Corporate benefits, in accordance with applicable laws. All associates have medical, personal accident and term insurance, over and above the minimum statutory requirement of ESIC.” □□□

[Courtesy: The Independent]

“SHOOT, COWARD”!

Strive to Be Like Che

*Carlos L Garrido
Edward Liger Smith*

THE FRENCH PHILOSOPHER Jean-Paul Sartre once called Ernesto ‘Che’ Guevara the “most complete human being of our age.” Today, 96 years after his birth, it is still difficult to find a better example of the socialist human being than the one who proclaimed courageously with his unforgettable last words, “Shoot, coward! You are only going to kill a man!” Che was for Fidel Castro “the most extraordinary

of [the] revolutionary comrades;” a man with an infectious character who organically lifted those around him to emulate his revolutionary virtues of “altruism,” “selflessness,” and the “immediate [and] instantaneous willingness” he had towards “carrying out the most difficult missions” for the socialist struggle.

In the field of ideas, in the field of feelings, in the field of revolutionary virtues, in the field of intelli-

gence, apart from its military virtues, where people feel the tremendous loss his death has meant for the Revolutionary movement.

The bourgeois Ideologues who serve as the theoretical and rhetorical mouthpieces of the capitalist ruling class will pile garbage on the reputation of any historical figure that successfully advances the struggle for socialism, Che Guevara is no exception. As he had already eloquently noted in a 1961 speech in Santa Clara,

“It is the nature of imperialism which bestialises men, turning them into wild blood thirsty beasts willing to behead, to kill, to destroy the last

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image of a revolutionary, of a partisan, of a regime that has either fallen under its boot, or still fights for freedom.”

However, Che lived his life in a way that made him exceedingly difficult for the bourgeois imperialist media to criticise. How can you, after all, criticise someone who fell defending “the cause of the poor and the humble of this Earth,” and that, as Fidel noted, did so in such “an exemplary and selfless way” that “not even his most bitter enemies dare to dispute?” Che believed that a necessary component in the construction of a socialist society is the creation of a ‘new socialist man,’ free of the selfish and individualistic traits that are common among individuals existing within capitalist relations of production. For Che, every revolutionary should strive to exemplify the new socialist man in their actions, through being honest, hardworking, incredibly studious, and willing to labour for the good of the collective society. This marks a radical transition away from the capitalist notion of growth centered on an individual’s accumulation of capital and commodities, and towards a socialist notion of growth centered on human flourishing – towards a notion of the human being as the unique expression of the ensemble of relations they are embedded in as individuals dialectically interconnected to the social. As Che told the Union of Young Communists (UJC) in a 1962 speech, “the young communist must strive to be the first in everything...to be the living example and mirror through which our companions who do not belong to the young communist see them.” This meant that young communists must be essentially human. To be so human you become closer and closer to perfecting the best attributes of being human. To purify the best attributes of man through work, studies, and the exercise of

continual solidarity with people and all people around the world. To develop to the maximum his sensibilities, to the point of feeling anguished when a man is assassinated in another corner of the world, and enthusiastic when in some corner of the world, a new flag of freedom is raised.

Che himself became increasingly disciplined as he got older and serves as a shining example of the socialist virtue-ethic he hoped would shape the next generations of Cuban communists. Since his death, generations of young Cubans have exerted themselves in the process of constructing the new socialist human being through the maxim: “pioneers for communism; we will be like Che.”

For Che, the transition to socialism could not just be reduced to changes in political economy, a fundamental transformation of the human being through the development of socialist culture was necessary. As Michael Löwy notes, Che held “the conviction that socialism is meaningless and consequently cannot triumph unless it holds out the offer of a civilisation, a social ethic, a model of society that is totally antagonistic to the values of petty individualism, unfettered egoism, [bourgeois] competition, [and] the war of all against all that is characteristic of capitalist civilisation [and] this world in which ‘man eats man.’” Not only was it necessary to raise the intellectual and cultural life of the mass of working people by developing “a consciousness in which there is a new scale of values,” but this transformation should not be limited to the ideological-political superstructure; it must also embed itself in the economic foundation of society through what he prescribed as the need for “a complete spiritual rebirth in one’s attitude toward one’s own work.”

Like any successful historical revolutionary, Che stressed the importance of reading and intensive study.

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Guevara himself was known to read incessantly throughout the entire course of his life. As a young boy playing soccer in Argentina, he would read Marxist theory while waiting to play on the bench, especially when horrific asthma attacks would pull him from the games. As the Cuban guerrillas waged their revolutionary struggle in the Sierra Maestra, Che would teach classes on Marxist economics and philosophy to the revolutionaries who would be tasked with managing Cuban society after the gangster dictator Batista was toppled. When he was in Africa at the forefront of anti-colonial struggles, he was reading none other than G W F Hegel. In this manner, in the germs of the Cuban revolutionary process Che had already planted the seeds for the creation of the new socialist man, and the elevation of the people's intellectual and moral life. The embryo of the proclamation Che made in *Socialism and Man in Cuba*, to have "society as a whole...converted into a gigantic school," was already being realised even under the extraordinarily difficult circumstances guerrilla warfare entailed.

Che understood that the education of the Cuban masses had very practical implications for the long-

term success of the Cuban revolution. When he was young, he had thought the US Rmpire was controlled by evil wizards and dark princes who wanted to rule the world and cared not who they slaughtered in order to do so. It was after reading books like Vladimir Lenin's *Imperialism: The Highest Stage of Capitalism* that Che came to understand that it was capital who perpetrated the violent imperialism he saw all around him in Latin America, rather than a diabolical cabal of evil wizards. It was the will of capital which dictated the murderous actions of the American Government in Guatemala, from which Che barely escaped with his life. If the people of Latin America could be made to understand this, it would be far more difficult for the US imperialists to convince them that it's in their benefit to reinstate capitalist relations of production—which the US often tries to do via propaganda and other techniques to foment colour revolutions.

After six decades of internationally denounced sanctions and hybrid warfare on Cuba, the blood soaked hands of the American empire have been unable to overthrow the construction of socialism in the country. Even in the periods where the US's

warfare on Cuba has produced the most formidable of challenges in attaining the necessary materials to ensure the subsistence of the Cuban people, the mass of Cubans have brazenly continued the revolutionary process, with the slogan of their Bronze Titan Antonio Maceo engraved on their chest – "Whoever tries to take over Cuba will only collect the dust of their blood-soaked soil, if they do not perish in the fight."

By studying the emphasis Che laid on developing the new socialist human being and the new socialist culture, one gives oneself the ability to understand the success of Cuban socialism more concretely. Additionally, for the Marxists currently fighting for the seizure of power by the working masses, studying Che's life and work reminds people of the necessary role the intellectual and moral leadership of the revolutionary vanguard plays in disarticulating working people away from bourgeois hegemony, and towards the new set of socialist ideals, passions, desires, and ethical life necessary for the attainment of a society free of alienation, oppression, exploitation, and war. □□□

[Courtesy: Midwestern Marx, a journal which presents an alternative socialist analysis to the dominant left today.]

CLIMATE CHANGE AND FOOD PRICES

Heat and Wheat

Biswajit Dhar

INDIA IS FACING A THIRD year of falling wheat production. The culprit? Heat. And climate change is pushing food prices. Shifting weather patterns are reducing crop yields and squeezing supplies, creating what could become a permanent source of inflation.

Yields of the country's second most important food staple have declined significantly in the past two years. In 2022, excessive tempera-

tures in March hit wheat production, lowering output by almost 4 million tonnes below the government's forecast of 110 million tonnes.

Studies show that the impact of "heat stress" was more evident in key wheat growing states of north India where wheat productivity declined significantly during the 2021-22 rabi or winter planting season (sowing in mid-November and harvesting in April-May).

In Punjab, for instance, the decline was 13.5 percent compared to the previous year. Scientists have estimated that for every 1 degree Celsius increase in temperature wheat production reduces by 4-5 million tonnes.

Worryingly, the adverse effect of "heat stress" is threatening to reverse the substantial improvements in wheat production India experienced between 2014-15 and 2020-21 when output increased from 86 million tonnes to 110 million tonnes.

In 2023, the official target for wheat output of 113 million tonnes was again down by almost 3 million

tonnes. This year, the government expects wheat output to be 110 million tonnes again, but the actual level will not be known for several months.

However, these figures are disputed by the main industry body, the Roller Flour Millers' Federation of India. It says wheat output levels were lower than those projected by the government by at least 10-14 percent. This year, the federation expects wheat production to be around only 105 million tonnes, 8 percent lower than government projections, although this would be about 3 percent higher than the federation's estimates of the previous year's output.

The decline in production over the past two seasons has reduced domestic availability of wheat, thus jeopardising the government's targets...

Lending credence to the estimates of the industry was the consistently lower-than-expected level of wheat procurement by the government. During the 2022-23 rabi marketing season, procurement by government agencies was 18.7 million tonnes as against the government target of 44.4 million tonnes, a 60 percent shortfall.

The following year, the 2023-24 marketing season, the government set a considerably lower procurement target of 34.2 million tonnes, but actual procurement was 26.1 million tonnes, almost a quarter lower.

Given the experiences of the past two rabi marketing seasons, the government lowered the wheat procurement target for the current season, 2024-25, further to 30-32 million tonnes. However, as in the past two seasons, actual procurement is expected to remain below the target. Latest estimates indicate that wheat procurement would be marginally higher than that of the previous year.

The decline in production over the past two seasons has reduced domestic availability of wheat, thus

jeopardising the government's targets on two fronts.

First, buffer stocks have come down, critical for providing subsidised food grains to the poor as well as for conducting open market operations necessary for keeping domestic wheat prices in check.

Secondly, lower output has affected the government's aspirations for transforming India into an agriculture export hub.

Export aspirations were fuelled during 2021-22, when India emerged as one of the major exporters of wheat, exporting a record 7.2 million tonnes of the commodity. But with wheat output declining in 2022 after increasing continuously for six years, between 2015-16 and 2020-21, the government banned wheat exports in order to "manage the overall food security of the country and control the increasing prices of food grains".

Even while imposing the export ban, the government decided to "continue with deals which are done directly with other governments" resulting in export of more than 4.6 million tonnes during 2022-23.

There is no doubt that India would find it difficult to enhance the production of wheat given the significant challenges posed by consistent increase in temperatures in the immediate pre-harvest phase.

But with wheat production declining during the year, continued wheat exports made its impact felt on the domestic food reserves. Buffer stock of wheat maintained by the Food Corporation of India (FCI), had dropped to 29.9 million tonnes on June 1, 2024, almost 4.7 percent lower than the 31.4 million tonnes a year ago. The current buffer stock level is at a 16-year low, slightly higher than the previous lowest wheat stock that was at 24.1 million tonnes on June 1, 2008.

Though the government claims that the existing level of buffer stock

is adequate for meeting any exigencies, there are indications that it is less certain than it professes.

That supply constraints have become an area of concern from the government stems from the fact that India has begun importing substantial quantities of wheat, the first time since 2017-18.

Imports began in June 2023 and have increased consistently since. Until April this year, total imports have been almost 115,000 tonnes.

There is no doubt that India would find it difficult to enhance the production of wheat given the significant challenges posed by consistent increase in temperatures in the immediate pre-harvest phase. Faced with similar imperatives to ramp up wheat production in the mid-1960s, the then government had adopted the green revolution with strong research support that allowed the realisation of the objective of food self-sufficiency.

The National Mission for Sustainable Agriculture (NMSA) is expected to play a similar role having been tasked with the responsibility of transforming Indian agriculture into an ecologically sustainable climate resilient production system. In addition, National Innovations in Climate Resilient Agriculture aims at "strategic research on adaptation and mitigation, demonstration of technologies on farmers' fields and creating awareness among farmers and other stakeholders to minimise the climatic change impacts on agriculture".

However, fiscal support for agricultural research has remained inadequate as increases in budgetary allocations have often not been increased in real terms, which shows a lack of political commitment in this vital area.

This situation needs to change quickly to prevent a catastrophic decline in wheat production. □□□

[Biswajit Dhar is Distinguished Professor, Centre for Social Development, New Delhi. Originally published under Creative Commons by 360info™.]

HEALTH FOR ALL

A Doctor's Day Pledge

Arun Mitra

EVERY YEAR FIRST JULY IS observed as the National Doctors Day to commemorate Dr Bidhan Chandra Roy, the second chief minister of West Bengal and a renowned physician, who was born and passed away on this day. This is a special occasion for medical practitioners to introspect the profession's contributions, achievements and present state of affairs and to draw strategies for future so as to strengthen the role of medical profession in building a healthy society. Therefore the celebrations on this day should not remain merely a ritual with doctors getting greetings from their friends, family members, and pharmaceutical companies. Many associations of the doctors organize seminars, medical camps, and other such activities on this day. However, a doctor is more than just a professional, and the practice of medicine is not only a profession but a passion. A doctor tries to allay both the physical and mental suffering of fellow human beings. It is therefore important that medics work for the betterment of health through scientific analysis of various factors involved in the causation of disease.

Through the advancement in science and various researches by far doctors have learnt that disease is

caused because of various factors and is affected by several socio-economic, environmental and political processes. From the ancient description of the diseases in different parts of the world, people have evolved modern scientific medicine which has tried to study the above-mentioned in an evidence-based manner.

Science has moved forward, and so has medicine. From the time of mythical treatments when man had little knowledge of the happenings around, the human society developed ways of medicine which played a big role during that period. However, advancing the existing knowledge the modern scientific developments in medicine changed the concept of pathological processes that caused the disease. The new technology during the recent period has speeded up the advances conceptually as well as in their application manifold.

It is however unfortunate that even today there exists gross inequity in the health care delivery system to various sections of population. This is true globally. The economic disparities between the erstwhile colonial powers and the present day developing countries are reflected in the healthcare delivery as well. This was very obvious during the global COVID pandemic. Many of

the developing countries lacked technical know-how and infrastructure for the management of COVID. They were exploited by the big pharmaceutical companies, particularly the vaccine-producing ones. The governments of these countries were made to sign one-sided agreements if they wanted to purchase vaccines.

As doctors, it is painful to see patients in such conditions dying without proper quality healthcare. Present-day public spending on health is only around 1.2% of the GDP against the required 6%. Doctors should impress upon the government to increase budget allocation to health.

There is need to increase wages of the population to strengthen their purchasing capacity, and to ensure healthy environment and good working conditions. A clean drinking water supply and healthy nutrition is the basic requirement to prevent diseases. There must be changes in the policies which effect health of the people.

It is a matter of great worry that there is increasing role of corporations in medical education and health provision. Their motive is only profit making which is against the basic concept of health for all. Doctors have to learn to resist the pressure of commercialization to fulfill the commitment to health to all. □□□

[Dr Arun Mitra is a Practicing ENT Surgeon in Ludhiana, Punjab. He is also the President of Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD) www.idpd.org; countercurrents.org]

TECH LAYOFFS 2024

Paradise is Crumbling

Bijin Jose

[As many as 1,04,410 employees have been laid off by 360 companies in the IT sector in 2024 so far.]

THE SPATE OF TECH LAYOFFS continues to impact thousands of tech professionals worldwide. It's only the fifth day of July, and thousands of working

professionals have already been impacted by the ongoing wave of job cuts. The latest to join the bandwagon is the Redmond tech giant Microsoft. The company has report-

edly laid off hundreds of employees in a fresh round of job cuts, impacting multiple teams and geographies.

The tech giant has not officially provided any details, however, several affected employees took to their LinkedIn accounts to express their displeasure. As reported by GeekWire, staff in the roles of product and program management have been affected the most. The same

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report also quoted a Microsoft spokesperson saying that organisational and workforce adjustments are necessary and a regular part of managing the business. “We will continue to prioritise and invest in strategic growth areas for our future and in support of our customers and partners.”

Sonja Delafosse, who has been working with Microsoft for nine years, was among the many laid off. Delafosse, who was serving as the director overseeing Microsoft’s AI professional development strategy, announced on LinkedIn that she was looking for a new role. “Hi everyone – I was impacted by the latest round of layoffs at Microsoft and am starting to look for a new role and would appreciate your support. Thank you in advance for any connections, advice, or opportunities you can offer,” wrote Delafosse.

It needs to be noted that Microsoft’s fiscal year ended on June 30, and the company is known to restructure its business at the start of the new fiscal year. In June, it was reported that Microsoft slashed around 1,000 jobs. The layoffs impacted the mixed reality department working on HoloLens 2 along with Azure for operators and Mission Engineering.

Even as Microsoft carries out yet another round of layoffs, another tech company has handed over the pink slip to hundreds of employees. On July 3, it was reported that US-based multinational technology company, UKG, reduced its workforce by around 2,000 employees. Reportedly, the CEO Chris Todd, in an email, said that the software company downsized its workforce by up to 14 per cent.

William Madden, who was a product manager at UKG, shared on LinkedIn he was impacted by the layoffs. “Hi everyone – As everyone has seen UKG has gone through

another round of layoffs and this time my team and I have been affected. I’m looking for a new role and would really appreciate your support. If you hear of any opportunities that you think are worth looking into for myself or for my team of Product Owners I’m open to chatting, send me a message or comment below!” he wrote.

UKG, one of the most prominent software developers, employed as many as 15,882 people as of June 2024.

Kamanie Manderson, who worked at UKG for years, took to his LinkedIn to urge his connections to apprise him about potential job opportunities. “Hi everyone. Today, I was part of a significant layoff at UKG. After a rewarding 10-year journey with Ultimate Software, which later merged with UKG, I am now actively seeking new opportunities. My time at Ultimate Software’s IT Help Desk and UKG’s Enterprise Endpoint Management allowed me to grow professionally and mentor many along the way,” he wrote.

Canadian business software company Open Text Corp, on July 3, announced that it was cutting as many as 1,200 jobs as part of a business optimisation plan which aims to save around \$200 million a year. Reportedly, the layoffs will cost the company around C\$60 million, which will be recognised in the first quarter of fiscal 2025. The company is, however, hoping to reduce its expenses by C\$ 150 million in 2025. According to an SEC filing, the Ontario-based company also has plans to reinvest C\$50 million annually in 800 new roles in sales and engineering to support its growth and innovation plans.

The ongoing spate of layoffs has also impacted Indian companies. On July 2, it was reported that edtech company Unacademy was laying off about 250 employees. The com-

pany, which is valued at \$3.4 billion in its funding in 2021, has been slashing jobs since schools reopened across India following pandemic-induced lockdowns. Reportedly, 100 people in the marketing, business, and product departments, and 150 in sales, were impacted by the latest round of layoffs. Since 2022, the company has laid off around 2,000 of its employees.

The spokesperson from Unacademy attributed the layoffs to the company’s restructuring exercise to streamline operations and enhance business efficiency. “This was necessary keeping in mind the company’s goals and vision for the year, as we focus all our efforts on sustainable growth and profitability. Consequently, some roles have been impacted. While this transition won’t be easy, we will be supporting all impacted individuals during this transition,” they said.

According to layoffs.fyi, a site that tracks tech layoffs, 1,04,410 employees have been laid off by 360 companies in 2024 so far. In May while 49 companies laid off 10,989 employees, June saw 46 companies sacking 10,083 of their staff. Moreover, in June and July, giants like Microsoft and Google announced major job cuts. The reasons cited include economic uncertainties that push companies to focus more on efficiency and cost-cutting, restructuring after acquisitions and project shutdowns, etc.. □

[Bijin Jose, an Assistant Editor at Indian Express Online. Source: The Indian Express]

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LETTERS

Medha Patkar Convicted for Defamation

The PUCL is shocked at the conviction by a Delhi Court of Medha Patkar, one of India's most renowned social activists, for defamation u/s 499/500 IPC and a sentence of five months imprisonment combined with a fine of Rs 10 lakh rupees imposed against her. The case itself was filed in 2000 and relates to a press note, the contents of which are allegedly defamatory to V K Saxena who then headed the National Council for Civil Liberties of Ahmedabad and is now the Lieutenant Governor of Delhi.

The Narmada Bachao Andolan (NBA) is one of India's oldest people's movements, and led by Medha Patkar, has been exposing the severe environmental impacts of big dams, especially on the Narmada River. The NBA has courageously brought to light the displacement of Adivasis from their land and mobilised the people against a form of development that has done injustice to India's poorest people.

The filing of the case of defamation against Medha Patkar is nothing but a weaponisation of law meant to silence, censor and intimidate viewpoints which challenge the dominant understanding of development. This phenomenon of seeking to control dissent through a heavy-handed use of the law is a well-known strategy used by corporations as well as states and has been characterized as SLAPPS, which stands for 'Strategic Litigation Against Public Participation'. The conviction of Medha Patkar was only possible because of the archaic law of defamation.

The Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, (BNS) which came into force on the 1st of July, 2024 has reproduced Section 499 of the IPC word for word as Section 356 of the BNS, confirming that the decolonial nature of the three criminal laws is nothing but an eyewitness.

As per BNS, a campaign against

big dams or 'destructive development' projects can be construed as an act affecting economic security or subversive and prosecuted under section 113/152 BNS!!

Kavita Srivastava, (President)
V. Suresh (General Secretary)
People's Union for Civil Liberties

Hathras Stampede

The All India Democratic Women's Association (AIDWA) is shocked and outraged by the devastating stampede that occurred on 2 July in Hathras, Uttar Pradesh in a Satsang by the self-styled godman, Narayan Saakar Vishwa Hari aka Bhole Baba. Nearly 121 people, mostly women, lost their lives in this stampede. The number of injured is known.

This tragedy is a stark reminder of the negligence of the Yogi government, which failed to ensure the safety and well-being of the people. The lack of adequate arrangements and crowd control measures led to this avoidable disaster.

The stampede was also a devastating consequence of the recklessness and negligence of these so-called spiritual leaders, who lured vulnerable people with unrealisable promises. AIDWA condemns the exploitation of faith for personal gain and demand that the government take action against the organisers of this Satsang. Although the police have lodged an FIR, Bhole Baba has not been named in it.

The lack of proper medical infrastructure and emergency response mechanisms resulted in the death of 121 people. Delayed medical attention and inadequate healthcare facilities are an outright indictment of the state's apathy towards healthcare. The callousness of authorities by not providing adequate security measures and also preventing overcrowding of the location is a violation of the fundamental right to life of the citizens.

This incident is a wake-up call for the state to acknowledge its failures

and take concrete steps to prevent such tragedies in the future. AIDWA holds the authorities accountable for their negligence, demands justice for the victims and their families, and action against the perpetrators of this stampede. AIDWA expresses heartfelt condolences to the families of the victims, who lost their lives in this tragic incident.

P K Sreemathi, President
Mariam Dhawale, Gen. Secretary
Termination of Contracts at TISS

We, the alumni of Women's Studies (WS), Tata Institute of Social Sciences (TISS), Mumbai; are appalled at the recent news published in various news platforms (30th June 2024 The Hindu; 1st July 2024, Indian Express among others) about the mass termination of contracts of faculty members and non-teaching employees. More than 100 faculty and non-teaching employees across the Mumbai, Guwahati, Hyderabad, and Tuljapur campuses of the institute were given letters on 28th June 2024 stating that their contracts would come to an end on 30th June 2024 without any further renewal of contracts. The affected faculty and non-teaching employees include those whose contracts are supported by the Tata Education Trust (TET), as well as those who were hired and remunerated under the UGC 12th Plan. This led to a sudden loss of employment for a wide pool of teaching and non-teaching employees, many of whom have been working in the institution for more than a decade.

We express full solidarity with all the teaching and non-teaching employees at the Advanced Centre for Women's Studies, and the teaching and non-teaching body of TISS at large.

We demand that all contractual faculty and non-teaching staff under the UGC 12th Plan to be reinstated with immediate effect, their pending salaries released and the terms of their employment to be regularised at

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par with the permanent employees on the UGC payroll.

Alumni of Women Studies
[WS], TISS

Demonetisation, GST and Covid-19

The cumulative impact of macroeconomic shocks is estimated to cost the Indian economy Rs 11.3 lakh crore between 2016 and 2023, rating agency India Ratings and Research reported in *The Hindu* on July 11. This loss is in addition to the loss of 1.6 crore jobs in the informal sector.

The economy faced three primary shocks over the eight-year period of assessment: demonetisation of high-value currency notes in 2016, the implementation of the Goods and Services Tax in 2017 and the economic slowdown caused by the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020.

The agency said the economic loss from these is equivalent to 4.3% of India's GDP in the financial year 2022-23.

These shocks had a "severe impact" on the informal sector. According to the rating agency, an estimated 63 lakh informal enterprises closed between 2015-'16 and 2022-'23 and about 1.6 crore jobs were lost.

The newspaper quoted Sunil Kumar Sinha, the chief economist of the rating agency, as saying, "This period coincides with an increase in formalization of the economy, which has led to a strengthening of tax collection."

Sinha said, "Although formalization of the economy is the way forward, the reduced presence of the unorganized sector will impact job creation."

The India Ratings and Research report is based on the annual survey of unorganized sector enterprises released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on July 5.

The ministry's survey said the total number of enterprises in the non-agricultural sector increased from 5.97 crore in 2021-22 to 6.5 crore in 2022-23. During the same period,

employment generated by the sector increased from 9.79 crore workers to 10.96 crore workers.

However, in 2015-16, before the first economic shock of demonetisation, the sector employed about 11.13 crore workers, reports *The Hindu*.

A Reader

New Criminal Codes

In a statement issued on July 2, AICCTU has demanded the immediate withdrawal of FIRs filed against street vendors in Delhi and Goa under the newly implemented Indian Penal Code. The organisation has also called for the repeal of the new criminal code, describing it as unconstitutional and undemocratic.

On July 1, 2024, the first case under the new penal code was filed against Delhi street vendor Mr Pankaj Kumar for setting up his stall. Mr Kumar relies on his vending activities for his livelihood, a fundamental right protected under the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014. Similarly, in North Goa, the police have filed a case against Mr. Nisar Ballari, a street vendor who sells coconuts.

Progressive and democratic organisations, including AICCTU, have repeatedly highlighted that the new penal codes are not only unconstitutional but also undermine democratic principles. The first case, registered at 12:15 PM on July 1, clearly illustrates the detrimental intent behind these codes, as it directly attacks the livelihood of a street vendor, Mr Pankaj Kumar. This action is seen as a deliberate attack on the working class.

Legally, street vendors have the right to conduct their business on sidewalks and are not to be considered obstructions or encroachers. Courts have ruled against labelling street vendors as "illegal" and have recognised their vital role in the economy. Section 27 of the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014, was specifically included to

prevent harassment by the police and to safeguard the livelihood of street vendors.

ML Update

NCERT

The Director,
National Council of Educational
Research and Training (NCERT)
New Delhi

Dear Professor Dinesh Prasad Saklani,

This refers to our email of 8 June 2023 wherein both of us had requested the NCERT to "drop our names as 'chief advisors' from all Political Science Textbooks of classes IX, X, XI and XII as mentioned in the 'Letter to the Students' and also in the list of Textbook Development Team at the beginning of each textbook". We had categorically asked you to "give effect to this request immediately and ensure that our names are not used in the soft copies of the textbooks available at NCERT website as also in the subsequent print editions." This mail was followed by a collective letter by a majority of scholars associated with the Textbook Development Team in Political Science making the same request. The NCERT did not act upon our request, nor did it have the courtesy to write back to us.

Both of us do not want the NCERT to hide behind our names to pass on to students such textbooks of Political Science that we find politically biased, academically indefensible and pedagogically dysfunctional. We reiterate our demand that the NCERT must delete our names as 'chief advisors' from all Political Science Textbooks of classes IX, X, XI and XII as mentioned in the 'Letter to the Students' and also in the list of Textbook Development Team at the beginning of each textbook. The new editions of these books that have been published with our names should be withdrawn from the market forthwith.

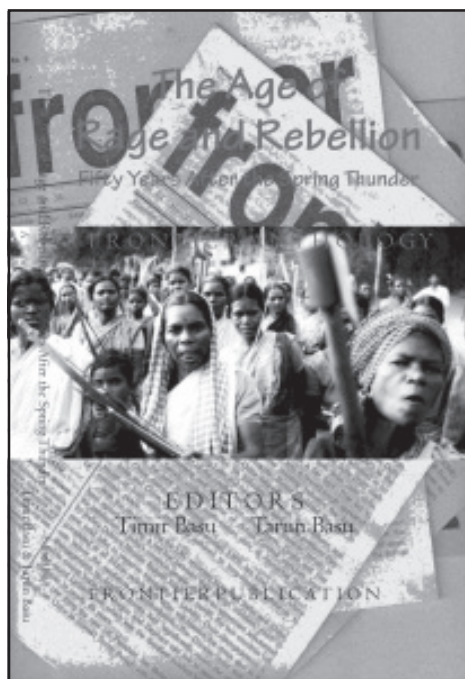
If the NCERT fails take immediate corrective action, we may be forced to take legal recourse.

Sincerely,

Suhas Palshikar & Yogendra Yadav

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