



## Ambedkar's Vision and Challenges to Parliamentary Democracy Today

We celebrated November 26, the Constitution Day. The Constitution has been shaping our democracy. Barely a week later, on first December, the Winter Session of Parliament will commence, expected to meet for just 15 sittings, of which three are earmarked for Private Members Business. And within a few more days, the country would commemorate December 6, the death anniversary of Dr. B R Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Constitution and one of India's most courageous defenders of parliamentary democracy. These three dates, clustered so closely together this year, offer more than a symbolic calendar sequence; they form a lens through which to examine the health of our republic, the erosion of legislative functioning, and the urgent need to reclaim accountability as the centre of our democratic life.

When the Constituent Assembly debated the structure of the future republic, Ambedkar's clarity in rejecting a Presidential system (Presidential form of Government) was unmistakable. He argued that India required a system where the executive remained continuously responsible to the legislature, ensuring that no single individual could claim untrammelled authority.

He famously warned that "In politics, bhakti or hero worship is a sure road to degradation and to eventual dictatorship," urging Indians to embrace a model of collective responsibility rather than vest power in one supreme leader or institution. The Parliamentary system, then, was chosen not simply for its familiarity through British rule but because it was inherently more accountable, deliberative, and reflective of the people's sovereign will.

Yet, as we move from Constitution Day to Ambedkar's death anniversary this year, the space between the ideals he articulated and the reality unfolding before us has appeared wider.

Nowhere is this drift more evident than in the functioning, or rather, the shrinking of Parliament itself. Data clearly shows that the institution Ambedkar described as "the nerve centre of our democracy" is being compressed in both spirit and practice. The First Lok Sabha met for an average of 135 days annually, allowing space for debate, dissent, and robust scrutiny. Even the Fourth Lok Sabha maintained a high average of 123 days.

Recent years have taken this decline to a historic low. The Sixteenth Lok Sabha averaged 66 sittings per year, and the Seventeenth Lok Sabha slumped to just 55 sitting days annually, the lowest for any full term Lok Sabha since 1952. Across the 15 sessions of the 17th Lok Sabha, 11 were adjourned prematurely, cancelling nearly 40 scheduled sittings and depriving the nation of roughly 13 percent of the Parliament's planned workdays. In 2020, the Lok Sabha met for only 33 days in the entire year, a stark illustration of how far the system has drifted from its constitutional expectations.

**D Raja**

During the Seventeenth Lok Sabha's entire five year tenure, only 274 sittings took place, marking the fewest sittings for any full term House in India's parliamentary history. And this contraction in time has been accompanied by a contraction in scrutiny. Of the 179 bills passed by the Seventeenth Lok Sabha (excluding



Finance and Appropriation Bills), 35 percent were approved after less than one hour of debate. Only 16 percent of introduced bills were referred to parliamentary committees, bodies designed to ensure detailed scrutiny beyond partisan pressures. Thus, even as sittings shrink, the government has leveraged its majority to push through legislation with dizzying speed and minimal deliberation, hollowing out the

very function Parliament was created for: to hold the executive accountable.

This degrading of parliamentary norms is further reflected in a disquieting new trend: members of the treasury benches disrupting proceedings, and an unprecedented escalation in the suspension of opposition MPs. In setting aside decorum and deliberately paralysing discussion, ruling party members contribute to the erosion of debate.

Meanwhile, the frequency with which opposition members are suspended, even for raising legitimate questions, turns Parliament into a one sided arena, deepening the imbalance between executive power and legislative scrutiny. This distortion is not accidental; it is part of a deliberate effort to transform Parliament from being the supreme institution in our democracy representing the sovereign will of the people into an instrument subservient to a centralised and ideology driven executive.

Ambedkar had warned precisely against this danger. His fear was that India might replace constitutional methods with authoritarian shortcuts, led by a political climate that elevates leaders rather than institutions. What we witness today is the emergence of a system in which key institutions, from investigative agencies to regulatory bodies, from universities to the media, are being pushed to align themselves with the worldview of those in power. Instead of acting as checks on the executive, they are increasingly functioning as extensions of a single ideol-

ogy, often contemptuous of the Constitution's values of equality, fraternity, secularism, and democratic accountability.

At the heart of this institutional imbalance lies another grave and often overlooked threat, the weakening of India's federal structure. Ambedkar and the framers were unequivocal that India would be a "Union of States," not as a unitary command but as a federal system in which the Union and the states derived their authority from the Constitution and not from each other. Yet today, federalism itself is under visible strain.

The increasing centralisation of fiscal powers, reflected in shrinking tax devolution, growing dependence on centrally designed schemes, and the functioning of the GST Council, has constrained the autonomy of states to plan for their own people. The frequent and partisan use of Governors to stall legislation, delay assent, or interfere in elected governments, along with the rising deployment of central agencies against political opponents in opposition-ruled states, has transformed constitutional instruments into levers of coercion.

The declining space for intergovernmental dialogue and the sidelining of institutions like the Inter State Council further erode the cooperative spirit Ambedkar envisioned. A democracy cannot remain healthy when its federal foundations are weakened, for the silencing of states is ultimately the silencing of the people they represent.

The consequences of this centralisation are profound. When Parliament meets for only 55 days a year on average, when scrutiny collapses, when dissent is equated with disloyalty, when

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*New Age Weekly*

## Wounds of December 6 Refuse to Die

The sinister episodes of how a masjid was turned into a temple is still fresh in the memory of people. The forced placing of the idols of Ram under the high dome of the main hall prohibited any Namaz, a practice that was continuing since ages. It was the night of December 22-23, 1949. Muslims were totally barred from entering the masjid, Hindus had a limited access and thus context was prepared. The courts did not restore the possession of the Mosque to its rightful owners. They froze the situation created by force and deceit, though official assistance was also extended. Then came the second stage. On February 1, 1986, court ordered the opening of the locks of the gates to permit Hindus to worship the idols. Muslims were not made party to the application though they had been party to the legal proceedings all along. Their application itself requesting a hearing was rejected. In the third stage, on November 9, 1989, just before the Lok Sabha elections, Shilanyas was performed at a site near the Mosque by the VHP with the official sanction from state and Central governments. There was written agreement between the government of Uttar Pradesh and leaders of VHP, signed at Lucknow, on September 27, 1989. The bricks were sanctified in all the corners of the country and brought to Ayodhya for laying the foundation of the temple building on November 9, 1989. Litigation on title to the mosque was pending before the court. The move should have been banned. But it was encouraged. The late CPI leader Com Satyapal Dang perceptively noted that while the foundation stone of the new temple would be some distance away from the Mosque, "There is no undertaking that Babri Masjid would not be sought to be demolished subsequently".

After three years, on December 6, 1992, the VHP construction plans were revealed in public by its secretary general Ashok Singhal. Deciphering the details, Ashok Singhal had said,

"The sanctum sanctorum or the Garbha Griha of the proposed temple will remain at the same place," and the puja of the idol was to be performed there only. The judiciary should have been more observant and prevented the Shilanyas on November 9, 1989. The Supreme Court declined to intervene on October 27, 1989. The Allahabad high court had made orders for the preservation of the status quo in the specific context of the Shila Pujan on August 14, and on November 7, 1989, two days before the Shilanyas. The orders covered not only the mosque but the adjoining area also.

Home minister Buta Singh rushed to Lucknow on November 8 to meet the VHP leaders, and asked them to shift the site on which foundation stone was to be laid. They simply refused to lis-

### Editorial

ten. Suddenly a shift came in the situation when the Advocate General Shanti Swaroop Bhatnagar made a 'sudden discovery' saying the space for shilanyas was clearly outside the site plan and told the court so. The high court could have prohibited the foundation stone laying at the particular space, and not in the proximity of the mosque itself. But it did not. The court dismissed the fears about the destruction of the mosque. The high court had in its knowledge that one of the parties who signed the agreement had openly discussed its commitment to destroy the mosque. The court dismissed these fears of demolition expressed by petitioners as '*Ipse dixit*'. The day after the Shilanyas, the distinguished Justice V R Krishna Iyer had made a remark that shows his deep anguish in this statement, "The judiciary will be described as the villain of the piece." In fact the enormity of the surrender could not be exaggerated.

In fact the official support and judicial apathy were the running trends in the entire scene till the last moment, that was the demolition of the Mosque on December 6, 1992. The issue was facilitated by the chief justice Venkatachaliah, as he was actively supporting the move. Attorney General Milton Banerjee was aware of the consequences of the heinous act, and issued repeated warnings but to no avail.

For thirty six- years, beginning from December 22, 1949, to February 1, 1986, there was a change in the situation that was forced on Ayodhya episode. The Mosque was demolished on December 6, 1992. Prior to it on November 9, 1989, there was Shilanyas, (the burying act of first brick), near the mosque ushering in a new stage. Thus proceeded the final 'Horror' act. It was a clear attempt to make ours a fractured society. The Supreme Court's majority judgment on October 24, 1994, on the president's reference to the court for an advisory opinion, upheld a provision and that was Section 7 (2) in the law enacted in the wake of the demolitions, which was Acquisition of Certain Area at Ayodhya Act, 1993, which implied that the idols which were placed in the disputed site, after the demolition, must be retained where they are and the puja must be continued as before.

In the years following the post Shilanyas in 1989, up to the demolition in 1992, no government made any attempt to restrain the tide of the Ram temple movement and it had to pay the price for it. The demolition sent shockwaves through the nation, making India a victim of the Hindutva' machinations. It revealed how the nation could be made vulnerable to Hindu communalists' attempt to thrust a majoritarian identity on it – an identity that is inimical to the secular democracy India is.

## Ambedkar's Vision...

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questions are replaced by proclamations, and when accountability is replaced by adulation, the republic does not just weaken, it begins to resemble a system sliding into undeclared fascism. No democracy collapses overnight; it erodes slowly, institution by institution.

This is why the cluster of dates, November 26, December 1, and December 6 must make us ask not simply how we commemorate Ambedkar's contributions but how we honour his vision. If Ambedkar insisted on parliamentary democracy, it was

because he believed the people must never be reduced to spectators. A nation whose Parliament hardly meets, rarely debates, and increasingly silences the opposition is a nation drifting away from that vision.

To reverse this decline, restoring accountability must be the foundational goal of our political life. The battle for accountability must be waged on three fronts simultaneously; politically, through mobilisation and electoral choices that prioritise democratic integrity; ideologically, through the reaffirmation of constitutional values against

sectarian narratives; and legally, through challenging arbitrary executive action and defending institutional independence in courts and public forums.

One concrete step that can reinvigorate parliamentary democracy is to mandate a minimum of 100 sitting days for Parliament each calendar year. This is not a symbolic demand; it is a structural necessity. More sittings would naturally enable thorough debate, ensure greater time for scrutiny, give the opposition a platform to articulate concerns, and reestablish Parliament as the centre of democratic decision making. India cannot claim to be the

world's largest democracy while operating its national legislature like a ceremonial body.

As we move from Constitution Day toward Ambedkar's death anniversary, these reflections must carry a sharper meaning. The Constitution is not merely a document to be celebrated once a year, nor is Ambedkar merely an icon to be garlanded. Both represent a vigilance we must exercise, every month, every session, every day, to prevent power from overwhelming accountability. The strength of a democracy is not measured by the size of its mandate but by the rigor of its checks and

balances, the independence of its institutions, and the courage of its citizens to defend their sovereign will.

At a time when fascist forces (RSS-BJP combine) seek to reconfigure India's political landscape, the call to action is clear: reclaim accountability or risk losing the republic Ambedkar helped build. Let Dr. Ambedkar's legacy remind us that the battle for India's democratic soul must be fought relentlessly, collectively, and with unwavering commitment to the constitutional promise that power belongs always, and only, to the people. ■

Since the advent of 19<sup>th</sup> century and spread of education and awareness, the injustice done in the name of the caste has come into focus. Many reformers like Periyar, Mahatma Phule and Dr. Ambedkar and others have focussed this issue of caste injustice and demanded and worked for a casteless society.

Indian Marxists and Communists also have visualised a society based on equality in which the caste has no place. The programme of the Communist Party of India, formulated and adopted at Puducherry Congress in 2015, talks of caste struggle and class struggle to go together for establishment of a society based on equality and equal opportunity, possible only in a socialist society. Indian Constitution also had in mind such a society. However, our Constitution of India, formulated in 1949, had faced it. In reality such a society did not exist at all. They realised that for such a society, the concept of social justice was imperative. Writing of Indian Constitution was also an important step and hence, affirmative actions like reservation for ST/SC are proposed. Subsequently this has been extended to the OBC population.

Caste has become a material force as it has existed for more than thousand years

# Indian Constitution and Caste

*Dr B K Kango*

and justified by religion, it has gripped the human mind. Today we see that not only upper caste but other castes like SC/ST and OBC are also being victims of this casteist thinking. Hence, Indian Constitution has to deal with this problem. Normally caste is justified by argument. By giving reservations to the

less society can be established only if in a society an individual has a dignity, equal opportunity and he or she is allowed to work and live without discrimination on the basis of caste, religion, sex,

State. It is unfortunate that today in the name of cultural nationalism this task is neglected by the state. In fact Indian Constitution must be the only constitution in the world which gives this responsibility of spreading scientific outlook amongst people of the Indian state.

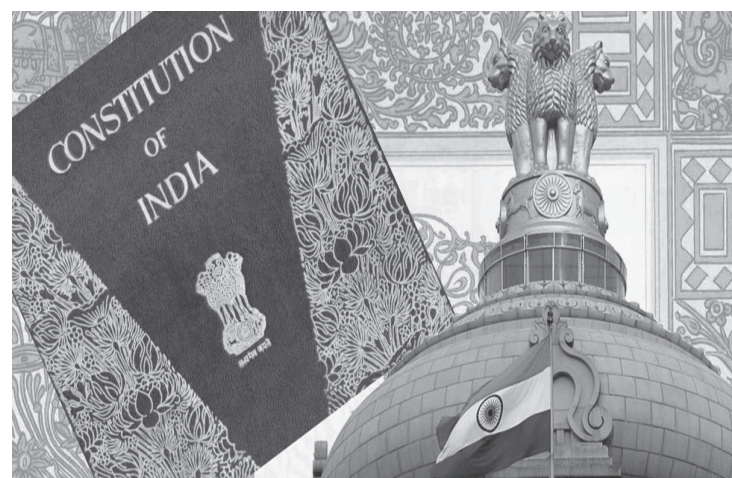
Similarly, Indian Constitution has established a state which is secular in nature and does not belong to any religion, sect or caste. This has to be remembered and strengthened while celebrating the Constitution Day on November 6.

India is a unique country with a population of 1.4 billion. Caste is a peculiar problem which is spreading all over the world, along with the Indians all over the world going for work. Recently there were reports that some states in United States have formed laws against caste discrimination as complaints of caste injustice were received. The result was the realisation that Indian society should to be actively try to abolish caste system. This is what the Indian Constitution wants and we all Indians should work in that direction. Unfortunately, the wide spread unemployment is working against this as most castes think that reservation is the answer to this ques-

tion of unemployment. But it is not so. To expose this reality, not only the reservations, the opportunities also must be made available especially while privatisation of public sector is on and private sector has no reservations. If one looks for a data about reservation in jobs lost due to privatisation, it is not readily available but there is also no agitation is there about such issues which is the need of the hour if we really want to protect reservation in jobs in the interest of social justice.

Now the debate is on whether reduction in jobs is due to use of artificial intelligence and new technology. The new jobs created due to new technology requires special skills and education. Efforts should be made to impart such skills and education to all Indians to make them suitable for the new jobs. Privatisation of Education which caters to only people with money will not help as recent studies about income and asset inequality shows that it has attained alarming heights.

We must appreciate Indian Constitution which deals pragmatically with the problem of castes in India. ■



so-called Backward Caste this illusion of merit can be challenged and past 75 years of experience of Indian Constitution proves this point. But it has to be accepted by entire society. Marx had said that when an idea grips the masses it becomes a material force and this gripping of mind by caste has to be loosened so that it ceases to be a material force that is to create objective conditions to challenge the idea of caste. Through reservation, it has been attempted to resolve it. Indian Constitution is aware of the fact that a caste-

language. Our Constitution supports this idea of individual dignity.

The present challenge to caste society and future establishment of casteless society is proposed by the Indian Constitution. This is a speciality of our Constitution which has to be reiterated on the Constitution Day which falls on November 26.

To advance towards this ideal, scientific outlook is very important and hence Indian Constitution gives this responsibility of spreading the scientific outlook on Indian



## India's Higher Education System Drives Students Out Niti Aayog Report Fails to Offer Direction

**R Suryamurthy**

India's student mobility crisis is no longer a question of data, it is an indictment of a system that has refused to reform while the world moved on. The new NITI Aayog paper does not so much analyse this imbalance as expose it. The numbers are brutal: for every foreign student who chooses India today, 19 Indians leave the country to study abroad. In 2021, the ratio plunged to 1:24, the worst imbalance in modern Indian history.

One almost does not need a policy paper to understand what this means; one only needs to stand outside any VFS centre or IELTS coaching hub in the country. The NITI report simply gives shape to a reality millions of Indian families already know — the higher-education system is not good enough for their children, and the world is more than willing to absorb them.

The outbound wave is now a runaway phenomenon. India sent 1.33 million students abroad in 2024, making it the largest source of international students globally, ahead of China. This would be a source of pride in a different context. But in India's case, the exodus highlights the opposite: people are voting with their feet against the domestic system. Meanwhile, inbound numbers — the students India supposedly wants to attract — remain frozen. India hosted just 46,878 foreign students in 2021–22, a decline from its 2019–20 peak and an embarrassing 0.10 per cent of total enrolment. The NITI Aayog authors do not sugarcoat it. India, they say, is a “semi-peripheral host,” a polite academic phrase for a country that has aspirations but not the systems to match them.

This stagnation comes at a time when global mobility is exploding. International student numbers rose from

2.2 million in 2001 to 6.9 million in 2022, creating a booming marketplace where countries compete aggressively for talent, revenue and soft power. Almost every education economy worth its name — Canada, Australia, Germany, the UAE, South Korea, Malaysia — has strengthened its inbound play. India, with one of the largest English-medium ecosystems in the world, has

that forces millions to look outside its borders for quality higher education is a system that is, fundamentally, no longer trusted.

The reasons are not mysterious. India's inbound experience is a catalogue of unforced errors. A foreign student first encounters a visa regime built for a different century — slow, opaque, burdened by paperwork and arbitrary clearances. The paper calls for “simplifying visa processes, reducing documentation burdens, and

ibility, India will remain invisible in the global marketplace. It calls a branding push “a sine qua non” — the language of academic diplomacy trying hard not to sound exasperated.

Suppose a student gets past the visa obstacles and finds India on their radar despite the branding vacuum. They then arrive on campuses that are often unprepared to host them. Accommodation shortages, outdated hostels, patchy international offices, weak safety systems, un-



somehow managed to opt out. It is hard to call this anything but a policy failure, particularly when the financial haemorrhage is added to the picture.

The NITI report estimates that Indian students spent USD 34 billion in just four countries like the US, Canada, UK and Australia in 2023–24, and that total overseas spending is set to reach USD 70 billion in 2025 — roughly two per cent of India's GDP, and close to 75 per cent of the country's annual trade deficit. The authors describe this as “a serious and structural foreign exchange leakage,” though even that feels like an understatement. Outward remittances for “studies abroad” under the RBI classification have grown 2,000 per cent in a decade. This is less a financial story and more a political one — a system

addressing regulatory bottlenecks” as an urgent priority, effectively stating what foreign students have complained about for years. Canada and Australia made their student visa pipelines a competitive asset decades ago. India still treats a foreign applicant as an inconvenience.

Then there is the near-total absence of national branding. India has never taken seriously the idea that education is an export — a soft-power instrument, an economic lever, a diplomatic asset. Malaysia does this. South Korea does this. China does it at a scale India doesn't even acknowledge. Even Turkey and Uzbekistan have built targeted recruitment funnels. Meanwhile, India imagines that proximity, affordability and English will somehow do the job. The NITI paper warns that without a unified message, a clear identity and consistent vis-

trained staff and cultural alienation have quietly eroded India's reputation as a destination. The report acknowledges this bluntly, urging investment in “hard infrastructure that meets the standards and requirements of international students” while stressing that many students “feel alienated” due to limited multicultural sensitisation. In a global market, student experience is the product. India has simply not designed it.

Academically, too, the mismatch between India's potential and its reality is glaring. A country that can run a cost-efficient Mars mission and build one of the world's biggest digital public goods ecosystems still struggles to internationalise its curricula, create joint degrees, build credit-transfer systems or hire foreign faculty at scale. The NITI paper argues that India must integrate its rich

research ecosystem — from ISRO to biotech clusters — more meaningfully into higher education, highlighting the country's “low-cost, high-impact research” rather than leaving it buried in bureaucratic silos. It is a strange irony that global giants like Amazon and Google see India as a top research hub, but universities abroad rarely see it as a source of cutting-edge academic collaboration.

The glaring hole, however, is the absence of post-study opportunities. This is not some exotic foreign policy idea — it is the backbone of global mobility. Canada's Post-Graduation Work Permit, Australia's Temporary Graduate Visa, the UK's Graduate Route: these visa frameworks are the real engines powering their international enrolments. India, meanwhile, offers nothing. Once a foreign student graduates, the message is simple: pack your bags. The NITI report tries to nudge the system forward by proposing a two-year internship visa for the top 10 per cent of foreign graduates and recommending policies that allow international student entrepreneurs to build companies in India. It is the kind of reform that would make India competitive overnight, but also the kind that requires political imagination and administrative courage — qualities in short supply when it comes to immigration reform in India.

To be fair, India has taken steps. NEP 2020 talks about “internationalisation at home”. The UGC has introduced twinning programmes, dual degrees and collaborative regulations. GIFT City is hosting foreign campuses with regulatory autonomy. As of May 2025, eleven foreign universities have established a formal presence in India. But these are islands of reform in an ocean of inertia. Policies have been announced, but outcomes remain limp. Inbound numbers refuse to rise. Regional competitors surge ahead. And

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CTU, SKM Joint Representation to President of India

# Memorandum to President of India Droupadi Murmu

We the workers and farmers are jointly in protest today all over India to highlight our issues and to demand redressal. We had organized such a protest on November 26, 2024 also and had submitted the representation also. We are once again sending this representation to you with hope that you would kindly intervene in favour of these two major productive forces of the country. We have chosen November 26, as the protest day through mobilisation as because this is the day when trade unions had observed Nationwide strike to protest against the anti-worker four labour codes and the farmers had begun their historic March towards Parliament against three farm laws in 2020.

The Government instead of considering our demands has notified 4 labour codes abruptly on November 21, 2025 without holding Indian Labour Conference. Similarly, the India-UK CETA, recently signed is also a direct attack on India's food security, healthcare, and economic self-reliance. The agreement will allow British agribusinesses to flood Indian markets with cheap dairy, wheat, and meat—mirroring the devastation caused by the India-ASEAN FTA, which crashed rubber prices by 70 percent in Kerala. The deal also opens India's healthcare sector to British corporate takeovers, accelerating the privatization of hospitals and extending drug monopolies that will spike medicine. In the tariff warfare initiated by Trump administration, several informal economy sectors, fisheries and animal husbandry etc. are impacted severely.

In this background we would like to place some facts before you about the pathetic situation as mentioned below and seek your intervention.

The working people of India are facing a deep crisis with the NDA3 Govt.'s policies aimed to enrich the Corporates and Super Rich. While cost of cultivation and inflation is rising at higher than 12-15 percent, every year, the Government is increasing MSP by only 2 to 7 percent. It raised national paddy MSP by only 5.35 percent to Rs. 2300 per quintal in 2024-25 without applying C2+50 percent formulae and no

guarantee of procurement. Earlier at least in Punjab and Haryana Paddy and Wheat were procured. But the Central Government failed to lift the crop procured last year, stalling paddy procurement this year due to lack of space in Mandis. Farmers are forced onto the streets again even to save their meagre MSP, APMC Markets, FCI and PDS supply.

To further aid MNCs, the Government is imposing digitization of land and crops, through Digital Agriculture Mission-DAM- as announced in the Union Budget 2024-25. Plans are afoot to promote contract farming and change

This has a grave impact on workers in Industrial and service sectors. The four labour codes—being imposed by the Central Govt. - annuls any guarantee on minimum wages, secured employment, social security, proper working time and right to unionise. *P r i v a t i s a t i o n*, Contractualisation and no recruitment policies push the existing workers and job seeking youth to virtual slavery. Trade Unions are on a struggle path also to protect basic right to form Trade Union; for revival of Old Pension Scheme, retirement rights, food and health security, effective legal machinery

percent children under 5 years are underweight, 21 percent suffer wasting, while 38 percent are stunted due to lack of food. Fifty percent women and 67 percent children are anemic. But the government is cutting down the budget allocation to the basic services schemes like ICDS, MDM and privatizing them.

Farm land is being forcefully acquired in the name of industrialization, but actually it is for entertainment facilities for the super-rich, commercial use, tourism, real estate, etc. with the Govt. shamelessly refusing to implement LARR Act. 2013 and the Forest Rights Act-FRA.

Corporates extract high revenue for electricity through smart meters, high recharge tariff of mobile networks, rising toll charges, high cooking gas, diesel and petrol prices and expansion of GST. On the contrary, working people - farmers, industrial and agricultural workers- and the middle classes sustain the debt burden. Landless are forced to take SHG loans on high interest rates to survive. The contract labour wages are very low in rural India. Whereas the Govt. has waived more than Rs 18 lac Cr. debts of Corporate Houses, but refused to free farmers and agriculture workers from indebtedness.

The Government has violated the written agreement of December 9, 2021 with the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM).

In this background the first ever all India worker-farmer convention at Talkatora Stadium on August 24, 2023 had adopted a charter of demands and called for continuous struggles. The Mahapadav in November 2023, General strike and Grameen Bandh on February 16, 2024, then recently on July 9, 2025, Nationwide general strike of trade unions and massive rural mobilization by Samyukta Kisan Morcha in which 25 Crore participated and the campaign that followed to expose and oppose the anti-worker, anti-farmer policies of the Government are the examples for our consistent protest drawing attention of the Government but to no avail. Despite the protests on these demands time and again the Government has failed to

respond.

Hence this decision of massive mobilization of farmers, rural poor and industrial workers on 26th November in districts all over India to mark the momentous occasion of 4th anniversary of the grand struggle against 3 Black Farm laws and countrywide general strike of workers to once again raise our common demands. The protest action is based on the focal demands and the charter of demands adopted by the first ever All India Convention of workers and farmers at Talkatora Stadium, New Delhi on 24th August 2023.

We place before you the demand charter of our agitation seeking your kind intervention to impress upon the NDA Government to address these issues in earnest in the interest of workers and farmers and at large in the interest of our country

Our Focal Demands are:

1. MSP@C2+50% with Legally Guaranteed Procurement for all Crops

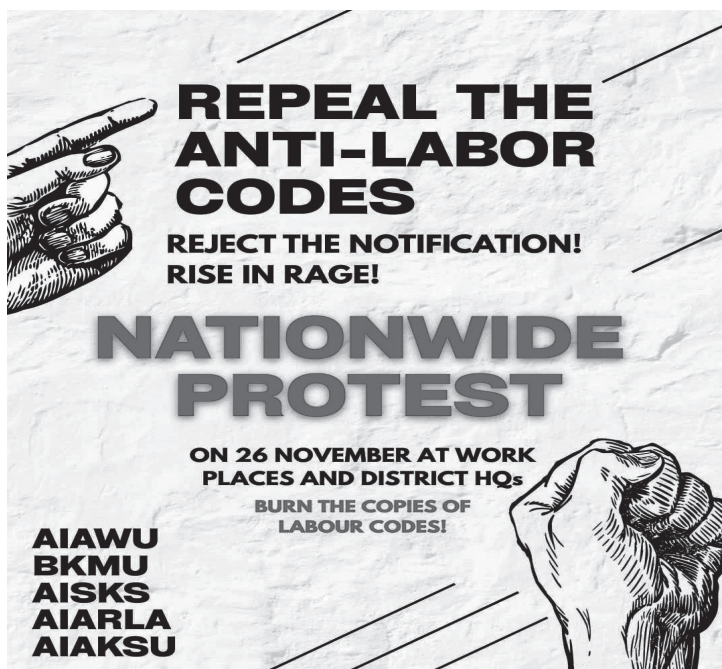
2. Repeal 4 Labour Codes; No Contractualisation or outsourcing of labour in any form. Withdraw draft Labour Policy-Shram Shakti Niti 2025.

3. Implement National Minimum Wage of Rs. 26000/month and pension @Rs.10000pm and Social Security benefits for all workers including organised, unorganized, scheme workers and contract workers and agriculture sector

4. Comprehensive Loan Waiver for farmers and agricultural workers to end Indebtedness and suicides; Ensure credit facilities for farmers and workers at low interest rates.

5. No Privatisation of Public Sector Undertakings and Public Services including Defense, Railways, Health, Education, Electricity. Scrap National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP). No prepaid Smart Meters, free power for agricultural pumps, 300 unit of free electricity to domestic users and shops; withdraw the Electricity Amendment Bill 2025

6. Pension to all-restoration of OPS, Rs.9,000/- with price indexation to EPF-95 pensioners, Rs.6,000 monthly



cropping patterns from growing food grains to commercial crops, helpful to corporate market supplies. GST imposed in 2017 and the Union Cooperative Ministry formed in 2019 were an invasion of the State Govt.'s powers and trimmed their taxation rights. The National Cooperation Policy announced in the Budget 2024-25 was aimed at facilitating corporate takeover of post-harvest operations and divert cooperative sector credit to corporates. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has signed many agreements with MNC's. In the public sector, the FCI storage, Central Warehouse Corporation and the APMC market yards all are being rented out to corporate companies like Adani and Ambani.

Perpetual deficit in farming causes higher debts and more eviction from agriculture. The acute agrarian crisis forces rural youth in lakhs to migrate to towns and inflate the reserve army of labour.

for redressal of complaints, etc. We believe that Building worker-farmer unity and strengthening it for liberating peasantry from pauperisation and agrarian crisis and for workers to win their rights has become utmost important in the national interest.

Privatisation of all strategic production including defence and basic and crucial services including railways, electricity and other transport will totally jeopardise the self-reliance of the country and is affecting the income of the government.

Government had reduced food subsidy by Rs. 60,470 Cr. (from Rs 2 72 802 Cr. to Rs 2, 12, 332 Cr.) and fertilizer subsidy by Rs.84000 Cr. in the last three consecutive years. The PDS has been crashed through a cash transfer scheme in many states as per the WTO diktats. Cash transfer is very meagre; food in the market is much costlier. Food deprivation of workers and poor people is rising. Thirty six

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New Age Weekly

# Let Us Unite to Fight Against Neo Fascism

*D Lenin*

*From November 5 to 8, 2025, the international media forum “Truth Against Neo-Fascism” was held in Moscow, organized by the Communist Party of the Russian Federation (CPRF). On November 6, it was inaugurated by G.A. Zyuganov, Chairman of the CPRF Central Committee and Head of the CPRF Faction in the Duma (Parliament). Excerpts from the Speech of G.A. Zyuganov:*



“Our anti-fascist struggle has entered its third stage. The heads of information and propaganda services from around the world have gathered here in Moscow. Forty countries are represented. These include leaders of the left-wing movement and the heads of major news agencies.

“Two years ago, we held the first anti-fascist forum in Minsk. Fifty delegations from around the world attended. Representatives from NATO member countries also attended the first forum. At that forum, we adopted a special manifesto, which we translated into all major languages. We invited progressive humanity to intensify our joint fight against fascism and Nazism.

“It’s important for us to address the challenges associated with scientific and technological progress. We must pool our efforts to curb NATO, which is prepared to even unleash a nuclear war

to assert its hegemony. My first deputy, Yury Afonin, recently visited China. He was in the main center of scientific and technological progress. 70 percent of the world’s robots are produced there. And this is currently our number one priority.

“First Secretary of the Moscow City Committee of the Communist Party of the Russian Federation, V.A. Tsarikhin, recently returned from China. Our 10-person delegation studied the experience of Chinese modernization. On the eve of November 7, it is crucial for us to summarize the experience of Lenin-Stalin modernization, as well as the Chinese experience. These are two unique breakthroughs into the future. They have shown how to overcome a war, how to build an anti-fascist front, and how to defeat Nazism and Hitlerism. And how should we act today to stop the new challenges of fascism and Nazism, which

have become a threat to everyone?”

“Everyone in my family fought. I know war from the wounds of my fathers, from close relatives killed in the war. In my native Oryol region, there are over 800 mass graves. The back of the fascist beast was broken at the Oryol-Kursk Bulge.

“It is fundamentally important for us to embrace the ideas of renewed socialism. Our delegation, led by M.S. Muzayev is currently participating in the 5th Forum of World Socialism in Beijing.

“We are building our policy around the Victory Program. We will discuss this program on November 14-15 at our Plenum and at the All-Russian Party Seminar.

“We have invited leaders from our Union of Communist Parties, which includes representatives of the communist parties of post-Soviet states, to the international media forum “Truth Against



Neo-Fascism” in Moscow. They have all come. This is fundamentally important for us.

“Now it’s important to unite all progressive forces in the name of a new victory. If we underestimate new global threats, we stand to lose a great deal. Victory is forged in unity. No one has ever won a major war without allies and reliable supporters.

“When peace, goodness, and justice are at stake, all progressive forces must unite under a common banner. If such unity had not occurred in 1941, we would never have won in 1945. And if this unity had occurred ten years earlier, we would not have allowed Hitlerism to rise to power. Hitler would never have been allowed to come to power in Germany and would never have been able to unleash World War II.

“Now the war against the Russian World has entered a special phase. It is crucial for us to demonstrate our unity. And for our news agencies to prove that they serve Truth and Peace.”

Deputy Chairman of the Communist Party Of The Russian Federation Central Committee member L. I. Kalashnikov addressed the audience. He thanked the organizers and participants for their fruitful work. Leonid

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Ivanovich announced that the forum’s materials would be compiled into a collection and widely distributed. “Today, our priority is to establish information and communication and continue it,” he said.

Deputy Chairman of the CPRF Central Committee D. G. Novikov and member of the Presidium of the CPRF Central Committee S. E. Anikhovsky presented reports on the work of the 2 sections.

In the first session on behalf of Communist Party of India D.Lenin participated and addressed. Following are the excerpts:

Dear Comrades, It is a great privilege and pleasure to me to attend this noble event organized by Communist Party of the Russian Federation the on behalf of Communist Party of India to take part in this noble event organized by Communist Party of the Russian Federation.

**Let us unite to fight against neo fascism**

“Truth against neo-fascism” is not a fixed doctrine but a moral, intellectual, and political stance — a call to defend honesty, historical memory, and critical reasoning against the manipulations and myths of authoritarian power. In our time, when the boundaries between democracy and

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## Labour Codes 2025

# Unions Rally against a “Corporate Giveaway”

The four codes—on Wages, Industrial Relations, Social Security, and Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions—aim to modernise labour laws under “Make in India.” Passed in 2019-2020 amid COVID disruptions, their implementation was delayed until this week’s gazette notification, bypassing tripartite consultations required by ILO conventions India has ratified. The government hails expansions like unique IDs for 50 million gig workers and one-year gratuity eligibility as inclusive. Critics, including union leader Akash Bhattacharya of AICTU, call it a “corporate giveaway,” simplifying compliance for MSMEs (employing 90 percent of workers) at the cost of post-Independence protections.

Unions decry the redefinition of “worker,” excluding supervisory roles above <sup>1</sup> 18,000 monthly—below average per capita income—forcing a choice between low pay and lost rights. The <sup>1</sup> 178 daily floor wage (<sup>1</sup> 5,300 monthly) is seen as unliveable amid 20percent food inflation, legalizing sub-minimum pay where 90percent already earn below thresholds like Delhi’s <sup>1</sup> 18,000 official rate (realities: <sup>1</sup> 7,000-9,000). Vague components like dearness allowance ignore housing costs in eviction-prone slums.

Industrial relations face suppression: Union registration requires 10percent workforce support (or 100 members), risking deregistration amid intimidation; strikes need 14-day notice and conciliation, often deeming them “illegal.” Fixed-term employment cements casualization without permanency perks, while layoffs rise to 300 without permission, hitting 75percent of small units in areas like Delhi’s Bawana. Gig workers get hollow UINs without benefits; safety shifts to self-certification, exempting small outfits and echoing the 2018 Bawana fire tragedy (42

deaths).

Thousands rallied at JantarMantar on November 21, burning code copies and chanting against “black laws,” led by CITU and AITUC. Demonstrations hit Gujarat, Karnataka, and Tamil Nadu, drawing factory workers, gig labourers, and contract staff amid rising costs. A Bawana cleaner lamented: “<sup>1</sup> 178 a day? Starvation—no safety gear or fair overtime.” Women highlighted coerced night shifts; men feared firings. Unions frame this as a betrayal of “Achhe Din,” prioritising corporates like Ambani and Adani. The November 26 bandh could halt rails and factories, involving 25 crore workers, testing



democracy like the farm laws.

Codes may attract <sup>1</sup> 2 lakh crore investments for 10 million jobs by 2030, per NITI Aayog, but IMF warns of precarity in a 50-million gig economy. With 1,500 annual factory deaths and 90 percent informal workers vulnerable, alternatives like universal income are absent. Politically, this risks alienating the working class before 2029 elections; ILO critiques highlight violations, while Amnesty notes rights gaps. Employers face global pressures, but unions demand repeal for equity.

In the crisp November air of 2025, India’s labour landscape fractures along lines strained by economic ambition and social neglect. The

government’s notification of four consolidated Labour Codes on November 21—merging 29 fragmented laws into frameworks for wages, industrial relations, social security, and occupational safety—promised a modern overhaul to fuel “Make in India.” Yet, four days later, streets hum with dissent. Trade unions, representing over 25 crore workers, mobilize a nationwide strike for November 26, branding the reforms a “corporate giveaway” that enshrines exploitation under progress’s guise. Drawing from JantarMantar protest narratives and insights from union stalwarts like AICTU’s Akash Bhattacharya, this

examination probes the codes’ mechanics, unleashed fury, and precarious future for a workforce where informality reigns.

The codes’ genesis traces to 2020, when Parliament rushed them through amid COVID chaos, only for implementation to languish under union pressure and state hesitancy. As a concurrent subject, labour now demands federal alignment, but the Centre’s abrupt gazette bypasses tripartite forums—essential under ILO conventions India ratified. Defenders, echoing Times of India editorials, hail expansions like unique IDs for 50 million gig workers and one-year gratuity eligibility as inclusive wins. Yet, Bhattacharya articulates in

interviews: “It’s good for capitalists and profits, not workers.” The thrust? Simplify MSME compliance (90percent labour force employers), but at protections’ expense, forged in post-Independence struggles and the 1947 Trade Unions Act.

At outrage’s epicentre: “worker” redefinition. Pre-codes offered broad inclusion; now, supervisory roles over <sup>1</sup> 18,000 monthly—a threshold Bhattacharya deems “abysmally low” against <sup>1</sup> 14,000 per capita incomes—fall outside safeguards. In Delhi’s factories or toilets, caretakers blurring hierarchies face “earn more, lose rights,” trapping millions. Bhattacharya

links this to wage ambiguities undermining Supreme Court mandates for holistic living standards, including education, elderly care, and healthcare.

Wages are the powder keg. The <sup>1</sup> 178 daily national floor (<sup>1</sup> 5,300 monthly) sets a baseline, with states able to hike above it. Proponents tout a safety net, but unions see sabotage: It duplicates state minimums while legalising subpar pay, where 90percent earn below legal rates. Delhi cleaners’ official <sup>1</sup> 18,000-19,000 yields <sup>1</sup> 7,000-9,000 realities, amid 20percent food inflation since 2020. Bhattacharya dissects: “Floor wage normalizes violations, diluting true minimum fights.” Vague dearness allowance and housing ignore Mumbai slum rents or PMAY

### STUDY & STRUGGLE



C. Adhikesvan

shortfalls. Enforcement? A mirage—courts post-1991 rarely favour workers; 90percent disputes fizzle sans tribunals. Sweet shop apprentices or COVID-stricken contract teachers embody this: Wages as “bookish,” absent from rhetoric.

Industrial relations codify suppression. Union registration rises from seven to 10 members, needing sustained 10percent workforce backing (or 100)—volatile amid intimidation. Fluctuations risk deregistration, arming owners to fracture solidarity. Strikes? 14-day notice mandates conciliation, deeming action “illegal” if talks feign. “Notice pretends negotiation,” Bhattacharya notes, “but real dates differ—dissent’s death knell.” Fixed-term employment (FTE) cements casualisation: Perennial roles invite indefinite contracts sans permanency. “No permanent workers left,” he laments, enabling layoffs to 300 (from 100), ensnaring 75percent small units in Delhi’s 28 belts like Bawana and Narela.

These erode targetedly: Stifle unions, dilute bargaining via 7.8 per cent unemployment (CMIE), slash costs for profits. Films like Homebound mirror Surat migrants’ despair—no refusals in three-year stints. 2024’s two million layoffs pale against facilitation. Safety? Inspectors yield to “facilitators” via self-certification, exempting 10-worker outfits—most informal—risking Bawana 2018 repeats (42 deaths). Social security’s gig UINs and maternity extensions ring hollow sans wage anchors; Skill India’s 10 million apprentices (doubled) trap in low stipends, 70percent untrained (NSSO).



DELHI



BHUBANESWAR



GOA



GUWAHATI



LUDHIANA



ODISHA



VISAKHAPATNAM



WEST BENGAL



AGRA

## Draft Labour Policy Shram Shakti Niti-2025

# An Agenda to Enslave Labour

RSS-BJP Government brought out a draft Labour Policy named as Shram Shakti Niti-2025 on October 8, with its ideological vision of taking the country and its working masses to the extreme exploitative conditions of master and servant relationship where servant has to serve the master without questioning. To achieve that objective the format of the policy quotes under Chapter 3 - Civilizational ethos and guiding principles- Labour as a Sacred and Moral Duty. It re-emphasises that labour is a dharma (righteous duty). There is no concept of labour rights, or raising any demands in this policy. It does not honour international labour standards or the fundamental rights and directive principles enshrined in Indian Constitution. The intentions are to control the labour and weaken the trade unionism. There is no mention of trade unions and so no role of the collective bargaining has been envisaged. Even the role of monitoring is proposed to be given to employers or the private players.

This policy fails on Federal and Local Governance as per the enshrined principles in the Indian Constitution. It aims to usurp all the powers with the Union government.

Labour is in the concurrent list of the Constitution, but the draft policy reduces the authority of State Governments as the states are positioned merely as implementing agencies of centrally designed policies.

It states: "The apex inter-governmental body under the Ministry of Labour & Employment will provide strategic direction, approve annual action plans and ensure coherence between Central and State programs," and further adds, "each state will constitute a dedicated vision to implement reforms, monitor outcomes, and co-ordinate with local governments."

The policy also adds new administrative tier mentioning

that "District Labour and Employment Resource Centres will function as single window service nodes for worker registration, skilling, grievance redressing, and welfare delivery."

It is to be noted that the local bodies have never been part of labour administration before. But this policy draft

**Amarjeet Kaur**

ensuring "equality" through insecurity? The objective is to push all towards precarious conditions in the name of "ease of doing business".

Much is talked about data collection. The Governance has always relied on data.



talks of the role of local bodies. The policy does not explain the structure, staffing, or accountability mechanisms for these new centres.

The policy claims to rest upon four structural pillars which sounds ideal but the proposals to achieve these set

Using modern technology is not new. It creates doubt when there is proposal to elevate it to a policy principle?

The government seems aware that while a few continue to amass enormous wealth, those who contribute



goals immediately raise fundamental questions. The policy titles itself with promises of "dignity" and "equality," yet says little about concrete measures to ensure these for workers.

It speaks of integrating formal, informal, and migrant workers. But how? Formal workers enjoy job security, wage protection, and social security—will these be extended to informal and migrant workers? Or will the policy level the field by removing protections from all, thereby

their labour are being steadily pushed downward. The policy itself admits this in one clear sentence: "Productivity and enterprise growth have risen steadily, yet wage disparity, gender imbalance, and skill mismatch continue."

To address these inequalities, the policy quotes from Indian Constitution to gain legitimacy but there are contradictions between stated aims and real direction. It says that "work is not merely a means of livelihood but a contribution to the broader order

of dharma (righteous duty)," the underlying implication is that labour is a moral duty rather than a right—thus diluting the worker's entitlement to wages, protection, and benefits. It states that these positions are propounded on the basis of "Our Civilizational Ethos" as follows:

Ideological Roots of this

■ Service is his spiritual duty.

■ If he accumulates wealth, it may be confiscated by the upper castes.

■ Failure to complete work warrants denial of wages and corporal punishment.

From SukraNiti:

■ "Service is a lowly birth." Workers should be paid only enough for food and clothing; extra payment brings sin upon the employer.

■ Labourers can never rise to be traders or leaders.

■ From Yajnavalkya Smriti:

■ If a carrier loses goods, he must replace them as warranted by the employer without any question.

■ Employers may beat or fine labourers for mistakes.

■ A lower-caste worker insulting an upper-caste employer may have his lips cut and property seized.

In NaradaSmriti, there is even a separate chapter on "non-payment of wages," reflecting a view that unpaid or partial payment is a norm to be regulated, not a violation.

If such texts form the ideological foundation of Shram Shakti Niti 2025, it raises grave concerns about the direction of India's labour policy.

There is clear indication that the policy is against Constitutional Provisions:

■ It is usurping the subject of labour from Concurrent List

■ Compulsory Digital Registration of Unorganised Sector Workers may run counter to Article 14 (Equality) and Article 21 (Life and Dignity);

■ Self-certification of labour laws compliance may run counter to Article 23 (Protection from forced labour) and Article 43A (Participation of Labour);

■ Side lining of Trade Unions and mutual consultations runs counter to Article

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*New Age Weekly*

# A Black Friday for the Working Class

The labour rights and trade union rights that the working class in our country enjoy today are the results of struggles, sufferings and sacrifices of the workers of India in the last more than 100 years. Along with the active participation in the freedom struggle to drive away the British imperialism from our soil, the working class of India also simultaneously fought and secured various labour rights.

After the formation of AITUC in 1920 and the struggles of the workers thereafter, in 1926, the Indian Trade Unions Act was secured which till today enables the workers to form trade unions to protect themselves and fight for their betterment. Thereafter, through struggles after struggles, number of labour laws have been achieved by the Indian working class. If today the workers are able to stand up against exploitation and fight for their betterment, it is only because of all these rights enshrined

**C H Venkatachalam**

in the present labour laws.

Even though there are many lacune in these laws, even though in the implementation of these labour laws, there is bias and prejudice against workers, even though there is rampant violation of these labour rights in many forms, still the present labour laws give the workers a scope to fight against all the injustices.

That is why the entire trade union movement in our country has been voicing its vociferous protest against the proposal of the Government to go ahead with their labour reforms agenda. Unfortunately, the Government has been ignoring the same because the Government is committed to give concession to the employers and the capitalists.

Twenty nine existing labour legislations were repealed and in their place four Labour Codes were adopted in

2019 and 2020 in a most unilateral and undemocratic way and totally ignoring the trade union movement.

But due to the united protest of the workers and trade unions, the Government did not go ahead with the implementation of these new Labour Codes.

Today, on this Black Friday, the Government has issued Gazette notification informing the implementation of the Labour Codes from today.

These four Labour Codes are Code on Wages, Industrial Relations, Code on Social Security Code and Code on Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions have replaced 29 centrally legislated labour laws. These Labour Codes are not mere replacement of the old laws but in essence negate and weaken various existing rights of the workers besides showering various concessions to the employers.

In the name of extending

some relief to contract workers and Gig workers, the scope for generation of permanent jobs has been buried. Fixed Term Employment is glorified. The idea is to perpetuate contract jobs and deny permanent jobs. This is a great betrayal of the huge unemployed youth in our country.

Women workers constitute 50 percent of the Indian workforce. Today there are restrictions to employ them in night shifts and hazardous and vulnerable jobs. Under the Labour Codes, in the name of equating women with men, these restrictions are removed. Thus, women will be exploited further.

The Government's propagation and advocacy that these reforms are pro-worker, are nothing but sugar-coated bitter pills.

Against these Government's retrograde measures and proposals, entire trade union movement (except BMS) registered its protest through countrywide strikes on January 8 and 9, 2019, January 8, 2020,

November, 2020, 26, March 2 and 29, 2022 and recently on July 29, 2025. AIBEI also participated in all these protest strikes.

But the Government, because of their pro-Corporate, pro-employer policies, has decided to unilaterally push these anti-worker Labour Codes. This is one more indication as to where the Government's sympathy is.

Then came the Black Friday for the Indian working class and trade union movement.

We also observe that the Government has proposed its new Shram Shakti Niti-2025 to reform its labour policies. All these mean a virtual war on the working masses and to facilitate further exploitation of the productive workforce by the employers and owners of production. Government has glaringly tilted the balance against the interest of the working class.

We strongly oppose these anti-worker labour law changes.

(CH Venkatachalam is General Secretary of AIBEI)

## An Agenda to Enslave...

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19(1)(c), which guarantee Right to organize and collective bargaining;

■ Promoting Privatisation, Contractorisation and Gig Economy without guarantee of Social Protection may run counter to Article 14, 21 and 23;

■ To make labour rights conditional on "Ease of Doing Business" runs counter to Article 38, 39 and 43;

Draft Shram Shakti Niti 2025 envisions registration of workers and portability of Social Security benefits by 2047, when the Supreme Court had ordered the Central Government to complete it during the Covid period. This amounts to contempt of Court and hence unconstitutional.

The policy's only concrete plan for inclusion reads: "creation of a universal social security account integrating EPFO, ESIC, PM-JAY, e-SHRAM, and State welfare boards." But this also is to

weaken the overall established social security systems.

EPFO and ESIC are central institutions providing social security to workers with contributions also from employers. State welfare boards, however, differ widely across states but have been addressing specific sectors of the informal economy. The Construction Workers Welfare Boards, Beedi Workers Welfare Boards, Mineral Workers Welfare Board and some others have been functioning as per enactments. Tamil Nadu and Kerala have relatively effective schemes for unorganised/informal sector workers while others lag behind. In unorganised sectors, there is no employer contribution at all.

By proposing to integrate all these mechanisms, the policy may in effect be moving towards a framework that eliminates employer contributions even in organised industries—a major shift left unexplained in the text. To state that there will be social security coverage for all is a mirage

in the present framework as suggested in draft policy.

The new policy essentially revolves around the four labour codes already passed by Parliament — Code on Wages (2019) and the three others in 2020 and now notified on 21st November 2025 hastily without calling Indian Labour Conference.

The labour ministry is giving up its role as a regulator and adopts the role as an employment facilitator. The inspections are to be given up in the new proposed dispensation.

The First National Labour Commission, chaired by Gajendragadkar, J. made many recommendations for the welfare of the labour. Today unprecedented unemployment is faced by our young generation. Every government sector/department is plagued with unfilled vacancies (Education : 12000 posts in Kendriya Vidyalaya and Navodaya Vidyalaya Schools, 1 lakh schools operating with

only a single teacher, one post out of every four posts in Central Universities, 2 out of every 5 in CSIR, 7 out of 10 specialist positions in Community Health Centres, 2 out of 5 in 20 operational AIIMS, 1.5 lakh in different Categories in Railways, 1 lakh vacancies in Paramilitary Posts, the list is unending). The NITI Ayog, which has been given the responsibility to oversee various schemes, with Ministry of Labour and Employment (MoLE) in the lead, has been on privatization spree. Many State Governments are increasing the work day shift from 8 to 12 hours. Then how does the MoLE plan to facilitate employment? Even the old Employment Exchange Act and its machinery, and the Compulsory Notification of Vacancy Act, which mandates employers to declare vacancies, have become defunct.

The "Shram Shakti Niti 2025" claims to uphold dignity, equality, and inclusion, yet its framework moves toward centralisation of authority, erosion of state powers, and

moralisation of labour instead of recognising workers' rights. Its stated mission does not address the ground realities faced by the toiling masses.

By invoking ancient caste-based hierarchies as moral precedents and by rebranding unimplemented labour codes as a new vision, the policy plans turning back the clock on more than a century of workers' struggles for justice, fair wages, and social protection.

In essence, the new labour policy appears less as a roadmap for worker empowerment and more as an ideological project to redefine labour not as a right — but as a "sacred duty."

AITUC rejected this draft policy and called upon the MoLE to withdraw the draft and asked to initiate dialogue by convening the long overdue Indian Labour Conference (ILC)

A long drawn persistent agitation will have to be continued to halt and defeat this draft policy in the interest of workforce, the people in general and the nation. ■

*When a society mourns, it reveals the wounds in its soul. In the weeks since the death of ZubeenGarg, Assam's most luminous voice and restless conscience, the state has turned into a landscape of grief. What began as mourning soon evolved into something rarer, a moral uprising dressed in sorrow.*

The official account from Singapore, where Garg died on 19 September 2025, stated that he drowned during a yacht excursion connected to the North East India Festival (NEIF). Yet few in Assam accepted the story, that too not without resignation. FIRs were filed across districts within hours. The state government ordered a Special Investigation Team, a second autopsy, and ultimately, a judicial inquiry under Justice SoumitraSaikia. Arrests followed swiftly, of NEIF organiser Shyamkanu Mahanta, Garg's manager Siddhartha Sharma, two personal security officers, and even a cousin in the police service. Each revelation, instead of easing emotion, intensified suspicion. This movement, however, is not simply about the circumstances of one man's death. It is about the exhaustion of faith, a civic ache born of too many broken promises. Durkheim would have recognised in this eruption what he called collective effervescence, the surge of shared emotion through which a society momentarily rediscovers its conscience. Assam's grief has become its mirror, reflecting the fault lines of its institutions, its cultural pride, and its long memory of abandonment.

Public trust is a fragile social contract, and in Assam, that contract has been fraying for decades. The incomplete justice of the Assam Movement, the unanswered questions of the anti-CAA protests, the inertia surrounding custodial deaths, each has chipped away at institutional legitimacy. The Zubeen case is the latest and perhaps most symbolic casualty of that erosion. Reports

of negligence, the absence of life jackets, delayed medical response, and unanswered distress calls, strike at the moral foundation of governance. If a figure as cherished and culturally central as Zubeen cannot be assured of justice, what remains for the faceless millions who suffer in silence? Max Weber once argued that modern authority rests on faith in institutions rather than in individuals. Yet in Assam, that equation

seems inverted, people trust personalities, not procedures. Zubeen himself embodied this inversion, he was a citizen's hero precisely because he stood above the machinery of power, his art serving as an alternative public institution of emotion and truth. His death, ironically, exposes the void that appears when charisma outlives bureaucracy.

To understand why his passing has convulsed an entire society, one must grasp Zubeen's symbolic weight. He was not merely a singer, he was an ecosystem, a bridge between BhupenHazarika's humanist legacy and the turbulent present. His voice carried the aspirations of a

# Under the Shadows of Grief

**Rajdeep Chowdhury**

state often spoken for but rarely heard. Through him, the Assamese language itself seemed to breathe in the contemporary world. When such a figure dies in uncertain circumstances, grief naturally becomes a mode of resistance. The protests, candlelight vigils swelling into processions, hashtags like #JusticeForZubeen flooding digital platforms, are not just emotional gestures, they are acts of cultural self-defense. Benedict Anderson would call this a re-imagining of community, where identity, long fragmented by politics

tween empathy and anxiety. Its creation of an SIT, promise of a 90-day charge sheet, and call for restraint illustrate the tightrope between compassion and control. The Chief Minister's warning against "politicisation" betrays a familiar discomfort, when grief acquires political force, the state finds itself judged not by evidence alone, but by empathy. This tension evokes Habermas's notion of the public sphere, that fragile space where emotional

easily undo that perception. Bourdieu might interpret this as a contest over symbolic capital, the public reclaiming moral authority from those who long monopolised cultural prestige. Zubeen's death, in that sense, has democratised grief. The street, once again, has become Assam's most credible institution. Justice, in this moment, must mean more than punishment, it must mean reform. Assam urgently needs a framework for cultural governance, clear safety protocols for public events, transparent liability laws, and independent oversight of organisers and sponsors. The government's decision to institute a judicial inquiry is a start, but true accountability will require structural change, not symbolic closure.

In Assam's mourning lies the desire to be heard, to be treated not as spectators but as citizens of feeling. The movement for Zubeen is, therefore, not only a plea for justice but a reclamation of dignity, a demand that institutions listen with the same depth that Zubeen once sang. The state now faces its test of legitimacy. If the investigation proceeds with clarity and courage, it can restore faith that the machinery of justice still responds to conscience. If not, Assam will remain a republic of grief, united not by trust in law, but by the aching music of its absence. If the state transforms this tragedy into policy, safeguarding artists, ensuring equitable regulation, and rebuilding faith in law, it would honour Zubeen's deepest ethos, that art and governance share a moral duty to the public.

ZubeenGarg's voice once gave Assam its heartbeat. In his silence, he has given it something rarer, the courage to ask whether its institutions still have one. ■



and migration, is momentarily reassembled through mourning. Assam's people are not only mourning an artist, they are reaffirming the dignity of being Assamese. In the tremor of their sorrow lies a subtle assertion "our culture matters, and so must our justice".

Indian democracy has long been nourished by the politics of emotions. Assam's current movement belongs to this lineage of emotive democracy. Emotion is not a failure of reason, it is a form of civic intelligence, a language through which the powerless hold the powerful accountable.

The Assam government's response has oscillated be-

legitimacy meets procedural authority. The current moment in Assam may well be one of the most vital public conversations in recent memory, messy, loud, human, and profoundly democratic.

The tragedy has also reopened old wounds of class and power. The NEIF, a glitzy platform connecting culture with commerce, represents the cosmopolitan aspirations of a new elite. Its collision with tragedy has sharpened public perception of inequality, that accountability is selective, that the privileged glide above the law. The subsequent arrests, though significant, cannot

# Let Us Unite to Fight ...

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despotism grow dangerously thin, this phrase becomes not merely a slogan but a principle of survival — the insistence that facts, reason, and solidarity remain the foundation of political life.

Neo-fascism is the adaptation of the old fascist spirit to the conditions of the post-war, post-industrial, and now digital age. It retains the central traits of its predecessor — ultranationalism, xenophobia, racism, authoritarianism, the worship of strength, and the hatred of dissent — but cloaks them in a democratic veneer. It speaks the language of elections, law and order, and patriotism, even while working to hollow them out. It does not always come marching in jackboots; it arrives in suits, smiles, and slogans about cultural revival and national rebirth. It works through propaganda rather than censorship, through distortion rather than overt repression, and through fear disguised as faith. Its aim, as always, is to erode the human capacity for doubt, dialogue, and dissent — the essential conditions of freedom.

The distinction between

classical fascism and neo-fascism lies not in their goals but in their methods. Classical fascism seized the state through violent mobilization; neo-fascism colonizes it through electoral legitimacy and media control. The fascism of the 1930s built concentration camps; the neo-fascism of today builds echo chambers. Both rest on the same psychological mechanism: the fabrication of enemies, the cultivation of grievance, the glorification of obedience, and the promise of a pure community purged of “outsiders.” The historical fascists achieved this through physical terror; the neo-fascists achieve it through cultural terror — disinformation, revisionist history, and the strategic inversion of truth.

The conditions that nurture neo-fascism are also familiar: economic crises, unemployment, the erosion of social security, and the alienation of individuals in atomized societies. Just as in interwar Europe, the sense of dislocation and loss becomes fertile ground for demagogues who claim to restore pride and order. They define enemies — immigrants, minorities, feminists, communists, secu-

larists — and promise to cleanse society of their influence. And in times of hardship, people are persuaded to trade freedom for belonging, reason for certainty, and compassion for vengeance. As Erich Fromm warned, “Most people were unprepared, both theoretically and practically, to believe that man could exhibit such propensities for evil, such lust for power, such disregard for the rights of the weak, or such yearning for submission.” Neo-fascism thrives in that same mixture of fear and longing.

In this landscape, truth becomes a revolutionary act. Antonio Gramsci wrote, “To tell the truth is revolutionary.” It is revolutionary because fascism, old or new, depends on lies. It depends on the lie that a nation can be pure, that a people can be homogeneous, that one race or religion can stand above another, that the elite who exploit the working class are its protectors. Fascism depends on myths that disguise the contradictions of capitalism — presenting economic crisis as the fault of migrants or minorities rather than the inevitable consequence of

greed and inequality. As Georgi Dimitrov famously defined it, fascism is “the open, terrorist dictatorship of the most reactionary, most chauvinistic, and most imperialist elements of finance capital.” That definition, though rooted in the 1930s, remains strikingly relevant. Neo-fascism, too, is not a rebellion against the capitalist order; it is its radicalization, a desperate attempt by elites to preserve their dominance in times of crisis by diverting popular anger toward false enemies.

For communists and progressives alike, then, the struggle against neo-fascism is the struggle for truth — the exposure of exploitation beneath the rhetoric of nationalism, the unveiling of class power behind the mask of cultural revival. It is an ideological battle, fought not only in parliaments but in classrooms, workplaces, and digital spaces where lies spread faster than light. Truth must be made visible through analysis, education, and solidarity. But truth cannot stand alone; it must walk hand in hand with unity. For truth without organization is powerless, and organization without truth is blind.

The communist tradition has long insisted that anti-fascist unity must be broad — a front of workers, intellectuals, secular forces, and all defenders of democracy. The united front is not merely tactical; it is the embodiment of truth in political form — the recognition that fascism divides to conquer, and that only solidarity among the diverse can resist it. Neo-fascism exploits isolation; truth restores connection. It thrives on cynicism; truth revives hope. It survives on the silence of the majority; truth demands that silence be broken. Gramsci’s admonition remains timely: “I hate the indifferent.” Indifference, he reminds us, is the ally of tyranny.

To fight neo-fascism through truth, we must challenge disinformation with evidence, historical revisionism with documentation, and hatred with humanism. We must defend the institutions that sustain truth — the free

press, the university, the judiciary, the spaces of public reasoning — for these are among the first targets of authoritarian regimes. We must also expose the contradiction that neo-fascism claims to protect the “ordinary citizen” while advancing policies that serve capital and crush labour. To unmask this hypocrisy is to strike at its heart.

But the struggle for truth is not confined to intellectual debate; it must find its expression in political and material action. Workers’ movements, student organizations, and progressive coalitions must make truth a living force — in campaigns for equality, in the defense of secularism, in solidarity with migrants, in the protection of the planet. The battle for truth is also the battle for bread, for dignity, for justice. It is fought in every act that asserts humanity against the machinery of hate.

Neo-fascism is not merely a historical recurrence; it is the symptom of a deeper crisis — the crisis of meaning in societies where profit outweighs people. Truth, therefore, is not only an epistemic concept but an ethical one. To tell the truth is to affirm the possibility of reason against unreason, of empathy against cruelty, of community against isolation. It is to defend the fragile idea that human beings, even in fear and confusion, can choose solidarity over submission.

In the end, the phrase “Truth against Neo-Fascism” signifies more than resistance; it signifies rebirth. It is a declaration that amidst the ruins of deceit and division, we still believe in the emancipatory power of knowledge, memory, and collective struggle. It reminds us that truth is not neutral — it sides with the oppressed, it illuminates exploitation, and it refuses the comfort of silence. When the chorus of lies grows deafening, to speak the truth is not merely courageous; it is necessary for civilization itself. Truth, united with action and solidarity, remains humanity’s surest weapon against the return of the darkest impulses of our age. ■

## Memorandum to President of India...

From Page 05

pension to all who are not covered by any pensions scheme.

7. No Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM), National Cooperation Policy and ICAR Agreements with MNCs that encroach on rights of State Governments and facilitate Corporatisation of Agriculture.

8. End indiscriminate land acquisition, Implement LARR Act 2013 and FRA;

9. Guaranteed employment and Job security for all. 200 days of work and Rs. 700/day as wage in the MGNREGS. Expand it to urban areas. Immediately withdraw the exclusion of families from MNREGA. Pay the pending wages.

10. Comprehensive Public Sector insurance scheme for Crops and Cattle, Ensure Crop Insurance and all the schemes’ benefits to the Tenant farmers;

11. Arrest price rise. Strengthen PDS. Ensure quality public health care and education to all. Rs.10,000/ monthly Pension at the age of 60 years for all. Tax the super-rich for the resources.

12. India must reject Trump’s tariff threats and assert its sovereign right to trade with all nations.

13. The India-UK CETA must be scrapped immediately, as because there is no ratification in Parliament.

14. No more secret trade agreements—all future deals must undergo full parliamentary scrutiny and public consultation.

15. Strict laws to stop Communal division in the society and ensure their effective implementation. Uphold secularism as envisaged in the constitution.

16. End violence against women and children through gender empowerment and fast track judicial system; End violence, social oppression and caste-communal discrimination against all marginalised sections including Dalits, Tribal People and Minorities.

With expectations from your good self to take our representation in urgency in favour of Justice and Equality as enshrined in the Constitution of India.

Thanking you and with regards,

Yours Sincerely,

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) & Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions (CTUs) and Independent Sectoral Federations/Associations

(Through District Collector) ■

# RSS Caught in US Lobbying Scandal with Pakistan-Linked Firm



*Diary of  
International  
Events*

*C. Adhikesavan*

The Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) finds itself at the centre of a political storm following revelations that an American lobbying powerhouse, Squire Patton Boggs (SPB), represented its interests in Washington. The controversy deepens as SPB is also known for lobbying on behalf of the Pakistan government—India’s chief geopolitical rival.

Documents obtained by The Print and verified through official U.S. lobbying disclosures reveal that SPB was hired by another U.S. firm, State Street Strategies, to lobby in the U.S. Senate “to promote U.S.-India bilateral relations” on behalf of RSS. Three payments — 120,000 dollar in April, 100,000 dollar in July, and 110,000 dollar in October 2025—were recorded in official filings, totalling 330,000 dollar over three quarters. These records, filed under the Lobbying Disclosure Act (LDA) with the U.S. Department of Justice, list RSS as the client, directly contradicting the organization’s public denials.

The complication arises because SPB also lobbies for Pakistan through Orchid Advisers LLC, reportedly paid 500,000 dollar monthly by Islamabad, roughly half of which goes to SPB. This dual representation—simultaneously for Pakistan and RSS—raises serious concerns about conflicts of interest, national security, and ethical boundaries in transnational lobbying.

Lobbying in the United States is a legal, regulated activity aimed at influencing legislation or policy through registered intermediaries. However, when foreign entities or political organizations engage in such lobbying, they must disclose under the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA) who they represent and what they seek to influence.

State Street Strategies, a U.S. public affairs firm known for connecting international clients with U.S. policymakers, specialises in building narratives to shape government perceptions. Yet its engagement with SPB for RSS raises red flags—especially as SPB’s clients list includes not only Pakistan but other states with competing agendas in South Asia.

The RSS’s financial opacity is one of the most troubling aspects of this episode. An unregistered body with no legal obligation to publish audited accounts or pay taxes in India, RSS operates as a vast socio-political network with opaque funding structures.

Financing an expensive U.S. lobbying campaign—costing over 330,000 dollar—without public disclosure has therefore sparked questions about accountability and legality.

Where did this money come from? Were donors or affiliates informed? Was the expenditure approved through any transparent mechanism? These questions strike at the core of democratic accountability. In a system where public trust relies on openness, such untraceable transnational expenditure erodes credibility not only of RSS but of the institutions that permit it to operate unregulated while exercising political and ideological power.

RSS’s direct involvement in foreign lobbying also has implications for Indian sovereignty. Diplomacy is constitutionally and conventionally a function of the Indian state, conducted through the Ministry of External Affairs. When a domestic, ideological organization undertakes lobbying



abroad, it blurs the distinction between official diplomatic efforts and private ideological outreach.

This blurring dilutes India’s capacity to project coherent foreign policy positions. If U.S. lawmakers receive parallel messages—one from the Indian government and another from a politically aligned but non-state actor such as RSS—it confuses diplomatic messaging and potentially undermines government credibility. Coordination failures of this kind have serious implications for sovereignty, signalling to foreign powers that Indian domestic groups can run independent diplomatic agendas.

The most alarming dimension is SPB’s simultaneous representation of Pakistan and RSS. Islamabad, through Orchid Advisers, reportedly pays SPB hundreds of thousands monthly to advocate for Pakistan’s interests, including military aid and favourable trade policies. That the same firm received payments from RSS to promote “U.S.-India relations” borders on a diplomatic

scandal.

Such dual lobbying arrangements inevitably create conflicts of interest and information risks. A single Washington firm representing both sides of one of the world’s most volatile rivalries could compromise sensitive information, erode trust, and even allow inadvertent cross-pollination of strategic narratives.

For India’s public, this raises uncomfortable questions. How could an organisation professing nationalism outsource foreign representation to a firm that profits from lobbying for Pakistan? Did those authorizing the payments understand SPB’s Pakistan connections? If so, why proceed despite the risk?

The controversy unfolds amid tricky geopolitical timing. In early 2025, following the Pulwama attack and subsequent escalations in Kashmir, the United States imposed tariffs affecting Indian exports while offering Pakistan economic concessions,

including an IMF-backed 1 billion dollar package. The role of well-funded Pakistani lobbying efforts in these U.S. decisions has been noted by analysts.

Against this backdrop, the revelation of RSS-linked lobbying payments to the very firm shaping Pakistan’s narrative magnifies geopolitical irony—and potential diplomatic damage. It also revives domestic debates about RSS’s legal status, tax exemptions, and its growing footprint in areas traditionally reserved for the state.

The government, for its part, spends roughly 275,000 dollar monthly in lawful U.S. lobbying through multiple firms, including Mercury Public Affairs, representing Indian diplomatic interests. The addition of RSS-linked lobbying contracts—independent of government control—clouds lines between state and ideological advocacy.

While FARA mandates disclosure of U.S. lobbying clients, it does not verify legitimacy or funding source. Therefore, even though official

records clearly list RSS as a client, the Indian public has no means of verifying whether domestic laws were breached.

The RSS’s denial could be politically strategic—acknowledging payments might invite scrutiny not just under Indian law but also from tax and regulatory authorities. However, denial despite public records risks damaging its credibility further, both domestically and internationally.

This episode transcends mere political scandal; it reflects the complex entanglement of ideology, money, and foreign policy. As India’s most influential socio-political organisation, often described by its supporters as the world’s largest NGO, RSS’s actions have far-reaching consequences.

Its unregistered status allows flexibility but shields it from scrutiny—an arrangement that may now prove untenable. Foreign lobbying, especially involving firms tied to rival nations, tests the limits of democratic accountability and institutional transparency.

Public trust in democratic governance depends on clarity over who speaks for the nation, how they are funded, and what foreign interests they might be advancing. When organisations bypass these principles while maintaining political influence, they weaken the very democratic fabric they claim to defend.

The RSS–SPB episode thus serves as a cautionary tale. It exposes loopholes in India’s regulatory oversight of political funding, highlights risks of parallel diplomacy, and underscores the vulnerabilities of foreign influence operations. Whether this controversy triggers institutional reform or fades under partisan rhetoric remains to be seen.

For now, the intersection of secretive ideology, global lobbying, and cross-border conflict of interest has placed the RSS at an unprecedented ethical crossroad—one that could reshape conversations about transparency, nationalism, and state sovereignty in India’s democracy.

*New Age Weekly*

Niti Aayog Report ...

From Page 04

India continues to supply the world’s STEM workforce while attracting hardly any in return.

It is also important to note that states, not the Centre, are quietly reshaping India’s inbound landscape. Punjab has quadrupled its numbers. Uttar Pradesh now attracts more foreign students than Delhi or Tamil Nadu. Gujarat’s inflows have risen six-fold. Andhra Pradesh is rebuilding itself as a value-for-money technical destination. These shifts show that when states take initiative — better marketing, new private universities, simpler admission channels — inbound numbers rise. But education remains a national mandate, and unless the

Centre builds a cohesive architecture, India will continue to depend on state-level improvisation.

The truth is, India now faces a fork in the road. It can either continue treating higher education as a domestic sorting mechanism — one that pushes millions out and fails to pull talent in — or it can finally recognise that global education is a strategic arena. The NITI paper calls this moment an “inflection point,” warning that India has the scale, affordability and institutional capacity to be a global education hub but lacks the decisive implementation to get there. There is no middle path left: either India reforms or India resigns itself to being the world’s largest exporter of students

and one of its most reluctant recipients.

An OPED is meant to provoke, so let it be said plainly: India risks becoming an educational suburb in the global knowledge economy — a place where students are trained to leave, not to learn. Until visas are overhauled, campuses upgraded, branding professionalised, curricula internationalised and post-study options enabled, nothing will change. India will continue bleeding talent and foreign exchange while others build education systems that are not just destinations but engines of national strategy.

The NITI report offers data. India now needs to offer direction. ■



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“Stop fake encounters and start peace negotiations. Despite the fact that human genocide is taking place, there is continued silence at highest seat of justice. It is most hurting. CPI and its mass organisations will collect signatures for launching a campaign,” stated Kunamneni Sambasiva Rao, member of state assembly and Telangana state secretary of CPI, while addressing a demonstration of left parties, intellectuals, leaders of mass organisations, civil rights and human rights activists on November 14, 2025 at Dr BR Ambedkar statue, Liberty Road, Hyderabad.

Demonstration took place under the leadership of Committee against Fake Encounters, demanding to stop fake encounters, put an end to Kagaar operation and protect the wealth of forests.

Kunamneni further said while addressing that Supreme Court has to take up this serious issue and launch comprehensive enquiry. Central government should stop Kagaar operation and peace

talks be initiated. Amit Shah and Modi are challenging frequently that by March, 2026, they want to annihilate all Maoists. It would have been better if same determination would have been shown about corruption, unemploy-



ment and other challenges to democracy. They should have taken these issues as challenges against which action was imperative.

He also made it clear that all these fake encounters are nothing but killings by BJP government. We are relentlessly working for the welfare of people. Are we anti-nationals? Whereas Adanis and

### Ramnarsimha Rao

Ambanis are looting public money, assets of government and also robbing the mineral wealth of the country. Are they patriots? Questioned

ceiving life threatening letters from BJP and RSS. John Wesley, Telangana state secretary, CPI(M), in his address pointed out that killing of Maoists is anti-constitutional. Who has given authority to government to kill Maoists? On these killings, comprehensive enquiry must be made.

Prof Kodandaram in his address demanded that criminal cases be instituted on officials who have been involved in the killing of Maoists in fake encounters.

Prof Haragopal, leader of civil rights, in his address, stated that these mass killings of naxalites are nothing but attempt to hand over the wealth of forests to Adanis. As they are questioning the government, will they become urban naxalites?

B Chandrakumar, retired justice, in his address, remarked that 1600 acres of land of mineral ores was sold to Adanis at the rate of one rupee only. Hence they want

to eliminate naxalites from those forests. This is most undemocratic and anti-constitutional.

Prominent among those present were ET Narsimha, Telangana state assistant secretary, CPI presided over the Demonstration. Syed Azeez Pasha, former MP, Ramesh Raja, state secretary, CPI (ML) Liberation, Saadineni Venkateshwerarao, state secretariat member, CPI(ML) New Democracy, Chalapathi Rao, New Democracy, Murahari, SUCI(C), Potu Ranga Rao, CPI (ML) Mass Line, Sandhya (PoW), Bhaskar of Chandranna group, CPI (ML), Prof Laxman, Goverdhan, New Democracy, M Narsimha, Telangana state deputy general secretary, AITUC, B Venkatesham state secretary, AITUC, Palla Narsimha Reddy, B Chaaya Devi, state executive members, CPI, Nedunoori Jyothi (NFIW), Kalluri Dharmendra (AIYF),

## On Record ...

The Supreme Court has placed the entire ecosystem of private and deemed universities across India under judicial scrutiny, demanding exhaustive disclosures from the Centre and state governments on the circumstances of their creation, the benefits extended to them, and the regulatory frameworks meant to ensure they adhere to a ‘no profit-no loss’ mandate if they position themselves as such institutions. A bench of justices Ahsanuddin Amanullah and NV Anjaria said that “in the larger public interest” it found it appropriate to examine aspects relating to the “creation/establishment/setting-up of all private Universities, either under the state governments/UTs or the central government, and connected concerns.” – *The Hindustan Times*, November 26.

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The victims of Delhi Blast struggle to rebuild their lives facing job loss and financial hardship. As the survivors of the blast near Red Fort try to piece back their lives, a fortnight since their lives were upturned, they struggle to sustain themselves due to loss of jobs and livelihoods and no government support. Many survivors, who often held daily wage or private sector jobs (such as e-rickshaw drivers or accountants), lost their livelihoods due to injuries and inability to return to work. Despite government assurances that medical expenses would be covered, some victims face uncertainty about who will bear the cost of ongoing treatment, such as surgeries for

hearing damage. *The Hindu*, November 25.

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Gautam Adani’s company allegedly overcharged ₹ 140 crore from the Rajasthan government by claiming payment for laying railway tracks for coal transport, which was actually done by trucks. This surfaced in court under RERA scrutiny.

Despite widespread social media reports, mainstream media ignores these revelations, exposing corruption involving government contracts and misuse of public funds linked to influential business interests. – *The Hindu*, November 25.

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Indian roads are among the deadliest globally, with over 1.72 lakh fatalities reported in 2023 alone. Contributing factors include over-speeding, wrong-side driving, poor road design, and lack of safety measures like helmets and seat belts. Despite government claims of improvement, potholes and weak law enforcement persist, worsening the crisis. Learning from safer countries like Norway and adopting strict safety laws and technology can save millions of lives annually. Meanwhile, public awareness and personal responsibility in wearing helmets



and seat belts remain vital to reduce accidents and protect families. – *Down to Earth*, November 24.

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Kerala achieved a historic milestone by becoming the first Indian state to eradicate extreme poverty through its innovative Extreme Poverty Eradication Programme (EPEP). Despite India being the fourth largest economy, 800 million people depend on government ration. Kerala’s model focused on decentralized governance, community participation, and integrated welfare in food, housing, health, and livelihood to lift tens of thousands out of poverty, offering a replicable blueprint for other states. – *The Indian Express*, November 24.

– Compiled by C. Adhikesavan

## Former VP Nguyen Thi Binh Honoured with Romesh Chandra Peace Award



**Former WPC President  
late Com. Romesh  
Chandra**

The Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations and the All India Peace and Solidarity Organisation jointly held a ceremony in Hanoi on November 18 to honour former Vice President Nguyen Thi Binh with the Romesh Chandra Peace Award recognising her exceptional contributions to peace and international solidarity.

Former Vice President Nguyen Thi Binh has been honoured with the Romesh Chandra Peace Award by Pallab Sengupta and Rabin Deb, advisory Committee member of AIPSO.

Madame Binh is also former member of the Party Central Committee and Honourary President of the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation (now the Vietnam Peace and Development Council).

Speaking at the award ceremony, Pallab Sengupta, Permanent Invitee to the National Secretariat of the Communist Party of India, President of the World Peace

Council, and a member of the AIPSO Presidium, emphasised that Madam Nguyen

Thi Binh is one of the most inspiring figures in the global

movement for peace, independence, and social justice. Her name, he said, shines brightly in the heroic history of Vietnam's struggle.

Madam Nguyen Thi Binh was also a chief negotiator of the Provisional Revolutionary Government at the Paris Peace Accords. She demonstrated the courage and dignity of Vietnamese women to the world, speaking not only for the aspirations of the Vietnamese people but for all those who fought against imperialism and for peace.

Expressing her sincere gratitude to AIPSO, Madam Nguyen Thi Binh said that the award was not only a personal recognition, but also an acknowledgment of the collective efforts of those



working in people-to-people diplomacy at the Vietnam Peace Committee and the Vietnam Union of Friendship Organisations.

The same day, AIPSO



**Madam Nguyen Thi Binh [sitting] Standing  
left to right: Ravinder and Pallab Sengupta**

also presented the Romesh Chandra Peace Award to Uong Chu Luu, former mem-

ber of the Party Central Committee's Commission for External Relations, Standing Vice President of the Vietnam Peace Committee, and Standing Vice President of the Vietnam Peace and Development Foundation (now the Vietnam Peace and Development Council), in recognition of their outstanding contributions to building and promoting the international movement for peace and solidarity.

The Romesh Chandra Peace Award, established by AIPSO, is named after Romesh Chandra, Honourary President of the World Peace Council, a shining symbol of the international peace movement, a steadfast fighter who devoted his entire life to the ideals of peace, the struggle against imperialism, and the strengthening of solidarity and friendship among nations.

Romesh Chandra was also a loyal friend of the Viet-

namese people, who consistently stood by Vietnam and actively mobilised progressive movements and peace-loving forces around the world to support the Vietnamese nation's struggle for independence and freedom.

The Romesh Chandra Peace Award was created to commemorate his life and legacy, honouring his extraordinary contributions to the international peace movement.

The award recognises individuals and organisations that have made outstanding contributions to promoting peace and strengthening international solidarity, acknowledging the dedication and tireless efforts of peace advocates, and inspiring future generations to continue upholding and spreading the noble values of peace, independence, freedom, and friendship among peoples. ■