

OCTOBER 2020

Rs.15

Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

RESIST MODI GOVT'S ANTI-FARMER POLICIES!
NO TO CORPORATE RULE!



WHY ARE FARMERS PROTESTING?

THE BILL DOES NOT GIVE WHAT THE FARMERS ARE ASKING FOR AND NEED, WHICH ARE -

MSP-MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE TO BE GUARANTEED
SUPERVISION OF TRADE
FAIR TRANSACTIONS AND PRICES
EMPOWERING STATE GOVERNMENTS TO REGULATE AND PLACE ALL MARKETS ON A LEVEL PLAYING FIELD.

FARMERS FEEL THAT THE BILLS ARE A WAY FOR THE GOVT. TO ABDICATE THEIR RESPONSIBILITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY TO PROVIDE THE FARMERS WITH A MSP OR MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE.

@ourdirtyunderwear

EXISTING SYSTEM

FARMER 

1. FARMERS SELL GOODS AT MSP - MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE, CONTROLLED BY GOVT. AT MANDIS

MANDI 

TRADER 

BIG CORP. BUSINESS 

2. BIG CORPORATIONS ARE ALLOWED TO TRADE, BUT THERE IS A LIMIT TO THE TIME AND AMOUNT OF PRODUCE THEY CAN HOARD/STOCK. (TO PROTECT FARMERS)

CONSUMER 

NEW SYSTEM

FARMER 

1. FARMERS NOW SELL DIRECTLY TO CONSUMERS AT THEIR OWN RATES.

BUT RELIEVES THE GOVT OF

2. ACCOUNTABILITY FOR MSP.

TRADER 

BIG CORP. BUSINESS 

3. THE BILL REMOVES THE LIMIT ON AMOUNT AND DURATION OF HOARDING OF PRODUCE BY CORPORATIONS.

4. LARGE SCALE STOCKING ALLOWS CORPORATIONS TO SET RATES LOWER THAN THE FARMERS.

CONSUMER 

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THE PROBLEM WITH THE NEW FARMER BILLS

FARMERS ARE NOT GUARANTEED A MINIMUM SUPPORT PRICE.

NO LIMIT TO THE AMOUNT AND DURATION FOR WHICH COMPANIES CAN 'HOARD OR STOCKHOLD GOODS'

MARKET IS OPEN TO MASS PRIVATIZATION.

HUGE IMPORT OF FOOD FROM POORER COUNTRIES CAN BE DONE BY CONGLOMERATES TO REGULATE PRICES WITHOUT REPERCUSSIONS.

THE GOVT. IS NOT ACCOUNTABLE FOR REGULATING PRICES

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CEREALS PULSES EDIBLE OIL ONIONS POTATO

HAVE BEEN REMOVED FROM ESSENTIAL COMMODITIES LIST, BY THE GOVERNMENT

BIG CORPORATIONS ARE NOW FREE TO MONOPOLIZE AND CONTROL THESE COMMODITIES



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MURDER IN UPPER HOUSE

THERE WAS A HARSH OPPOSITION TO THE BILLS BEING PASSED, IN THE UPPER HOUSE OF PARLIAMENT.

THE LIVE STREAM OF THE SESSION ON 'PAJYA SABHA TV' WAS MUTED DURING THE 'VOICE VOTING' AND WAS IN FAVOUR OF THE 'AYES'.

THE MEMBERS OF THE OPPOSITION WERE NOT ALLOWED A PHYSICAL VOTE. A PHYSICAL VOTE IS TO BE DONE EVEN IF A SINGLE MEMBER DEMANDS.

THE OPPOSITION HAS WALKED OUT IN DISSENT.

THE HURRIED PASSING OF THESE BILLS AND THE RUBBER STAMP NATURE OF THE PARLIAMENT GIVES US A GLIMPSE OF OUR DYING DEMOCRACY.

MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT WERE QUOTED CALLING THIS A 'MURDER OF DEMOCRACY'



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FIGHT FOR FARMERS IS A FIGHT FOR DEMOCRACY

Credit: @ourdirtyunderwear, Instagram

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Modi's Farm Bills: Mortal Blow to India's Farmers

It took India quite some time to decode Narendra Modi's 'Aachhe Din' rhetoric, but his latest 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' jumla (empty phrase) is unravelling much faster. For the Modi government, 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' has only one meaning – turning the whole of Indian economy into an Adani-Ambani enterprise!

After launching an aggressive campaign of privatization of India's key infrastructure sectors, the government has now unleashed a war on India's agriculture and farmers. Agriculture is the only sector which recorded positive growth amidst an otherwise across the board free fall of India's GDP in the first quarter of financial year 2020-21 (April-June 2020). The government now seeks to hand over the reins of Indian agriculture to corporate agri-business.

The three farm ordinances promulgated for this purpose on 5 June triggered massive opposition from farmers across the country, but as soon as Parliament met for a belated monsoon session, the government turned the ordinances into bills, and then had them 'passed' without voting in a complete mockery of parliamentary democracy. By all indications, the numbers in the Rajya Sabha were stacked against the government and when opposition MPs insisted on voting, the live telecast was muted, and the chair declared the bills passed. In a further mockery of parliamentary procedures the Chairman of the Rajya Sabha dismissed the no confidence motion against the erring Deputy Chairman and went on to suspend the protesting opposition MPs. The government has committed daylight murder of parliamentary democracy to subject India's farmers to the slavery of India's new Company Raj.

The government claims about the purpose and implications of the bills are full of deceit and lies. The titles of the bills are also utterly misleading. One of the bills is titled The Farmers' Produce Trade and Commerce (Promotion and Facilitation) Bill, 2020. Another is called The Farmers (Empowerment and Protection) Agreement of Price Assurance and Farm Services Bill. The government claims that the bills are aimed at freeing farmers from bureaucratic control, expanding their choice about sale of their produce and improving their capacity to get better prices. The government also claims that the bills in no way do away with the existing provisions of minimum support price and the mandis (Agricultural Produce Market Committee) where farmers currently sell their produce.

We can take a look at Bihar, where the Nitish Kumar government had revoked the APMC Act way back in 2006, to understand the implications of the state abdicating its procurement responsibilities. According to data obtained by The Wire through RTI queries, less than 0.1% of estimated wheat production in Bihar was acquired by central and state government agencies in the rabi marketing season of 2020-21. And this is no aberration; the proportion of official procurement has remained less than 2% over the last four years in Bihar. The figures have been equally abysmal for paddy and not much better even for maize. While farmers across the country have been fighting for increased MSP as recommended by the Swaminathan Commission and for timely and assured procurement, the government wants to completely abdicate its responsibility and hand over the reins to private agri-business companies. The continued existence of MSP and APMC on

paper will bring absolutely no relief to common farmers when the entire system will be dominated by private players. The implications can thus only be alarming for large sections of India's agrarian population.

When the Bill talks of promotion of facilitation of trade and commerce, it has private agri-business units in mind which will now have complete freedom to buy from anywhere and store as much as they like. The government would like us to believe that farmers will be equally free, but can farmers ever match the power of the agri-business? The price advantage will thus lie entirely with the latter, and this coupled with their new-found freedom of inter-state trade and unregulated storage will allow them to further tighten their grip. It will not take long for the 'freedom' of farmers to trade with mighty agri-business companies to turn into a new form of bondage where the companies will call all the shots. Apart from adversely affecting small farmers and share-croppers who lease in land for cultivation, the new system is also likely to deal a mortal

blow to India's self-sufficiency in foodgrains production and the whole system of food security and public distribution. Once contract farming becomes the dominant mode of agriculture, the pattern of cultivation will be decided by agri-business companies according to their own interests and calculations to satisfy their own hunger for profit and not fulfil the needs of feeding India's billion-plus people. Just as Mukesh Ambani's Jio has been allowed to grow at the cost of the huge public sector network of BSNL, the Food Corporation of India will also be sacrificed at the altar of major private agri-business players.

The new order will also have major adverse implications for India's already weakened federal structure. While the states will have no regulatory power over the movement and sale of agricultural produce and lose whatever revenue they used to earn from transactions through the APMC network, all powers will accrue to the Central government and big corporations. The government is celebrating the bills as harbingers

of a radical transformation of India's agriculture and camouflaging this mortal blow as a historic moment of freedom for India's farmers. It is quite similar to the kind of grand self-congratulatory claims we heard after demonetization and the introduction of GST. By all indications, the upshot of these new 'bold reforms' will be as disastrous as the suffering that has followed in the wake of demonetization and GST. We must congratulate India's farmers for not falling for the government's deceitful propaganda and for rising in bold resistance. The power of the farmers' protests has already forced Akali Dal minister to quit Modi's cabinet and several state governments to voice their opposition. Six years ago, the united protests of farmers and opposition parties had forced the Modi government to withdraw its land acquisition ordinance. Let us make sure that the government is forced to retreat once again in the face of the resolute resistance of the united platform of farmers' organizations. Every defender of democracy must join hands with India's farmers to win this battle. □



Credit: @ourdirtyunderwear, Instagram

'One Rupee' Fine for 'Contempt of Court'

After delivering a more than 100-page verdict holding Prashant Bhushan guilty of contempt of court for two tweets, Justice Arun Mishra and his colleagues finally issued another long judgement to pronounce the quantum of sentence. Prashant Bhushan was asked to pay a fine of one rupee by 15 September or serve a prison sentence of three months along with an embargo of three years on his legal practice. Understandably enough, Prashant Bhushan decided to pay the fine as he had already declared that while not offering any apology for his tweets, he would cheerfully submit himself to any punishment decided lawfully by the apex court.

Both verdicts announced by Justice Arun Mishra in this contempt of court case, the August 14 judgement holding Prashant Bhushan guilty for his tweets and the August 31 sentence after the court failed to coerce Bhushan into offering an apology, will go down in India's judicial history in any list of extremely arbitrary and peculiar verdicts. Finding two tweets guilty of discrediting and destabilizing the judiciary and then fixing a token fine of one rupee as punishment for such an allegedly grave offence can only be seen as a sign of extreme judicial inconsistency. The court only gave the impression that in this case it had painted itself into a corner.

But we cannot afford to treat the whole thing as an aberration that can be forgotten after this ludicrous sentence. The court clearly wanted to set an example and send out a message. It was a message for Twitter to 'behave', to restrain and regiment the platform and not be hospitable to dissent. And it worked! Even before the Supreme Court gave its verdict, Twitter went out of its way to suspend the

tweets in question. The message was also intended for Prashant Bhushan and the public at large and even though Bhushan refused to buckle under pressure the Supreme Court has taken this opportunity to create an example to intimidate and silence other critical voices.

The whole episode has two important lessons for the ongoing popular quest for justice and democracy in the face of the intensifying fascist offensive. The outpouring of mass support and solidarity for Prashant Bhushan clearly indicated that large sections of Indian people were alive to the growing threat to democracy and determined to defend it with all their strength. By staying firm and refusing to submit to coercion and give an apology, Prashant Bhushan has powerfully articulated this popular resolve. This courage of conviction and tenacity to fight are key qualities to wage and win any protracted battle. And we need these qualities whether we have to spend months and years in jail like the Bhima Koregaon 12 and many others are doing or whether we succeed in getting mild sentences like the one-day incarceration for Arundhati Roy or one rupee fine for Prashant Bhushan.

The other lesson is the importance of the battle for legal reforms and judicial accountability. Colonial-era repressive doctrines and draconian legislation like the Contempt of Court Act, or sedition or defamation laws, or laws like NSA, UAPA or AFSPA, that are routinely used to curb freedom of speech and expression, incriminate dissent and provide impunity for extra-judicial repression and violence, can have no place in the constitutional democracy of independent India. The International Commission of Jurists has also urged review of India's criminal

contempt laws after this latest episode. The urgency of judicial accountability becomes obvious when we look at the routine violation of the rule of law by the powerful and the privileged and the systematic persecution and disempowerment of common citizens, especially the poor and ideological dissenters, by the state.

August is the month of resistance and freedom in our history. As the fascist regime seeks to rewrite our history and celebrate and showcase their 'victories and achievements' won through wholesale subversion of the Constitution and suppression of the people, it is important for us to intensify our resistance and celebrate and consolidate our victories. Whether it is a prominent international publishing concern like Bloomsbury being shamed into disowning the publication of the sinister Sanghi narrative on the Delhi communal violence or the Supreme Court climbdown in the contempt of court case or the Allahabad High Court ordering the release of Dr. Kafeel Khan and revocation of the illegal NSA charges imposed on him, the people's movement for justice and democracy must draw on every moral vindication and victory to sustain and strengthen itself.

And this moral victory must make us doubly aware of the increasingly vindictive and inherently casteist nature of the Indian state. While Prashant Bhushan is let off with a one-rupee fine, let us remember that young Suvarna Salve, a Dalit student and cultural activist in Mumbai, has been asked to furnish surety of Rs 50 lakh to get bail for participating in a peaceful Mumbai solidarity protest against the ABVP attack on JNU students in January 2020. The fight for freedom of speech and expression must challenge the majoritarian and Manuvadi bias of the state which makes a Kafeel Khan or a Suvarna Salve more vulnerable when they exercise their freedom of expression. □

Delhi Police 'Riots Probe' Is Nothing But Persecution of Equal Citizenship Protestors

Ever since the naming of Left political leaders in chargesheets followed by the arrest of student activist Umar Khalid, criticisms and condemnations of the Delhi Police's "riots probe" have intensified. In addition to students, intellectuals, activists, citizens across India, even former senior police officers wrote to the Delhi Police Commissioner expressing distress at the biased manner in which the police was conducting its "probe".

Feeling the heat of these mounting condemnations, the Delhi Police has scrambled to issue a series of "clarifications" and statements. If anything, these statements confirm the Delhi Police's inability to defend or disguise its blatantly indefensible actions.

In chargesheets filed by the Delhi Police in various riots cases, the names of political leaders like CPIM General Secretary Sitaram Yechury, CPIML PB member Kavita Krishnan, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav; intellectuals including Professors Apoorvanand and Jayati Ghosh; filmmaker Rahul Roy; former JNU student activist Umar Khalid and activists of student organisations and platforms like AISA, JCC, and Pinjra Tod were attributed by the police to "disclosure statements" by some of the accused persons. In the storm of outrage and condemnation that followed, many pointed out that such "disclosure statements" obtained in police custody carry no weight as legally valid evidence, since they tend to be scripted by the police. This impression that

the "disclosure statements" in the Delhi violence cases are scripted is

that the academicians and politicians named are "part of



further strengthened by the fact that statements attributed to different individuals use identical language; and by the fact that at least three of the accused: Safoora Zargar, Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita have written "refused to sign" on the statements they are said to have made. It was also pointed out that there were complaints of persons being forced to bear false witness in statements to the police: to either agree to falsely implicate activists or be charged under the draconian UAPA law.

The Delhi Police responded to these criticisms with a "clarification"

disclosure statement of one of the accused in connection with organizing and addressing the Anti-CAA protests." While claiming that "the disclosure statement has been truthfully recorded as narrated by the accused person", the Delhi Police added that "A person is not arraigned as an accused only on the basis of disclosure statement. However, it is only on the existence of sufficient corroborative evidence does further legal action is taken." On the very next day, however, the Delhi Police arrested Umar Khalid, solely on the basis of "disclosure statements" which attributed

violent statements to him. Where is the “corroborative evidence” for the claims made in disclosure statements that Umar instigated violence? On the contrary, there is ample evidence of Umar’s speeches during the equal citizen movement against the discriminatory CAA NPR NRC laws, calling for peaceful protests even in the face of violence.

Bail orders for Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita in some of the cases under which they have been arrested, have clearly noted the fact that their public speeches do not, as the police claim, incite any violence, but merely call for peaceful protests. It is to compensate for this utter lack of evidence that the police is resorting to UAPA charges. The UAPA is a law designed to be a tool to target critics of the regime: a law under which a person can be imprisoned for years on the basis of a mere allegation by the State, without bail or trial. The Home Ministry, in a reply to a question in the Rajya Sabha, has admitted that of the 3,005 UAPA cases filed in 2016-18, only 27% had chargesheets: a fact that goes to show the flimsy nature of these cases. Yet, police can delay investigations endlessly, and the falsely accused languish in jail for years. Even if subsequently acquitted, the accused is punished by the very process of being booked under UAPA.

In response to a letter to the

Delhi Police Commissioner, former police chief Julio Ribeiro expressed concern at the fact that the Delhi Police was failing to act against BJP leaders like Kapil Mishra and Anurag Thakur while arresting

have been filed in the riots related cases in which 1153 accused (571 Hindus and 582 Muslims) have been charge-sheeted.” This is a misleading claim. The question which the Delhi Police is evading

in the name of its Hindu-Muslim numbers is: how many pro-CAA persons have been charged under UAPA and other stringent sections of the law, in comparison with equal citizenship (anti-CAA) protestors? Among the 571 Hindus charge-sheeted, have any but the equal citizenship protestors like Natasha and Devangana been charged with stringent sections including UAPA? Have not most of them been charged with light sections?

The Delhi Police note, objecting to the

fact that “various interest groups are using social media platforms and other online portals to raise questions about the fairness of investigation of the North East Delhi riot cases,” suggested, as did the Police Commissioner in his reply to Ribeiro, that anyone aggrieved with the investigation should approach the Courts rather than social media and news portals. These responses suggest that the Delhi Police has a problem with free speech by

The “Social Media” Excuse

After Umar Khalid’s arrest, the Delhi Police seemed rattled by the massive outcry that followed. In a highly unusual move, Delhi Police Commissioner S N Shrivastava, along with Deputy Commissioner of Delhi Police’s Special Cell Pramod Singh Kushwaha (who conducts most of the interrogations of the Delhi violence accused), spoke at a webinar organised by the Delhi Police Retired Gazetted Officers Association <https://indianexpress.com/article/cities/delhi/road-blocks-during-delhi-riots-sign-of-conspiracy-chargesheet-by-thursday-police-6596305/>. At the webinar, Shrivastava said that the social media outcry was because some of those being investigated have a strong social media following and are spreading fake news about the probe. This is ironic: after all, who has a stronger social media following and proven record of spreading fake news than the Prime Minister Modi and the legendary BJP IT Cell? The police chief’s remark is a sign of the failure of the BJP to control the narrative over the anti CAA movement and the Delhi Police witch hunt. The outrage at the brazenly biased and conspiratorial Delhi Police probe is the voice of India’s people who are refusing to buy lies. This outpouring is confined to social media for now only because of the pandemic: at the first opportunity, it will spill out in protests on the streets, as it did to protest every act of police violence during the anti CAA movement.

citizens for peacefully protests. The Delhi Police Commissioner issued a reply suggesting that Ribeiro should not lend his name to “concocted stories” of police bias by motivated persons.

Echoing the Police Commissioner’s reply, a representative of the Delhi Police also issued a note to the media claiming it has been even-handed towards Hindus and Muslims alike, stating that “Over 250 charge-sheets

HOW IS IT DIFFERENT?

UAPA

Bail is impossible if the allegations against accused are true prima facie. Period of detention can be extended to 180 days.

Investigation is carried out by the National Investigation Agency, a Central Government body.

It is upon the accused to prove his innocence.

ORDINARY CRIMINAL LAW

An individual is entitled to bail by default if the investigating agency fails to file a charge sheet within 90 days.

Investigation is carried out by police officials operating under the State Government.

The accused is considered to be innocent until proven guilty by the state.

Credit: @lawyersgopobono, Instagram

its critics, and by independent media (it is online news portals that have done the most rigorous reportage on the Delhi violence and police probe). At the same time, the Delhi Police itself has not had any qualms in leaking custodial (fabricated) “confessions” to selected pro-government media outfits to prejudice the case against the accused equal citizenship protestors. The Delhi High Court had to issue a notice against such leaks. The fact remains that in a democracy, the police and investigative agencies must be open to scrutiny and questions by citizens in the public domain; such questions cannot be confined to courtrooms, to which few have access.

Ribeiro, in his rejoinder to the Police Commissioner’s reply, has rightly observed that the Police Commissioner is silent on the “licence given to” BJP leaders Kapil

Mishra, Union minister Anurag Thakur and MP Parvesh Verma “to rant, rave and threaten those who are peacefully protesting perceived wrongs.”

The Delhi Police’s 11-lakh page charge-sheet and its defensive statements cannot hide the truth. The police is protecting the real perpetrators of the Delhi violence while using draconian laws like UAPA to punish equal citizenship protestors. It responds to criticism by declaring that the critics represent, or are being used by “motivated vested interests”. Do the BJP leaders it is protecting, have no motivations and vested interests at all? Why is the Delhi Police allowing itself to be used by them?

The charge-sheets with their lakhs of pages bring to mind the words of Bertolt Brecht: Given the immense power of the regime/ Its camps and torture cellars/ Its well-fed policemen/ Its intimidated

or corrupt judges/ Its card indexes and lists of suspected persons/ Which fill whole buildings to the roof/ One would think they wouldn’t have to/ Fear an open word from a simple man.” The simple people all over India are fearlessly facing a vindictive regime armed with nothing but their “open words”, their unity, and their commitment to the truth. It is the regime that fears the people.

Letter by Julio Ribeiro To Police Commissioner, Delhi

Dear Shri. Shrivastava,
I write to you with a heavy heart. As a true patriot and a former proud member of the Indian Police Service I appeal to you to ensure a fair probe into the 753 F.I.Rs registered against peaceful protestors who rightly apprehend injustices born from bias and hate against a minority community.

The Delhi Police has taken action against peaceful protestors but deliberately failed to register cognizable offences against those who made hate speeches which triggered the riots in N.E. Delhi. It troubles sane and apolitical persons, like me, why Kapil Mishra, Anurag Thakur and Parvesh Verma have not been arraigned before the Courts of law while deeply-hurt Muslim women, peacefully protesting against discriminations based on religion, were lodged for months together in jail!

The not-so-subtle attempt by the Delhi Police to entangle true patriots, like Harsh Mander and Prof. Apoorvanand, in criminal cases is another matter for concern. We, the police forces in the land, and its leadership drawn from the Indian Police Service, have a duty and obligation to respect the

Constitution and the enacted laws, impartially without regard to caste, creed and political affiliations.

Kindly revisit the actions of the police under your command in Delhi to determine if they have been true to their oaths taken at the time of their induction into service.

Yours sincerely,
Julio Ribeiro
I.P.S. (Retd.) 53 MAH

Open Letter to the Police Commissioner, Delhi, regarding the flawed investigation into the Delhi riots, February 2020

Dear Shri Shrivastava,

We, the undersigned, are retired officers of the Indian Police Service and belong to a larger group of retired officers belonging to different services and known as Constitutional Conduct Group (CCG). Mr Julio Ribeiro is a

living legend of an IPS officer (as one publication put it) and is one of the most valued members of the CCG. We would like to endorse the letter he has written to you regarding the flawed investigation into the Delhi riots.

In addition, we would like to say that it indeed is a sad day in the history of Indian police that investigations and challans submitted in the court by Delhi Police in connection with riots of this year are widely believed to be partisan and politically motivated. It pains all those police officers, serving as well as retired, who believe in upholding the rule of law and our Constitution.

We were sad to note that one of your Special Commissioners had tried to influence investigations claiming resentment among Hindus over the arrest of some rioters belonging to their community. Such a majoritarian attitude in the police leadership leads to a travesty of justice for the victims of violence

and their family members belonging to minority communities. This would further mean that real culprits of the violence belonging to majority community are likely to go scot free.

What pains us more is implicating all those who spoke and joined protests against Citizenship (Amendment) Act (CAA). They were simply exercising their fundamental rights of freedom of speech and peaceful protests as guaranteed by the Constitution.

Basing investigations on “disclosures” without concrete evidence violates all principles of fair investigation. While implicating leaders and activists, who expressed their views against CAA, all those who instigated violence and are associated with the ruling party have been let off the hook.

Such investigation will only make people lose faith in democracy, justice, fairness and the Constitution. A dangerous thought that may ultimately shake the pillars of an orderly society and lead to

Stop Bhima Koregaon Case Witch Hunt

In a shocking development, the National Investigation Agency (NIA) arrested cultural activists of Kabir Kala Manch Sagar Gorkhe and Ramesh Gaichor in the Bhima Koregaon case. Till now, 14 academics, activists and lawyers have been arrested in this case. Just one month back, we saw how Delhi University associate professor of English, Hany Babu, was arrested in this case. Subsequently, a scientist from West Bengal, Parthasarathi Ray, has been questioned by the NIA.

Both Gorkhe and Gaichor, in a video released few days back, have clearly said that NIA has been forcing them to give statements against those arrested. And since they refused to do so, they were likely to be arrested. The same pattern is being seen in the Delhi violence “investigations” also, where there have been complaints that Delhi Police is threatening people to either bear false witness against activists, or else face UAPA charges.

Even as activists, intellectuals, lawyers, and doctors are being harassed, intimidated, arrested and jailed indefinitely under draconian laws, there is no action against BJP leaders instigating violence, and against terror outfits involved in attacking Dalits and assassinating dissenters. Rather, persons like “Sadhvi” Pragya, still facing charges of Islamophobic terrorism, has been handpicked by the Prime Minister to enter Parliament as a BJP MP.

Under the Modi regime's undeclared Emergency, rights activists and dissenters are either shot at, killed, or raided, arrested and jailed. But even in the dark times, we draw our inspiration to fight back from the words of Ramesh Gaichor, “We aren’t descendants of (Vinayak Damodar) Savarkar but are children of Dr. Ambedkar. We have done nothing, we have always followed the Constitution.”

breakdown of law and order.

We would, therefore, earnestly request you for reinvestigation of all riot cases fairly and without any bias based on sound principles of criminal investigations to provide justice to the victims and their families and for upholding the rule of law.

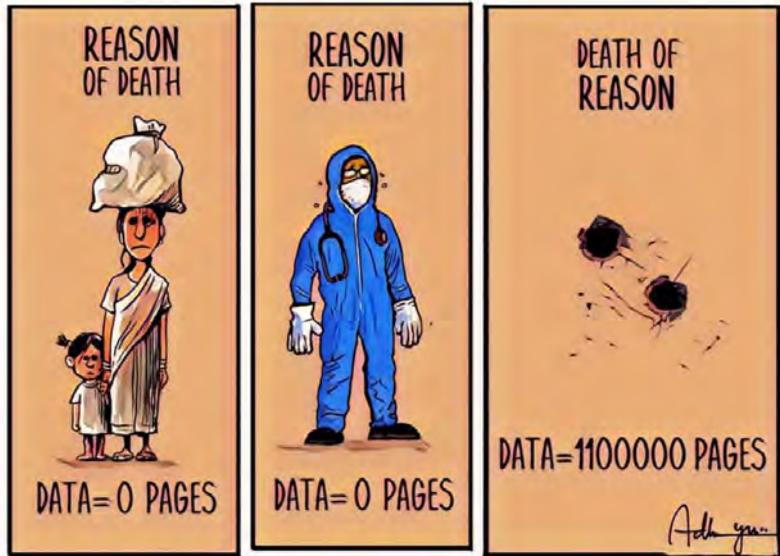
Yours sincerely,

1. Shafi Alam, IPS (Retd.), Former Director General, National Crime Records Bureau, GoI
2. K. Saleem Ali, IPS (Retd.), Former Special Director, CBI, GoI
3. Mohinderpal Aulakh, IPS (Retd.), Former Director General of Police (Jails), Govt. of Punjab
4. A.S. Dulat, IPS (Retd.), Former OSD on Kashmir, Prime Minister's Office, GoI
5. Aloke B. Lal, IPS (Retd.), Former Director General (Prosecution), Govt. of Uttarakhand
6. Amitabh Mathur, IPS (Retd.), Former Director, Aviation Research Centre and Former Special Secretary, Cabinet Secretariat, GoI
7. Avinash Mohanane, IPS (Retd.), Former Director General of Police, Govt. of Sikkim
8. P.G.J. Nampoothiri, IPS (Retd.)
Former Director General of Police, Govt. of Gujarat
9. A.K. Samanta, IPS (Retd.), Former Director General of Police (Intelligence), Govt. of West Bengal

'Do not get scared, raise your voice against injustice'

Umar Khalid's Message of Courage

Following Umar Khalid's arrest, his friends and supporters released a pre-recorded video with a short message. The text of the message is translated from Hindi to English, below.



If you are watching this video, it means that I have been arrested. The Delhi Police is not catching people who openly instigated the riots, in front of the police, in front of TV cameras, we've all seen this. Forget an FIR, they haven't even been called for questioning. But instead, it is going after those who criticise the government and its policies, especially the Citizenship Amendment Act. The ones who participated in the anti-Citizenship Amendment Act protests are being wrongly framed without proof. I gave a 17-minute speech out of which 20-30 seconds are taken out and made viral saying that I conspired in the Delhi riots. The part where I talked about Satyagraha is nowhere to be seen.

Why am I dangerous? Is it because I say that this country as much mine as it is yours? We live in a beautiful country where people of different faiths, speaking various languages, all kinds of people are equal before the Constitution and the law. Today, efforts are being made to change this, to divide us. And those who speak against this divisive politics are threatened, intimidated and put behind bars to silence them.

They are trying to scare us, but they are trying to scare you too. They are stifling our voice by jailing us, but they are also trying to trap you in lies. They want to frighten you into silence. My one appeal is do not get scared. Raise your voice against injustice.

Criminalising and Silencing Dissent: Delhi Police Investigations into the February Violence

Statement issued at a Press Conference on 16th September, 2020, Press Club of India, New Delhi

We have gathered here today to express our collective anguish at the sheer brazenness with which the Delhi police has turned the investigation into the February violence in Delhi into an inquisition of the anti-CAA protests. Just two days ago, Umar Khalid was taken into custody and booked under UAPA and several other criminal sections, thereby adding to the list of anti-CAA protestors languishing behind bars. He is among the soaring young voices who have risen up in defense of the Constitution, at the service of truth, and are today prisoners of conscience.

Credit: Sandeep Adhwaru

The Delhi violence saw the loss of 53 human lives, assault on property and livelihoods, and attacks on places of worship. Even in February we were aghast at the role of the police, who were not just partisan but inhuman as they stopped ambulances from entering affected areas; until concerned citizens were forced to knock on the doors of the High court at midnight to remind the police of their duty.

In the last few months we have collectively witnessed the same dereliction of duty by the police. We all wanted a fair investigation into the Delhi violence, but what the Delhi police has resorted to is a sinister plan to brand, target, frame and arrest all those voices that dared to speak up against the unconstitutional and immoral Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA). Coupled with the National Register for Citizens (NRC) and the National Population Register (NPR),

the CAA was designed to forever fracture the idea of India.

This was thwarted by what was undoubtedly the most vibrant and creative people's movement across the country since independence. The movement was the exact antithesis of what the government in power wants us to be. It was united, and at the same time diverse; it was both peaceful and courageous. So, the ruling party has resorted to what it does best. It has deployed the police, a pliant media and all the draconian laws at its disposal to unleash a vicious witch-hunt, particularly against young minds. They do not want them to dream of an inclusive, pluralist, egalitarian India.

The real culprits – who in broad day light threatened to clear the protest sites by force, or those who came with guns into the protest sites, or those who chanted provocative and violent slogans – remain free. Even

as all democratic voices of dissent are being gradually implicated. This includes students, academicians, artists, politicians and activists.

We demand an immediate end to this outrageous investigation that is being conducted with prejudice and malafide intent. We demand that activists booked under the UAPA be immediately released; and a judicial enquiry commission be constituted to punish the real culprits and ensure justice for the Delhi violence.

Syeda Hameed, Writer and former member, Planning Commission of India
Prashant Bhushan, Eminent Lawyer
Kavita Krishnan, Politbureau member, CPIML
Pamela Philipose, Senior Journalist
Nandita Narain, former President, DUTA

Sifting Evidence:

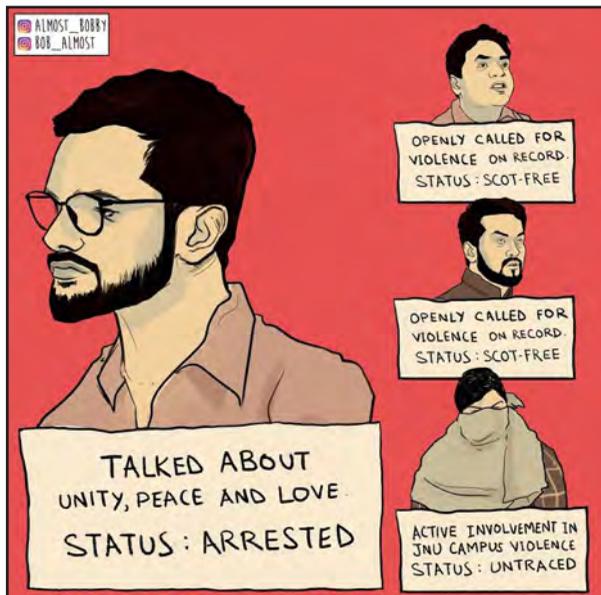
A Review Of "Delhi Riots 2020: The Untold Story"

This review of the book Bloomsbury withdrew after an outcry, has been prepared by a voluntary citizens' collective of academics and activists, anchored by Karwan-e-Mohabbat, Anhad and Muslim Women's Forum. We publish excerpts from the introduction to the detailed review.

On March 11th, 2020, a group called GIA (Group of Intellectuals and Academicians) submitted a fact-finding report on the Delhi riots to the Home Ministry. The group then announced that a book Delhi Riots 2020: The Untold Story, based on this report would be launched on August 22, 2020. The

guests of honour at the launch event included Kapil Mishra, a Delhi BJP leader, who became known for his hate speeches between December 2019 and February 2020, in the run up to the Delhi Assembly election. On December 21st, 2019 he led his supporters in chanting - 'Desh

ke ghaddaron ko. Goli maaro saalon ko' (The traitors to the nation. Shoot the bastards). On February 23, 2020, he stood in North East Delhi, along with the Deputy Commissioner of Police, and threatened that his supporters



Credit: @almost_bobby, @bob_almost, Instagram

would 'take matters into their own hands' if the CAA protesters were not cleared up. This speech is widely alleged to have triggered the subsequent violence that wracked North East Delhi between 23 and 26 February 2020. Petitions are pending in the courts asking for FIRs and legal action against him for inciting the Delhi violence, which took 53 lives (40 Muslims and 13 Hindus) and devastated many more.

On the day of the book launch, Bloomsbury India, the publisher, pulled out. We do not know exactly why, but presumably because many people objected to the idea of such a book and its release by Kapil Mishra. The authors subsequently claimed that their freedom of expression was being curtailed. It is noteworthy here that the lead author, advocate Monika Arora, was instrumental in getting noted Sanskritist Wendy Donniger's book, *The Hindus*, banned in India in 2014. One of the other authors, Prerna Malhotra, belongs to the National Democratic Teachers Front (NDTF) which has frequently lobbied to remove material from the social science syllabi of Delhi University, including well known linguist AK Ramanujan's *Three Hundred Ramayanas*.

But the facts on this matter are clear - there was no call to ban the *Delhi Riots 2020* book. Established and reputable publishers get their reputation because they fact-check, and stay away from publishing material that may amount to libel. Other publishers may not care, and therefore do not achieve that reputation. One publisher, Garuda Press, has now said it intends to publish this book.

In the meantime, a PDF of the Bloomsbury book began to be circulated widely, on WhatsApp, Twitter and email, by supporters

of the book, who believed that its message must be spread far and wide. At the virtual book launch, Kapil Mishra tweeted "The book is public now". During a programme on NDTV telecast on 26 August 2020, one of the authors questioned the anchor's authority asking if he had read the book, and said that reports critical of the book were coming from 'fake portals.' We conclude that the authors wanted people to have an informed opinion based on their close reading of the book.

What we found is contained in the pages that follow - passages from the book with false claims, factual inaccuracies, and distorted/selective presentations. As reviewers, we have simply used the yardstick of evidence and fact and lack thereof. There are many statements in this book that amount to libel.

A reputed publisher like Bloomsbury must answer how this material, including defamatory content, made it through their fact-checks from manuscript stage to final proofs.

WHAT IS THIS BOOK ABOUT?

Rewriting the narrative

This book is not about the Delhi riots. This book is about recasting a people's movement for equal citizenship and against the Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 (CAA), into something criminal. In the book the 'facts' of the Delhi violence form only one chapter (chapter 6).

The passing of the CAA led to one of the largest democratic rights movements in independent India, across class, religious communities and regions. Its closest contemporary equivalent

is probably the Black Lives Matter (BLM) movement. Like the BLM, the movement against the CAA, with full participation of democratic and civil rights actors, was led by those most directly affected, by Muslims, and especially by Muslim women. Scores of university students, women and men, also played a leadership role. The police attack on the students of Jamia Millia Islamia (JMI) who were peacefully protesting against the CAA and the police vandalism of the Jamia library had led to a wave of sympathetic protests in colleges and universities across the country, starting with Aligarh Muslim University (AMU).

In order to delegitimise the movement against the CAA, it had to be criminalised. The Delhi riots themselves were the first step – to introduce violence and abruptly end a peaceful people's movement. The second step was to link this violence to the movement against CAA, as cause and effect. The third step was to link all Muslim protestors, those associated with

civil rights and democratic movements, and ordinary university students critical of government policies, and paint them all as actors in a synchronized conspiracy to destabilise the country.

BROAD ARGUMENT IN THE BOOK

Urban-Naxal-Jihadi conspiracy to destroy India under garb of movement against CAA

According to this book: There was a giant criminal conspiracy to create extreme violence and destroy the Indian state. The conspiracy was likely foreign funded, probably by international,

Islamist organizations; possibly the ISIS. The entire movement against the CAA-NRC-NPR in India was the front. The lakhs of protestors, including youth, students and women of all ages were part of the conspiracy; sometimes described as gullible and brain-washed, and other times as co-conspirators who were exceptionally violent. The conspirators were 'Urban Naxals' or Jihadi, and most times both at once. The book does not explain why Naxals were funded by Islamists, despite their known differences.

The phrase Urban-Naxal-Jihadi is used a lot in this book. Each throw aims to stick to a range of actors, in the belief that stickability is a foregone conclusion; that it is self-evident and self-explanatory; and requires neither logic nor evidence.

It is fair to say that in this book, all people who express liberal views and take public positions against the ruling BJP are Urban-Naxal. All Muslims - men, women and children - are Jihadi. The tale takes a broad sweep, invokes images of ISIS, Syria and Egypt, and quotes from purported Maoist pamphlets about guerrilla warfare.

According to this book, conspirators – interchangeably Urban, Naxal and Jihadi - planted highly skilled sharp-shooters, possibly trained in Syria or Egypt, on high rise buildings in North East Delhi to kill. Therefore, the authors demand that all high-rise buildings in all of Northeast Delhi must be subjected to a forensic audit. Many Islamic rioters, the book suggests, had combat training and used 'bunkers.' The conspirators also

trained women to hide swords under their burqas. However, it does not indicate a possible location for this burqa/sword training. Delhi Police had no choice but to crush this Islamist-Naxal conspiracy, which is also taking root in our most reputed universities. Therefore, this books also calls on "... vice chancellors of DU, JMI, JNU and all other universities to take an audit of the

sheets being filed by the Delhi Police in the riot cases (refer – Introduction II) We came to the inescapable conclusion that there is indeed a conspiracy. And this book is part of it.

The theories in this book have been replicated down to details in the charge-sheets being filed by the Delhi Police in the Delhi riots cases. These criminal cases have already

incarcerated scores of people who participated in the movement against the CAA. For example, Chapter 6 about the first day of violence in the Seelampur-Jaffrabad area, contains a story that mirrors the version in the police charge-sheet on the Jaffrabad violence (FIR 50/20). We scanned several other charge-sheets and found the same story being repeated. Each charge-sheet begins its narrative with the movement against the CAA, it then goes on to talk about conspiracy, pre-planning, networks,

and so on, with no evidence whatsoever. Yet, people are in jail today, many under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA), an anti-terror law that makes bail near impossible. Many more live with the threat of imprisonment tomorrow.

This book is part of a carefully crafted template for the police to follow and embellish. Unrelated actors and actions are now being woven by the police into a complex conspiratorial web out of thin air. The grand foundational idea of the rule of law and sanctity of investigative procedures, on which hinges the liberty of each individual in any civilized society, is reduced to tawdry copy-paste. □



use of their campuses to engineer wider disturbances in the city in the eight weeks leading up to the riots." This then, is the big picture of the Delhi riots in this book.

This narrative may not meet many readers' standards of credibility, but it claims to be the 'untold story' of the Delhi riots.

THE 'REAL' CONSPIRACY BETWEEN THE DELHI POLICE AND AUTHORS OF THIS BOOK

We did, however, find evidence, which forces us to take this book very seriously. For alongside this book, we also read the charge-

Between Escalating Covid Numbers and Nosediving GDP, the Modi Regime is an Unmitigated Disaster

Dipankar Bhattacharya

We now have the official economic report card for the first quarter of FY 2020-21. The GDP has crashed by 23.9 per cent, by far the worst global performance for any country comparable to India. Never before in the last four decades did the Indian economy record a negative growth rate. These are early estimates and economists believe the final actual figures may well be much worse. Pranab Sen, India's former chief statistician, estimates the economy to have shrunk by more than 30 per cent, taking into account the informal sector for which we do not yet have hard data.

The government which had all along been in a denial mode about the economic decline, wants to pass off this shock as an 'act of God', as a natural outcome of the economic disruption caused by the lockdown. This is clearly a big lie. Economic growth in India has been decelerating for quite some time post demonetisation. India's GDP growth rate has been in a free fall for successive eight quarters since 2018-19, from 8.2 per cent to as low as 3.1 in the quarter ending on March 2020, before turning hugely negative following the imposition of lockdown. A sustained slowdown has now pushed the economy into this abyss. Secondly, various countries have adopted some kind of lockdown or the other, but nowhere else has it triggered this kind of an economic disaster. The most drastic and draconian lockdown has produced the most

disastrous outcome.

A sectoral breakdown of the GDP crash shows that the fall has not been limited to sectors like construction, transport, aviation, hospitality and tourism that have clearly suffered a massive disruption. Even sectors like mining, that have been largely insulated, or public services, that should have actually seen an increase if the government focused on better delivery of health services and civil supplies, have contributed significantly to the sharp overall fall. The only sector that reported a marginal positive growth has been agriculture. But then the contribution of agriculture to GDP has been steadily declining and a marginal growth of agriculture cannot therefore pull up the overall figures.

Can the economy revive on its own from this state of alarming decline? The government and its official economic administrators perhaps have such a dream. Some of them are predicting a V-shaped recovery, which means the economy will pick up as sharply as it has fallen. But increasingly, more and more observers of global economic trends tell us that the graph of recovery is not likely to look like V, or even U, but rather like K, where some components (or rather corporate houses) will grow while others continue to go down, thereby further widening the difference or increasing the degree of inequality. But the bottom line for any kind of recovery is urgent

state intervention. The disaster has resulted from flawed policies and inaction, recovery needs an urgent course correction, based on effective policies and determined action.

Investment, demand and consumption are the three key parameters that have been driving the Indian economy downward. There has been a massive loss of jobs and income affecting millions of people. A joint study of the International Labour Organisation and Asian Development Bank estimates job loss for 4.1 million youth, in seven key sectors including construction and agriculture, in the wake of the Covid19 pandemic. According to the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy, as many as 18.9 million salaried jobs have been lost since April. Job losses are accompanied by massive wage cuts, resulting in a huge drop in income and savings, which can only dampen consumption, demand and hence investment.

The only way out can be a massive and urgent increase in expenditure by the central government on an action plan focused on components like cash transfer to compensate for loss of income, universalisation of public distribution system guaranteeing at least 10 kg foodgrain per person per month in every household, increased job days under MGNREGA and introduction of an urban employment guarantee act on similar lines and an extended

moratorium and interest/instalment waiver on all small loans. The Modi government has adopted an opposite strategy – it refuses to pay state governments their GST dues, forget about transferring cash to Jan Dhan accounts. Cash-strapped state governments in turn are deferring salary payments and curtailing necessary expenditures, leading to a squeeze on public expenditure, delivery and demand.

The lockdown was announced as a dramatic measure of temporary restriction and sacrifice that will effectively flatten the Covid curve in India. But the prolonged and harsh lockdown has not slowed down the spread of the virus in India, it has only deferred the peak and the incremental numbers are still steeply climbing even after more than six months of the onset of the virus. And now the economy is being unlocked, and students are being forced into examinations and voters into elections, even as the epidemic is ominously escalating with a million cases being added now in less than two weeks.

The government has failed miserably on both fronts – the epidemic and the economy. In the name of economic stimulus the government only unleashed a new rhetoric of 'Atmanirbhar Bharat' and the PM has reduced it to asking the people to buy locally made toys, adopt locally bred dogs, and use non-Chinese apps on their phones while the Adanis and Ambanis go on a massive acquisition spree, extending their control over key areas of infrastructure and communication. The gimmicks are celebrated by the dominant media, but the people are now increasingly rejecting this script and the choreography, with students drowning Modi videos on the internet in such mighty waves

Unemployment Crisis

PM Modi's birthday was observed by youth all over India as "National Unemployment Day": with reason. The country's youth held the PM's demonetisation, GST, and lockdown as the three death blows that felled the Indian economy, and destroyed jobs.

- Urban unemployment in India was 9.83% in August (Center for Monitoring Indian Economy)
- Rural unemployment rate was 7.65% in August (CMIE)
- National unemployment rate was at 8.35% in August (CMIE)
- 6.6 million white collar professional jobs, including engineers, physicians, teachers, accountants, and analysts were lost between May and August 2020, bringing employment of this sector of professionals to the lowest level since 2016. (CMIE)
- 5 million industrial workers' jobs were lost during May to August 2020, largely in the medium, small and micro industrial units. (CMIE)
- Between 2016-17 and 2019-20 the total number of employed people in the country stayed stagnant — from 40.7 crore to 40.3 crore. (CMIE)
- India will suffer a "permanent" loss of 13-14% of real GDP (amounting to around Rs 30 lakh crore) over the medium term: much higher than the 3% average loss that most other economies in Asia-Pacific will suffer.
- India has an existing pool of 3.5 crore unemployed people. Since the pandemic hit, 2 crore salaried jobs have been lost. Migrant workers forced to return home and find survival in the agricultural sector, while counted as employed, are actually instances of disguised unemployment.
- By the end of this financial year, even if no further jobs are lost, India would need close to 4.5 crore jobs.
- Each year, at least 1 crore young Indians will join the labour force demanding work.

of dislikes that the BJP could only think of saving themselves by disabling the dislike button! The time has come for young India to turn the social media dislikes into

emphatic political resistance and electoral rejection of a regime which only excels in manufacturing disasters and inflicting miseries on the people. ☐

DUET: A Proposal For An Urban Work Programme

(We reproduce a proposal by economist Jean Drèze for a scheme of subsidised public employment in urban areas, to address the current job crisis, and to create a lasting institution as an antidote to urban unemployment and urban decay. This proposal was first shared on 'Ideas for India'. As Ideas for India points out, "Please note that the motivation for DUET is quite different from that for MNREGA. MNREGA offers insurance to rural workers in a slack season or in a drought year when agricultural jobs disappear. That is not the case of urban production. Yet, there is significant unemployment in urban areas. Urban areas could use some infrastructure and there is under utilised labour but there are no resources to use this labour to build the infrastructure. DUET may be one way to solve this problem?")

Context

- There is a crisis of employment in the urban informal sector, as millions of workers have lost their job due to periodic lockdowns, and may or may not retrieve it soon.
- Our public institutions and public spaces (schools, colleges, health centres, bus stands, jails, shelters, hostels, parks, museums, offices, etc.) have a chronic problem of poor maintenance.
- As public institutions reopen after months of lockdown, much work will be needed to restore the premises (cleaning, sanitising, white-washing, weeding, repairing, painting, plumbing, and so on).
- There is growing interest in an employment guarantee act, but little experience of relief works in urban areas. Decentralised Urban Employment and Training' (DUET) could act as a step towards urban employment guarantee.

The Basic Idea

- The state government issues 'job stamps' and distributes them to approved institutions – schools, colleges, government departments, health centres, municipalities, neighbourhood associations, urban local bodies, etc.

Initially, the approved institutions will be public institutions (private non-profit institutions could be considered later).

- Each job stamp can be converted into one person-day of work within a specified period, with the approved institution arranging the work and the government paying the wages (statutory minimum) directly to the worker's account on presentation of job stamps with a due-form work certificate from the employer.
- Employees are to be selected from a pool of registered workers by the approved employer, or, better perhaps (to avoid collusion), by an independent 'placement agency' – see below.

Rationale

- Activating a multiplicity of approved employers will help to generate a lot of employment.
- The approved employers will have a stake in ensuring that the work is productive.
- The scheme requires little staff of its own since existing institutions are the employers.
- Workers are assured of timely payment at the minimum wage, and possibly other benefits.

Further Possibilities

- To avoid abuse, the use of job stamps could be restricted to a list of permissible works. But the list should be fairly comprehensive, and not restricted to maintenance.¹
- The list of works should not be so broad as to displace existing jobs in public institutions.
- All DUET employment should be subject to worker safety and welfare norms specified in the scheme and existing labour laws.
- All urban residents above the age of 18

should be eligible to register under DUET, but special registration drives or placement agencies could be located in low-income neighbourhoods.

- The scheme would cover both skilled and unskilled workers. Whenever a skilled worker is employed, an assistant (unskilled) worker could be mandatorily employed as well, to impart an element of training and skill formation to the scheme. Further training facilities could be developed or explored over time, for example, by some of the non-profit placement agencies if any.
- Some cost-sharing could be introduced, with the approved employer paying a small portion of the wages, or paying for the job stamps instead of getting them for free. That would help to ensure that work is productive. However, it would reduce employment generation. Also, cost-sharing is a complication, perhaps best avoided initially.
- Simple norms will be required for allocation of job stamps among public institutions. Some limited transferability of job stamps among these institutions can be considered.
- An independent authority could be appointed or designated at the municipal level to monitor, inspect, audit and evaluate the works.
- The National Urban Livelihood Mission (NULM) could possibly play a role in DUET as well.
- DUET could easily be initiated on a trial basis in a particular district or even municipality.

Right to Urban Livelihood: New Dimension

(In addition to the DUET proposal above, we also reproduce excerpts from a concept note of a proposed Urban Right To Work legislation, prepared by Sajha Manch, a federation of groups in Delhi working among the urban poor. These proposals could provide structure and focus for the growing movement of Indian youth against unemployment.)

By the collecting information through surveys and organizing a series of consultations and workshops, Sajha Manch realized that the dynamic of urban

The Placement Agency

- The primary role of the placement agency is to assign registered workers to approved employers as and when required. But it could also serve other purposes, for example, certifying workers' skills, protecting workers from exploitation and arranging social benefits for them.
- Various options could be considered for the placement agency, such as: (1) a single agency for the municipality, run by the local government; (2) a worker cooperative; (3) multiple placement agencies, run as non-profit organisations or cooperatives.

Precedents

- Some countries have employment-subsidy schemes of similar inspiration, e.g. "service voucher schemes" (SVS) in several European countries. Belgium has a very popular SVS for domestic services such as cleaning and ironing. It was used by 1 out of 5 households in 2016.

Towards Employment Guarantee

- It would be relatively easy to move from DUET towards demand-driven 'employment guarantee'. That would require the municipality to act as a last-resort employer, committed to providing work to all those who are demanding work but not finding any with other approved employers. Alternatively, DUET could become *part* of a larger employment guarantee programme in urban areas.

livelihoods was distinctly different from the demand for guaranteed rural employment. Broadly, there were three categories of work in the city: (1) **wage**

employment, which was largely **unsafe**; (2) **self-employment**, which was largely **illegal**; and (3) **under-employment**, which was both **unsafe as well as illegal**. These studies revealed three key demands of the workers: (1) **the right to legal identity**, (2) **access to space and resources**, and (3) **credit on easy terms**.

On the basis of these studies a tentative Urban Right to Work legislation has been drafted. This draft was debated with informal labor organizations, national trade unions, and civil society organizations in four seminars which made important suggestions. But the draft requires extensive national debate so that various labor movements can develop a common understating and it could become more comprehensive and effective from the worker's point of view. It will also require a comprehensive campaign within all sections of society to enact such legislation.

The following are the main points of the draft:-

To ensure the **livelihood of workers** in urban areas, the first demand is that the every adult who register for any production work should get **300 days** work in a year.

Everyone must get a **living wage** instead of minimum wage, as decided in the **15th Indian Labour Conference, 1957** and affirmed by the **Supreme Court of India**.

For salaried workers with employers the demand for a Tripartite Board is tenable, but for the self-employed, and the unemployed, the **government should be the principal employer**.

This means that if any category of urban worker

– salaried, self-employed, or unemployed – is **not getting a living wage** then the **government (Labor Department) has to compensate**.

Instead of making separate Boards for different occupations, this draft proposes that the **Labor Department should take full responsibility for all**, in order that **workers remain united**.

Thus **Right to Work** is considered to be a **fundamental right**, and **not an employment guarantee scheme** that is dependent on government's discretion and people's compulsion.

Workers' accommodation near work should be an essential requirement so that a large share of workers' income is not spent on transport.

Every worker, employed or seeking employment, should be entitled to registration and issuance of **identity card** by the Labor Department, and this **should be interchangeable** with the **NREGA job card** for ease of migrant workers.

Every job must be healthy and safe, and be available for **disabled and vulnerable** people, so that it protects both environment and society.

Every public works should be labor-intensive and **40% expenditure reserved for employment**, while restrictions on public appointments in government departments should be removed.

Participation of workers in policy-making and the right to organize are crucial if transparency and accountability are to be demanded from government.

We appeal to all concerned for an open discussion on this draft so that a comprehensive debate can lead to a national campaign on the Right to Work, and the fragmented unorganized workers all over the country may be united to defend their rights. □

Plummeting GDP and Booming Stocks

Indian Economy in Coronatimes

Arindam Sen

Part I

8 August, 2020. A piece of good news greeted Indians in the midst of a morbid milieu marked by growing Corona cases and fatalities and a palpable economic paralysis. Indian tycoon Mukesh Ambani is at the moment world's fourth richest

person. With a total net worth of \$80.6 billion, of which he raised more than \$20 billion selling a third of Jio shares to investors like Facebook and Google during the lockdown, he is just behind Amazon founder and CEO Jeff Bezos (net worth \$187 billion), Microsoft co-

founder Bill Gates (\$121 billion) and Facebook co-founder and CEO Mark Zuckerberg (\$102 billion). And Ambani is not alone - - India Inc as a whole is currently doing quite well on the stock markets. The S&P BSE Sensex is up 45% from its March 23 low, thanks to three months of brisk

buying by foreigners plus the rising interest of Indian small investors repulsed by falling FD interest rates. On August 11, Ambani's Reliance Industries Limited broke into the list of world's top 100 companies.

30 August, 2020. Newspapers screamed even louder, this time at a rude shocker. During the first quarter (April -June) of financial year 2020-21 i.e., second quarter of calendar year 2020, our GDP has shrunk by 23.9%, compared to China's 3.2 per cent growth (the only major economy to record a positive figure) and the second worst performer UK's 20.4% decline. But even this figure is a understatement, even if one assumes that a government well-known for its profligacy in data suppression and manipulation has for once told us what it actually found. Because the GDP calculations itself did not fully cover the vast informal sector -- which contributes about 40% of the GDP and which was more severely battered by the lockdown compared to the formal. So the figure of actual decline must have been, in the least, more than 30%, as former Chief Statistician Pronab Sen pointed out in an interview with Karan Thapar.

Worse still, this is not a passing shadow. For FY 2020 - 21 as a whole, GDP shrinkage is likely to be around 13-14%, Professor Sen observed. In fact, following the end-August revelation all rating agencies have revised their forecasts about India's GDP contraction: the Asian Development Bank from 4% to 9% and the CRISIL from 5% to 9%, for example. Goldman Sachs now projects a full-year contraction of 14.8% and data compiled by Bloomberg indicate that while most of the large Asian economies barring China are set to contract this year, India is estimated to shrink the most in that group.

So India currently ranks first in GDP shrinkage and eighth in stock resurgence (both the contraction and the resurgence, it is important to note, are global phenomena). What do we make of these contradictory trends?

"COVID-19 has been likened to an X-ray, revealing fractures in the fragile skeleton of the societies we have built ... It is exposing fallacies and falsehoods everywhere- the lie that free markets can deliver health care for all, the fiction that unpaid care work is not work, the delusion that we live in a post-racist world, the myth that we are all in the same boat. Because while we are all floating on the same sea, it's clear that some of us are in superyachts while others are clinging to the floating debris. We are sometimes told a rising tide of economic growth lifts all boats. But in reality, rising inequality sinks all boats."

- U.N. Secretary General Antonio Guterres, Nelson Mandela Lecture, Johannesburg, 19 JULY 2020

The relation between the nose-diving GDP numbers and the skyrocketing Covid graph is understandable. The former is, in part, a function of the prolonged -- and sporadically still continuing -- lockdown(s) arbitrarily imposed

on the people and the economy. But how do we correlate the two juxtaposed pointers to the state of Indian economy -- the GDP downturn and the stock market surge? As we shall see, beneath the glaring disconnect lurks a close, even causal relation. With a long-term stagnation/recession (and now the unprecedented contraction) in the real economy, creating asset price bubbles on the stock markets (and in some other segments) is the basic survival strategy of international finance capital -- a strategy which, incidentally, promotes further concentration of wealth, income and power in the hands of the finance oligarchy ruling the world. What we see today in our country is only a manifestation of this global trend. But that part of the story we shall take up in our forthcoming issue; let us get started with the GDP imbrolio.

GDP in Free Fall: Root Causes and Modi's Lackadaisical Response

For all the laughable official denials, it is a well-established fact that the downslide had started years ago thanks to despotic and disastrous measures like demonetization and that the process had been steadily gaining acceleration -- much like a stone falling to the earth does. Thus between early 2018 and early 2020, the yearly rate of GDP growth recorded a huge fall from 8.2% to 3.1%. The villain of the piece was unsold inventories signaling stagnant or dwindling demand in almost all sectors of the economy. In fact the finance ministry's own monthly data repeatedly showed that demand had collapsed, leading to a fall in capacity utilisation and industrial production. Yet the government did not fight the demand-pull downturn by enhancing

expenditure on employment generation and measures like cash transfer to the working people. The government did transfer a paltry sum of Rs. 500 per month to Jan-Dhan accounts but only for three months from May and even that never reached a very large section of the would-be beneficiaries, mainly women, due to a faulty and careless delivery system. The scheme was withdrawn precisely when people needed it most. Similarly, a niggardly approach was taken about MGNREGA, with the government refusing to adequately fund the time-tested and highly productive scheme after July. And the migrant labourers -- arguably the worst sufferers of the suddenly imposed lockdown -- were just ignored in the whole scheme of relief.

So what did the government do? It chose to tread the failed beaten track of placating big business with generous sops. Examples include the September 2019 tax cut financed by a massive 1.76 lakh crore snatched from the RBI followed by successive rate cuts by the RBI -- both made possible by appointing a pliant yes-man as Governor -- and so on. Such steps, far from addressing the basic problem of demand depression, in many ways proved counter-productive. The problem of declining tax revenues resulting from the growth slowdown was further aggravated by the tax concessions to big business, thereby reducing the government's capacity to spend. Many other policy blunders were committed, which showed up in the historical low of 3.1% GDP growth and brought the economy to the edge of a dangerous precipice. This was when Corona happened. In conjunction with the stupid lockdown, it inflicted a double whammy of demand and supply shocks on the economy -- sending

it, in fact life itself, into a tailspin.

How did the government respond, in the post-Corona phase, to the twin crises involving public health and national economy? We all know about the absurd predictions, false promises and the inhuman, insensitive, irresponsible conduct of the 'gharme raho-thali bajao- diya jalao-phool barshao' government in tackling the pandemic. Its complete failure in flattening the Covid curve could not but contribute enormously to the economic crisis. And what are the measures the government has taken so far in tackling the latter?

The first and most sensational announcement was Modi's Atmanirbhar Bharat package of mid-May. In the May-June 2020 number of Liberation (available at cpiml.net) we showed that the package, apart from being yet another "statistical jugglery and fraud" on the people, had no potential at all to stimulate recovery or growth.

"Increased state expenditure is the only way out, by adopting measures to increase revenue by taxing the rich and if necessary, by printing money. The government is doing none of it. It is only taking measures to promote private investment, including foreign investment, dismantling labour laws, weakening environmental safeguards and facilitating easier and greater corporate control over natural resources and human labour. Such measures are bound to prove all the more irrelevant and disastrous in times of a massive

crisis like the present juncture."

"Modi's Covid19 Stimulus Package: Monumentally Deceptive and Disastrous"
- Dipankar Bhattacharya

Now the RBI itself, in its report of August 25, admits that "appetite for investment is anaemic". And yet its policy responses remain exclusively focused on releasing more funds to commercial banks by reducing the cash reserve ratio (CRR, or the percentage of total deposits that a bank is required to maintain as a cash reserve with the country's central bank) and/or the repo rate (the rate at which the central bank lends money to commercial banks). The banks are expected to pass on the benefits of lower CRR and repo rates to their customers, i.e., lend at lower rates of interest. This would, it is assumed, encourage both investment and personal consumption, thereby stimulating the economy. But in the absence of a good "appetite" both for investment (since markets remain depressed) and for personal consumption (because, anxious about the uncertain future, the aam admi tend not to borrow for buying homes or consumer durables) the banks do not find enough customers willing to borrow even at the reduced rates of interest. Moreover, the banks themselves, in view of the grim economic situation and having burnt their fingers on NPAs, are now extremely cautious about lending. So the excess liquidity generated by our wise policy makers are ending up in RBI's own reverse repo account (where banks keep their excess funds at a low interest) or in speculative activities on the stock market (more about that in Part II).

This in brief is why the Indian economy is not looking up even

after "Unlock 4.0". How can heavy doses of the wrong medicine -- liquidity infusion -- save the economy when it is in dire need of a very different remedy, namely, demand generation? In fact the situation would have been worse if it were not for the good rabi harvest and very good monsoon, which provided some respite in agriculture. The recently published annual report of the RBI has admitted that the 'green shoots' that were visible in May and June started disappearing from July, mainly because pent up demand had got exhausted. It is now widely recognized that the recent pickup in a few sectors like automobiles resulted from pent-up demand; by no means did it signal the onset of a much-hyped V-shaped recovery. In fact economists and commentators are now looking for novel imageries to describe what India could expect next year: a hockey stick recovery (where a very long downturn is followed by a tiny uptick) or a K-shaped recovery (where one branch or segment of the economy goes up and another, equally substantial one, goes down).

What Can Still be Done and Must be Done

The government has failed the people, but a lot can still be done to save lives and livelihood, to save the economy, to save India.

Eminent heterodox economists and also those familiar with the workings of global capital as well as the Indian economy -- such as Raghuram Rajan and Kaushik Basu -- have come forward with their valuable opinions. In an interview with Karan Thapar for The Wire, Rajan explained why the government must take urgent relief measures for the bed-ridden economy and suggested how

the finance ministry could do this without inviting too much reactions from the global capital markets (see box).

In light of the points that emerged in course of our discussion, we would like to pinpoint four basic and urgent tasks to be carried out on a war footing.

1. Develop our public health infrastructure in a manner that the huge loss and depreciation of human resources (which also constitute the most vital component of a nation's economic resources) due to the pandemic can be minimised quickly and significantly. Many countries are now witnessing a second wave of Covid-19; our public health services must be kept battle-ready for any such eventuality.

India's 23.9% GDP contraction should alarm us all

"... Government-provided relief becomes all the more important. This has been meagre; primarily free food grains to poor households; and credit guarantees to banks for lending to small and medium (SMEs) firms, where the take down has been patchy. The government's reluctance to do more today seems partly because it wants to conserve resources for a possible future stimulus. This strategy is self-defeating.

If you think of the economy as a patient, relief is the sustenance the patient needs while on the sickbed and fighting the disease. Without

relief, households skip meals, pull their children out of school and send them to work or beg, pledge their gold to borrow, let EMIs and rent arrears pile up... Similarly, without relief, small and medium firms -- think of a small restaurant -- stop paying workers, let debt pile up, or close permanently. Essentially, the patient atrophies, so by the time the disease is contained, the patient has become a shell of herself."

2. But this must not be done simply by overworking the available health staff and thereby depriving lakhs of people suffering from other ailments. New infrastructure, including medical staff and equipment, must be built up/ mobilized. The handsome expenditure on public health should be recognised for what it actually is -- a stimulus for urgent economic recovery and an investment in the future progress of the country, both in terms of human development index and economic progress.

3. Revamp and extend the scope of MNREGA, launch its urban edition. While continuing other benefit transfers, restart and firm up cash transfer, for that alone can boost effective demand. Start filling up the lakhs of vacant posts in government and semi-government undertakings and institutions, including educational institutions, on a urgent basis. Meet the long standing demand of unemployment allowance and introduce an Indian version of the JR (job retention) scheme of OECD countries.

4. Compensate the migrant labourers, who suffered and died

due to the criminal unconcern of the central government, with cash and jobs. Launch special schemes to address specific problems of women, Dalits, Adivasis, Minorities and all other socially/ economically deprived and vulnerable sections; and also for students and youth, on whom depends the future of our country.

But whence will all the money come? Apart from means like a special levy on the super rich and raising funds on sovereign bonds, money should be printed as required. The government must rise above the neoliberal taboo about deficit financing. When you refuse to take absolutely necessary steps in an unprecedented crisis for fear of a fiscal deficit, the economy collapses, GDP shrinks more and more, ultimately you are forced into deficit financing. This is the worst case scenario - - experienced in many countries - - where the nation loses out on both counts. With a huge deficit, the nation is caught in a debt trap with zero or negative growth and skyrocketing inflation. The other option is to increase government expenditure on relief, reconstruction and employment generation in a balanced, well thought - out manner and accept some fiscal deficit. That way, the deficit will increase for a while, but not in an uncontrollable way and recovery will begin. Once GDP enters the positive territory and stays there, the deficit will start coming down.

We know the government is in no mood to listen to the people's voice. We shall have to force its hand through mass movements. And the green shoots of multiple agitations across the land are indication enough that the people of India must not be taken for granted.

(To be concluded) 

Bihar: Facts Bust NDA's Sushasan Claims

Nitish Kumar has been CM of Bihar for a nearly unbroken 15 years (with a brief interval in which Jitan Ram Manjhi replaced him). Between 2005 and 2015, he presided over an NDA regime. The NDA was trounced in the 2015 polls, and Nitish Kumar became CM in a Mahagathbandhan government with the RJD. But the NDA stole the mandate with Nitish Kumar allying with the BJP which the people of Bihar had so comprehensively rejected. Now, with Bihar facing Assembly Polls, the NDA has little to offer except the claims of 'Sushasan' (Good Governance) under Nitish Kumar as CM. This 'Sushasan' myth has been carefully crafted and marketed since 2005, with the NDA claiming that Bihar before Sushasan Babu Nitish Kumar's rule was a "Jungle Raj" under Laloo Prasad Yadav and the RJD.

On every parameter (crime, education, employment and distress migration, farming, healthcare, wages) however, the facts on the ground belie these claims. Below are excerpts from well-researched articles examining various aspects of development in Bihar. Ed/

Schooling and Higher Education

A news report in the Times of India ('School education: Bihar 19th among 20 states', Fariyal Rumi, October 4, 2019) noted that Bihar had "emerged as the second lowest in the 'School Education Quality Index' (SEQI) report released by NITI Aayog. The Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD), World Bank and education experts conducted the survey and decided the rankings. The outcome category is based on parameters like learning, access of students to school, infrastructure and facilities and equity outcomes (treating students equally).

In infrastructure and facilities, Bihar has secured second last position with 10.9%, Bihar has scored 42.9%, 41% and 57.7% in access to schools, learning outcomes and equity, respectively.

As per the rankings, Bihar has witnessed a sharp decline of 9.3% in access to schools category. Around 35.9% children are still out of school in Bihar.

Bihar has the most illiterate people in India, but spends the least per elementary school student

(Excerpts from a January 2017 piece by Khushboo Balani, Indiaspend.com)

Bihar's classrooms are India's most crowded and have the fewest teachers. Yet, India's sixth-poorest state spends the least money per student, according to an IndiaSpend analysis of government data.

Bihar has 37.3% fewer teachers than it needs in elementary school (Class 1 to Class 8), and is short of 2,78,602 teachers, according to our analysis based on Right to Education Act criteria, which stipulates a pupil teacher ratio of 30:1 in primary schools (Class 1 to Class 5) and 35:1 in upper primary school (Class 6 to Class 8).

Of six million teaching positions in government schools nationwide, about 9,00,000 elementary school teaching positions and 1,00,000 in secondary school – put together, a million – are vacant, as IndiaSpend reported last month (i.e December 2016) according to an answer given in the Lok Sabha (lower house of Parliament). Of these, at least 2,00,000

vacancies are in Bihar's government elementary schools.

Bihar is India's third-most populous state, with 99 million people; its literacy rate (61.8%) is the country's lowest; and the female literacy rate (51.5%) second lowest, according to Census 2011.

Reading levels in Bihar government primary schools declined over five years and improved in private schools, according to the Annual Status of Education Report-Trends Over Time Report (2006-14); not an encouraging sign, since 90% of all Bihar schools are run by the government.

62% primary students do not complete education

Nearly 5% of children from Bihar aged six to 14 years are estimated to be out of school, according to this 2015 human resource development ministry education profile. Of those out of school, 55% children were never enrolled and 25% dropped out of school.

Of those in primary school, barely 85% made it to upper primary school in 2014-15, the third lowest proportion in India after Nagaland and Uttar Pradesh, according to Unified-District Information System For Education data.

No more than 38% students enrolled in Class 1 complete their secondary education (Class 10) in Bihar, according to the Bihar Economic Survey 2015-16.

Not enough classrooms, teachers

With nearly 28% of its population aged five to 14 (28.9 million), Bihar reported 23.4 million students in elementary school in 2015-16 and 46,7,877 teachers (even including schools where primary, upper primary and secondary levels co-existed, and teachers on temporary contract), according to government education data.

Bihar should have 746,479 teachers in elementary school, according to the pupil teacher ratio criterion of 1 teacher for every 30 students in primary school and one teacher for every 35 students in upper primary.

The teacher shortage is mostly in primary school, with one teacher for every 36 students, India's lowest rate after Uttar Pradesh, according to the U-DISE Flash Statistics 2015-16. The Indian average pupil teacher ratio in primary school is 23.

Bihar has a teacher pupil ratio of 24 in upper primary, higher than the all-India ratio of 17, but lower than the prescribed guideline of 35.

While teacher absenteeism has declined in the state from 39% in 2003 to 28% in 2010, as this 2014 study reported, it is still higher than the all India average of 24%.

Bihar also has India's worst count of students per elementary school classroom, 51—which includes grade I to grade VII—according to U-DISE (2015-16) data. The ratio declined from 65 in 2012-13 to 51 in 2015-16 but continues to be higher than the national average of 27.

Lowest per-student expenditure on elementary education

Bihar has India's second largest population aged five to 14 (Uttar Pradesh is first), but the government spends little per student.

Bihar recorded India's lowest per student expenditure on elementary education, Rs 5,298 in 2014-15, according to this commentary in the Economic and Political Weekly. The best-performing state (among the 18 surveyed), Himachal Pradesh, spent Rs 39,343 per student in 2014-15—or nearly seven-and-a-half times as much.

Bihar has improved its student-teacher ratio by employing contract teachers – called para teachers – at lower salaries than teachers with permanent jobs.

Para-teachers in the districts of Nalanda and Purnea, for instance, are paid Rs 6,400-6,800 per month, while regular teachers earn Rs 23,000 - Rs 28,000, according to this 2013 survey by Accountability Initiative, a think tank based in Delhi.

In 2015-2016, Bihar allocated 5.75% of its total education budget on school infrastructure – inadequate in a state that has an average of 51 students in a classroom.

NIRF Ranking Exposes Bihar's Higher Education Truth

(Arun Kumar, Hindustan Times, June 12, 2020)

The ranking of institutions across the country released on Thursday by the National Institutional Ranking Framework (NIRF) under the Ministry of Human Resource Development (MHRD) is a reality

check for Bihar institutions of higher learning and an indicator of the reasons behind mass exodus of students outside state in search of better education.

None of the state universities or colleges figure in the

overall list of top 100 institutions. The only institution that figures in the overall list is IIT, Patna, ranked 54th. It is ranked 26th among the top 100 engineering colleges, a big drop since 2016 when it was ranked 10th in the country. Even in 2019, it was ranked 22nd.

The only other institution in the top 100 list of engineering colleges is the NIT, Patna, ranked 92nd, though it is not in overall list of 100 top institutions. It was ranked 87th in 2016.

Ailing Healthcare: In The Covid Mirror

A recent study of Indian states' preparedness in the wake of the Covid pandemic found that Bihar had the lowest bed-population ratio. (The Hindu, 'How prepared are India's States in health infrastructure to tackle COVID-19', Vignesh Radhakrishnan, Sumant Sen, March 25, 2020)

Bihar is also the worst equipped to detect Covid cases. Bihar's doctor-patient ratio is also abysmal. According to WHO, there should be one doctor for 1,000 people. However, in Bihar, one allopathic doctor serves 43,788 people.

The death rate among doctors due to Covid is 9 times more in Bihar than the national average. (Hindustan Times, August 20, 2020) Senior vice-president of IMA-Bihar Dr Ajay Kumar said, "Doctors account for 0.5 per cent of the total deaths in India due to Covid-19. However, in Bihar, the percentage of doctors' death is 4.75 per cent, which is nine times more than the national average." The reasons for this startling and grim statistic are obvious. Dr Ajay Kumar

There is no medical college from Bihar in the list of top 40 colleges of the country. In the list of law colleges also, none from the Bihar finds place.

However, the biggest let down, though not expected after poor showing in the accreditation by the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC), has been that there is no state university or college in the list anywhere.

said, "In other states, doctors doing duty in Covid-19 wards are quarantined for 15 days after 15 days of continuous work. This arrangement is not followed in Bihar, as a result of which our doctors remain exposed to Covid-19 patients far longer than in other states. In fact, in Bihar, doctors are working continuously at a stretch since mid-March, without even an off day." This state of affairs is clearly due to the already prevailing low doctor-patient ratio.

Moreover, doctors and health staff in Bihar are forced to work with substandard protection kits. IMA-Bihar secretary Dr Sunil Kumar told the HT, "Protective gears available here are questionable. Fifty percent doctors in public sector are 60-plus and have comorbidity, yet they have been drafted for Covid-19 duty despite our requests not to engage them. However, given the shortage of doctors, with 60 per cent posts vacant as compared to their sanctioned strength, the government allowed elderly doctors no relief."

Bihar: Four Claims Made by BJP in Its Campaign Video on Crime That Ring Hollow

(Excerpts from a report by Umesh Kumar Ray, The Wire, 2 September 2020)

The Bihar unit of the Bharatiya Janata Party has uploaded a video on its Facebook page, as part of its digital campaigning efforts ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, claiming that the law and order situation in Bihar has improved drastically during the National Democratic Alliance's regime.

The video claims that not only has there been a drop in criminal activities, but communal violence too has stopped.

Compared to other states, Bihar's crime numbers place it at the bottom of any list, the video claims. It also claims that since the NDA government took over in 2005, crimes have gone down when compared to the 15-year rule of Lalu Prasad Yadav.

The claims made in the video appear distant from ground reality. In many cases, the figures have been misinterpreted.

Claim 1: Bihar's rank in crime

In the video, it has been claimed that when it comes to overall crime figures, Bihar is currently at number 23, whereas 'earlier' it was at number three. The video does not say which year or time the BJP is considering as the base year but mentions that the data was obtained from National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

Analysing the statistics published by NCRB, The Wire found that Bihar has not been ranked 23rd at all.

Bihar is at the fourth position in overall criminal cases registered under the Indian Penal Code (IPC). If the criminal cases registered under the IPC and the local laws of the state are combined, Bihar is at the seventh position.

NCRB has made data public till 2018. The figures for the year 2019 is yet to come. NCRB data for 2018 show that 1,96,911 (6.3% of national) criminal cases were registered in Bihar under the IPC. Only Madhya Pradesh (2,48,354), Maharashtra (3,46,291) and Uttar Pradesh (3,42,355) have more criminal cases than Bihar.

At the same time, if criminal cases filed under IPC and local laws of the state are combined together, then a total of 2,62,815 cases were registered in Bihar. Only Gujarat, Kerala, Madhya Pradesh, Maharashtra, Tamil Nadu and Uttar Pradesh are ahead of Bihar.

Claim 2: Only 222 people in a lakh are victims of crime

In the video, BJP has claimed that only 222 people among each lakh in Bihar are victims of crime, while at the national level the figure stands at 383 people.

This claim by the BJP is correct if one looks at the NCRB figures, but it cannot be considered as an achievement by any means. Bihar is the most populous state in the country and the number of crime victims per one lakh people is calculated on the basis of population.

An official at the NCRB told The Wire, "We used the data of the National Commission on Population's technical group, which falls under the Ministry of Health and Family Welfare. The technical group had estimated Bihar's population at 11.83 crore. We used this figure to calculate crime victims per lakh population."

Since Bihar has a large population, even if the crime rate is high, the number of crime victims per lakh population will be a relatively low estimate.

Claim 3: 34% reduction in criminal incidents

BJP said in the campaign video that there has been a 34% reduction in criminal incidents in Bihar since the NDA government came to power.

The NDA government in Bihar was formed in 2005. The state-wise crime figures for 2004 and earlier years were not available on the NCRB website, but data from the State Crime Record Bureau show that Bihar has seen an increase in criminal cases year after year.

During Lalu Prasad Yadav's time, BJP and Janata Dal (United) had been calling the regime a 'jungle raj'. JD(U) and BJP leaders have kept up this refrain and

allege that crime had been unbridled at that time.

However, data from the years 2001 to 2019 available on the website of the State Crime Records Bureau show that criminal incidents have increased every year. A total of 95,942 cognisable offences were registered in Bihar in the year 2001, which increased to 1,15,216 in the year 2004.

However in the year 2005, it decreased by about 10,000.

A total of 2,69,095 cognisable offences were registered in Bihar in the year 2019, which was 1,53,880 more than the year 2004.

Recently, in response to a question, DGP Gupteshwar Pandey attributed this to the fact that earlier fewer FIRs were lodged. "Now all the police stations are instructed not to ignore the complaint of any person, thanks to which more criminal incidents are being recorded in Bihar," he said.

The statistics of the NCRB too confirm that criminal incidents have been increasing in Bihar. According to the data, a total of 1,89,696 cases were registered in Bihar under IPC and state laws in 2016, which increased to 2,62,815 in the year 2018.

Claim 4: Riots and massacres do not happen in Bihar

In the video, the BJP has claimed that there are no riots and massacres in Bihar, but NCRB data refutes this claim too. Ironically, the data shows that Bihar is at the top position when it comes to communal or religious violence.

NCRB used to publish only figures of riots earlier, but since the year 2017, it has been releasing separate figures on communal and religious riots. According to the data, Bihar ranked first with 167 communal/religious riots in the year 2018. Around 339 people were affected by these riots. There were a total of 10,276 riots in Bihar that year, which was more than in any other state.

In 2018, during the Ramnavami celebrations, communal violence had erupted in nine districts.

Last year in February, communal violence had taken ugly shape in Sitamarhi where a Muslim man was lynched and set on fire by a mob in broad daylight.

In October last year during Durga idol immersions, too, communal violence took place. One person was killed in the clash. Many shops were looted, most of them belonging to Muslims. The violence was allegedly erupted after a rumour spread about stone pelting targeting the idol in a Muslim populated area. Talking to The Wire, the station house officer of Jehanabad town Satendra Sahi had said, "Neither were stones

pelted on idols, nor were idols damaged.”

Victims had then blamed the state machinery for not taking stringent action to stop the violence.

BJP has also claimed that “massacres” have not been happening in Bihar, presumably using the word to indicate caste-based violence. It is true that during the NDA government no massacre has happened but

caste-based violence has taken place. According to NCRB data, Bihar has reported 87 cases of caste-based violence, which affected 142 persons.

Bihar is at second position in the country, when it comes to caste-based violence.

Joblessness

Bihar unemployment rate double the national average

(Reuters, June 16, 2020)

Bihar, one of India's largest and poorest states, posted a steep rise in unemployment in the year ended June 2019 to record nearly double the national joblessness rate, only months out from elections.

The latest state unemployment data released on Tuesday is a lagging indicator and the current joblessness rate was expected to be much higher as millions of unemployed labourers return home due to a nationwide lockdown to curb the spread of coronavirus.

Unemployment in Bihar rose by 3 percentage points to 10.2 percent during the year ended June 2019, government data showed, even as the country's overall unemployment slowed to 5.8 percent, compared with 6.1 percent a year earlier.

Educated Unemployment

In Bihar, the more educated you are, the more likely you are to be unemployed. (IndiaSpend Team

September 11, 2015) Although Bihar has one of the lowest proportion of young people, unemployment for

them (15- to-29 age group) is higher at 17.5% than the national average of 13%.

Desperate Search For Jobs Drives Migration

(The Wire, June 22, 2020)

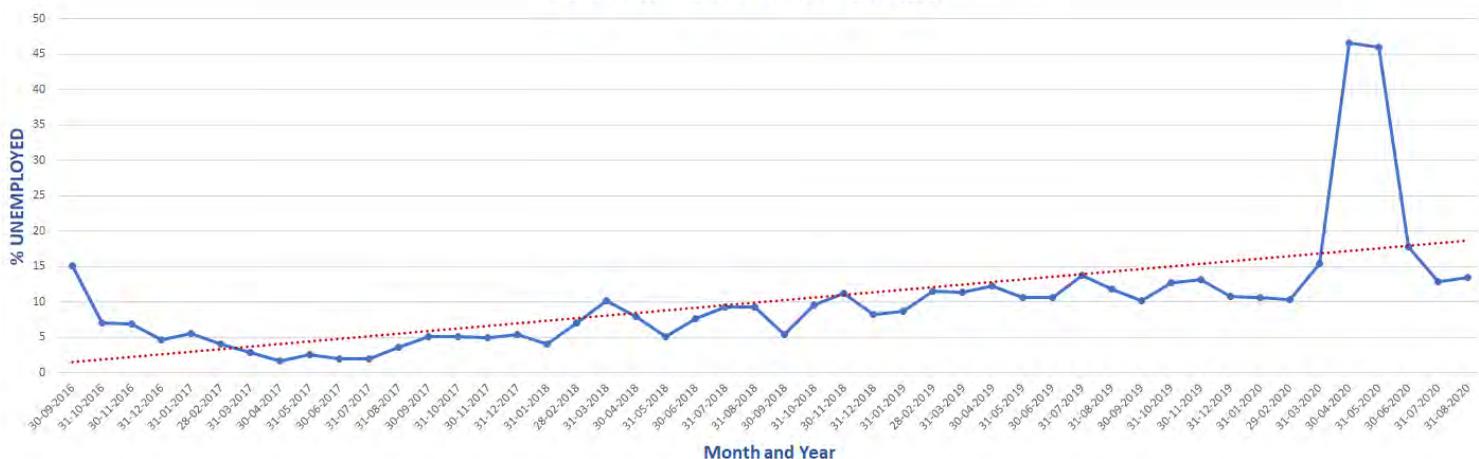
In 2005, Nitish Kumar had promised that Bihari people would not have to migrate outside the state. However, little has changed since then.

The occupational structure of Bihar suggests that 56% of the labour force is engaged in agriculture (India 44%), 8% in industry (23% India) and 36% in services. Employment elasticity of output in agriculture is already close to zero or negative.

Further, increasing informalisation and higher costs of living in urban areas over time have led to a gradual increase in circular migration. In 2017-18, the share of casual labour in Bihar (32.1%) was significantly higher than in India (24.3%). At over 10% growth, Bihar has registered higher growth than India in the last three years, however, one-third of its population is below the poverty line.

Further, nearly 40% of Bihar's youth had no jobs and

% UNEMPLOYMENT IN BIHAR - 2016-2020



Source: <https://unemploymentinindia.cmie.com/kommon/bin/sr.php?kall=wtabnav&tab=4020>

the unemployment rate had jumped to 7.2% in 2017-18 from 2.5% in 2011-12.

Post-COVID-19, several newspapers have reported that around 25 to 30 lakh migrant workers have returned to Bihar. A CMIE survey pegged unemployment in Bihar

for April 2020 at 46.6% (or 20 percentage points above the national rate). NSO's PLFS (2019) unemployment rate in Bihar (7.2%) was already higher than the national average (6.1%).

Farmers' Plight

Bihar Did Not Meet Even 1% of its Wheat Procurement Target

(The Wire, 15 September, 2020)

Data made available by the Centre shows that the government managed to procure wheat from only 1,002 farmers in Bihar. Less than 1% of the wheat produced in Bihar was procured by the Central and state government agencies in the rabi marketing season of 2020-21, data obtained by The Wire through the Right to Information Act (RTI) show.

Farmers in the state were projected to produce 61 lakh metric tonnes (LMT) of wheat this year, but the government has procured only 5,000 tonnes, or 0.081% of total estimated production.

That is also less than 1% – or 0.71% to be precise – of the Bihar government's target to procure 7 lakh tonnes of wheat. In fact, chief minister Nitish Kumar had increased the target from the initially set 2 lakh tonnes citing the coronavirus pandemic and the difficulties being faced by farmers in selling their produce.

In 2018-19 for instance, 17,504 tonnes were procured from farmers in Bihar and in 2017-18, 20,000 tonnes were procured. These quantities too are less than 1% of the total wheat produced in Bihar, but they are higher than the quantity procured this year.

In 2019-20, government agencies procured even less, at 2,815 tonnes, than they did this year.

A key factor has been the decline in the number of procurement centres in the state, which stood at around 9,000 in 2015-16 but dropped to 1,619 in 2019-20. As

a result of the lower number of procurement centres, only a very small fraction of the total farmers in the state are able to sell their crop at the minimum support prices (MSP) announced by the Centre.

"We can't rely on government procurement in Bihar. There are private flour mills and biscuit manufacturers who normally buy our produce. But this year, even that was not possible because of the lockdown. So, we had to sell at rates as low as half of the MSP," said Rajesh Yadav, a farmer who grows wheat in Madhubani district of Bihar.

APMCs abolished and what the future could hold for the country

Another factor to note is that Bihar had abolished the Agricultural Produce Market Committee Act (APMC) way back in 2006 and perhaps provides an opportunity to catch a glimpse of what the future could hold for the country, as the Centre has recently introduced an ordinance to override state APMC Acts, which has caused a major stir with farmers opposing the move.

Writing for The Hindu Business Line in May this year, food policy expert Devinder Sharma explained how the repeal of the APMC Act in Bihar has not benefited farmers.

"Take the case of Bihar, which had revoked the APMC Act in 2006. The idea was to attract private sector investments in marketing infrastructure where efficient markets were expected to provide for better price discovery. Unfortunately, nothing like that happened," Sharma wrote. ▣



Bombay HC Tableeghi Jamaat Verdict Exposes Central Government's Scapegoating of Muslims In The Name of Covid-19

(Excerpts from the judgement by Justice T.V. Nalawade in the court of Justices Nalawade and Sewlikar)

Considering the dates on which these persons were taken in custody, it can be said that there is more possibility that they got infected in India and they were not already infected when they arrived in India. Further, admittedly screening at the airport was done of these petitioners before allowing them to leave the airport. The entire aforesaid exercise was done by the Central Government against the persons like petitioners with presumption that they were already infected when that contention cannot be substantiated.

There was big propaganda in print media and electronic media against the foreigners who had come to Markaz Delhi and an attempt was made to create a picture that these foreigners were responsible for spreading Covid-19 virus in India. There was virtually persecution against these foreigners. A political Government tries to find the scapegoat when there is pandemic or calamity and the circumstances show that there is probability that these foreigners were chosen to make them scapegoats. The aforesaid circumstances and the latest figures of infection in India show that such action against present petitioners should not have been taken. It is now high time for the concerned to repent about this action taken against the foreigners and to take some positive steps to repair the damage done by such action.

In our culture, there is saying like "atithi devo bhava" which

means that our guest is our God. The circumstances of the present matter create a question as to whether we are really acting as per our great tradition and culture. During the situation created by covid-19 pandemic, we need to show more tolerance and we need to be more sensitive towards our guests particularly like the present petitioners. The allegations made show that instead of helping them we lodged them in jails by making allegations that they are responsible for violation of travel documents, they are responsible for spreading of virus etc.

If there was any substance in the contention that there was possibility of spreading virus by these persons, proper action would have been taken against them, to send them back to their own country without taking action like present one. In the situation created by pandemic near and dear of every person who is out of house and particularly out of country are worried about the well being of such persons.

The question arises as to what must have tempted the authority to issue such directions against the foreigners like the petitioners. The record of this matter and the submissions made show that

action of Central Government was taken mainly against Muslim persons who had come to Markaz Delhi for Tablighi Jamaat. Similar action was not taken against other foreigners belonging to other religions.

There were protests by taking processions, holding Dharana at many places in India from at least from prior to January 2020. Most of the persons participated in protest were Muslims. It is their contention that Citizenship Amendment Act, 2019 is discriminatory against the Muslims. There were protests on large scale not only in Delhi, but in the most of the States in India. It can be said that due to the present action taken fear was created in the minds of those Muslims. This action indirectly gave warning to Indian Muslims that action in any form and for any thing can be taken against Muslims. It was indicated that even for keeping contact with Muslims of other countries, action will be taken against them. Thus, there is smell of malice to the action taken against these foreigners and Muslim for their alleged activities. ...The Government cannot give different treatment to citizens of different religions of different countries.

Dr Kafeel Khan's speech calls for national integrity and unity, does not instigate violence or hatred: Allahabad HC

On September 1, 2020, the Allahabad High Court ordered the release of Dr Kafeel Khan, ruling that his detention under the National Security Act (NSA) was illegal. CPIML had played a

leading role in the campaign for justice for Dr Kafeel, who was the target of vindictive victimisation by the Uttar Pradesh Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath, ever since he had helped save lives of babies in a



government hospital in Gorakhpur, Adityanath's own constituency. Excerpts of the verdict by the Bench of Chief Justice Govind Mathur and Justice Saumitra Dayal Singh are below (Source: Bar and Bench, Lydia Suzanne Thomas).

A complete reading of the speech prima facie does not disclose any effort to promote hatred or violence. also no where threatens peace and tranquility of the city of Aligarh. The address gives a call for national integrity and unity among the citizens. The speech also deprecates any kind of violence. It appears that the District

Magistrate had selective reading and selective mention for few phrases from the speech ignoring its true intent. We are in absolute agreement with learned Additional Advocate General that it is not open for the courts to substitute their opinion by interfering with "subjective satisfaction of the detaining authority".

However, it does not mean that the court cannot look into the material on which detention is based. The expression "subjective satisfaction" means the satisfaction of a reasonable man that can be arrived at on the basis of some material which satisfies a rational man. It does not refer to whim or caprice of the authority concerned. The closure of examining record as suggested would be nothing but a licence to allow the executives to act at their whims or caprice. This would be against the fundamentals of our constitutional values and provisions.

values and provisions." Well, UAPA is indeed "against the fundamentals of our constitutional values and provisions" because it allows the government to detain accused persons on its "whims and caprice", without showing any reasonable evidence whatsoever.

Justice Suresh Kumar Kait in bail order for Devangana Kalita:

...I have gone through the inner case diary produced in a sealed cover along with pen drive and found that though her presence is seen in peaceful agitation, which is fundamental right guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution of India, however, failed to produce any material that she in her speech instigated women of particular community or gave hatred speech due to which precious life of a young man has been sacrificed and property damaged. Admittedly, agitation was going on since long, print and electronic media was present throughout in addition to cameras of police department, but there is no such evidence which establishes that the alleged offence has taken place on the act done by the petitioner, except statements recorded under section 164 Cr.P.C. much belatedly, though, those witnesses were allegedly remain present at the spot throughout.

Bail order for Natasha Narwal by Additional Sessions Judge Amitabh Rawat

...certain videos were shown in the court by the IO (investigating Officer) and Special Prosecutor but the said videos show her being a part of unlawful assembly but do not show the accused indulging or inciting the violence. □

No Proof of Instigation or Hate Speech: Bail Orders For Devangana Kalita and Natasha Narwal

Below are significant excerpts from bail orders in the Delhi HC for Pinjra Tod activists. It is to be noted that while Natasha Narwal and Devangana Kalita have got bail in other FIRs, they continue to remain in jail because they are booked under UAPA. This goes to show the nature of the draconian UAPA law: where even if the police show no proof at all of any crime, the accused can be denied bail

and kept in jail indefinitely, even as the police deliberately delay trial. The Allahabad HC verdict releasing Kafeel Khan, held that police must show the court that they have material evidence to persuade "a reasonable man" of the basis for invoking NSA and detaining the accused; to do so based on "whims and caprice" of the government would be "against the fundamentals of our constitutional

Hunger Strike against Order to Demolish Delhi Slums

A 48 hours hunger strike by CPIML Delhi State Secretary and other comrades against the order to demolish slums near railway tracks, culminated in the release of Charter for Slum Dwellers in Delhi.

The Supreme Court order came after the Railway Ministry submitted to the court blaming the lack of cleanliness on the Jhuggis along Railway tracks in Delhi. Nothing can be more shameful than the fact that an elected government is blaming the poor for pollution that has been created by its own policies. Since the order of demolition was issued, the Railways have been putting up eviction notices in different slums.

The CPIML held a 48 Hours Warning Hunger strike in the Wazirpur Slum, one of the slums which is threatened with demolition, and protest meetings in other slums including the Mansarovar slum.

Voices of protests erupted from different slums. Slum dwellers declared that they would not tolerate any attempt to evict them from their Jhuggis. Due to the popular opposition from Jhuggi dwellers against the eviction order, the Central Government responded to a petition filed by Congress leader Ajay Maken in court, stating that that no demolition will happen in the next four weeks.

The four weeks moratorium on slum demolition is only an eye wash. The hunger strike demanded a complete revocation of the demolition order.

Ravi Rai, State Secretary of CPIML Delhi along with Shakuntala Devi, Sita Devi, Rameshwari Devi, Rinku and Sita (all residents of Wazirpur Slum) observed the 48 Hours hunger strike.

While starting the hunger strike Ravi Rai said "The slum dwellers have right to housing near place of their present Residence. The Government's so called assurance of no demolition till 4 Weeks is an eye wash. We demand complete revocation of the demolition order and housing for all slum dwellers near place of present residence along with land title".

Shakuntala Devi, another hunger striker who is staying in the Wazirpur Slum for last 28 years said, "We have been staying here for a long time now. We work in the city. The government should tell us where will we stay if our house is demolished."

Sita Devi, another hunger striker who is staying in the Jhuggie for last 22 years said, "We have not been given a pucca house till now by the government and now they are trying to demolish our Jhuggi. Will they give us house in next four weeks that they have not given in last 22 years?"

The hunger strikers demanded:

- Permanently revoke the order of demolition.
- Ensure proper house within 5kms of the present residence.
- Ensure land title to all.

issued to Self Help Groups (SHGs), given the serious economic and social distress caused by the coronavirus pandemic. The completely unplanned lockdown has resulted in increasing cases of starvation and near-starvation. Lack of livelihood options and employment has crippled the rural economy. Given this situation, it is the government's duty to intervene and protect vulnerable people from predatory microfinance institutions (MFIs) through effective regulation.

On 15 September, large and spirited protests were organised by AIARLA, AIPWA and CPI(ML) to highlight concerns that women and rural poor are facing. Thousands of women and rural and migrant labour attended these protests. It is clear from the participation in the protests and the wider resonance that they are receiving that large sections of rural poor fear extortion and harassment by loan sharks more than COVID-19. Joblessness and economic vulnerability are an equally real pandemic for women and rural labour across the country.

These protests have taken on the form of a movement in Bihar, with large protests being held in Patna, Siwan, Madhubani, Darbhanga, Samastipur and elsewhere. As a result of this campaign, the issue of debt relief is likely to emerge as a crucial question for the JD(U) and BJP to address before the upcoming elections. Those participating in the protests are asking, angrily, why 'waivers' and 'moratoriums' are being announced only for super-rich corporations, and not for women and the rural poor who are on the brink of destitution. People are being harassed by loan sharks at a time when they are jobless, hungry and worried about keeping their households running, they point out. It is from this anger that they are demanding that the Nitish

Debt Relief Movement

AIARLA organised a month-long campaign between 16 August to 15 September 2020, demanding debt relief on loans

government in Bihar and the Modi government at the centre listen to them and address their lived reality by announcing debt relief till March 2021.

AIARLA and AIPWA have been leading this campaign in different parts of country, from Bihar and West Bengal to Assam and Uttar Pradesh. In Bihar, protests and human chains were organised on 15 September at the district headquarters and collectorates in Madhubani, Arwal, Jahanabad and Darbhanga. In Madhubani, the protest rally began from the Madhubani railway station and ended at the collectorate. The rally was addressed by AIARLA district president Uttam Paswan, AIARLA district secretary Bechan Ram, AIPWA district convenor Pinki Singh and CPI(ML) district committee member Anil Singh. In Chandauli, the protests in Bichiya, addressed by AIARLA national secretary and CPI(ML) district secretary Anil Paswan, AIPWA district secretary Pramila Maurya and Shashikant Singh, highlighted the intimidation by goons of various MFIs such as Bandhan, Cashpor, Utkarsh and Prayantar. In Ankapalli, Vishakhapatnam, CPI(ML) state secretary Bugatha Bangarao addressed the protest and submitted a memorandum to the rural development officer. In Rayagada, Odisha, a dharna was organised at the district collectorate. In Assam, protests were organised in Goalpara and elsewhere in the state. In Naharkatia, the protests were held under the banner of one

of the constituent organisations of Microfinance Shoshan Birodhi Joutha Sangrami Mancha. Similar marches and protests were also held in districts and Block headquarters in all other states.

It was announced at these protests that if the Bihar Chief Minister and Prime Minister Modi do not immediately announce a comprehensive package – debt relief, relief from paying interests on loans taken, and reduction on interest rates on group loans – continuous protests will be organised. In fact, the RBI rules and regulations clearly state that all financial institutions should ensure moratoriums on loan and interest recovery. MFIs, which provide support to women and rural poor in the absence of government infrastructure, cannot be allowed to run amok and unregulated. As it is, government banks are not providing sufficient support to those who need it. This situation is forcing women to avail of loans from MFIs. AIARLA and AIPWA have consistently been making the point that in the short term, these institutions have to be properly regulated and in the long-term, public sector institutions and government banks will have to take up the primary responsibility of providing financial support. Government intervention is also required to address growing joblessness. It should be ensured that MNREGA funds are used to ensure 200 days of work and Rs 500 minimum wages per day for everyone.

response to the call given by the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee (AIKSCC). From Jantar Mantar in Delhi to villages across the country, lakhs of farmers protested against the Modi government's policies which are turning the country's farming and farmers into slaves of corporate and multinational companies. The following are the demands made by the farmers from the Modi government: withdraw all three anti-farmer ordinances; withdraw the Electricity Bill Amendment Act; slash petrol-diesel prices; implement One Nation One MSP. In addition to the 250 farmers' organizations associated with AIKSCC, BKU (Tikait) also organized dharna protest for withdrawal of the 3 ordinances. Farmers' mobilization was witnessed in various parts of the country. 15,000 farmers gathered at Barnala in Punjab, mobilized by Punjab Kisan Union (AIKMS) and Bharatiya Kisan Union Dhakonda. The huge rally at Barnala was addressed by AIKMS President Comrade Ruldu Singh. Thousands of farmers protested at 5 cities in Punjab. AIKMS General Secretary Rajaram Singh attended the protest at Patna.

The protest at Jantar Mantar was led by AIKSCC National Convener VM Singh, Swaraj Abhiyan leader Yogendra Yadav, AIKMS leaders Prem Singh Gehlawat, Purushottam Sharma, AIKMS leader Satyavan, AIKMS leader Comrade Vimal, AIKS leader Bhagat Singh, Dharampal Moradabad and many others. The protests at Kolkata, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Andhra Pradesh, Jharkhand, and Bihar were led by leaders of farmers' organizations including Jai Kisan Andolan and All India Kisan Mahasabha. BKU president Rakesh Tikait was stopped at the Ghazipur border on his way to Delhi and he

Lakhs of Farmers Protest Farm Bills

On the first day of Parliament session 15 September 2020, farmers across the country came out in resounding protest in

and other farmers held a dharna protest on the spot.

According to the report given by AIKMS Bihar State Secretary Ram Adhar Singh, protests were organized at dozens of places in Bihar, including Gardani Bagh in Patna, Patna City, Patna Rural, Naubatpur, Paliganj, Beguserai, Vaishali, 9 Blocks in Bhojpur, Agiaon, Nawada, Shekhpura, Nalanda, and Arwal.

Protests in Uttar Pradesh were organized at Azamgarh, Gorakhpur, Rae Bareilly, Lakhimpur Kheeri, Chandoli, Sonbhadra, Ghazipur, Mathura, Moradabad and Jalaun. Protests were held at Nainital and Almora in Uttarakhand, Ramgarh, Giridih and other Districts

in Jharkhand, Bhubaneswar, Raigarha and Puri in Odisha, Jhijhunu and other paces in

Rajasthan. Protest programs were also organized in Andhra Pradesh, Puduchery, West Bengal, Madhya Pradesh, Chhattisgarh and Haryana by AIKMS. 30,000 farmers in Tamil Nadu have signed on the charter of demands prepared by the TN AIKMS unit.

A memorandum was submitted by farmers across the country to the President of India on 14 September 2020. The memorandum appealed to the President to support the farmers in their struggle against the attacks on them by the government during the Lockdown period.

to ensure smooth passage of the Code On Wages Bill. The Modi government which has told the country that it does not have any data on casualties suffered by migrant workers during lockdown is shamelessly waiting for the remaining three codes to become laws without much resistance.

The last few years have seen an increasing clamour by the big corporates and pro-government think-tanks for 'promoting' what the government calls 'ease of doing business', which actually is nothing but a façade for anti-worker policies of the government. Such policies no doubt affect the most hard-working and marginalized sections of the society. The government is actively facilitating accumulation of wealth by a big few while forcing the workers into slavery and penury.

Copies of the labour code bills were burnt by the protesters in front of Ministry of Labour & Employment as a mark of protest against the abrogation of labour laws. AICCTU National General Secretary Comrade Rajiv Dimri along with Comrade Santosh Roy, President, AICCTU Delhi, Delhi AICCTU Secretary Shweta Raj and other people were detained by Delhi Police in Mandir Marg and Parliament Street police stations. While addressing the protesters Rajiv Dimri said, "The Modi government thinks that it can go ahead with the abrogation of labour laws without any resistance. We can assure that AICCTU and all other fighting trade union organizations will offer the government the toughest resistance on the roads. This session of parliament has been called not with the motive of solving the issues of pandemic, unemployment and nose-diving economy but to pass anti worker, anti farmer bills and ordinances." He added that as part of AICCTU's

AICCTU Burns Copies of Labour Code Bills In Front of Labour Ministry

Calls For Protest Across The Country Against Introduction of Anti-Worker Bills In The Parliament

On 16 September 2020, members of different unions affiliated to AICCTU protested in front of Shram Shakti Bhawan, which houses the Ministry of Labour and Employment. The Modi-led Government has accelerated its efforts to snatch away the rights of the workers by abrogation of 44 important labour laws. The monsoon session of Parliament, which opens after a long hiatus is 'designed' to suit the needs of the Modi government to dodge the questions and discussions on important matters including those concerning millions of workers and farmers. The snubbing of all opposition as well as the aspirations of the working class, and the pace at

which the Modi government is doing so, clearly shows its anti-worker and pro-corporate stance. The current session of the Parliament would see introduction of three extremely anti-worker bills namely – Labour Code On Occupational Safety, Health & Working Conditions Bill, The Code On Social Security Bill & The Code On Industrial Relations Bill.

The parliamentarians who are elected by the people certainly seem to be oblivious to the plight of workers, which is evident from the way in which the first of the labour codes – Code On Wages was passed by the parliament. MPs cutting across party lines (except for the ones from left parties and some others) voted in a manner

nationwide protest, similar protest actions have been organized in various state capitals and district level labour department offices. Such protests will continue on all

the days of monsoon session of the parliament. The Central Trade Union Organizations called for a joint protest on 23rd September.

FIRs were registered against many of our central leaders, but from the start we have believed in our role as an alternative revolutionary federation rather than a movement for compromise and we continue the struggle vigorously.

IREF observes Countrywide Anti-Privatization Day

Under the call given by the Indian Railway Employees Federation, Anti-Privatization day was observed across the country on 18 August 2020. Railway employees at all zones, divisions, production units, railway stations and workshops organized marches in a peaceful democratic way while maintaining physical distance, and made railway employees aware of the need to oppose privatization and save the railways.

A joint statement was released by NCRW Secretary and IREF National President Manoj Pandey and NREW Secretary and IREF National General Secretary Sarvajit Singh. They said that since coming to power for the second time at the Center, the government started corporatization of railway production units and handing over railway colonies, railway stations, railway hospitals and railway lands to private companies under the 100 day Action Plan on 18 October 2019. We opposed this by forming a Joint Sangharsh Committee at DLW Varanasi represented by our Prime Minister as MP. Under the IREF banner we, along with the struggle committees of all production committees, all recognized and non-recognized unions and organizations from almost all categories formed a Sanyukta Sangharsh Samiti on 8 December 2019 at the Mavalankar Hall in New Delhi for the first time in 50 years of the history of the railway

movement. Under intensified pressure from this Committee the government had to back down from implementing the 100 day Action Plan. But now taking advantage of the Corona crisis the government has betrayed the people of the country and railway employees and has started selling the railways. When this government merged the Rail Budget from the General Budget, it became clear that they want to handover the railways (the people's transport) to capitalists. We participated with all our strength in all the struggles of the central labor organizations (22 May, 3 July and 9 August 2020). As a result

On behalf of the Indian Railway Employees federation we have consistently taken independent initiatives. From 19 June to 26 June earlier this year we carried out the Protest Week campaign. Even today it is only the IREF that is observing a countrywide Anti-Privatization day among the entire Indian railways.

When the so-called recognized federations in the Railways compromise with the ruling powers and betray the railway employees and the people of the country, we forge a unity among railway employees, farmers, students and youth and consistently struggle for the interest of railway employees, even if it means that we may lose our jobs or be sent to jail.

Misogynist Bullying of Rhea Chakraborty Is A Travesty of Justice for Sushant Singh Rajput

(AIPWA issued this statement in response to attacks on actor Rhea Chakraborty in the media.)

All sensitive persons are deeply aggrieved by the death of Sushant Singh Rajput and the people of Bihar as well as all progressive people in the country want justice for Sushant and his family. But the courts should be allowed to decide whether or not Rhea Chakraborty is guilty for his death. The way in which the media is attacking and smearing Rhea is a shameful and criminal act. The manner in which media personnel pushed and shoved Rhea yesterday cannot be

condemned enough. Action must be taken against the people who did this.

AIPWA wishes to appeal to the media to stop its media trial that is interfering with the legal process and doing injustice to all persons involved including the memory of Sushant Singh Rajput.

We also appeal to people to understand the intentions of some forces in the media who are acting as propagandists for the government. This issue is being utilized to divert attention from burning issues like growing unemployment and economic distress in the country;

in view of the forthcoming Bihar Assembly election they are trying to divert attention from the plight of migrant workers from Bihar, the distress of farmers, the rising morale and confidence of criminals in Bihar, and the spate of instances of rape and violence against women in Bihar and in India.

We should also note that just yesterday the Bihar BJP Cultural Cell stated that the Sushant Singh matter would be made an election issue for the Bihar Assembly election. It is also to be noted that the same forces which were hostile to Sushant Singh during the violent

Karni Sena attacks on the Padmavat film cannot be Sushant's well-wishers today. The truth is that they are simply trying to gain political mileage out of his death. Even if a woman may be found guilty of a crime later, in a fair legal process she must be given the opportunity to present her side of the story, and the investigative agencies must do their work impartially. The media trial is vitiating the climate to the extent that will make a free and fair process by investigative agencies and even judiciary difficult.

We also appeal to the courts, the National Women's Commission and

the News Broadcasting Standards Authority to intervene strongly and stop the media's smear campaign against Rhea, which is using misogynist language and ideology to the hilt.

Sushant was a sensitive and progressive-thinking young man, who would certainly not have approved of such public shaming of a woman in his name. Therefore, we appeal to all people who respect Sushant to voice their dissent against the way in which the media is acting in this matter.

Protests Against the Racist and Casteist Attacks on Professor Maroona Murmu



Professor of the History Department of Jadavpur University, Maroona Murmu, made a comment on social media supporting voicing concerns about final semester exams being held during the COVID-19 pandemic. Students across the country had been protesting against exams being held during the pandemic, fearing that their safety and future would be put at risk. In response to her comment, however, a storm of casteist and racist abuse was unleashed against Professor Murmu on Facebook. An undergraduate student described

Professor Murmu 'incompetent/devoid of merit' ('jogyotaheen') and 'worthless' ('opodartha') to describe Murmu, adding "some unqualified and incompetent people take undue advantage of the reservation system and their caste is now helping them be successful, while the deserving lag behind for ever." The same student commented later that she had "just reminded one 'Murmu' a Santhal about her Adivasi lineage. That too in a polite manner." Nor were these the only comments: rather, Professor Murmu faced an endless flood of abuse and taunts.

If a PhD in history, an alumna of prestigious academic institutions, and a Professor with published research to her name, can be subjected to such brazenly public casteist racial abuse, one can only imagine what adivasis and dalits with lesser visibility face on a daily basis.

AISA and AIPWA protested against these attacks on Professor Maroona Murmu, and academics from across the country issued statements in solidarity with her.



The episode underlined how much work remains to be done to get society to acknowledge caste privilege, to fight the casteist anti reservation myths, and to dismantle and annihilate caste itself. □



Swami Agnivesh

We are grieved by the passing of Swami Agnivesh.

He was a lifelong crusader against social slavery and bigotry, and a friend of all kinds of people's movements. He succumbed to injuries sustained in an attack by a lynch mob comprising cadres of India's ruling Bhartiya Janta Party in Jharkhand last year. A BJP Minister defended the attempted lynching at the time. Agniveshji's internal organs never recovered from the damage done to them by the attack.

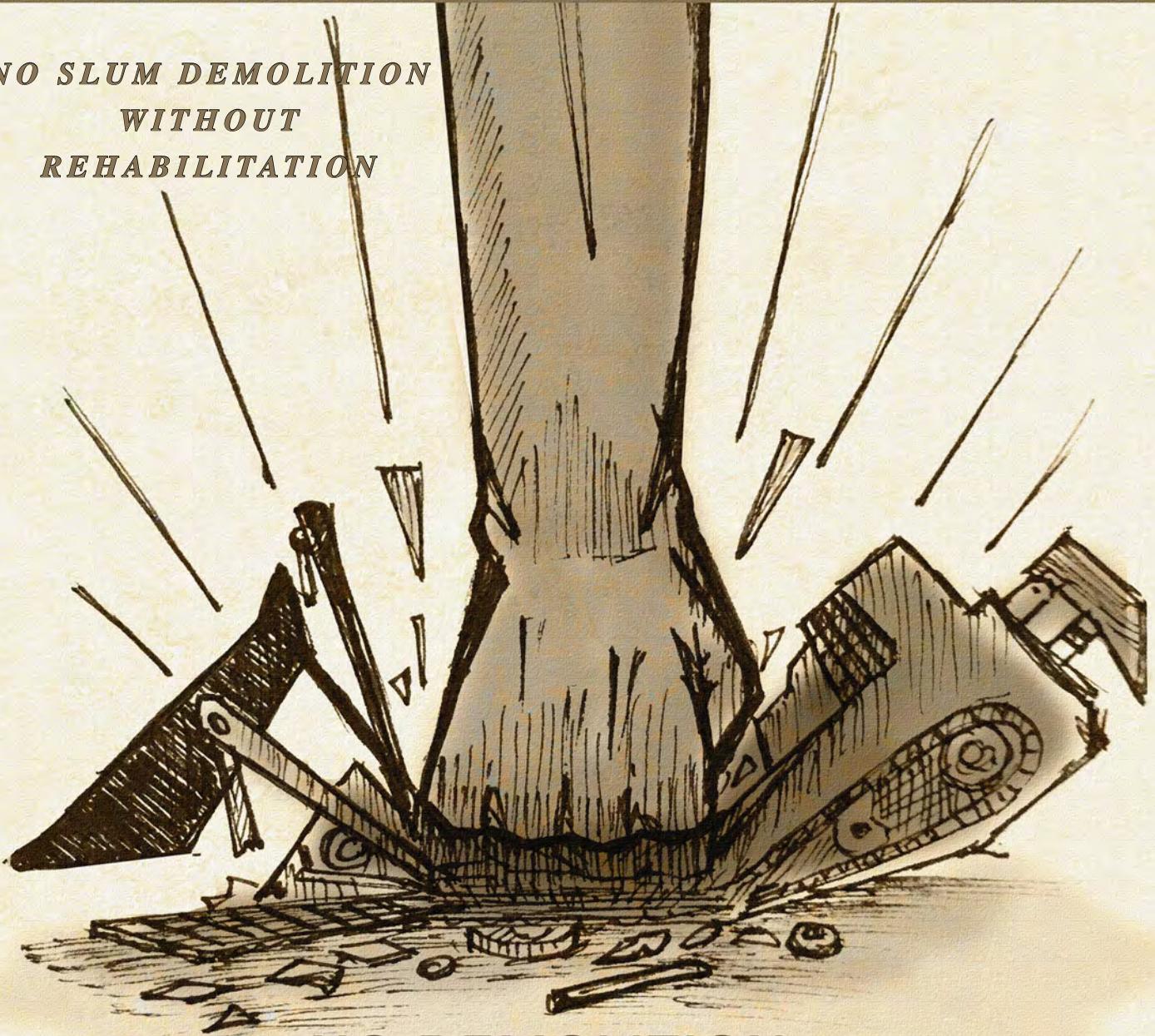
The BJP resented Agniveshji not only for his conscientious opposition to communalism, but because by wearing saffron robes and speaking up for the rights of oppressed people and for equality, he refused to allow the BJP to equate saffron robes with violent bigotry.

His courage, tenacity and fighting spirit will continue to inspire India's battle against communal fascism. We salute Swami Agniveshji with his own favourite slogan: ***Kamanewala khayega, Lootnewala jayega, Naya zamana aayega!*** (The worker will eat, the looter will go, the new era will dawn!)

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WITHOUT
REHABILITATION***



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