

# Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

JULY 2025

Rs. 25



## **Condemn US Bombing of Iran**

The undesigned five Left parties strongly condemn the United States' bombing of Iran. This is a grave violation of Iranian sovereignty and the UN Charter, and it will inflame global tensions, destabilise West Asia and have severe economic repercussions. The US and Israel are justifying their attacks by claiming that Iran was on the verge of developing a nuclear weapon. However, it is important to note that the Director-General of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), Rafael Grossi, stated on 19 June: "We did not have any proof of a systematic effort to move into a nuclear weapon". Even US intelligence agencies acknowledged that they did not possess conclusive evidence indicating that Iran was developing a nuclear weapon. Furthermore, Iran remains a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT).

Despite these facts, Israel launched an attack on Iran on 12 June to sabotage any potential negotiations between Iran and the US. Now, the US has joined Israel in this act of aggression, even though President Trump had given a two-week window for talks. This clearly demonstrates that the US-Israel axis has little regard for their own intelligence assessments or any diplomatic process, and is intent on imposing war on Iran and the entire West Asian region. This makes it evident that the real intention is to destroy Iran, establish imperialist hegemony over West Asia, and control the global flow of resources. This attack is aimed at serving the interests of the military-industrial complex and enabling international capital to navigate its way out of the prolonged crisis.

The US deployed B-2 stealth bombers to drop bunker-busting bombs on Iran, reenacting the invasion of Iraq, which was also launched on similarly unverified claims that were later proven false. It is ironic that US, the only country to have ever used a nuclear weapon – despite Japan being ready to negotiate at the end of the Second World War – is now speaking about the threat of nuclear weapons!

The US attack will, in all likelihood, drastically escalate the conflict, with disastrous implications for global peace and the livelihoods of ordinary people – especially in countries like India, which rely heavily on West Asia for oil imports and opportunities for migrant labour. The already burdened working masses will be the worst affected by the economic fallout of the war.

The Indian government must immediately abandon its pro-US, pro-Israel foreign policy stance and join global efforts to stop the war. We urge all peace-loving people of our country to unite in condemning the US attack and to organise protest actions against this imperialist aggression.

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New Series Vol. 31 No. 03

JULY 2025

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36 pages including covers

### Annual Subscription Rates

India Rs. 300

Abroad US\$ 60

Digital Subscription Rs. 200

Online Payment: liberation.org.in

Pay By Bank transfer:

Account Name: Liberation Publications

Account No.: 90502010091855

IFSC Code: CNRB0019050

MICR Code.: 110015388

Bank: Canara Bank

# Hands off Gaza and Iran: Defeat the US-Israel Axis of Aggression and War



Aftermath of Israeli bombing in Iran; most casualties are civilians, including women and children. | Photo: M Mahdi Dehghani

After winning the elections on the promise of stopping all wars, reducing America's military involvement on foreign soil and focusing on the economy, the Trump Administration has now joined Israel in attacking Iran. The current phase of Israeli aggression on Iran began on 12 June even as Iran was negotiating with the US to find a possible diplomatic solution to the dispute over its alleged nuclear programme. After Iran retaliated with missiles, inflicting substantial damages and denting the myth of Israel's military prowess and aura of invincibility, Israel started pleading for American assistance. Donald Trump left the G7 summit in Canada midway, asked Iran to surrender unconditionally, gave it a two-week window for negotiations only to bomb Iran on 21 June, calling it 'the way to peace'! The script looks eerily similar to the US invasion of Iraq two decades ago.

The excuse then was the alleged presence of chemical weapons in Iraq, the so-called weapons of mass destruction, which was found to be a big hoax invoked only as a sinister plank to justify a totally unjust invasion. The alibi today is Iran's alleged nuclear weapons capability. Israel has been repeating this allegation for last thirty years, always saying that Iran is just 'a few months away' from the bomb. It does not matter that Iran has been a signatory to the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and continued to comply with international inspection. That Trump's own intelligence chief Tulsi Gabbard testified in March denying that Iran was developing nukes before being rebuked by Trump and changing her statement. That even as recently as 19 June the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) clarified that it had no proof of any systematic attempt by Iran to build nuclear weapons.

Clearly facts do not matter for the US-Israel axis. The Trump-Netanyahu duo is driven by the single-minded drive to secure complete strategic and



resource control over West Asia. Three decades ago, in the formative years of the post-Soviet world order, the US and Israel adopted a strategy to destabilise West Asia. Netanyahu had begun the first spell of his long but interrupted reign as Israel's Prime Minister in 1996 with the neoconservative blueprint known as the "Clean Break" report. From Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya and Syria, the strategy has been executed through the systematic application of terror, invasion, war, destruction, regime change and even breaking up of countries. Iran stands out as the last frontier in West Asia in the face of this sinister strategy of occupation, plunder and control. Hence the desperation of the Trump-Netanyahu combine to wage the ongoing war on Iran.

The US quest for a puppet regime in Iran - in the name of democracy, or to use the latest Trump boast, of 'making Iran great again' - is not new. It has a long history. In 1952-53, the CIA had engineered a coup in Iran to oust the elected popular National Front government led by Mohammad Mosaddegh and scuttle Iran's oil nationalization plans. The powers of the royal Pahlavi dynasty of Iran, which were getting diminished under the elected Mossadegh government, were restored under the aegis of the US and the UK, and long years of repression under the Shah and his notorious secret police followed. The 1979 Iranian revolution eventually ended this puppet rule paving the way for the current Islamic republic which combines a presidential form of government with a theocratic order. The US and the UK have ever since been looking for ways to regain their lost influence in Iran.

The current theocratic order of Iran has been evidently regressive and coercive, and the women's movement and other progressive

forces of Iran have been waging a brave resistance for democracy defying severe repression. But the majority of progressive forces of Iran also remain fiercely anti-imperialist, rejecting the US-Israel agenda of regime change through war. The forces of democracy, justice and peace worldwide must come together to rebuff the US-Israel invasion of Iran and the campaign for a regime change and possible balkanization of Iran. The US is the only country which has actually used nuclear weapons, traumatising generations in Hiroshima and Nagasaki and shocking the whole world with the horrors of a lethal nuclear attack. There can be no greater hypocrisy than the US now bombing the people of Iran in the name of destroying Iran's nuclear capability.

The attack on Iran also needs to be seen in the context of the Israeli occupation of Palestine and continuing genocide of Palestinians in Gaza. This is the worst ongoing crime against humanity rekindling horrifying memories of colonial era campaigns of plunder and extermination, the Nazi holocaust and the racist apartheid regime in South Africa. The anti-genocide voice has emerged as the loudest affirmation of humanity in today's world and the Palestinian cause is invoking greater popular support and solidarity than ever before. In the latest UN resolution, major European powers like France, Germany and the UK all voted against the genocide and the US-Israel axis found itself starkly isolated amidst calls for stopping arms supplies to Israel. By escalating the military conflict with Iran, the US-Israel axis of war seeks to overcome its isolation and reunite the West under the declining hegemony of the US.

For us in India, the refusal of the Modi government to condemn the genocide in Gaza and now the

aggression on Iran by the US-Israel axis is the biggest betrayal of India's foreign policy responsibility and national interests. The foreign policy failure of the Modi government has been exposed most clearly in the international isolation faced by India in the wake of the Pahalgam terror attack and the repeated humiliation inflicted on India by the Trump Administration, be it in the manner of deportation of undocumented Indian citizens, in the increasingly racist treatment of Indian origin people residing and working in the US, or the denial of visa and educational opportunities to Indian students, not to mention the adverse implications of Trump's tariff terrorism. In spite of this proven failure, the Modi regime continues to remain shamelessly subservient to the US-Israel agenda in West Asia.

Such subservience also has a great economic cost, given India's dependence on West Asia for oil and for job opportunities for a big contingent of migrant Indian workers. It will also further alienate India from our neighbours in Asia. This is therefore the moment for all progressive and patriotic Indians to demand an urgent course correction in Indian foreign policy. This is also the moment for us to forge closer anti-imperialist anti-war solidarities worldwide. Iran in 2025 is not Iraq of 2003 in terms of military strength and preparation; the situation within the US has also changed with more and more people rising in protest against Trump's tyranny; and the global balance of forces is also no longer conducive to the unilateral unipolar designs of US imperialism. As the US-Israel axis pushes the world to the brink of a major war, which may well escalate into a cataclysmic WWII, let the world rebuff that design by decisively pushing back this axis of terror and war. ■

## *Commemorating the 50th anniversary of the promulgation of Emergency*

# Emergency, Then and Now

**F**ifty years have elapsed since the promulgation of Emergency by the Indira Gandhi government. On 26 January 1975, the Constitutional Republic of India observed its twenty fifth foundation anniversary. Just a few months later, on 12 June, 1975 Allahabad High Court found Indira Gandhi guilty of electoral malpractices, and in two weeks the government placed the country under Emergency, effectively suspending the very system of India's parliamentary democracy and the fundamental rights of Indian citizens. Nineteen months into the Emergency, elections were announced in January 1977 and by March 1977 India saw the first defeat of the Congress at the central level and formal lifting of the Emergency. A turbulent time in the history of independent India, and a treasure house of crucial lessons for the future of modern India.

The outcome of the 1977 election is widely perceived as a historic mandate that restored parliamentary democracy in India. With political prisoners released after years of incarceration and press censorship lifted, for a brief period there was indeed a mood of celebration in the country. But it did not take long for the euphoria to evaporate. The army action in the Amritsar Golden Temple codenamed Operation Bluestar, the assassination of Indira Gandhi, and the anti-Sikh pogrom that followed cast a long shadow over India's spirit of national unity and constitutional rule of law.

This only went from bad to worse with the Ram Janmabhoomi campaign unleashed by the Sangh brigade, especially Adani's violence-ridden rath yatra and the demolition of the Babri Masjid.

The 2002 Gujarat carnage deepened that wound, and the increasing acquiescence and complicity of the state in the face of this intensified Hindutva offensive triggered a massive erosion of India's parliamentary democratic framework and multi-religious multi-cultural social fabric. Serial enactment of draconian laws in the name of combating terrorism and curbing dissent - from TADA in the 1980s and 90s to POTA in the 2000s to UAPA - eclipsed India's already weak record of constitutional liberties. By the time Modi came to power, India had already begun acquiring several trappings of a hard state amidst a growing clamour for making it even harder. With every passing day in the Modi era, the constitutional underpinnings of the republic are facing a relentless systematic assault.

Each of the epithets enshrined in the constitution as markers of modern India - sovereign, secular, socialist and democratic - has been badly dented, and every promise made to the citizens - justice, liberty, equality and fraternity - has become a prerogative of power and not a universal right that should be available to all without any discrimination. If one has to use the Emergency as a metaphor for suspension of

democracy, we can only describe India today as in a permanent state of undeclared but very real Emergency. The event that triggered the Emergency fifty years ago - a High Court convicting a Prime Minister in a case of electoral malpractice, is now an absolute impossibility. The Election Commission today does not heed any complaint of violation of code of conduct against any powerful leader of the ruling party, not to speak of the Prime Minister or a BJP Chief Minister, and it is impossible to expect any court of law to disqualify any top leader of the ruling dispensation in an election petition.

Elections were announced in January 1977 even before the Emergency was formally lifted. There was some lifting of restrictions and a partial release of prisoners and after the unexpected shock defeat, the Emergency was fully lifted. The people of India could electorally prevail and bring an end to the Emergency. Today the current regime is desperate to defy the people and manipulate the electoral process to cling to power by all possible means. Amit Shah has warned India openly that the BJP is determined to rule India not for a five-year term but for fifty long years, and the Election Commission has become a willing accomplice. Every passing day tells us that power in the BJP scheme of things is not to be constitutionally administered according to the tenets of rule of law, institutional scrutiny and federal devolution. In the Modi-Shah-Yogi scheme of governance, power is totally centralised and arbitrary. This is a state of ever-expanding Emergency that seeks to turn India into a republic of fear and fetters.

There were three key phrases used to characterise the Emergency era in mainstream discourse: extra-

constitutional authority, the caucus around Indira Gandhi and the subsequent coinage of 'emergency excesses'. Today the RSS has emerged as the supreme extra-constitutional authority with growing penetration and decisive influence in almost the entire array of institutions, especially academia, media and the judiciary. The triumvirate of Modi, Shah and Yogi have made even the BJP's own leadership structure largely redundant and the PMO has effectively become the real cabinet. Excesses are now built into the system, celebrated as the 'new normal'. Parliamentary democracy, the form that was carefully chosen by the Constituent Assembly, is being subverted in every possible way to turn India into a presidential system.

If the Emergency was a wakeup call about the fragility of democracy in India, today we find ourselves in the midst of a much bigger war. At stake is not just the functioning of parliamentary democracy, but also its very constitutional foundation and the legacy of India's anti-colonial freedom movement, the springboard of the vision of a multicultural multilingual modern India. The grand unity of the non-Congress opposition could bring an end to the Emergency through the elections in 1977, but a broad-based unity of non-BJP forces could only inflict a partial setback to the fascist Modi regime in 2024. Evidently, beyond electoral understanding we need a united and powerful assertion of the people on every front of struggle. We will have to fight much harder to win victory over fascism and move towards a truly democratic and egalitarian social order. ■

## Amit Shah's Aspersions Against India's English Speakers and the Regressive Language Agenda of the Sangh Brigade

▲ AKASH BHATTACHARYA

**T**he Home Minister Amit Shah's recent comment against English has drawn a lot of attention. Like other divisive comments that Modi and his ministers make from time to time, this too was meant to create a sensation. Shah talked about making Indians who speak in English feel ashamed.

Given English's role as a global link language, and as a language of global power, Shah's statement appears absurd. How can a government that claims global leadership, and regularly hobnob with dominant Western powers such as England and United States of America, look down upon English?

Shah's statement could have been ignored as foolhardy and bizarre, if not for its deep roots in the Hindutva ideology and the government's divisive and inequality-inducing policies. The Leader of Opposition Rahul Gandhi responded promptly, pointing out that Amit Shah and his government basically want to exclude the majority of Indians from upward mobility in the global economy. They wish to reserve the upper echelons of elite professions for the Western educated children of the Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP) leaders and their carefully chosen friends.

True enough, but there is more to Shah's statement than nepotism and cronyism. His clarion call against English may be couched in the rhetoric of de-colonization and socio-linguistic equality, but it is essentially an alibi for the government's deep-rooted casteism, majoritarianism and attempts at Sanskrit-Hindi imposition.

The BJP feels inconvenienced by India's dual relationship with English. English was both a language of colonial power as well as a source of modern ideas. It was through English – sometimes directly and sometimes in translation via the Indian vernaculars – that Indians felt and absorbed about the emancipatory impulses of modern democracy, secularism, pluralist nationalism, humanism and socialism. They creatively interpreted these in the Indian context and fostered the modern Indian nation-state as we know it.

The milieu that produced multilingual nationalist leaders such as Gokhale, Tilak, Gandhi, Nehru, Patel and Azad, also produced Hindutva stalwarts such as Hedgewar, Golwalkar, Savarkar, Deoras, Madhok and Vajpayee. Yet how easily these Hindutva leaders set aside the pluralist and democratic traditions, and advocated for an unequal and exclusivist Hindu nation! Unable to reasonably account for this divergence, today's Hindutva leaders seem eager to vilify not only the ideas which created modern India, but also a language that played a pivotal role in the process.

English played a key role in shaping a modern conception of social justice. In the caste-divided pre-modern India, Dalits and backward classes had been excluded from "classical" Sanskrit education. With the coming of English, Indian vernaculars were gradually standardized by creatively adopting English grammar and syntax to the vernacular linguistic structures. The rise of vernaculars did offer new opportunities in education and employment for those excluded by Sanskrit and Persian; but only to a limited extent.

In the nineteenth century, the vernaculars were taken over by regional caste

elites who infused these languages with Sanskrit, and used them as vehicles to consolidate their social power. Dalit and backward class communities excluded from Sanskrit institutions could attend vernacular schools but often had to be satisfied with a place in the verandah rather than inside the classrooms.

Limited access to vernaculars meant that English – often learnt directly from missionaries – became the key source of modern emancipatory ideas for Dalit Bahujan communities. Great thinkers and leaders such as Jyotirao Phule, Iyothee Thass, Jogendranath Mandal, and BR Ambedkar creatively combined these modern ideas with indigenous egalitarian ethos to give us the modern vocabulary of social justice.

An iconic incident in mid-1970s Karnataka demonstrates the tension-filled relationship between Dalits, the modern vernaculars and English. In 1973 a Dalit minister in the government of Karnataka – B. Basavalingappa – called upon the Dalits to prefer English over the vernacular, given the persistent gate-keeping by upper caste Kannadiga authors and scholars. Basavalingappa's comment created a furore which in turn generated a counter-reaction from young Dalit students.

The counter-reaction culminated in the formation of the historic Dalit Sangharsh Samiti (DSS), which became the cradle for iconic Kannada writers such as Devanoor Mahadeva and Siddalingaiah. Thus, while these authors ultimately opted for Kannada as their medium of expression, English's social power and emancipatory potential were a key part of the linguistic matrix of post-colonial India. Deeply afraid of social justice politics, the BJP is uncomfortable with these histories, and with the enabling role played by the English language.

Given English's dual role in India –

of both conquest and emancipation – a wholesale removal of English was never part of the decolonization agenda. While Angrezi Hatao movements did take place in the years following independence, notably led by Dr. Ram Manohar Lohia, those movements were primarily about ensuring socio-linguistic equality.

The BJP government's National Education Policy (NEP 2020) waxes eloquent about multilingual education. If the BJP was actually serious about linguistic equality, it would have committed public money to producing enough translated materials to make quality multilingual education a reality.

Far from it, the BJP government is keen to impose Hindi in the name of multi-lingual education and under the pretext of decolonization. Recently, a controversy erupted after the Mahayuti government in Maharashtra, led by BJP's Devendra Fadnavis, announced that Hindi would be a compulsory third language for students from Classes 1 to 5, starting the academic year 2025-26 as part of the phased implementation of the three-language formula of the NEP 2020.

Any kind of linguistic imposition is unjust; on top of that, Hindi imposition is laced with caste inequality and majoritarian aspirations. The Hindi that Amit Shah (and many before him) regularly glorifies as our primary “national language” is a specific Sanskritized version of the popular North Indian tongue called Hindustani. As the freedom struggle picked up pace, preparing Hindi to be the national language became a major pretext for Sanskritization.

The Sanskritization undertaken in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries created a vernacular that was not only indexed by caste but also had a distinct “Hindu” feel to it. Sanskritization was a way to eliminate Persian elements from the Hindustani tongue and distinguish Hindi from Urdu

along religious lines. The resultant Hindi-Urdu controversy played a key role in polarizing North Indian society, and associated Hindi exclusively with the Hindu community – a process that was critiqued from within the Hindi cultural milieu (even by stalwarts such as Munshi Premchand) and beyond.

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, while reflecting on what could be an acceptable link language for India, famously said, “We are not going to allow Hindi imperialism to be used as an instrument of domination over non-Hindi areas”. He preferred Hindustani in place of Sanskritized Hindi as the link language in India.

The NEP gives pride of place to Sanskrit and calls for a three-language policy without clear indications that this would not mean Hindi imposition. The richness of other classical traditions such as Tamil, Telugu, Odia are acknowledged but not given the same significance as Sanskrit. Likewise, the role of Persian and Urdu in India's civilizational journey are completely obliterated.

The best of India's de-colonial traditions has emphasized on national sovereignty, independent foreign policy, undoing of deep-seated institutional inequalities, and creating a just and equal society. The BJP government has tried to systematically undo our achievements in each of these fields. Beating back Left-liberal and Dalit Bahujan resistance – all rooted partially in the English language – has been an integral part of this attempted un-making. Shah's aspersions against English must be read in this context as well.

Continue to push Sanskrit-Hindi through the backdoor, and beat back those who oppose this under the pretext of beating back colonial linguistic legacies: these are the two goals that Amit Shah seeks to achieve simultaneously, through his anti-English aspersions. ■

# Ahmedabad Air Crash: The Modi Model of Development without Safety and Governance without Accountability

**S**erial disasters seem to have become the order of the day in today's India. Even as we were trying to come to terms with the horrific terror attack in Pahalgam that claimed twenty-six innocent lives, there came the shocking news of a stampede in Bengaluru that turned the ill-advised celebration of the RCB victory in the IPL 2025 final into a procession of death. The crash of the Air India plane in Ahmedabad killed not just all airborne passengers except a lone miraculous survivor, it also killed a number of doctors, students, employees and other people at the site of the crash. During this period we also watched people fall to their deaths off overcrowded local trains in Mumbai, a bridge collapse in Pune and yet another chopper crash in Uttarakhand. Meanwhile, a BBC investigative report reminded us that the death toll caused by the stampede in Kumbh earlier this year was at least 82, way above the UP government's official figure of 37 deaths.

The daily lives of ordinary people in India today have clearly become not only uncertain and insecure but unsafe. Does this tell us anything about the two words we hear so often - development and governance? We have a paradigm of development where maintenance and safety are among the lowest of priorities. No prize for guessing the topmost priorities - corruption, propaganda and ostentation. And

we have a template of governance where any notion of accountability is conspicuously missing. Take the example of the Ahmedabad plane crash - the most shocking air disaster of its kind, reportedly the first mishap with the Boeing 787 Dreamliner plane. The airport is in the hands of the Adani group, while Air India has recently been handed over to the Tata. The Modi government is left with only regulatory responsibility, yet the DGCA, the regulatory authority remains badly understaffed, with a reported vacancy of more than 53 percent (879 vacancies out of a total of 1,633 sanctioned posts). This speaks volumes about how safety standards are treated in the field of civil aviation.

The response of the government even after such a shocking accident on an international flight involving passengers of different nationalities reflects the continuing lack of seriousness on the question of safety. An accident that should serve as a wake-up call demanded immediate fixing of accountability. Resignation of concerned ministers used to be the primary expression of accountability in the wake of a major disaster. But the Modi government showcases a model where concerned ministers only visit the sites to make Instagram reels - the template followed by Rail Minister Ashwini Vaishnaw after railway accidents now came in handy for civil aviation minister Ram Mohan

Naidu. For Narendra Modi a visit to the crash site marked another occasion for a photoshoot. After the Kumbh stampede, we were told that the stampede victims would have a guaranteed place in heaven, and now after the Ahmedabad air crash we have this fatalistic philosophical gem from Union Home Minister Amit Shah: nobody can prevent an accident!

Is this invocation of fatalism meant to prepare the people to accept the accident as a disaster 'ordained by destiny' and not demand any accountability from the government? Is there also an attempt to control the inquiry into the accident? As part of the International Civil Aviation Organisation, India's Aircraft Accident Investigation Bureau has already commenced an independent inquiry into the causes and circumstances of the accident, yet the Modi government has announced another high level committee under the stewardship of the Home Secretary, the official who reports to Amit Shah, giving rise to serious doubts about the government's approach to the inquiry and its implications. Regardless of the immediate cause of the Ahmedabad air crash, it is widely documented that the Ahmedabad airport has serious structural issues, from the limited size of the runway to the densely populated surroundings. There are reports by the DGCA and Airports Authority of India regarding specific hazards of the Ahmedabad airport that have been ignored by successive state governments. There are growing safety concerns about the Boeing Dreamliner model itself indicated by various whistleblower reports and the multiple problems already reported in various Air India flights since the Ahmedabad crash. Let the inquiries not be reduced to cover-up exercises to protect the people and practices responsible for



the lapses and find scapegoats for such a massive human tragedy.

It is quite revealing that the crash has happened in Ahmedabad, the headquarters of Narendra Modi's much trumpeted 'Gujarat Model'. In fact, Modi's prime ministerial projection was powered by the corporate clamour emanating from the 'Vibrant Gujarat' investment summits. In many ways, Ahmedabad is now treated as India's second or parallel capital, complete with fancy symbols of grandeur like the Sabarmati Riverfront and the Narendra Modi Stadium. Yet the airport in the city, handed over to the Adani group like several other airports in the country, suffers from crucial infrastructural deficiencies. If a city like Ahmedabad, so central to the BJP's model of 'smart cities', is found wanting in basic parameters of urban development and governance, we should see the Ahmedabad plane crash not just as a wake-up call in the field of civil aviation but as a reality check for the entire Modi model of 'Viksit Bharat'. Let this be a turning point in India's battle for safe and sustainable development and governance with transparency and accountability. ■

### **Ahmedabad Plane Crash: CPI(ML) Expresses Deep Shock, Stands in Solidarity with the Affected**

We express our heartfelt condolences and deep grief at the tragic crash of an Air India flight AI 171 in Ahmedabad on June 12. The London-bound aircraft, carrying over 200 people, crashed shortly after takeoff near Meghani Nagar.

This crash is among the most tragic air disasters India has witnessed in recent years. It is vital to promptly determine its cause to ensure air safety and protect the lakhs of passengers who fly daily.

In this time of grief and tragedy, we stand with the families of all those affected.

- issued by Central Committee of CPI(ML)  
on June 12, 2025 ■

## **The Modi-Era Foreign Policy Has Thoroughly Compromised India's Position in the International Arena**

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

**T**he seven parliamentary delegations comprising fifty-odd MPs and senior officials have returned to India after visiting thirty-odd countries to mobilise international opinion in the wake of Operation Sindoor. Three of these seven delegations were headed by parliamentarians from non-NDA parties, parties that are dubbed anti-national by the Modi government almost day in and day out. The BJP does not have any Muslim MP and spews hate-filled venom against Muslim MPs on the floor of India's parliament, but the delegations also included some Muslim members from different parties. Surely there has been no change of heart in the Modi regime's approach to opposition MPs or the decorum of parliamentary democracy. It was only India's acute isolation in the international arena which forced the regime to field multiparty parliamentary delegations in an effort to protect the Prime Minister and his senior cabinet colleagues from facing international embarrassment.

The Parliamentary delegations were not met with any enthusiasm by world leaders. The delegations mostly did not even have any exchange with foreign ministers or important current representatives of the host countries. Their meetings remained by and large confined to former leaders, Indian diaspora members and some thinktank representatives. Media interactions too had little coverage in prominent newspapers or media networks. In other words, the visits hardly had any impact on international perceptions regarding the post-Pahalgam developments. Notably, the delegations did not visit any country in South Asia. An important country like Canada, currently president of G7 and host of the 2025 G7 summit, was also conspicuously missing in the list of countries visited, with the Modi government perhaps fearing that questions would be raised about India's suspected role in the 2023 murder of Harjit Singh Nijjar.

Contrary to the Modi government's campaign for putting Pakistan back on the grey list of FATF - which would mean increased monitoring of Pakistan for any possible funding of terrorism by the Financial Action Task Force, an intergovernmental organization founded by the G7 to combat money laundering - Pakistan has secured substantial foreign loans in the recent past without any terror-related monitoring. These include \$1 billion from the IMF, \$800 million package from

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***A country which won freedom after suffering from centuries of colonial plunder and subjugation naturally identified itself with national liberation struggles and anti-imperialist causes across the world.***

the ADB and a \$40 billion partnership framework with the World Bank. During this period, itself, Pakistan has been made the chair of the UN Security Council Taliban Sanctions Committee and vice-chair of the Counter Terrorism Committee. With Trump now repeatedly claiming to have brokered the ceasefire between India and Pakistan, and the world keeping the two nuclear-powered neighbours in the same bracket, the Modi government's foreign policy has clearly failed achieve its stated objective of isolating Pakistan.

Ever since Modi's ascent to power in Delhi in 2014, we have been told that India has now acquired a prominent profile in the international arena. Modi has been India's most widely travelled Prime Minister. The regime has been using terms like Vishwaguru (teacher of the world) or Vishwamitra (friend of the world) to describe India's role or stature in the world. This claim is however quite hollow. In reality, the government is trying to leverage India's population as cheap labour and its territory and resources as 'cheap nature' for multinational corporate capital, to gain traction in the international arena, a strategy which can only make India a cog in the wheel of global supply chains. This partially explains Modi's repeated genuflection to Donald Trump – from giving him a completely unwarranted role in brokering a "ceasefire" with Pakistan, to allowing Indian migrants to be handcuffed and deported back to India.

For the Modi government, foreign policy has been more about India's domestic political consumption and promotion of the Modi cult than any real engagement with international affairs. The big Modi events organised during his foreign trips have been attended

mostly by hired crowds and diaspora members mobilised by the RSS or overseas BJP network, with very little involvement of opinion makers, students or common citizens of concerned countries. A key focus of Modi's foreign visits has been to secure contracts for his corporate friends especially the Adani group. Most of these contracts have been unpopular locally, and with the Adani group being exposed and even prosecuted for its shady corporate governance many of these contracts are now being scrapped. This has taken a heavy toll on the credibility of India's foreign policy.

The most perilous flaw of the Modi era foreign policy has been India's increasing dependence on and identification with the US-Israel axis which has made India increasingly isolated in Asia. India could have used her role in the BRICS as a countervailing force to enhance India's foreign policy autonomy, but now things have reached a stage where the US openly threatens India that it must sever its ties with BRICS. The US is now even forcing India to limit its trade with China and Russia, and rely increasingly on the US for its defense purchases. For the US and Israel, India is not just a lucrative market but is being fast reduced to the status of almost a vassal state to serve their strategic goals in Asia. Willing to integrate itself with the neo-imperial world order, India stands isolated from the vast majority of countries which have been systematically pushed to the margins of the deeply unequal global economic order.

The last-minute invite for India to attend the G7 summit in Canada as an observer should be seen as a reality check for India's actual status in the international arena. The government's Hindu supremacist

offensive and increasing attacks on dissent have resulted in India's decline in many global comparative indices. The complete alienation of Sikh as well as Muslim diasporas from the Modi regime was likely another factor which compelled Canada to issue a statement justifying its last-minute invitation to India. Canada's reference to India as the fifth largest economy and most populous nation occupying a central position in several supply chains makes it clear that Canada recognises only India's objective economic significance and not India's current diplomatic role in the international arena.

Like India's Constitution, Indian foreign policy was also shaped by India's protracted freedom movement. A country which won freedom after suffering from centuries of colonial plunder and subjugation naturally identified itself with national liberation struggles and anti-imperialist causes across the world. The support for Palestine against Zionist occupation or the anti-apartheid struggle in South Africa constituted a natural moral compass of India's foreign policy. Non-alignment with global superpowers and friendship with other post-colonial countries were also strategically crucial to strengthening India's national sovereignty and building genuine international economic cooperation. Today in the Modi era, India's foreign policy is being stripped of that moral and strategic core and threatens to seriously compromise India's sovereignty. The fight for an independent foreign policy is intimately connected with the ongoing battle for the defence of the secular democratic character of India's republic and the inclusive anti-imperialist core of India's nationalism. ■

# The Narayanpur Massacre and the BJP's Sinister Military Campaign for a 'Maoist-free India'

**F**ollowing the extra-judicial killing of CPI(Maoist) general secretary Comrade Nambala Keshav Rao alias Basavaraju in the Narayanpur massacre on 21 May, the Modi government seems to be in a celebratory mode. While Home Minister Amit Shah called it 'a landmark achievement in the battle to eliminate Naxalism', promptly endorsed as a 'remarkable success' by PM Narendra Modi, the BJP Karnataka unit used a meme showing Amit Shah holding a cauliflower. The symbolism invokes the carnage of Muslims in Bhagalpur in 1989, where killers claimed to have grown cauliflowers on the soil where more than a hundred Muslim victims in a village were reportedly buried. At the moment of the Modi government's claiming its biggest anti-Maoist military success, the BJP was quick to remember and celebrate one of India's ghastliest anti-Muslim massacres.

The Maoist deaths in the Narayanpur massacre have now also been corroborated in a press release issued on behalf of the Dandakaranya Special Zonal Committee of CPI (Maoist). According to this release, as many as 28 activists were killed in this massacre including several women and a number of senior leaders of the party. The release says till January, Basavaraju had an immediate security system comprising more than sixty fighters, but the number was reduced since then to ensure greater mobility. The group was also affected by desertions and betrayals, and this enabled the state to plan and execute the military operation

with such success. At the time of the massacre, Basavaraju was guarded by thirty four fighters, seven of whom managed to escape by breaking the encirclement of the security forces.

Basavaraju's mother, and members of families of Nageshwar Rao and other leaders, had approached the Andhra Pradesh High Court seeking custody of the dead bodies of their kin to bring them home for their funerals. The AP High Court gave a favourable order and the Chhattisgarh government had promised to the court to hand over the bodies after post mortem. But while the family members kept waiting for the bodies, the state cremated them calling them 'unclaimed bodies'. Just a few days ago, activist Soni Sori had narrated her experience of accompanying some Adivasi families to Bijapur hospital to collect the bodies of their members killed at Karregutta hills. Thousands of maggots were crawling on those decomposing bodies leaving them unrecognizable. For the Maoists and Adivasis of Bastar, the state's violence continues even after their lives are taken away.

The Modi government has fixed a deadline - 31 March 2026 - to make India Maoist-free. The security forces are being given a licence and an incentive to kill with each killing fetching guaranteed hefty rewards. There is a surrender policy for Maoists who side with the government, but the policy is not intended to rehabilitate them in what is called 'normal, peaceful life' but only to turn them into mercenaries and forcibly pit them against their

former comrades, often fellow Adivasis from the same community, locality and families. With more than 60,000 security personnel from the central paramilitary forces like the CRPF and its elite CoBRA commandos and various state forces like the Chhattisgarh police, the District Reserve Guard comprising mostly surrendered Maoists, Bastar Fighters and Special Task Force, Bastar today is among India's most densely militarised regions, where the people are subjected to aerial bombardment and the use of Israeli drones.

More than 300 security camps have turned the region into a military cantonment where there is one security personnel for every eight civilians. And for Adivasis in Bastar, every aspect of life is overshadowed and administered by the security forces. The autonomy promised in the Fifth Schedule of the Constitution and the rights provided under the Forest Rights Act or Panchayat Extension to Scheduled Areas Act have all disappeared in the eerie environment of the militarised administration of a police state. The militarisation of Bastar has a long history going back to UPA-era anti-Maoist campaigns like Operation Greenhunt and Salwa Judum, which in 2011 was termed unconstitutional and ordered to be dismantled by the Supreme Court. But the Modi era began with a renewed offensive with intensified violence. Militarisation today is a 'permanent settlement' to facilitate massive corporate plunder.

Let us also note that in the guise of a battle against Maoism, the Modi regime is out to silence every Adivasi protest in Bastar against this nexus of militarisation and corporate plunder. Gandhian Himanshu Kumar has been banished from Chhattisgarh; writer-activist Bela Bhatia is being harassed and

suppressed; long-standing popular voice of Bastar and former CPI MLA Manish Kunjam is being targeted; the anti-militarisation umbrella platform of indigenous people called Moolvasi Bachao Manch has been banned; and indiscriminate cases are being filed and people arrested under draconian laws like the Chhattisgarh Special Public Safety Act and the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act. The Supreme Court has time and again said that upholding an ideology is no crime, there are guidelines for mandatory investigation into every encounter. Today ideological

witch hunt and encounter killings, increasingly described chillingly as neutralization, have become pillars of state policy.

The ramifications of Operation Kagaar are not limited to Bastar or the Maoists. They concern every movement for justice, every form of dissent against fascist tyranny. Sooner rather than later, the template being developed in Bastar will be replicated elsewhere against newer target groups. The cauliflower in Amit Shah's hands in the sinister BJP Karnataka imagery must serve as a warning for all. At a time when Maoists

had declared a unilateral ceasefire, there must be a broad convergence for a political resolution through peace and dialogue. A judicially monitored probe into Narayanpur and other recent massacres perpetrated under Operation Kagar is a must for the constitutional foundation of the Indian republic to survive. And regardless of how the Maoists deal with the current juncture and try and regroup after this setback, the indigenous people of Bastar and beyond deserve the fullest solidarity and support of all democratic forces in their quest for justice and dignity. ■

## Stop Modi's War on Tribals and Maoists

**C**PIML, CPIM, CPI and VCK organised a joint demonstration on 2nd June at Chennai condemning the cold blooded killing of struggling tribals and Maoists in Chattisgrah. Several hundreds of demonstrators raised slogans against Modi and BJP for extra-judicial killings. Comrades Asaithambi, CPIML state secretary, P Shanmugam, CPIM state secretary, Mutharasan, CPI state secretary and Thol. Thirumavalavan, founder president of VCK addressed the protesters.

CPIML Liberation and Makkal Adhikaram in Tamil Nadu organised a public meeting on 5 June at Trichy condemning Modi's war on tribals and Maoists of Chhattisgarh and demanding judicial enquiry into the killings. The meeting emphasised on a political solution to the problem rather than looking at it as a law and order subject. Significantly, this was the first ever joint program of CPIML and Makkal Adhikaram in the state.

The public meeting was addressed by comrades Shankar, CPIML Polit-bureau member and the

Incharge of Tamil Nadu party, Raju, a member of Makkal Adhikaram's state team of political affairs, Thiagu of Tamil National Liberation Movement, Adv Balamurugan of PUCL, Adv Banumathi of Progressive Women Advocates Association addressed the gathering along with Chezhan, the state secretary of Makkal Adhikaram, Loganathan of New Democratic Labour Front and Dhanavel of RYA. Comrade Asaithambi, the state secretary of CPIML presided the protest meeting.

Protestors of both programs condemned the killing of comrade Basavaraj, the general secretary of CPI (Maoist), hundreds of Maoist cadres and thousands of innocent tribal people fighting for their rights on the land and forest which is being indiscriminately handed over by Modi-BJP government to corporates to loot the minerals.

Speakers also criticised Modi and the BJP's state government for their unjustified refusal to negotiate with Maoists to end the conflict who have unilaterally declared ceasefire and also willing for talks.

The Geneva Convention, ratified by around 150 countries around the globe, on "non-international" wars / rebellion, has formulated a set of guidelines regarding internal / civil wars which prohibit killings, tortures, etc. It has also guided that the rebels shall be treated as war prisoners and associated rules should be followed by the nation states. Modi led BJP government has violated all applicable laws and has killed tribals and Maoists indiscriminately. It is also being reported that the military forces in more than 300 camps in the region resort to fake encounters.

The BJP-RSS idea is not only a 'Maoist free India' by March 2026 but a 'dissent free country'. They are waging a war against not just Maoists but against the constitution, rule of law and democracy.

The protesters demanded to stop the Modi's war and extra-judicial killings against tribals and Maoists forthwith and to institute a judicial enquiry into the killing of Basavaraj and others to deliver justice. They also raised voice against violations of the Forest Rights Act and against the loot of rich minerals by the corporates. ■



# India's Illegal 'Push Back' to Bangladesh: When 'Otherisation' Becomes the Primary Agenda of the Government

▲ SUCHETA DE

**R**iding on the undeterred chariot of hate, The Modi-Amit Shah regime has unleashed a cruel 'Push Back' of people to Bangladesh. According to reports, more than 2,000 people have been forcibly 'pushed back' to Bangladesh since 'Operation Sindoor'.

Police forces in different states are arbitrarily detaining people with Bengali-speaking Muslim backgrounds and forcibly sending them to the Bangladesh border, from where the Border Security Forces are pushing them into Bangladesh. Several accounts have revealed the appalling manner in which these individuals are being forced to enter the perilous territory of no-man's-land in the India-Bangladesh border zone, which is surrounded by armed Border Security Force personnel on the Indian side and the Bangladesh Border Guard on the other.

One such instance has been reported by Hazara Khatun, a 62-year-old physically disabled woman who was picked up by the police on 27th May and forcibly deported to Bangladesh. She said that the Border Security Force "treated us like animals." She recalled that the BSF told them, "We will shoot you if you don't go to the other side." She added, "After we heard gunshots from the Indian side, we got very scared and quickly walked across the border." Several other similar incidents have been reported, depicting how the police and the BSF are violating every norm of human rights and forcing people

to enter Bangladesh at gunpoint. The police have been given absolute freedom to detain anyone based on mere suspicion, even if the person holds an Aadhaar card or other forms of identification, transport them to the India-Bangladesh border in West Bengal, Assam, and Tripura, and forcibly push them into Bangladesh while BSF rifles are pointed at them.

Police in BJP-ruled states such as Gujarat, Maharashtra, Haryana, Delhi, and Assam are carrying out these illegal detentions and deportations. The entire process of the pushbacks depends solely on 'suspicion' of someone being 'Bangladeshi' and violates every national and international legal standard. The institutionalisation of such arbitrary pushbacks represents a dangerous strategy of persecution and otherisation of Muslims, in complete violation of the principles of natural justice under the BJP regime. It violates Article 21 and Article 14 of the Indian Constitution, which guarantee the protection of the right to life to all persons and extend the right to equal protection of the law to everyone residing within Indian territory, including foreigners.

In the recent spate of pushbacks, those who are being picked up are not even produced before a magistrate or provided legal representation to defend themselves. Assam CM Himanta Biswa Sarma continues to defend the illegal pushouts, citing a February Supreme Court verdict and the legally obsolete Immigrants

(Expulsion from Assam) Act, 1950, to justify the arbitrary pushbacks being carried out through the Assam border. Sarma has even stated that District Commissioners have the authority to deport anyone based on suspicion, without undergoing any process of verifying the citizenship of the concerned individual.

Neither the Supreme Court verdict cited by Himanta Sarma—which pertains to 63 persons detained in the Matia Detention Camp—nor the invocation of the 1950 Act, can obscure the fact that no government or security personnel has the right to forcibly deport any individual without following established procedures for identity verification and formal repatriation with the consent of the country to which the individual is being deported.

India is a signatory to the UN Global Compact on Migration, which obligates countries to protect victims of trafficking and prohibits their deportation. As many of those identified as undocumented migrants are, in fact, trafficking victims, the government has no legal or moral right to deport them forcibly. The Supreme Court, in a 2021 ruling regarding the deportation of Rohingya refugees, clearly stated that deportation cannot occur unless the prescribed legal procedure is followed.

In a July 2024 verdict, restoring the citizenship of a Muslim man who had been declared a foreigner by a Tribunal in Assam, the Supreme Court ruled that the executive has

no right to act on mere suspicion and declare someone a foreigner. The Court questioned whether the executive had the right to “pick a person at random, knock at his/her/their door, and say, ‘We suspect you of being a foreigner.’” The Court observed that the State cannot function in such an arbitrary manner.

The complete arbitrariness of the ‘Push Back’ process is further exposed by the fact that several individuals have been brought back to India after being forcibly pushed into Bangladesh by the Border Security Forces. It has been reported that at least five individuals, who were working in Maharashtra and were arbitrarily detained by the Maharashtra police and deported, are Indian citizens from West Bengal. Following intervention by the West Bengal government, these individuals were allowed to return. Several others, from Bengali-speaking Muslim backgrounds, who had been forcibly deported, have also returned to Assam.

The recent wave of forced deportations of Bengali Muslims is part of the RSS-BJP agenda to constantly manufacture an “other” within the population, establishing a hate-filled narrative of an “internal enemy.” The CAA-NPR-NRC strategy aimed to persecute Muslims by conducting a nationwide NRC but was decisively rebuffed by widespread mass resistance in 2019. The “chronology” explained by Amit Shah, which aimed to unleash a National Population Register followed by a nationwide NRC after passing the Citizenship Amendment Act, sought to create a system that cast suspicion on millions and left them vulnerable to disenfranchisement by a communally biased administrative

machinery. This exposed the BJP’s dangerous plan to plunge the nation into communal chaos.

The BJP has frequently invoked the fear of “infiltrators” as a political tool, with Bengali-speaking Muslims being the primary target of these hate campaigns. From deploying bulldozers against Muslim homes to dehumanising Bengali-speaking migrant workers as “insects,” the BJP has consistently displayed the communal venom that drives its politics.

While ‘Operation Sindoor’ was officially aimed at targeting ‘terror infrastructure’ in Pakistan, the domestic political narrative around it vilifying Muslims, even when Donald Trump claimed credit for brokering a ceasefire between India and Pakistan—demonstrates the present regime’s disregard for genuine border security and national sovereignty. Rather than addressing legitimate questions—such as the identity and whereabouts of the Pahalgam attack perpetrators—the Modi government has chosen to distract the public with illegal pushbacks, turning fellow citizens into enemies while those tasked with ensuring internal and border security remain unaccountable.

It is time we raise our voice against this illegal campaign of Push Back by the Modi regime, and demand an immediate halt to all pushbacks; free legal aid and compensation for those who were forcibly deported; and that no one, including those declared as ‘Foreign Nationals’ by Assam’s disputed Foreigners’ Tribunals, be forcibly deported without proper verification of identity and residence by Bangladeshi authorities. ■

## **Raja Ram Singh Demands Action Against Maharashtra Police on Forced Deportation**

CPI(ML) MP Raja Ram Singh has written to Union Home Minister Amit Shah demanding immediate action against Maharashtra Police officials allegedly involved in the illegal deportation of Indian citizens to Bangladesh.

In a letter dated 17 June 2025, Raja Ram Singh highlighted the case of four Indian daily wage workers who were reportedly picked up in Maharashtra and forcibly deported across the border solely on the basis of their identity, without any due legal process. He described the act as a serious violation of constitutional rights and a dangerous precedent undermining the rule of law. Citing reports published in *The Hindu* (15 June 2025) and *Indian Express* (16 June 2025), Singh warned that such actions threaten the fundamental rights of Indian citizens. He condemned the targeting of marginalised communities and stressed that identity-based persecution by state forces must not be tolerated.

The CPI(ML) MP urged the Home Ministry to take strict action against the responsible police personnel and to issue clear directives to all police departments to prevent such incidents. He called for immediate steps to protect Indian citizens from harassment and discrimination based on identity.

He further stressed that urgent action is necessary to safeguard the constitutional dignity and rights of all citizens. ■

# Labour Codes: Support and Intensify the Working Class Resistance against Anti-Worker Labour Codes

▲ V. SHANKAR

**T**he proposed all India strike on 20 May against the implementation of Labour Codes was postponed to 9 July because of adverse conditions that arose out of Pahalgam terror attack and Modi's war with Pakistan. But, undeterred by the war climate, Modi government chose to implement Labour Codes through backdoor methods.

BJP led state governments have already removed more than 80 percent of companies and workers out of the purview of labour laws by increasing threshold limit of workers strength from 100 to 300 workers and by increasing working hours. Rules and other procedures are already formulated to implement Codes in a backdoor method.

Instead of officially enforcing Labour Codes passed by the Parliament around 5 years back, Modi led BJP government has chosen to implement it in phases based on threshold limit and based on sectors through executive orders bypassing the Parliament.

Recently, the labour ministry of the Government of India has instructed all state governments to increase working hours. Based on those instructions, in the guise of flexibility, the Congress led Karnataka government has proposed amendments vide the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2025 which will significantly impact the rights of workers. The amendment permits regular working hours to be

increased from 9 hours to 10 hours, and total daily hours including overtime to be increased from 10 hours to 12 hours. The total overtime hours over a period of 3 continuous months will be increased from 50 hours to 144 hours. The Congress led Karnataka state government has not undone many anti-worker amendments and measures of its predecessor, the BJP.

When such a pro-corporate amendment was introduced by the DMK, the opposition ruled state government of Tamil Nadu, workers and unions organized major struggles and the state government was forced to withdraw the amendment to increase working hours. But the sword is still hanging on the heads of workers. Such stance of the opposition led state governments amply display their pro-corporate character despite opposing the communal character of the union government. This has once again proved that there is an undeclared consensus to serve the corporate class without any ambiguity.

In order to dilute the workers resistance and to have a cushioning effect, the Modi led BJP government is also planning to implement the Labour Codes in phases. The idea is to enforce immediate compliance (by 2026) of new Labour Codes by large scale industries of a strength of 500 workers and more. The phase two is expected to cover industries with a worker's strength of 100 to 500 workers in the year 2027. The factories with a total of less than 100 workers are given a time span of two years, i.e., the year 2028 for

the implementation of new Labour codes. By introducing such a phased implementation with a three year plan from now, the government expects the resistance movement of trade unions to die down due to lack of any pan Indian support from workers cutting across trades and categories. This is the divide and rule policy of Modi to suppress workers movements.

Additionally, they are also looking at implementing it through executive orders and circulars prescribing increased threshold limit of workers strength, increased working hours, restructuring wages structures, ease of compliance for the managements, relieving the employers of the fundamental responsibility providing social security to its own work force, dismantling welfare boards, replacing ESI/PF, etc., with new schemes only with some resemblance but without any real benefits.

The government has already paralysed the welfare benefits of Beedi workers under Beedi workers welfare act. The welfare functions are already halted for more than four years. Lakhs of crores of rupees lying with construction workers welfare board is being diverted to other sectors which was strictly prohibited by the law and also by the Supreme Court. The cess from employers is collected only for select industries like the construction sector which is also being relaxed by reducing the percentage of cess. On the other hand, all welfare boards' beneficiary lists are being integrated with e-shram portal which does not offer any benefit for workers as of now.

The government is refusing to convene the Indian Labour conference for more than 10 years now, which is a tripartite body comprising representatives of the government, employers and employees convened once in a year or two. All major

decisions concerning workers and industries had always been arrived at by taking all stakeholders, including workers, into confidence in the last several decades in the past. But Modi government is refusing to do so. The government is refusing to listen to the genuine concerns of workers including wage loss, job loss and the system of hire and fire in the name of flexibility and ease of doing business. On the other hand, Modi is eager to make life easier for a big loot by the industrialists.

It is in this backdrop, the working class represented by all central trade unions in the country barring BMS has decided to strike work on 9 July 2025. The industrial wheels will come to a grinding halt on 9 July.

Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has also decided to join the strike with their own demand against corporatization and commercialization of agriculture. They have decided to enforce the strike on 9 July by organizing protests in various forms including picketing of government offices in rural areas.

The CTUs and SKM have already held impressive campaigns, including organizing joint conventions at various levels to expose the pro-corporate Modi led BJP government, its anti-worker Labour Codes, privatization, three new criminal laws and its refusal to restore OPS (Old Pension Scheme).

**Make 9 July all India strike a great success! ■**

## ANTI-WORKER: Proposed Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2025

The IT and ITES Democratic Employees Association (IIDEA) has strongly condemned the proposed amendments to the Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments Act, which further erode workers' rights in the IT/ITeS sector.

Despite existing legal provisions mandating regulated working hours and overtime wages, the reality on the ground is starkly different. Workers in the IT/ITeS sector are routinely forced to work excessive overtime without receiving the legally mandated double wages. The situation is even more exploitative in Work-From-Home arrangements, where employees are expected to be on-call round-the-clock, with no enforceable "Right to Disconnect" policy. When workers demand timestamps to claim rightful overtime, they are denied, and their wages are withheld. Multinational corporations like Infosys and Wipro have faced lawsuits in the US for overtime violations, yet in India, worker protections remain woefully inadequate.

While developed nations are moving towards shorter workweeks to uphold worker dignity and productivity, the Indian government is enabling corporations to extract even more labour from employees. India is already ranked by the ILO as the 13th most overworked country in the world, with 51% of the workforce working 49 or more hours per week. The proposed amendments ignore these alarming realities and instead seek to further dilute labour protections.

### Key Concerns with the Proposed Amendments:

The amendment excludes workplaces with fewer than 10 workers from maintaining mandatory registers and displaying notices under Rule 24. This will disproportionately harm IT workers in startups, where labour violations are rampant, and statutory protections are

routinely ignored while continuing exploitation under the guise of 'flexibility'. The claim that the 48-hour work week safeguards workers is a myth. The truth is:

**Physical & Mental Health Crisis:** The ILO (2021) found that long working hours caused 745,000 deaths from stroke and heart disease in 2016 a 29% increase since 2000.

**Declining Employment & AI-Driven Layoffs:** Rising youth unemployment and job cuts due to automation make overwork even more unjustifiable.

**Destruction of Work-Life Balance:** Flexibility is one-sided, leaving workers with unpredictable schedules that disrupt family life. Also recent studies show Indian women spend 70 minutes daily on childcare (vs. 15 minutes for men) and 301 minutes on domestic chores (vs. 98 minutes for men), this disproportionate impact on women workers also cannot be discounted.

**Reduced Productivity:** Stanford research confirms that overwork lowers total output due to fatigue and stress.

**Denial of Basic Labour Rights:** The Karnataka government has already exempted the IT/ITeS sector from the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946, denying workers clear terms of employment. Now, this amendment further weakens transparency, making it easier for employers to evade accountability.

The IIDEA has demanded (a) Withdrawal of these anti-worker amendments that exempt small establishments from maintaining records; (b) Enforce existing labour laws, including overtime payment and working hour limits; (c) Introduce a "Right to Disconnect" policy for WFH employees; and (d) End the IT/ITeS exemption from the Standing Orders Act to ensure job security and fair conditions.

The IIDEA opposes this Bill which is meant to serve the corporate interests at the cost of workers' health, dignity, and rights. Instead, the Karnataka government must immediately consult with trade unions on the above demands along with the demand for a minimum wage of 41,000 with at least 20% increment per year, adequate HRA based on the working location, and full salary transparency for all workers. ■



# Lal Nishan Party's Unification with CPI(ML): Towards a Stronger Communist Movement to Defeat the Fascist Offensive



Unity Conference in Shirampur on 31 May | Photo: Liberation Multimedia Desk

**T**o defeat the growing fascist offensive, India today urgently needs a stronger presence and role of the Left. The merger of the Lal Nishan Party of Maharashtra with the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist), announced at a unity conference in Shirampur on 31 May, marks an encouraging step in this direction. This unification brings together two great legacies of India's communist movement in a state which has historically been the cradle of the quest for social equality. Maharashtra also happens to be the ideological fountainhead of Indian fascism and every advance of the communist movement in Maharashtra today has great value. The unification of LNP and CPI(ML) therefore evokes a lot of hope in the centenary year of India's organised communist movement.

The genesis of the LNP in Maharashtra lay in the debate within the communist movement over the communist approach during the 1942

Quit India movement. The movement had emerged from Maharashtra and galvanised the entire country, triggering a powerful mass rebellion and even leading to the formation of a few parallel governments including one in Satara in Maharashtra. The founders of the LNP parted ways with the CPI, called for a vigorous combination of the anti-fascist international task and the anti-colonial national imperative and began to act under the banner of Navjeevan Sanghatana. While organisationally parting ways with the CPI, the Navjeevan Sanghatana considered itself as an integral part of the Indian communist movement and acted accordingly with exemplary commitment, developing strong pockets of influence among workers and peasants, especially the rural poor, in many parts of Maharashtra.

The late 1930s and early 1940s also saw the rise of Ambedkar as a powerful political voice of the social justice and workers' rights cause. In

1936 Ambedkar came out with his clarion call of Annihilation of Caste and formed the Independent Labour Party which declared Brahmanism and capitalism as its twin targets. This paved the way for a short-lived but profoundly significant phase of close cooperation between the communist movement and Ambedkar, a phase marked by encouraging signs of an organic growth of worker-peasant unity and the shaping of progressive legislations for the working class. Unfortunately this phase did not last long and by the late 1940s and early 1950s, the two streams had moved apart amidst considerable bitterness. The LNP represented the only communist section that campaigned actively for Ambedkar in the two elections he contested and lost in 1952 and 1954 and in getting him elected to the Rajya Sabha in 1954 after his defeat in the by-poll.

In the subsequent years, the LNP remained a significant component of the Sanyukta

Maharashtra movement and an ally of the Republican Party of India, the last party to have been launched by Babasaheb Ambedkar. A contingent of eight leaders from the LNP stream - Comrades Datta Deshmukh, Bhai Sattha, VN Patil, Santaram Patil, Nagnath Naikwadi, Bapusaheb Bhapkar, Jaisingh Mali and Dongar Rama - won the Assembly elections in 1957. The party led a series of struggles for the welfare and rights of the working people in rural Maharashtra and won victories in struggles for land redistribution and wage increase as well as securing employment guarantee legislation in the wake of severe drought in the state in the 1970s.

The 1970s and 1980s injected new energy in the LNP movement following the party's close interaction with the Dalit Panthers and the 'Magova' group (a group of young Marxist intellectuals and activists active in the first half of 1970s which brought out a Marxist monthly in Marathi named 'Magova' meaning search or investigation). Comrades Ashok Manohar and Mukta Manohar, who were part of the Magova group, joined the LNP and brought in new political and social dynamism in the trade union movement. The LNP also forged close unity with the militant trade union struggles led by Dr Datta

Samant, especially the historic textile strike that began on 18 January 1982. In 1984 Samant won the Lok Sabha elections from Mumbai South Central defeating the Congress and the BJP - a remarkable display of workers' power in an election swept by the Congress after the assassination of Indira Gandhi and in which the BJP could secure only two seats.

Meanwhile, in Bihar the revolutionary peasant movement led by the CPI(ML) powered a remarkable electoral assertion of the landless rural poor under the banner of the Indian People's Front. In the 1989 Lok Sabha elections, the anti-feudal struggle broke the feudal-criminal stranglehold on the election process and Comrade Rameshwar Prasad won from Ara in his first ever electoral contest. More victories followed in the 1990 Assembly elections and the massive "Dam Bandho Kam Do" rally in Delhi on 8 October at the call of the IPF attracted the attention of progressive forces across the country.

That was the beginning of the LNP's association with the IPF and CPI(ML) which grew closer over the years. In 1995 Comrades Ashok Manohar and Datta Samant addressed a public rally in Patna along with Comrade Vinod Mishra on the occasion of the third conference

of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions. The assassination of Datta Samant in 1997, the demise of Comrade Nagbhushan Patnaik and Comrade Vinod Mishra in 1998 and the passing of Comrade Ashok Manohar in 2003, came as major blows to our respective organisations, but the cooperation between the two parties continued to expand and has now culminated in this historic unification.

The unification of the Marxist Coordination Committee founded by Comrade AK Roy in 1972 with the CPI(ML) in September 2024 and now the merger of the Lal Nishan Party of Maharashtra have armed the CPI(ML) with greater strength and energy at a time when the constitutional foundation and parliamentary democratic framework of India are facing relentless fascist aggression. At stake today is the very direction of the republic as a secular democracy and the rights of citizens in diverse spheres of life without which we cannot fulfil the promise to make India truly free and democracy really functional. A bigger and stronger CPI(ML) is determined to work wholeheartedly for deeper engagement with every democratic struggle of the people, forging closer unity among the Left and seeking broader understanding with the entire non-BJP political spectrum. ■

## Lal Nishan Party Merges with CPI(ML) Liberation

**A**fter more than three decades of ideological-political proximity and close cooperation, the Lal Nishan Party (LNP) of Maharashtra merged into the CPI(ML) Liberation. The declaration was made in a unity conference held in Shirampur in Ahilyanagar (formerly Ahmadnagar) district Maharashtra on 31st May 2025.

The onslaught of the Hindutva fascist forces on people's lives, livelihoods and dignity after the recent mandate in Maharashtra elections that went in favour of

the BJP despite serious concerns on voter registration and deletion has left the State shaken.

Speaking at the convention, Comrade Uday Bhat, LNP leader and Secretariat Member, said: "Our party has been closely working with CPI(ML) for several years on the working class, students, women and youth fronts. This merger will further strengthen the anti-fascist resistance in the land of Phule and Ambedkar".

Comrade Dipankar, General Secretary of CPI(ML) Liberation said: "The legacy of the LNP is glorious. Maharashtra was a big centre of the freedom movement. And stood witness to the energetic communist

► *Continued on Next Page 22*

# Comrade Ashok Manohar, ‘Magova’, and Me

▲ MUKTA MANOHAR

**W**e entered through two entrances that led to the hall where the historic ‘Unity conference of Lal Nishan and CPI(ML)’ was organized. On 30th May these entrances were not ordinary; named after Comrade Bhaskarrao Jadhav and Comrade Madhukarrao Katre. Both were former presidents of the Lal Nishan Party. They strived to organize the rural poor for a voice, dignity and a sense of justice. Comrade Bhaskarrao Jadhav — continues to live through his revolutionary songs while Comrade Katre, is remembered for his tireless organisation of sugar factory workers.

After crossing the open area covered with large, meaningful posters, I stepped into the main hall — and was deeply moved by the atmosphere. The hall, with a seating capacity of 800, was almost full — primarily with rural party supporters from nearby and distant parts of Maharashtra. The eagerness on their faces reflected their hopes and expectations from the leaders of both parties gathered there.

At the center of a long banner were smiling photos of Comrade Ashok Manohar and Comrade Swapna Mukherjee, with images of departed leaders from both parties — a powerful reminder that today’s leadership stands on the shoulders of those who dedicated their lives to revolutionary work. The stage was named in honour of these two comrades — the Comrade Ashok Manohar and Comrade Swapna Mukherjee Manch.

As Ashok’s wife and comrade, I

was profoundly moved on this day of merger. The seed of this dream — like those seen and nurtured by countless known and unknown comrades — had been sown by him many years ago. A dream of building a world that was more just, humane, and in harmony with nature. Ashok firmly believed that such a transformation could only be achieved through a proper revolutionary Communist Party.

Though he became involved in the left movement early in life, he joined the Lal Nishan Party after 1976. He carried forward the ideological legacy of a group known as Magova.

## What was Magova?

The 1960s were times of global turmoil — often referred to as the “Swinging Sixties.” In 1968, France witnessed massive uprisings by students and workers. These events were closely studied by a group of students at IIT Powai in Mumbai. From classical music, literature, and painting, their conversations gradually shifted to deeper socio-political questions: Why poverty? Why so much inequality? What is the role of a worker?

They examined with intense seriousness, the Vietnam anti-war movement, the Hippie movement, Beatles music, student revolts, labour strikes, and civil rights struggles etc. Young minds from TIFR (Tata Institute of Fundamental Research) in Mumbai also joined the dialogue.

This led to the formation of a left-leaning group — Magova — with a clear and deepening understanding of Marxist thought. The word Magova means “to review in depth.”

During vacations, they shared their insights with youths in their hometowns in Maharashtra. Over time, a meaningful, ideologically rooted group came together. According to this group, all major contemporary Communist parties in India had committed serious errors. Many important aspects of social and other struggles had been ignored by them. Magova believed that these gaps needed to be addressed within a new framework.

## Magova’s Involvement in the Bhil Adivasi Movement, Shahada

In 1971, during a severe drought, Shahada and Taloda talukas in Dhule district witnessed a critical incident.

The background was — a man named Vishram Hari Patil had received 500 acres of land from the government in 1930. An American-trained agriculturalist, he developed a large farm estate known as “Patilwadi.” His son, Jagannath, later managed the land, employing around 45 bonded laborers (saldars) and other workers.

During the drought, the Patils denied these saldars their usual grain allowance. This sparked serious unrest. A tribal singer named Ambarsing Surattvanti took the lead. He planned to open the Patil’s warehouse and distribute grain to the hungry. However, the plan was leaked. Though the group initially managed to access the grain, they were violently attacked on their return. One Adivasi was killed, and many were arrested.

Vinoba Bhave’s Sarvodaya

movement and the Gram Swarajya Samiti brought attention to the incident. The periodical Manus also covered it in detail.

Moved by these events, young activists from the Magova group, including Ashok, went to Shahada to investigate and support the Adivasi community. Ashok became a full-time organizer with the newly formed Shramik Sanghatana.

At that time, Ashok had just begun co-running a factory and had the chance to become an industrialist. But he gave it up to dedicate his life to activism. Though his family was initially distressed, he had open conversations with them. Eventually, they understood. Two of his sisters joined the women's movement, and one of his brothers later worked full time with Baba Amte.

When I first met the young Ashok Manohar, the Magova group had just dissolved. But I came to know him as a passionate and committed political activist. I had always believed that my life partner should be someone who thought differently and lived with conviction. During this search, I met Ashok — right at the Magova office in Pune.

## Ashok's Personal Background

Hailing from a traditional Brahmin family in Pune, his parents were religious but not dogmatic. While studying at SP College, he and a group of friends formed a group to protect democracy. At that time, they were overwhelmed by the anti-communist propaganda and viewed communism as a threat to democracy. But this prompted a self-reflective question: How can one criticize communist ideology without understanding it? So, they invited the Marxist thinker V.Y. Kolhatkar to deliver a talk at the college. Some students strongly opposed the idea

and created chaos during the event. In the end, Ashok and a few others had to escort Kolhatkar to safety without letting him speak.

This incident triggered a change in Ashok. He began reading Marxist literature on his own. It was this intellectual journey that eventually brought him into contact with Sudhir Bedekar and the Magova group.

## Ashok During the Emergency (1975)

During the 1975 Emergency, Ashok went underground and began organizing in Pune's industrial sector. Faced with two options — academic research or direct activism — he chose the latter and began working with Comrade A.D. Bhosale, a respected labour leader and member of the Lal Nishan Party. Though Ashok's background differed from that of the Lal Nishan Party's, they agreed on key principles: no factionalism, complete openness, and integrity in political work. Thus began Ashok's crucial contribution to Pune's labour movement.

Now, Ashok got an opportunity to work in a new environment. In fact, it would be more accurate to say that he earned this opportunity thoughtfully. A new industrial world was taking shape in Pune — factories and manufacturing units. Bajaj Auto, TELCO, David Brown, Formica, Philips, PMT Tools — and the small-scale industries emerging in Bhosari. Various factories were also being set up along Nagar Road.

Getting the chance to work among industrial workers — the very section of society that, according to Karl Marx, truly has the potential to bring about change — was something Ashok found deeply fulfilling. He believed that seeing the working class rise in a developing country like India was a meaningful experience.



*Com. Ashok Manohar was a leading voice of the working class and General Secretary of LNP, remembered for his tireless dedication to the movement. | Photo: CPIML Photo Archives*

He remained consistently active among the workers. They were young, and Ashok too was young. Making friends came naturally to him, and because of this quality, he blended well with the workers. His first real involvement in industrial labor struggles began at the David Brown company. The fight for wage increase lasted a long time, and during this movement, workers faced police batons — Ashok too was beaten at that time. Four workers had been victimised, who started working in trade unions as full time activists.

He started study circles for young workers in the Balamal chawls of Pimpri and in Morwadi. Through these study groups, he would help workers understand the full process of production and assess how much they really knew about it.

Often, the owners of the chawls built for workers would collude with factory owners. The young workers, mostly from the Konkan region and western Maharashtra — Satara, Kolhapur — had usually passed out from ITIs (Industrial Training Institutes). Ashok kept notes of such detailed realities of workers' lives.

He would explain in simple terms how companies prepared balance sheets, how they hid key



details, and how to uncover the hidden exploitation of labour in every minute of hard work. He analysed several major workers' struggles — such as the TELCO workers' agitation and the first instance of police firing at Bajaj company in Pune. He also wrote some booklets on these topics.

At the level of trade unions, he encouraged unity marches and collective action. Throughout these processes, he regularly engaged in deep political and ideological discussions with Comrade A.D. Bhosale.

As I was in front of photographs of Comrade Ashok and Swapan ji I remembered the last meeting they had together in Pune for the AICCTU meeting. Taking a pause here, I have travelled back.

## And a New Journey in My Life Also Began

After registering our marriage, Ashok and I began living together at his home. Perhaps his father hoped that Ashok too would eventually take up a job and lead a conventional life after marriage. But when he realized that I, too, was not someone who would fit into that mold, he didn't express anger or disapproval.

Ashok's mother was extremely affectionate. Being the youngest son, he was especially dear to her. She never pressured me to follow any traditional customs expected of a newlywed woman. On the contrary, she often said, "What our generation couldn't do, you have the chance to do."

When it came to my own marriage, I had taken a firm stand — and it led to many debates and disagreements at my parental home. My father was influenced by RSS ideology. He worked in government service and was frequently transferred. His views



*Mukta Manohar with union members holding a protest | Photo: Special Arrangement*

about life values and beliefs were somewhat muddled. He had three daughters, but he never expressed disappointment about not having a son.

However, my elder sister's inter-caste marriage caused him social backlash, and this affected him deeply. As for me, I rebelled even more strongly regarding marriage. I declared firmly that I would not take part in the traditional practice of being "shown" for a match.

When we were children, he had encouraged us to read progressive literature. He had us read the novel Pan Lakshat Kon Gheto and Kalyanche Nishwas, a collection of progressive short stories. As a child, I had been strongly drawn to scientific thinking. That's why I wanted a partner who would live differently, unconventionally. Ashok opened up that horizon for me.

Gradually, I came into contact with many eminent activists who had dedicated their entire lives to a cause of the people. I developed a close relationship with Comrade Leelatai Bhosale. I also came to know Dr. Sulabha Brahme, Dr. Kumud Pore, and several others who had once been active in the Magova group — like Dr. Anant Phadke, Dr. Bharat Patankar, Sudhir Bedekar, and Suhas Paranjape. These individuals soon became good friends, and they began conducting study circles for us.

I had made it clear from the

very beginning — even during my first meetings with Ashok — that I wouldn't accept Marxism just because he believed in it. I was particularly aware of issues concerning women's freedom and equality. Through my interactions with these people, I was introduced to a more theoretical and analytical understanding of the concept of equality.

It was through this process that I came to deeply appreciate Maharashtra's progressive legacy — the ideas of Mahatma Jyotirao Phule, Krantijyoti Savitribai Phule, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, and Shahu Maharaj. I started understanding how to bring these ideals before the working class and how to carry forward their efforts in the context of changing times.

This ideological churning later proved very helpful when I began working with the Pune Municipal Corporation Workers' Union.

Becoming part of the process of social change meant understanding the lives of workers, labourers, and the oppressed, especially Dalits and Adivasis. Through our involvement in Shahada, we became part of the Adivasi movement there. The issues faced by Adivasi women and the exploitation they endured began to feel like my own.

At that time, Pune was emerging as a new industrial hub. Young labourers from all over Maharashtra were migrating to the city. They lived in one-room tenements in chawls,

facing numerous difficulties — and all of this became visible to us as part of the larger struggle.

I began to understand the exploitation of workers in factories — how every moment of their labour was calculated for profit, the production processes, and the companies' balance sheets. We analysed these in detail during various labour struggles.

In our office — and even at home — we were constantly engaged in discussions with friends about labour struggles in Pune.

Together with Dr. Bharat Patankar and Gail Omvedt, we formed a commune of sorts. Eventually, due to the strain of frequent visits and discussions at home, we decided to live together with Bharat and Gail. Many of our friends came to stay there too, and it became a vibrant community.

Bharat Patankar had once worked extensively with the mill

workers in Mumbai, in collaboration with the Lal Nishan Party. He was also an active Magova member. After Magova was dissolved, he, along with some other activists founded the Shramik Mukti Dal.

I remained active in the women's movement and organizations, but there was a strong inner urge to work with labour unions as well. Eventually, I got the opportunity to work with the Municipal Workers' Union.

But in a time of serious social and political challenge — on 31st July 2003, Ashok suddenly passed away due to a heart attack.

Ashok had very strong convictions about what a comrade should be. He often quoted Lenin and Marx in this context: "The heart of a revolutionary must be an ocean of emotion, and the mind a laboratory of ideas." Or "All theories are gray, but life is green." That's how he lived — passionately and fully.

Even though he's gone, his sensitivity, his deep empathy for others, and his unwavering commitment to the working class — these remain the foundations I continue to live by.

That's why this Unity conference of the Lal Nishan Party and the CPI(ML) Liberation evoked so many memories. It felt like a day that brought alive old dreams — and opened up a new, wider sky for the realization of new ideas for equality and transformation.

By now, the public meeting had begun. Leaders and activists from the Lal Nishan Party and CPI(ML) Liberation were speaking. The crowd was eager to listen — and so was I.

(The author is an activist, trade union leader, and writer, with a long association with the Pune Municipal Corporation Employees Union and the central committee of the Lal Nishan Party.) ■

## ► Lal Nishan Party Merges with ... (from Page 18)

participation in the Quit India Movement of 1942. After disagreements with the CPI, LNP was formed with the belief that the movement for people's rights should've been further strengthened during the freedom movement.

This was also the legacy of Naxalbari, Telangana and Tehbhaga, which is what brought LNP close to us. It is this legacy that we will re-energise to fight the RSS-BJP. If Hindutva was born in Maharashtra, so was Babasaheb Ambedkar. The historic farmers and workers struggles of Maharashtra will show us the way forward in defeating the fascist forces."

Comrade Rajaram Singh, CPI(ML) MP and General Secretary of All India Kisan Mahasabha said: "Maharashtra has been the centre for Ambedkar and Phule as well as the communist movement. The farmers movement has been inspirational for the entire country. But it has also seen the maximum number of farmers suicides due to corporate plunder." On the occasion, a booklet in Marathi — 'Fascist Hallya Viruddh Ek Juticha Pratikar Sanghatith Kara' — on the anti-fascist writings of Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya was released.

A 36-member conference preparatory committee with a 12-member steering committee will now work

towards the state conference of CPI(ML) in Maharashtra by the end of the year.

Comrades Shashi Yadav, CPI(ML) PB Member and MLC in Bihar Vidhan Parishad, Shankar, PB Member and AICCTU National President, Meena Tiwari, CPI(ML) PB Member and AIPWA General Secretary, Dharendra Jha, CPI(ML) PB Member and AIARLA General Secretary, Kunal, CPI(ML) PB Member and Bihar State Secretary, Manoj Bhakt, CPI(ML) PB Member and Jharkhand State Secretary, Haldar Mahto, CPI(ML) PB Member, Ravi Rai, CPI(ML) PB Member and Delhi State Secretary, Neha, National President AISA, and others were present on the occasion.

Also present were LNP Secretariat Members Comrade Balasaheb Surude, Comrade Vijay Kulkarni, Comrade Atul Dighe, Comrade Uddhav Shinde, Comrade Medha Thatte, Comrade Mukta Manohar, Comrade Jeevan Surude, and Comrade Rajendra Bavke. Central Committee Members Comrade Madina Shaikh, Comrade Sharad Sansare, Comrade Madhukar Narsinge, Comrade Vikas Alawani, Comrade Dhondiba Kumbhar, Comrade Anant Waykar, and Comrade Shantaram Patil also participated in the convention. ■

# “No One Lives in Slums Out of Choice”: Testimonies of Displaced People in Delhi

▲ AKASH BHATTACHARYA

**A**s soon as the BJP government took power in the Delhi state, demolitions in slums and informal settlement have picked up. In the last few weeks, displaced people of Wazirpur took out a march, vowing to fight the bulldozers if they are deployed again in Wazirpur. Elsewhere, in Bhoomiheen Camp (Kalkaji), several opposition leaders were detained for protesting the demolition orders. The sword of demolition hangs over Okhla too.

In 2022 and 2023 it was Mehrauli, Tughlakabad, Vasant Vihar, Batla House and Chhattarpur. This time it's Kalkaji, Okhla, Wazirpur. In between, Yamuna and Chilla floodplains. People lost homes everywhere - a generational set-back for many.

In response, the Left parties have jointly initiated a Peoples' Movement for Housing Rights. This is not just about housing rights in fact. This is a fight for equal citizenship.

The residents of “illegal colonies” constitute 40% of Delhi - the bulk of Delhi's informal workforce. These are construction workers, sanitation workers, domestic workers, gig workers, street hawkers - people whose labour sustains the other 60%.

They did not start living in informal colonies by choice. Low salaries and precarious employment forced them into these habitations. The government gave them voter cards, Aadhar cards and all other citizenship documents to extract their labour and votes, but is denying them their rights - to life, livelihood, homes, the city and the nation.

Here are some testimonies of

people affected by demolitions in Wazirpur and Kalkaji, which tell their stories - of exclusion, inequality and state brutality.

**Ameena (Wazirpur):** I have been here since my childhood. My mother worked here - she brought me when I was 2 years old. And they just came and demolished these homes. There was no prior information about the exact date and time of the demolitions. It was all very abrupt. Now all of us are out on the streets, with no water and no electricity. The little kids are sleeping on the streets. The government should give us an alternate accommodation, or at least pay some compensation.

I am originally from Uttar Pradesh - from Firozabad. I have been here for more than 30 years. I used to work in the nearby factory, then I worked as a cook, and then in a parlour. We are all workers here. What shall we do now? Where shall we go? Even if the government gives us 20-30-yard plots, that is enough. But they are not giving us anything, only taking away whatever little we have.

If we protest, the police threaten to put us in jail. They tell us that they will get female police to crush us. They say that they are only following orders. But where shall we go? Modi has promised Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makaan but where are our houses? The entire area has been flattened. Rekha Gupta has gone back on her promises. The area looks like a crematorium now. She claims to have laid out a budget of lakhs for jhuggi folks. Are we not part of that?

We have voter cards, Aadhar cards, electricity bill - all on this

address. If we were illegal residents, why were we issued those cards? And if we were issued those documents, how can the government call us illegal residents?

**Seeta Devi (Wazirpur):** I have lived here for over 20 years. I am from Bihar and came here for work. That is when I bought this Jhuggi. I used to work in the factory. The contractor was evil; he would not keep us in one employment for more than 6 months. Anyway, after I got injured, I switched to working as domestic worker.

We have lived here for so long; all of us. How can they call us illegal residents? I have ration card, voter card, Aadhar card, all on this address. They cannot chase us away like this. Where will we go now? I feel very depressed looking at the debris of houses. They did not let us take anything. Everything got buried under the debris. What happened to the Jahan Jhuggi Wahin Makan promise?

More demolitions are scheduled. This whole area will get flattened. Where to go now? We are all very bothered about what will happen to all of us.

**Resident of Bhoomiheen Camp, Kalkaji\*:** We were not living on a canal or a flyover. We were not obstructing anyone. Why are our homes gone then? I have no name. All my documents have been buried in the debris. Without any papers, who am I? How does my name matter? My college books have been buried as well. They came at 3 am to demolish. We were all asleep. Which government activity happens at 3 am? Next morning at 10 am there was a hearing at the Division Bench and they were scared we would get a stay; that is why they came at 3 am to demolish. Rekha Gupta is not ending poverty, but chasing away the poor.

(\*Name has been withheld on request) ■

## Bulldozer Raj Will Not Be Tolerated: CPIML Leads Resistance Against Forced Evictions in Wazirpur



Protest in Wazirpur. | Photo: Liberation Multimedia Desk

A massive people's protest is brewing in Wazirpur, Delhi, against the ongoing demolition drive by railway authorities, who have bulldozed nearly 100 homes without rehabilitation or compensation. The CPI(ML) has been at the forefront of resisting this brutal displacement and bulldozer raj (regime).

On 2 June, the Railway administration demolished approximately 100 jhuggis in Delhi's Wazirpur area, rendering hundreds of families homeless under the blistering summer heat. In response, CPI(ML) held a jan sabha (public meeting) in Wazirpur on 7 June with the participation of the displaced families. The party strongly condemned the fresh notices issued by the Railway administration for further demolitions and declared that the evictions would be resisted. Raising the slogan "Bulldozer raj nahin chalega! Wazirpur mein bina punarvaas vishthapan nahin chalega!", CPI(ML) vowed to intensify the struggle in the coming days.

On 9 June, a delegation of Wazirpur residents met with CPI(ML) MP Comrade Sudama Prasad, and submitted a memorandum regarding the evictions. He assured them he would raise the issue both with the government and in upcoming meetings of the Railway Committee.

The resistance reached the streets again on 10 June, with a large protest rally led by the red flag of CPI(ML). Residents marched through Wazirpur, demanding a halt to the demolitions and calling for dignified resettlement. "We set out to save our homes — come walk with us," was the rallying cry.

On June 10, CPI(ML) MP Sudama Prasad, wrote a letter to the Chairperson of the Parliamentary Standing Committee on Railways, strongly condemning the action as "a gross violation of justice and constitutional values." He pointed out that the demolitions, carried out during peak summer, left families — including children and the elderly — exposed to unbearable heat without shelter, water or electricity. ■

## Large-scale Eviction Drives of Indigenous and Tribal People in Many Districts of Assam

The Karbi Anglong Kisan Shramik Sabha and AIARLA have sent a memorandum to the Governor of Assam on 19 June 2025 demanding immediate stop to the ongoing evictions in many districts and rehabilitation of those evicted.

The BJP government in Assam has been carrying out large-scale eviction drives in various districts of the state, including Karbi Anglong, Dima Hasao, Kamrup (Rural), Kokrajhar and Goalpara. This has created a sense of uncertainty and fear among the people. Longkiram Tokbi and Bikram Singh Terang, President and General Secretary respectively of Karbi Anglong Kissan Shramik Sabha, and Gobin Tokbi, National Vice President of AIARLA have in a statement said that there are two patterns clearly seen in these eviction drives.

In Karbi Anglong and Dima Hasao districts, which are protected under the Sixth Schedule of Indian Constitution, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council have decided to allot 18,000 bighas of land to APDCL for solar projects, 4,000 acres of land for compressed biogas projects to Reliance group and 400 bighas of land for establishing Sainik School. At Umrangso under Dima Hasao Autonomous District Council area, 9,000 bighas of land have been allotted to Adani group for setting up a mega cement factory.

These decisions will lead to the massive displacement of poor indigenous people and will gradually destroy land rights and traditional practices of land management of tribal people protected under the Sixth Schedule. Regrettably, the Karbi Anglong Autonomous Council, which is responsible and accountable for protecting land rights of indigenous people, have failed to take a strong stance against these decisions.

They also demanded a decision to allot land to Adani group for a solar project at Bashbari of Pahartijhora in Kokrajhar district without conducting any public hearing should be cancelled. The eviction drive in Hachila Beel area of Goalpara district, where Bengali speaking Muslims (who are Indian nationals) are being evicted without any rehabilitation plan, is a matter of great concern and immediate action to provide rehabilitation to the evicted people and to ensure that such incidents do not happen in the future. ■



# Immigrants in the US Facing Daily Terror

▲ TAMARAI



An anti-Trump protest in Burlington, Vermont on January 20, 2025. | Photo: Ellerie, Wikimedia Commons

**T**he United States (US) is currently holding close to 50,000 immigrants in despicable detention centers for being in the country without visas. They are referred to as undocumented or unauthorized immigrants. There are currently 11 to 12 million undocumented immigrants in the US, out of which about 8.5 million are workers.

Stephen Miller, Homeland Security Advisor to the Trump Administration helped the government in preparing the notorious travel ban during the first Trump presidency in 2017. An executive order signed on January 27, 2017, prevented citizens from 7 majority Muslim countries from entering the US for 90 days separating families and causing enormous distress. In 2023 speaking to the New York Times, as Trump's advisor on immigration, he said "Any activists who doubt President Trump's resolve in the slightest are making a drastic error: Trump will unleash the vast arsenal of federal powers to implement the most spectacular migration crackdown."

Miller is only one of the powerful representatives of the vicious anti-immigrant, anti-poor, most reactionary wing of the ruling class who are in power in the US. True to those words he uttered, the Trump administration since being elected to power has been wreaking havoc on hard working immigrants across the country. Again in June this year another travel ban has gone into effect which will affect 12 countries, at least half of those with a majority Muslim population.

## Workers Creating Wealth, Facing Terror

On June 6 in Los Angeles (LA), California, the US Department of Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) sent several agents to carry out raids in the Fashion District where largely immigrant workers from Guatemala, Mexico, Ukraine, Spain and China work long hours and often for less than minimum wages. LA is the hub of the garment manufacturing centers in the US. Center for Public Integrity reports that 42% of garment workers

in the US are immigrants.

A total of 2 dozen workers have been arrested from Ambiance Apparel Warehouse. The Director of Garment Workers Center in LA, Marissa Nuncio in an interview with In These Times said "... what we know to be commonplace in the garment industry is that when a worker complains about their rights, their immigration status is used against them ..."

More than 300 immigrants in California without documents have been arrested in the last few days and many of them have already been deported. Jorge-Mario Cabrera, a spokesman for CHIRLA, the Coalition for Humane Immigrant Rights speaking to the Washington Post said "... their emergency line had received more than 120 calls from distraught families ..."

Huge protests broke out after the raid on June 6, thousands of people in civil rights organizations, unions, immigrant rights groups, and concerned citizens came out in support of the detained immigrants. Trump called in the National Guard to "protect" LA from "rioters" using highly inflammatory language straight out of an authoritarian ruler's handbook. National guard is an active militia in the US under the control of both the government in the state (which in California is presently controlled by Democrats) and the federal government. This has led to the Democratic government in California filing cases against the federal government.

In addition 700 Marines were deployed to put down the protests, this division of Marines has been deployed in foreign countries, like Afghanistan, where American imperialism has carried out huge crimes against humanity for nearly half a century.

David Huerta, President of the

Service Employees International Union (SEIU), California, which represents janitors, security officers and other workers who was observing the raids was arrested, pushed to the ground and hospitalized for injuries. After many union members and other activists condemned and protested over his arrest, he was released. He said " "Hard-working people, and members of our family and our community, are being treated like criminals....he said in Spanish, ..."es de nuestra comunidad, pero es de todos." (This fight is our community's, but it belongs to everyone)

In a Democracy Now show, Pablo Alvarado, co-executive director of National Day Labor Organizing Network spoke about the anguish of immigrant workers who go for work in the morning and don't know if they will return in the evening. He talked about the 40% immigrant workforce in the US construction industry, 50 % of these workers are undocumented and are indispensable for the economy. In California, there were devastating wildfires in January 2025, the immigrant workers worked nonstop to remove the debris and rebuild homes. He talked about the protests that have broken out in LA and in other cities, which have been supported by many communities in solidarity with the detained immigrants. More than 500 people have been arrested since the raids began.

On June 14, 2025, Trump celebrated his 79th birthday coinciding with a military parade in Washington, DC, which was also the 250th anniversary of the US army. This extravaganza reminiscent of celebrations for monarchs cost close to 45 million dollars. On the same day, many coalitions in the country organized "No Kings" protests including in LA. Millions of people in the US marched to protest the

attacks against people by Trump and his cabal. People came out to protest the cuts to health care, housing, food assistance programs, they were joined by tens of thousands in the immigrant rights movement. We will, "Crush ICE" was a popular slogan.

## **Students - Challenging Genocide, Facing Abductions**

Mahmoud Khalil, a former student activist from Colombia University in New York, was arrested by ICE in March this year, his case has attracted world wide attention. He was a prominent organizer of protests in 2024 against the ongoing genocide of Palestinians by Israel supported by the US. government. Unlike the thousands of poor immigrants without formal documents, Khalil is a green card holder - "legal resident" and is married to an American citizen. American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) said of his arrest "...obviously intended to intimidate and chill speech....the federal government is claiming the authority to deport people with deep ties to the US and revoke their green cards for advocating positions that the government opposes.."

Rumeysa Ozturk, a Turkish student in Boston was abducted in broad daylight by masked ICE agents, also in March 2025 and spent 45 days in an ICE detention facility before being released in May. Along with 4 others she wrote an opinion piece for Tufts University newspaper where she was a student. The article asked the University to acknowledge Israel's genocide of Palestinians and also demanded that Tufts University divest from companies with ties to Israel. Marco Rubio, the US secretary of state, recently bragged that more than 300 pro-Palestinian supporters student visas were revoked.

Politically active immigrant students opposing the genocide

of Palestinians and students from immigrant communities largely from Mexico, Central and South America are being targeted by ICE. Mafia style kidnappings of young school students who have been in this country since childhood have taken place. 18 year old Marcelo Gomes da Silva who is of Brazilian ethnicity going for his volley ball practice was arrested by ICE officials near Boston in June. He was then detained in a facility and shackled in humiliating conditions, he had to be released after 6 days after huge protests by students and community members.

## **Detention Centers - Disease and Deaths**

Privatization of prisons expanded from policies instituted in the 1980s. About 8% of the incarcerated population in the US - nearly 100,000 people are in private prisons. GEO group and CoreCivic are two prominent billion dollar companies which are profiting enormously from contracts with ICE. GEO group's stock increased by 41% a day after Trump returned to power. The CEO of GEO shamelessly called it an "unprecedented opportunity ... and "this is truly one of the most exciting periods in my career with the company.", he was referring to holding poor immigrants in its detention centers prior to their deportation. The capitalist class has become more brazen in its speech and terror tactics under the present administration.

The National Public Radio has been receiving calls since May about overcrowded detention centers, with lack of food, immigrants sleeping on the floors and not receiving medical treatment. ACLU released a study in 2024 which looked at 52 deaths from 2017-2021 in ICE detention centers, it concluded that 95% of those deaths were preventable.

US imperialism has worked very well with dictators for more than a century. El Salvador's self described "coolest dictator" Nayib Bukele and Trump negotiated a multi-million dollar deal a few months ago for El Salvador to receive prisoners/undocumented immigrants from the US to its notorious prison called CECOT. Under the 1798 Alien Enemies Act, 252 Venezuelan men were forcibly removed and sent to CECOT. The authorities in the US claimed that these men belonged to a dangerous gang with out providing evidence. The CATO institute has reviewed the records of 174 deportees, 42 have no criminal record. In addition 50 of the so called 'illegal immigrants' had entered legally.

## Opposing War at Home and Abroad

On June 14, several organizations in the country including some prominent ones like 505051 which are affiliated with the Democratic party organized nation wide protests. They went under the name "No Kings Protests" and coincided with Trump's birthday celebrations and the military parade in the capital Washington, DC.

There were rallies and actions in 2100 cities and towns with more than 5 million people participating. In LA, where the immigrant raids occurred, in the face of of severe repression and militarization 200,000 people marched. While the Democratic party and its organizations largely focused on Trump's cuts to health care, food assistance programs and other anti people measures, there were socialist parties, anti imperialist/pro-Palestinian organizations, union members, immigrant rights groups, LGBTQI+ organizations who came out in large numbers to oppose the cuts to the working class while simultaneously condemning the ongoing genocide of people in Gaza and the war against immigrants at home. Some of the eye catching signs in addition to CRUSH ICE were "No one is Illegal on Stolen Land" and "Immigrant Rights are Workers Rights".

Andreina Chavez Alava writes very well in the website Venezuelanalysis, "Venezuelan migration has never been truly a choice, it is a question of survival ... particularly since 2017, when the US imposed crippling sanctions on the oil industry, strangling the country's

main source of income"... "It's time to decolonize the narrative surrounding immigrants in the US. We must advocate for their (immigrants) rights without framing their worth solely around how "essential" or profitable their labor is to capitalism. They have rights simply because they are human beings."

Lenin, in 1913, on the subject of migration of workers to advanced industrial countries wrote, "America heads the list of countries which import workers ... the bourgeoisie incites the workers of one nation against those of another ... to keep them disunited."

The significant number of strong protests against raids and detentions of immigrants and students are indeed very encouraging signs. Ron Gochez, a community organizer with Union Del Barrio who led some of the protests in LA, on Democracy Now show, said, "If we organize ourselves, if we resist, we can defend our communities from ICE terror, from the Border Patrol or from any federal agency ..."

*(Mahmoud Khalil was released on 20 June 2025 by a federal judge from ICE custody in Jena, Louisiana. — Ed/-) ■*

## CPIML MP Slams Modi Govt for Silence Amid US Crackdown on Indian Students

**S**trongly denouncing the silence of the Indian government amid escalating repression on Indian immigrants and students in the United States by President Donald Trump, CPI(ML) Member of Parliament Raja Ram Singh has raised alarm over the "continued assault on India's dignity".

In a letter addressed to Prime Minister Narendra Modi on May 30, CPI(ML) MP highlighted that "the recent instance of the US administration led by President Donald Trump withholding visa interviews for Indian students applying to United States universities is a disturbing trend."

The recent repressive move by the Trump administration targeting foreign students — of which around 28 percent are Indians — comes just months after Indian migrants were handcuffed, shackled, and deported back. Even then, the Indian government had refused to condemn the inhuman act.

"What is worrying is not only the tone and tenor of the

language, which is nothing short of threatening, but the fact that indignity is becoming the grammar of US immigration policy," Singh declared.

Calling attention to the long-standing contributions of Indian students and workers, Raja Ram Singh wrote, "Indian students have historically contributed socially, economically, educationally, and culturally to US universities." He added, "The job market and the US economy have long been bolstered by the hard work and contributions of Indians, especially in the technology sector." Slamming the Indian government's inaction, the MP stated, "What is unfortunate is the lack of response from the Indian government to these continuous threats affecting India's dignity globally and the self-respect of its citizens residing in the US."

He concluded, "The Indian government, to date, has failed to even register a simple protest against these repeated assaults. It is time a strong and unequivocal response is given. I, on behalf of my party, demand that you take immediate action to uphold the dignity of our nation and its citizens." ■

# Amid Massacres in Gaza, Israel Attacks Humanitarian Aid Ship Madleen

**T**he humanitarian ship Madleen, part of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition, was violently intercepted by Israeli forces in international waters on June 9, 2025. On board were 12 unarmed volunteers from around the world, including climate activist Greta Thunberg and French MEP Rima Hassan. The ship was carrying food, medical supplies, and body formula for the people of Gaza.

Their mission was to break the decade-long illegal and inhumane blockade imposed by Israel and deliver life-saving aid to a besieged population deliberately starved by Israel's genocidal war on Gaza. Instead, they were met with violence. Volunteers were kidnapped at gunpoint for attempting to bring basic humanitarian relief.

Attacking a civilian humanitarian mission in international waters is a blatant violation of international law, including principles protecting freedom of navigation and the delivery of humanitarian aid during armed conflict. This illegal act is part of Israel's ongoing genocidal policy of collective punishment and siege against the Palestinian people.

In fact, this is not the first such incident. In 2010, Israel attacked the ship Mavi Marmara, killing ten aid workers. Earlier this May, another ship, Handala, also part of the same flotilla, was attacked by an explosive drone near Malta in international waters.

## Hunger Strike by Madleen Volunteers

Following their detention, some volunteers aboard Madleen began a hunger strike in protest against the

conditions of their detention. They demanded immediate access to legal representation, medical care, and assurances that they would not be forcibly deported.

All twelve volunteers aboard Madleen have since been released and deported. Greta Thunberg was flown to Sweden via France; others followed after legal processing. They have pledged to continue advocating for breaking the siege.

## Tunisian Humanitarian Convoy Faces Blockade

In a parallel effort, a land convoy called Soumoud (Steadfastness) set out from Tunisia on June 9, 2025. Organised by civil society groups from the Maghreb region, the convoy included over 1,000 participants, including doctors, lawyers, youth activists, journalists, and a foreign medical team and activists, determined to deliver food, medical equipment, and fuel into Gaza.

The convoy crossed into Libya on June 11 but was stopped near Sirte by forces aligned with Khalifa Haftar, a US- and Western-backed military ruler. As part of efforts to block the Soumoud convoy, Egyptian

authorities also not only closed the Rafah border crossing but also detained and deported several international participants. Among those expelled were European medical volunteers, journalists, and human rights activists who had planned to cross into Gaza to deliver humanitarian aid and document conditions on the ground. After days of negotiations and some participants being detained in Misrata, the convoy was forced to return on June 16.

Although it did not reach Gaza, Soumoud has sent a clear message that international solidarity remains unshaken. The convoy's organisers have vowed to continue until aid can reach Gaza unimpeded.

## Aid Site Massacres Under US Israeli Backed Platform

Amid Israel-US axis's attempt to suppress international attempts to deliver aid to Gaza, more than 500 Palestinians have been killed during 'aid distribution' since the US Israeli backed Gaza Humanitarian Foundation (GHF) assumed control of food operations in the besieged strip. With international aid stuck at Gaza borders, the Israel had been using GHF to push starving population to "aid sites" and then kill them.

On June 16 Israeli troops



*The Madleen before departure. | Photo: Tan Safi, Freedom Flotilla Coalition*





*Palestinians carry a man on a crate after he was shot by Israeli forces during 'aid distribution' near the GHF centre. | Photo: Special Arrangement*

opened fire at a food queue near Rafah, killing 34 and wounding around 200 as tanks and gunfire targeted civilians waiting for aid. That same day a shooting near Khan Yunis killed 59 and wounded 221 as tanks and troops fired on displaced families forming long queues. Earlier in June at least 27 were killed and 184 wounded in a morning shooting near a distribution centre in Rafah. The International Committee of the Red Cross reported that its field hospital received a mass casualty influx and warned that civilians were shot while trying to reach GHF centre.

"People fought over five pallets. They told us to take food, then they fired from every direction," said Mansour Sami Abdi,

a father of four while describing to Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) team about the attack on June 1 near Rafah GHF site. "I ran 200 metres before realising I'd been shot. This isn't aid. It's a lie. Are we supposed to go get food for our kids and die?"

International humanitarian groups like ICRC, MSF and other prominent organisations have condemned and have refused to participate in or endorse the GHF system, with the Red Cross, ICRC and others condemning it as dehumanising, unsafe and ineffective.

These deliberate attacks on international aid, food queues, flour trucks, shelters, and aid workers are not random tragedies. They are

part of a systematic and nefarious strategy by the Netanyahu-Trump axis to weaponise hunger and turn starvation into a tool of war. The aim is not merely to deny Palestinians access to food and medical supplies, but to turn the act of survival itself into a death trap.

## India's Troubling Silence Amid Gaza Crisis

Amid the ongoing genocide and humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza, what is equally alarming is the silence from India. On June 14, 2025, India abstained from voting on a United Nations General Assembly resolution that called for an immediate ceasefire and unhindered humanitarian access to Gaza. The resolution, which was overwhelmingly adopted by 149 countries, was a clear appeal to halt the bloodshed and address the deepening crisis.

India stood out not only as the sole country in South Asia to abstain, but also as the only member of both the BRICS bloc and the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation to do so. This marked India's fourth abstention on Gaza-related ceasefire and humanitarian aid resolutions in recent years. ■

## AISA and Other Student Groups Protest Israeli Assault on Gaza Aid Flotilla

**I**n a blatant act of state repression, Delhi Police detained scores of student protestors on 10 June, even before a peaceful demonstration could begin outside the Israeli Embassy. The protest, organised by AISA and other student groups, was in response to Israel's interception of the "Madleen - Freedom Flotilla", which was carrying humanitarian aid to Gaza.

The students had gathered to demand that the Indian government press Israel to allow the safe passage of the flotilla and ensure the well-being of its crew, who remain under threat from Israeli forces. Instead, protestors were rounded up before the protest could

even begin. Several were detained from metro stations, while cases of "illegal protest" were filed against key organisers, including JNUSU President Comrade Nitish Kumar and AISA Jamia Secretary Comrade Saurabh.

Comrade Nitish stressed the need for international pressure on Israel and called for strengthening the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement. He also denounced the Indian government's complicity in Israel's actions through its deepening ties with the Adani-Israel nexus.

ed the detentions and FIRs, stating that the government is criminalising dissent while shielding a regime responsible for mass starvation and civilian deaths in Gaza. The organisation demanded the immediate withdrawal of all cases and reaffirmed its call to break the siege on Gaza. ■

## People Across India Rally in Solidarity With Palestine, Condemn Genocide and Imperialist Aggression



Protest in Kolkata | Photo: Liberation Multimedia Desk

On 17 June, people across India observed a National Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, in Delhi, Kolkata, Bihar and several other states. The day of action was called and organised jointly by the Communist Party of India (Marxist–Leninist) Liberation (CPI(ML)), Communist Party of India (Marxist) (CPI(M)), Communist Party of India (CPI), All India Forward Bloc (AIFB), and Revolutionary Socialist Party (RSP).

Across the country, the protest demonstrations strongly condemned the genocide and war crimes committed by the Israeli government in Gaza, and denounced the ongoing military aggression across the region, including against Iran, by the Israel–US imperialist axis. Protesters warned that the expansion of this axis represents a grave threat to peace, justice and sovereignty in West Asia.

In Delhi, a united protest at Jantar Mantar saw participants declare unwavering support for the Palestinian people's

struggle for justice, dignity and self-determination. Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary of CPI(ML), said, "India's long-standing anti-colonial and pro-Palestinian position is being abandoned under the Modi regime. This silence in the face of genocide is not neutrality — it is complicity." He urged the people of India to reclaim the country's principled stance in support of liberation struggles and against imperialist domination.

CPI General Secretary D. Raja and CPI(M) General Secretary M. A. Baby also addressed the protest, reaffirming their commitment to the Palestinian cause and demanding an immediate end to all military and security cooperation with Israel.

In Kolkata, a massive rally led by the five Left parties marched from the Lenin statue at Esplanade to the Ho Chi Minh statue at Ho Chi Minh Sarani. Though entirely peaceful, the march was stopped by police at Park Street, where a protest meeting was held. Atanu Chakravarty of CPI(ML) said, "Gaza

is a moral test for the world. India must stand with the oppressed, not with their oppressors." Other speakers included Kartik Pal (CPI(ML) Politburo), Md Salim (CPI(M) State Secretary), Manoj Bhattacharya (RSP General Secretary), Debabrata Roy (AIFB), and leaders of CPI. Protests were also held in Nadia district of West Bengal.

In Bihar, Left parties including CPI(ML), CPI, CPI(M), AIFB and RSP held coordinated protests across the state. In Patna, a march from GPO Golambar culminated in a mass meeting at Buddha Smriti Park. Meena Tiwari, General Secretary of AIPWA, called for global unity against the apartheid state of Israel.

CPI(ML) MLA Mahboob Alam criticised the Indian government for departing from its anti-imperialist legacy and expressed continued solidarity with the Palestinian resistance. CPI(ML) State Secretary Kunal, CPI leaders Gajanfar Nawab and Abhyuday, and others also addressed the gathering. Similar protests took place in Gaya, Nawada, Karakat, and East Champaran.

Protests were also held in Tamil Nadu on June 17, including in Kumbakonam, Nellai, Kanyakumari, and Thoothukudi. In Andhra Pradesh, joint protests took place in Vijayawada, Kakinada, and Anantapur.

In Punjab, demonstrations were held in Mansa, Hoshiarpur and Amritsar. In Uttar Pradesh, coordinated district-level protests registered strong opposition to genocide and apartheid. In Jharkhand, youth and workers gathered in Ranchi to rally in support of the Palestinian people. Assam too saw public meetings and marches demanding an end to Indian complicity and military ties with Israel. ■

# Labour and the Metrics of Citizenship

▲ SAGRIKA RAJORA & AKASH BHATTACHARYA

*(This is an abridged version of the article published in The Leaflet on May 1, 2025 under the same title.)*

The history of the labour movement is grounded in the struggle for equal and dignified citizenship. Far from being confined to the workplace, the demands of workers have long encompassed broader claims to inclusion, recognition, and democratic participation. From the Chartist movement in 19th-century England to the strikes demanding an eight-hour workday which culminated in the May Day, working-class mobilisations have always invoked a vocabulary that transcended mere economic claims, insisting instead on a moral and political reordering of society that acknowledged the worker as a full citizen.

At the heart of the labour movement lies the fundamental struggle over citizenship, not merely as a legal status, but as a lived reality encompassing rights to dignified work, food, education, housing, and identity. In the context of post-colonial India, one observes a persistent gap between constitutional rights and material realities. Across fields as varied as wage structuring, the exclusionary failures of the Public Distribution System ('PDS'), the neoliberal assault on education, the judicialized displacement of urban poor, and the growing regime of surveillance, culminate in the erosion of substantive citizenship rights.

Work is the primary terrain where citizenship is situated. The Constitution, under Article 43 (a Directive Principle of State Policy),

envisions the right to a living wage, a standard that allows not just for bare subsistence, but for conditions of work consistent with human dignity. However, in practice, employers, across all sectors, and more so when the employment is informal, rarely adhere to this vision. Instead, the dominant policy design is to structure wages around the statutory minimum wage, which itself is often set below the threshold of a living wage and is poorly enforced by the State.

Such fragmented structuring leads to a distortion of the "wage" itself, where the fixed component of a worker's salary barely meets survival costs, and the variable portion becomes a tool for disciplining and extracting surplus labour. This makes the worker dependent on the State for food and basic welfare. A State that does not pay well and accord dignity to the workers hardly bothers to provide for the worker's basic needs, making her vulnerable to chronic precarity and their political repression.

Labour movements therefore recognize the need to organize along multiple metrics of citizenship. As neoliberal authoritarian regimes weaponize formal citizenship to exclude and eliminate communities, the labour movements today are looking to generate a mass demand for the substantive fulfilment of state's obligations to its citizens, and connect this to the fight against denial of formal citizenship. Below are some of the metrics of citizenship along which labour movements in India have started to organize, drawing upon a range of long-standing Left-democratic traditions.

## Housing, Food and Education

In the context of Indian rural and urban development policies, the right to adequate housing forms a contested terrain of law, citizenship, and exclusion. The judicial and administrative treatment of slums and informal settlements illustrate how citizenship is often rendered conditional upon legality of occupation and tenure, ignoring the deeper structures of dispossession and precarity.

Policies for housing Economically Weaker Sections ('EWS') and Low-Income Groups ('LIG') remain woefully inadequate in rural and urban India, often relegated to the margins of budgetary priorities. The legal machinery continues to function ambivalently, swinging between constitutional compassion and procedural displacement.

The National Food Security Act ('NFSA'), 2013, mandates that up to 75 percent of India's rural population and 50 percent of the urban population should be covered under a targeted public distribution system (PDS). This means that roughly 67 percent of the national population is entitled to subsidised food grains, which reveals the severe malnutrition among the working classes. On top of that, millions remain excluded due to use of outdated census data.

The Hindutva state de-prioritizes the vital constitutional mandate of bringing about substantive equality through education. The privatisation of public education, facilitated by the National Education Policy ('NEP') 2020 and long-standing structural adjustment policies, not only erodes constitutional guarantees like the Right to Education but also fosters a deeply unequal citizenry. Education, far from being a public good, is increasingly treated as a commodity, its accessibility determined by market logic rather than social justice.

## Climate Change and Public Health

The impact of climate change reproduces the structural inequalities of caste, class, race and gender. Those that contribute the least to climate change – the socially and economically marginalized working-class communities, especially of the Global South – are the worst affected. Inequity and exclusion from basic services like healthcare not only heighten sensitivity to hazards, but also constrain these communities' ability to adapt to climatic changes.

Oxfam India's "Survival of the Richest: The India Supplement" (2023) revealed that the top 30% own more than 90% of the total wealth. In contrast, the bottom 50% of the population (700 million) has around 3% of total wealth. Poor quality of employment is a key factor behind keeping the bottom 50% to 70% where they are at present. As per the International Labour Organization almost 82% of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector, and nearly 90% is informally employed: victims of non-implementation of labour laws and violation of government advisories on disasters such as heatwaves by the employers.

Trade unions in India are beginning to see climate change and its impact as universal concerns that can forge democratic solidarities between the labour movements and other social movements. Climate justice movements are acknowledging the potentiality of the organized power of the working classes in fighting climate change. This bodes well for the earth and for the workers whose labour makes it habitable.

### Majoritarian Exclusions and Surveillance

The Citizenship Amendment Act ('CAA') and the National Register of Citizens ('NRC') tore open the

question of citizenship into the public domain, exposing how belonging in India could be stripped and redrawn along religious and documentary lines. For millions of workers who are migrants, Dalits, Adivasis, Muslims whose lives are already marked by precarity, these moves transformed citizenship from a presumed right into a conditional, fragile status. Workers long marginalised by the State now faced a new threat: the burden of proving identity through an arbitrary and hostile state apparatus.

This assault on citizenship was not confined to Assam or limited to formal paperwork. It revealed a deeper neoliberal project: using surveillance, databases, and documentation as tools to regulate, discipline, and exclude labour. Biometric monitoring at worksites, Aadhaar-linked rationing, exclusionary welfare systems, and digital databases all function as mechanisms of control determining who can work, who can eat, who can belong.

Rising religious majoritarianism is reshaping not only political rights but the very conditions of existence for the working class. The experience of the Assam NRC shows how dangerous this path can be where many people were excluded because of technicalities like name changes after marriage, lack of formal education and mistyped details. Without recognized citizenship, workers risk losing access to welfare schemes, legal protections, reservations, union rights, and even the ability to move freely for work. The NRC framework threatens to create a massive class of stateless labourers, disenfranchised and hyper-exploitable.

### The Struggles Over Citizenship

With the aggravating effects of neoliberalism and Hindutva fascism, constitutional protections have become increasingly stratified.

The working class experiences citizenship not as a guarantee of rights but as a terrain of struggle where even basic legal entitlements (food, shelter, wage, bodily safety) must be fought for as workers operate outside formal citizenship channels, negotiating rights not as a given but as a conditional favour.

As economic liberalisation and precarious employment regimes increasingly destabilise the workplace, the status of the worker is itself under threat. Market dynamics have stripped labour of stability, and in doing so, have begun to erode the very foundation of substantive citizenship for vast sections of the population. Workers are often the first to be displaced, not just from employment but also from social protections, public services, and constitutional guarantees. Hindu majoritarian fascism has added to this erosion of rights by fragmenting the working class along religious lines and adopting policies such as the CAA-NRC-NPR that threaten to render millions of workers stateless.

The overall situation leaves the working classes with little option other than to (re)organize – not just as workers but also as citizens. Unfortunately, suppression and criminalization of dissent are also major problems for workers. The struggles in ITI (Bangalore), Kalawati Saran Hospital (Delhi), Maruti, Samsung and other struggles in the industrial belts, and struggles against eviction and demolitions have all been met with repression. This automatically brings them into a common cause with other democratic movements facing state repression. While this is a crisis, it can also be an opportunity to build shared platforms and broad democratic unity. ■



## Red Flags Rise, Voices for Land Rights Roar in Rayagada

**O**n 18 June 2025, Adivasis of Tela Sikabadi village in Jaredi panchayat under Kolnara block of Rayagada district (Odisha) hoisted the red flag on their ancestral forest land. This powerful assertion of land rights was led by CPI-ML Liberation and Adivasi Sangrasa Morcha (ASM), who stood firmly with the villagers in reclaiming what has belonged to them for generations.

Tela Sikabadi is a tribal-dominated forest village surrounded by hills, home to 80 Adivasi families. For centuries, they have lived on and protected this land. Yet the government continues to deny them legal recognition. Article 5 of the Constitution affirms their claims, but instead of justice, they face



*Adivasis hoist red flag on reclaimed forest land in Rayagada | Photo: Liberation Multimedia Desk*

betrayal. Non-tribal encroachment is increasing, and tribal land is being handed over to outsiders and corporations, while the original inhabitants are pushed aside.

Across Rayagada district, Adivasi villages face the same injustice. On 6 June 2025, ASM staged a protest at the Kolnara Tehsil Office and submitted a 21-point memorandum to the

Chief Minister, demanding justice and recognition of tribal land rights. With no response from the administration, the people took matters into their own hands.

Led by CPI-ML leader and ASM activist Tripathi Gamango and former Sarpanch Anirudh Nishika, the villagers declared that the Adivasi struggle for jal, jungle, zameen will only grow stronger. ■

## Statue of Comrade AK Roy Unveiled in Dhanbad

**C**ommemorating what would have been the 90th birth anniversary of legendary communist leader Comrade AK Roy, comrades in Dhanbad unveiled a life-size statue near the BCCL Central Hospital on 15 June 2025, the place where he had breathed his last.

The occasion included a commemorative meeting at Jagjivan Nagar, cultural performances by students of a local dance academy and an Adivasi troupe, and the flagging off of a 'Mazdoor Sangharsh Sandesh Yatra' in the lead-up to the all-India strike on 9 July against privatisation and the four anti-worker labour codes.

The yatra, flagged off from

the statue site, passed through Jagjivan Nagar, Saraidhela, Randhir Verma Chowk, and Purana Bazar before reaching the Labour Statue at Randhir Verma Square.

Speaking at the event, CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said, "Like Che, Comrade AK Roy's life history also tells us how the communist spirit is not limited by geographical borders or social and cultural boundaries." He recalled that Comrade AK Roy came from a freedom-fighter family in Rajshahi (now in Bangladesh), studied in Kolkata, moved to Sindri as an engineer, and went on to become Dhanbad's most beloved communist leader.

"More power to the inspiring legacy of Comrade AK Roy in today's anti-fascist resistance and in the battle for the rights of the working class and the indigenous people of Jharkhand," Dipankar Bhattacharya said. Polit Bureau members Comrades Anand Mahato, Haldhar Mahato, and Vinod Singh, party MLAs Arup Chatterjee and Chandradev Mahato, farmer leader and former MLA Rajkumar Yadav, veteran JMM MLA Mathura Mahato, CPI(M) Jharkhand secretary Prakash Viplav, veteran communist GK Bakshi, and activist Rekha Mandal were among those who paid tribute.

Comrade AK Roy's younger brother, noted scholar Tapas Roy, and his nephew Yashwant Roy also attended the commemorative events, travelling from Kolkata to participate. ■

## Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha Holds National Meet in Ranchi

**T**he Adivasi Sangharsh Morcha (ASM) held a two-day programme on 8–9 June in Ranchi (Jharkhand) with participation from Adivasi leaders across multiple states, including Jharkhand, Bihar, West Bengal, Assam, Karbi Anglong, Uttar Pradesh, Odisha, Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Tamil Nadu and Karnataka.

On 8th June, a day-long meeting of the ASM National Council was convened, inaugurating with remarks from CPIML General Secretary Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya, who underscored the mounting challenges faced by Adivasi communities and the vital role of ASM in organising resistance. Delegates from participating states presented their respective reports, detailing the struggles and conditions in their regions. The day concluded with the reconstitution of the National Council. Comrade Thirupati Gomango was appointed as the Convenor, while leading Adivasi representatives from each state were inducted as Co-convenors. This interim body will steer ASM's activities until the

organisation's National Conference, now scheduled for September 2026.

The 9th of June, observed as the martyrdom day of legendary Adivasi freedom fighter Birsa Munda, began with tributes to his legacy, followed by a day-long Convention on the present condition of Adivasis in the country. Delegates from various states spoke with conviction on the issues confronting their communities.

In his address, Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya remarked, "Adivasi rights are being continuously violated. In Bastar, water, forest, land and minerals are being handed over to Adani, and those who raise their voice against this face repressive action. The Adivasi community is fighting against this anti-people attitude of the government across the country. The threat to the Constitution has increased, so now is the time to protect democracy and the Constitution through a united fight of all the deprived sections."

Renowned Adivasi leader Dayamani Barla asserted, "Adivasis never compromised with any invader

or exploiter — be it the Mughals or the British. Today, when there is a period of corporate loot and government repression, the tribal people are again on the path of rebellion."

James Herenj, activist and convenor of NREGA Watch in Jharkhand spoke at length on the systematic neglect of the PESA Act and the Forest Rights Act, while activist Siraj Dutt highlighted the militarisation of Adivasi regions and the ensuing repression, calling for an organised struggle to remove military camps from these areas.

A number of important decisions were taken during the Convention. It was resolved that ASM will organise state-level seminars in the third week of July to consolidate Adivasi voices across the country. Furthermore, coordinated protests will be held outside the Governor's residence in each state at the end of August. Several other resolutions were also adopted.

The two-day programme reaffirmed the resolve of the Adivasi communities to unite and intensify their struggle against displacement, exploitation, and state repression. ■

## First State Convention of AP Adivasi Sangham Held in Anakapalli

**T**he Andhra Pradesh Adivasi Sangham held its first state convention in Anakapalli town on May 31, marking a significant step in the tribal rights movement. A mass rally was organised on the town's main road before the convention began. The event was chaired by Com. Rechukatala Simhachalam,

a senior tribal leader from East Godavari.

Speakers included Sri V.S. Krishna of the Human Rights Forum, Com. Bugatha Bangarao of AIARLA, tribal activist Musalayya from Kakinada, PS Ajay Kumar, advisor to the Sangham, and Com. K. Janardhan of CPI (ML) Liberation. V.S. Krishna condemned the state's repressive actions under Operation KAGAR and criticised both central and state governments for criminalising tribal issues.

Ajay Kumar raised the long-pending demand for notifying tribal

areas under the Fifth Schedule, especially in states like Kerala, Tamil Nadu, and West Bengal. Bugatha Bangarao warned that the new TDP-Jana Sena government was promoting a communal agenda and urged tribal communities to resist such divisive politics.

The convention passed eight resolutions and elected a state-level committee to prepare for the organisation's first full state conference. Com. Jakkampudi Raju was unanimously elected as the State Convener to lead the ongoing struggles. ■

## CPI(ML) Slams BJP-Nitish Government for Lawlessness and Injustice

**B**ihar is witnessing an alarming surge in violence, particularly against Dalits, women and minorities. The CPI(ML) has slammed the BJP-Nitish Kumar government for turning Bihar into a safe haven for communal forces and criminals by allowing law and order to collapse.

In Muzaffarpur, the horrific rape and death of a 10-year-old Dalit girl from Kudhani block exposed both brutal violence and official apathy. The child, who had 20 stab wounds, died after being left untreated for hours in an ambulance outside Patna's PMCH hospital. CPI(ML) State Secretary Comrade Kunal demanded the resignation of Health Minister Mangal Pandey, calling it a double failure — first, the inability to prevent the crime, and then the denial of medical treatment. A joint CPI(ML)-AIPWA fact-finding team revealed gross negligence and the extreme poverty of the victim's family. Statewide protests were organised on 4 June.

Another deeply disturbing case has come to light from Sitamarhi, where an 11-year-old Muslim girl was gangraped and murdered in Runni Saidpur. A CPI(ML)-Insaaf Manch team found evidence of communal intimidation and local complicity.

Speaking on behalf of the team, MLA Virendra Gupta condemned the silence of Chief Minister Nitish Kumar and the BJP leadership, calling it a shocking display of inhumanity and political apathy. "This crime shows the collapse of law and order in Bihar and the state's utter disregard for the safety of minorities," he said. Protests were held on 16 June demanding justice and action against those protecting the accused.

In another incident, a rural doctor in Gaya was tied to a tree and assaulted while he was treating the mother of a 2021 gangrape survivor. A seven-member CPI(ML) fact-finding team visited Harakuraha village on 7 June and met the victims at Gaya hospital. The team reported that the accused are still roaming free and have even released misogynistic songs celebrating their impunity. The team demanded immediate arrests and an end to the culture of violence and fear.

### Badlo Sarkar, Badlo Bihar

As part of its campaign against rising violence, rural distress and injustice, the CPI(ML) has launched the state-wide "Badlo Sarkar, Badlo Bihar" (Change the Government, Transform Bihar) yatra. CPI(ML)

General Secretary Comrade Dipankar said the BJP-JDU regime has allowed feudal dominance to flourish in the name of development. "Crimes against women, especially from Dalit and minority communities, have become disturbingly frequent. The people of Bihar are demanding liberation from this regime of repression," he added.

The Shahabad-Magadh leg of the yatra began from the Indrapuri dam site with tributes to labourers who died during its construction. CPI(ML) leaders including MPs Rajaram Singh and Sudama Prasad and MLAs Arun Singh and Sandeep Saurabh are leading the campaign, which focuses on mass meetings and rural outreach.

Speaking at a rally, Rajaram Singh said that in 20 years of BJP-JDU rule, the Indrapuri reservoir remains incomplete, the Sone river is drying up, and the canal system has collapsed. "Farmers face a water crisis, APMCs have been dismantled, there is no MSP procurement, and sharecroppers remain unregistered. This government has betrayed farmers," he said.

On 21 June, AIPWA and CPI(ML) women leaders released a public chargesheet marking 20 years of BJP-JDU rule, criticising the government's betrayal of women. AIPWA General Secretary Meena Tiwari said the government has failed to deliver either social or economic justice. ■

## OBITUARY

### Pancham Manjhi

With deep sorrow, we announce the untimely passing of Comrade Pancham Manjhi, a dedicated young leader of the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) Liberation. He passed away on the evening of 11 June 2025, at the age of just 23.

A resident of Danada village in Bikram block, Patna district, Comrade Pancham had recently taken on greater responsibilities within the movement. He was an active and committed member of the Bikram Block Committee of the CPI(ML) and had been elected Joint Secretary of the Bihar State Committee of the Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA)—a role he undertook with great

energy, sincerity, and revolutionary spirit. His sudden demise following a medical emergency has come as a profound shock to all of us.

His passing is an irreparable loss to the Party, to the RYA, and to the people's movement in Bihar and beyond. In this moment of grief, we extend our deepest condolences to his family, friends, and comrades. Red Salute to Comrade Pancham Manjhi! ■







On June 22, 2025, hundreds of women under the banner of AIPWA marched through the streets of Koderma, Jharkhand, demanding the safe return of migrant workers kidnapped in Niger. The march came after armed militants kidnapped five men from Jharkhand's Giridih district - Sanjay, Raju, Faljit, Chandrika, and Uttam Mahto—while they were working for Kalpataru Power Transmission Limited in the Tillaberi region on 25 April 2025. The families of the abducted have faced agonising uncertainty, and efforts by the Jharkhand Chief Minister Hemant Soren to prompt the Indian Embassy and the Ministry of External Affairs have so far seen limited response.

Despite heavy police deployment and repeated attempts to block their way, the women pushed forward with strength and unity. Their demand: why hasn't the government acted to bring the workers home, and why is Annapurna Devi, local MP and Union Minister of State for Education refusing to meet them?

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**CHARU BHAWAN, U-90, SHAKARPUR, DELHI - 110 092**

#### PUBLISHED BY:

**Dipankar Bhattacharya for the Central Committee, CPIML**  
from Charu Bhawan, U-90, Shakarpur, Delhi - 110 092

#### EDITOR: Arindam Sen

**PRINTED BY:** Lekhraj Singh Chauhan at Graphic Print,  
383, F&E, GF, Patparganj Industrial Area, Delhi - 110 092

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