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BIHAR'S VOTER PURGE: UNDOING THE PROMISE OF FREEDOM

India's freedom struggle was not only about overthrowing colonial rule but also about reclaiming the voice of the ordinary Indian.

Before independence, the right to vote was a privilege reserved for a select few. Colonial franchise rules demanded property ownership, income, or educational qualifications, and only a fraction of the population, barely one in ten, was allowed to cast a vote. The poor, Dalits, adivasis, women, and the landless majority had no place in the decision-making of their own country. India's democratic beginnings were historic and unprecedented: we became the first major nation to adopt a truly universal franchise from the very birth of our Republic, including all adults, women and men

alike, as equal voters. By contrast, the United States took 144 years from its independence in 1776 to grant women the Right to vote in 1920, while the United Kingdom took over a century from the 1832 Reform Act to extend equal voting rights to women in 1928. It was this denial of voice that the freedom movement sought to overturn. When the Constituent Assembly debated the shape of our democracy, Dr B.R. Ambedkar and his colleagues envisioned a system founded on political equality. Universal adult franchise, the principle of one person, one vote, one value, was the revolutionary outcome of that resolve. It was a conscious decision to treat the weakest and the most marginalised citizen as politically equal to the

D Raja

most privileged. India, a poor and deeply unequal society, would take the unprecedented leap of giving the ballot to all adults, believing that political equality would serve as the foundation for social and economic equality. Later, Indian democracy became even more inclusive when the voting age was lowered from 21 to 18, an achievement in which CPI leader C.K. Chandrappan played a key role. The world watched in awe as a newly independent country, still grappling with poverty and illiteracy, conducted the largest experiment in universal adult franchise. Every voice mattered, and the right to vote became the cornerstone of the republic.

Today, that cardinal right is facing a new and insidious threat in Bihar through the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls. On August 1, the Election Commission of India published the draft rolls for the state, but what should have been a routine update has instead triggered alarm across the political spectrum and civil society. The process has been marked by opacity, errors, and mass exclusions on a scale unprecedented in Indian electoral history. Unlike regular revisions, the SIR requires even existing electors to submit a detailed enumeration form accompanied by one of a restrictive list of eleven documents. Common proofs like Aadhaar, voter ID, and ration cards were not accepted in many cases. This onerous process has placed the heaviest burden on those least equipped to navigate bureaucracy: migrant workers without fixed addresses, Dalits and adivasis without land records, minorities and the urban poor without formal documents. The result has been a wave of exclusions that threatens to silence the very sections of society for whom universal franchise was originally conceived.

The numbers tell a disturbing story. Bihar has nearly 7.9 crore reg-

istered electors. By the end of the enumeration period, around 7.23 crore forms were submitted, but more than 36 lakh names were flagged as missing, migrated, deceased, or duplicate. Observers and analysts estimate that the overall deletions and discrepancies could affect as many as 64 to 94 lakh voters, making it the largest single exercise of voter removal in independent India. Patna district alone has seen nearly four lakh names dropped from the draft rolls. For countless families, discovery that they have been struck off the list will only happen when it is too late, because the Election Commission has not published a list of deleted names as is customary with draft rolls. Instead, the deletions are buried in the data, invisible to the public and nearly impossible for the disenfranchised to challenge without access to machine-readable electoral rolls, which the Commission has refused to provide.

The entire exercise has been riddled with what can only be described as a tragedy of errors. In one farcical instance, a residence certificate was issued in the name of a dog—Dog Babu—complete with the parental names Kuttababu and Kutiya Devi. While the

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CPI general secretary D Raja paying tributes to Fidel Castro at Ajoy Bhavan

Restrain the Corporates

The Slogan of “Quit India Movement”, initiated on August 8, 1942, has been acquiring an added significance on its eighty-first anniversary. It was a slogan against the British rulers that had ruled over India for more than a century, and when they decided to leave, the country was by then bleached white. It was the neo-colonialism that has been ushered in as its new Avtaar. They are selective in their choices.

After all these years, in many of its ventures, the Tariff issue was its new threat, coming from the United States.

The tariff structure on Indian goods combines a baseline with 10 percent duty with a 25 percent reciprocal tariff, which was announced by the US President Donald Trump on April 2, 2025, and an additional 25 percent tariff, effective 21 days after August 7, 2025. Unlike China, which faces a 30 percent tariff, or Vietnam and the Philippines at 20 percent, India and Brazil face the highest rate of 50 percent. It was a repeat, with a new base line. It was shackles for economy. With running political content, to enslave the country. Once again, the Call came, asking to Quit India in August this year, the nation’s economic independence has come under the shadows of economic imperialism in a new form that was rehearsed by the United States.

Quit India movement was the final call given eight decades and three years ago on August 8, 1942, for complete independence. It placed the demand for independence on the immediate agenda of the national movement. The Quit India Movement marked a crucial turning point in India’s struggle for independence. Despite the repression by British authorities, the movement galvanised widespread public support, leading to mass protests and parallel governments. The Quit India Movement intensified the demand for freedom, ultimately hastening the end of British colonial rule in India.

Since gaining independence in 1947, India’s economy, despite the continual presence of the Right, representing the monopoly capitalism, its inbuilt exploitation, gradually evolved to become one of the largest and independent economies in the world. Public sector undertakings played the most significant

role in it. The PSUs have been at the forefront of India’s industrialization and economic independence. With more than 400 diversified units across various sectors, they make significant contributions to GDP growth, employment opportunities, and foreign exchange earnings.

Despite massive onslaught by the NDA government on these government-owned companies, they are still leading in critical sectors such as infrastructure, power, banking, and technology. Their contribution extends far beyond the economic indicator — they are the top and first driving force behind industrialization, technological development, and employment generation. Additionally, these businesses provide socio-economic stability through mass-level employment generation, especially in rural and backward regions.

These undertakings also created the ground for the growth of privately-owned enterprises throughout the country. However, the hard-earned economic freedom of the country is now facing the threat of neo-colonialism led by the United States.

Editorial

As it is, the US, which already imposed 25 per cent tariff on Indian goods, has now decided to double it, calling it India’s additional punishment for importing Russian oil. This is nothing short of a sanction on India if it continues to use its independence of decision to import crude oil from Russia.

Will the Narendra Modi government show the courage to stand up against the neo colonial overtures by the US? Already, the state-owned Indian refineries are pulling back from the Russian trade.

Faced with a similar situation, Brazilian President Luiz Inacio Lula da Silva, who has also been handed penal tariff of 50 percent, floated a trial balloon: a joint response by BRICS, marshaling a unified front to challenge Trump’s neocolonial overreach. But can Modi, in order to maintain India’s economic independence, take a confrontational position against the United States?

Brazil’s biggest export market is China, with whom it has a 49 billion dollar trade surplus. India, on the other hand, sells just

about 32 billion dollar annually to Brazil, Russia and China — *combined*. The US buys nearly three times as much from it, in addition to providing tens of thousands of work visas each year to Indian techies. Washington also controls the student-visa pipeline for — amongst others — children of local politicians, bureaucrats, tycoons and bankers. Would the Modi government go on a collision course with Trump to protect India’s economic independence or bow down to him to protect his industrialist friends — Adani and Ambani — and the interests of the elites that surround him?

Under the NDA government, India’s economy has been declining on a regular basis. On an average, there has been a constant slowdown, with key indicators showing a deceleration across various sectors. This slowdown is marked by an unprecedented fall in employment situation, a decline in bank credit growth, subdued export growth, stagnation in agriculture and a slowdown in almost all major sectors of industries. These declines are not cyclical in nature. They are caused by structural weaknesses created by the Modi government’s policy decisions which are aimed at benefiting big corporate like Adani and Ambani at the cost of small and medium industries and agriculture.

This decline has a direct bearing on the purchasing capacity of Indians. A recent report has indicated that a significant portion of the Indian population, approximately 90 percent, may lack the financial means to spend on discretionary goods and services. This suggests a decline in purchasing capacity, driven by factors like growing unemployment, inflation, rising cost of living, and stagnant wages, particularly impacting the middle class. Again, the policy decisions of the NDA government are directly responsible for creating this crisis for Indians. In the past, India’s market used to be Indian economy’s major bargaining strength vis-à-vis the foreign countries. With the fall in purchasing power of Indians, the present government has practically destroyed this trump card too. It is this uncertainty which is inhibiting us. Shall we be able to sustain the threat to our economic independence or make a choice for easy compromise?

The Central Trade Unions (CTUs) and Samyukt Kisan Morcha (SKM) observed August 13 as the day against privatisation and sale of Public Sector Enterprises, and also Public services and against Corporate loot. The SKM gave slogan 'Corporates, Quit India'. The day was marked by massive protests at several places in urban and rural India, at industry/factory gates, at district headquarters, in other public places to press for their demands. There were tractors and other vehicles marching organised at different locations.

It is to be noted that after a successful General Strike action by trade unions and rural mobilisations by SKM on July 9, strike action against the anti-workers, anti-farmer and anti-national policies of the BJP led NDA Government, both the fronts met separately as well as jointly to carry forward the struggles. They opined that the threats to National Sovereignty are real as the government failed to react to the threats by Trump administration to impose 50 percent tariffs on India including penalty on India's imports of oil from Russia.

On the other hand CTUs-SKM, the coordination of ten Central Trade Unions and Samyukt Kisan Morcha, strongly condemned these recent threats by U.S. President Donald Trump to impose 25 percent tariffs on India and also punitive tax for oil trade deal with Russia taking it to 50 percent per cent tariff. This is a blatant act of economic coercion aimed at dictating India including its trade relations with Russia. These aggressive measures expose the hypocrisy of US trade policies, which demand open markets for American corporations while weaponizing tariffs to bully sovereign nations.

Equally alarming is

No Repeat of History! Corporates Must Quit!

Amarjeet Kaur

the Indian government's meek submission to these threats, reflecting its growing subservience to western imperialist interests. This surrender is further evident in the recently

even more exploitative India-U.S. trade deal, which would grant American agribusiness corporations like

flood Indian markets with cheap dairy, wheat, and meat—mirroring the devastation caused by the India-ASEAN FTA, which crashed rubber prices by 70 percent in Kerala. The deal also



signed India-UK Comprehensive Economic Trade Agreement (CETA), a deal that sacrifices the interests of India's farmers, workers, and economic independence at the altar of foreign corporate profits.

Instead of firmly rejecting this intimidation, the Central Government has responded with si-

Cargill unrestricted access to India's dairy sector, agriculture, resulting in collapsing prices & destroying the farming community along with endangering food security of the nation. It would also trigger deindustrialization in India and skyrocketing unemployment.

The India-UK CETA,

opens India's healthcare sector to British corporate takeovers, accelerating the privatization of hospitals and extending drug monopolies that will spike medicine.

The Central government has not abandoned its anti-worker and anti-farmer policies in the face of one of the biggest strike action and mobilisation on July 9 rather continues its pro-corporate agenda with the anti-working class four labour codes and the denial of a legal guarantee for MSP@C2+50 percent and loan waivers. The Central government has aggressively continued its disastrous assault on people's rights to Jal, Jangal, aur Zameen (water, forests, and land) for corporate greed. It has also persisted in forceful land acquisition using outdated laws under the guise of so-called "development," devastating the environment. Its policy of privatisation and sale of Public sector enterprises and public services continues aggressively against

national interest.

It was in this background that the CTUs-SKM called upon all farmers, workers, students, and patriotic citizens to join the nationwide day of resistance on August 13, 2025, with various mass actions like tractor and motorcycle rallies, protest demonstrations, public gatherings, and other forms of protest as decided by different platforms and partner organizations. Through this protest, CTUs-SKM asserted to carry forward the legacy of the freedom struggle, upholding the values of freedom, sovereignty, and people's unity.

The protesters raised the following demands, along with other burning issues of workers, farmers, and other toiling masses:

- India must reject Trump's tariff threats and assert its sovereign right to trade with all nations, including Russia.

- The India-UK CETA must be reviewed and altered immediately, it has no ratification from Parliament.

- All negotiations for a U.S.-India trade deal must be halted to prevent further corporate exploitation.

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

The protesters had clarity in mind when they said "The East India Company colonized India through trade—today, CETA and US trade deals are the new instruments of corporate imperialism." August 13, became a day for the farmers and workers to rise in defense of sovereignty and freedom, sending a clear message:

"We will not let history repeat! Will not Allow neo-colonialism to take Roots!"



lence, signaling its willingness to compromise India's strategic autonomy in favour of U.S.A. This capitulation paves the way for an

is also a direct attack on India's food security, healthcare, and economic self-reliance. The agreement will allow British agribusinesses to

Fidel Castro's Birth Centenary

India Honours a Revolutionary Icon

DELHI: On August 13, 2025, India marked the commencement of Fidel Castro's birth centenary with a vibrant and well-attended event organised at Surjit Bhawan. The celebrations were joined by a diverse crowd, including all Left parties, democratic international dignitaries, students, and activists, all united in their admiration for Castro's enduring ideals. From the CPI general secretary D Raja, national secretariat members RamaKrishna Panda and Dr. Girish Chandra Sharma took part in the event.

The event, participated by and presided over by CPI(M) Polit Bureau member R. Arun Kumar, celebrated the legacy of the Cuban revolutionary leader, whose influence continues to resonate internationally till today.

The Cuban Ambassador to India, H.E. Juan Carlos Marsán Aguilera, delivered a stirring speech, emphasizing Castro's role in transforming Cuba into a beacon of resistance against imperialism. "Revolutionaries didn't choose armed struggle as the best path; it's the path the oppressors imposed on the people," he quoted Castro, encapsulating the revolutionary spirit that defined Cuba's struggle. The ambassador's words echoed in the packed auditorium, where representatives from Nigeria, Venezuela, Bolivia, China, Guyana, Peru, and Brazil joined Indian leaders to honour a man, a revolutionary whose defiance of global powers inspired generations.

Fidel Castro, born on August 13, 1926, led the Cuban Revolution to overthrow dictator

Fulgencio Batista in 1959, establishing a socialist state that prioritized free healthcare, education, and cultural access. His leadership, spanning



nearly five decades, outlasted 11 U.S. presidents and survived an estimated 638 assassination attempts, as documented by former Cuban intelligence chief Fabian Escalante. Castro's resilience and commitment to sovereignty made him a global symbol of anti-imperialism, particularly resonant in countries like India,



where his camaraderie with leaders like Jawaharlal Nehru and Indira Gandhi strengthened bilateral ties.

The Delhi event saw prominent Indian political figures reflect on Castro's impact. CPI General Secretary D. Raja shared personal anecdotes, recalling his encounters with Castro, including a 1978 youth festival in Havana and a 1998 international social-

C. Adhikesavan

ist meeting. "Fidel was a wonderful orator and articulator," Raja said, noting Castro's ability to

galvanize crowds. He highlighted Cuba's defiance of the U.S. embargo, pointing out that the United Nations General Assembly repeatedly passed resolutions against it, with only the U.S. and Israel in opposition. "Cuba stands united, and India's people stand solidly with them," Raja declared, emphasizing the deep solidarity be-

Palestine's current struggle, advocating for India to emulate Cuba's healthcare and education policies. Javed Ali Khan of the Samajwadi Party noted Castro's relevance amid U.S. trade tariffs affecting India and the Global South. Forward Bloc's G. Devarajan referenced Castro's iconic 1960 UN speech—a record-breaking 4-hour 29-minute address denouncing U.S. imperialism—calling him a true internationalist who liberated not just Cuba but inspired freedom movements worldwide.

In a unique tribute, the National Committee for Solidarity with Cuba inaugurated a football tournament on August 2, 2025, led by Ambassador Marsán Aguilera and First Secretary Maiky Díaz Pérez. The event, a nod to Castro's vision of sport as a unifying force, aimed to

tours, and a 2026 Book Fair. President Miguel Díaz-Canel has emphasized "bringing Fidel to the present," focusing on youth engagement and reinforcing socialist values. However, these celebrations unfold against Cuba's severe economic crisis, marked by blackouts, inflation, and shortages. Critics argue that the regime's focus on ideological campaigns distracts from addressing these structural challenges, highlighting disconnect between official narratives and public needs.

The Delhi event also sparked reflection on the state of communism in India. A CPI(M) supporter lamented the movement's decline, noting the growing influence of corporate interests over India's populace. "Fidel's legacy reminds us of the need for a true communist revival," the cadres said, echoing sentiments that India's Left must reclaim its revolutionary roots to counter capitalist encroachment.

Fidel Castro was a international inspiration. Castro's centenary is not just a Cuban milestone but a global one. In India, his legacy resonates as a call to resist imperialism and prioritize social justice. The Delhi commemoration, with its blend of political discourse and cultural tributes, underscored India's enduring bond with Cuba. As Raja put it, "Fidel belongs to our family." His life—marked by defiance, survival, and a commitment to the marginalised—continues to inspire those fighting for a world where the weak are not crushed by the strong.

tween the two nations.

CPI(M) General Secretary M.A. Baby underscored Castro's commitment to truth and human dignity. "The U.S. has weapons of mass destruction, from Hiroshima to Palestine," he said, framing Castro's resistance as a moral stand against global hegemony. RJD MP Manoj Jhadrew parallels between Cuba's fight for sovereignty and

foster equality and international solidarity. "This tournament is a celebration of resistance and hope," said a Cuban diplomat, reflecting Castro's belief in uplifting the oppressed through collective action.

In Cuba, preparations for Castro's centenary, launched on August 13, 2025, and extending to December 2026, include workshops, historical

President of the United States of America Donald Trump has taken the US out of the Paris Climate Accord, the WHO, and UNESCO. He has seceded, effectively, from the World Trade Organisation. He has ruptured the institutional underpinning of Pax Americana and uprooted the dollar as the world's anchor currency. He is forcing other nations to invest in the US. He is an enemy of free cross-border flows of goods, capital and people.

Left to himself, he would wreck globalised growth. He must be checked. India must take the lead to salvage globalisation and its redemptive virtues. BRICS, of which India is a founding member, can be galvanised to serve as the vehicle for mobilising the largest economies of the world to save globalised growth. The EU is paralysed by the fear of losing America's security cover, and has responded to the Trump offensive with all the quick wits of a bunny caught in the headlights. China, the other major economy, is a founding member of BRICS, and has been busy getting the best bargain for itself.

Globalisation has been good for the developing world. Of course, Indian Leftists would demur, colonised as they are by the west-centric narrative of widening inequalities, and the rich growing fabulously rich at the expense of stagnant lives of the working people. Of course, income inequality has been growing within countries around the world. At the same time, the gap between the median incomes of the world's rich and poor nations has been narrowing. More to the point, absolute incomes at the bottom of the social pyramid have been rising, allowing unprecedented numbers to climb out of the wretchedness of poverty, and acquire a modicum of human agency, dignity and aspirations.

With policies in place

to broaden the participatory base of globalised growth, India witnessed rapid growth in real wages during the period 2003-14. Poverty fell. So did maternal and infant mortality rates. Rural road networks lengthened and grew dense, connecting more people to markets and towns that beckoned migrants. Construction work

drained rural areas of workers, raising rural wages, and giving those who took to construction and slightly more skilled work in whatever was constructed new levels of income.

Telecom networks spread and connected ever more people to the world. A new world of technology-enabled opportunity opened up, the doorway to it sitting snug in the calloused palm of the worker, and the still tender hands of their children.

Homegrown policy had attacked this emancipatory process before Trump. Demonetisation, divisive politics that tears apart essential social cohesion, ham-handed implementation of GST, the manmade Covid migrant crisis, the failure to refinance non-banking finance companies that funded builders, contractors and larger infrastructure developers during the

economy's Covid coma — all these have depressed India's gross fixed capital formation below 30 percent, the level first reached in 2004 and sustained till 2014. India's aspirational growth rate now is seven percent. Ten percent is the stuff of dreams.

It is vital to protect globalised growth, to get out of the rut in which India's economy is stuck. India must persuade BRICS to spearhead Operation

Salvage. The EU, Japan, Canada, ASEAN, Australia, OPEC and the African Union must be persuaded to create another World Trade Organisation, minus the US. One relatively easy way to do this is for everyone to join the Comprehensive and Progressive Trans Pacific Partnership, and create a dispute settlement mechanism for the grouping.

BRICS must go ahead with its proposals for a BRICS Reinsurance arm and BRICS Clear, a clearing and holding facility for crossborder financial transactions on the lines of Euroclear. Most significantly, BRICS should launch a stablecoin benchmarked against the SDR, the IMF's unit of account. It must comply with the provisions of the US Genius Act, holding reserves equal to the value of stablecoins issued. This could be the currency for transactions in which the

T K Arun

US is not a counterparty. A currency on the blockchain would obviate the need for a messaging system like SWIFT for cross-border capital flows.

India can lead only if it has credibility. That calls for tough political choices. End sectarian politics, to begin with. Let the briefings on Operation Sindoor jointly

itless procurement. Let trade handle the bulk of procurement, storage and distribution of grain. Build buffer stocks and an intelligent distribution system, to flatten price spikes anywhere in the country. Expand work schemes, disability and old-age pensions to ensure everyone has the resources to buy food. India's farm policy will cease to be a dealbreaker in trade talks.

Levy an R&D cess on companies that have a turnover of Rs 500 crore or more and do not spend at least 5% of turnover on own R&D. Give graded tax breaks on income derived from intellectual property developed in-house. Scrap all protection save a uniform 5% import duty, fortified by anti-dumping and safeguard duties, to shelter domestic industry from unfair external competition.

Rid the world of kings and pretenders. Use trade and growth, instead of guillotines.



by a Muslim officer and a Hindu officer set the template for the future.

Separate producer subsidy from consumption subsidy in agriculture. India's current food subsidy conflates the two. Give farmers income support, as the EU does. End lim-

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Issues of Vote Theft, SIR Acquire All India Dimension

Police Obstruct INDIA Bloc Protest March, ECI Threatens

Communist Party of India joins Protest march along with INDIA bloc MPs against "vote theft" through manipulation of voters list by the ruling establishment in the country led by PM Narendra Modi with connivance of the Election Commission of India (ECI). The issue has already acquired a national dimension. Leader of the Opposition (LoP) Rahul Gandhi's demonstration of the voter list manipulation was so stark that the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (SIR) in Bihar, which ECI intends to conduct across the country, is also seen as an effort to steal votes, with only difference that earlier instances of vote theft was done through "mass addition of voters' names" while this time the effort is to win election through "mass deletion of voters".

Obviously, the opposition MPs representing people across all states in India joined hands under the INDIA bloc banner to protest. However, their protest on August 11, 2025 was stopped by the police of the Nation Capital only after few metres from the Parliament of India, from where it began. MPs were seen jumping over the barricades, and when completely stopped, they sat on a sit-in protest at the spot. The protesting MPs were detained by the police.

Later, police said, "Only 30 MPs had permission to go to ECI, but there were more than that present on site. We informed them that we can accompany any 30 of them, however, due to the large crowd present, we had to detain the MPs." After about two hours of detention in the Parliament Street police station, police released all MPs.

It was earlier on August 11, the ECI, which is an accused in the "vote theft" and "electoral roll manipulation" in con-

Dr Gyan Pathak

nivance with the PM Narendra Modi and associates, had reiterated its threatening language against the Leader of the Opposition who had publicly exposed the "vote theft" through voter list manipulation. They have said that Leader of the opposition has 'still time to give declaration on oath.'

Though ECI is a constitutional body, it should be noted that it is an accused in the "vote theft" allegation and hence it would not serve the purpose of justice if an accused publicly goes on threatening the complainant in a crime against nation. Even as ECI is an accused in both past and present electoral list manipulation efforts, ECI seems to be very keen to become a judge. Here again, the purpose of justice can not be served if an accused becomes an investigator and judge both.

Therefore, the threat served by the ECI to the LoP of the country is unacceptable. Nevertheless, the Chief Electoral Officers of several states have issued threatening notices to the LoP.

It is unacceptable, on account of another reason too. ECI has reportedly indulged in politics, which is not their mandate according to the Constitution of India, especially when they said that the Congress led Karnataka government had used their "voter list" for their Caste Census, which had validated the list on one hand, while on the other

Rahul Gandhi has alleged it to be manipulated. The very mention of Caste Census of Karnataka smacks politics, and ECI has nothing to do with Caste Census, since there have been much politics played around caste census by the BJP led by PM Narendra Modi with whom the ECI has been alleged to have connived. ECI's threatening languages are laden with political slant, apart from their asking Rahul Gandhi to apologise or submit complained on oath so that they could take actions.

Since BJP and PM Narendra Modi has also been alleged to have got the electoral roll manipulated through the ECI, and benefited from them, it is quite natural that the BJP leaders have been criticising Rahul Gandhi.

Haryana elections and creates a mountain of lies... It is their well-thought-out strategy to create a state of anarchy... I appeal to the Opposition and the Congress party to raise all issues in Parliament." Nevertheless, the country has seen how the government, Rajya Sabha, and Lok Sabha, did not allow discussion in the Parliament on SIR issue.

Monday's INDIA bloc's protest saw almost all important opposition leaders of the country, which included Congress leader Mallikarjun Kharge, NCP (SP) leader Sharad Pawar, Samajwadi Party Supremo Akhilesh Yadav, Congress leaders Rahul Gandhi, Priyanka Gandhi, and almost all

who's who in opposition's parliamentary politics.

LoP Rahul Gandhi said, "Actually, we cannot talk to the ECI, this is the reality. ... The truth is before the nation and this fight is not political, it is to save the Constitution. It is fight for 'one man one vote'. We want a clean and accurate voter list." Congress MP and party's general secretary Jairam Ramesh alleged that we are not even allowed to reach ECI. Right in front of the Parliament House, democracy is being murdered.

It has been learnt that ECI had granted an appointment for an interaction at 12 noon today August 11, on the request of the Congress Party. Nevertheless, opposition MPs were not allowed to proceed to Nirvachan Sadan with their protest march. Delhi police said that there was no permission sought of govt for opposition MP's protest march against electoral malpractices.

In the meanwhile, the opposition INDIA bloc parties are planning to escalate the protest against "vote theft" and SIR across the country. Congress president Mallikarjun Kharge has called for a meeting to formulate a common strategy on the issue of the alleged poll fraud.

Detention of opposition MPs have attracted criticism from the opposition leaders across the country, which indicates the issue has already acquired a national dimension.

RCH Workers on Hunger Strike

Dr. Ravindranath

On August 10, 2025, the RCH Sanitation Workers Hunger Welfare Association launched a hunger strike in Chennai. The strike aims to demand the immediate implementation of the Tamil Nadu government's announcement to increase the monthly honorarium for Primary Health Centre RCH sanitation workers from ₹1,500 to ₹5,000, along with several other demands.

The Key Demands included:

* Immediate Implementation of hiked Honorarium:

During the April 2025 Assembly session, Minister for Health M Subramanian announced that the monthly honorarium for RCH sanitation workers would be raised from ₹1,500 to ₹5,000. While we express our heartfelt gratitude for this announcement, the government order has not yet been issued. We demand its immediate release and the payment of ₹5,000 starting from April 2025.

* Permanent Employment for Long-Serving Workers:

Many RCH sanitation workers have been working for over 15 years with only ₹1,500 as monthly wages, without being posted as Multi-Purpose Hospital Workers. They must be posted as multi-purpose hospital workers.

* Retirement Benefits for Workers Above 60 Years:

Sanitation workers who have crossed 60 years of age should be granted retirement benefits as announced by the Honourable Minister. If not, the pending dues should be calculated and

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The Hidden Sacrifices Behind Clean Clothes

Life at Mumbai's Dhobi Ghat

Mumbai's Dhobi Ghat, renowned as the world's largest open-air laundry, processes thousands of clothes daily, but the human cost is staggering. Workers, primarily from the Dhobi caste, stand in chemical-laden water for up to 12 hours, their skin blistering and burning from relentless exposure. Families crowd into 7x7-foot rooms, breathing toxic fumes nightly. Children inherit this grueling legacy, with some families trapped for over 40 years. Mothers' hands, scarred from labour, struggle to hold their babies. Ironically, those who clean Mumbai's clothes often cannot afford clean water themselves. Beyond laundry, this is a story of invisible lives, pride amid suffering, and extraordinary resilience.

At Dhobi Ghat's core are laundrymen submerged in detergent-filled water. One worker displays his raw, blistered feet, explaining how chemicals cause papules that persist for weeks. Despite this, they endure through monsoons, winters, and beyond. "Either it's monsoon or winter, we have to do our job, despite everything," says a veteran who began in 1984, over 40 years ago. Starting young, they learn the craft as a form of "study" from mentors. Their routine involves collecting dirty clothes, washing, ironing, and returning them, often working until 10 or 11 PM before eating and sleeping.

The washing process starts with sorting and marking clothes with numbers to identify owners. Stubborn stains are treated in boiling furnaces called *bhattis*,

where clothes are mixed with chemicals and boiled for 4 to 5 hours. Handling this hot water frequently causes hand blisters, forcing workers to rest while others take over. "It's not slavery, it's our business," one dhobi asserts, emphasizing their entrepreneurial spirit. Yet, the physical toll is immense—workers sweat profusely in minutes, enduring heat and fumes without complaint. "I have no shame or complaints. I survive because of this job," another shares, reflecting their resolve.

Dhobi Ghat comprises 826 stone ghats, each rented for Rs 300

ders, and children, posing safety risks.

Within these cramped spaces, dreams persist. Eleven-year-old Pari shares her room with her parents, grandfather, and brother. She bathes there, while men use downstairs facilities. Aspiring to become a doctor and fond of Hindi, Pari proudly wears clothes symbolizing India's flag, though she does not fully grasp its meaning. "My dad told me so," she says of her ambition. Despite the hardships, children like Pari attend school, nurturing hopes of escaping the ghat's cycle.

Environmental and

Modern tools have infiltrated Dhobi Ghat. Washing machines, costing over 2 lakhs rupees, handle clothes from hospitals, hotels, bars, and banks across Mumbai. Driers, powered by Rs 1,800 gas cylinders that last a week, dry clothes in 10 to 40 minutes, depending on fabric. Delivery bikes carry up to 200 kg of clothes, navigating Mumbai's chaotic traffic and slippery monsoon roads, where accidents occasionally occur.

Monsoons intensify the challenges. Clothes are hung and removed up to 10 times daily as rain soaks them repeat-



monthly from the municipal corporation, exclusively for the Dhobi caste. These ghats not only clean clothes but sustain 200 families. Living conditions, however, are dire. Over 4,000 families squeeze into tiny rooms, some just 7x7 feet, shared by four or more people. Pramila Pandey, who migrated from Gorakhpur, describes her low-ceilinged room, combining kitchen, storage, and bathing areas. An outside washroom costs Rs 2 per use. Many homes are on the first floor, accessed by iron ladders navigated daily by pregnant women, el-

health challenges exacerbate the struggles. Sewage lines connected to the ghats overflow during monsoons, flooding homes with dirty water, colours, garbage, and even rats. Detergent water triggers rampant skin diseases, yet workers feel trapped. "If we think it's hard, what else will we do?" one asks. They hope their children avoid this life, but opportunities are scarce. Informal electricity and wood-burning furnaces, still used due to the lack of formal power, add toxic fumes to the air, worsening health risks.

edly. "We have to support our families," workers say, resigned to the relentless cycle. Women face distinct burdens. Nirmala Nirmal, a resident for 7-8 years, describes life as "hell," working from noon to 6 PM daily without week-ends. "We work the entire day," she laments, as water splashes into homes, disrupting cooking and daily routines. Yet, she notes, "everyone adjusts in the end," reflecting a collective resilience.

Pride shines through the adversity. Aditya, a young dhobi, boldly



STUDY & STRUGGLE

C Adhikesavan



tells friends, "I am a Dhobi. I am not ashamed. I feel proud." Clothes, woven into India's history—from independence struggles to caste divisions—are transformed here from stained to spotless. Workers focus on survival and craftsmanship, not symbolic meanings. Aanchal, who studied until 9th grade but stopped, admits she works out of necessity, not choice. "We are helpless," she says, yet finds joy in small escapes like traveling.

Dhobi Ghat reveals a stark irony: while 90 per cent of people use machines, 10% rely on human hands as "machines." Earnings are meagre, barely covering Rs 1,200 monthly rents for cooking slabs or ghat fees. Still, resilience endures—families support each other, children pursue education, and workers take pride in their trade. Behind every clean shirt lies a story of sacrifice—blistered skin, toxic homes, generational traps—but also an unyielding human spirit. In this laundry slum, lives are steeped in hardship, yet hope remains unstained, a testament to the enduring strength of those who make our convenience possible.



90th Anniversary of AISF

AISF in Pre and Post Independence India

Anil Rajimwale



This year begin the celebrations of the 90th anniversary of the premier student organisation of the country: All India Students Federation. It is time we take stock of its contributions, pre-and post-independence.

It is little realized that the student community played a crucial role in freedom struggle and in building a new India after freedom. Its role is generally underestimated and is often mentioned only in passing. Students, considered unsuitable for serious social and political responsibilities, have played a crucial role in history.

A perusal of history will show that students have often played a pioneering role in many historic movements.

AISF, in particular, has the distinction of playing a major role in crystallizing this process and educating and bringing the student masses in the anti-imperialist freedom struggle and in building a new Indian nation.

Contribution of student community

Student community contributed greatly to the rise of

nationalism in the 19th century after the spread of education. With the increase in the numbers of students, their activities and consciousness also increased. They became aware of the gross inequality deliberately introduced by British colonial rule. While the British people enjoyed the democratic rights, the same was denied to the Indians. While British people were imparted modern education, the same was imparted in highly distorted and selective way in India for colonial purposes.

However distorted, the western education helped the educated masses to assimilate modern democratic ideas, something not foreseen by British rulers. Students and educated youth became a powerful national force by the turn of the 20th century.

The 19th century is replete with numerous student movements pertaining to social, educational and political issues.

Students initiate political movements

Student organisations like Students' Association (Bengal, 1874) played a crucial role in initiating political movements including Congress. It produced outstanding leaders like Surendra Nath Banerjee, who became a prominent Congress leader of 19th century. Bihar Students' Central Association (BSCA), founded in 1906, was the precursor of Congress party in Bihar, with Babu Rajendra Prasad a prominent leader of both.

Bombay Presidency had the Students' Brotherhood as a powerful student organisation, as a precursor of many political organizations. The first all India student organisation called All India College Students' Conference (AICSC) was founded in 1920 in the wake of the great non-cooperation movement (NCO) led by Gandhiji. AICSC produced many national leaders. SA Dange and his group attended it from Wilson College, Bombay.

There are many other instances.

Formation of AISF, 1936, and rising national movement

Formation of AISF was the most important event in history



of student movement. It was the most prominent student organisation, leaving an indelible mark on Indian history, producing outstanding leaders in various fields of activities including politics and for various parties.

AISF was formed in the background of rising national movement in 1930s. Growing influence of Marxism radicalized youths and students, who sought new paths to freedom and democracy.

Provincial and local student organizations were already coming up in the 1920s and 30s, such as MSO in Madra, LSU in



Lahore, ABSA and BPSF in Bengal, BSU in Bombay, etc. The process culminated in foundation of AISF in Lucknow, 1936, with PC Joshi, Subhash Bose and Nehru guiding role behind the scenes.

Various trends in the national movement came together to found it, such as progressive Congressmen, Socialists, Communists and others including the independents and non-politicals. Thus it was a joint broad-based platform.

An all India students' conference was held in Karachi on March 26, 1931 with a view to form AISF, presided over by Jawaharlal Nehru, attended by 700 student delegates. But the effort did not last beyond the event.

There is an interesting, even sensational, background to emergence of AISF. Sir Malcolm Hailey, Governor of UP, tried to forestall any move towards AISF by initiating a puppet student organisation in early 1936, but was outmaneuvered by the student leadership, who forestalled the attempts of British authorities by capturing the conference of UP University Students Federation!

It was this transformed body that convened the first or foundation conference of AISF on 12-13 August 1936. It was the biggest gathering of students





till then. It was the last time that Pt Jawaharlal Nehru and Md Ali Jinnah came together in a public gathering. Nehru inaugurated and Jinnah presided over it.

Training ground for national leaders

AISF was a training ground for a wide variety of outstanding leaders belonging to a wide range organisations. Those who worked in it or were in any way included PC Joshi, Yusuf Meherally, Subhash Bose, NK Krishnan, Parvati Krishnan, C Rajeshwar Rao, B Narsingha Rao, Pt Nehru, Renu Chakravartty, Harish Tiwari, Hiren Mukherjee, Indrajit Gupta, Bhupesh Gupta, Karpoori Thakur, Nandini Satpati, Geeta Mukherjee, Nergis Batlivala, Perin Bharucha, ML Shah, Ansar Harvani, PN Bhargava and numerous others. Mahatma Gandhi, Raj Kumari Amrit Kaur and Prof Kalelkar had much to do with AISF.

AISF had a relative independence, being under no particular party, being virtually the only student body in India at the time. It initiated major movements in Madras, AP, Kerala, Orissa, Bihar, Punjab, Bengal, Bombay etc. Often movements begun by students spread out into the wider political circles, as for example in Bengal and elsewhere during the post-WW II upsurge (1945-47). In 1937, AISF triggered all India movement for the release of the Andaman Prisoners, taken by the major parties.

Students including those of AISF were at the forefront of

Quit India movement of 1942. Students played a crucial even during the post- Second World War upsurge for Indian independence (1945-47). Students shut down Bombay in support of Naval ratings and working class in 1946. Agitations had brought educational institutions to a halt by 1947.

Simultaneously, AISF also prepared detailed proposals on the scientific, technological and broader education in its Nagpur Special Session in 1946.

Student Movement in Post-independence India

Qualitatively new situation of independence from British colonial rule characterized student-youth movement with new expectations, dreams and even utopian day-dreaming.

The pre-independence period was identified by the struggle to throw out British



rulers. Post-independence period was characterized by struggle to put its aims into practice.

New situation caused problems, as concrete nature of tasks came to the fore, leading to differences and splits in the vast student movement.

India was faced with the questions related with the national reconstruction, involving concretization of economic, social, political, cultural etc problems. It was easier to throw out a foreign ruler but far more difficult to rebuild the country. The problems of students and youth, and of the people in general, were related deeply with socio-economic transformation.

Student movement in post-independence India

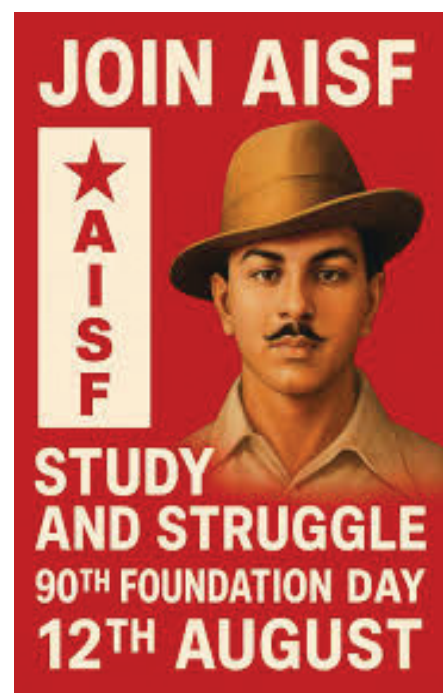
Student movement carried forward the heritage of freedom movement, AISF and some others being in the forefront. Only the communal organizations kept away, not bothered about India's future.

AISF tried to tackle the problems of backwardness, unemployment, and educational restructuring, etc so as to fulfill the dreams of the freedom movement. As it turned out, things were not so easy. One had to formulate clearly the economic methods to solve educational and other problems.

AISF took a big part in the reorganization of educational system and syllabii in accordance with the traditions of the freedom movement. Colleges and universities became the new centres of progressive consciousness. There is no doubt that the students played a key role in developing the new post-colonial India, with AISF acting as crystalliser.

Students' movements

AISF led some of the most memorable movements that shaped India. Among them were related with: Pondicherry and Goa liberation, statewide protest in Bihar against firings in Patna in August 1955, food and education in Bengal and elsewhere, numerous Delhi marches, syllabus and regarding Kothari Commission, uniform and cheap or free modern education for all, struggles in Tamilnad, Kerala, Bihar, W Bengal, Maharashtra, and elsewhere. Students wrote memorable chapters in the



1960s' agitations, which saw collapse of one-party Congress rule in 1967 elections. AISF participated in front ranks against JP-led agitation in 1973-74. AISF opposed excesses of emergency in 1975-77, leading agitations. It also opposed coming to power of communal forces, leading up to BJP-RSS rule in 2014.

AISF has consistently opposed any splits in the organisation and movement, whether in 1940s, 50s or in 1964-70. Split has only harmed the student movement. AISF has never formed a separate organisation since 1936; some others did it, claiming to represent student masses.

Transformation of the student movement

As India moved farther away from the point of freedom, the immediate issues of livelihood and education became more important. Student population grew in numbers, while the movement lost its key guiding principle, becoming more amorphous. Its vision was sought to be guided by the conflicting political views. This was both positive and negative.

Students gradually got in-

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90th Anniversary of AISF...

From Page 09

involved in the discussions of issues like public sector, self-reliance, national planning, green revolution, nationalization, policies of Pt Nehru or Indira Gandhi and the Nehruvian framework, communalism and secularism, casteism, socioeconomic policies, non-alignment and foreign policy, revolution, socialism, armed or peaceful struggles and so on.

By 1960s and 70s students got involved in controversies regarding rightwing and leftwing policies, Vietnam war, Soviet-Chinese differences and paths of revolution, splits in Communist movement and among Socialists, rightwing communal ideologies, etc. This forced the students and youth to ponder and created serious differences.

Question of alternative path came up after the end of monopoly of Congress power in 1967 and formation of non-Congress governments. Later, several left and democratic governments were formed but number of student organizations proliferated. Threat of communal-fascism loomed over, particularly after BJP-RSS government was installed in 2014.

Divisions in student organisations

The student movement got split into more groups, factions and organizations. In fact, the AISF got split way back in 1940 into Communist and non-Communist factions, basically on the question of characterization of the WW II. There were some minor splits before independence.

In the initial post-independence period, student organizations like the NSUI (National New Age Weekly

Students' Union of India), Samajwadi Yuvjan Sabha, later Akhil Bhartiya Vidyarthi Parishad (ABVP), etc came into being. Since 1960s-70s and later, organizations like the SFI (Students' Federation of India), some Naxal affiliated and Maoist organizations, Ambedkarite ones and many related with questions of class, caste and community emerged.

Today, the student movement of India stands totally divided.

Whither student movement?

The student movement has undergone a



drastic change in character since independence. The political parties each have organized their own student organization. They are a little more than an extension of the party and ideology they represent, unable to play their due role.

They should play a positive role representing student interests. But over time, they are in mutual conflict.

Positive role of AISF

After independence, students led by AISF have contributed to raising and solution of crucial issues before country and student community. Among them: issues related with syllabus, commoditization of education, education as

fundamental right, need for universal and compulsory primary education, opposing privatization, primacy



of government participation in education, basic question of responsibility of the state, allotting substantial proportion of GDP for education, scientific and techno-

logical education, etc are crucial.

It has to be underlined that in independent India, the students have deeply impacted national poli-



tics. AISF has left a deep imprint in all the fields.

Reorientation of AISF: cadre meetings

In the 1960s and 70s, a number of all India

cadre meetings of student and youth workers were held in Delhi and elsewhere. The main problem was that of the reorientation of AISF and of student movement.

After serious debates, it was decided that AISF should explain scientific socialism to students, with a growing emphasis on democracy and democratic transformation. The reorientation began after the Pondicherry conference of AISF/AIYF held in 1965-66.

Bhagat Singh too was a socialist, who changed the name of his organisation to Hindustan Socialist Republican Association, by adding the word 'socialist'. So, struggle for socialism is long-term aim of AISF. It is also enshrined in Indian Constitution.

This needs raising their theoretical, value-related, social, political, ideological and other levels; only then can

important.

Students and educated youth have a big responsibility to the society. AISF is of the opinion that they must think about the poor and the downtrodden and spend time for their betterment. They must also think about the national reconstruction and about building a new and strong nation, with the slogan: Peace, Freedom, Socialism.

AISF has done a great job of working among the middle class youth and students and even parents.

If we continue the logic of the freedom movement, the youth and students should also work among the common people, in cities and villages. Swami Vivekanand and Mahatma Gandhi said in his famous work To the Students that they should go to the villages in their holidays or spare time to be among the people.

Bhagat Singh is much respected and remembered. How many follow him, really speaking? He read a lot. He came to the conclusion that society can be changed, not through pistol, but new scientific ideas. He is a symbol of student mass.

Student movement has to basically reorient and reconstruct itself according to the age of information and scientific and technological revolution (STR). Today, AI is spreading like wildfire, becoming new means of production and information. Consequently, methods of student struggle need change.

Today AISF is engaged both in defending Indian democracy and Constitution, and in adapting to the era of technological revolution. ■

BOOK REVIEW

This year Communist Party of India is celebrating the hundredth year of its foundation. It is in the order of things that a comprehensive book on the history of the CPI has been written by the Marxist intellectual Anil Rajimwale, who also looks after the ideological education in the party. The book was badly needed, as there is hardly any other on the subject.

It covers the entire period since the foundation of CPI in 1925 till the last party congress held in Vijayawada in 2022. It provides details of all the party congresses and important conferences, and hence is very useful for study and research.

In a lucid and simple but profound presentation, the author deals first with the material base of the freedom and Communist movements by pointing out to the first railway line in India laid down in 1853, which began the process of emergence of the working class in India, the grave-digger of British colonialism. Karl Marx prophesied that by laying the railway, British rulers had sown the seeds of a social revolution in India. The prophesy came true exactly 95 years later when India became independent in August 1947.

The railways caused sprouting of new factories, mills and mines, adding to the number and strength of the working class, and to that of the revolutionary, socialist and Communist movement, as also helped emergence of a modern freedom movement. The railways not only carried goods and passengers, they also carried ideas of nationalism, freedom and socialism. Apart from this, the modern education also contributed to a large extent to spread the Communist movement in India.

Let it be clear that the industrialisation and education were all limited, catering to the needs of the British colonial order.

Russian revolution in 1917 led to the radicalisation of the India masses and classes, deeply impacting the national movement and its leaders.

In this connection the author makes interesting remarks, in reply to the rightwing propaganda, that the word 'socialism' was used even before the CPI came into being! It was used first by Swami Vivekanand in 1899-1902. Subsequently, Tilak, Lala Hardayal, Pt Nehru, Lala Lajpat Rai and other nationalist leaders too used the term. So the Communists alone cannot be accused of using a 'foreign' concept!

The process of crystallisation of Communist groups culminated in the first communist conference in Kanpur from 25th to 29th December, 1925. Initiated by Satyabhakta, the conference brought together most of the handful of Communists in India. They included Radha Mohan Gokuljee, Maulana Hasrat Mohani, groups of Communists in Bombay, Lahore, Karachi, Calcutta and a few others

100 Years of Communist Party of India

including Dange, Ghate, Mirajkar, Singaravelu, Hasan, Muzaffar Ahmed and others.

Prior to it, efforts to establish a 'Communist Party of India' by a small group of revolutionaries in Tashkent in 1920, failed to achieve the aim. Neither had it active contact with India, nor did the communists in India recognise it.

It is mistakenly stated by some that MN Roy was the 'founder' of CPI. The author has explained in detail that it was not so.

It would not be out of place to mention Lenin-Roy controversy at the second congress of Comintern, 1920, where M.N Roy tried to foist his utterly sectarian and harmful line of first dislodging the national bourgeois leadership of Gandhiji from leadership. Roy said: "Revolution/freedom movement in colonial countries was possible only under the leadership of the

Name of the Book: A History of Communist Party of India

Author: Anil Rajimwale

Publisher: People's Publishing House, 2025, pp251.

Price: ₹ 260/-

working class." Lenin outrightly rejected this formulation and the consequent tactical line. Unfortunately a trend continued to stick to sectarianism initiated by Roy.

In order to crush the rising communist movement in India, the British Government arrested 32 leading communists, working class and trade union leaders by instituting false proceedings under the Meerut Conspiracy Cases. But the result was the opposite of what the British rulers intended. This case enlightened the common man about the Communist ideology through its proceedings.

After the release of prisoners by 1933-end, P.C Joshi, youngest among all, became the General Secretary of the Party in 1935. Under his guidance, a new period in CPI history began. Three joint mass organisations were formed, namely, All India Students Federation (AISF), All India Kisan Sabha (AIKS) and Progressive Writers Association (PWA) in 1936. The CPI made a deep impact on the national movement under his slogan of the 'National Front'. Party also held its momentous first congress in 1943.

India became free on 15th August, 1947, with the partition of the country into India and Pakistan, followed by the worst communal riots. CPI under PC Joshi warmly welcomed the independence, celebrating it all over the country. Communists had been the first to demand full independence for the country way back in 1921.

The author has made sharp criticism of

Tikaram Sharma

sectarian period under BTR, who replaced PCJ in December 1947 and formally in the second congress held in Calcutta in Feb-March 1948. BTR Line did massive damage to the movement by giving a call for armed revolution. Some ultra-left forces still refuse to learn.

The author explains in detail the origin and role of the historic Three P's Letter of Dange, Ghate and Ajoy Ghosh, which helped bring party into the mainstream of national politics.

Party decided to participate in the first general elections in which CPI became the main opposition. This showed how wrong was the line of armed revolution in India.

The author lucidly explains emergence of the qualitatively new line in 1956, reflecting new world and national situation. It was discussed in 1955 and 1956 (4th congress, Palghat).

The fifth extraordinary congress, held in Amritsar in 1958, was a milestone in the party history in more than one way, a turning point. Party Constitution was changed, giving it a democratic feature. Concept of the dictatorship of the proletariat was given up and peaceful transition emphasised.

CPI criticises Chinese aggression, 1962

The author dispels the wrong propaganda that CPI did not criticise Chinese aggression in 1962. In fact, as the book proves, CPI CEC and NC unambiguously criticised the Chinese aggression in its meetings in October-November 1962, which was not liked by the Maoists and extreme rightists, who saw their opportunity being lost.

There was an opportune moment to work out a realistic strategic and tactical line, which was lost due to splitting activities, which led to party split in 1964. The author gives interesting background of the events, and characterises the split as unfortunate and harmful. CPI considers the split as helping rightwing reaction, monopoly capital and imperialism.

Maoism did great harm to the Indian Communist movement, the book opines, through splitting acts.

Author of the book has collected immense amount of historical material to write it.

The book covers the main issues in the history of the Indian Communist movement and also debates and controversies. It provides the basic information about the history of CPI.

We hope that more of such books will appear on the occasion of the centenary year of CPI.

It is hoped that the book will be highly useful tool for readers. Its Hindi and other regional language editions should be published so that the history of the party is accessible to a larger audience.

What is the Value...

From Front Page

does nothing! But will the agriculture it nurtures, and the farmer associated with it, remain alive, satisfied, and prosperous? When this is considered, a terrifying picture emerges.

Farmers' Suicides in Amravati Division from 2001 to 2024

Over the last 25 years, the issue of farmers' suicides has been neglected and has become increasingly serious. The accompanying table clearly shows that between 2001 and 2005, the number of suicides (average 220 per year) was relatively limited; between 2006 and 2014 it increased (average 996 per year); and from 2015 onwards, this figure has continued to rise, averaging 1,019 per year. In the entire period from 2001 to 2024, there were a total of 20,145 suicides; of these, 10,475 families (52 percent) were declared ineligible for assistance.

Who are declared ineligible?

According to reports in leading newspapers in May, 2025, the Maharashtra government has outlined three criteria for a suicide-affected family to be eligible for assistance:

1. Crop failure
2. Indebtedness

3. Harassment for loan recovery by creditors

Under these criteria, a district-level committee examines each of the cases. It also checks whether the land's 7/12 extract (ownership record) is in the name of the person who committed suicide. If the land is not in their name, many such families are declared ineligible for assistance.

The core issue is: whether the failed crop was grown on land cultivated by the owner or a tenant is irrelevant. The person cultivating the land is the one taking the risk; therefore, no farmer working a plot should be deprived of assistance.

In neighbouring Telangana, while safeguarding agricultural interests, no distinction was made between owner and tenant – compensation was given to whoever was cultivating the land at that time. For sustainable agriculture and development, ending this owner-tenant distinction as soon as possible will reduce the incidence of suicides in Vidarbha and Marathwada.

Combined statistics of farmers' suicides in Amravati Division and Wardha District

Looking at the nature of these three criteria, once crop failure occurs (and it has been happening continuously since 2001), the loan taken by the farmer for the current year becomes overdue. Once it is added to previous overdue loans, the farmer becomes indebted. Loan recovery attempts by creditors are then a normal process.

Where banks have high levels of overdue loans, we, the public, will naturally ask: What did you do to recover these loans? Did you pursue recovery? Creditor institutions – banks, cooperative banks, rural banks, microfinance companies, private moneylenders, all pursue recovery, but do not necessarily keep proof of such action.

Therefore, in Vidarbha, between 2001 and 2024, for nearly 52 percent of families were declared ineligible, one can imagine the humiliation they must have suffered due to such recovery pressure. If crop failure has occurred, overdue loans will increase, and so will recovery pressure, all of this together create one reality: the increasing distress and decline of the agricultural sector!

The mental toll this situation takes on wid-

ows, young daughters, and sons in suicide-affected farming families has never, to my knowledge, been studied by the government, nor have there been systematic efforts to prevent the harm caused by such a tragic event.

Why does the government ignore the most-affected region?

If the government pays so little attention to the region with the highest suicide rate in the country, then one cannot understand what ray of hope can be seen in the agricultural sector. Compared to the agricultural economics of water-rich regions like Konkan, Western Maharashtra, Khandesh, and Eastern Vidarbha, the economics in arid regions is fraught with uncertainty.

To ensure stability and progress there, profits from industrial sectors – via CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) obligations or special taxes/cess – must be diverted toward agriculture in the arid zones. Otherwise, the government will have to take on more debt.

Why do suicides happen?

The combined impact of increasing industrialization and urbanization has brought about climate change; erratic rainfall; low productiv-

ity per hectare; failure to get the minimum support price in the market; expensive loans from private moneylenders; and uncontrolled spending on modern seeds, chemical fertilizers, and pesticides. Farmers have no control over any of these factors. In contrast, industrialization establishes corporate control over them first, and then production happens. Even the smallest uncertainties are measured, monetized, and deducted from the price paid to farmers before fixing the price of their produce.

This gap in pricing methods between industrial goods and agricultural goods is severely detrimental to agriculture. Naturally, we see hope in the industrial sector and despair in the agricultural sector of arid zones. The measures taken to address this are, however, far from adequate. The three government-stated causes together form a noose around the farmer's neck, ultimately leading to suicide.

In the case of Kailas Arjun Nagre, a farmer from Buldhana district who had won awards for being progressive, his tragic suicide was accompanied by a letter in which he cited lack of irrigation and other related reasons.

RCH Workers ...

From Page 06

paid as per the daily wage rates fixed by District Collectors under Government Order No. (D) 792 of the Public Health Department (2017).

* Monthly Wage Instead of 27-Day Payment System.

As per Government Order No. 604, Multi-Purpose Hospital Workers are paid only for a maximum of 27 days per month. This should be revised to provide full monthly wages, and their services should be regularised.

* District-Level Voluntary Transfer Counselling:

Transfer counselling

should be held in each district to allow workers to be posted near their homes. Deputation orders should be cancelled.

* Equal Pay for Equal Work:

Workers performing the same duties should receive equal wages.

* Job Security:

Sanitation workers must be given job security.

* Permanent Employment as per Former CM's Order:

As per the special order issued by the late Honourable Chief Minister Dr. Kalamnagar on 01.10.2010, RCH sanitation workers should be given

permanent employment.

* Weekly Offs and Government Holidays:

Workers should be granted paid weekly offs and government holidays.

* Pending COVID-19 Incentives:

459 RCH sanitation workers who served in COVID-19 wards during the pandemic have not yet received the promised incentive of ₹15,000 each. This should be disbursed immediately.

A hunger strike took place on August 10, 2025, near Rajaratnam Stadium on Rukmini Lakshmi Pathy Road in Egmore, Chennai. This

event was organised by the Tamil Nadu Government Primary Health Centre, the RCH Contract Sanitation Workers Welfare Association, and the Doctors Association for Social Equality.

N.S. Selvaraj, the State President of the RCH Sanitation Workers Welfare Association, presided over the hunger strike. Dr. A.R. Shanthi, the State General Secretary of the Tamil Nadu Medical Department Employees Federation and the RCH Sanitation Workers Welfare Association, delivered the inaugural speech. M. Radhakrishnan, the State General Secretary of AITUC,

was also in attendance.

P. Kalidasan, the All India President of the Para Medical Lab Education and Welfare Association and the State President of the Tamil Nadu Medical Department Employees Federation, participated in the event. S. Thanvanthan, the State Vice President of the Para Medical Lab Education and Welfare Association, was present as well.

Members of the Sanitation Workers Association State Executive Committee, including S. Nila Oli, A. Eswari, Muthulakshmi, and Vijaya, spoke about their demands. Dr. G.R. Ravindranath, the General Secretary of the Doctors Association for Social Equality, delivered the concluding address.

The 2025 Global Report on Food Crises

Escalating Hunger Amid Multiple Crises



*Diary of
International
Events*

C. Adhikesavan

In an era where technological advancements promise abundance, the stark reality of global hunger continues to deepen. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) has released the 2025 Global Report on Food Crises, painting a grim picture of a worsening crisis. This annual assessment reveals that acute food insecurity and child malnutrition have surged for the sixth consecutive year, impacting 295 million people across 53 countries—an alarming increase of 13.7 million from 2023. As conflicts rage, economies falter, and climate extremes intensify, the report underscores the urgent need for a paradigm shift in addressing food insecurity.

The Global Report on Food Crises (GRFC) serves as a critical tool for analysing food and nutrition crises worldwide. It focuses on acute food insecurity and malnutrition affecting both resident and displaced populations. Produced collaboratively by UN agencies, regional bodies, donors, and technical organisations, the GRFC is coordinated by the Food Security Information Network (FSIN). This network operates in support of the Global Network Against Food Crises, ensuring a comprehensive, data-driven approach to understanding and combating hunger. By aggregating insights from diverse sources, the report provides policymakers, humanitarian actors, and the global community with actionable intelligence to mitigate these crises.

One of the most disturbing key findings from the 2025 report is the relentless rise in hunger and malnutrition. Acute food insecurity now affects 22.6 per cent of the assessed population, a figure that has hovered above 20 per cent for the fifth straight year. This persistent elevation signals a failure in global efforts to curb the tide. The impact on vulnerable groups, particularly children, is devastating. Nearly 38 million children under five are suffering from acute malnutrition in 26 nutrition crises worldwide. Hotspots include

Gaza, Mali, Sudan, and Yemen, where the combination of conflict and limited access to aid exacerbates the situation. These statistics are not mere numbers; they represent lives stunted by deprivation, with long-term consequences for health, education, and economic productivity.

Conflict emerges as the predominant driver of this hunger epidemic. In 2024, it affected 140 million people across 20 countries, making it the leading cause of food insecurity. The report confirms famine in Sudan, with critical hunger levels also reported in Gaza, South Sudan, Haiti, and Mali. In these

those in Afghanistan, South Sudan, Syria, and Yemen. In Afghanistan, for example, economic isolation following political changes has led to skyrocketing food prices, while in Yemen, years of war have intertwined with economic collapse, leaving households unable to meet daily needs. These shocks often interact with other drivers, creating layered vulnerabilities that are hard to unravel.

Climate extremes further fuel the crisis, with El Niño-driven droughts and floods pushing 18 countries into acute food insecurity and impacting over 96 million people. Southern Africa, South-eastern Asia, and the Horn of Africa

ment, and aid, perpetuating their vulnerability. In regions like the Middle East and sub-Saharan Africa, mass movements due to conflict and climate events have strained host communities, leading to widespread food shortages.

Amid these dire findings, the 2025 GRFC issues a stark warning: humanitarian funding is



regions, violence disrupts agricultural production, supply chains, and humanitarian deliveries, trapping populations in cycles of desperation. For instance, in Sudan, ongoing civil strife has led to widespread displacement and destruction of farmland, pushing millions to the brink. Similarly, in Gaza, blockades and military actions have severely restricted food imports, leading to acute shortages.

Economic shocks compound the problem, driving hunger in 15 countries and affecting 59.4 million people. Factors such as inflation and currency devaluation have eroded purchasing power, making basic staples unaffordable for many. The report notes that economic shocks have become the primary driver in protracted crises like

have been particularly hard-hit. In southern Africa, prolonged dry spells have decimated crops, leading to failed harvests and livestock losses. Floods in parts of Asia have washed away fields and infrastructure, displacing communities and destroying food stocks. The report highlights how these weather events, exacerbated by climate change, are becoming more frequent and severe, undermining resilience in agrarian societies.

Forced displacement adds another dimension to the crisis. Nearly 95 million forcibly displaced people reside in countries grappling with food crises, where access to nutrition is further compromised by overcrowding, limited resources, and insecure environments. Refugees and internally displaced persons often face barriers to land, employ-

declining at its fastest rate in years, even as hunger reaches record levels. To break this vicious cycle, the report calls for a “bold reset” in global strategies. This involves pooling resources and scaling up successful interventions that have proven effective in past responses. Prioritizing the needs and voices of affected communities is crucial, ensuring that solutions are context-specific and inclusive. Investments in local food systems and integrated nutrition services can foster sustainability, while building resilience in crisis-prone rural areas—where 70 per cent of the population depends on agriculture—is essential. Enhancing early warning systems, promoting climate-smart farming, and addressing root causes like inequality and governance failures are key steps forward.

Bihar’s Voter Purge...

From Front Page

anecdote provoked laughter, it is a grim symptom of the chaos and haste that has defined the SIR. Enumerators under pressure have issued certificates without proper verification. Errors abound in the draft rolls: husbands recorded as fathers, wives as husbands, and entire households missing. But behind the clerical absurdities lies a deeper design that is far from funny. The exclusions are not random. They overwhelmingly affect the poor, the socially backward, minorities, adivasis, and migrant workers – precisely those communities who historically struggled the most to secure politi-

cal voice. For them, this exercise is not a harmless bureaucratic drill. It is the removal of the most fundamental guarantee of citizenship: the right to vote. Political parties of the Mahagathbandhan in Bihar have sounded the alarm. The SIR is nothing short of “votebandi”, a calculated attempt to shrink the electorate in a manner that benefits the ruling establishment. The deletions come just months ahead of the Bihar Assembly elections, fuelling suspicions that this is not merely administrative incompetence but a weaponisation of the Election Commission’s constitutional mandate. Instead of facilitating participation, the ma-

chinery of electoral revision is being used to pre-emptively strip away the right to choose from millions of citizens. Political parties, including the CPI and civil society groups have moved the Supreme Court, challenging the SIR for violating constitutional guarantees under Articles 14, 19, 21, 325, and 326, as well as the provisions of the Representation of the People Act. The Court has indicated that it may intervene if the scale of disenfranchisement is proven, and hearings are due in mid-August. But for now, the burden falls on the excluded to file objections by the September 1 deadline – a task nearly impossible for migrant labourers or the illiterate poor who may not even know they have been deleted.

The timing, the methods, and the opacity of the SIR all point in one direction: a deliberate strategy to undo the gains of universal franchise. The forces that always had contempt for India’s democratic experiment seem to have found a new tool: not the outright denial of voting rights, but their quiet erasure through procedural manoeuvres in a compromised institutional environment. If this model is allowed to stand in Bihar, it may be replicated elsewhere, hollowing out the promise of political equality brick by brick. Each name struck off the rolls is not just an administrative entry; it is a citizen silenced, a voice erased from the chorus of the republic. The right to vote is not a formality. It is the

living legacy of our freedom movement, the instrument that gave political dignity to the millions once deemed unworthy of citizenship. To take that right away through a process that is opaque, exclusionary, and riddled with errors is to betray the spirit of the Constitution and the sacrifices that built it. Bihar’s Special Intensive Revision is more than a bureaucratic misadventure. It is a political act with the potential to distort democracy at its root. This must be resisted, challenged in court, exposed in public, and reversed. For if the franchise is diluted, the edifice of our democracy will stand weakened, and the voice of the poorest Indian, so hard-won in the crucible of independence, will once again be lost.

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Com. Arun Wankar - A Great Fighter for the Downtrodden

Arun Wankar, the former Nagpur District Secretary of the party, passed away on August 13, 2025, after a prolonged illness.

Arun Wankar began his political career as a student leader and was actively involved in the All India Students Federation (AISF). He gained prominence in Maharashtra during the D.Ed. and B.Ed. agitation, advocating for justice for poor students who had been deceived by private college owners. Under his relentless leadership, thousands of students in Vidarbha and



Dr Yugal Rayalu

across Maharashtra received the justice they deserved.

In addition to his work in student politics, Arun was active in the Kisan Sabha, eventually being appointed as the Secretary of the Maharashtra State Council of the Kisan Sabha. He organised a twenty-day sit-in protest to fight for the rights of landless farmers in the rural areas of Nagpur District. This struggle resulted in many landless farmers gaining farming rights. Arun also played a significant role

during the farmers' protests in Delhi, leading a large contingent from Nagpur and fearlessly speaking out against the Modi government and its anti-farmer policies.

As a rationalist, Comrade Arun Wankar rose above caste and religious politics. He had expressed his wish to donate his body for medical research during his lifetime. To honour his request, the Nagpur District Council of the Party arranged for a dignified funeral, led by Nagpur District Party Secretary Dr. Yugal Rayalu. His body, draped in the Red Flag, was donated to the Government Medical College of Nagpur. Senior party leaders, Dr. Ratinath Mishra and Mohandas Naidu, were also in attendance at the funeral.

On Record ...

Keeping in mind the 'sensitivity of the reservation policy,' and divergent views 'you will face a lot of opposition, it (issue) should be dealt with carefully,' the bench orally observed. The Supreme Court on Monday issued notice to the Centre on a plea which seeks to exclude the "creamy layer" within the Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe from enjoying the benefits of reservation in government jobs and education, and to extend the benefits only to the economically backward people within these communities.

While seeking the Centre's response on the PIL filed by Yamuna Prasad and Ramashankar Prajapati, a bench of Justices Surya Kant and Joymalya Bagchi told the petitioners' counsel, advocate Reena N. Singh, that the matter may face opposition from various quarters. - *The Telegraph*, August 12.

The US regulator told a New York court that despite repeated requests to India's ministry of law and justice, summons to Gautam Adani, Sagar Adani and the Adani Group in a high-profile bribery case remain undelivered. The United States Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) has informed a New York court that six months after it sought India's assistance to serve summons to Gautam Adani, his nephew Sagar Adani, and the Adani Group, the documents have still not been delivered.

In a status report filed in the Eastern District court on August 11, the SEC said it had "requested assistance from Indian authorities to effect service under the Hague Service Convention" but that

"those authorities have not yet effected service." The SEC's complaint alleges that the defendants paid bribes worth Rs 2,029 crore to secure solar power deals through the Solar Energy Corporation of India (SECI). - *The Telegraph*, August 12.

Several people at a local pastor's premises in Bihar's Katihar district were injured after Bajrang Dal members allegedly attacked them during a Sunday prayer on August 10. The outfit claimed efforts were underway to convert people. Police have launched an investigation into the incident.

One of the people who was at the pastor's residence claimed that "40-45 people believing in Christianity" had gathered for a weekly prayer meeting around 10 am." Around 30-40 men, some carrying iron rods, sticks and even pistols, attacked us. At least 10 people were attacked with iron rods," he claimed. One of the individuals has filed a complaint at the Sahayak police station, naming the "local Bajrang Dal president, Pawan Poddar, and another person among those leading the attack". - *The Indian Express*, August 12.

The Election Commission of India on August 9, 2025 said it has delisted 334 Reg-



istered Unrecognized Political Parties (RUPPs) after an inquiry. If a party does not contest elections continuously for six years, it will be taken off the list of registered parties, the guidelines for the registration of political parties state. Moreover, in accordance with Section 29A of the Representation of the People Act, 1951, parties have to provide details at the time of their registration, including the name of the party, its address, and the names of office-bearers, with any change communicated to the ECI without delay. - *The Hindu*, August 9.

- Compiled by C. Adhikesavan

ECI Must Answer for Electoral Roll Manipulations: CPI

Communist Party of India issued the following statement from CPI Parliamentary Party Office on August 11, 2025 on the forcible detention of Rajya Sabha CPI MPs P Sandosh Kumar and P. P. Suneer by the Delhi Police under the Union Home Ministry while they were on their way to the Election Commission of India as part of a peaceful protest march with MPs from the INDIA Bloc:

The Communist Party of India strongly condemns the forcible detention of CPI MPs P Sandosh Kumar and P. P. Suneer by the Delhi Police under the Union Home Ministry while they were on their way to the Election Commission of India as part of a peaceful protest march with MPs from the INDIA bloc. This draconian action exposes a government that is increasingly afraid of democratic questions and an administration that responds to legitimate demands for accountability with intimidation and force.

The CPI believes this is a grave assault on the constitutional rights of elected representatives and an ominous sign for the health of Indian democ-

racy. In the words of CPI Rajya Sabha leader P. Sandosh Kumar, "The democracy we cherish is under siege when MPs are barred from even seeking answers from the Election Commission. The scale of manipulation that has come out has the potential to dismantle the very foundations of our democracy and we seek answers from the ECI."

CPI MP P Suneer said, "This is not law enforcement, it is intimidation. They fear the truth, and they fear the people's voice. We will not be deterred and will continue our protest, both inside the Parliament and on streets." The CPI draws attention to mounting and credible apprehensions of large-scale manipulations of electoral rolls across Karnataka, Maharashtra



and Kerala, where patterns of voter deletion, duplication and suspicious new registrations have been observed. Equally alarming is the ongoing Special Intensive Revision of electoral rolls in Bihar, which threatens to disenfranchise vast numbers of voters, particularly migrants, minorities, and economically disadvantaged sections, by imposing documentation requirements that many cannot meet. These measures, far from strengthening democracy, risk turning elections into a managed

exercise to suit the political interests of those in power. The Election Commission's silence and inaction in the face of such grave allegations have eroded public trust to unprecedented levels. Its credibility is at an all-time low. The CPI questions whether the ECI still functions as an independent constitutional authority or whether it has become complicit with the ruling BJP in enabling electoral malpractice. At a time when transparency and vigilance are most needed, the Commission's reluctance to act, coupled with

the Union government's use of the police to muzzle protest, sends a chilling message about the state of our democracy. The CPI reiterates its unwavering commitment to defend the people's right to free and fair elections. We will continue to raise these questions in Parliament, in the streets, and before the people. No amount of police detentions or administrative suppression will deter us from demanding accountability from those entrusted with safeguarding the democratic process."

What is the Value of a Dryland Farmer's Life?

In the regions of Maharashtra where farmers' suicides are most frequent, more than half of the affected families are denied assistance on the grounds that the land is not in the farmer's name, or that there is no clear proof of "recovery harassment." In that case, will the announcement of the state's bright future ever truly become a reality?

The statistics on farmers' suicides published by the Central government show that

Maharashtra is the most severely affected state. However, in regions of the state where irrigation is available, fortunately suicides do not occur. Farmers opt to die



Dr Srinivas
Khandewale, Dheeraj
Kadam

only when every source to keep alive dries up. In Vidarbha, except for

Wardha district, the Nagpur division receives more rainfall and is a rice-growing belt; while the Amravati division and Wardha district are rain-dependent dryland districts. Published data shows that suicides are concentrated in these two belts where rain is always scarce. Amravati division and Marathwada; and even within them, Western Vidarbha (Varhad - Amravati division) has seen more suicides than Marathwada. This

means that, in the country, Maharashtra, and within Maharashtra, the Amravati division has become the epi-centre of suicides.

When the Maharashtra government makes announcements about the bright future of the state, statistics show that these announcements exclude the agricultural areas of Vidarbha and Marathwada. It is not that the government

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