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Organ of the
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NEW DEMOCRACY

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Students/Youth Revolt in Nepal & What it Signifies

“Those who oppress the students come to grief.”

8/9 September 2025. A Political Quake shook Nepal sweeping away the political establishment. In less than 30 hours all symbols of political power were stormed- Parliament, Singh Durbar-seat of Govt., Prime Minister House and even Supreme Court. Jails were forced open. Police and administrative offices were stormed all over Nepal.

What began as a peaceful protest at 9 AM close to Parliament morphed into one of the strongest upsurges of people's anger seen anywhere. Number of participants swelled into over hundreds of thousands. K.P. Sharma Oli led CPI (UML) - Nepali Congress Govt. with other coalition partners as well, had no idea of the anger sweeping the people and no respect for the issues being raised by them. It resorted to massive repression, ordered shooting of demonstrators. 34 of them have been killed while 1,368 injured. This is the biggest massacre of the people since the fall of monarchy. This brutal suppression brought Nepal to boil, the protests becoming larger and larger, wider and wider. Those who considered people expendable were expended. Those who pretended to be invincible were trampled into dust.

What is being described as Gen Z protest is actually the revolt of the future against the present- decadent, corrupt and authoritarian govt. managed by self-serving leaders. Ban of social media platforms just precipitated the anger building up due to high unemployment, rampant corruption and growing inequality. It is a

revolt of students and youth who are aware that they have no prospect of employment, who witness children of high and mighty getting all the benefits. Slogan of “Nepo babies or Nepo Kids” resonated as a symbol. Just remember how the misconduct of then Crown Prince Paras had become a symbol of decadence of monarchy under King Gyanendra.

These protests were initiated by some NGOs working among youth, some of these NGOs also receiving funds from foreign sources. These protests were organized at many centres which show some organized effort, even the role of various vested interests may have been there but it is the anger of youth and the people at large that made the protests what they became. Though the protests were centred in Kathmandu, other major cities and towns also became centres of protests, and people all over Nepal rejoiced over the protest and its success. People of Nepal, including those living abroad, were indignant over the firing on the protesters and the high death toll.

This is not a revolt for going to the past but one for moving to the future. Issue of attempts to restore monarchy is being raised but it has not been an issue in the protest. Existing Multi-party Democracy dominated by some parties has failed the people of Nepal, just like Monarchy had failed them and their rule was overthrown. The students and youth may not have a clear vision of what they want to bring, nor a clear path for how to achieve that, but they are clear about what they want to destroy and why, and went about it in earnest. Such revolts may at times not deliver immediately the results sought for, such upsurges are sometimes even used by rightist forces who utilize people’s anger- even a playing role in organizing them- but they time and again show the potential of the people and the tremendous energy that can be

harnessed to bring about real revolutionary change. Let us not reproach them for what they may not do, but greet them for what they have done. Upsurges of youth including students highlight the pressing issues of the people and the country and may help political forces to build on them. By themselves these do not bring change in the 'system'.

Besides symbols of Govt., leaders of three major parties- Nepali Congress, CPN (UML) including its breakaway section CPN (US) and CPN (Maoist Centre) who have dominated Govts. Since the abolition of monarchy- and their residences have been targeted and torched by the protesters. Nepali Congress is an old representative of ruling classes, had exhausted its entire positive role with the abolition of Monarchy. The present protests have also forcefully brought to light the degeneration of communist revolutionary organizations when they become the instruments of the ruling classes, of status quo rather than of revolutionary change, symbols of despair and hatred than of hope and inspiration. Their joining the so-called mainstream has turned them into the opposite of what they were. At the root of this degeneration is their abandoning of the revolution and the people. Both CPN (UML) and CPN (MC) have had glorious pasts which contrast with their inglorious present. CPN (UML), earlier CPN (ML), was born from the Jhapa peasant rebellion inspired by great Naxalbari peasant uprising. It joined Multi-party Democracy under Monarchy, abandoning revolutionary path being influenced by Deng revisionist theory. CPN (Maoist Centre), main continuation of CPN (Maoist) that had conducted People's War in Nepal from 1996 and played a pivotal role in abolition of Monarchy, renounced revolution in favour of multi-party competition concluding that in then uni-polar world (what they called as global state) victory of revolution was not

possible. Today the leaders of both have become vastly despised – Oli as a symbol of authoritarianism and Dahal (Prachand) as a symbol of opportunism. Their degeneration is definitely bad, but revolutionary forces must draw the appropriate lesson that economic corruption is generally preceded by political corruption i.e. abandoning the Revolution. When in power and for the sake of enjoying power, they did not carry out even measures like utilizing bank loans for employment generation nor did they write off people's loans so as not to anger imperialists.

Nepal is the poorest country in South Asia (per capita GDP \$1400). Its agriculture remains backward, industries undeveloped and vast hydropower potential untapped. It is exploited by large neighbour India, imperialist powers especially US and UK; China has also joined this club over last decades. Indian Govt. has big influence in Nepal and has been having big brotherly attitude towards Nepal, and for long there has been jostling between India and China for influence. In recent period contradiction between USA and China has intensified and Nepal has also become a playground for this intensifying contradiction.

While feudal monarchy has been abolished, but semi-feudal relations are predominant in rural areas while imperialist penetration has grown. With successive govts. not addressing the real problems of the people, Nepal has continued to be in the abyss of backwardness, exploitation, destitution and poverty. Larger population of Nepal lives in the villages, with urbanization only 22% and nearly 65% of them dependent on Agriculture with nearly half of the population directly engaged in agriculture. Attempts at land reforms have been half-hearted and have not basically changed agrarian relations. According to a recent estimate, 10% of the rural people control over 40% land. Agriculture contributes 24.5% to the

GDP of Nepal.

Since a long time, youth of Nepal have been going abroad for employment. Youth unemployment rate is very high- according to World Bank 32.06% - and 7.5% of population, mostly youth, lives abroad for employment. Remittances from these Nepalis constitute 33.1% of the Budget, among the highest in the world. But the successive Govts. have not addressed the issue of unemployment. They have been busy in reaching agreements with foreign countries for supply of labour!

The revolt of students/youth in Nepal is not an isolated phenomenon. In our neighbourhood alone, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh have each witnessed huge upsurge of students and youth sweeping away those in power. What comes next is determined by the role of different political forces. Students/youth revolt prepares the ground but may not and does not control the ultimate outcome. Argalaya (Sri Lanka) propelled JVP led Front to power while Bangladesh is still grappling with holding new elections. In all these cases- Sri Lanka, Bangladesh and now Nepal, Army has been left with the political power, with the responsibility to manage political transition. This is only our neighbourhood. Students/youth protests are shaking the foundations of rule in Kenya and Angola in Africa and in Indonesia. The battle cry is similar - against unemployment and corruption, the latter issue getting traction among people due to increasing inequality and vulgar show of wealth. Nor is the revolt confined to students and youth. France is on a volcano of working-class upheaval even as the successive govts. try to impose debt burden on the working people. French ruling class wants to prevent Left forces there from becoming the main challenger to Ultra-right neo-fascist forces but is unable to do that, thus paving the way for a straight fight between

parliamentary left led by militant LFI and Le Pen led RN, mainly a class battle. These are often fought to finish in France. These revolts / upsurges should be seen in the backdrop of deepening crisis of Imperialism which is hobbling from one catastrophe to another since explosion of financial economic crisis of 2008.

Students/Youth upsurge has opened the door for intensification of people's movements especially struggles of different sections. It has destroyed the political status quo, the rule of select leaders. Though main upsurge of Nepal students ended on September 9, protests continue in different centres in Nepal. What direction they take will be influenced by the political settlement arrived at by Army and the role of different political forces. In brief, whether this Youth Festival leads to festival of the people will be influenced by a number of factors.

Central Committee,

September 10, 2025

CPI (ML)-New Democracy



North East Delhi Violence - Justice Denied

A two judge bench of the Delhi High Court has denied bail to 7 activists incarcerated without trial for over five years after being charged under UAPA sections in connection with the 2020 North East Delhi Violence. These bail appeals were distinct, separate appeals, have each been in the court since 2022, i.e., for a period of three years, and were clubbed together by the High Court. The seven include four youth and students- Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha, Meeran Haider and three others.

These seven and nine others are accused under the political FIR No 59/ 2020 under UAPA. They are also accused under its Section 15 which criminalizes “...activity threatening unity and integrity, security, economic security or sovereignty with intent to strike terror or likely to strike terror.” This is by “use of bombs, dynamite or any other means”. Section 16 UAPA is also applied to them, which carries a death penalty.

There are three clear positions taken by the High court judgement.

First, that calling for and mobilizing for “*chakka jaam*”, which basically translates to a strike and may be the meaning could extend to a road block, falls in the category of “any others means” of striking terror and thus doing an anti national act! This is new ground that the Delhi High Court has covered. All democratic forces and organizations must take note of this as *chakka jaam* has been part of democratic protests.

Second, the Court has upheld the position of the State that calling for *chakka jaam* is equivalent to calling for the violence that happened subsequently. So, WhatsApp meetings or speeches to do a *chakka jaam* against CAA NRC NPR or call to strengthen sit in protests including by organizing people for such protests, or even saying the CAA NPR NRC laws will hurt Muslims only etc. - calling/ planning for protest against these laws or organizing for it is equal to planning for and organizing the North East Delhi violence.

Third, that people including youth and students can be kept in jail for over five years solely and only on the basis of WhatsApp group chats about a *chakka jaam*, a “flurry of phone calls” after violence breaks out and “protected witnesses” who claim to have been part of “conspiracy meetings”.

These witnesses have not been cross examined under oath in any Court, their names are unknown- they are only in the charge sheet filed by the Delhi police. The charge sheet criminalizes the “flurry of phone calls” after the violence breaks out. Common people in the entire city must have been making phone calls in worry and horror. And would not an absence of phone calls by people who were openly with the protests going on since mid December 2019 in various parts of the city been far more suspicious than a “flurry” of calls?

The 2020 violence- in this, 17 were non Muslims of the 53 people who lost their lives. All the accused of “conspiring” for that violence- these 7 accused and the 9 others too- are Muslims. They stand condemned before the trial has even started- the Solicitor General opined against the bail pleas before the Court- “If you are doing something against the nation, you better be in jail”. A prosecution’s Court- “if you are doing something ...” Had they? The state accuses them and the High Court bench holds them guilty. It

did not even conduct a proper mini trial.

In fact this strengthens a dangerous legal argument that to organize protests against an Act for demanding its repeal is itself anti-national. Participants in all such movements can be branded anti-national and can be incarcerated indefinitely for long periods. The entire attempt of the BJP- RSS Central Govt. has been to assert that protest against the CAA NRC NPR is itself criminal and anti-national. The vicious attitude of the prosecution is clear. The High Court has essentially endorsed that position.

The High Court bench, by clubbing the petitions, has escaped responsibility for addressing the different arguments raised by each of the accused seeking bail. They may have all quoted parity with those accused who have got bail and all drawn a parity with an earlier Najib case, but their other arguments were different. Sharjeel was in jail a month before the North East Delhi violence started, Gulfisha had apparently created a WhatsApp group to ensure women participated in the protests. Shifa ur Rehman, President of an organization called AAJMI (alumni of Jamia university) “most probably misused” his presidency... but the Court did not call this out as a prejudice and not evidence. If to protest against the CAA NRC is itself anti national, how should the Supreme Court move to repeatedly send its three interlocutors to speak to the protesting women at Shaheen Bagh be characterized?

In the entire period of the tens of women sit-ins in Delhi, there were clearly two active sides. One was either part of the protest or actively sympathized with it and even joined it - and these were not only Muslims but also democratic women organizations, progressive and democratic organizations and individuals. The second active side was of those who viciously opposed these protests, were mostly linked to the BJP RSS ruling at the Centre

and moved with state protection. The High Court has actually taken a general position with one side, not applying itself to the merit of the pleas in each bail petition.

These cases under UAPA are part and parcel of the BJP RSS agenda to criminalize dissent, to label minorities especially Muslims as all potentially threats to “nation” and thus ‘other’ them.

The Supreme Court has often upheld “bail is the rule” though recently benches have modified this pronouncement itself in the case of UAPA accused. To deny bail to these youth who have already spent 5 years in jail, is a travesty of justice. There are over 900 witnesses in the police charge sheet. The time line for the trial is years and years.

In this order Delhi High Court has not followed the various directions in the judgements of Supreme Court. Supreme Court has recognized that keeping in jail for long period before conviction i.e. pre-trial, is a violation of constitutional right under Article 21. Even while taking cognizance of strict provisions of UAPA regarding grant of bail, Supreme Court has held that constitutional right is above these provisions concerning bail.

In these cases linked to North East Delhi violence, the list of witnesses is long and there is no possibility of trial concluding in near future. If for this pre-trial period the accused are to be kept in jail, then it amounts to punishing without the crime being proved and no just law can permit this. Supreme Court has also mentioned this in its judgements. In fact, Govt.’s purpose is not to prove their ‘crime’ but to punish them through legal process. It is a clear example of process itself being the punishment.

Those denied justice by the High Court will approach Supreme Court. Two of them have already announced the intention to do so.

Supreme Court will have an occasion to examine different legal aspects and to ensure that standards decided by itself are applied in this case to undo gross injustice.

The reality of those 2020 dates in Delhi was the open threats and utterances of prominent BJP leaders who publicly threatened the protestors at the tens of Anti CAA protest sites in Delhi. Nothing came of the petitions demanding cases of hate speech be registered against such leaders.

The issue of CAA NPR NRC laws is yet an active issue. The entire SIR exercise being carried out by the ECI in Bihar began with a demand for 11 documents- all proofs of citizenship. The ECI then upheld clearly its right to determine citizenship. It is mainly the fight back of the people of Bihar that has forced the Supreme Court to ensure that the Aadhar Card is taken up as the 12th document. The fight back is along with the realization that what was being asserted by democratic forces in 2019 is actually the reality- such 'proofs of citizenship' drives will target minorities, but will definitely also target all poor and especially all migrants. Among migrants the biggest casualty, as figures have proved in Bihar, are women. The maximum such women will be of the majority community. This will not cause much discomfort to those who subscribe to Manuvadi patriarchy.



Expose Divisive, Nefarious, Anti-people Reactionary Nature of RSS

Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh (RSS) founded in 1925 on September 27 is completing a century of its existence. It has been ruling the country continuously for over past 11 years through its electoral wing, Bhartiya Janata Party (BJP). It had earlier led NDA Govt. at the Centre between 1998 and 2004, having formed a 13-day Govt. in 1996. It has also been a part of Union Govt. led by Janata Party between 1977 and 1979. It has been in power in a number of states either on its own strength or as a part of coalition. It always represented the most reactionary section of Indian ruling classes. Its programme and vision is fascist and it is today trying to impose fascist dictatorship over the country.

RSS was formed in the backdrop of rising movement of the people of the country against British colonialism. Energized by the victory of Great October Socialist Revolution and in response to the brutal Jallianwala Bagh massacre by British colonial rulers, a great upsurge of people's anger burst forth in India. It was channelized by Gandhi led civil disobedience movement. Gandhiji called an end to this movement after Chauri Chaura incident. This abrupt withdrawal demoralized the people who were seething with anger against atrocious rule of British imperialism, but it encouraged reactionary forces of different hues to disrupt the growing unity of the people of the country against the colonial rule. Communal reactionary forces built their strength on this people's

disillusionment and unleashed a programme to communally polarize the then India.

RSS was formed in 1925 inspired by the vision of Italian fascist ruler Benito Mussolini. Both Hedgewar, founder of RSS and B.S. Moonje, its ideological leader (and a leader of Hindu Mahasabha) appreciated the reactionary Italian fascists and fashioned their outfit RSS along similar lines. Moonje visited Italy and met Mussolini in 1931. It was formed and functioned as armed volunteers of reactionary classes. With coming of Hitler led Nazis to power in Germany and their targeting Jews in Germany and territories occupied by them, RSS became an admirer of Hitler especially his elimination of Jews as a model for dealing with minorities.

RSS was founded to counter the rising tide of freedom movement especially its ethos of secularism, democracy, social justice and federalism. It became an expression of the most reactionary sections of the ruling classes, princes and big feudals aligned with British colonial power. RSS consciously kept aloof from the freedom struggle, rather aligned itself with the colonial power and did everything to not displease the colonial masters. To disrupt the unity of the people in anti-colonial movement, RSS adopted the stand of Hindu nation. In this respect, it was an organizational expression of the Hindutva trend which had taken root in parts of India under British patronage after defeat of Indian people in 1857 in what came to be known as First All India War for Independence. This Hindutva trend was strongly represented in Indian National Congress as well in its right wing and they were to both utilize and shield RSS. Nurtured within the womb of Hindu Mahasabha, RSS adopted a programme of militarizing Hindus. It was not to fight British colonial masters but fellow Indians who did not agree with

their vision. RSS was opposed to Indian nationalism and counterposed their Hindu nation to this. RSS ideologue Golwalkar identified Muslims, Christians and Communists as enemies of his Hindu Rashtra.

RSS did not fight for freedom from colonial rule even of Hindus. RSS wanted to build Hindu nation with its reactionary caste, patriarchal and undemocratic rule embodying feudal values with the help of colonial rulers. Colonial rulers found RSS useful for disrupting the unity of the people of India against colonial rule. RSS was initially helped by some princes, but it also remained close to Hindu Mahasabha as well as right wing of Congress, functioning as armed volunteers used to keep the communal cauldron boiling. In that period, it was close to Santani wing of Hindu Mahasabha which also had Arya Samajis. It upheld prescriptions of *Manusmriti* to target oppressed castes, tribals and women. And it merged these with myths of glory of so-called ancient Brahmanical period, denigrating other religions. To make its rule over all of India, it opposed federalism as many provinces and regions in pre-partition India were dominated by other religions. Despite its upper-caste chauvinism, caste question remains its Achilles heel as it needs these castes for electoral victories.

RSS vision has been based on *Manuwadi* upper caste chauvinist patriarchal society, opposed to other religions in India especially Islam. This vision was also useful to the big capitalists who were rising as junior partners of British imperialism. And a section of them too became its sponsors, though mainly supporting Congress. RSS vision of Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan was an expression of reactionary sections of Hindu society especially in North and West India. But the basic aspect of its programme is continued domination of upper castes over oppressed castes, tribals and

minority religions.

RSS remained a marginal force till communal partition of India in 1947. It played an active role in communal violence in the wake of Partition, that gave it a base among Hindus who were violently displaced from their homes in then Pakistan. It came out boldly in support of declaring India as a Hindu Rashtra, wanted *Manusmriti* in place of the Constitution and opposed the tricolour as a national flag in favour of saffron Hindu religious flag. It stood for violent suppression of the struggle of the people and for dictatorial rule over the country, opposing parliamentary system. Its role in the assassination of Gandhiji was widely discussed and RSS was banned. However, the ban was quickly lifted due to its closeness to the right wing of the Congress. At that time, it formed the Bhartiya Jan Sangh as its electoral wing to intervene in the political scene. Today's Bhartiya Janata Party is its present form after an interlude of Jan Sangh's merger with Janata Party.

As Congress came under the leadership of Nehru, especially after death of Sardar Patel, RSS came out in opposition to Congress. In this period Jan Sangh gained support from trading communities especially in North India i.e. Hindi belt, in addition to refugees especially from Punjab and some princes and capitalists. Trading communities, with their narrow outlook, are often repository of religious nationalism. This period marked Jan Sangh forging alliances with other opposition parties. In this period, i.e. post-1977, RSS's electoral wing BJP even adopted Gandhian socialism for a brief period.

Two important developments catapulted RSS to be the main force of the ruling classes in the country. First was the open adoption of Hindu communal position by Congress under Indira Gandhi especially after it lost power in South Indian states. It

brought the Hindu communal agenda of RSS to the mainstream of ruling class politics. Congress first targeted Sikhs and after Rajiv-Longowal Accord, Muslims. Gates of Babri Masjid were unlocked in this period. Ram Mandir movement had gained momentum, ultimately benefiting RSS and its aggressive communalism. Second was the implementation of Mandal commission, which brought upper castes, especially in Hindi states, overwhelmingly over to RSS-BJP. On the other hand, oppressed castes were divided and leaders of many of them fell prey to micro-management of RSS through so-called social engineering. This explains the strength of RSS-BJP in North and West India. RSS-BJP expanded their base on this model in several other parts of the country. In Assam, RSS-BJP utilized the particular mix of communities and backed Assamese upper castes while striking deals with other sections, thus carving out a base in Assam and other North East states.

When Indian economy went into decline in the early second decade of this century and Congress was unable to further the interests of corporate as they would have liked, a large section of big capital i.e. corporate, started supporting RSS for implementing their agenda. On the basis of this support i.e. of corporate and upper caste landlords, buttressed by people's feelings against corruption in high places which was rampant under Congress rule, RSS-BJP came to power with a clear majority in 2014. From there started their march to impose fascist dictatorship over India.

RSS is today the most powerful representative of big capitalist and big landlord ruling classes. Since colonial period it has been a pro-imperialist force and has deep links with imperialist powers, especially western imperialist powers. As the crisis of imperialist system deepens, there is a growing trend towards fascicization in many countries. In India too, socio-economic crisis is deepening

with the resultant eruption of people's struggles. This is a situation which is pregnant with the possibility of revolutionary change. However, this situation can also be utilized by reactionary forces to bring fascism. Hence ruling classes are relying on RSS to suppress the people and are supporting its fascist drive. Today, RSS represents the danger of fascist dictatorship in India. It has the programme, strength and centralized organizational structure which other ruling class parties lack. Furthermore, it is helped by the domination of upper castes in the administrative structure especially its top echelons- may be referred to as deep state- where Hindutva ideology has a strong base.

Its swadeshi plank is bogus and is meant to divert attention from its service to imperialist powers. When Bajpai Govt. lifted quantitative restrictions on imports or when Modi permitted wholesale entry of foreign capital in different sectors RSS supported the Govt. It uses its swadeshi plank only to hoodwink the people and flaunt its nationalist credentials.

RSS-BJP rule in states is marked by attacks against lives and properties of minorities especially Muslims, ushering in "bulldozer raj", increasing atrocities by upper caste landlords against Dalits and Extremely Backward Castes with support of police and administration, intensifying drive to forcibly displace tribals from their land in the interest of corporate and increasing attempts to impose *manuwadi* code on women.

Over the last 100 years of its existence, RSS today represents a grave danger to whatever rights and liberties exist for the people. It portrays itself as a cultural organization but it controls BJP and several other organizations like BMS, BKS, ABVP, VHP, Bajrang Dal, Durga Vahini, Adivasi Kalyan Parishad and a myriad of others. These are officially listed on its site. But in fact, it is a hydra headed

organization- it has many organizations that it uses for inciting violence especially communal violence. Besides, it floats several organizations for the purpose of fomenting communal and caste trouble but does not acknowledge them, thus adopting the screen of deniability.

RSS has systematically tried to monopolize all the cultural and religious events in the different parts of the country. Among tribals, it tries to Hinduize them, weaning them away from their traditional values, thus inculcating patriarchal and caste values, neglecting their traditional heroes or saffronizing them where ignoring is not possible. RSS is monopolizing all religious activities, using them to propagate its sectarian, communal agenda. It organizes religious tours, uses govt. resources to provide facilities for religious events and inculcates hatred among participants towards other religions. Even cultural activities hitherto celebrated by different communities are usurped by it for its communal agenda.

RSS has focused on saffronization of education, teaching mythical history to young people, teaching distorted history in text books, erasing whole periods of Indian history while distorting several others. This is an attempt to poison the minds of youth.

It has built a vast network of armed volunteers. Its *shakhas* are vehicles of recruitment of such volunteers. These are held in official premises, while RSS functionaries are permitted to hold Govt. jobs treating RSS as a cultural organization, thereby increasing its reach and control over the people.

All these are attempts to prepare for imposing fascist dictatorship over the country. All these are methods to buttress support for terroristic rule of big capitalists and big landlords, subservient to imperialist powers. This danger should be understood by all revolutionary, democratic and progressive

sections and people. We should educate our ranks, cadres at different levels, activists and sympathizers about RSS, what it stands for, its methods of work and danger to Indian society and politics it represents.

Central Committee of CPI (ML)-New Democracy calls upon all committees, units to educate activists and people about RSS on the occasion of hundred years of its existence. We call upon all revolutionary, progressive and democratic forces including left parties to undertake such activities to expose RSS and build an anti-fascist movement in the country.

CPI (ML) – New Democracy

25/9/2025



CPI(ML) New Democracy Statement

**Condemn Repression In
Ladakh ; Support
Demands of the People**

CPI (ML) -New Democracy strongly condemns the use of lethal force against the youth protests in Ladakh on September 24. In this use of live ammunition, 4 youth were killed and over 100 injured. Among the killed, three were youth aged between 19 to 21 years. Youth protest was part of the agitation going on for a long time in Ladakh, in which main demands include statehood for the region and its inclusion under Schedule VI of the Constitution. Well

known activist Sonam Wangchuk and 34 others had been on indefinite hunger strike since September 10. On September 23, condition of two, both elderly, deteriorated and they had to be hospitalized. This caused anguish among the youth. Nearly 5000 of them went from the Dharna site for protest. Reportedly office of BJP and that of Leh Development Council were attacked.

Ruling RSS-BJP has displayed utmost insensitivity in dealing with the issues of this border region, a Union Territory. Despite deteriorating conditions of protesters, Union Govt. kept a meeting on a much later date i.e. October 6. Protesters demanded early meeting, but Govt. turned a deaf ear.

Underlying issues are lack of jobs and rights over land. Protesters feel that inclusion in Sixth Schedule will ensure their rights over land while statehood will ensure jobs for the youth. These are justified demands.

In 2019, RSS-BJP Govt. had launched its fascist attack on J&K virtually annulling Article 370, repealing Article 35 A and dividing the state into two Union Territories- J&K and Ladakh. These were widely opposed by people of J&K. While bifurcating the state of J&K, RSS-BJP Govt. had promised to grant statehood to J&K and address issues of the people of Ladakh. Even these promises remain unfulfilled. Now RSS-BJP are blaming Sonam Wangchuk for inciting youth for violence, having all along ignored warnings of frustration building up among youth. Govt. is even now refusing to address the issues raised by the people of Ladakh. This shows not only insensitivity of RSS-BJP Govt. to the issues of the people but is also dangerous in this border region. They are blaming youth for covering up their own criminal negligence.

Hindutva of RSS-BJP rooted in “Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan” is

incapable of even understanding the issues of regional and religious minorities. They try to suppress them through use of force. Manipur in North East is burning for over two years but the Union Govt. has taken no meaningful steps. They consider that throwing crumbs to some elements in corporate driven 'development' is a panacea.

CPI (ML) - New Democracy demands immediate end to repression. Union Govt. must immediately announce inclusion of the region in Sixth Schedule and take steps to grant statehood to the region. They should stop vilifying the protesters and immediately start dialogue with their representatives.

CPI (ML) – New Democracy calls upon peace and justice loving people to condemn this repression and support just demands of the people of Ladakh.

Central Committee,

September 25, 2025

CPI (ML) - New Democracy

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Angolan Protest Against IMF - Dictated Austerity

● Sekhar

In recent years, Angola has found itself at the crossroads of economic reform and social unrest. Sparked by a series of austerity measures under the guidance of the International Monetary Fund (IMF), a wave of protests swept through the nation. What began as peaceful demonstrations against policies seen as unfairly impacting the most vulnerable, quickly escalated into tragedy when government forces responded with lethal force, resulting in the deaths of 22 citizens.

The aftermath has left deep scars on the country's political and social landscape, raising urgent questions about governance, accountability, and the human cost of economic restructuring.

Angola's Economic Challenges and IMF

Angola, a nation rich in oil and minerals, has long struggled with economic mismanagement, corruption, and the volatile swings of global commodity prices. Despite its wealth, the country faces high unemployment, poverty, and significant inequality. In the name of an effort to stabilize its economy and attract foreign investment, the Angolan government sought assistance from international organizations, resulting in an agreement with the IMF.

And 'Along came the Spider' and its web, to quote an English movie title. The IMF's involvement brought with it a series of

stringent economic reforms commonly known as austerity measures. These included cuts to fuel and food subsidies, public sector salary freezes, reductions in social spending, and new taxes. While the intent was to reduce budget deficits and restore fiscal discipline, for many Angolans these policies translated into higher living costs, diminished public services, and a shrinking social safety net.

The immediate trigger was the decision by the Government to cut fuel subsidies, raising diesel prices from 300 to 400 Kwanzas (\$0.33 to \$0.44) per litre. This hike sent transport and fuel costs soaring where at least half of the country is mired in poverty and inequality and where 90 per cent of the country's Capital Luanda's population depend upon blue and white minibus taxis, called **candongueiro**, for transportation. Much of Angola's working-class use these taxis for their daily transportation needs.

The Spark and the Public Mobilization

As the effects of the austerity measures rippled through Angolan society, discontent simmered, particularly among the urban poor and youth. Everyday life became a struggle—fuel prices soared, staple foods became unaffordable, and unemployment remained high. University students, labor unions, civil society organizations, and opposition parties began to organize protests, demanding a reversal of the most punishing cuts and more equitable economic policies.

In early July, small-scale protests began following the announcement of austerity measures. The movement escalated into mass protests on Monday, July 28th, when **candongueiro** drivers called for a three-day strike. The strike call became a rallying cry and tens of thousands of people joined the movement

nationwide. In Luanda, police opened fire on protesters and people stormed shops for food and supplies. Shops and businesses were shuttered as armed security forces patrolled the streets.

As clashes in Luanda spread to other areas, protests quickly ignited in cities like Huambo, Lubango, and Benguela. In Lubango, a police officer shot and killed a 16-year-old who was part of a group attempting to enter the offices of the ruling party, MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola), which has held power since Angola gained independence from colonial Portuguese rule. (We shall explore this further later.)

Social media became a powerful tool for mobilization, with activists sharing stories of hardship and calling for demonstrations in the capital, Luanda, and beyond. The protests were initially peaceful: marchers carried signs reading “Bread, Peace, and Justice” and chanted slogans against IMF policies and government corruption. Local TV stations and international outlets such as AFP and BBC relayed the stories of ordinary Angolans, highlighting their grievances and the harsh realities of hunger, poverty, high prices, and unemployment.

Angola is the second-largest producer of petroleum in Africa, after Nigeria. However, much of the oil extraction is carried out by multinational oil companies from the U.S. and Europe. These include the French company TotalEnergies, U.S. companies ExxonMobil and Chevron (which operates in 180 countries), the Italian company Eni (operating through a joint venture of AzuleEnergy with UK’s BP company, Azule again being joint venture between BP and Eni) and the Norwegian company Equinor, all of which are actively involved in offshore oil extraction in Angola.

Ironically, Angola’s state-owned company, Sonangol, participates in exploration and production only in partnership with

these international corporations. To offset the high costs imposed by these Western oil firms, the Government subsidizes fuel prices—a lifeline that has helped many Angolans afford basic goods.

These facts reveal that Angola's national oil resources do not truly belong to the Angolan people. They receive only crumbs—what remains after the profit hunger of international companies is satisfied. Now, under IMF stipulations, even those remaining crumbs are to be redirected toward settling the country's fiscal deficit—as if Angola and its people were two entirely separate entities. This so-called fiscal deficit is, in fact, the result of the relentless plunder of Angola's oil and mineral resources by imperialist countries, on whose behalf the IMF has imposed Structural Adjustment Programs (SAPs) and austerity measures on the Angolan masses.

Government Crackdown and Violence

Fearing the spread of unrest and questioning the legitimacy of the protest movement, the Government responded with a heavy hand. Riot police and military personnel were deployed to disperse crowds, often using tear gas, rubber bullets, and in several tragic instances, live ammunition. What began as a protest against fuel subsidy removals has now become an uprising against decades of socioeconomic misery.

As the armed forces resorted to sporadic gunfire across the capital Luanda and several other cities on July 28th to 30th, 22 protesters were killed. Nearly 200 people were injured in the violence while more than 1200 people had been arrested. While expressing regret for deaths at the hands of security forces, ministers stated that vandalism and rioting had triggered widespread insecurity. They alleged that elements with criminal

intentions had turned the demonstration into a threat, thereby defending the killing of protesters.

On a particularly dark day, as thousands gathered near the central square of Luanda, security forces opened fire on protesters after declaring the assembly illegal. Amid the chaos, 22 people lost their lives—some shot, others trampled in the desperate rush to escape. Countless others were injured or arrested. The event was condemned by human rights organizations both within Angola and abroad, which decried the use of excessive force and called for an independent investigation.

Domestic and International Response

News of the killings sparked outrage throughout Angola and reverberated around the globe. Vigils and spontaneous memorials sprang up in cities across the country, as families mourned and communities demanded answers. Opposition leaders denounced the crackdown, accusing the government of prioritizing IMF mandates over the welfare of its own people.

Internationally, the tragedy drew statements of concern from the United Nations, the African Union, and human rights organizations such as Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch. Many called for restraint, urging the Angolan government to respect freedom of assembly, protect human rights, and hold those responsible for the violence accountable.

The IMF, facing criticism for the social impact of its policies, issued a statement expressing regret over the loss of life and emphasizing that economic reforms should always be implemented in a manner that protects the most vulnerable. However, for many Angolans, the words rang hollow against the reality of lost loved ones and shattered communities.

Social, Political and Economic Consequences

The aftermath of the violence was marked by a period of national mourning and heightened political tension. Trust between citizens and the Government eroded further, as many saw the events as emblematic of a leadership disconnected from the struggles of ordinary people. Workers' groups and other protesting people intensified their calls for reform, while Government officials sought to restore order and reassure foreign investors.

- *Legal and Political Repercussions:* In the weeks following the shootings, opposition parties demanded a parliamentary inquiry and justice for the victims. Some officials were placed under investigation, but scepticism remained regarding the impartiality and thoroughness of these efforts. Calls for greater transparency and civilian oversight of security forces grew louder.
- *Economic Impact:* The protests and ensuing violence exposed the fragility of the government's reform agenda. Foreign investors grew weary, and economic growth projections were revised downward. Meanwhile, the continued implementation of austerity measures deepened public frustration, leading to sporadic protests and strikes in the days that followed.
- *Social Response:* The tragedy galvanized a new generation of activists disillusioned with the ruling classes. Mutual aid networks and grass root organizations provided support to the families of the victims and advocated for systemic change. The arts and independent media played a crucial role in memorializing the fallen and keeping the story alive in the public consciousness.

Agents of Western Plunder

While the IMF and World Bank, often referred to as the Bretton Woods Sisters, present themselves as saviours of crisis-ridden poor countries and their people, History has repeatedly shown that their actions often subjugate these nations to Western imperialist powers such as the US, the UK, France, and Germany. A clear example of this pattern can be observed in the recent history of Angola. It would be helpful to track the succinct overview of the agonized journey endured up to the outbreak of protests, by the Angolan people.

Under pressure from the IMF, the government began phasing out fuel subsidies. The cuts started in 2023 and continued into 2024, raising gasoline prices by 87 percent in June 2023 and diesel prices by 48 percent in April 2024. The Finance Ministry plans to eliminate all fuel subsidies by the end of 2025 to reduce the budget deficit and meet debt obligations, which currently stand at approximately \$58 billion—around 63 percent of the country's GDP.

IMF has prescribed the same austerity measures in the name of fiscal consolidation, whenever its favoured economies have been mired in economic crises. Examples include the Asian Tigers (South-East Asian countries) crisis of the mid-1990s, India's balance of payments crisis in the early 1990s, and the European debt crisis following the global recession (the Great Recession) of 2007–08. Even the GATT process—which brought all Global South countries under the influence of the IMF and World Bank—was accompanied by SAPs (Structural Adjustment Programs), which consist of the policies of Liberalization, Privatization, and Globalization (LPG).

LPG policies aim to dismantle public sector undertakings, deprive domestic Micro, Small, and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) of their own markets, destroy domestic regulations designed to protect the interests of local producers in both agriculture and industry, and enable the plunder of mineral and human resources at cheap prices. Ultimately, these policies push Global South countries to the bottom of the global value chain, preserving research and development for the US, EU, and UK, while transforming Global South nations into mere suppliers of human and natural resources at throwaway prices.

These policies automatically lead to further deepening of crises. When that happens, IMF prescribes further strengthening of austerity measures with no recovery in sight. Thus, IMF and World Bank essentially work for the benefit of western imperialist countries thereby acting as agents of plunder by the west.

The same happened in Angola. As a press briefing in March 2024, the IMF stated: “The removal of subsidies is very important to ensure fiscal consolidation. There is critical need for good strategic communication and mitigation measures aimed at the poorest sections of the population.”

Angola’s deepening crisis is rooted in the collapse of global oil prices since 2015 and declining domestic production. Although Angola is second-largest oil producer in sub-Saharan Africa, the vast revenues generated have enriched only a handful of elites in MPLA and their foreign masters. Over half the population lives below the poverty line, unemployment stands at 30%, youth unemployment surpasses 50% and inflation reached 20% in June 2025. Public services are in ruined state as a result of more meagre allocations in the budgets with each passing year.

Struggle for Independence and Civil War

Nearly five decades ago, MPLA leader Agostino Neto declared that “Concretely realizing the aspirations of the great masses of our people, the People’s Republic of Angola will, under the guidance of MPLA, gradually advance toward a people’s democratic state. With the alliance of the workers and the peasants as its nucleus, all patriotic sectors will be united against Imperialism and its agents in the struggle for the construction of a society without exploiters and without exploited.”

That promise was made in the aftermath of a heroic 13-year guerrilla war against fascist Portuguese dictatorship that ended with the Carnation Revolution in April 1974 in Portugal which toppled the authoritarian Estado Novo regime. Soon after decolonization of Angola in 1975, the country plunged into 27-year civil war, stoked by the US and South Africa. These countries backed rightist UNITA faction in Angola along with FNLA which was later crushed by UNITA in internal struggle for domination. On the other hand, Soviet Union and Cuba backed MPLA. Cuba even sent tens of thousands of troops to support MPLA militia to fight against UNITA forces. In this civil war a million people died, and millions were displaced.

The end of the Cold War had its ramifications on the character of the MPLA leadership. Following the open restoration of Capitalism in Soviet Union and subsequent disintegration, the MPLA relinquished even any nominal lip service to Socialism, rebranding themselves as Social Democracy, like their counterparts FRELIMO in Mozambique and African National Congress in South Africa. They declared themselves pro-business and imposed IMF market reforms, austerity and privatizations.

The events surrounding Angola's protests against IMF-dictated austerity measures represent a sobering chapter in the nation's history. The loss of 22 lives at the hands of government forces stands as a stark reminder of the human costs that can accompany economic restructuring. Yet, in the aftermath, new movements for justice and reform have emerged, suggesting that even in the darkest of times, hope and resilience endure.

Scramble for African resources

With the rise of capitalist China, there has been intensified competition between China and the West, led by the United States. Angola is being dragged into the maelstrom of imperialist conflict amid the scramble for Africa's rich resources. Under the stewardship of the MPLA, Angola has now become one of the most pro-US regimes on the continent. The United States Africa Command (AFRICOM) is strengthening military cooperation with the MPLA regime under the guise of "preventive security assistance."

During a recent visit to Angola and Namibia amid ongoing anti-austerity protests, AFRICOM's Deputy Commander, Lt. Gen. John Brennan, cited dubious claims of ISIS/Islamic State threats in Southern Africa and of entry of Mexican drug cartels. By invoking these threats, the US aims to further entrench its security presence in Angola, portraying itself as a saviour against these supposed dangers and persuading Angolans to place their trust in the US's assistance. This narrative is being used to justify expanded US-Angolan military exercises, arms sales, and maritime surveillance support.

As the US accelerates its preparations for conflict with China, it is militarizing Angola's strategic coastline and integrating the

country into its global war apparatus. Since the beginning of Biden's presidency, the US has aggressively promoted the Lobito Corridor as a counterweight to China's Belt and Road Initiative. This corridor connects the copper and cobalt-rich Democratic Republic of Congo to the Atlantic Ocean via Angola's rail and port infrastructure. Through the Lobito Corridor, Angola has become a key component in the US's strategic war planning in the region. US officials openly describe how "security is leveraging economic development and vice versa."

On the other hand, China played a central role in shaping Angola's post-war economy. Since early 21st century, China has become Angola's largest creditor, China extended tens of billions of dollars in oil backed loans to finance infrastructure projects -roads, railways, hospitals, and housing developments. These are constructed largely by Chinese state-owned firms. These deals with China are dubbed the "Angola Model" which tied credit to guaranteed oil exports, in turn allowing MPLA elite to maintain liquidity. Like other African regimes, Angola's ruling elite is being forced to choose sides between the US led camp and the China and Russia led BRICS camp.

As Angola's dominant party without significant opposition, the MPLA is internally divided, with none of its factions prioritizing the welfare of ordinary citizens. Hence, rising atmosphere of struggles by working class and other petty bourgeoisie sections along with peasant masses that spread across the rural Angola should lead to concrete, organized and resolute action along the revolutionary path. Such a path should be directed against the exploitation of foreign companies and domestic industrial and rural elites who lost their interest long ago in establishing a people's democratic state as stated by MPLA founder Agostino Neto.

Disillusionment & Restiveness across Africa

It should be noted that the aura of the old anti-colonialist movements across the continent has been evaporating under the weight of intensified imperialist plunder, aided by the IMF and World Bank.

In Namibia, the SWAPO (South West Africa People's Organization) party, which led the struggle for independence from South Africa, remained the dominant political force after South Africa relinquished its claim over Namibia in 1990. Although it still holds power, SWAPO is rapidly losing its influence due to widespread unemployment, inequality, poverty, and corruption.

In South Africa, the ANC, which had ruled the country since the fall of apartheid, lost its parliamentary majority in 2024. In Botswana, the Botswana Democratic Party (BDP), which had governed since independence in 1966, suffered a historic defeat in the December elections.

In Mozambique, although FRELIMO (Mozambique Liberation Front) declared itself the winner of the October elections, the government is facing serious allegations of widespread electoral fraud. The announcement of the results sparked mass protests several weeks after the election held on October 9.

Workers, students, and peasants mobilized in large numbers, as they have been reeling from decades of poverty, unemployment, and corruption. In response, the Government resorted to brutal repression, ordering the police and military to crush the protests.

What followed was a three-month-long campaign of deadly force against peaceful demonstrators, during which, according to opposition parties and international human rights organizations

such as Amnesty International, 315 people were killed, over 3,000 were injured and more than 4,000 were arrested.

In Nigeria, President Bola Tinubu, acting at the behest of the IMF, scrapped fuel subsidies in 2023—plunging the country into a wave of skyrocketing inflation. The burden of this assault fell squarely on the backs of workers and youth, who rose up in defiance under the banner of **#EndBadGovernanceInNigeria**. Their demands were simple and just: a living wage for every Nigerian worker, whether in public or private employment. In the heart of Lagos, a placard summed up the rage of the masses: **“One day, the poor will have nothing else to eat but the rich oppressors.”**

Tinubu’s regime, born out of a deeply disputed election, wasted no time proving where its loyalties lie—not with the people, but with imperialist creditors like the World Bank, Eurobond holders, and China’s Exim Bank. On their orders, the regime imposed brutal austerity measures and turned its guns on the people. Peaceful protests were criminalized. Independent media was gagged. The police and army unleashed a reign of terror—killing at least 13, injuring many more, and arresting over 700 protesters, including 50 journalists. Even religious leaders and retired generals shamefully lined up in support of this crackdown.

Former President Olusegun Obasanjo’s words ring truer now than ever: **“Africa is staring at the abyss... Everywhere, the youth are angry. They are unemployed, unempowered, and see nothing but hopelessness.”**

This is the reality not only in Nigeria but across the continent. From Dakar to Dar es Salaam, from Lusaka to Tripoli—the same pattern repeats: corrupt elites at home doing the dirty work of

foreign masters, while the masses are left to starve.

There is no future under these regimes. There is no salvation in the hands of comprador politicians or foreign lenders. Workers, farmers, students, youth, women, and even professionals must prepare to rise—not with scattered outrage, but with united movements. The time has come to fight back, to organize, and to smash the system that feeds on our suffering.

The choice is clear: Resist or Perish.



Emerging victorious from 41 Years of Darkness Like a Burning Flame

[Significance of the Release of Lebanese Marxist-Leninist Leader Georges Ibrahim Abdallah and his revolutionary spirit for resistance in the World — An Analysis by P. Prasad (PP)]

As political activists, some often feel distressed when bail denied for even a short duration. But if one is forced to remain in prison for months, how would one's mental state endure? And if imprisonment lasted for years what would be the feelings of the prisoner?

Beyond months and years, many have persisted through

harsh prison sentences with unwavering resolve. Even today, several intellectuals and leaders remain imprisoned for years even in our India where their release is uncertain. In this regard we can quote few examples in Indian context. Think of revolutionary thinker Prof. G N Saibaba, human rights activist Fr. Stan Swamy before his tragic death, or various Kashmiri leaders. Standing tallest among these is Georges Ibrahim Abdallah, the renowned Lebanese Marxist-Leninist and iconic supporter of Palestinian liberation struggle. His release represents a radiant moment that offers revolutionary inspiration to the working class and particularly to the resistance forces across the world.

Georges Abdallah was arrested on October 24, 1984 by French police and after 41 years he was released from a French prison on July 25, 2025. Now he joins a few tallest persons in contemporary history who endured such prolonged incarceration. He was accused of involvement in the 1982 assassinations of American and Israeli diplomats, a case widely considered to be politically motivated and fabricated. His release from prison after 40 years and 9 months marks one of the longest revolutionary prison lives in the world. It is more than one and half times the period of Great South African freedom fighter Nelson Mandela's 27-year prison term. Abdallah stands as a global symbol of resistance.

Abdallah was arrested during the height of the Palestinian National Liberation Movement. At that time, the African liberation movements were still going on. The anti-American imperialist movement was on rise in Latin American countries. In Central America, anti-American imperialist uprisings were taking place in countries like Nicaragua and El Salvador. After that arrest, the world underwent many changes.

In the above context, Western imperialism began a process of

reorganizing itself from a defensive position to an offensive position. Reaganism and Thatcherism gained momentum during that period. In the process Neoliberal policies started gaining momentum. Furthermore, the collapse of the Soviet Union resulted in the end of the bipolar world order and ushering in a uni-polar world. This led to adoption of liberalization, privatization, globalization (LPG) policies. This transition saw the US led WTO in the economic arena and invasions in Afghanistan and Iraq in the military arena, rapidly reshaping global economic and political dynamics. This long-term process has led to many changes in world. Recently, we are seeing decline of uni-polar world and strengthening of multi-polar world. Abdallah's extended prison life has encompassed all these momentous shifts.

Georges Abdallah is not merely a nationalist revolutionary. He is a committed internationalist also, but primarily devoted to Palestinian liberation and in general he upheld the global communist ideals. His lifelong commitment invites us to reassess the trajectory of the Palestinian liberation movement and its evolution during his incarceration.

Before his arrest, the Palestinian movement surged forward, with the West Bank as its revolutionary nucleus. The PLO led a guerrilla war with thousands of armed volunteers. Thinkers like Abdallah made attempts to fortify this struggle through Marxist-Leninist ideology and also its organization. After his imprisonment, many important developments- neoliberal policies, uni-polar world after fall of the then Soviet Union, occupation of Iraq etc. altered the course of the movement, which led to the Oslo Accords. Those agreements not only represented a serious setback to the Palestinian liberation movement, but in practice, were acts of betrayal.

Arrested during the conflict of Palestinians and Israel but Released during the Conflict of Iran and Israel

Under Yasser Arafat, Fatah abandoned the demand for a One-State solution and embraced a Two-State framework. Even this was abandoned in favour of truncated autonomy without statehood. As a result, Fatah experienced political collapse, the PLO was disarmed, and Marxist-oriented Palestinian organizations also lost significant influence. In contrast, Hamas was initially emerging with religious motivations in opposition to the then secular and democratic organization Fatah and later evolved as a principal national liberation force, due to the prevailing conditions at that time. The revolutionary epicenter also shifted to Gaza, instead of earlier West Bank.

In the pre-arrest era, many Arab nations either actively or passively opposed Zionist Israel. During that period the main contradiction was between Arab nations and Israel. In the later period the situation changed drastically. In fact, then Egypt was the main leader of Arab nations, who fought with Israel. Egypt's betrayal came as early as 1979 through the Camp David Accord with Israel with the help of USA mediation. However, Iraq, Syria, Lebanon and Jordan continued to oppose. Over a time, after USSR collapse, the rise of a uni-polar world led to the setbacks to the people's movements particularly in West Asia: Iraq was invaded, Jordan capitulated to US interests, Lebanon's economic and political system collapsed under repeated Israeli-American attacks. Despite Syria remained a sovereign state, it was weakened considerably. Beginning in 2020, Arab nations started signing the Abraham Accords with Zionist Israel under US mediation, which led to further diminishing Palestine's diplomatic leverage and rendering Israel an uncontested regional power.

Two significant crucial developments have taken place. First, Palestinian liberation forces began pursuing an independent path, free from reliance on Arab governments, which are under the influence of USA. Especially the construction of tiny Gaza with a sophisticated network of tunnels is a testament to the independent stance. The Palestinian Liberation Movement began taking its liberation into its own hands. This was so for the first time in the history of the Palestine national liberation struggle after 1948. Second, a new axis of resistance emerged led by Iran. This has replaced the traditional Arab-Israeli conflict that existed before.

Armed guerrilla organizations like the Hezbollah, the Houthis, and the Hamas have grown in strength, backed by Iran. With Iranian state power on one side and militant armed guerilla groups on the other, the “Axis of Resistance” is shaping as an alternative force challenging Israeli military power and its aggressions.

From Humble Origins to Revolutionary Fire

Born in 1951 in a Christian family in a remote village of northern Lebanon, Georges Ibrahim Abdallah found himself in a region central to Palestinian resistance. The US and Israeli regimes unleashed attacks, sanctions, and applied relentless pressure on Lebanon. The Palestinian cry for justice moved the hearts of many people in Lebanon. Those circumstances led him to participate in the Palestinian solidarity movement even in childhood. He was injured in that period. Although Palestinian citizens were Muslims, Abdallah, like many other Lebanese citizens was a Christian and yet he valued humanity above religion. He was drawn to the liberation movement in his youth and, in that journey, he studied Marxism and became a Marxist. Disillusioned with the inefficacy of Fatah’s leadership in the Palestine national liberation movement, he chose the Marxist route to build an alternative struggle for Palestinian

Liberation.

The Dual Trials of a Revolutionary

The courage to face violent street battles doesn't necessarily guarantee endurance inside torture chambers and protracted dark prison cells. Some revolutionaries falter behind bars. Yet nearly all who persevere through such darkness excel even more on the open revolutionary battleground. That tells us something essential: proving oneself before oppressed masses on the frontlines is one kind of trial; surviving isolation and repression in prison, away from public gaze, is another. The latter is far more demanding and valuable. In fact Abdallah aced that litmus test. That is his unique revolutionary distinction.

Theory vs. Practice

In revolutionary history, theory and practice hold importance. Revolutionary practice enriches theory, and vice versa. Some people immerse themselves in practice giving little importance to the study, while others focus on theoretical exploration, offering guidance from afar. Abdallah had no opportunity to engage himself in the Palestinian struggle from his distant prison cell in a foreign land. With limited access to real-time developments, he relied entirely on Marxist ideological commitment to sustain his communist identity. Thriving in such adverse conditions is the mark of his political singularity.

A Tale of Two Choices: Savarkar vs. Abdallah

Savarkar sought clemency from the British imperialists. Abdallah, by contrast, refused all forms of pardon and chose to continue his life in prison-transforming his political legacy into a revolutionary victory over the tri-imperialist alliance (US, Israel, France). He gifted the world the dignity of the Palestinian flag and

the communist banner, raising them sky-high from a prison cell and infusing them with new political vitality.

A Blazing Release After 489 Months

After 40 years, the imperialist, racist and Zionist regimes tried to mute him physically- rendering him deaf, mute, and blind. But politically, he emerged as a universal voice, and a guiding light. His refusal to seek clemency only amplified his revolutionary aura. His release is a historic moment -a blazing sun stepping out after 489 months behind bars. Even in prison, he played the role of thousands of organizers outside.

Abdullah's forty one years of determined non-submission are not his only unique achievement. He exposed the limitations of the imperialist and Zionist states. He exposed the true form of so-called Western democracy in general, and French democracy in particular. He gave political revival to Marxism, which had recently lost its minimum space in the liberation movements and in the organizations of the Arab countries in general, and Palestine in particular. He also provided moral and political prestige to communism worldwide. In fact, he refused to apologize and achieved results that a number of liberation fighters and organizers could have achieved through sacrifices on the field.

Feared by Imperialism, Loved by the Oppressed

Afraid of his voice turning into a global anthem, imperialists refused to let him speak in Paris and Beirut, instead transferring him directly to his native village in northern Lebanon by handing him over to the Lebanese government. This conspiracy to silence his revolutionary message only highlights its power. His release electrifies oppressed people and is also a political tonic for socialism across the working-class world. His voice is now a call, a catalyst, a

burning wick lighting the path forward.

During a dark era when even the outside world was engulfed by imperialist shadows, Abdallah spent over forty years in a prison of an imperialist nation. That revolutionary tide outside didn't just give him mental strength and help him endure like a man of steel, it was he who helped inspire and sustain the revolutionary movements outside.

Let us raise our fists, raise revolutionary slogans and hail Georges Ibrahim Abdallah. This is in essence a salute to various resistance forces such as anti-globalization, anti-imperialist, anti-Zionist, etc. This is a salute to the countless prisoners who are standing and languishing in Israeli prisons in particular and it is also a salute to the various resistance policies and philosophies, including Marxism, that guide them, in general.

Salute once again to Abdallah who has given them new strength.



Booming GIG Economy : Boon for Companies, Bane for Employees

● **Mrigank**

The GIG economy is flourishing day by day. App and platform-based work is taking precedence over traditional work. It appears convenient to end customers, it is burdensome to workers and profitable to the company. Almost for everything, many platforms, aggregators and Apps have come up, and some of them are dominating the market. We shall try to examine and understand the modus operandi and economic reasons behind this.

What Is GIG

The word *GIG* has taken on many meanings over time, but in today's context, it typically refers to a temporary, flexible job performed for payment. The term originated in the world of music, where performers were hired for single events or short-term engagements. Over time, this idea has expanded to include nearly any kind of short-term work across various industries.

A GIG usually involves completing a specific task or project on an as-needed basis, often with flexible hours and rates. Workers in the GIG economy are not tied to a single employer and can take on multiple jobs simultaneously, assembling their income from a variety of sources. While individual GIGs may offer modest pay, consistent participation in multiple GIGs can lead to earnings comparable to regular employment. However, these arrangements

typically lack the structure and benefits of a traditional employer-employee relationship.

The GIG economy challenges the conventional model of full-time employment, where individuals build long-term careers within a single organization. Today, the GIG workforce includes delivery drivers, rideshare operators, freelance developers, online tutors, consultants, and many others. As this model continues to grow, it reshapes how we think about work, income, and job security in the modern world.

History

By the turn of this century, advances in information and communication technology were rapid and quickly passed on to end users, making smart phones with various apps a common part of daily life. At the same time, the digitalization of the economy allowed a growing number of people to complete transactions entirely online. Together, these developments fuelled the rise and rapid growth of the GIG economy.

Traditionally, work was defined as full-time employment with fixed hours and associated benefits. However, persistent economic factors including greed to maximize the profit and rapid technological advancement have reshaped this concept, leading to a labour market increasingly dominated by independent and contract-based work.

Initially associated with musicians and artists, the GIG economy has since expanded into many sectors. With the rise of digital platforms like Uber, Airbnb, and TaskRabbit, GIG workers have become vital to services such as transportation, temporary lodging, and short-term tasks. As a result, both the number of GIG workers and the variety of jobs they perform have grown

significantly.

Emergence of GIG Economy

One must investigate the economic and employment scenario to understand the rise of the GIG economy.

India is expected to have a large number of GIG jobs by the end of 2025, making it one of the most sought-after GIG economy locations. Over 15 million independent contractors are employed in India now in a variety of industries.

The GIG economy emerged gradually. The economy took time to develop. Corporate work cultures that were stressful and unpleasant gave rise to freelancing. Millennials began choosing to work as freelancers. Additionally, the start-up economic model promoted contractual freelancers because they could engage staff according to the capabilities required for a certain project and avoid expensive fixed expenses. Contractual freelancers have become more common as a result. MNCs adopted flexible hiring choices because of the worsening economic crisis. As a result, GIG culture began in fields including software development, machine learning, and data science. Even though it started out in such technical professions, it has defined a notion and demonstrated how to use it further in other jobs.

Growing unemployment and manufacturing's decline have both contributed to the GIG economy's expansion.

There is a continuous decline in the employment rate in India. Between 2011 and 2016, unemployment was between 4 and 5%, but job creation did not keep pace with the growth of the workforce. 2017–2019: Demonetization (2016) and the introduction of the GST (2017) caused a significant increase in unemployment, which reached 6.1% in 2017–18 (PLFS). 2020–2021: Unemployment

rose to 23.5% due to COVID-19 (April 2020, CMIE), then leveled off at 7–8%. 2022–2024: Youth unemployment (~15–20%) is a significant worry, and unemployment decreased a bit but remained high (~7–8%, CMIE).

The manufacturing sector is performing poorly. Its share is stagnant at about 15–17% (the Make in India objective was 25%). Between 2014–19, the annual growth rate was roughly 7%; in 2021–24, it was 4–6%. Steel and heavy industries, labour-intensive industries like textiles and leather, and MSMEs (post-demonetization and GST issues) have all suffered significant setbacks and have fallen behind Bangladesh and Vietnam. Those previously working in these industries are now part of a sizable army of unemployed people.

These factors have contributed to a boom in the GIG economy- Companies wanted to reduce their cost and available workers due to unprecedented unemployment.

The Facts and Figures of the GIG Economy

The GIG economy in India has grown significantly and is still growing rapidly. Approximately 15-20 million workers, or 4-5 % of the non-agricultural workforce, were involved in GIG work in 2020–21. This figure may rise to 50 million by 2029–2030, according to projections, making up 10-12 % of the non-agricultural labour. According to financial estimates, the GIG economy's market size was \$45 billion in 2024, and growth is predicted to continue. The GIG economy sector is expected to increase at a compound annual growth rate (CAGR) of roughly 16.18% from its estimated \$50 billion in 2024 to \$2.15 trillion by 2033.

GIG is used in **Food & Grocery Delivery** like Swiggy, Zomato, Blinkit, BigBasket, Dunzo; **Ride-Hailing & Taxi**

Services like Ola, Uber, Rapido, Meru Cabs; **Logistics & Last-Mile Delivery** like Porter, Amazon Flex, Flipkart (Ekart Logistics), Shadowfax; **Home & Professional Services** like Urban Company, Housejoy, Taskmo; **Healthcare & Pharmacy Delivery** like PharmEasy, 1mg, Practo; **Freelancing & Professional GIG Work** like Upwork (India Operations) for IT, design, writing, marketing freelancing, Fiverr (India Operations) for Digital services (graphic design, programming, etc.), Toptal for Premium freelance talent (developers, designers), Freelancer.com (India) for General freelance GIGs; **E-Commerce & Quick Commerce** like Zepto, Instamart (Swiggy), JioMart; **Miscellaneous GIG Work like BYJU’S (WhiteHat Jr)** for Online tutoring (freelance teachers). Quikr for Local services (repairs, tutoring, rentals), WorkIndia for Blue-collar job matching (delivery, security, etc.). These are just a few names and not a comprehensive list.

The extent of the GIG economy can be seen from the following representative table.

Name of Company	Type of work	Annual turnover FY 2023 in Cr	Employees
Swiggy	Food delivery, grocery delivery, and instant pick-up/drop services.	5,000	300,000+
Zomato	Food delivery, dining-out services, and hyperlocal deliveries.	7,000	250,000+
Uber	Ride-hailing, bike taxis & food delivery (Uber Eats)	2,500 (India-specific)	600,000+

Ola (ANI Technologies)	Ride-hailing, bike taxis & electric vehicle services	2,200	1,000,000+
Urban Company	Home services (beauty, cleaning, repairs, etc.)	1,000	50,000+
Dunzo	Hyperlocal delivery (groceries, medicines etc.)	200	20,000+
Rapido	Bike taxis and delivery services.	300	500,000+
Amazon Flex	Last-mile delivery for Amazon orders.	Not disclosed (part of Amazon India)	100,000+
Flipkart (Ekart)	E-commerce logistics and last-mile delivery.	Not disclosed (part of Flipkart)	150,000+
BigBasket	Grocery delivery and supply chain logistics.	6,000	30,000+
PharmEasy	Medicine delivery and healthcare services	2,500	10,000+
Porter	Intra-city logistics and goods transportation	500	200,000+
Licious	Meat and seafood delivery	1,000	5,000+
Blinkit (formerly Grofers)	Quick commerce and grocery delivery	2,000	20,000+
BYJU'S (White Hat Jr, etc.)	Online tutoring and education services	4,000	10,000+
Upwork (India Operations)	Freelancing platform (IT, design, writing, etc.)	Not disclosed (global revenue \$500 Mn)	1,000,000+

Fiverr (India Operations)	Freelancing platform (creative and digital services).	Not disclosed	500,000+ (global revenue \$300 Mn).
Taskmo	GIG work platform (on-demand tasks and staffing)	50	100,000+
Quikr	Local services and freelance jobs.	200	50,000+
Housejoy	Home services (cleaning, repairs, etc.)	100	10,000+

The GIG economy has witnessed remarkable growth in recent years. As shown in Table 2, it has expanded nearly 40-fold since 2014. Initially, its emergence was driven by factors already discussed earlier. In the following years, the boom in food delivery services, ride-hailing platforms, and, to a smaller extent, online shopping, further fuelled its expansion.

Table 2
Size of GIG Economy

Year	GIG Economy Size (USD Billion)	GIG Economy Size (INR Lakh Crore)
2014	~1.5–2	~ 0.9–1.2
2016	~3–4	~ 2–2.5
2018	~8–10	~ 5.5–7
2020	~12–14	~ 9–10
2022	~20–24	~ 15–18
2024 (Est.)	~35–50	~ 30–40

The COVID-19 pandemic acted as a major catalyst, sharply increasing demand for e-commerce services such as grocery delivery, prepared meals, and household items. Platforms like

BigBasket, Grofers (now Blinkit), Instamart, and others capitalized on this shift, while major e-commerce players such as Amazon (promoted as “*aapkiapani dukan*”), Flipkart, and Snapdeal expanded their offerings to include a vast range of consumer goods. Rising unemployment in the manufacturing sector pushed many workers into GIG roles, often under any working conditions available. The introduction of “10-minute delivery” by many grocery and e-commerce companies illustrates this pressure—while convenient for consumers, it imposes high risks on delivery workers, who must navigate hazardous conditions to meet deadlines, a clear sign of job desperation.

Table 3 further reflects the sector’s rapid growth. The GIG economy’s share of India’s GDP rose from just 0.5–0.8% in 2014 to an estimated 2.5–3% in 2024. In terms of workforce size, the number of GIG workers jumped from 8–10 million in 2012 to 25–35 million in 2024. According to NITI Aayog projections, by 2030 the sector could account for 5% of GDP and employ around 50 million people—roughly 10–12% of the total non agri. workforce—potentially surpassing industries like textiles and logistics.

Table 3

2014–2016:	0.5–0.8% of GDP	1.5–2% of non-farm workforce (8–10 Mn GIG workers)
- 2020:	1.2–1.5% of GDP	4–5% (15–20 Mn GIG workers)
- 2024 (Est.):	2.5–3% of GDP (India’s GDP \$4 Tn)	7–10% (25–35 Mn GIG workers)

A sector-wise breakdown shows that blue-collar workers make up about 70% of the GIG workforce. This category includes ride-hailing and delivery workers (Zomato, Swiggy, Dunzo, Uber, Ola), e-commerce logistics staff (Amazon, Flipkart), and care/home

service providers (Urban Company, Housejoy). These workers face the most severe exploitation: long working hours, low pay, and lack of benefits.

White-collar GIG workers, in contrast, comprise about 30% of the workforce and include freelancers in IT, consulting, creative services, and similar fields. They earn monthly incomes ranging from Rs. 50,000 to Rs. 2 lakh, enjoy greater job security, receive insurance, and require specialized skills such as coding or design. Blue-collar workers, on the other hand, typically earn only Rs. 20,000–Rs. 25,000 per month, lack job security, and are frequently subject to algorithmic deactivation. Their primary skill requirement is often limited to driving.

GIG: Good or Bad

The GIG economy has its staunch advocates, who attempt to justify it by highlighting perceived benefits for workers. Conversely, there are critics who, from the workers' perspective, argue that it represents nothing more than a modern form of exploitation. Let us explore this further. Much of the earlier discussion already provides a foundation for understanding the reality of the situation.

Arguments in favour of GIG work

Supporters of the GIG economy cite several reasons in its favour. GIG workers are said to enjoy flexible work schedules, allowing them to decide when to work and when to take time off. This flexibility enables them to treat GIG work as a supplementary or secondary source of income. They can leave at any time, choose their clients or employers, and exercise greater control over their professional commitments.

Reality of GIG work

The GIG economy presents a range of serious problems for its

workers. One fundamental issue lies in the very definition of a “worker” and the rights and benefits associated with it. GIG workers are excluded from statutory employer-provided benefits such as overtime pay, minimum wage protections, maternity and paternity leave, compensation for workplace injuries, ESI and EPF benefits, and the right to engage in collective bargaining. They fall entirely outside the scope of existing labour laws and norms.

As a result, they suffer from low earnings, social isolation, irregular and antisocial working hours, overwork, sleep deprivation, and exhaustion. A joint WHO–ILO study (2021) found that GIG work not only leads to poor health outcomes but has also contributed to rising worker mortality, as the pressure to work longer hours at irregular times takes a toll on both physical and mental health.

The oft-touted “flexibility” of GIG work is, in practice, a myth. To earn a sustainable income, workers must accept as much work as possible; refusing tasks leads to being deprioritized or even losing work altogether. In reality, “flexibility” means workers must remain available whenever the company requires, yet receive work only intermittently. They must instantly accept GIGs when they appear and then wait for the next one. For example, Ola drivers in India are penalized for rejecting pick-up requests.

The rise of 10–30 minute delivery services in e-grocery and food platforms has further intensified pressure. Workers in the vicinity of an order feel compelled to accept it to maintain their rating or protect the aggregator’s brand promise, even if it means riding in hazardous weather or driving recklessly. Ratings systems also increase vulnerability—workers can be penalized for issues beyond their control, as customers rate them directly and they are the only visible representatives of the company.

Such conditions disrupt sleep patterns, daily routines, and work-life balance. GIG workers are forced to constantly search for new jobs and be available at all hours, regardless of personal obligations, while facing intense competition. Those unable to secure work have no access to unemployment insurance.

Supporters argue that GIG work can be a supplementary source of income, enabling people to hold primary jobs while earning extra in their free time. However, a PUDR survey (Sept–Nov 2021) revealed that for most workers, GIG work is their primary livelihood. Average monthly incomes are Rs. 25,000–30,000 for Ola/Uber drivers and Rs. 14,000–15,000 for Swiggy, Zomato, and Amazon delivery workers—before deducting expenses. Drivers must cover vehicle installments or daily rentals (Rs. 500–600/day for cars, Rs. 100/day for e-scooters), plus fuel and maintenance, leaving much lower net earnings. In such circumstances, there is no real flexibility—only chronic insecurity. Payment is tied to completing specific tasks, with no guaranteed minimum wage.

The “freelancer” label is also misleading. GIG workers are classified as “independent contractors,” which denies them fundamental rights like minimum wage and health insurance. Contracts explicitly state that platforms are not employers—Uber, for example, declares its drivers are “not employees in any way.” Yet these companies control pay rates, working hours, and penalize refusals; Swiggy even imposes “black marks” for rejecting orders.

This structure has led to an increase in unpaid working hours. Workers may endure four hours of unpaid waiting time, 14-hour shifts, and complete job insecurity. Urban Company beauticians are forced to buy company-approved products and face harassment without effective recourse. Delivery riders risk accidents without any insurance cover. Companies often side with customers even

when they are in the wrong—penalizing workers for infractions such as not wearing a helmet, even if the circumstances are beyond their control.

A survey by the Indian Federation of App-based Transport Workers (IFAT) and the International Transport Workers' Federation (ITF) found that many drivers spend 16–20 hours a day at the wheel, leading to chronic ailments like backache, constipation, liver problems, waist pain, and neck pain. They have no access to accidental, health, or medical insurance.

The transient nature of GIG work also erodes long-term relationships between workers, clients, employers, and vendors, removing the benefits of trust, familiarity, and stable collaboration. Since relationships end as soon as the next GIG is complete, neither side invests in mutually beneficial arrangements.

The growth of GIG work has also affected full-time employees. Because GIG workers are cheaper to hire, companies increasingly replace regular employees, undermining long-term career prospects.

Government measures to address these concerns have been inadequate. While some social security provisions have been suggested, they stop short of recognizing GIG workers as regular employees or establishing an employer–employee relationship. GIG workers should be recognized as piece-rate workers and guaranteed minimum wages, an eight-hour workday, and other statutory benefits.

Why consumers shifted to GIG

The rapid rise of the GIG economy can be explained first from the customer's point of view. Ride-hailing provides the clearest example. In the past, passengers had to wait by the roadside or

travel to a taxi stand in search of a ride. Today, with just a few taps on a smart phone, a cab can be booked from home, and vehicles are readily available across most urban areas.

Traditional taxis often involved bargaining, and overcharging was a frequent complaint. App-based taxis, by contrast, display fares in advance, calculated algorithmically, and allow digital payments. They also provide GPS tracking, trip-sharing, and SOS features, which let families monitor a passenger's journey in real time. These safety and accountability mechanisms did not exist in conventional taxis. A rating system has further improved service quality by making both drivers and passengers accountable. Added to this are promotions in the form of discounts, coupons, and cash back, which draw in customers and encourage loyalty.

A similar story unfolded with online delivery services. Consumers discovered the convenience of ordering groceries, meals, or household goods online and receiving them at their doorsteps. The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated this habit, as lockdowns forced millions to rely on such services. What began as a necessity soon turned into an expectation, creating lasting demand for app-based delivery.

From the driver's perspective, however, the transition has been far less positive. Traditional taxi drivers usually owned their vehicles and retained the full fare. In the app-based model, companies deduct 20–30% commissions, while drivers bear the costs of fuel, insurance, maintenance, and loan repayments. In the early years, drivers earned relatively well due to subsidies and promotional schemes. Over time, however, incomes became unstable and steadily declined.

Traditional taxi drivers typically worked fixed hours with room for rest. App-based drivers, by contrast, are compelled to

work 12–16 hours a day just to earn subsistence wages. Rejecting rides can lead to penalties or fewer bookings. Time off comes at the cost of lost opportunities. The rating system keeps drivers under constant pressure, with even minor mistakes reducing scores and jeopardizing future work. In disputes, companies usually side with customers.

Whereas traditional taxi driving could sustain families over the long term, the future of app-based driving is profoundly uncertain. There is no social security, no health insurance, and no pension. Workers are labeled “independent contractors,” but their hours, pay rates, and working conditions are tightly dictated by algorithms. The same logic extends to other blue-collar GIG work—food delivery, logistics, and home services—where precarious incomes and intensified pressure have become the norm.

Political Economy of GIG

From a Marxist political economy perspective, the GIG economy does not break with capitalism but represents its logical extension. It reshapes the ways in which surplus value is generated, capital is circulated, and labour is exploited.

A GIG itself can be seen as a unit of exploitation, where labour power is sold not for fixed hours but for discrete tasks. Workers—drivers, delivery agents, freelancers—carry out labour that creates value, while the platform extracts surplus through multiple channels: commissions charged to both workers and customers, advertisements within apps, and the appropriation of consumer data.

The GIG economy excels in generating absolute surplus value by extending the working day. With no guaranteed minimum wage, workers must often labour 12, 14, or 16 hours to secure even a

subsistence income. Much of this includes unpaid waiting time, which nonetheless enables platforms to guarantee “on-demand” services to consumers. At the same time, platforms extract relative surplus value by intensifying labour through algorithmic control. Ratings, performance metrics, and schemes like “10-minute delivery” compel workers to accelerate their pace, often at the cost of safety and health.

The circulation of capital in this model further clarifies the dynamic. Platforms function as capitalists, investing in digital infrastructure, warehouses, and servers. What is distinctive, however, is that much of the fixed and constant capital—vehicles, bikes, and household tools—is provided by the workers themselves. This creates the illusion that they are petty capitalist “partners,” but in reality, these assets are deployed for their own exploitation. Services are sold to consumers, and the surplus flows back to the platform in the form of higher profits. By offloading constant capital costs onto workers, platforms secure exceptionally high profit rates while minimizing their own risk.

The system depends on the reserve army of labour—the mass of unemployed and underemployed workers. High unemployment ensures a steady supply of desperate workers willing to accept low-paying GIGs. If one worker rejects an order, the algorithm instantly reallocates it to another. This perpetual competition keeps wages depressed and weakens any possibility of collective resistance.

Exploitation is intensified through algorithmic management, the digital equivalent of the factory overseer. Algorithms dictate routes, timings, and earnings; discipline workers by downgrading or deactivating “low performers”; and obscure the figure of the boss. Because the “manager” appears as a neutral piece of code rather than a person, workers often internalize blame (“my rating is low”)

instead of recognizing systemic exploitation.

Thus, we can say that the GIG economy thrives on a contradiction. For consumers, it represents convenience, transparency, and safety. For companies, it provides extraordinary profits with minimal investment and virtually no social obligations. For workers, however, it produces insecurity, intensified exploitation, and the erosion of hard-won labour rights.

Far from transcending capitalism, the GIG economy represents its digital-age evolution—a system where capital gains near-total freedom from responsibility toward labour, extracts surplus with ruthless efficiency, and conceals exploitation behind the sleek façade of a smart phone app.

Over the years, GIG workers have engaged in both spontaneous and organized protests across the country. However, what is urgently required is a sustained, large-scale, organized movement to address these systemic problems.



Impact of CETA on Indian Agriculture and Trade

● **Ashish Mital**

Bilateral trade between India and UK is \$ 56 billion. With signing of Comprehensive Economic and Trade Agreement, CETA, it is now targeted to double by 2030. Of this merchandize is \$ 23 billion and services is \$ 33 billion. India enjoys a total trade surplus of \$ 12.6 billion with UK. In services it is \$ 6.6 billion with total exports of \$ 19.8 billion and imports of \$ 13.2 billion and in merchandize it is \$ 6 billion with exports of \$ 14.5 billion and imports of \$ 8.5 billion.

Benefits or Compromise?

Big claims of its benefits have been made on both sides, annual estimated economic boost to UK by 2040 of \$6.4 billion and as per Minister Piyush Goyal it will help exports worth \$ 23 billion of labour-intensive products. However, as we shall see the agreement opens up the Services sector, Food Processing, Govt. procurement, Patent Rights, MSMEs, Education, Health to further control by MNCs and lays the ground to undermine agricultural and food self sufficiency. It also erodes the base for native, small investors in favour of MNCs and subjects govt. welfare measures to be further compromised.

The CETA Agreement

CETA is a 349 page document, having 30 chapters and topics covering subjects ranging Gender Equality, Anti-Corruption,

Intellectual Property Rights, Digitization, affording National treatment companies belonging to the other party (country), inviting and safeguarding investments, Government Procurement, Innovation, Policy discussions like of Make in India, Environment Protection, SMEs and job creation which indicates that it seeks to comprehensively determine a shift in the direction of economic management. From the days when WTO and GATT provisions changed the economy, it is obvious now that these bilateral agreements (FTAs) are being structured to help the stronger power to make specific inroads into the economy of the weaker party.

CETA special emphasis is on the criteria of Origination of Goods. Article 3.2 categorises them into “(a) wholly obtained or produced entirely in the territory .., (b) produced entirely in the territory of one or both of the Parties, exclusively from originating materials; or (c) produced entirely in the territory of one or both of the Parties using non-originating materials, provided the good satisfies all applicable requirements of Annex 3A (Product-Specific Rules of Origin)..”.

In Article 6.2 (b) there is provision to “ensure that the Parties’ sanitary and phytosanitary measures do not create unjustified barriers to trade; ..” And in Article 6.5 it is stated that in order to facilitate trade “adaptation of sanitary and phytosanitary measures recognize regional conditions, including through the application of concepts such as pest-free or disease-free areas, areas of low pest or low disease prevalence, zoning, compartmentalization, pest-free places of production, and pest-free production sites”. This in particular is a potential source of allowing import of GM crops and other produce contaminated with poisonous pesticides and other objectionable sanitary inputs in the name of ‘pest free areas’.

Indian Exports

This deal slashes tariffs on 99% of Indian exports. On textiles it has been reduced from 12% to zero, on leather from 16% to zero, on vegetable oils from 20% to zero, on transport and auto parts 18% to zero, on processed foods from 70 to zero% and there is substantial reduction also on marine products, gems and jewelry, toys, engineering goods and chemicals. However, presently also 60% of merchandize is duty free. With CETA, fresh grapes exports are expected to increase by 20% over 3 years. Though exports are slated to help MSMEs, textile sector may not gain as China has 25% and Bangladesh 20% of UK RMG market. With Indian textiles, quality is also an issue.

Trade in Agriculture and Processed Foods

Article 2.13 of CETA on Agricultural Safeguards provides to override all special safeguards under WTO clarifying that “Originating agricultural goods from a Party (country) shall not be subject to any duties applied by a Party pursuant to a special safeguard taken under the *Agreement on Agriculture*, set out in Annex 1A to the WTO Agreement.”

In 2022-23, world-wide Agricultural exports from India were valued at \$ 45.05 billion. Of this, exports to UK were only \$ 811million or just 1.8%. It is mostly tea, mangoes, grapes, spices and marine products and constitutes 5.6% of total merchandize exports (\$ 14.5 b) to UK.

India exports a total of \$ 14.07 billion worth of processed food products globally of which exports to UK are just \$ 309.5 million, or just 2.2%. While the UK imports \$ 50.68 billion worth of processed foods, India’s share in this is just 0.6%. CETA is eyeing a big boost in this sector. UK is expected to liberalize entry of Indian meats, dairy

products, tea, coffee, spices, fruits, vegetables, fruit juices and others. UK's total agricultural market is valued at \$ 63.4 billion, which is reasonably big. In processed foods the main competitors are US, China and Thailand.

UK Exports to India

24.5 % of UK's export will enjoy immediate duty-free market access. Average reduction of duty on UK exports is from 15% to 3%, removal/ reduction is on 92% items. Import of UK processed foods like Whiskey, Rum, Vodka, Brandy, Liqueurs, other alcoholic drinks, chocolates, biscuits, soft drinks (High Fat Sugar and Salt, HFSS), aerospace, high end cars, automobiles, medical devices, electrical machinery will increase. Duty cut on Whiskey and automobiles are in a phased manner to allow limited increase every year. On Scotch duty cut is half in first year to 75% and then over 10 years to 40%. On automobiles it will apply only to 10,000 units in first year and gradually to 19,000 units and this is specifically for large engine size Internal Combustion Engine Vehicles and Electronic Vehicles, not to mid and small size vehicles. Jaguar Land Rover, Aston Martin and Mini which are already in the Indian market via TATAs will become cheaper.

On Agri imports India claims to safeguard sensitive agricultural products like dairy, vegetables, apples, edible oils, oats, walnuts, whey and modified whey, blue veined cheese and specific seed categories such as vegetable seeds and sugar beet seeds from concessions, keeping those tariff lines under sensitive list. For strategically important products where domestic capacity is being built, for example under Make in India or PLI India will reduce tariffs gradually over 5, 7 or 10 years, but access to India's telecom, electronics and renewable energy market for UK firms will increase.

Security for Foreign Goods, National Treatment:

Chapter 2.4 deals with National Treatment. It clarifies that “1. Each Party shall accord national treatment to the goods of the other Party (read country) in accordance with Article III of GATT 1994”. That article is “incorporated into and made part of this Agreement, *mutatis mutandis*.” And further, in para 2 that “with respect to a regional or state level of government, ..., treatment no less favourable than that accorded to like, directly competitive or substitutable goods of the Party of which it forms part”.

Trade in Services

Article 8 deals with Trade in Services. Commitments in services cover IT, finance, education, healthcare and high value sectors. Services sector contributes 55 per cent of Gross Value Added (GVA) in India and 81 per cent to UK's economy. India hopes to gain from a wide-range of services including IT and IT-enabled services, financial services (Article 9), education, healthcare, professional services (accountancy, engineering, environmental services and management consultancy), auxiliary air transport services, telecommunications (Article 11) and aviation support services and also for start-ups i.e., mainly in manpower movement. However, UK will open 6 University campuses in India, UK firms will have access in domains like accounting, auditing, financial services (FDI capped at 74%) and telecom (100 %). CETA covers mutual recognition and professional mobility. Professional qualifications in fields like nursing, architecture and accountancy will be mutually recognized. In medical and education companies of the two countries will work in alliance.

Professionals can move more easily, both ways. Mobility covers business visitors, professionals (1800 chefs, yoga instructors, artists annually under contracts for 12 to 24 months),

intra corporate transferees for graduate trainees. Double Contribution Convention will allow saving of Rs 4000 crores by removing dual social security payments that had to be paid (20% of pay to UK insurance) in UK for 3 years. They can pay in India during these 3 years.

The direction in this is pretty clear. UK companies will invest in and own companies established in India and low waged professional Indian labour will be able to migrate and sustain the new trade environment. Chapter 8 on Trade in Services clearly states that “Market Access to allow transfer of Capital into its territory”. And section 8.4 provides for giving National treatment to the companies of the other party (Article 9.4 for Financial service Companies).

Special importance is being lent to aerospace/ air transport services covered under section 5 of this Article. Apart from others it shall apply specifically to “(a) aircraft repair and maintenance services; (b) line maintenance services; (c) selling and marketing of air transport services; (d) computer reservation system services; (e) airport operation services; and (f) ground handling services.”

Investments, FDI Promotion, MSMEs

CETA will boost FDI. It mandates that only goods made in India would be eligible for tariff reduction. It should be wholly obtained or significantly transformed through processing in India. It means no trans-shipment is allowed. The agreement integrates Indian businesses with global value chains. This will apply to Food Processing also.

Lower tariffs on inputs and advanced manufacturing equipment is also expected to spur MSME supply-chain integration, creating skilled vocational jobs beyond metros. SMEs

are a vital part of India's economy, contributing around 30.1% of India's manufacturing in 2022-23 and 45.8% in India's total export in 2024-25. SMEs benefit from faster processing at customs.

Article 19.1 on Small and Medium Enterprises provides for in para 4 (c) "assessing the effect of globalization on SMEs, and, in particular, examining issues related to SMEs' access to financing, technology, and support for innovation". In Article 19.4 it recommends "Cooperation to Increase Trade and Investment Opportunities for SMEs". So, this sector, claimed to help small, native investors will see even more penetration of Corporate and MNC investments.

Intellectual Property Rights, Patents

CETA covers Intellectual Property on which Govt. of India has granted concessions. CETA will work in favour of patent owners. Proposal of having voluntary licensing will allow companies to grant licenses freely and sell medicines at rates decided by them. No govt. check can be there in regulating access to these medicines. Indian Patent Act mandates yearly report. It will be done after 3 years now. This is heavily in favour of Drug/ Pharma MNCs.

Article 13 is on IPR. Para 13.4 1(d) says that the parties shall "maintain an appropriate balance between the rights of intellectual property right holders and the legitimate interests of users and the public interest". The power of IP owners and users is so imbalanced that it will only lead to misappropriation by MNCs, owners of the IP rights. Further, in para 13.5 2, it says that "Each Party shall give effect to the provisions of this Chapter and provide in its territory to the nationals of the other Party adequate and effective protection and enforcement of intellectual property rights". Para 13.6.1 lays out that "The Parties recognize the preferable and optimal route to promote and ensure access to medicines is through voluntary

mechanisms, such as voluntary licensing which may include technology transfer on mutually agreed terms”. It also recommends in para 13.8 that ‘National Treatment to the other party’.

Government Procurement

Article 15 deals with Government Procurement. It covers Commercial Goods and Services and Construction Service and Article 15.2 specifies in para 2 that “covered procurement” means government procurement: (a) of goods, services, or any combination thereof as specified in each Party’s Schedule to Annex 15A (Government Procurement Schedules); (b) by any contractual means, including; purchase; lease; and rental or hire purchase, with or without an option to buy”. While on one side it says that this ‘will have a Make in India content’, on the other it says that in ‘outsourcing’ there will be ‘no exclusion due to not being natural citizen’. With the government increasingly reducing government jobs and adopting outsourcing of its entire works, this change is significant and sinister, in the sense that MNCs and FDIIs will be increasingly involved with these now.

Whether it will also cover Govt. procurement of Crops for welfare is a very big worry. For reference, government procurement was excluded from the scope of GATT negotiations to allow governments to pursue domestic policy. Domestic policy involved procurement to support local industry and social welfare agendas, which have been discussed in later WTO rounds as restrictions (MSP, Govt. procurement of crops, PDS) on trade. This led to conclusion of a separate ‘Agreement on Government Procurement (GPA)’ which addressed the issue of government procurement causing trade barriers. It aims at liberalizing

government procurement. It was first signed in 1979 and later revised in 2012. It is not signed by all WTO members. India is not a signatory to this. It appears that now with CETA and other such FTAs, India is being roped in to sign up for these provisions.

Article 18.2 covers Subsidies

It says in para 1 that “Parties acknowledge, however, that certain subsidies have the potential to distort the proper functioning of markets and undermine the benefits of trade liberalization under this Agreement”.

CBAM

Apprehensions have been expressed on Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism will come into effect on January 1, 2027. It will impact sale of Steel, Aluminium, fertilizer, hydrogen and other carbon intensive goods as 99% zero duty will not apply to these. CBAM is a non-trade measure. No mention of this is there in CETA.

Technology Alliance

Technology Security Initiative is focused on future telecoms, AI and critical minerals. As per CETA, the world’s largest digital data infrastructure on critical minerals value chain will be developed. The first phase as already been launched with IIIT Bombay in Oct 2024. It will analyze supply chain data on lithium, copper, nickel and cobalt. Rare Earth Elements, REE are important components of cutting edge hardware ranging from semiconductors and electric vehicles to jet fighters – especially neodymium- iron-boron i.e. NdFeB magnets are crucial for EV manufacturing and EV components such as power steering, wiper motors and braking systems. Beijing controls 92% of trade in REE.

Conclusion:

Thought the magnitude of trade and agro trade with the UK is relatively small, the overall direction of CETA is to allow freer movement of UK capital into India's financial, telecom, energy, agriculture and agro-processing, education, health, sectors with foreign investment driven production for increasing export of goods and services; of undermining govt. subsidy and welfare; of allowing foreign participation in Govt. procurement of goods and services; and of promoting Patent led overcharging of specific commodities and services.

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Inquilabi Sada Rah	Punjabi
Sangrami Ekta	Odia

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