

Proletarian Era

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Union Budget 2026—all *Kartavyas* and *Sankalps* for the business tycoons, no concern for common masses

Union BJP Finance Minister (FM) in her Budget speech for 26-27 said: “Since we assumed office 12 years ago, India’s economic trajectory has been marked by stability, fiscal discipline, sustained growth and moderate inflation. This is the result of conscious choices we have made, even in times of heightened uncertainty and disruption. Our Government, led by Hon’ble Prime Minister Modi, has decisively and consistently chosen action over ambivalence, reform over rhetoric and people over populism.” Then she added: “Our Government’s ‘Sankalp’ (Pledge) is to focus on our poor, underprivileged and the disadvantaged”. To deliver on this Sankalp, the Budget, she said, has

been prepared in *Kartavya Bhawan* (Duty House). Last year, the BJP Finance Minister had started with a clarion call of “Viksit Bharat”—a developed India by 2047. The rhetoric was one of high ambition. Yet, a cold analysis of macroeconomic data reveals not a breakthrough (toward an upper-middle-income economy) by 2032, but the consolidation of a narrow, exclusionary growth model which would make the rich richer and the poor poorer. The speech was non-transparent since it gave no idea whatsoever of budgetary allocations for key programmes and schemes. One had to dig out the figures through number crunching from the annexures. In fact, the entire budget which has now become more ritualistic than

realistic, is only a narration of over-promising and shrewd camouflage of under-delivery.

Earning side

Before entering into some details, let us dwell on one fundamental aspect. In budget, people need to know how much money the government has for spending and where is that money coming from. The budget 26-27 is of Rs 53.47 lakh crores, marginally higher (around 5%) than last year. But what are the sources where the government expects to earn from? 24% of the earning would be from borrowings. 21% of the income will be from personal income tax. GST and other indirect taxes would bring 15%, while corporate tax would account for 18% of revenue. Who pays GST and other indirect taxes? The common people.

The bottom 50% of the population pays 64% of the total Goods and Services Tax (GST), while the top 10% contribute only 4%. Rest is from non-tax revenue such as fees, fines, dividends from public sector undertakings (PSUs), interest on loans, and royalties. So, the government extracts 36% (21+15) of tax from the toiling masses whereas corporates bear half of that as tax liability. That means corporates enjoy more concessions and waivers while the common citizens are made to feel good at stagnated relief.

Spending plan

Now we turn to expenditure side. 22% of the tax revenue goes to the states. And, as high as 20% (Rs 14 lakh crores) is spent as interest

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AIUTUC Congratulates people for successful strike

Comrade Shankar Dasgupta, General Secretary, AIUTUC, issued the following statement on 12-02-26:

The All India United Trade Union Centre (AIUTUC) congratulates the working people of the country for making the All India General Strike at the joint call of the 10 central trade unions including AIUTUC and different All India Federations and Associations, a total success. The countrywide General Strike called today demanding complete scrapping of the anti-worker, anti-people and pro-monopoly 4 black Labour Codes was wholeheartedly supported by Sanyukta Kishan Sabha and different agricultural unions.

Most of the industrial establishments, Banks, Insurances were closed. The attendance in the central and state government offices was thin, road transport came to a halt in most of the states. Shops were closed. Throughout the

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When amassed profits char human lives

The devastating fire that erupted in the early hours of 26 January last at the two adjacent warehouse structures, one being a decorator’s warehouse and the other, a factory of ‘Wow Momo’ located in the Anandapur–Nazirabad area of Kolkata has been one of the most shocking industrial disasters in the city’s recent history. As rescue and recovery operations progressed, charred human remains were recovered from inside the warehouses with reported 27 deaths and 25 individuals’ missing till 1st of February, raising fears that the final toll could rise further once debris clearance is completed.

Nazirabad tragedy

The location—tucked inside a densely populated zone—made firefighting operations exceptionally difficult. Narrow access roads, absence of internal fire-fighting systems, and the presence of combustible stock caused the fire to spread rapidly. Fire brigade teams from multiple stations took more than 32 hours and dozens of fire-tenders to bring the blaze under control. Even after the flames were doused, cooling operations continued for days, as pockets of fire repeatedly reignited due to stored materials. What began as a blaze inside a warehouse premises soon escalated into a prolonged

inferno, exposing grave lapses in fire safety, urban regulation, and worker protection.

As the fire had finally been brought under control, charred bodies or dismembered body organs in whole or in parts were recovered. The identity of those burnt alive were identified with the help of DNA analysis of the relatives and some compensation for namesake was promised by the government. The manager of the Momo company and some others were taken into custody to cool down the seething inhabitants of the area. Curiously, the state fire minister, a high profile ruling TMC

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CPDRS held conferences to protect human rights



(Left) WB State Conference of ‘Centre for Protection of Democratic rights and Secularism’ (CPDRS) was held in Medinipur on 7-8 February. (Middle) Comrade K Sridhar, General Secretary, CPDRS, addressing. (Right) Citizens’ Conference held on 1 February in Karnool, AP, under the chairmanship of Mr. K. Omkarl, District President of the Poura Chaitanya Vedika (Affiliated to CPDRS) on the theme “Human Rights – The Challenges Before Us Today.”

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on the borrowings. Rest 58% is available with the government for spending. With projected borrowing amount at Rs 17 lakh crore this year, the total borrowings would cross Rs 214 lakh crores (55.6% of GDP) as against Rs184.56 crores last year. This shows how prudent fiscal management is! If 1% additional tax is imposed on those earning Rs 20 lakhs or more a month, government revenue could increase by Rs 15, 000 crores. On the other hand, if corporate tax is marginally hiked from 22% to 25%, government could net additional revenue of around Rs 1.2 lakh crores. Why not then tax the rich more and give some breathing space to the common people back-broken by unbridled price rise and non-availability of means of income? Only then, the claim of focus on “marginalized and disadvantaged” could have some substance. But that is not to happen because target audience of the government is different. To state clearly, fiscal consolidation now functions as a credibility device to reassure monopoly houses, foreign investors, supports sovereign ratings (Country’s creditworthiness) and reinforces the government’s self-image as a competent economic manager of theirs.

Claim of lifting 25 crore people above poverty

Now about the claim of “inclusive growth”. The FM has reported that close to 25 crore people have come out of multidimensional poverty due to the government’s efforts over a decade. Achievement par excellence! But does the claim match with reality? Multidimensional poverty means identification of poverty beyond just low income by assessing overlapping deprivations in health, education and living standards. It captures how individuals experience items of essential need simultaneously—such as lack of clean water, poor nutrition, healthcare and proper education — to provide a more comprehensive, person-centred picture of poverty than income alone. Now, let us turn to reality.

Who does not know that retail inflation is skyrocketing whatever may be the spruced up figure released from the self-styled experts mandated to show night as day? Being unable to manipulate data any further, the government had to admit of late that retail inflation has shot up. But the figure of increase has been pegged down at 1.33% through customary sleight of calculation. But food inflation is stated to be 8%. So, consumption expenditure is

dipping, particularly in rural areas, driven by high food inflation, plummeting real wage, and increased debt. Does it indicate any upliftment in the life standard of common Indians?

The government’s decision to give free ration to 80 crore poor itself indicates that over 60% downtrodden do not have the means to afford even bare minimum food items. India ranks 105th out of 127 countries in global hunger index. According to the UNICEF report, 8.8 lakh children under five years of age lost their life due to starvation in recent years. Over 20 crore Indians sleep on empty-stomach every day. More than 7,000 Indians die per day due to hunger. Over 500 children die every day because of malnutrition and health issues. 48 peasants commit suicide every day. Over 50% of the population still lacks reliable access to safe drinking water. 66% of rural Indians lack access to minimum healthcare and critical medicine, 31% travel over 30 km for obtaining rudimentary medical treatment. Only 3.4% of the 1.55 lakh Health Sub Centres are functioning as per Indian Public Health Standards (IPHS). A lowly 13% (3278) of the 24,918 Primary Health Centres, and 8.4% of Child Health Centres adhere to basic standards. Approximately 90 crore people lack adequate financial protection from the much-touted health insurance schemes. What purpose would insurance cover serve if basic healthcare facilities elude people, particularly the rural people, constituting about 70 % of the population? Can the have-nots approach high-priced private hospitals for treatment? So, how could 25 crore people come out of multi-dimensional poverty? Is that not mere waffle!

Agriculture and peasants

In a public speech, our hon’ble PM Modi had stated that his heart breaks to see the misery of the peasants. If welfare of the peasants was truly the concern, policy would focus on irrigation, price stability, and input support. But such is not the case. Further, how was it that three Black Farm Laws were brought in to facilitate unrestricted ingress of giant multi-nationals and monopoly houses in agriculture? When the peasants’ organized a historic protest movement for one long year in the outskirts of Delhi, the BJP government took every possible administrative measures at the borders of states adjacent to Delhi to stop the marching peasants from coming. Water cannons were turned on the agitators in wintry cold, tear

gas shells fired, and lathi charge resorted to brutally injuring countless peasants. Multiple layers of barricades were put up with fences, coiled wires, containers filled with sand, big trucks, and trenches dug on the streets, boulders dropped on the roads with the help of cranes, inter-state borders sealed and curfew as well as Sec 144 imposed in many places to stop the peaceful marchers. Over 700 protesters lost their lives. Though under pressure of movement, those four laws were abrogated, a move is afoot to bring them back through backdoor. The government has not yet approved long standing demand of legitimizing Minimum Support Price (MSP) based on scientific formula of C2+ 50. While the crop procurement market is already handed over to private operators who merrily fleece the peasants by not giving them remunerative price for their produce, now, with invocation of a new Seed Act and other measures, the entire agricultural input market is opened up to the profit-hungry agri-corporates. In other words, the agricultural sector is now in private hands and there is no tax on agricultural income. So, it is now a most lucrative agricultural hunting ground for the behemoths.

In this perspective, look at the budget figures. Expenditure on agriculture and allied activities had been cut from an estimated Rs 1,58,838 crore to Rs 1,51,853 crore in 25-26. For the next year, it is increased only by about 2%, which barely covers inflation. For rural development, Rs 2,65,817 crore was planned in 2025-26 but expenditure was 20% less at Rs 2,12,750 crore. For the next year, it is raised to Rs 2,73,108 crore – just 3% more.

Moreover, in keeping with the law of capitalism, land is being increasingly concentrated in the hands of a few. According to the published NSSO data a few years back, the extent of landlessness has been extremely high like 54.4% in Andhra Pradesh, 49.3% in Bihar, 46.3 % in Punjab and 42.5% in Telangana, to cite a few states. NSSO data further shows that the top 20 per cent of the rural households owned 76 per cent of all land. These figures can easily be assumed to have increased manifold in the subsequent years.

Next, the rural employment guarantee scheme MGNREGA has been rebranded as VB-GRAM G, coupled with a shift to a 60:40 Centre-state funding ratio. It thus transfers a major responsibility of funding to resource-crunched states while undermining the Act’s legal

guarantee. MGNREGA has long been structurally and fiscally tied to agriculture. Since 2014, it has operated under a binding mandate that at least 60 % of all works must be linked to agriculture and allied activities. What distinguishes VB-GRAM G from MGNREGA in its treatment of agriculture is not the kinds of work it permits, but the timing of work itself. Agriculture— allied work such as water conservation and land development were already central to MGNREGA. The decisive break lies in the withdrawal of the employment guarantee precisely when agricultural labour demand peaks. What the new law ultimately legislates instead is a statutory reconfiguration of rural labour markets that prioritizes labour availability over income security. VB-GRAM G Act, the experts say, is more centralized and does not offer a legal guarantee of jobs. Section 5 of the Act states that it will apply only in areas notified by the central government. This immediately ends the universality that was central to MGNREGA. The guarantee no longer applies everywhere by default. In 2020-21, Rs 1.1 lakh crore was allotted to MGNREGA. But that came down to Rs 86,000 crores in 2025-26. Now, VB-GRAM G got Rs 95,692 crores which is, by any count, drastically short of providing the distressed rural unemployed a wage befitting to eke out a bare living.

Migration of landless peasants and agricultural labourers to other states for earning a pittance as contract labour in unorganized sector is on an alarming rise. And now with the reported opening up of agricultural market to US would virtually wipe out Indian peasants from the scene. This is how the government is shedding crocodile tears for the peasants.

Workers are equally distressed

Similarly, what about the workers? Permanent employment has become a tale of yester years. Now, it is an age of contractual, casual and fixed term employment at a throwaway compensation. Even the government is appointing workers and employees on contract basis for undertaking permanent nature of jobs. According to data provided by the Indian government to the Lok Sabha in December 2025, over 2.04 lakh (2,04,268) private companies closed down in India over the past five financial years (spanning FY21 to FY25). So, a large number of workers have lost their job. Regular employees in

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Minneapolis symbolizes US people's courageous protest against fascist measures of Trump administration

The Trump administration's governing method in US has always been saturation: flood the zone, exhaust the public, make every outrage blur into the next. In that fog, it becomes difficult to name the moment when a society crosses from democratic erosion into something darker—when repression stops being episodic and becomes structural. And that is once again manifested in Minneapolis, an area dominated by people of South American origin most of whom have obtained American citizenship. US government has long been propagating that the immigrants have been eating away jobs depriving youths of American origin and are involved in illegal trades like drug trafficking. Hence, they need to be deported from the country. In keeping with that policy, the government led by President Trump, in December last, sent teams of notorious ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) officers to the city with the stated aim of finding, arresting and removing people who have come to America illegally or have stayed longer than they were allowed. Under that subterfuge, it was a violent and coercive crackdown on the entire populace of that state with the objective of unleashing a reign of terror and create dichotomy between native Americans and immigrant Americans. It finds similarity with the way BJP-led fascist autocratic Indian government is targeting Muslim minorities as “foreigners” and “terrorists”, pitching for their forcible push-back to neighbouring countries and in the process, trying to wedge a divide between the Hindus and Muslims.

Thuggery of ICE

ICE is a creation of the US government's Department of Homeland Security. Similar to the US Border Patrol, ICE is given free rein to indiscriminately detain, deport and brutalize anyone they deem “illegal” using the biased criteria of how they look and how they speak. These storm troopers have been given a legal license to break into people's homes when and wherever they want without any warrants, a clear violation of the Fourth Amendment that supposedly protects individual residences and to a lesser extent public spaces like schools and businesses from “unreasonable searches and seizures” without warrants. They have the power to stop, hold and arrest people they suspect of being

in the US illegally. The prescript of immigration enforcement is that it protects “the rule of law.” The reality is that it protects the demonic imperialist rule. It reminds us of the atrocities committed by the Indian Security forces in Jammu and Kashmir as well as Manipur and other North-Indian states with the Black Law AFSPA [Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act] providing them immunity from any punitive action.

3, 000 ICE troops to deploy in Minneapolis

With 3,000 troops reportedly on standby to deploy to Minnesota, the vibrant Twin Cities (Minneapolis-St. Paul), tensions were rising as protests continued against Donald Trump's anti-immigration policy. Though US officials said they were targeting the “worst of the worst”, fact has been that migrants with no criminal record and who are US citizens were being detained and harassed. Each day, residents in loosely organized groups drove around their neighbourhoods trying to spot ICE agents and film them, they say, to hold them to account. They also sounded alarms to let people know when the ICE officials are in the areas. Minneapolis, incidentally, was the epicenter of the struggle against police brutality when the video of George Floyd's lynching ignited a spontaneous rebellion.

Killing two innocent citizens has sparked massive protest

ICE thugs occupying Minneapolis murdered Renee Good, a mother of three, on 7 January as she was driving away from immigration officers in a Minneapolis neighbourhood. Then a 5-year-old Liam Conejo Ramos was abducted on 20 January to use as a hostage. These crimes fueled an unprecedented general political strike and mass demonstration of over 50,000 people on 23 January. They shut down Minneapolis, which affected hundreds of cities. The next day, after ICE storm-troopers killed Alex Pretti, an ICU nurse, while he was recording a raid, people called another strike on 30 January. “No work. No school. No shopping. Stop funding ICE,” ran a slogan on the website that listed 250 sites across 46 states and in major cities. Protesters said they want to step up pressure even after President Trump said he would “de-escalate a little bit” in Minnesota. Arizona and Colorado, meanwhile, were among the states where schools were

cancelled in anticipation of mass absences.

Protests have erupted throughout US, in cities including New York, Chicago, Los Angeles, St. Louis and Austin. Student organizers have called for walkouts and protests across the United States on 30 January to demand that federal immigration agents withdraw from Minnesota, after two fatal shootings of US citizens generated public outrage. Thousands marched through Minneapolis in the bitter cold, urging an end to President Donald Trump's immigration crackdown in their city. The entire state of Minnesota was moved in a progressive direction that continues until today and is reflected in the fightback that we are seeing in Minneapolis against ICE, for the immigrant community and against the fascist measures of US imperialism. Dozens of students walked out of morning classes at Groves High School in Birmingham, Michigan. “*I think that it just goes to show how many people are against this, and how this is jeopardizing our country,*” one student told an international news media. “*I think us all coming together and speaking out against this shows our government that we are not OK with this, and we won't let it slide.*” Across the state of Minneapolis, bars, restaurants and shops were closing for the day, in the largest display yet of opposition to the Trump government's surge.

Murdered citizens were part of social backbone

These two citizens who have been assassinated were no criminals but were witnesses to criminality of the ICE thugs. Both Renée and Alex Pretti were not marginal figures but part of the social backbone of working life. Their deaths reveal an essential truth: when repression expands, citizenship is not a shield. The two deaths have not been tragic anomalies. They are the predictable outcome of a state project that has turned immigration enforcement into a domestic counterinsurgency force. And more fundamentally, they reveal what deportation has always been in the United States: not simply a border policy, but a weapon of a capitalist-imperialist class rule. Mass deportation has never primarily been about stopping crime or securing borders. Crimes and illegal trafficking of drugs are carried out with the blessings of the utterly corrupt imperialist-capitalist rulers

US included. It has been about producing a workforce that is cheap, disposable, and afraid. The objective of dangling bugbear of deportation is to terrorize the workers, mostly immigrants, who are hyper-exploited so that they fear organizing themselves in protest, and not likely to speak about that at all. Same is the case with India, now an imperialist power of reckoning, where, as stated above, pauperized Indian citizens belonging to minority Muslim community are painted as ‘illegal intruders’ and are continuously intimidated with threat of deportation. In Germany, the neo-Nazi groups are raising similar anti-immigrant slogans against the migrated workers from Turkey, Syria, Iraq, Ukraine and other countries in Africa and Asia who are engaged mostly in lower-end jobs at nominal wage.

The threat of deportation is thus a sword hanging over low-wage labour, ensuring that solidarity among them becomes risky and united resistance costly. ICE raids are also not aimed at driving away immigrants but to the terrorize entire immigrant communities thereby creating silence in workplaces, nipping in the bud any possibility of their raising demand for higher wage and better service condition, and keeping millions of workers to remain structurally vulnerable—exploitable not for their precarity, but because of threat of deportation or even physical annihilation.

When US federal agents can kill civilians and face no meaningful investigation, the message is clear: enforcement agencies are being positioned above law, beyond accountability and increasingly against civil society itself.

Red eye of US administration

Incidentally, in last week of January, US Vice President JD Vance visited Minneapolis in a demonstration in support of ICE officers and to ask local leaders and activists to reduce tensions, saying ICE was carrying out an important mission to detain immigration violators.

AUS federal judge issued an order limiting the crowd control tactics that can be used by ICE agents toward peaceful protesters in Minneapolis. Judge Katherine Menendez said federal agents cannot arrest or pepper spray peaceful demonstrators, including those monitoring or observing ICE agents. On the other hand, the Justice

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central public sector enterprises (CPSEs) decreased by 1.08 lakh within five years (from 9.2 lakh in 2019-20 to 8.12 lakh in 2023-24) due to disinvestment. According to the latest Annual Survey of Unincorporated Enterprises (ASUSE) for 2021-22 and 2022-23 released by the Union Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MoSPI), nearly half of the Indian states and three Union territories saw informal sector job losses over seven years. Over and above, four Black Labour Codes passed recently are slated to remove whatever little safeguards the workers had so far and give a free hand to the employers to do whatever they want—hiring and firing workers, snatching away existing labour protections and infringing upon their right to strike. On the other hand, the Codes roll out red carpet to the profit-hungry corporate sharks under the garb of ‘ease of doing business’.

Unemployment is mounting

So, unemployment is mounting. India’s official unemployment rate is stated to be fluctuating between 6%-8% in recent years (PLFS). This is again a carefully knit camouflage. The bigger issue is informal employment, where nearly 90% of workers are engaged in low-paying, insecure jobs. Youth unemployment remains high, especially among educated youth over 18% urban youth unemployed (PLFS 2023). India also faces widespread disguised unemployment in agriculture, where too many workers share limited farm output, keeping rural wages low and perpetuating poverty. Underemployment and informal work dominate the labour market, with ~92% of workers in informal jobs, often earning below minimum wages and lacking job security. Though the latest Economic Survey has expressed concern about employment, it has been completely ignored in the Budget.

Incidentally, in 2024 budget, the FM announced a new ‘Prime Minister’s Internship Scheme’ aimed “at providing internship opportunities to youth in top 500 companies of India. The programme was stated to be offering youth exposure to real-life business environments across sectors, helping them gain valuable skills and work experience”. But then in two subsequent budgets, no reference has been made to the outcome of the scheme. Based on data provided in Parliament, around 16,000 to 16,060 candidates had joined the internship, which as of late November 2025 was experiencing low uptake (claim was of recruiting 1 crore in 5 years) and high attrition. As of mid-2023, there were approximately 9.64 lakh vacant positions across various Central Government departments in

Drastic cut in social welfare schemes

India. But most of those posts are either still lying vacant or extinguished. As of mid-2023, more than 2.74 lakh (274,580) non-gazetted, Group C posts were lying vacant in the Indian Railways, according to an RTI reply. These vacancies include crucial safety positions, with over 1.7 lakh in the safety category. No one knows what is the present position. The budget allocated Rs 2.9 lakh crore to the Railways for the fiscal year 2026-’27. But will that be used for filling up permanent vacancies, improving safety of journey, bettering public amenities or drained in running high cost Amrit Bharat and Vande Bharat expresses, affordable only by a handful of rich?

Defence Expenditure increased and social welfare allocations cut

Budget 2026 trimmed food, fertilizer and fuel subsidy outgo by 4.47%. But, it has increased military expenditure / allocation to Rs 7.85 lakh crore, the highest among all Ministries. This once again proved that dying capitalism cannot but go more and more for militarization of economy. On the other hand, allocations towards social welfare schemes have been reduced. For example, in ‘25-’26, in the Jal Jeevan Mission, instead of budgeted Rs 67,000 crore only Rs 17,000 crore was spent. For housing scheme (PMAY) instead of Rs 54,832 crore, Rs 32,500 crore was spent. Like this, for dozens of centrally sponsored schemes and major central sector schemes, expenditures were less than allocations. The overall education budget as a percentage of total outlay has dropped over the last few years. As against recommendation of National Education Policy 2020 for allotting 6% of GDP to education, the central government’s expenditure on education is estimated at 0.6% of GDP. Concurrently, a 92% cut in minority education funds has been noted, shrinking from Rs 678 crore to Rs 55 crore. Moreover, the Budget proposes an Education-to-Employment-and-Enterprise (E2E) standing committee to align education outcomes with labour market needs and expand India’s share of global services exports, thereby confirming its objective to strip education of its essence.

Delivery timeline – a shifting goalpost

Another point is noteworthy. In 2014, PM Modi requested to give him a few years to change the lot of the people. In 2016, after announcing ruinous demonetization, he pleaded for 50 days to show the positive results pending which, he stated he was ready to face any punishment meted out to him by people. He also

said in 2017 that by five years (i.e. from 2017 to 2022), farmers’ income would be doubled. So, his timeline for delivery was akin to shifting goalpost. Now, he and his government have extended the timeline to 2047. So, one would not be able to hold him responsible for reneging on his promises in next 20 years. Incredible indeed!

One highlighted feature of the budget is the continued expansion of central capital expenditure, now exceeding Rs 12 lakh crore. Infrastructure dominates—transport networks, flyovers logistics corridors, energy systems, and industrial clusters. This reflects a deliberate development model. This budget has allowed products in tax free Special Economic Zones to be sold in domestic market. Who are benefitted by these? The monopoly houses and big contractors who bag the orders. But what about those living under the flyovers, the hungry footpath dwellers evicted from their home and hearth? No answer would be forthcoming. Rather than stimulating demand directly through consumption or transfers, the government channels resources into physical and productive assets, hoping to crowd in private investment and raise long-term productivity.

Some thrive, some stick in the gap

Wealth inequality has reached, according to some reports, a hundred-year high. Combined wealth of 248 billionaires (as of the 2025 report), is approximately Rs 98 lakh crore i.e. 1/3rd of GDP. The top 10% of the Indian population holds 57% of the national income. Corporate profits in India have experienced a remarkable surge, nearly tripling from Rs 2.5 trillion in FY21 to Rs 7.1 trillion in FY25, according to Reserve Bank of India. The BJP-led Union government has waived loans to the tune of Rs 16.50 lakh crore for 100 corporate giants, mostly from Gujarat. Also in the current budget, tax defaulters have been

decriminalized and offered prospect of paying monetary compensation in place of going to jail.

So, the so called growth trajectory projected in ‘Amritkal’ to be a Rs7 trillion economy by 2030 is to benefit the business tycoons. Right now, net-worths of Ambani and Adani are Rs 9.10 lakh crore and Rs 8.14 lakh crores respectively. Reports and analyses from several media outlets indicate a strong correlation between PM Modi’s foreign visits and the subsequent acquisition of projects by the Adani Group in those countries. For example, following PM’s visits to Bangladesh in 2015, the Adani Group signed an MoU for a 1,600 MW coal-fired power plant in Jharkhand to supply power to Bangladesh. Likewise, the group partnered with Elbit Systems in 2018 to manufacture drones and later acquiring Haifa port in 2022 after PM Modi’s sojourn to Israel in 2017. Adani bagged a 30-year concession to operate a terminal at Dar es Salaam port in May 2024 after Tanzanian President’s visit to Delhi in October 2023. Similar has been the saga with Kenya, Egypt, Vietnam and Ethiopia. So, whom the BJP government is working for? The suffering multitude or a handful of business magnates?

Final words

To what conclusion do the two contrasting scenarios lead to? The government is glaringly comfortable with rising inequality so long as opportunity narratives can be sustained. This future-oriented model is distinctively uneven and mocks the slogan “saab ka saath, saab ka vikas” (development for all) often reiterated by the BJP leaders and ministers including PM Modi. The budget only sells 16 dreams without any real intent to fulfil them.

As stated in our Central Committee statement, “Ease of doing businesses glaringly prevailed over showing any concern about ‘ease of living’ of the citizens.” In this perspective, the high sounding words of “growth and prosperity” of Sankalp budget and “economy is in a Goldilocks moment flagged the many challenges that it faces” in Economic Survey sound like prattles.

Minneapolis resistance

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Department opened a criminal probe into the Democrats Walz and Minneapolis Mayor Jacob Frey, accusing them of attempting to impede federal immigration operations. Walz said the move was “*weaponizing the justice system against your opponents*”. Minneapolis is a clear instance of how fascist autocratic system consolidates: through not only violence, but institutional protection of violence.

People’s united protest—silver lining among gloom

The silver lining is that the common people of US are courageously uniting while coming out to raise voice of protest against the fascist attacks, rising above all divides—white and black — native Americans as well as immigrants. Though the fascist rulers of US are showing a tough face, fact is that such periodic bursts of people’s protest are sending shivers down their spine. Minneapolis is not the end of the story. It is the line being drawn — in blood — between repression and resistance.

When “Cleanest City” ranking covers deadly drinking water underneath

Between 24 December 2025 and early January 2026, Indore, India’s long-celebrated “cleanest city”—was jolted by a devastating public health crisis. In Bhagirathpura, one of the city’s oldest and most densely populated localities, residents reported foul-smelling, discoloured municipal drinking tap water. What followed was a wave of vomiting, severe diarrhoea, dehydration and weakness. Hospitals were receiving a large number of patients suffering from stomach diseases as drinking water was contaminated because of mixing of sewage, triggering widespread illness and deaths.

By the time the state BJP-led government woke up from its deep slumber, at least eight deaths had to be officially acknowledged and over 310 hospitalizations. 203 patients are still admitted in hospitals. Of them, 25 are in intensive care units. Over 2,800 people fell ill in just ten days. The most vulnerable section i.e. the children, the elders and those with compromised immunity were the worst victims. A mother mixed the same boiled tap water to dilute the milk for easy digestion of her 5 month old baby boy born after 10 years of wait, but the same water took the baby’s life. Death toll rose to 28 on 26 January last when the government was celebrating Republic Day with pomp and grandeur.

On investigation, what came out bears testimony of utter negligence and maintenance of potable water supply system on the part of the government administration. A main drinking water pipeline passed under a public toilet that lacked a mandatory septic tank and absence of any connection to the sewer line with the sewage accumulating in an open pit. A leak in the ageing pipeline allowed sewage to mix directly with potable water, which was then supplied to thousands of households. Lab testing revealed that the water supplied in Bhagirathpura contained life-threatening bacteria like Fecal coliform, Ecolie, Pseudomonas erugenosa, Vibrio, Klebsiella, and Citrobacter. Several distribution lines in Bhagirathpura were also found broken. Drinking water pipelines and sewage pipelines haphazardly run dangerously close. The area receive piped water for barely an hour a day. Thereafter, pressure drops soon. This shows that leakage in the pipeline could not be detected in time. By the time contamination was noticed, the damage was already done. Residents had complained repeatedly for days about water quality, running to every

pillar and post starting from government officials to their elected representatives— councilor to the Mayor. But no one bothered to look into such a crucial matter. As if, it is not part of their duty.

Thus, it can be seen that the Bhagirathpura tragedy was not an accident—it was the outcome of long-standing supervision neglect. Most pipelines in the area were laid in 1993–94, under a foreign-aided slum expansion project. Many of these are asbestos-cement pipes, which, when damaged, are prone to releasing hazardous fibers. Under Project Uday (Phase III) in 2008, 360 MLD (Million Litres Per Day) of Narmada water was added to water supply system of Indore. But instead of putting in place a uniformly modernized infrastructure, the city has a bifurcated network—modern trunk lines in new areas and fatigued metal pipes in old localities. Such a dual system is incapable of handling today’s increasing pressure due to rising population load. Newly developed urban areas and the posh localities of Indore have durable, flexible, and corrosion-resistant thermoplastic High-Density Polyethylene (HDPE) pipelines designed for continuous supply. But such facilities were not granted to the older localities and habitats of poorer sections of people. A 2018 CAG audit found fecal coliform and other contaminants in most of the tested water supplied by Indore Municipality Corporation. This was alarming and warranted immediate remedial measure. But pipeline replacement in Bhagirathpura went on a snail’s pace.

It bears mention that 25–30% of the budget of Indore Municipality Corporation (IMC) is reported to be spent on water and sanitation supported by substantial funds from Asian Development Bank (ADB). The Atal Mission for Rejuvenation and Urban Transformation (AMRUT), launched in June 2015 by the BJP-government with much fanfare is a project focussed on improving infrastructure in 500 cities, primarily targeting water supply, sewerage management, storm water drainage, urban transport, and green spaces. The mission was stated to be aiming to ensure 100% tap water coverage and sanitation in these areas. Moreover, SPML Infra Limited, a private company, was awarded a major project worth Rs 1,073 crore by the IMC for the augmentation of the city’s water supply system under the AMRUT. Yet there have been gaping

holes in the system as borne out by the recent disaster. A Rs 2.38 crore pipeline revamp project approved in November 2022 was still incomplete when the tragedy had occurred. A 2023 National Green Tribunal NGT committee noted that Indore generated nearly 368 MLD of sewage while ignoring water extraction by 910 ‘illegal colonies’, proving the 8 year ‘cleanest city’ tag a farce. Even judicial reference has been of no avail. The state later told the High Court that 80% of the work had been completed, admitting that old lines continued to be used because laying of new lines was delayed. But the reason for delay was not made explicitly clear.

Responding to PILs the Madhya Pradesh High Court had to make a crucial constitutional observation, that ‘The Right to Life’ under Article 21 includes the right to clean drinking water. The court criticized the authorities for failing their most basic duty, directing immediate provision of safe water, free medical treatment for victims, preventive and corrective long-term measures, transparent categorization of emergency, preventive, and systemic reforms. The court’s remarks underlined what residents already knew, that this tragedy was preventable.

If the contamination reflected administrative failure, the official response revealed moral bankruptcy. Despite public assurances by the local MLA and Cabinet Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, many families complained of not being compensated. When questions regarding this were raised, instead of admitting accountability, the minister dismissed the journalists with the remark: “Fokat questions mat poochho” (Don’t ask useless questions).

The comment itself shows how indifferent and irresponsible are these high security fenced ministers to the misery of common people. To them, deaths of citizens are immaterial and any query regarding fault of the administration is *fokat* (useless). And since MP is not a poll-bound state, the central government has not granted a single paisa as compensation to the victims.

However, to play to the gallery, the state government ordered some suspensions and transfers. But such cosmetic measures, people know, are of no use. Can anyone in the lower rung dare to neglect duty if the echelons at the hierarchy are not either lackadaisical in approach or acquiescing in such dereliction of

duty of those?

Incidentally, Bhagirathpura a workers dominated settlement, presents a striking political paradox. For over a quarter of a century, the region has remained a steadfast stronghold of the BJP across all levels of governance, yet it continues to struggle with a legacy of severe water contamination. The Indore Municipal Corporation (IMC) has been under continuous BJP control for 25 years (since 1999-2000). Similarly, the Indore-1 Legislative Assembly, which encompasses Bhagirathpura, has been a BJP bastion for decades (with only a brief interruption in 2018). Currently represented by senior cabinet minister Kailash Vijayvargiya, while the local ward (Ward 10) too remains firmly in BJP hands. Yet, when people from Bhagirathpura have been jostling with death and disease, over two dozen people, including children, have been diagnosed with jaundice after drinking contaminated water in the Mhow, a sub-division of Indore which, coincidentally come under the parliamentary constituency of the same minister who miffed at the media persons for being questioned about Bhagirathpura tragedy.

The Annual Ground Water Quality Report 2024 by the Central Ground Water Board (CGWB) highlights a critical, rising trend in groundwater contamination across India, with 440 districts—nearly 56% of the 779 districts analyzed—reporting excessive nitrate levels in groundwater as of 2023. Major findings include widespread fluoride contamination in states like Rajasthan and Haryana, and significant arsenic, lead, uranium and iron contamination in various regions. Across India, 66 million people suffer from fluorosis, Arsenic exposure in the Gangetic belt has led to cancer clusters, Nitrate contamination has caused a surge in infant “blue baby syndrome” and Uranium and heavy metals threaten long-term organ and neurological health. From Budhpur in Uttar Pradesh to Bhubaneswar in Odisha, groundwater has become a silent killer. And the downtrodden millions pay the highest price.

The Bhagirathpura tragedy has shattered the myth that award of cleanest city does not mean guaranteed safety even over purity of drinking water. Clean streets and glossy rankings cannot compensate for corroded pipes, ignored warnings, and callous governance. Indore’s crisis is a national mirror. It asks a simple question: What is the value of development if citizens cannot safely drink water from their taps? Is it not akin to applying snow-powder on face to hide the festering sores?

Safe drinking water is not a luxury, not a favour, and not a market

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leader could find time to visit the place of occurrence only after 32 long hours as he was reportedly locked in a party meeting and overseeing the preparatory arrangements of Saraswati Puja in his constituency. Though usual blame game by the power-hungry parliamentary opposition parties had settled down after a couple of days, the deep scars will keep tormenting the families of dead and injured. The pertinent question that remains is will such recurrent incidents of fire taking tolls of precious lives and destruction of properties stop here?

Industrial disasters are galore

A deeper insight into the whole matter reveals that although the narrated incident looks an isolated one; it is in fact part of the many devastating industrial accidents in India which have been alarmingly rising over the last decade. Fires, explosions, toxic leaks, and building collapses are reported regularly across the states. Official and independent estimates report over 30,000 industrial accidents happening annually in India, causing thousands of deaths and several thousand more serious injuries. Fire-related incidents, particularly in warehouses, chemical units, garment factories, and small manufacturing clusters constitute a significant share. Major disasters in recent years, like explosions, fires, and warehouse infernos reveal a pattern rather than isolated failures. Experts point out that official figures often underreport the real scale, as accidents in informal units, contract labour spaces, and unregistered warehouses frequently go unrecorded never entering official records, masking the true scale of the crisis. Industrial accidents in India have become a systemic problem rather than rare mishaps, pointing to structural failures in governance and regulation. Most importantly, there is hardly any fire audit allowing the factory, godown, market or building owners to merrily skirt installation as well as inspection of firefighting devices.

Between 2012 and 2022, more than 1,000 factory workers on average died each year in registered factories alone due to fire. This excludes deaths in the informal sector. Data from the Ministry of Labour's Directorate General Factory Advice Service & Labour Institutes (DGFASLI) showed over 3,300 deaths in registered factories between 2018 and 2020 while the figure is estimated to be over 6500 by independent analysts. In 2024 alone, labour unions reported over 400 workplace fatalities and more than 850 serious injuries from industrial accidents such as fires, explosions, and toxic chemical-related incidents. The worst industrial disaster at Bhopal Union Carbide factory, the persistent

Criminal negligence to secure workers' safety

inaction of the Sterlite group to contain severe air and water pollution, and environmental violations at its Tuticorin copper smelting plant, the Vizag Styrene Gas Leak and Anakapalli Pharma Unit Accident of Vishakhapatnam, Jaipur Oil Depot Fire, Korba Chimney Collapse in Chhattisgarh, Sigachi Industries Explosion in Telangana—the list is big. So, the reported numbers represent the tip of an iceberg; because millions of workers in India's vast informal and unregistered sectors remain outside official safety frameworks.

Inhuman treatment to the workers

Inhuman treatment of workers came to light when the details of the Kolkata incident were known. Not only inflammable materials were stocked without any safety measures, one of the two premises was allegedly locked from outside to avoid any 'theft' with workers sleeping inside the premises. So ultimately, with no exit to escape, the warehouse literally became a burning 'Lacquer palace' for the workers trapped inside. This bore testimony of criminal apathy on the part of the owners towards the security of the workers with the government remaining a mute spectator. In the past, in Delhi and the 'National Capital Region' (NCR) Industrial areas, a massive, multi-state manufacturing and logistics hub surrounding Delhi, comprising over 60 distinct industrial clusters across Haryana, Uttar Pradesh, Rajasthan, and Delhi, numerous illegal factories and godowns have repeatedly caught fire, often at night when workers were either sleeping or on the job. Gujarat too has repeatedly witnessed such warehouse and logistics hub fires where storage of hazardous materials was poorly regulated, often without proper safety clearances.

Structural causes behind industrial accidents

Unregulated rapid industrial and logistics expansion, driven by sole objective of profit maximization, has led to warehouses operating without proper regulatory clearance resulting in mushrooming growth of industrial units in residential zones and storage of hazardous materials without safety compliance. Labour and factory inspections have increasingly turned into infrequent exercises, paper-based formalities, processes weakened by staff shortages and political pressure. Corruption sanitizes all illegal deeds. As a result, violations go unchecked until disaster strikes.

Apathy towards workers' safety

Utter negligence towards ensuring workers' safety is the core issue at the heart of these accidents with a slew of underlying disturbing

truths. The workers' lives are treated as expendable, safety measures viewed as avoidable costs, advantage is taken of lack in bargaining power and fear of job loss of the contract and migrant workers. So workers are compelled to refrain from reporting hazards. So, the details of safety measures remain only on paper.

Growing informalization of labour

A majority of industrial workers are now employed either on contractual or temporary basis (even as daily wagers) employed through labour contractors who care a fig for security and insurance of the labourers. This system allows employers to evade responsibility, while workers remain unprotected and voiceless. Warehouses turning into living quarters are also one of the most disturbing aspects. This practice violates whatever little of labour laws and fire safety norms are still in vogue. Yet, due to weak enforcement, it has become widespread and eventually normalized. The profit-hungry owner class and their lackeys feel no obligation to honour dignity of the workers.

The new labour codes—an insult to the injury

Industrial accidents are no more random tragedies. Rather they have been occurring into a predictable consequence of weakened labour protections and regulatory apathy. The country has seen repeated workplace disasters that expose a simple but devastating truth, where workers are being left to risk their lives while legal safeguards are dismantled. The government, turning a blind eye to all these incidents has further diluted the safety protections with labour laws being eviscerated to codes. Until recently, India's workplace safety architecture was governed by 29 distinct labour laws, each with detailed, enforceable provisions for worker protection. Laws such as the Factories Act, 1948, included explicit requirements for fire prevention, welfare facilities, machine safety, and accident reporting. Others, such as the Contract Labour Act, 1970 and the Inter-State Migrant Workmen Act, 1979, provided at least certain specific protections for vulnerable worker categories. However, in 2025 the new 'labour reform' initiative of the BJP government, obviously at the instance of its masters, the ruling capitalist class, watered down all 29 laws to four draconian labour codes. Among them, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code was meant to subsume safety and hygiene regulations. But the consolidation has resulted in key protections being generic rather than

specific with detailed clauses on hygiene, fire safety, and accident reporting being replaced by broad duties that depend on future rules to be framed. And the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions (OSHC) Code has become discretionary rather than enforceable where the state governments can even exempt activities or facilities from certain provisions on economic grounds. Also it has become less punitive with penalties for safety breaches often being "compounded" rather than resulting in criminal liability, thereby weakening deterrence. The Factories Act, for example, mandated strict fire prevention measures, ventilation standards, sanitation, and welfare facilities for workers, all with legal force. Under the OSHWC Code, many such safeguards are now subject to rule-making and interpretation, reducing uniform protection across industries. Enforcement has been weakened by turning Inspections into mere facade with critical change in the labour inspection regime. The older legal framework allowed frequent, unannounced inspections by factory and labour inspectors. To some extent these served as a real deterrent. Under the new codes, inspections are increasingly routine and facilitative, reducing the likelihood of exposing violations before they result in disasters. Inspector has been recast as an "inspector-cum-facilitator." Inspections are increasingly digital, randomized, or paperwork-driven and enforcement becomes largely virtualized in a country where most work sites are informal and unsafe.

The cost of neglect

Weak accountability on the part of the employers and labour safety rules being tweaked with alacrity, the result is a steady stream of workplace tragedies such as fires, explosions, electrocutions, falls, and structural collapses that could be prevented with enforceable safety standards and rigorous inspection. Despite alarming data of 3,331 deaths between 2018 and 2020 in registered factories, there have been just 14 imprisonments under safety laws in that same period, underscoring enforcement failures even under the old system.

Absence of accountability after disasters

Even after some major industrial accidents, enquiry committees are formed, compensation announced, and lower-level officials suspended. However, owners and principal employers rarely face consequences. Crucially, official data underestimates the real toll because nearly 90% of India's workforce operates in the informal sector, where accidents and fatalities often go unreported and unrecorded. Unions and watchdog groups argue that combining

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Assam CM's provocative and spiteful utterance against religious minorities

Let the problems of the suffering humanity be kept in backburner. But the relentless effort to divide people by spewing communal venom, exacerbate hatred against minority community and pit one section of the people against another by inciting frenzy and infusing animosity must gather speed. Of late, there is a competition among the ruling BJP leaders over the issue. Who can be more barefaced and better hate campaigner than the others and thereby curry favour with the ruling monopolists somehow holding on to their moribund existence by wedging a divide into the struggling unity of the exploited millions.

One would recall that one Anurag Thakur, now having a cabinet berth in central ministry had openly given call to shoot the religious minorities. Now, Himanta Biswa Sarma, chief minister of Assam has perhaps overtaken all to prove his credential as a devout face

of crass communal Hindutva. Of late, he has openly called for the social and economic boycott of Bengali-speaking Muslims in the northeastern state of Assam, urging citizens to deny them land, transport, and livelihoods so that they are forced to leave the state. He has even gone to the extent of posting a video posted on the Assam BJP unit's official X handle on 7 February where he is seen to be symbolically shooting at Muslims at point-blank range. But then what else he can do to divert people's attention from the real cause of their rapidly deteriorating life standard, growing misery and penury?

Bengali-speaking Muslims in Assam, it bears recall, are among the state's most socio-economically marginalized communities. Despite generations of residence, they are frequently portrayed by RSS-BJP leaders as 'outsiders' or 'illegal intruders', a narrative that has fueled evictions, disenfranchisement, and

targeted administrative action. And so, labeling them as illegal "foreigners" and forcing them to leave the country are violative of the precepts of Indian Constitution.

Expressing grave concern over the continuous venomous hate campaign against the poor genuine Indian citizen belonging to religious minorities of Assam by the chief minister and RSS-BJP combine, Comrade Chandralekha Das, Assam State Secretary, SUCI(C), in course of a statement issued on 03-02-26 said that the recent attack upon the poor wage earners, belonging to religious minorities in Upper Assam depicts the abysmal socio-political situation prevailing in the state. These hard working extremely poor *bona fide* Indian citizens, most of whom are peasants, are labouring hard to eke out a bare living, thereby playing an important role in the state economy. Attack upon these poor hardworking impoverished people is not only illegal but inhuman as well.

This unabated hate campaign will not only jeopardize the communal harmony but will have an evil impact on the state economy too. Needless to say, poor people of one section never rob the poor people of another sections of their rights; rather in fighting unitedly against the rule of exploitative capitalism, the common enemy bestriding the country like a dead weight, their struggling unity is further cemented, and in the cultural milieu of united movement all precipitated divides, bitter feelings, mutual hatred and such other malevolent mindsets would be wiped out.

The SUCI (C) has called upon the people of the state to stand by those penurious hardworking innocent people and not to fall prey to the motivated campaign by the servitors of ruling capitalist class, and ensure communal harmony and strengthen mutual amity and fraternity to defeat the machinations of the anti-people forces.

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registered and informal sectors would reveal far higher daily workplace deaths, of which many could be avoided with robust safety regulation.

Workplace safety should be a fundamental right

Article 21 of the Indian Constitution guarantees the 'right to life and personal liberty'. But what does that right mean if a worker must risk death every day to earn a living? A right to life that ends at the factory gate is a hollow promise. Unsafe workplaces—where exits are locked, machines unguarded, chemicals unlabeled, hours unregulated—systematically violate Article 21. Courts have repeatedly expanded this article to include dignity, health, and livelihood. Safety is the missing link that binds them together. Without safety, employment becomes coerced survival, not free choice. Recognizing workplace safety as a Fundamental Right is not a legal luxury, rather it is a moral, constitutional, and economic necessity. This cannot be achieved with labour inspections weakened, penalties reduced to fines, and "self-certification" normalised. When safety is only a regulation, it becomes negotiable. But if it is a fundamental right, the burden shifts from workers proving harm to employers and the state proving protection. Rights create enforceability. They empower courts, unions, and individuals to act before death occurs, not after.

Endowment of ruthlessly exploitative capitalism

These series of fatal accidents lay bare the most inhuman, cruel and

Ruthless exploitation of the workers

insensitive face of the existing capitalist system where maximum profit of the owners override everything—safety and security of the workers, release of adequate subsistence-level wage, unhygienic and accident-prone working conditions, treating the labourers like animals—everything. And the servitor governments work as hand-maiden to such criminality. More crisis-ridden is capitalism, more is the brunt of that squarely passed on the workers. And domination of bourgeois and social-democratic forces in labour unions has virtually institutionalized predicament, indigence and inhuman life conditions of the workers.

So, it is incumbent on the suffering workers to imbibe this truth, organize themselves under the banner of correct revolutionary trade union, steel their fighting unity rising above all divides, fear and lures, and spearhead a real uncompromising sustained movement to wrest their just demands. It also devolves on the class conscious intelligentsia and thinking people to go the workers and educate them. History adjures the task to us.

The poorest workers face the greatest danger

India's most dangerous jobs—construction, warehouses, mines, chemical units, transport, sanitation—are staffed by contract workers, migrants, women and tribals. These workers lack bargaining power, job security, and often legal identity. When safety is discretionary, inequality

decides who lives and who dies. A democracy cannot allow prosperity to be built on disposable bodies. Countries with the strongest workplace safety regimes are not less competitive rather are more productive, more skilled, and more stable. Unsafe workplaces lead to higher healthcare costs loss of skilled labour and intergenerational poverty

Compensation is not justice

Post-accident compensation is often cited as proof of concern. It is not. Compensation monetizes death but does not prevent it. No amount of money restores a burned body, a crushed spine, or a child who lost a parent. A caring system should prioritize prevention over payout, accountability over charity.

Selective compassion with relief depending on visibility

The Prime Minister Modi's announcement of ex-gratia aid for the victims of the Kolkata Anandapur warehouse fire was swift and prominently publicised. Condolences were expressed, compensation declared, and official handles amplified the gesture as proof of a sensitive and responsive state. Yet, this sudden display of empathy throws into sharp relief a troubling absence: the same Prime Minister has remained conspicuously silent on the Indore water contamination tragedy, where poisoned drinking water has claimed more than 31 lives and pushed nearly 2500 into hospitals. Yet, there has been no Prime Ministerial ex-gratia announcement, no national

acknowledgement of state accountability, no comparable public expression of condolence. Question arises whether the contrast is merely administrative or deeply political? Are deaths caused by fire more deserving of compassion than deaths caused by poisoned water? There is no dispute regarding the need to compensate Kolkata's fire victims. But justice cannot be selective. Either the Indian state grieves for all its dead, or its condolences mean nothing at all. Modi government advertising itself as decisive, compassionate, and accountable must explain why fire victims in an opposition ruled state going to face elections receive relief while water victims ruled by the BJP itself and not having assembly elections in near vicinity receive silence. Every expression of sympathy rings hollow with all the signals indicating towards the ensuing assembly elections.

The false choice between development and life

The Anandapur warehouse fire is not an aberration, rather part of a national pattern of industrial neglect. When labour protections are diluted, inspections weakened, and profit placed above human life, fires no longer remain confined to buildings—they spread into the moral and democratic foundations of the society. Economic development cannot be built on the systematic endangerment of workers. Unless workers' safety is restored as a legal, moral, and political priority, the industrial growth will continue to be marked by avoidable tragedies and silent suffering.

AIKKMS on Indo-US trade deal

Comrade Sankar Ghosh, General Secretary, AIKKMS, issued the statement on 4.02.2026:

News is pouring in that the India-US trade deal, which had been stalled for over a year, has been finalized on 3 February 2026. This deal comes just after the anti-farmer, anti-people, and pro-corporate Union Budget was presented in Parliament.

It is ironic that US President Trump made the announcement about the agreement over a bilateral trade which will affect India, especially the Indian farming community, while the Indian Parliament is in session. The Prime Minister has not yet made any announcement before the nation about the final agreement reached with the US. Commerce Minister of central BJP government has only indicated about the agreement without giving details.

According to information released by President Trump, India will stop importing oil from Russia and buy it from Venezuela via US. Then 50% tariff imposed by US on Indian imports would be reduced to 18%. America claims that India would reduce the tariff and other non-tariff barriers to zero on goods imported from it. Trump also claimed that India has promised to buy American goods worth Rs. 45.5 lakh crores.

The other points which are going to harm the peasantry at large are: India has committed to grant access of US agricultural products including corn and genetically modified soya bean. US officials expect this to help

narrow the gap of \$ 1.3 billion agricultural trade deficit. Reports from US suggest that India's opening of the Dairy Sector to the heavily subsidized US dairy products could potentially make an annual loss of Rs 1.03 lakh crore rupees for Indian dairy farmers. All the protective guards would effectively be dismantled to pave way for US dairy products to flood Indian market. US Agriculture Secretary has hailed the deal as a victory.

India is reported to have agreed to reduce or eliminate tariff and non-tariff barriers on several farm products. India is a major market of import of over \$1,1 billion for US tree nuts like almonds and pistachios. The present rate of protective tariff of 30 % on US pulses such as lentils and yellow peas is going to be either reduced or made zero. It is needless to state what pernicious an effect will it have on the Indian peasantry. It is known to all that after the signing of FETA with Britain and the subsequent reduction of import duty on all varieties of cotton from 15% to 0%, caused crash of cotton prices in the market and incurred heavy losses to the cotton growers in India.

In a word, this trade deal between India and US is totally detrimental to the interest of the common peasantry and hence there is no other way but to fight unitedly to thwart this move. We call upon all the toiling people, especially the suffering peasants, to come forward to resist this heinous deal with all their might.

CPDRS on derogatory remark of Assam Chief Minister

In a statement issued on 09-02-26, 'Centre for Protection of Democratic Rights and Secularism' (CPDRS) stated that it finds no words strong enough to condemn the most shocking and deeply offensive video imagery posted on the Assam BJP's social media accounts, showing the Assam CM shooting at framed photographs of Muslims on a wall displaying the words « No Mercy » as reported in the press. The video, which has triggered a massive row and significant backlash, is nothing short of inciting genocide in an already turbulent situation where the minority community is living in fear and insecurity in the wake of the earlier

NRC and the ongoing Special Intensive Revision (S.I.R.) of electoral rolls. This act by the Chief Minister of state of Assam who has taken oath on the Constitution of India cannot go unpunished and the CPDRS urges upon the judiciary of our country to play its due role. The CPDRS appeals to the people of all communities to raise their united voice of protest against the ongoing attempts of communally dividing our society. We call upon the people to safeguard the unity of the people like the apple of the eye and defeat the nefarious design of ruining the secular fabric of the citizens by inciting the poison of communalism.

AIUTUC on successful General Strike

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country people's support was spontaneous and overwhelming.

AIUTUC strongly condemns the coercive actions of the government machineries in different places to foil the General Strike, strongly demanded of the BJP led

central government to withdraw forthwith the anti-worker and pro-monopoly Labour Codes and calls upon the working people of the country to continue the movements in further heightened form against draconian Labour Codes till its total withdrawal."

Successful South Asian Left Students' Meet in Colombo



AIDSO-RSU organized South Asian Students' Meet in Colombo on 28th-30th January. SSF from Bangladesh, ANSU(S), ANNISU(R) and SSSUN from Nepal, NSF from Pakistan, RSU from Sri Lanka and AIDSO, AISF from India were the participant student organisations in the meet.

Comrade Manishankar Pattanayak (International Affairs Secretary), Comrade Ajay Kamath (Joint Secretary) and Comrade Sugubala (Working Committee Member) represented AIDSO in the meet.

Assure Justice for Ankita Bhandari



A public meeting was held at Srinagar Garhwal in Uttarakhand under the banner of 'justice for Ankita committee'. Uttarakhand Mahila Manch, AIMSS,, Mahila Ekta Munch along with AIDSO, Srinagar citizens

forum jointly organized this public meeting. Activists from various places of Uttarakhand state attended. Ankita Bhandari, a 19 year old receptionist was murdered on September 2022 by the hotel owner who belong to the BJP-RSS combine since she refused to provide 'special service' to leaders of the ruling party in Uttarakhand. The meeting demanded stringent punishment to the culprits.

Indore Water Tragedy

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product.

It is a constitutional right, and the non-negotiable responsibility of the government. The BJP top brass wax eloquent about double engine government. Indore water tragedy is a glaring proof of what is in store for the citizens if a double engine government is operative. How hollow is the hype of 'Viksit Bharat' is borne out by the Indore water scandal. In 'Amritkal' which, as claimed by the BJP leaders, has commenced after 75

years of independence, urban residents are deprived of not just pure water but supplied with poisonous water. Its wake up time for the citizens and questioning the government about the applications of the rights given in the same constitution on the Republic Day. Pressure can be created on the government-administration for remedy only if the suffering people close their ranks and build up a united, sustained, powerful movement in demand for the basic facilities to subsist.

Corrigendum: There were some mistakes in the news of the 3rd Madhya Pradesh State Conference of AIDSO, published in the last issue (Vol. 59, No. 12) of P. Era. The corrected news is as follows:

On behalf of the Central Council of AIDSO, Comrade Sourav Ghosh, President, Comrade Sibashish Praharaj, General Secretary, Comrade Ajit Panwar, Joint Secretary, Comrade Ashwini K S, Vice President and Comrade Umesh Maurya, State Secretary of Haryana and CWC member, addressed the 3rd Madhya Pradesh State Conference of AIDSO.

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