DECEMBER 2026
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Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)



REST IN POWER
Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya
1942- 2026



Final Journey of Comrade
Swadesh Bhattacharya
November 2, Patna



Memorial Meeting in Delhi | November 18, 2026



Memorial Meeting in Patna | November 11, 2026



Memorial Meeting in Kolkata | November 13, 2026



Memorial Meeting in Lucknow | November 16, 2026

Liberation
New Series Vol. 32 No. 08
DECEMBER 2026

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40 pages including covers

Annual Subscription Rates
India Rs. 300
Abroad US$ 60
Digital Subscription Rs. 150
Online Payment: liberation.org.in
Pay By Bank transfer:
Account Name: Liberation Publications
Account No.: 90502010091855
IFSC Code: CNRB0019050
MICR Code.: 110015388
Bank: Canara Bank

Strengthen Indian People's Solidarity with the Palestinian People

Since 1977, November 29 is observed every year as the international day of solidarity with the Palestinian people. It was on this day in 1947 that the United Nations had accepted the plan to partition Palestine and create the state of Israel. But for the Palestinian people, this partition plan imposed a violent colonial occupation, the systematic dispossession which the Palestinians call the Nakba or 'catastrophe' and unleashed decades of continuing expansion of Israel into Palestinian territory. In November 1956 Israel invaded and occupied Gaza, by 1967 Israel also annexed the West Bank and East Jerusalem, and since 8 October 2023, the world has been witness to the horrific



genocide of Palestinian children, women and civilian people in Gaza. Today as the genocide continues, we are also seeing a massive escalation of settler and Israeli army violence in the West Bank.

The call for ending the genocide and the cruel colonial occupation of Palestine has therefore become the most urgent global imperative for peace-loving, justice-seeking forces of the world. Freedom of Palestine today is as urgent as was freedom from fascism and colonialism in the 1930s and 40s, the liberation of Vietnam in the 1960s and 70s and the end of apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s and early 90s. The US-Israel axis today is no less an obstacle to peace, democracy and national liberation than the fascist axis during World War II.

It is heartening to see that even though many states and governments still support the US-Israel axis or remain quiet about the war of aggression unleashed by the Trump-Netanyahu nexus, public opinion across the world is becoming increasingly vocal against the genocide in Gaza and there are multiple youth- and worker-led movements taking action in solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people, and in some cases forcing their governments to distance themselves from Israel. The defeats suffered by Trump and Netanyahu in recent elections to the two chambers of the US Congress and the Israeli Knesset respectively were in part a reflection, right in the imperial heartlands, of this global shift.

If any third country needs this shift most urgently, it is India. India's strategic ties with the US and Israel, that began in the wake of the collapse of the Soviet Union, have now been taken to a totally new level by the Modi government. India's foreign policy is now conspicuously devoid of any strategic autonomy and appears to have been almost mortgaged to the strategic requirements or dictates of the US-Israel axis. India's response to the Gaza genocide or the Iran war has generally been one of shocking silence barely masking covert or overt support for these crimes. Indian crony capitalists, most notably Adani, have been deeply involved in supplying weapons and technology to Israel for use in the genocide.

The Indo-Israel strategic bonding has had disastrous implications for India's domestic governance resulting in alarming erosion of transparency and democracy and intensification of state surveillance and repression. From the use of Pegasus and Cellebrite snooping technology and manufacture of fabricated electronic evidence against India's own citizens to the sinister imitation of the Mossad model of 'national security', the adoption of Israeli tactics of repression in Kashmir, and the Zionist ideological inspiration fuelling anti-Muslim hate and Hindu supremacist triumphalism, Israel's has been the most toxic influence for India's fragile electoral democracy and constitutional governance.

The US-Israel axis continues to camouflage its continuing war of aggression, occupation and control as a response to the threat of terrorism, invoking the 9/11 twin tower attack in the US by Al-Qaeda or the October 7, 2023 terror strike on Israel by Hamas. But the series of US-led wars from Iraq and Afghanistan to Libya, Syria and Iran and the genocide in Gaza have resulted in far greater violence and destruction than any act of terror. These so-called anti-terror responses have been absolutely disproportionate and utterly indefensible. Any attempted 'balancing' act which brackets the Gaza Genocide or the Iran war with the October 7 Hamas assault therefore amounts to an act of complicity that only emboldens the perpetrators of genocidal violence and wars of aggression and occupation.

The Modi government today incriminates every expression of solidarity with the Palestinian people. This is a complete reversal of India's long established position on Palestine. Even before India attained its own independence, India's freedom movement had embraced the Palestinian cause as an integral part of India's own anti-imperialist agenda. Right in the 1930s, the Indian National Congress passed resolutions opposing Zionism as an imperialist project. India voted against the UN Palestine Partition Plan in 1947 and Nehru compared it to India's own trauma of Partition. Independent India's non-aligned foreign policy remained steadfast in defence of Palestinian freedom, as it did for the abolition of apartheid in South Africa.

Today the subordination of India's foreign policy to the US-Israel imperialist nexus goes hand in hand with the growing suppression of democracy and constitutional rights of India's own citizens. The louder our voice of solidarity with the Palestinian people, the stronger will be the prospect of India's own survival as a democratic republic.

Victory to the people of Palestine, long live India-Palestine solidarity. ■

REVOLUTIONARY SALUTE COMRADE

SWADESH Shambhuji BHATTACHARYA

7 MARCH 1942
30 OCTOBER 2026

Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya, fondly known as Shambhuji, one of the founding leaders of CPI(ML) Liberation, Politburo Member and In-charge of the Party's Central Organisation Department passed away 30 October 2026 at in Patna, where he had been undergoing treatment for cancer for a prolonged period.

Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya's political journey was inseparably bound up with the historic task of rebuilding the CPI(ML) and carrying forward the revolutionary legacy of Naxalbari. He was the last surviving member of the reconstituted Central Committee of the CPI(ML), formed on 28 July 1974. From that historic moment until his final days, he remained tirelessly engaged in leading the Party's growth and development. The other two members of the reconstituted Central Committee in 1974 were Comrade Jauhar (Subrata Dutta) and Comrade Vinod Mishra. Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya also served as the Bihar State Secretary of the Party from 1974 to 1980.

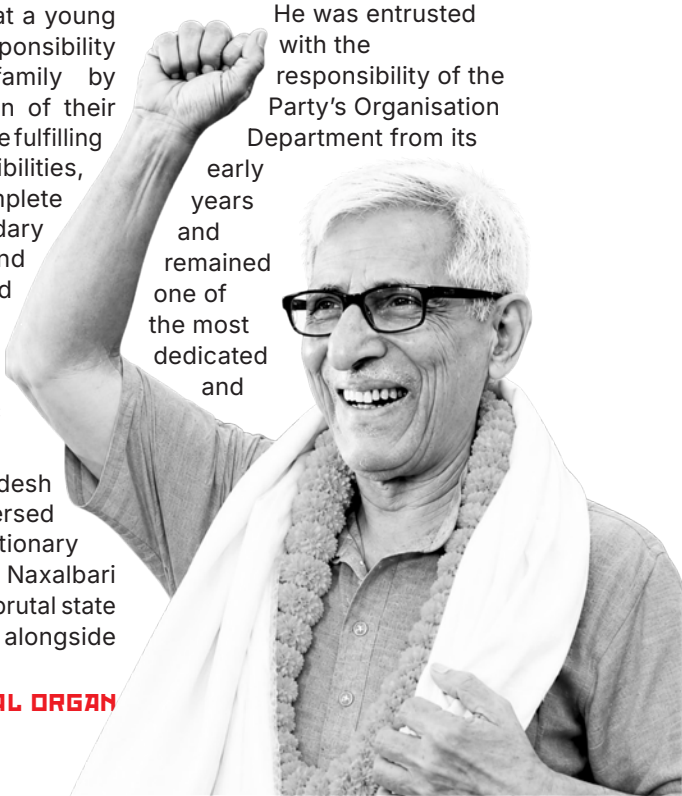
He made an invaluable contribution to building and expanding the Party across the country. From Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh to Assam, West Bengal and Tripura; from Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh to Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, Party cadres across almost every state where the CPI(ML) expanded benefited from his political, ideological and organisational guidance. His significant role in the Party's sustained growth over the past five decades, his selfless communist commitment, personal sacrifices and deep affection and sensitivity towards his comrades will always be remembered.

Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya's personal life was also marked by immense hardship and struggle. During his childhood, his family was compelled to leave East Bengal and migrate to West Bengal in the aftermath of Partition. He completed his primary education in Comilla, in East Bengal (then East Pakistan, now Bangladesh). Having lost his father at a young age, he took on the responsibility of supporting his family by shouldering the burden of their ancestral business. While fulfilling these family responsibilities, he went on to complete his Higher Secondary education in Kolkata and subsequently earned a B.Com degree from Calcutta University. He later worked for a few years in a major public sector undertaking.

By then, Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya had immersed himself fully in revolutionary politics. As the historic Naxalbari peasant uprising faced brutal state repression, he stood alongside revolutionary comrades in the arduous struggle to reorganise the scattered forces, rebuild the Party and carry the revolutionary movement forward. This was a period of immense challenges, demanding courage, conviction and unwavering commitment.

For Comrade Swadesh, Party building had become the central purpose of his life. Continuing in his job while confronting the intense state repression of the early 1970s was no longer an option. He chose to give up his job and devote himself entirely to revolutionary politics. From then on, his life belonged to the Party and the people.

He was entrusted with the responsibility of the Party's Organisation Department from its early years and remained one of the most dedicated and







(R) Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya addressing the Democratic Rights Yatra from Siliguri to Lalbazar, West Bengal, on February 11, 1999.
(L) Comrade SB leading a march during the first Gwalior District Conference in Madhya Pradesh in 2008.

conscientious comrades in the task of Party organisation, guiding the building of a strong Party organisation in keeping with changing circumstances. From the formulation of the Party Constitution and its rules and regulations to the everyday organisational responsibilities of the Party, comrades across the organisation consistently looked to him for guidance. For generations of younger comrades, he was not only a trusted guide in organisational work but also a source of political understanding, encouragement and inspiration.

He was also the editor of the Party's central weekly bulletin, ML Update, from its inception. Following the Party's Fifth Congress in 1992, he took charge of establishing and running the Party's Central Office in Delhi, a responsibility he carried out with dedication.

The passing of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya is an irreparable loss for the Party. Yet, the life he lived and the struggles he led inspire us to renew our resolve and work with greater determination to realise the vision to which he devoted his entire life.

His life and struggles, forged through decades of unwavering commitment to the Party and the people, will remain a lasting source of inspiration for generations of communists and for students, youth, women, workers and peasants fighting for social transformation. His revolutionary legacy will continue to guide our struggles and strengthen our resolve, particularly in the most difficult circumstances.

"Hum Shok Ko Shakti Mein Badal Dena Jante Hai" – "We know how to turn grief into strength." These were the words of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya at the funeral of Comrade Vinod Mishra in 1998. Today, as we bid farewell to Shambhuji, we hold on to these words and draw strength from the spirit of unwavering determination that defined his life. We turn our grief into strength and pledge to carry forward his revolutionary legacy and unfinished mission with the same courage, conviction and commitment that he embodied throughout his life. ■

> Let us bring together all those who can join the resistance, move forward collectively, and unleash a new wave of struggle against fascism.
>
> Let a new wave of struggle arise against fascism and let the CPI(ML), with its red flag, raise this movement to new heights.
>
> **- Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya**
> From his concluding address at the 11th Party Congress of CPI(ML), Patna, 2023

Scan the QR Code to Watch
a Short Video Tribute to Comrade SB.

Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya (Shambhuji): Revolutionary Extraordinaire

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA



Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya during the concluding address at the 11th Party Congress of CPI(ML), Patna, 2023

Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya, the last member of the historic three-member Central Committee founded on the second martyrdom anniversary of Comrade Charu Mazumdar, is no more. His two comrades-in-arms from that reorganised CC left us long back. Comrade Jauhar (Subrata Dutt), the second General Secretary after Comrade Charu Mazumdar, had died a martyr in Bhojpur on 29 November, 1975. Comrade Vinod Mishra who steered the party after Comrade Jauhar's martyrdom also died prematurely on 18 December, 1998. For these fifty-two long years since 28 July, 1974, Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya kept guiding the party with his characteristic wisdom, selfless dedication, patience and tenacity. We will now miss our guardian and his guiding presence.

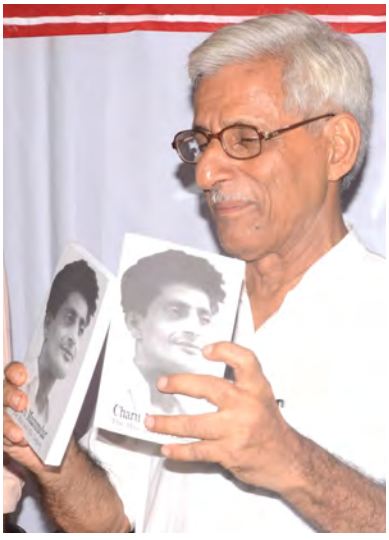
So much has changed in these five decades. In 1974 Comrade Jauhar, VM and Raghu (that was the formal name Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya was known by during the underground days of the party) picked up the threads against the backdrop of extreme confusion and chaos within the movement and severe repression of the state. Comrade Charu Mazumdar's last words - keep the party alive, uphold the people's interests as the supreme interest of the party and forge broad-based unity to combat the severe repression of the state - became the guideline for the reorganised centre of the revolutionary communist movement. Against heavy odds, this small centre nurtured the movement and placed it firmly on a solid all-India foundation. Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya looked after the organisation in Bihar through those crucial formative years from 1974 to 1980.

Here we must also remember the legendary trio from Bhojpur's Ekwari village - Comrades Jagdish Mahto (Master Saheb), Ram Naresh Ram and Rameshwar Yadav. Under their inspiring leadership a bold militant anti-feudal resistance had started striking deep roots in the plains of Shahabad and the adjoining Magadh region. The awakening and assertion of the predominantly Dalit oppressed poor had even raised the call for Harijanistan (Gandhi's 'harijan' term was more widely used back then in feudal Bihar than the Amedkarite nomenclature of Dalit). The fusion of the spirit of Naxalbari and the energy of Ekwari propelled the reorganised CPI(ML) rapidly forward. Of the legendary 'Ekwari three' pioneers, Comrade Jagdish Master was killed on 10 December 1972 when the upsurge of the oppressed poor was still in its early stage. Comrade Rameshwar was martyred in an encounter with the police at Sona Tola in Sahar on 14 January 1975.Comrade Ram Naresh Ram lived on becoming Secretary of the party's Bihar unit in 1980 and, after being elected as CPI(ML)'s MLA for Sahar, serving as leader of the party's legislature wing in the Bihar Assembly from 1995 till his demise on 26 October 2010.

The 1980s witnessed great expansion of the revolutionary peasant movement of Bihar for social dignity, land rights and living wages. Similar struggles erupted in several pockets across the country. With the formation of the Indian People's Front as an open mass organization the echo of this anti-feudal awakening in Bihar and beyond found an inspiring all-India resonance. Under the banner of IPF the disenfranchised Dalit and oppressed caste toiling people of Bihar began exercising their right to vote in real life. In the Lok Sabha elections of November 1989 the fighting poor of Bhojpur created history by exercising their right to vote and sending agricultural labour leader Comrade Rameshwar Prasad to the Lok Sabha from Ara.



Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya interacting with the people during a mass contact meeting in Bhojpur, Bihar.



Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya releasing Charu Mazumdar: The Man and His Legacy, a book authored by Comrade Arindam Sen, and dedicating it to the fighting people of the country on July 28, 2012.

Along with Comrades Vinod Mishra and Ram Naresh Ram, Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya was a key architect of this great political assertion of the revolutionary peasant movement.

The 1990s however began on a different note. The BJP and the RSS launched an aggressive campaign, triggering riots and bloodbaths in the name of 'Rath Yatra', eventually demolishing the 16th century Babri Masjid in broad daylight in brazen violation of the Constitution and the commitment made by the UP government to the Supreme Court. This happened just two weeks before the Fifth Congress of CPI(ML) was to commence in Kolkata. The import of the Babri Masjid demolition was not lost on the party. The Fifth Congress sensed the growing threat of communal fascism in India, and the party resolved to come overground and fight from the front. With it came the new challenge of building the party's new office system and organisational structure. Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya took the responsibility of setting up the party's new central office in Delhi. On 28 July 2012, the office acquired its current identity as Charu Bhawan.

From steering the party's recovery after the severe setback of the 1970s to shaping its transition to a vibrant communist party and preparing it for the challenging current phase of anti-fascist resistance, Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya had become a living symbol of the party's continuity and adaptability, unity and stability, consolidation and maturity/ sagacity, amidst all the ups and downs of an ever-changing situation and the challenges posed by the intensification of fascist aggression in the Modi era. Before joining the party as a fulltime organiser, Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya was an employee with the public sector Heavy Engineering Corporation in Ranchi. In a period of setback for the movement when the state was boastfully writing the obituary of the CPI(ML) and some confused and disheartened revolutionaries had indeed begun to retreat, Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya had stepped forward as a professional revolutionary. This stubborn resolve and stamina defined his entire communist life. Despite battling cancer in the last few years, he remained fully involved in the party's everyday activities. Even in hospital he was keenly watching the Gen Z protests and the energetic courageous role of AISA comrades. Till the last moment when he could talk, he was only talking about strengthening the party organisation and increasing the party's role.

Adieu Comrade Shambhuji (Shambhuji is the name Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya has been most widely known by to comrades across India). Rest in power! Your beloved party will do all it can to fulfill your unfinished mission. ■

FROM THE ARCHIVES

Let us Renew our Communist Pledges! Let us Rise to the Occasion!

SWADESH BHATTACHARYA

(Reproduced below are the excerpts from the Inaugural Speech delivered by Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya at the all-India Party Convention at Bhubaneshwar, 2004 on the occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Party reorganisation)

Today on the 28th of July 2004, we are completing thirty years of our revolutionary journey since the reorganisation of the Party on July 28, 1974. In these thirty years we have passed through many ups and downs, but we have faced all odds in a firm and determined way. At every turning point of revolutionary advance or retreat, the entire Party has always marched in unison.

In the changed conditions after the first major confrontation with the state, our Party alone correctly grasped the essential shift in emphasis indicated by Comrade Charu Mazumder in his last writings and developed it further.

We began our journey with a small three-member Central Committee headed by Comrade Jahar and basing on a fresh upswing in peasant movement in Bhojpur and Patna. The reorganised Party had a State Committee in Bihar, a leading team in West Bengal and sections of comrades in Ballia and Ghazipur of UP and Delhi.

...

From an underground structure operating almost solely through armed units, the Party has gradually developed mutifarious structures and taken up the most challenging and rigorous job of combining parliamentary and extra-parliamentary struggles while retaining and expanding the effective strength of people's resistance and evolving all forms of class and mass organisations and struggles. This is something unique in the history of the Indian communist movement.

...

> **"There can be no obstacle which we cannot surmount, there can be no weakness which we cannot overcome.**

There can of course be no scope for any sort of complacency. We are still a small party and we cannot claim that we have solved all the unresolved questions of the communist movemnet in India in theory and practice, in combining all forms of organisation and movement. The Party must address these problems and find out positive and concrete solutions to pave the way for our desired development at this juncture.

From the parliamentary arena to the sphere of panchayats and people's resistance, we often face in our practice wrong trends and sometimes even distortion and degeneration. We have to combat these wrong trends and weed out the expressions of distortion and degeneration in our practice. We have to streamline our class and mass organisations in terms of mass base, movemental orientation, independent functioning and on the whole in terms of attaining and reinforcing our cherished revolutionary credentials. And to do it all, the Party, its leading bodies in particular will have to attain much more wisdom and learn the necessary art and skill to guide and lead the entire movement through effective motivation of all its functional apparatus. Party Central Committee members in particular and State leaders in general must enhance their direct involvement not only in formulating concrete policies and tactics

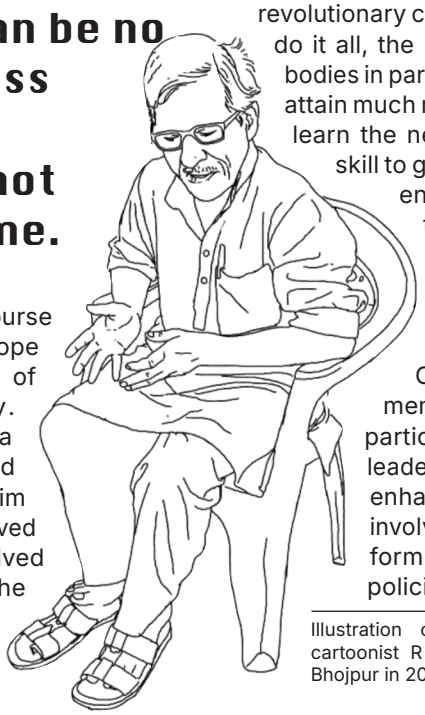


Illustration of Comrade SB by cartoonist R Prasad on a trip to Bhojpur in 2015.

and orientating the organisation and movement in respective fields but also in actual implementation and enrichment of those policies and tactics.

We must revive our fine traditions of integration with and reliance upon the masses and of selfless sacrifice for the masses which reflects our distinction from the anarchist activities of outfits like the PWG and MCC. We should not forget for a moment that our attitude towards our martyrs and their families and towards our comrades in jail must reflect our genuine concern for our heroes and become a source of inspiration for the comrades and the masses who dare to brave all odds as also for the younger generation. This forms an essential component of Party work.

Our experience of using the parliamentary institutions down to the panchyat level to conduct effective exposure of the bourgeois system and provide added impetus to class struggle clearly shows that it is not at all a simple and easy task and that the job cannot be left to the elected representatives alone. Party committees must formulate policies and plan exposure campaigns and agitational measures and ensure effective involvement of elected representatives in carrying out such plans under the leadership of the Party.

The Seventh Congress of our party had explicitly cautioned us in this regard. Yet the threat of encirclement by contractors and vested interests remains very much real. In real life we do find 'a section of political activists gradually degenerating into petty fortune-seekers' and trends like 'gradual reduction of the role of elected people's representatives to a mere agency of implementation of official schemes' and proliferation of corrupt practices. Such a malady afflicts the entire apparatus of a communist party by making the party. It detaches parliamentary role from the revolutionary perspective and promotes the tendency of looking at parliamentary role as a reward for work and sacrifice and increasingly as a career opportunity. Such tendencies have made inroads in our party too and they cannot just be wished away.

Party committees must heighten their grasp and vigil to provide effective leadership to this complex practice. They must identify the wrong tendencies and wage a determined ideological and political struggle to correct them. The message should be loud, clear and bold that there is no room for fortune-seekeing or parliamentary careerism in our Party.

Comrades, we take great pride in the revolutionary tradition and credential of our Party. We have always upheld the Leninist teaching that mass poverty and backwardness is an inescapable corollary of the capitalist system and in such conditions it is not possible for the entire proletarian class to reach the desired level of class consciousness. We will therefore always need a group of class conscious leaders who will inspire and motivate the proletarian army with the great socialist ideology, who will unify the proletariat and lead it in struggle. As a militant alliance of leaders the party of the proletariat will numerically always be much smaller in relation to the size of the proletariat, but the party will surely be wiser than the proletariat in class consciousness and experience and it will have to be organisationally compact and cohesive.

Our Party has never been averse to practising freedom of thinking and lively discussions and debates on varied ideas and opinions while strictly adhering to unity in action. The Party however rejects any trend that may reduce the Party to a mere band of philosophers or free-style revolutionaries. It has been our tradition to promote and practise a high level of inner-party democracy while ensuring unreserved subordination of all to the majority opinion cum collective decision and unconditional commitment to revolutionary work with due adherence to the norms of accountability. Ours is a party of revolutionary struggles. Naturally, the Party cannot be satisfied with mere acceptance in words, it insists on actual deeds, it insists on concrete practice and definite implementation of Party decisions in every field of activity.

Comrades, we inherit the revolutionary tradition of exemplary sacrifice, hard struggles and selfless service, the great tradition that has been upheld and enriched by our great martyrs and departed leaders including Comrades Charu Mazumder, Comrade Jahar, Comrade VM, Comrade Nagbhushan, Comrade Ravi, Comrade Jayant and Comrade Anil Barua and hundreds of Party cadres, fighters and struggling masses. There can be no obstacle which we cannot surmount, there can be no weakness which we cannot overcome.

On this great occasion of the thirtieth anniversary of Party reorganisation, let us renew our communist pledges. No force on earth can stop our advance. All we have to do is to break our shackles and rise to the occasion. At this favourable juncture of national politics, history beckons us to march at the forefront of the Left movement. Let us enhance our efforts and multiply our initiative. ■

From Naxalbari to Bhojpur

SWADESH BHATTACHARYA

The following article presents excerpts from the first part of a video interview with Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya (Shambhuji), conducted in Bengali by Mitali Biswas in 2018. In this interview, Shambhuji reflects on his journey into the communist movement, the revolutionary legacy of Naxalbari, the rebuilding of CPI(ML), and the historic peasant struggles in Bhojpur. The interview has been transcribed and translated into English by Suryo.



When I was young, my maternal uncle was involved with the Communist Party. To tell the truth, it was through him that I became attracted to the communist movement. He was an honest and dedicated man who lived for the struggle. I felt that there was substance in what the communists were saying, and I was inspired by people who dreamt of a new world. Around 1967, the Naxalbari movement began to make its impact felt. Though Naxalbari was only the seed of a broader revolutionary movement, it unleashed tremendous upheaval across the country, as if it were a raging storm. In villages and cities, farms and factories, schools, colleges and universities, and among the intelligentsia, I witnessed an extraordinary revolutionary enthusiasm. I was particularly struck by the enthusiasm among the peasantry for establishing a rule of workers and peasants in place of the existing rule of the elites. Even today, I consider the revolutionary fervour, sacrifice, martyrdom, and determination to build a world without injustice unprecedented in Indian history.

In 1969, the same year that the Communist Party of India (Marxist-Leninist) was formally constituted, I joined the Heavy Engineering Corporation in Ranchi, a semi-government enterprise. While working there, I sought to participate in political activities in Ranchi and the surrounding areas, and became more involved with the recently formed CPI(ML). The call for change represented by the Naxalbari movement had such tremendous power that people were willing to give up their personal comforts and security. After working for barely a year and a half, I left my job to devote myself to the movement. I had a good, stable job, but I had no difficulty leaving it behind for the people's movement.

After the setback suffered by Naxalbari, comrades of the CPI(ML) in different places began trying to unite again, rebuild the Party and develop the movement anew. Comrades in Bihar, West Bengal and eastern Uttar Pradesh, including Jauhar, Vinod Mishra, Kartik Pal and Dhurjati Bakshi, established contact with one another. Alongside rebuilding the struggles in our own areas, we sought to bring together the scattered forces of the movement and the Party. Through a series of meetings, we felt the need to establish a centre. In 1974, we formed a reorganizing Central Committee, which included Comrade Jauhar, Comrade Vinod Mishra and myself. Comrade Jauhar was martyred shortly afterwards, and Comrade Vinod Mishra subsequently became the General Secretary and led the Party until 1998. For us, this process of rebuilding the Party went hand in hand with rebuilding the revolutionary movement, which would emerge in a new form in Bhojpur, Bihar.



Swadesh Bhattacharya paying revolutionary tribute to Karl Marx at the CPI(ML) Liberation Central Committee meeting in Chennai on May 29, 2026.

In Bhojpur, I witnessed a tremendous awakening among the peasantry. A backward district in an underdeveloped state, Bhojpur was a predominantly agricultural region with overwhelming feudal oppression. When the peasants found a path to struggle against this domination, it generated a tremendous momentum in the peasant movement, something I had previously only read about in history. Those whom the landlords had long regarded as people destined to remain beneath their feet—Dalits, marginalized people, labourers and agricultural workers—emerged as a tremendous political force. Not merely the feudal powers, but the state machinery itself became terrified. The movement generated a tremendous wave of struggle to break the existing structures of social and economic domination. Across Bhojpur and the surrounding districts, peasants occupied government lands, ponds, fallow lands and lands forcibly seized by landlords, planting their red flags upon them.

For me, Bhojpur demonstrated a truth of Marxism: revolutionary movements and class struggles develop their own revolutionary forms, irrespective of the wishes of individuals. When a revolutionary movement begins to rise, the elements necessary to sustain it emerge from within the movement itself. These cannot be artificially created according to the wishes of a few individuals. Movements take their own form according to the prevailing material conditions. The task of a revolutionary party, then, is to give organized expression and political direction to what emerges spontaneously. In turn, this organized movement generates even larger spontaneous responses among the people. Following the setbacks suffered by Naxalbari and the division of the CPI(ML) into numerous groups, we sought to unite the scattered revolutionary forces and rebuild the Party across the country. The Bhojpur movement provided an example through which we could rebuild the Party in different states. We did not consider ourselves merely a group, but part of a revolutionary party that had to be rebuilt throughout India.

Like the revolution itself, state repression against the Naxalbari movement had been unprecedented. Many young revolutionaries and villagers lost their lives at the hands of the state machinery and reactionary forces. Yet I have always believed that their sacrifices did not go in vain. The movement's impact remained, emerging again under new conditions and in new forms, again and again in history. Revolutionary movements necessarily pass through different stages and suffer setbacks, but the struggles that give rise to them remain. Naxalbari had presented the dream of a new India, and the forces against which we had struggled continued to exist. For me, Naxalbari was not merely an event but a revolutionary communist movement for the transformation of society, a struggle that would necessarily be prolonged. Naxalbari had not died and would not die. But neither would it return in exactly the same form.

The primary difference between the CPI(ML) Liberation and other revolutionary groups has been in the analysis of the changing material conditions, and how the Party can organize itself according to those conditions. One must understand that the Naxalbari movement was ultimately a communist movement based on a Marxist-Leninist understanding of social relations. If the Naxalbari movement is abstracted from its Marxist-Leninist character and not understood as a revolutionary stream within the broader ongoing communist struggle, the movement will not be able to occupy a national presence. The CPI(ML) Liberation's practice of understanding the movement from a Marxist-Leninist lens, to engage in the analysis of changing material conditions, and to evolve the Party with the evolving material conditions has been a fundamental difference between us and other communist groups and parties. As a consequence, we have seen many developments in the Party's strategy over time, and rather than these changes weakening the Party organization, the evolution has only strengthened our unity and enabled us to establish a national presence of the revolutionary communist movement. ■

A Revolutionary Life, A Legacy of Struggle
Remembering Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya



On November 2, as a caravan of red flags marched through the streets of Patna, the capital of Bihar, it carried with it the memories of a revolutionary life deeply intertwined with the remarkable resurgence of CPI(ML) Liberation in the state. Behind those red flags was the vehicle carrying the mortal remains of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya (Shambhuji), whose life and legacy remain etched in the revival of a Party that today holds an important place in the landscape of anti-fascist resistance and people's movements.

These were the very streets that, in 1998, had witnessed the final journey of Comrade Vinod Mishra, the then General Secretary of CPI(ML) Liberation and a close comrade-in-arms of Shambhuji. Bihar was also the land where Comrade Jauhar, who served as the Party's General Secretary from 1974 to 1975, attained martyrdom in the revolutionary struggle for the liberation of the oppressed.

Before his final journey in Patna, the mortal remains of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya were taken to Ara in Bhojpur on October 31. It was a return to the flaming fields of Bihar, where countless stories of people's struggles for rights, dignity and justice are etched into the landscape, and where the blood of countless martyrs has nurtured the revolutionary movement. His mortal remains were kept for tributes at Kranti Park, a memorial in Ara dedicated to the martyrs of the Party, featuring busts of Comrades Jagdish Prasad (Master Jagdish), Rameshwar Yadav, Ram Naresh Ram, Subrata Dutta (Comrade Jauhar) and Vinod Mishra.

He was brought back to Patna on November 1. The following day, thousands of comrades from Bihar, Uttar Pradesh and Jharkhand, and members of the Party Politburo and Central Committee, leaders of Left parties and democratic forces, gathered to pay their final tributes.

As the funeral caravan moved through the streets of Patna towards the crematorium, comrades marched with dipped red flags, carrying the determination to uphold the legacy of Comrade SB. The streets reverberated with the slogan, "Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya Amar Rahe!" (Long Live Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya!)

The grief of bidding farewell to a beloved revolutionary leader was accompanied by a collective resolve to carry forward his unfinished mission. That spirit of remembrance and renewed determination continued in memorial meetings held in Patna, Kolkata, Lucknow and New Delhi, and many other cities in various states where comrades, fellow revolutionaries, friends and generations of activists gathered to remember the man they had known as Shambhuji.

Memorial Meeting in Patna

A memorial meeting for Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya (Shambhuji) was held at Rabindra Bhawan in Patna, Bihar, on November 11. Party leaders, activists and intellectuals from different districts of Bihar and several other states gathered to pay revolutionary tribute to the veteran communist leader.

Addressing the gathering, CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said that the passing of Comrade Swadesh had left an irreplaceable void in the revolutionary movement. He recalled Shambhuji as a symbol of

steadfastness and organisational strength, who continued working to strengthen the Party until his final days.

Comrade Dipankar said that Shambhuji was among those revolutionary leaders who continued to march forward with firm steps even in the most difficult circumstances. He played a crucial role in organising struggles against feudal oppression and repression in central Bihar and building the Party through decades of intense struggles. These struggles helped strengthen CPI(ML) into a force that today stands on the frontlines of the battle against fascism. He emphasised that strengthening the Party organisation and carrying forward its revolutionary struggles would be the true tribute to Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya.

Comrade Dipankar said that CPI(ML) faced the challenge of defeating the BJP's repressive rule and restoring democracy, constitutional rights and the rule of law in Bihar. He asserted that the Party would confront this challenge and move forward.

CPI(ML) Politburo Member Dhirendra Jha recalled the lessons learned from Comrade Swadesh on bringing student and youth movements together with workers' and peasants' struggles.

CPI(ML) West Bengal State Secretary Abhijit Majumdar recalled the historic Naxalbari movement and Comrade Swadesh's revolutionary contributions. Paying tribute to his lifelong commitment to communist organisation, Abhijit called for strengthening and expanding the Party across the country.

CPI(ML) Central Office in-charge Prabhat Chaudhary and Karakat MP Raja Ram Singh recalled Shambhuji's close association with peasant movements, his political speeches and their experiences of working alongside him in different struggles. They remembered him as an important Marxist teacher whose passing was an irreparable loss to the revolutionary movement.

Leaders of Left parties paid tribute to Comrade Swadesh and resolved to carry forward his struggles while strengthening Left unity. Among them were Ramlal Singh of CPI, Forward Bloc State Secretary Amrik Mahto, SUCI State Secretary Arun Singh and Arvind Sinha of CPI(ML) Class Struggle.

The memorial meeting was also addressed by CPI(ML) Bihar State Secretary Kunal, All India Progressive Women's Association (AIPWA) General Secretary Meena Tiwari, Bihar Legislative Council member Shashi Yadav, senior leaders K. D. Yadav and Baldev Jha, former MP Rameshwar Prasad, Ara MP Sudama Prasad, former MLA and All India Agricultural and Rural Labour Association (AIARLA) National President Satyadev Ram, AIARLA Bihar State Secretary Shatrughan Sahni, Central Committee member Jawahar Lal Singh, Bhojpur District Secretary Abhyuday, and State Committee members Manohar and Samata Rai.

Comrade Kunal presented an account of Comrade Swadesh's life and revolutionary contributions, while the meeting was conducted by AIPWA General Secretary and CPI(ML) Politburo Member Meena Tiwari.

Memorial Meeting in Kolkata

Comrades from across West Bengal, along with leaders of various Left parties, gathered in Kolkata on November 13 to pay revolutionary tribute to Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya. The memorial meeting brought together several comrades who had worked closely with Comrade Swadesh during different phases of his long revolutionary journey, including his formative years in Ranchi, when he was working at the Heavy Engineering Corporation (HEC). The gathering became an occasion to revisit memories of his political contributions, organisational abilities and lifelong dedication to the communist movement.

The memorial began with a moving rendition of a song by Salil Chowdhury, performed by Comrade Babuni Mazumdar. Comrade Mehuli Chakraborty presented a composition by Rabindranath Tagore.

Marxist writer Tilak Das Gupta recalled the sincerity, patience, meticulous attention to detail and broadness of mind with which Comrade Swadesh had presided over a unity meeting of thirteen Marxist-Leninist organisations in the early 1980s. His recollections highlighted Shambhuji's important role in building communist unity during a crucial period of the movement.

Comrade Mitali Biswas screened an abridged version of a video interview with Comrade Swadesh recorded in Kolkata in 2018, offering comrades an opportunity to revisit his reflections on his revolutionary journey and hear his voice once again.

Comrade Abhijit Majumdar read out a tribute to Shambhuji. Veteran leader Meena Pal, Sucheta De, Shashi Yadav and Comrade Swadesh's brother Shyamal Bhattacharya were among the many speakers who shared their fond memories of Shambhuji and his contributions to the revolutionary movement. The meeting was presided over by Comrade Kartick Pal, while Atanu Chakraborty conducted the proceedings. The meeting concluded with the collective singing of The Internationale.

Memorial Meeting in Lucknow

People gathered at the Vinoba Bhave Auditorium in Gandhi Bhawan, Lucknow on November 16 to offer floral tributes to Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya, followed by two minutes of silence in his memory.

Addressing the meeting, speakers recalled Comrade Shambhuji's lifelong dedication and said that his absence would be deeply felt at a time when democracy, voting rights, the right to protest and the Constitution were facing intensifying attacks.

The speakers recalled Comrade Shambhuji's unwavering emphasis on strengthening Party organisation and noted that even the most correct political line could not be translated into practice without a strong, vibrant and fighting organisation capable of confronting future political challenges. Building such an organisation, they stressed, remained one of the most urgent tasks before the Party.

CPI(ML) Politburo Member Comrade Ramji Rai delivered the main address at the memorial meeting. Other speakers included CPI(ML) Uttar Pradesh State Secretary Sudhakar Yadav, senior leader Jayaprakash Narayan, Jan Sanskriti Manch National Vice-President Kaushal Kishore, former Allahabad University Students' Union President Lal Bahadur Singh, CPI(ML) Central Committee Member Krishna Adhikari, AIPWA State Secretary Kusum Verma, Samata Rai, Party's Lucknow in-charge Ramesh Singh Sengar, Insaf Manch State Convenor Afroz Alam, High Court advocates Balram Yadav and Saurabh Chandra, CPI(ML) State Standing Committee Member Om Prakash Singh, and State Committee members Meena and Vijay Kumar. The meeting was conducted by CPI(ML) Central Committee Member Ishwari Prasad Kushwaha.

Memorial Meeting in New Delhi

On November 18, a memorial meeting was organised at HKS Surjeet Bhawan Auditorium in New Delhi. CPI(ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya, members of the Party Central Committee, CPI(M) General Secretary M. A. Baby, CPI General Secretary D. Raja, Revolutionary Marxist Party of India (RMPI) General Secretary Mangat Ram Pasla, Ambassador of the State of Palestine Abdullah M. A. Abushawesh, CPI(ML) MP Sudama Prasad, AISA President Neha, journalists and writers Urmilesh, Abhay Kumar Dubey and Ajay Singh, Democratic Teachers' Initiative's Uma Gupta and several others came together to honour the enduring revolutionary legacy of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya.

Comrades from the embassies of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela and the People's Republic of China also joined the memorial meeting, expressing their solidarity and paying tribute to the departed revolutionary leader.

The tributes brought together memories of the difficult years of underground struggle, the patient work of rebuilding and expanding the Party, and the warmth, humility and comradeship with which Shambhuji had inspired generations of revolutionaries. Through the recollections of comrades who had worked alongside him for decades and younger activists who had known him in his final years, the meeting reflected the profound personal and political legacy he had left behind.

Comrade Dipankar said, "At a time when the Indian state was trying to crush the CPI(ML) movement and comrades were scattered by severe repression, Shambhuji emerged as an anchor and mentor in the rebuilding of the Party. Entrusted with immense responsibility at a young age, he devoted his life to uniting the organisation, nurturing new comrades and expanding the Party. With extraordinary patience, humility and determination, he guided the Party through some of its most difficult periods. His passing is an immense loss, but his extraordinary resilience, revolutionary dedication and unwavering confidence in the Party leave us with the responsibility of confronting the unprecedented challenges of our times."

Comrade M. A. Baby said, "Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya lived a truly revolutionary life. Today, as India faces an unprecedented threat from authoritarian forces, with the state seeking to crush people's movements, we must strengthen our organisations and build a new people's movement. Comrade Shambhuji's life and revolutionary dedication show us the way forward."

Ambassador of the State of Palestine Abdullah M. A. Abushawesh extended heartfelt condolences on behalf of the Palestinian people and the Embassy of Palestine. He said, "We gather today not only to mourn the passing of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya, but also to honour a lifetime devoted to principles, convictions, and the struggle for a more just and equal society. As Palestinians, we understand deeply the meaning of struggle, sacrifice, perseverance, and unwavering commitment to a just cause. Throughout this long and painful journey, international solidarity has remained a source of strength and hope." He added that although Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya had departed, the values he upheld, the sacrifices he made and the generations he inspired would remain part of his enduring legacy. He concluded with a red salute to Comrade

Swadesh Bhattacharya and a call for enduring international solidarity and friendship between the peoples of India and Palestine.

CPI General Secretary D. Raja said, "Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya was a great revolutionary who dedicated his entire life to the people and the struggle to transform our country. Today, as the BJP-RSS pursues its divisive communal ideology and seeks to perpetuate caste hierarchy, inequality and patriarchy, the need for unity among all progressive and democratic forces has become more urgent than ever, as Shambhuji emphasised in his speech at the 11th Party Congress of CPI(ML). This is the revolutionary legacy Comrade Swadesh has left us, and the responsibility we must collectively carry forward."

Revolutionary Marxist Party of India (RMPI) General Secretary Mangat Ram Pasla said, "Comrade Shambhuji's passing is an irreparable loss not only to CPI(ML) but to the entire progressive movement. Every meeting with him renewed my energy and revolutionary spirit. Today, as the RSS seeks to impose its divisive agenda, our country faces grave challenges of poverty, inequality and repression of Dalits and minorities. The historic farmers' movement demonstrated how people from different backgrounds can come together and build a powerful united struggle. The emerging movements of the younger generation also offer new hope. There was a time when freedom from British colonial rule seemed impossible, yet the people fought and achieved it. We can do so again. In Punjab, we are determined to resist the RSS and defend the progressive legacy of Guru Nanak. I remain confident that through greater unity and collective struggle, we will defeat fascism. Carrying forward Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya's revolutionary legacy must strengthen our resolve in this struggle."

Senior journalist Urmilesh recalled, "I first met Comrade Swadesh, whom I knew as Shambhuji, around 1980–82. He was a senior comrade with whom I had the opportunity to live and work closely. Today, India faces an enormous danger, but we also have the strength and potential to confront it. The communist movement must provide a new direction by building a broad and powerful unity of democratic and progressive forces. A strong unity among the Left parties can inspire fresh hope among the people of India. We must strive to strengthen the collective struggle for a democratic and progressive India."

Senior journalist Abhay Kumar Dubey recalled, "I came to Delhi in 1982 and became associated with the preparatory committee of the Indian People's Front (IPF), eventually joining CPI(ML). It was during this period that I met Shambhuji. I often wondered how a person like him was made. He spoke slowly and thoughtfully, but listened to others with extraordinary patience. I consider two people instrumental in shaping my intellectual abilities and understanding of the world: my father and Shambhuji. He did not teach me through books or theoretical lectures, but through everyday discussions on how to organise people, strengthen the Party and develop revolutionary work. He paid attention to the smallest details while keeping sight of the larger political strategy. For me, Shambhuji was the personification of CPI(ML) itself. He never sought the limelight, yet his guidance shaped an entire generation of comrades. Even after I left full-time Party work to pursue journalism, his influence remained with me."

CPI(ML) MP Sudama Prasad said, "It is a matter of great pride for us that Comrade Shambhuji spent his final years in Bihar, a land whose revolutionary struggles he had helped nurture and strengthen. Through his dedicated organisational work, he helped transform Bhojpur into a powerful centre of resistance, bringing together the poor and landless and building them into a formidable force of struggle. He always emphasised that without the active participation of the people in struggles on the ground, the revolutionary movement could never realise its full potential. The truest tribute to Comrade Shambhuji would be to carry forward this legacy of people's struggles and intensify our collective fight to defeat fascism and corporate rule."

Veteran journalist Ajay Singh recalled, "It takes me back to the early 1970s, when I first met Shambhuji, who was then known as Babluji. I was working among DTC workers in Delhi, and we met several times through the underground Party network. Following the martyrdom of Comrade Charu Mazumdar, the Party was going through a period of severe repression, divisions and mistrust. At that critical juncture, Shambhuji played an extraordinary role in sustaining the revolutionary movement, overcoming divisions and reuniting comrades. He was a man of few words who listened with immense patience. His quiet smile often seemed to suggest that he understood far more than he said. From the formation of the Indian People's Front in 1982 to the Party's emergence from underground, he worked tirelessly to bring comrades together, including those who had drifted away. What attracted me most to the Party was his extraordinary patience and ability to work through disagreements. Whatever I am today owes much to the Party and to Shambhuji's guidance. At a time when we face

the challenge of fascism, his remarkable patience, perseverance and commitment to unity remain an enduring lesson for all of us."

In a deeply personal remembrance, Comrade Uma recalled, "In 2002, when my family refused to accept me after I had spent two weeks in jail, Shambhuji called me to party headquarters and taught me everything. For him, 'the interests of the people are the interests of the Party.' This was not merely a principle he believed in, but something he embodied in his everyday life. That was the essence of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya."

Comrade Neha recalled, "I met Shambhuji briefly in Patna in July, at a time when several comrades were on hunger strike and others had been jailed in Bihar. Despite his deteriorating health and immense physical discomfort, his first concern was to ask about my well-being and that of the other comrades who had been on hunger strike. Such extraordinary love, care and comradeship defined Shambhuji. As the younger generation of the Party, we are determined to carry forward the revolutionary values and legacy that he and his comrades built through a lifetime of struggle."

Comrade Dipankar expressed gratitude for the messages of tribute and solidarity received from international fraternal parties, comrades and organisations associated with communist and people's movements across the world. CPI(ML) Delhi State Secretary Ravi Rai conducted the proceedings, while AISA leader Danish Ali read out a brief obituary recalling the life and revolutionary contributions of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya.

The memorial meeting concluded with the collective singing of The Internationale, in a moving tribute to Comrade Shambhuji and all departed and martyred comrades.



Tamil Nadu | November 22, 2026

POST SCRIPT

Across the country, from State Committees to local Party branches, comrades are organising memorial meetings to pay tribute to Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya. As the Party mourns the passing of one of its founding pillars, these gatherings are also occasions to celebrate his extraordinary revolutionary life, draw inspiration from his enduring legacy and renew the collective resolve to carry forward his unfinished mission with unwavering dedication and determination. ■

International Communist and Workers' Movements Pay Revolutionary Tribute to Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya

Communist and workers' parties, revolutionary organisations, international comrades and diplomatic representatives from across the world have conveyed their condolences and revolutionary solidarity to CPI(ML) Liberation following the passing of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya.

The messages, received from across Asia, Europe and Latin America, paid tribute to Shambhuji's more than five decades of revolutionary struggle, his historic role in rebuilding and strengthening the Party, and his lifelong commitment to the working class, socialism and proletarian internationalism.

The Nepali Communist Party, in a letter conveyed through its Department of International Relations on behalf of its Co-Convenors, Comrades Pushpa Kamal Dahal 'Prachanda' and Madhav Kumar Nepal, recalled Shambhuji's pivotal role in the revolutionary movement and his continuous solidarity with the communist movement in Nepal. The letter affirmed, "We stand shoulder to shoulder with you in carrying forward his revolutionary legacy, and we will be together fighting ahead to strengthen the international communist movement."

The Communist Party of Nepal (UML), in a message from Pradeep Gyawali, Standing Committee Member and Chief of its Department of Foreign Affairs, paid heartfelt tribute to Shambhuji, stating that his "unwavering dedication, political legacy, and revolutionary

ideals will endure as an ever lasting source of inspiration for generations to come."

The Socialist Party of Bangladesh (SPB) General Secretary, Bazlur Rashid Firoz, recalled Shambhuji's historic role in reorganising CPI(ML) in 1974, following a period of severe state repression, and his subsequent contributions to rebuilding the revolutionary communist movement in India and South Asia.

Saiful Huq, leader of Revolutionary Workers Party of Bangladesh (RWPB), paid tribute recalling Shambhuji's participation as an invited guest at the Party's Seventh and Tenth Congresses in Bangladesh. The RWPB remembered his deep affection for the people of Bangladesh and described him as a "deeply respected and guardian-like figure" whose revolutionary life would continue to inspire future generations.

From Latin America, the United Socialist Party of Venezuela (PSUV), in a letter from Tania Valentina Díaz González, Secretary of International Affairs, paid tribute to Shambhuji's lifelong struggle and dedication to defending the rights of workers and oppressed peoples. The Party declared, "Today, we reaffirm our commitment to keeping alive the flame of internationalist solidarity and friendship between our peoples and parties, ideals to which he devoted his entire life."

The Communists of Catalonia, Spain, through Arnau Piqué Magdalena, International Relations Secretary, extended their condolences to Shambhuji's family, loved ones and comrades. Expressing confidence that CPI(ML) Liberation would carry forward his revolutionary aspirations, the Party reaffirmed the shared dream of "a socialist future without exploitation."

The Marxist–Leninist Party of Germany (MLPD), in a letter signed by Peter Römmele, conveyed its condolences on behalf of the Party, its youth league REBELL and children's organisation Red Foxes, as well as Stefan Engel and Monika Gärtner-Engel. Recalling Shambhuji's leadership in Party building and his revolutionary commitment, they said that his life's work would continue to be honoured by Indian revolutionaries and the international Marxist-Leninist and revolutionary movement.

The Communist Party (Switzerland), in a letter by Samuel Iembo, Head of the International Department, and Alessandro Bellanca, Member of the Department, paid tribute to Shambhuji's contribution to revolutionary Party building and the class struggle in India. The message affirmed, "communists such as comrade Bhattacharya are never truly lost." His work and revolutionary example, it emphasised, would live on through the struggles of future generations.

The Left Radical of Afghanistan, in its message of condolence recalled CPI(ML) Liberation's principled anti-imperialist positions and its solidarity with the people of Afghanistan. The organisation stated that his passing was "a great loss, not only for the toilers of India but for the entire revolutionary movement in the region."

The Independent Workers' Party (POI) of France honoured Shambhuji's memory and extended revolutionary greetings to CPI(ML) comrades carrying forward his legacy as "steadfast fighters against the reactionary regime of the BJP and the RSS."

Comrade Ana Prestes, Secretary of the International Department of the Communist Party of Brazil (PCdoB), the Central Committee of the Communist Party Communists of Russia and the Marxist–Leninist Communist Party (MLKP), Turkey/Kurdistan, also conveyed their condolences and fraternal solidarity.

A letter of condolence and solidarity was received from the Ambassador of the State of Palestine in New Delhi. Messages of solidarity and tribute were also received from diplomatic representatives of the Republic of Cuba, the People's Republic of China, Vietnam and Venezuela.

The Party also gratefully acknowledges the personal messages of condolence and revolutionary tribute received from Comrade Ramón Lobo, Deputy of the National Assembly from PSUV, Venezuela, who attended the 11th CPI(ML) Party Congress as guest; Comrade Siva Sivasegaram of the New Democratic Marxist-Leninist Party, Sri Lanka; Comrade Taimur Rahman, Secretary-General of the Mazdoor Kisan Party (MKP), Pakistan; Comrade Abdol Hamid Shahrabi, veteran Iranian left-wing activist; Comrade Guruh Riyanto of the Sindikasi Trade Union, Indonesia; Comrade Sarah Raymundo from the Philippines; Comrade Fentia of the Nurses Trade Union, Indonesia; and Comrade Ishwar Pokhrel, Member, Standing Committee of the Communist Party of Nepal (UML), Nepal.

The Central Committee of CPI(ML) Liberation extends its heartfelt revolutionary thanks to all fraternal parties, organisations, diplomatic representatives and comrades across the world for sharing in the grief of the Party and honouring the memory of Comrade Swadesh Bhattacharya. These expressions of solidarity reaffirm the enduring bonds of revolutionary internationalism that transcend national borders and unite the struggles of working people and oppressed peoples across the world. ■

The Right to Vote and the Right to Protest Are the Soul of Democracy

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

The Modi-Shah regime is coercing activists to sign so-called 'peace bonds' and give up their constitutional right to express democratic dissent and organise peaceful protests. Leaders of the CJP were tricked into signing this bond and now the bond is being invoked to stop them from exercising their right to protest. A similar order to sign a peace bond has also been served by a Special Executive Magistrate to Comrade Neha. It has been duly challenged in the legal arena, but this 'peace bond' ploy against peaceful protests must be exposed and rejected in the court of the people.

An Assistant Commissioner of Police issuing a notice on the basis of reports received from a constable itself violates the very principle of separation of powers. What is even more hypocritical is that when Comrade Neha and her lawyer appeared before the concerned ACP turned Special Executive Magistrate at the Mandir Marg Police Station, they found a noisy violent group of slogan-shouting middle-aged Sanghi men at the gate. The ACP-turned-SEM did not consider this violent assembly a 'breach of peace'! In fact, it may not at all be a surprise if the crowd had gathered with the help of inside information from the police station.

This synchronisation of state-led persecution and state-sponsored street violence is a defining feature of fascism. The Modi-Shah regime has been deploying this strategy to counter every popular agitation for the last decade. Demonisation of JNU and assault on Kanhaiya Kumar in 2016, violent attacks on equal citizenship campaign protesters in 2019-20, vilification of the historic farmers' movement and the mowing down of protesting farmers in Lakhimpur, UP in 2020-21, brutal attacks on paper leak protesters in Delhi in July this year and subsequent attacks on CJP activists in various parts of the country and now this ongoing campaign of hate and violence against 'right to vote' campaigners across the country, all conform to the textbook pattern of fascist terror.

The organised mob at the Mandir Marg Police Station gate gives us a glimpse of the kind of violent mass hysteria the Sangh brigade is planning to whip up across the country in the name of its 'crush anarchy' campaign. By disrupting public transport, blocking roads and turning the whole of central Delhi into a veritable war zone, it was the Modi government which sought to push the capital into a state of anarchy. The burning of books and bulldozing of book stalls during the puja festive season in Kolkata gave us another glimpse of the Sangh brigade's campaign of violence and anarchy. The idea is to derail the 'right to vote' movement by creating chaos and unleashing widespread mob violence.

Stopping peaceful protests by weaponising so-called 'peace bonds', spreading anarchy by giving a call for 'abolishing anarchy', stealing elections and manufacturing mandates and yet accusing the opposition of subverting democracy - the state of the Indian republic in 2026 very much resembles the dystopian order sketched by George Orwell in his classic last novel Nineteen Eighty-Four. In Orwell's surveillance state, under the constant watch of Big Brother, the ministry of propaganda becomes the ministry of truth, the war ministry becomes the ministry of peace, the interior or home affairs ministry christens itself as the ministry of love and the economy is administered by the ministry of plenty. The official language Newspeak turns every word upside down - war becomes peace, freedom turns into slavery and ignorance celebrated as strength - and the thought police (Thinkpol in Newspeak) works overtime to uncover and punish thoughtcrime! Compare the lexicon of Modi's India - from the Jumla of Achchhe Din to the nomenclature of 'peace bonds' and 'Dimagi Naxals' and we will find the Indian version of Nineteen Eighty-Four in the land of Orwell's birth (Orwell was born in Motihari of Bihar as Eric Arthur Blair in 1903).



Today, once again we see a renewed rise of far-right fascists across the world, and also a renewed

intensification of anti-fascist resistance spearheaded by a whole range of Left, progressive and anti-imperialist forces. Hungary witnessed the defeat of the far-right Viktor Orban regime in April 2026, and now Lula has won the presidential election for a record fourth time defeating his US-backed far-right challenger Flavio Bolsonaro, and in Serbia a two-year-old student upsurge has ended the twelve-year-old authoritarian reign of Aleksandar Vucic.

In France, Italy, Germany, Greece, Albania and beyond, popular student and working class struggles and progressive political streams are challenging neoliberal policies of privatisation and austerity, far-right aggression, and their governments' support for the US-Israel axis on the streets. The famous 1968 chant "Paris, London, Rome, Berlin - We shall fight, we shall win" has come back as a renewed roar and this time, with the children of migrants from the ex-colonies at the forefront, it is not only anti-war but explicitly anti-imperialist.

A rattled Trump has rushed to his favourite Islamophobic and xenophobic scare mongering rant to stop the echo of Europe in his beleaguered home ground. He has suddenly become worried about the future of France and its culture, raising the bogey of an Islamic takeover of Paris. Mohan Bhagwat and Narendra Modi have as ever parroted the same line, hoping to paint India's own growing Gen Z disillusionment, anger and passionate desire for change as a 'foreign conspiracy'. But the people of India know their turn is coming soon to give a long awaited rebuff to India's own fascists.■

Drought in Maharashtra: Prevention and Eradication

RAJENDRA BAWKE

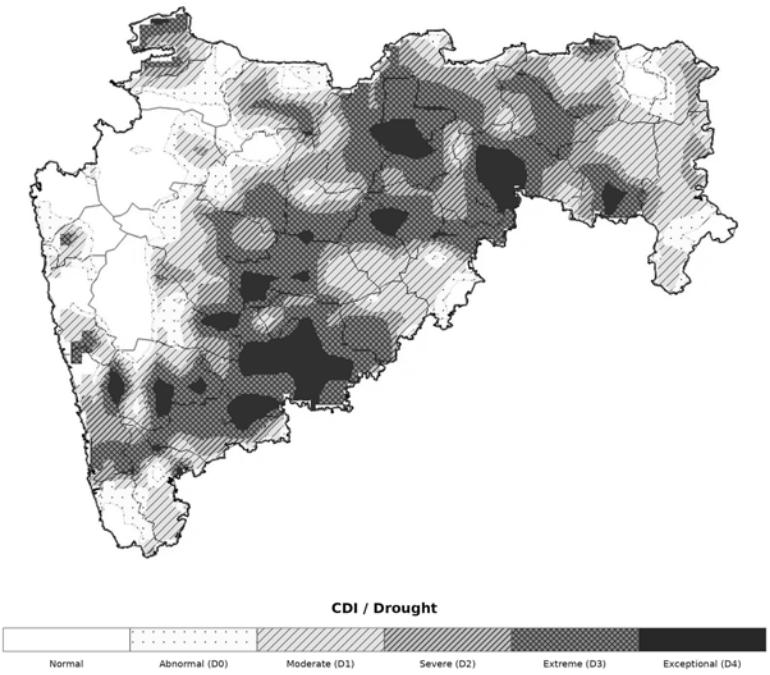


Photo by Historical map: 23 September 2026. India Drought Monitor : Combined Drought Index (CDI). (Map adapted to grayscale using AI.)

Today, Maharashtra is facing a crisis of drought worse than the 1972-73 drought. Due to extremely low rainfall in the Kharif season, a severe drought situation has arisen in the state of Maharashtra. On 25 September 2026, drought was declared officially in 265 talukas in the first phase. After reviewing at the end of the Kharif season, 40 more talukas in Maharashtra were included by 14 October 2026, bringing the total number of drought-affected talukas to 305. Rabi sowing has not been taken up anywhere yet, so there is a possibility that some more talukas out of the total 358 talukas will add to the tally. While 85.2% of the talukas in the state are already drought-affected, there are clear indications that the geographical spread of the drought in the state will increase as the districts in the Konkan belt are also rain deficient. Considering the increasing extent of this drought, there is a general consensus that Maharashtra will have to face a crisis worse than that of 72-73. Even if the rains are adequate next year, the effects of this year's drought will continue to haunt the state's agriculture in the next year as well affecting sugarcane and kharif crops in particular.

The government has announced some measures including exemption in land revenue, crop loan restructuring, moratorium on loan recovery, electricity bill concessions, exam fee waiver for students, water supply

and fodder management etc. but they are highly inadequate.

Moreover, the announced relief and the necessary assistance must also reach the affected farmers, agricultural labourers and other working classes immediately. Assistance to the landless, agricultural labourers, women, students, nomadic tribes, small businessmen and other artisans in the rural economy should also be considered on priority. The statistics up to Taluka level regarding actual assistance and benefits that reach to the affected including how many applications remain pending must be published by the government in a transparent manner.

Another big challenge is to immediately arrange fodder and water for livestock. Necessary measures and assistance are needed to sustain the dairy and poultry farming businesses which are an important source for supplementary income to the farmers of the state. According to the statistics released in October 2026, there is a total of 2.78 crore livestock in the state. There is a deficit of about 22.79% in the availability of green fodder and 21.43% in dry fodder. The government must take measures for adequate supply of fodder to save livestock and maintain their strength.

Due to the lack of employment opportunities during the drought, the migration of poor farmers and agricultural workers to cities has increased significantly. Rural employment guarantee scheme works need to be taken up for those who demand it, as per the Employment Guarantee Act of 1978. Providing employment guarantee work, payment of wages on time and ensuring unemployment allowance if work is not provided are crucial aspects in providing a minimum relief to the drought affected.



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DROUGHT AFFECTED TALUKAS IN MAHARASHTRA

(14 October 2026)

Also, priority should be given to soil and water conservation works in employment guarantee scheme. Works useful for drought prevention such as deepening and widening of drains, removing silt from percolation ponds, removing silt from dried dams to increase their storage capacity, and work under the watershed development component should be taken up. A village-wise employment plan should be prepared and weekly review of demand for work and wage related relief should be taken up.

Sugar producing cooperatives and privately owned factories are an important part of the rural economy of Maharashtra. This year's sugarcane production and sugar extraction will be affected with the crushing period being shorter than usual. The impact of this drought on sugarcane farming will be more severe in the next season. Financial and employment assistance to sugarcane cutters and seasonal sugar factory workers should be included in the government's package.

In the report till September, a deficit of 18.8% has been recorded in the rainfall since June. Considering the total stock of water in the dams and availability of drinking water in the state, according to the records available on the dashboard of the Water Resources Department, the live water storage of the dams in the state, as on October 20, is in a deficit of about 30 percent. Beer and liquor production, which uses water as raw material, should be banned till the next monsoon recharges.

The crisis in agriculture has become worse. The debt burden from Self help groups, NBFCs and mahajans has increased. The number of farmers committing suicide due to this vulnerability is increasing. Therefore, the government must also consider providing immediate assistance of Rs. 50,000 per acre to the farmers as well as to all agricultural labourers; complete waiver of all loans of farmers, women and agricultural labourers; provide 10 kg of food grains per person through the public distribution system as the prices of jowar, rice, oil, and sugar have already doubled; hoarding of foodgrains must not happen; and, use of foodgrains in industrial production should be stopped immediately. ■

Gokul and the BJP's Assault on Cooperative Democracy

AJIT PATIL

Even as the BJP, in collusion with Chief Election Commissioner Gyanesh Kumar, dismantles the independence of the Election Commission and disenfranchises voters on a massive scale, Maharashtra has witnessed another assault on the electoral mandate. At the Kolhapur District Cooperative Milk Producers' Union, popularly known as Gokul, the BJP-led alliance lost the board election. Its government then issued an ordinance that gave the alliance the votes it needed to capture the cooperative.

Gokul produces milk and milk products worth Rs 4,000 crore annually. For the farmers of western Maharashtra, where the policies of the government over the last 12 years have deepened the agrarian crisis, dairying provides a vital supplementary income. It is mostly women who run this business. Gokul sells 13 lakh litres of milk a day in Mumbai and Pune alone, generating a daily turnover of Rs 10 crore. Behind this familiar brand are thousands of kilometres of milk collection routes, large chilling plants at places such as Shirgaon and Vashi, and a local economy built up over generations.

The BJP, the Shinde-led Shiv Sena and the Ajit Pawar faction of the NCP contested the election together as the Mahayuti. The Samavichari panel, backed by the Maha Vikas Aghadi, defeated them, winning 13 seats against the Mahayuti's 12. The government transferred the election officer immediately after the result. The Mahayuti directors then stayed away from the meeting to elect the chairperson, leaving it without a quorum. The Maha Vikas Aghadi approached the High Court but secured little relief.

In the meantime, the BJP-led state government issued an ordinance providing for the appointment of five additional directors to Gokul and giving four of them voting rights. On November 9, milk farmers and the democratic people of Kolhapur district staged a massive demonstration against the ordinance and in support of the elected majority. CPI(ML) workers from several talukas of the district participated. Disregarding the verdict of the election and the clear opinion of the people who had come out on the streets, the BJP-led alliance captured the board with the votes of the four additional directors.

This power grab did not take place in a vacuum. Taking advantage of the malpractices that have grown in the cooperative sector over the years, the BJP and RSS have set out to capture the sector for their long-term agenda. The creation of a separate Ministry of Cooperation at the Centre and the decision to put Amit Shah in charge of it must be seen in this light.

In the dairy sector, the promotion of Amul has gone hand in hand with attempts to take over and merge milk cooperatives, much as corporations seek to establish monopolies through mergers and acquisitions. There were attempts to swallow up the brands, Nandini in Karnataka, Mahanand in Maharashtra, Aavin in Tamil Nadu and Milma in Kerala have all faced this pressure. In the rest of the states, the people and governments repelled this attack.

After the failed attempt to establish the Mayur brand as a competitor, there are fears that an administrative and political maze is being created to directly gobble brand Gokul. This will open the way for Anand and Mother Dairy as two monopolies to dictate prices for the milk producers and the consumers.

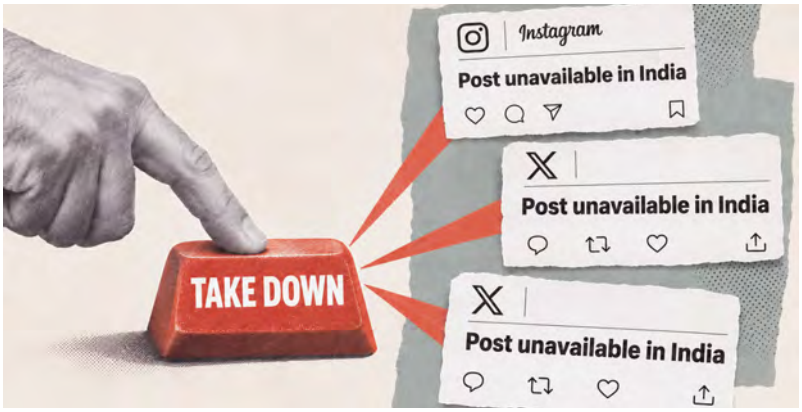
The process of this monopolisation is being carried out under the umbrella of the Sardar Patel Cooperative Dairy Federation, established in July 2025 with the stated aim of bringing the country's milk producers under one roof and building a common supply chain. Amul's managing director heads the federation. Of the 14 seats on its board, 11 are reserved for milk unions from Gujarat. The whole of the rest of India gets three. If Gokul joins this federation tomorrow, who will decide how Kolhapur's milk is priced, where it is sold and what becomes of the collection routes and chilling plants its farmers have built? Decisions about these resources could pass into the hands of the federation in Anand, Gujarat. The farmers who own Gokul today could become helpless suppliers tomorrow.

Does this concentration of control also prepare the ground for international dairy companies? Over the past year and a half, the Modi government has pursued trade agreements with Europe, the United States, Australia and New Zealand, offering import concessions on grains, oilseeds, fodder and other agricultural products.

Farmers and working people of Kolhapur have already shown that they will not watch quietly while their cooperative is taken from them. In defending their elected board, they are also defending their right to decide the future of their milk, their markets and their livelihoods. ■

The Automation of Repression

GURSHABAD GROVER



The public demonstrations against mass disenfranchisement represent one of the largest democratic challenges to the fascist regime. True to its authoritarian instinct, the government has only tightened its control over online freedom of expression – now at an unprecedented and senseless scale.

I don't employ the two terms – unprecedented and senseless – flippantly. For evidence of having no precedent, consider Meta's recent transparency report. It reveals that just in the first half of 2026, Meta made an astonishing 5.4 million pieces of content unavailable to Indians because of regulations and legal requests. For comparison, the same number was around 41,000 in the six months preceding this period.

To make sense of the lack of sense of how the censorship is being directed, let's take the example of LiveLaw, a media site focusing on legal reporting. Between 27 and 30 October, three of LiveLaw's videos were removed from Instagram. Two of these concerned developments in cases regarding Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls, and one was about a legal challenge against the Transgender Rights Act. None even amounted to dissent from or opposition to the government, they simply reported on court proceedings. The kicker is that two of these videos were removed within a span of fifteen minutes of upload! The short time span indicates that the content was never actually viewed or reviewed by anyone: forget reasoning in legal orders, there is no application of thought at all.

How we've landed in this Kafkaesque situation is the result of a series of amendments to the rules under the Information Technology (IT) Act that the BJP government has enacted in the last five years. In the May issue of Liberation, I covered the legal institutionalisation of this ruthless architecture of censorship.

Pertinently, an amendment in 2021 asked major social media platforms to deploy "automated tools" to proactively block "unlawful" content. This requirement was so broad and absurd that it immediately met legal challenges and operational resistance from social media platforms. Then in February 2026, the government narrowed the requirement to two categories, and one of these categories is content "exactly identical" to what was already censored by previous orders. The government followed it up with two secret advisories – which were thankfully leaked to the press – that added more pressure for "enhanced diligence", particularly against "unverified or misleading claims regarding the imposition of emergency, restrictions, police action or other official measures."

And the social media platforms have complied, and more. In a typical sequence of events, the Modi government directs posts to be censored: everything from a citizen calling Modi "useless", Rahul Gandhi waving the Indian flag, or CPI(ML) Liberation leaders flagging the Delhi Police's vandalism of an Ambedkar portrait.Then social media platforms employ tools – which are also opaque to the public – to take down similar content. As another example, consider the ridiculous cascade of events: a post about Burhan Wani is targeted with censorship, a digital rights organisation's post about the censorship gets censored, Scroll posts about that and gets censored!

Here, the social media platforms – mostly in the hands of American tech companies that have now shed even their flimsy pretence of support for human rights – are also to blame for simply caving to illegal orders. Meta has been particularly overzealous and is removing political content by filtering on keywords – _en masse_ without rhyme, reason or notice. Under the scanner is everything from Hardeep Singh Puri's appearance in Epstein's communications to statements about the murder of Ankita Bhandari.

Where some topics are entirely off-limits and prior restraint on speech is the default: that is what the so-called digital public sphere looks like in the Hindutva vision. ■

Our Immediate Imperative Is To Stop Fascism

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

The following is a slightly abridged version of the keynote address delivered by CPIML General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya at the Vijayan Maash Memorial Seminar organised by the M. N. Vijayan Cultural Centre in Kozhikode, Keralam, on October 31. The seminar focused on the theme "The Rise of Indian Fascism and the Challenges Facing India and Keralam."



To the chair of this symposium, Comrade Chekkutty, Comrade Prakash Babu, the speakers to follow, and all of you present here—friends and comrades:

It is a great privilege for me to address you on this occasion, which is dedicated to the memory of Professor M. N. Vijayan. Unfortunately, I never had the opportunity to meet him in person. However, I have heard much about him. As we were just reminded, in the final years of his life, he served as an independent, critical voice contemplating an alternative, more meaningful future for the Left in Keralam—a vision that I am sure applies to the broader Indian national context as well.

To draw a brief analogy, we saw a similar dynamic in West Bengal in the early 2000s with Comrade Ashok Mitra, the Marxist economist who served as the first Finance Minister of the 1977 Jyoti Basu government. He, too, began criticizing several Left Front policies around early 2006, particularly the land acquisition in Singur.

Fundamentally, that entire critique—whether developed by Ashok Mitra and his comrades, or by Professor Vijayan here—emerged in response to the growing impact of neoliberalism on our economic policies, and the question of how the Left ought to confront it. Whenever they observed signs of surrender, vacillation, or unacceptable compromise with neoliberalism, they consistently raised their voices to express concern and critique that trajectory.

All of them shared the same political setting, where we could assume some degree of parliamentary democracy, a welfare state, and a mixed economy. Those were the baseline conditions. Whether we aimed for an outright revolutionary transformation or sought to exert pressure on the system to keep it in check, the underlying context remained the same: parliamentary democracy, a mixed economy, and a direction set by the state.

The introduction of new economic policies—liberalization, privatization, and globalization—in 1991 marked the first major shift. Economic policy began changing abruptly. Alongside this shift, the 1990s brought other profound upheavals: the aggressive rise of the BJP and the Ramjanmabhoomi agitation. That was a major shake-up in Indian politics—an earthquake developing across the country.

In the popular terminology of that era, politics was known as 'Mandal politics,' 'Mandir politics,' and 'Market politics.' Many believed that the market and the new economic reforms would naturally neutralize extreme communal polarization, hysteria, and fanaticism. That was the prevailing assumption in the early 1990s. The critiques offered by M.N. Vijayan and Ashok Mitra in the early 2000s emerged after a decade or two of experiencing those policies. Today, in 2026, we have entered an entirely new and unprecedented phase—one we must clearly name as Indian fascism, nothing less.

Fascism in India has now come to power. As an ideology, an imagination, and a political design, it first raised its head in 1925 with the formation of the RSS. The RSS was not an offshoot of India's freedom movement; rather, it was

directly inspired by Hitler and the rise of European fascism, adopting that model of nationalism as its foundational blueprint.

When we say fascism has come to power today, we do not mean it happened overnight. A century-long journey has reached its pinnacle—a breaking point. That is the defining change. Fascism, which once existed merely as an ideology, now wields state power and possesses the machinery to implement its agenda. Whether it advances rapidly and aggressively, or gradually and incrementally, depends on the circumstances. Fundamentally, however, we are confronting a fascist regime actively executing its project, and we must define the role of the Left as a fighting anti-fascist force.

The primary responsibility of the Left today is to spearhead anti-fascist resistance—that is task number one. This represents a massive shift because it is entirely unprecedented in our history. When we confronted fascism in the 1940s, it was within an international context—in Germany, Spain, Italy, and across Europe. In India, we built an anti-fascist cultural and political movement, yet we were not confronting a fascist regime holding state power within our own borders.

This is a profound transformation, and my first appeal to all of you in Keralam is to treat this reality as your starting point. Keralam remains one of the few fortunate, exceptional states in India where fascists are not directly in power. You may feel protected here. Until very recently, people in states like Keralam and Tamil Nadu believed they were insulated, thinking, "Fascism cannot happen here. It might be in Gujarat, Delhi, or Uttar Pradesh, but not where the Left is strong, not where our culture and progressive legacy are deeply rooted." That illusion has been brutally shattered in West Bengal.

It has been completely shattered in West Bengal. The BJP has been in power there for just a few months, and already we can witness what they are capable of, what they intend to do, and how they operate. Destruction and vandalism are underway in full swing. Keralam may still feel distant from that reality, yet the exact same trend is taking root here as well. No state in India is immune to the rise of fascism. Every state, every segment of society, and every aspect of our existence is vulnerable to this onslaught.

Many have refused to recognize this reality as fascism, and that denial is a major obstacle. Believing that fascism cannot exist here is a mental block. Assuming that fascism was confined to Germany and Italy, and that it died with Hitler and Mussolini, is our failure of imagination—not a limitation of the fascists or of history. Many assumed fascism had been locked away in the deep freeze of history, failing to see that contemporary fascists have been defrosting it, reheating it, and serving it afresh across different nations.

Equating fascism exclusively with historical German or Italian models—and assuming India cannot replicate them—has blinded us to the real danger. As a result, fascism grew largely unnoticed and unchallenged in India, thriving on that very oversight. Another analytical hurdle is the assumption that fascism is strictly a product of advanced capitalist crisis.

We often tell ourselves, "We do not have advanced capitalism; our capitalism is backward. How could its crisis produce fascism?" The crucial point is that fascism is not solely an expression of advanced capitalism; it can thrive alongside deeply entrenched feudal remnants. India possesses every single ingredient required for fascism. If you speak to those oppressed by the caste system or active in the Ambedkarite movement, they will tell you: "You are waking up to fascism only now; we have lived under the fascism of the caste system for centuries." Indeed, the caste hierarchy is tailor-made for a fascist project.

Similarly, if you examine who constitutes the fascist forces today—in Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, or West Bengal—you will find feudal elements that either escaped land reforms unscathed or are burning with vengeance to reclaim their lost land, social standing, and political dominance. Even in West Bengal, the Chief Minister is not merely a local Congress politician; he represents a deeply entrenched family whose power remained completely intact through 34 years of Left rule and land reforms.

This unmitigated feudal power provides fertile ground for fascism to expand. Neoliberalism stands alongside, and advanced exactly in the same period—the 1990s and early 2000s. Back then, through the employees' movement, trade unions, and annual bank and insurance strikes, we believed we could slow neoliberalism down. Even if we could not reverse it entirely, we successfully mitigated its impact and rolled back several measures across trade, agriculture, industry, services, and bank privatization.

That era is over. Just recently, IDBI Bank was sold off. The period in which India maintained nationalized commercial banks and built public-sector refineries like HPCL has officially ended. Today, foreign crude oil arrives directly at Jamnagar to be refined for export to America, while corporate conglomerates like the Adanis are tasked with developing refinery infrastructure for global markets. Neoliberalism now operates at an

entirely different level of intensity. Beyond trade and agriculture, labor laws have been completely overhauled through the new labor codes, handing total corporate control over Indian labor.

Every ingredient of fascism is now in place, and its proponents hold state power. Within the Left, we often debate a critical question: Fascists come to power through elections, but do they ever leave through elections? Once entrenched, is there an electoral exit route? That remains an open question. Mussolini and Hitler fell under extraordinary circumstances—a world war, military intervention, and the might of the Soviet Union—representing a vastly different historical juncture. What happens now in a country like India, where a modicum of democracy remains and elections still take place?

In 2024, the ruling fascists sensed their impending defeat. After boldly declaring "Abki Baar 400 Paar" (Over 400 seats this time), the people of India reduced them to 240 seats—despite extensive electoral manipulation. Realizing they could no longer sustain their grip through standard contests, they launched the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of voter rolls and enacted the new Election Commission Act. They began systematically rigging the electoral apparatus so that future "normal" elections are engineered to guarantee continuous victories for the BJP. They have engineered a self-renewing electoral mechanism.

We have reached a stage where we must confront this head-on. The movement we are building now, and the rally we are holding tomorrow, are not merely about a single election or the voting rights of a few individuals. More than 13 crore—nearly 14 crore—people have been arbitrarily struck off the electoral rolls. Even if we generously assume that half of those exclusions account for migration or deaths, at least 7 crore citizens have been wrongfully disenfranchised. Migrant workers, Muslims, the rural poor, and women—we know precisely who the primary targets are.

This struggle is no longer just about restoring individual voting rights; it is about the very survival of India's electoral democracy. Historically, Indian democracy rarely extended beyond the ballot box. We never achieved a truly participatory, 24/7 democracy where citizens could continuously exercise their rights and hold governments accountable. That remained an unfulfilled aspiration. What we did possess was an electoral democracy where, every 10, 15, or 20 years—or even after 34 years of Left Front rule in West Bengal—voters could occasionally change their government through ballot box.

Even that basic avenue is now broken. When the electoral mechanism is compromised, only powerful popular movements can restore it. Going forward, anyone hoping to win an election must recognize that in every assembly constituency, the BJP has already engineered a secure buffer of at least 30,000 votes through manipulation. Defeating them requires generating an overwhelming political swing capable of overcoming a 30,000- to 50,000-vote cushion. Only the convergence of a massive grassroots movement, intense public pressure, and altered ground conditions can deliver genuine change.

How we ultimately defeat and oust fascism remains an open-ended challenge. We know how it came to power; we have suffered through it, and we witness it consolidating across every sphere of public life. Yet there is no rigid, pre-meditated blueprint for dismantling it. We must forge the answers ourselves. Every avenue must be explored, and the Left must urgently reinvent itself.

The Left must reinvent itself as the champion of popular resistance against fascism. That is our foremost task. Too often, we comfort ourselves by treating fascism as a passing phase, thinking, "We will endure this and eventually build socialism." There is no path to socialism that bypasses this roadblock. We must dismantle fascism first. If we overthrow it through revolutionary struggle, there will be light at the end of this dark tunnel—a deeper, more substantive democracy with broader rights for the people, oriented toward socialism even if not yet a fully realized socialist state.

Since the Modi era began in 2014, we have witnessed powerful, hopeful struggles. Yet the era itself is defined by fascism, which operates through two distinct mechanisms. Historically, the modern state held a monopoly over state violence. Only the state could legally apply violence to punish citizens. Under fascism, however, state repression is fused with mobilized street violence. The combination of state terror and vigilante street violence defines fascism in any country in any era.

Simultaneously, we are witnessing the "normalization of the abnormal." Everything unfolding around us is profoundly, inherently abnormal, yet it is treated as " new normal" and "routine", and the perpetrators act with complete impunity. The disenfranchisement of 13 crore citizens through SIR is treated as normal. The de-notification of Aadhaar is treated as normal. Brandishing an AK-47 at a protest march, or firing pellet guns in Kashmir and Delhi, is treated as normal. Throwing

a research scholar in jail under the National Security Act (NSA) simply for demanding minimum wages is treated as normal.

Confronting this normalization of the abnormal demands extraordinary political imagination, innovative modes of resistance, and a bold new trajectory for the Left. Over the past decade, we have witnessed a series of movements all of which were extraordinary. The student movement that emerged following the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula was something extraordinary—not a routine student mobilization. That student movement put forward the provocative and powerful idea of combining Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh. Nobody had thought of combining Ambedkar and Bhagat Singh before, but it happened, and it is increasingly gaining acceptance among the people.

The civil and student movement of 2016-2017 was exceptional, and we have undoubtedly grown wiser, drawing vital lessons and immense energy from it. Then came the resistance against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA)—a law that was entirely discriminatory, divisive, and targeted against India's Muslims in particular. Just before the COVID-19 pandemic struck, we saw the Shaheen Bagh model of resistance, characterized by the unprecedented participation of Muslim women ranging from 8-year-olds to 80-year-olds standing shoulder to shoulder across generations. It had a galvanizing, cascading effect across the entire country, inspiring hundreds of thousands of Shaheen Baghs to spring up in different cities and towns nationwide. That was massive.

We know how that movement was crushed: authorities engineered communal violence in Delhi and weaponized it to dismantle the protests. Today, activists like Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, and many others remain imprisoned for four to six years without trial or due process. A climate of fear has been inflicted upon us, so pervasive that many political leaders dare not even utter their names for fear of being branded "anti-national."

Following that, we witnessed the historic farmers' movement—an unthinkable feat. India has a rich history of powerful peasant struggles: in Keralam, Bengal, and Telangana, we have seen glorious struggles by agricultural laborers, landless peasants, smallholders, and marginal farmers, yet what the farmers achieved at the borders of Delhi was unprecedented. For an entire year, farmers from Punjab, Haryana, western Uttar Pradesh, and Rajasthan stood firm, refusing to return home until the farm laws were repealed—and they won.

However, each of these struggles—the student uprisings, the anti-CAA protests, the farmers' movement, and campaigns to defend the Constitution—remained largely confined to specific regions or social segments. Today, with the momentum building since January, June, and July, and the ongoing fight against voter disenfranchisement, a genuine pan-India movement is emerging before our eyes. At the center of it is a completely new phenomenon: the rise of Gen Z.

When a corporate-backed party captures the public imagination, and Left student organizations—AISA, SFI, AISF, and other progressive groups—throw their weight behind a broader resistance, something remarkable happens. This new generation's entire political consciousness has been formed over the past 12 years. Unburdened by historical baggage, they are indifferent to past grievances against the Left or the Congress. Throughout their lives, they have known only the rule of Modi, Amit Shah, Yogi, Adani, Ambani, and the RSS.

Because their political awakening was forged directly under fascism, they carry an instinctive anti-fascist resolve that cuts across class, language, and gender. That is precisely why this movement succeeded. Alongside it, students and young workers—facing severe precarity, low wages, and a total lack of job or social security—are rising up against inhumane working conditions and punishing hours.

The Gen Z working class and young women represent the most hopeful development in India today. Even in a state like Keralam, the assertive mobilization of young women is unprecedented. Many say the future is female, and indeed, this generation's resistance is overwhelmingly led by women—a deeply encouraging sign.

Now, consider this grassroots energy alongside the INDIA Bloc. While the opposition alliance has its limitations and internal contradictions—particularly in states like Keralam, West Bengal, Tamil Nadu, and Punjab, where constituent parties compete against one another—it remains a vital framework for broad opposition unity. If this surging grassroots movement converges with the broader political opposition; if civil society extends its full cooperation; and if all sections of the Left—organized parties, the non-party Left, independent activists, and Marxists of every hue—unite across generations, we can generate unstoppable political momentum. Without that unity, impetus and momentum we cannot realistically imagine defeating fascist forces.

Let us have no illusions about the brutality of the forces we face. Some still argue, "This is not Germany; there are no gas chambers here, and six million people have not

been exterminated." We must not wait for gas chambers or a six-million death toll to recognize fascism! Daily lynchings and silent electoral genocide are already more than enough.

Whether this fascism can be stopped, stalled right here and now, and defeated, or whether it becomes further entrenched and unleashes its full fury—whether we are truly condemned to suffer the unmitigated, unregulated, and uncontrolled fury of a fascist force—only time will tell. I am speaking here not merely as a political leader representing a party, but rather as a student and activist of this broader movement, drawing inspiration and strength from the enduring legacy of the communist movement.

Our immediate task is to stop fascism here and now, prevent it from growing any further, and protect whatever remains of our democracy, civilization, social harmony, diversity, federalism, and fundamental freedoms. Let us safeguard, rescue, and strengthen these values so that we render fascism unsustainable. In doing so, we will not only defeat Modi, but we will also be equipped to stop any future ruler who aspires to be like Hitler or Modi and seeks to destroy India.

Our immediate imperative is to stop fascism in its tracks and safeguard what remains of our democracy, civilization, social harmony, diversity, federalism, and fundamental freedoms. By defending and strengthening these values, we can make fascism unsustainable. In doing so, we will not only defeat Modi, but also equip ourselves to stop any future ruler who aspires to emulate Hitler or Modi and destroy India.

Halting that fascist imagination is our primary duty. I often think that if Professor Vijayan were alive today, applying his conscience and analytical rigor to our current crisis, he would issue this exact warning. Long ago, Ambedkar warned that transforming India into a Hindu Rashtra would be the worst possible disaster. Bhagat Singh, even in his youth, taught us that if brown sahebs merely replace white colonizers, freedom will lose all its meaning.

Insightful thinkers and leaders have consistently warned us against this. As the Chinese proverb says, "We live in interesting times." But if we can grasp the true magnitude of this crisis and stop it, that will stand as the greatest achievement of the Indian Left. Whatever we accomplished in the 20th century belongs to our glorious past. There were debates and unresolved issues, which is fine. What we achieved in the parliamentary arena and through extra-parliamentary people's movements—for me, the 20th century serves as a historical point of reference: largely glorious, offering valuable lessons. But today's situation is completely unprecedented.

Many will dismiss this as an "out of syllabus" question, but if you look closely at Indian society, Ambedkar's observation holds true: "The Constitution is only a top dressing of democracy on an undemocratic or anti-democratic soil." When we understand what he truly meant, we realize what needs to be done. This is our biggest challenge, and I thank all of you for bearing with me. ■

Surat's Migrant Workers Fight Exploitation and Police Repression

Pravasi Shramik Adhikar Manch

Migrant workers in Surat, Gujarat, are fighting against inhuman working conditions, 84-hour workweeks, inadequate wages, denial of weekly holidays and the absence of basic social security. A fact-finding team of the Pravasi Shramik Adhikar Manch visited Surat following the workers' protests in August and October 2026 to investigate their working and living conditions and the reasons behind the continuing exodus.

The team, comprising Comrades Vinod Singh, Sandeep Saurav, Sadrul, Anandbhai and Abhishek, visited different industrial areas and interacted with migrant workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha and West Bengal. They also met local trade union organisers, representatives of the Indian National Trade Union Congress (INTUC), All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) and Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), and activists involved in the struggles of textile workers.

Gujarat's economic growth rests heavily on the labour of migrant workers. The state's projected Gross State Domestic Product (GSDP) for 2025–26 stood at approximately ₹29.82 lakh crore, with manufacturing and services contributing around 44 and 36 per cent respectively in 2023–24. The Surat Economic Region, comprising six districts of southern Gujarat, accounts for approximately 25 per cent of the state's GDP despite occupying only 10.8 per cent of its geographical area. Behind these "impressive" economic figures lies the reality of extreme exploitation. Migrant workers from Bihar, Jharkhand, Odisha, West Bengal, Uttar Pradesh and other states sustain Gujarat's textile, diamond and manufacturing industries. Yet the wealth they generate offers them little protection against poverty, unemployment, workplace injuries or arbitrary decisions by employers.

The fact-finding team found that workers in several textile units were compelled to work for 12 hours or more every day, often without adequate breaks or even a weekly holiday. Many workers complained that inadequate staffing forced them to operate multiple machines simultaneously for extended periods, increasing exhaustion and the risk of accidents.

Workers reported that when they demanded a weekly holiday, some factory owners sought to reduce their wages in exchange. Trade union representatives informed the team that three letters containing the workers' demands had already been submitted to the Labour Department and employers, but no effective intervention had followed. Statutory benefits, including provident fund contributions, medical assistance and bonuses, were routinely denied.

Workplace safety was another major concern. Workers described frequent accidents involving industrial machinery, often resulting in injuries without adequate medical assistance or compensation from employers. Many such accidents remained unreported. Mass layoffs, wage reductions and threats of dismissal further intensified insecurity. With limited employment opportunities in their home states, migrant workers remained particularly vulnerable to exploitation and intimidation.

Discontent intensified in August 2026 when workers in the Vedanta Industrial Area of Amroli, Surat, organised protests demanding weekly holidays. Instead of addressing their demands, the Gujarat Police registered an FIR against 500 people and arrested eight workers.

On October 15, workers and trade union leaders attempting to raise their demands outside the Collector's office in Athwalines, Surat, faced another police crackdown. Several workers and union leaders were detained, while further FIRs and arrests followed the protests.

The movement of migrant workers back to their home states is neither new nor an isolated development. The COVID-19 crisis, industrial closures, mass layoffs, wage reductions and deteriorating working conditions have repeatedly forced workers to leave Surat. In March 2026, rising gas prices amid the US-Israeli aggression against Iran further aggravated the industrial crisis, prompting another wave of workers to return home. Workers in Surat's diamond-cutting and polishing industry have similarly endured prolonged layoffs, wage reductions, factory closures and the absence of social security.

For those returning home, the journey itself often becomes another ordeal. A migrant worker from Giridih district in Jharkhand described travelling for 42 to 45 hours in a cramped bus from Surat because of inadequate long-distance train connectivity. Yet returning home rarely brings lasting relief. The absence of adequate employment and livelihood opportunities in their native states eventually forces many workers to migrate again, often to the same industrial centres from which they had fled.

The report identifies this repeated movement between unemployment at home and exploitation in industrial cities as a defining feature of the migrant workers' predicament under the prevailing economic policies.

The conditions documented in Surat also reflect wider working-class struggles across India. During 2026, workers raised similar demands in industrial centres including Barauni, Panipat, Bhagalpur, Buxar, Jamshedpur, Haridwar, Manesar, Noida, Korba and Singrauli. Within Gujarat, protests also took place in Vapi, Dahej, Surat and Vadodara.

The fact-finding report noted that situation exposed the Modi government's anti-worker labour codes and the Gujarat government's Ease of Doing Business model, which prioritises the interests of industrialists while denying workers's their rights.

Pravasi Shramik Adhikar Manch demanded that the Union and state governments abandon anti-worker policies and ensure living wages, an eight-hour workday, guaranteed weekly holidays, workplace safety and comprehensive social security for migrant workers.

It also demanded the immediate withdrawal of all FIRs registered against protesting workers and trade union leaders, an end to police repression and employer intimidation, and protection of workers' right to organise and protest peacefully.

The organisation further called upon governments in states experiencing large-scale outward migration to formulate policies protecting the welfare and rights of workers compelled to seek employment elsewhere.

The struggle of Surat's migrant workers exposes the contradiction between the much-publicised Gujarat model of economic growth and the conditions imposed upon those whose labour sustains it. Despite arrests, threats and repeated repression, workers continue to resist exploitation and demand their fundamental rights to dignified work, fair wages, rest and social security.

Full report will be available in forthcoming issue of Workers' Resistance. Visit aicctu.org and liberation.org.in. ■

Reservation as a Public Health Policy

DR. A CHANDIRAN JOSEPH

A young man walked into his father's textile mill in Manchester in 1842 and assumed a managerial role. What followed was not merely a career but a reckoning. Friedrich Engels' '*The Condition of the Working Class in England*' documented overcrowded dwellings, malnutrition, alcoholism and shared sleeping spaces for the sick and the vulnerable that ravaged the urban poor. Disease, he showed, was not accidental but produced by living conditions.Around the same time, Rudolf Virchow's investigation of the 1848 typhus epidemic in Upper Silesia reached a similar conclusion: epidemics arose from poverty, overcrowding, political neglect and lack of education, and lasting prevention required social reform.[1] Decades later, Salvador Allende in The Chilean MedicoSocial Reality (1939) echoed this insight, linking patterns of disease to social inequality and showing that improvements in living standards, rather than medical advances alone, were central to the decline of major infectious diseases.[2]

Nearly a century after Engels' work, as India drafted its Constitution, about 60 million people belonged to the Scheduled Castes, a population larger than that of England. Reservation emerged as a response to this historic exclusion. Though framed as a measure of social justice, its consequences extended beyond representation, quietly addressing disease, deprivation and premature death rooted in poverty.

Where Caste and Class Converge

Virchow, Engels and Allende wrote largely in the language of class. Their work identified how diseases borne out of poverty required not merely economic reform but social reform as well. Class however is primarily economic. In India, caste frequently determines class location. Though fixed by birth, it has historically been tied to occupation and stigma. The majority of the working class at the lower strata carry a distinct caste imprint. Manual scavengers, graveyard diggers, sanitation workers, stone quarry workers, migrant labourers, cobblers, and fishing communities are not occupationally distributed by accident. Caste here does not merely accompany poverty and labour, it organises them. At the lower strata, caste and class converge while they increasingly diverge at the upper strata through access to education, employment and livelihood, all products of reservation. Birth determines Caste, caste determines occupation, and occupation in turn determines exposure to diseases. Access to education, employment and safe housing through reservation has enabled sections of these communities to move away from hereditary labour and the occupational diseases that once accompanied it.

Caste, Poverty and Disease

Even today, data echo these historical truths. The National Family Health Survey 5 shows that children born to Scheduled Caste and Scheduled Tribe families are breastfed longer than those from other groups. In isolation, this may appear encouraging. In reality, though the data may not be sufficient to establish causality and may require larger epidemiological studies, it still underlines silent hunger and lack of access to adequate nutrition. Prolonged breastfeeding compensates for food insecurity. This underscores why access to education, livelihood and maternal empowerment remain central to child health and why reservations for women are inseparable from public health outcomes.

Virchow wrote that epidemics such as typhus could occur only under the wretched conditions created by poverty and that removing these conditions would prevent their recurrence. His answer to preventing future epidemics was simple and enduring: Education, liberty, and prosperity.

There is substantial evidence to show that factors such as caste and standard of living shape disease outcomes. Data from the National Family Health Survey (NFHS-5) indicate that children in the lowest wealth quintile have a stunting prevalence of around 46%. Socially disadvantaged groups remain more vulnerable, with stunting rates of 39.2% among Scheduled Castes and 40.9% among Scheduled Tribes, higher than those observed among general and Other Backward classes. A recent study published in Nature similarly reports a higher prevalence of stunting among SC and ST children at around 39%, compared to about 33% among non-SC/ST populations, and highlights the role of poor sanitation, with children in households lacking adequate sanitation being significantly more likely to be stunted. The household wealth index alone,

a leading factor, is estimated to account for nearly 41.3% of the stunting inequality between SC-ST and non-SC-ST groups.[3,4] These findings point to a clear convergence of caste and poverty, where children from SC and ST communities and those in the lowest wealth quintiles bear a disproportionate burden of malnutrition. This is not merely a nutritional deficit but a reflection of deeper structural inequities. The complex interplay of social, economic and political factors shapes growth patterns and health disparities, as described in the Social-Economic-Political-Emotional (SEPE) framework of human development. Historical marginalisation, unequal access to healthcare, inadequate maternal education and barriers to sanitation together shape health outcomes. Caste-based exclusion continues to limit access to public services, including healthcare. The World Health Organisation has long noted that a significant proportion of malnutrition is linked to infections arising from poor sanitation, including diarrhoeal diseases such as cholera and dysentery, as well as intestinal infections. Its recent report on social determinants of health equity further underscores that health outcomes are shaped less by medical care than by the social and economic conditions in which people live, and calls for addressing structural discrimination embedded in institutions and social systems.[5]

Evidence from Southern states like Keralam and Tamil Nadu provides a useful illustration of how social policy and public health systems can intersect to shape better outcomes. Tamil Nadu which takes pride in one of the earliest public health directorates established in 1920 and India's first Public Health Act in 1939, has consistently recorded some of the lowest infant mortality rates and maternal mortality ratios in the country. The state's IMR stands at around 19 per 1000 livebirths compared to the national average of 28 and a much higher level in states such as Uttar Pradesh with an IMR around 50. MMR has similarly declined to around 35 per 1 lakh live births (2023), well below the national average of 88. Indicators of Child nutrition bear a similar pattern. Stunting, an indicator for chronic undernutrition in children, assessed based on height-for-age, is around 25% in Tamil Nadu, compared to 42.9% in Bihar and 39.7% in Uttar Pradesh, while wasting, an indicator of undernutrition assessed based on weight-for-height, stands at about 14.6%, significantly lower than in states such as Gujarat (25.1%) and Maharashtra (25.6%). [5] Institutional deliveries and sustained improvements in maternal care have further reduced early-life risks across populations. These patterns suggest that where public health systems operate alongside broader social policies that expand access to education, employment and basic living conditions, the gains extend across all social groups.[6] Historically marginalised communities in better-performing states, therefore, fare better than their counterparts in high-burden states.

When India adopted reservation, the dominant constitutional framing moved beyond formal equality and focused on substantive equality. Articles 15 (4) and 16 (4) empower the state to make special provisions for socially and educationally backward classes and for the scheduled classes and scheduled tribes. Though these addressed the structural disadvantages, their implications extended further. Article 47 directs the states to improve nutrition, standard of living, and public health. Yet public health itself cannot advance in communities without addressing diseases borne of poverty, illiteracy and insecure living. Preventive medicine rests as much on housing, nutrition and education as it does on clinical care. Policies that expand access to education and employment, therefore, reshape the conditions in which diseases take root.

The doctrine of substantive equality embedded in the Constitution offers a deeper explanation. Equality is not achieved by ignoring caste, but by recognising how caste structures access to resources like education and housing. In the same way, public health recognises that diseases such as tuberculosis, leprosy and malnutrition are the results of poverty. Slum dwellers with limited education and precarious livelihoods repeatedly experience epidemic outbreaks, a reality documented for long and reaffirmed by contemporary research.

Caste in India functions as a health determinant. Reservation operates as a population-level intervention, flattening extreme vulnerability rather than privileging individuals.

Housing policies offer a parallel illustration. Engels identified overcrowding and poor ventilation as drivers of mortality. In states like Tamil Nadu, initiatives such as the Slum Clearance Board and the Periyar Samathuvapuram scheme were introduced by the former Chief Minister M Karunanidhi as social reform measures.The Kalaignar Kanavu Illam scheme, introduced in 2024, aims to make Tamil Nadu a slum free state by 2030. Yet their public health impact was unmistakable. Permanent housing with ventilation, spacing, and sanitation undoubtedly reduced communicable diseases spread

through air, water, and vectors. These were health interventions implemented outside hospitals.

Why Reservation Must Endure

Reservation has long faced demands for a sunset clause. Ambedkar rejected this unequivocally. Infectious diseases do not disappear with time limits. Diseases rooted in poverty retreat only when living conditions improve.[7]

The drafting committee chaired by Ambedkar adopted the term backward classes with flexibility across states. The underlying logic, however was consistent as social backwardness, which could not be separated from housing, education, occupation, and quality of life differ from state to state.

Contemporary India continues to reflect this reality. Migrant workers in Tamil Nadu employed in stone quarries, salt pans, and construction sites often belong to castes like Gond and Oddars. Many remain unrecognised in official records, depriving them of reservation benefits in education and employment.[8] According to the Tamil Nadu State Planning Commission report 2025, eight out of ten migrant workers live in kutcha or semi pucca houses. Most purchase drinking water, rely on common toilets, lack social security, and remain excluded from ESI coverage. Silicosis, though notifiable, remains underreported and frequently misdiagnosed as tuberculosis due to bureaucratic and occupational pressures. Global health declarations have long reinforced these truths. The Alma-Ata Declaration and the Ottawa Charter recognised health as a fundamental right and placed social justice, education, and equity at the centre of health policy. Countries and states that adopted progressive social policies achieved better health indicators not through medical advances alone, but through redistribution and inclusion.[9,10]

Despite decades of progress, stigma persists. Tuberculosis, leprosy and HIV continue to displace patients from homes and livelihoods. These diseases remain concentrated among populations with poor housing, unsafe work and lack of access to education. Health education alone cannot dismantle this cycle. Structural interventions must precede behavioural change.

India ranks among the most unequal countries globally. The World Inequality Report 2026 shows that the richest ten percent capture nearly sixty percent of national income, top one percent hold forty percent, while the bottom half receives only fifteen percent. Wealth inequality is sharper still. Female labour force participation remains abysmally low despite decades of reservation. These inequalities translate directly into health disparities.

Reservation was introduced as a response to historical injustice. It has endured because it continues to address present vulnerability. Public health stresses that diseases recede when dignity, education and stability expand.

Though the Union budget largely continues to prioritise curative interventions in health with only a gradual shift towards preventive medicine, India has historically invested in prevention and health promotion through lateral policies outside the health sector. Such policies achieve much more than what budget reallocation to the health sector alone can achieve. Reservation is one such intervention; it has quietly contributed to the elevation of socio-economic status and environmental standards of living, factors that lie at the heart of public health.

Ambedkar understood this when he rejected arbitrary timelines or a sunset clause for justice. Responding to arguments in the Constituent Assembly, he invoked Edmund Burke's words that "large empires and small minds go ill together." Diseases may persist, but diseases borne of poverty will recede when the benefits of reservation reach the poor and the wretched.

Reservation, therefore, addresses the social determinants of health. ■

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Choking on Indifference: How Modi, Rekha and Sandhu Are Denying Indians the Right to Live

B. SINGH

Another year, another winter, another season of poisonous air. The air pollution crisis may not be new, but the BJP's "triple-engine" government seems to be setting a new low for accountability. What was once a problem for the people of Delhi-NCR has slowly become the reality across most of the Indo-Gangetic Plain and in nearly every major metropolitan city in the country.

This article will not go over the science of air pollution again, or list the solutions that are already in front of us. Instead, we want to express our dismay that the party in power no longer seems to care about its failure to govern, even when that failure is a matter of life and death for millions of citizens. Before we turn to that failure, let us look at some key facts about the ongoing crisis. They are even more troubling because they show how the ruling party's own right-wing ecosystem is actively making the problem worse, for the sake of petty majoritarian appeasement:

- The government knew pollution would peak after Diwali. Despite controlling the Centre, the state and the municipal corporation, it took no preventive action. Sprinklers and GRAP measures were all reactions to spikes, not plans to prevent them.
- The government knew from last year that green crackers did not prevent the post-Diwali spike, and that the rules were widely ignored. It still chose not to oppose the Supreme Court's ruling allowing them.
- •When AQI readings crossed 1,000 at several locations, and one area reported PM2.5 levels above 3,000, several government monitoring stations stopped reporting data.
- As if all this were not enough, air pollution was dropped from the agenda for this year's winter session of Parliament, just as it was last year.

The pattern is clear. The BJP's ecosystem has presided over some of the worst air on record, and it has responded the only way it seems to know: with propaganda and distraction. Delhi's Environment Minister proudly announced that the city had recorded 220 "clean air days" this year. He left out that this figure counts every day in the "good", "satisfactory" and "moderate" categories, which means any day with an AQI of up to 200. Delhi's air was actually rated "good" (an AQI of 50 or below) on just one day, and India's standards are already far looser than the WHO's. Then came the familiar blame game, with other state governments and opposition parties made the scapegoats, above all over stubble burning. Meanwhile, sitting chief ministers keep making scientifically baseless claims. Our institutions still refuse to treat air pollution as the public health emergency it is, even though peer-reviewed studies link around 1.7 to 2 million deaths in India every year to polluted air.

This failure cannot be seen in isolation. It reflects the government's abysmal environmental record as a whole, from relaxing sulphur dioxide norms for coal-fired power plants to its steady refusal to treat long-term climate action as a priority. Air pollution is simply where this neglect becomes impossible to ignore, because we breathe it every day, and every independent measure tells the same story. India ranked 176th out of 177 countries in Yale's Environmental Performance Index 2026, with a score of just 22.46. Only Laos ranked lower, and India came 7th of 8 countries in South Asia. On climate action, India has fallen in the Climate Change Performance Index for two years running, from 10th in 2025 to 23rd in 2026 and 28th in 2027, largely because it depends on coal and has no timeline for exiting it. That is the same coal now allowed to keep poisoning our air. IQAir's 2025 World Air Quality Report ranked India the sixth most polluted country in the world. New Delhi was again the most polluted capital, with an annual PM2.5 average of 82.2 µg/m³, more than 16 times the WHO guideline, and Loni, just across Delhi's border, was the most polluted city on the planet. Even the government's flagship National Clean Air Programme is quietly failing. Of the 100 cities with enough data, 23 have seen PM10 levels rise since it began, and only 23 have met the revised 40% reduction target. Twenty-eight of the 130 programme cities still have no continuous monitoring station, and Delhi has used less than a third of the clean-air funds it received. These are not the numbers of a government that tried and fell short. They are the numbers of a government that never treated clean air, the environment or the climate as a priority at all.

Citizens Have Taken Note

But something has changed. Citizens are no longer willing to accept poisonous air as an annual ritual. Last winter, parents, students and activists gathered at India Gate to demand their right to breathe,

and many were detained for it. This year, the anger has only grown. Students have protested on university campuses, including at Delhi University. For the first time in many years, a citizens' delegation of students, environmentalists, mothers' groups and former members of government advisory panels took the matter directly to the Union Environment Ministry. The ministry tried to placate them with assurances that pollution was its "highest priority". The delegation refused to back down and carried its demands to the officials.

These are not isolated outbursts. They mark the moment the public stopped treating air pollution as bad luck or bad weather and started seeing it for what it is: a political choice.

The Fight Ahead

Air pollution, the environment and climate action are political priorities, and they must be fought for as political priorities. A government shaped by crony capitalism answers to the industries that pollute, not the people who breathe, and it will never put citizens first on its own. It will count "clean air days" while children's lungs are scarred. It will blame its neighbours while its monitoring stations go dark. It will drop the issue from Parliament's agenda while millions choke.

The responsibility therefore falls on us. Citizens must stand together across neighbourhoods, cities and states, and keep up the pressure on this regime until it either solves the crisis or makes way for a government that will. Our right to breathe is not negotiable, and neither is our right to life. ■

Netanyahu Is Out, Trump Is Down, Narendra Modi Awaits His Turn

DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

Following the defeat of the far-right in Brazil and Serbia, we now have yet more encouraging news right from the imperialist heartlands of the US and Israel. In Israel, Netanyahu has lost his majority even though his coalition remains the biggest bloc with 53 seats in Israel's 120-member parliament (called the Knesset). The most significant upshot of the elections is the emergence of the Arab parties as a significant factor with as many as 19 seats which ensured the defeat of Netanyahu. The US midterm elections reduced Trump to a 'lame duck' president for the remaining term of his presidency by giving an emphatic majority to Democrats in both chambers of the US Congress - the Senate (upper house) as well as the House of Representatives. Democrats won historic victories in several traditional Republican citadels, in some cases ending nearly a century of Republican stranglehold.

Trump had belatedly sensed the groundswell of public anger against his hugely unpopular tyrannical misrule and tried to do some damage control by pretending to distance his government from Israel and promising to end the Iran war. He also tried to manipulate the electoral roll and explored the option of buying votes by promising handouts. But nothing worked and the working people of America gave him a roaring rebuff and elected a whole lot of progressive representatives. The US now has its first ever Muslim Senator in Abdul El-Sayed from Michigan, the first ever Black woman Governor in Keisha Lance Bottoms as the elected Governor of Georgia, the first ever Native American woman governor in Debra Haaland (New Mexico) and the first ever Palestinian-American state senator in Aber Kawas for the New York State Senate.

The changing political trend that recently gave the US four young Socialist Mayors in New York (Zohran Mamdani), Seattle (Katie Wilson), Los Angeles (Nithya Raman) and Washington, D.C. (Janeese Lewis George) has now produced this potential for a significant leftward shift to resist and defeat the far-right racist politics epitomised by two terms of Donald Trump's presidency and the politics and policies of what is now called Trumpism. This potential has asserted itself in the face of the disastrous impact of the war of aggression on Iran and the ongoing genocide in Palestine by the Trump-Netanyahu combine, impacts which are felt not only internationally but in the domestic economic conditions and political environment within the US itself. The deep affordability crisis triggered by low wages, reduced state spending on public welfare, increased military spending and escalating costs of war have made life extremely hard for the working people of the US.

Yet at the other end of the spectrum, Trump's MAGA America now celebrates obscene wealth, epitomised by the rise of the world's first trillionaire in Elon Musk and the ever closer coalescence between the Trump Administration and the greed and plunder of American oligarchs. The racist anti-immigrant war unleashed by the Trump Administration has made life insecure not only for immigrant communities but the American people at large what with the terror, violence and militarisation unleashed by the ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) apparatus of the state. University students

and teachers condemning the genocide in Gaza and the cruel occupation of Palestine by Israel are facing the wrath of the Trump Administration working in tandem with the hugely influential Israel lobby.

Against this backdrop, large sections within the Democratic camp are denouncing the bankruptcy, hypocrisy and cowardice of the Biden era and working for a bold pro-people agenda that calls for a wealth tax on billionaires and living wages for workers, increased spending and improved delivery in the arena of public health and education, embargo on giant Data Centres that are devouring resources and degrading the environment, and strict regulation of the reckless use of AI technology which has triggered massive unemployment and all-round disruption. Trump supporters have not dared to attempt any coup against this midterm mandate delivered by the American people, but by terming it a 'giant step back in history' Trump has indicated that his administration will be on a collision course with the Democrat controlled chambers of the US Congress.

The defeat of the Netanyahu regime and the massive meltdown of the Trump Administration in the US midterm elections should have a great welcome resonance in India. The Modi government has sacrificed India's interests and dignity at the altar of its strategic subservience to the US-Israel axis. The domestic politics of the Sangh brigade borrows heavily from the racism, Islamophobia and dictatorial paradigm of Trump and Netanyahu. Just when the US electorate is delivering this historic mandate against Trumpism, we learn that the Modi government hired two American lobbying firms spending $ 2,25,000 per month to secure congratulatory social media posts and phone calls from the Trump Administration to boost Modi's image!

Shocking silence over Trump's tariff war and humiliating anti-India comments and paid soliciting of praise from the same Trump Administration reveal a pathetic picture of the Modi government behind its 'Vishwaguru' bravado. We, the people of India, must now get ready to reject this cowardly Indian stooge of Trump and Netanyahu who has mired India in deep disaster on every front. ■

Blue Wave Brings Red Bloc in US Midterm Elections

MR

It was only a year ago that a 34-year-old democratic socialist who began his campaign polling at around 1 percent was elected mayor of New York City. Political pundits called Zohran Mamdani's win a fluke, a big-city exception that would never travel to the rest of America. On November 3, the rest of the country answered them. Democrats have now seized control of both chambers of Congress (Senate and House), flipping nine traditionally Republican-held Senate seats and 40 Republican-held House seats—gains not seen in 70 years. But the real story isn't that the Democrats won. It's who won, and what they ran on. For the first time in modern American history, an organized socialist bloc is heading to Washington and into mayoral seats across the country, carried by a working-class referendum against forever wars, oligarchy, and the corporate capture by Big Tech of both parties. The country saw many firsts in terms of diversity: Texas chose its first Latina-Hispanic woman governor, New Mexico the first Native American woman governor in the history of the country, and New Hampshire the first openly gay man elected to the Senate. In Georgia, Keisha Lance bottoms will be the first Black woman governor in history in a state that was the bastion of the racist Jim Crow era.

No Compromise: Combining Left, Anti-Fascist, and DEI Politics

Across the country, working-class politics were not sacrificed at the altar of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) politics; rather, Left candidates, embracing their own racial, ethnic, sexual, and religious diversity—and that of the country's—chose to lead with a combination of working-class, anti-fascist, and DEI priorities. As such, affordability was as much of a concern for these candidates as anti-fascism; battling oligarchy as important as battling Islamophobia.

To start, it is worth looking at the Mamdani effect. Mamdani's 2025 campaign was built on class-redistributive demands: freeze the rent, make buses free, provide childcare for all, open publicly owned grocery stores. He produced campaign videos in multiple languages and reached poor neighborhoods with working-class ethnic minorities. He refused to soften his support for Palestine and still won in a city with a large Jewish population. That victory demolished the liberal establishment's favorite argument that socialists, minorities, and pro-Palestinian candidates are unelectable. The effect was immediate. Membership in the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), which is not a party but an activist political organization, has grown from roughly 6,000 in 2015 to more than 130,000 today, with the "Mamdani bump" outpacing even the surge that followed Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's 2018 win.

New York City DSA alone doubled in size within months of his primary victory.

In the lead-up to the midterms, DSA, which was reenergized by Bernie Sanders' democratic socialist campaign in 2016 and Mamdani's win in 2025, endorsed 164 candidates in 32 states and the national capital. As of November 18, more than half of these candidates had won, including Clare Valdez (NY-7), a Native American who ran on promises to expand labor rights; Darializa Avila Chevalier (NY-13), a working-class Afro-Latina organizer who helped lead Gaza solidarity protests; and Melat Kiros (CO-1), an Ethiopian immigrant who believes in housing as a basic human right. They join re-elected DSA members Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian-origin immigrant who was censured over her social media statements against Israel's fascism and genocide, and Latina incumbent Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, who has long backed climate justice campaigns against fossil fuel industries. While not a DSA member, the Egyptian-origin medical doctor Abdul El-Sayed of Michigan campaigned and won on a platform of universal healthcare, and an end to corporate capture of elections and US military aid to Israel. In the face of massive smear campaigns by the America-Israel Political Action Committee (AIPAC), El-Sayed held fast to his Muslim identity and pragmatic calls for policies based on human dignity. Beyond Congress, culturally diverse socialists will run city halls: longtime DSA member and Black woman Janeese Lewis George won Washington, DC's mayor's seat, while in Los Angeles, Indian-origin DSA member Nithya Raman defeated incumbent Mayor Karen Bass.

Four policy agendas stood out. First, opposition to US complicity in Israel's war on Gaza was not a liability this cycle; it was a rallying cry. "We will not wait to end the genocide in Palestine," Kiros declared on primary night. Kiros has said the next House Speaker must prioritize withdrawing aid from Israel and pulling out of the war with Iran. El-Sayed made ending military aid central to his Senate run in Michigan, home to the country's largest Arab and Muslim community.

Second, across the political spectrum, there was a call for ending the data center grab. Voters rejected the AI industry's land, water, and power grab despite tech giant Elon Musk pouring some $445 million to boost Republican candidates. An NBC exit poll found 56 percent of voters called AI and data centers a major factor in their vote. Working people understand what Silicon Valley has tried to hide: these facilities drive up electric bills, drain water supplies, and enrich billionaires at the public's expense.

Third was taxing the rich. DSA candidates ran on Medicare for All, universal childcare, and rent controlled housing—and making the wealthy pay their share for these things. The billionaire class understood the threat. In California, Proposition 40, a one-time 5 percent tax on net worth above $1 billion to supplement federal healthcare cuts, was defeated after rich opponents outspent supporters roughly ten to one. Google's co-founder alone poured more than $100 million into the $333 million campaign against it. Yet a voter poll found most young Californians voted yes. Its backers have vowed to return in 2028, and no doubt Sanders will keep pushing for a national wealth tax.

Fourth and finally, healthcare, housing, and childcare for all were a core part of the Left agenda. Kiros calls Medicare for All her top priority alongside universal childcare and elder care. Valdez ran on universal rent control and a federal jobs guarantee. In Philadelphia, Rabb backed Mamdani-style public grocery stores to ensure healthy affordable food. In Washington, DC, Janeese Lewis George promised 72,000 new homes to stem the gentrification crisis in the capital region, six times what her establishment opponent offered.

Why White Workers Moved Left

One of the most important stories of this election is a shift that the political establishment said was impossible: white working-class voters moving back toward the Left. White voters without a college degree, the backbone of Trump's coalition, still voted Republican, 59 percent to 40 percent, according to the New York Times. But that margin was 14 points smaller than Trump's in 2024. White women, who backed Republicans by a margin of 11 points in the 2024 House vote, backed Democrats 52 percent to 46 percent, a 17-point swing according to exit poll data. Among young white men, a group Trump carried by 28 points two years ago, Democrats won by 17, according to CNN's exit poll.

Why? Asked what moved them, these voters pointed to rising prices, healthcare cuts, and a war in Iran that shows no signs of stopping. In Data for Progress polling in Maine, Michigan and Texas, more than two-thirds of voters backed a $15 federal minimum wage, and majorities supported Medicare for All. Nationally, 58 percent said government should play a larger role by taxing the wealthy and corporations. Two-thirds blamed the war with Iran for higher gas prices, including 56 percent of Republicans, and 84 percent said the war had hit their cost of living. A 29-year-old part-time

bartender in Iowa who had voted for Trump three times said that this year she voted blue, citing Trump's corruption, the Iran war, and her family's rising costs and lost healthcare. Republicans spent a decade telling white workers that their enemies were immigrants, trans people, and "woke" elites. But no amount of culture war can pay an electric bill driven up by the data center next door, or cover a prescription after healthcare cuts. The work is far from done. But the cracks are real. A politics of multiracial working-class solidarity, built on healthcare, housing and an end to endless war, is no longer a slogan. It is an electoral strategy that just won.

Voters understood whom to blame. Trump's approval stood at just 37 percent on Election Day, his lowest of the term. Fifty-four percent said the wealthy and big corporations benefited most from the Republican tax cuts, and 61 percent called the claim that those cuts helped working families false. Nearly half of voters said they saw attack ads on "socialism and leftism" in the final month, but the fearmongering failed. Data for Progress also found that candidates who refused outside money, including AIPAC's, outperformed those who took it; 260 House and Senate candidates swore off corporate PAC cash. AIPAC itself admitted that their support is now a liability.

But let us not be mistaken that this was resounding support for the Democratic Party. Most voters hold unfavorable views of both parties. As Kiros put it on election night, the issue she heard most was corruption: people no longer trust any party to fight for working families. Unfortunately, some Democratic Party leaders will try to absorb this progressive energy without changing course—as already seen by their bid to advance AIPAC-hungry Hakeem Jeffries to majority leader. Many establishment Democrats, including some who flipped seats this year, still openly reject democratic socialism. They will ask the new members to be patient, to compromise, to wait. They will continue to support the genocide in Palestine. But as Melat Kiros put it, the country will not wait for these centrist cheerleaders of US imperialism. The task ahead is to turn a historic election into historic change, and to build on this momentum to win in 2028. ■

CPIML General Secretary Reaffirms Solidarity with Palestine in Meeting with Palestinian Ambassador



CPI(ML) Liberation General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya met Palestine's Ambassador to India, Abdullah M. Abu Shawesh, at the Party's Parliamentary Office in Delhi on October 28. Comrade Rajiv Dimri, General Secretary of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU), Comrade V. Arun Kumar from the Party's International Affairs Department, and Comrade Prasenjeet, General Secretary of the All India Students' Association (AISA), were also present during the interaction.

During the meeting, Comrade Dipankar reaffirmed CPI(ML) Liberation's unwavering solidarity with the Palestinian people and their struggle for freedom, justice and self-determination. He saluted the steadfast resistance of the Palestinian people and reiterated the Party's commitment to the Palestinian liberation struggle.

Ambassador Abdullah M. Abu Shawesh thanked the progressive people of India for their consistent solidarity with Palestine and the Palestinian people.

The meeting also discussed the urgent need to stop the genocide in Gaza and end Israel's occupation of Palestine. The struggle for Palestinian liberation remains a major challenge before peace-loving and freedom-loving people across the world.

Comrade Dipankar emphasised that India's democratic public opinion and its traditional foreign policy had long stood in support of the Palestinian cause. However, the Modi government's pro-Israel stance has derailed and muted India's official position on Palestine in international forums. Despite this shift in the government's position, India's democratic public opinion continues to stand firmly with Palestine. ■

Humanitarian Aid in Solidarity with Cuba

"Cuba is not alone. We are always with Cuba and against the US imperialist onslaught," said the joint delegation of the Revolutionary Marxist Party of India (RMPI), CPI(ML) Liberation and the All India Kisan Mahasabha (AIKM) at the Embassy of Cuba in New Delhi on November 19. The delegation handed over a consignment of life-saving humanitarian supplies to Cuban Ambassador Comrade Juan Carlos Marsán Aguilera. This modest consignment embodied a bond of solidarity woven through the contributions of India's peasants and toiling masses in the spirit of revolutionary internationalism.

The delegation comprised RMPI General Secretary Comrade Mangat Ram Pasla, CPI(ML) Liberation Politburo Member Comrade Sanjay Sharma, AIKM National General Secretary Comrade Purushottam Sharma and Comrade Rajiv Dimri, General Secretary of the All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) and V. Arun Kumar of International Department of CPI(ML) Liberation.

Thanking the delegation for the aid consignment and solidarity, the Cuban Ambassador described how the blockade bears down on everyday life. Restrictions on oil supplies disrupt electricity generation. When the power fails, the water supply is interrupted too. Hospitals face shortages of essential supplies, with serious consequences for patients undergoing cancer treatment. He also spoke of the rise in infant mortality in a country whose public health system had achieved one of the lowest infant mortality rates in the Americas. Even amid these hardships, Cuba continues its international medical missions. The Ambassador cited the work of some 5,000 Cuban doctors serving rural communities in Mexico.

Washington also targets tourism, a major source of income for Cuba, the Ambassador said. Even European travellers who visit the island subsequently face restrictions on travel to the United States. He condemned the efforts of Donald Trump and Marco Rubio to revive the Monroe Doctrine, through which Washington has sought to dictate the affairs of Latin American countries. He pointed to US military threats against Venezuela as another expression of the same imperialist policy.

Recalling the struggle against the Batista dictatorship and the defeat of the US-backed invasion at the Bay of Pigs, the Ambassador said the Cuban people had time and again defended their sovereignty and dignity against imperialist aggression. They would continue to do so in the face of present hardships, he affirmed.

Comrade Mangat Ram Pasla spoke of the indomitable spirit of the Cuban people and their determination to carry forward the revolutionary transformation of their society. Describing the present consignment as a modest contribution, he reaffirmed that the parties and their mass organisations would continue to support Cuban people in their resistance to imperialist aggression.

Conveying the solidarity the delegation handed to the Ambassador a joint letter from CPI(ML) Liberation General Secretary Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya and RMPI General Secretary Comrade Mangat Ram Pasla addressed to Comrade Miguel Díaz-Canel Bermúdez, First Secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba and a copy of the AIKM resolution on Cuba.

The letter by the two General Secretaries recalled how the victory of the Cuban Revolution on January 1, 1959, under the leadership of Comandante Fidel Castro, inspired a new spirit of revolutionary internationalism across the world. For decades, Cuba has stood with peoples fighting imperialism and oppression. Its medical missions have brought care to communities across continents even when Cuba itself faced immense hardships. It was in this same spirit of internationalism, the letter said, that India's peasants and workers had contributed to the consignment. As the Trump administration tightens the blockade, the signatories saluted the Cuban people for defending their sovereignty, dignity and socialism and demanded an "immediate and unconditional end to the criminal US blockade".

The solidarity initiative grew out of a resolution unanimously adopted at AIKM's Fifth National Conference, held in Jalandhar, Punjab, on September 20 and 21. The conference condemned the illegal blockade imposed by US imperialism and demanded its immediate lifting and the withdrawal of all sanctions against Cuba. It appealed to farmers across India to stand with the Cuban people facing severe economic hardship in face of US blockade.

Comrade Purushottam Sharma said

Cuba's six decades of resistance to US imperialism had shown working people everywhere what they could achieve when united against injustice and oppression. He conveyed the solidarity of India's farmers, workers and toiling masses with the Cuban people in their struggle to end the blockade. Drawing a connection between US pressure on Cuba and Venezuela and the experience of Indian farmers, he said the Trump administration was seeking to extend its imperialist tentacles into India through the India-US trade deal and seize the country's resources.

The delegation reaffirmed its solidarity with the people of Cuba and renewed their commitment to the common struggle to end all forms of oppression and injustice. ■



OBITUARY

Comrade Dilip Sen (Bato-da)



The CPI(ML) Liberation deeply mourns the passing of Comrade Dilip Sen (Bato-da) on November 6, a veteran comrade who had been undergoing treatment at RN Tagore Hospital following a series of brain strokes.

For decades, Bato-da remained a steadfast pillar of the Party and the democratic movement in Kolkata. His unwavering commitment, characteristic energy and enthusiasm, and above all his warmth, compassion and deep bonds with comrades and activists made him a much-loved figure in the movement. His life was marked by dedication to the Party and the cause of democracy and people's struggles.

Red Salute to Comrade Dilip Sen (Bato-da)

Comrade B. Vasantayya



Comrade Vasantayya, a veteran CPIML Liberation activist in Kakinada, Andhra Pradesh, passed away on November 9, 2026. He was active in the land movement, and his home was a centre of Party activity in the district. From the early days of theIPF, he and his wife Suryakantam warmly welcomed and sheltered Party comrades despite repeated repression.

We salute Comrade Vasantayya's revolutionary life and extend heartfelt condolences to his son Comrade B. Bangar Rao and the entire family.

Red Salute to Comrade Vasantayya!

POSTING DATE : 27-28 OF EVERY MONTH
PUBLISHED ON 26TH OF EVERY MONTH

R.N.I. NO. 55777/93
P. R. NO. DL(E)—11/5156/2021-23
POSTING AT NEW DELHI G.P.O.



EDITORIAL OFFICE
CHARU BHAWAN, U-90, SHAKARPUR, DELHI - 110 092
PUBLISHED BY:
Dipankar Bhattacharya for the Central Committee, CPIML
from Charu Bhawan, U-90, Shakarpur, Delhi - 110 092
EDITOR: Arindam Sen
PRINTED BY: Lekhraj Singh Chauhan at Graphic Print,
383, F&E, GF, Patparganj Industrial Area, Delhi - 110 092

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