

Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)



Venezuela: People's Resistance in Face of US Aggression

In the early morning hours of January 3, the U.S. attack on Caracas unleashed indiscriminate bombing and gunfire on residential areas and civilian infrastructure. Bullets tore through people's homes while families were asleep inside. The following visuals from the Misión Vivienda housing project in Ciudad Tiuna, Caracas, show the devastating aftermath of the U.S. aggression and its impact on civilian life.



In the face of U.S. imperialist aggression, Venezuelans across the country rose up in protest against the attack on their sovereignty and the kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. These visuals from Caracas and Apure stand as a testament to the unity of the Venezuelan people in the face of imperialism.



Photographs provided to *Liberation* by Celina Della Croce of the Tricontinental: Institute for Social Research, from Caracas and Apure, Venezuela.



New Series Vol. 31 No. 10
FEBRUARY 2026

CONTENTS

COMMENTARY

Call of 2026 Against Hate & Injustice	05
SIR in West Bengal	06
Dictatorship of Private Employer	08
Justice for Ankita Bhandari	11

COVER FEATURE

US Imperialist War on Venezuela	15
---------------------------------	----

SPECIAL FEATURE

Bulldozer Raj in UP & Uttarakhand	21
-----------------------------------	----

IN FOCUS

Chennai Sanitation Workers' Struggle	26
--------------------------------------	----

STATEMENT

	27
--	----

INTERNATIONAL

Trump's Board of Peace Iran Protests	28
--	----

FACT-FINDING

Turkman Gate Demolitions	28
--------------------------	----

Murshidabad Worker Killed in Odisha	30
-------------------------------------	----

FILM REVIEW

	31
--	----

REPORT: Jharkhand Sankalp Sabha	33
--	----

Editor-in-chief

Dipankar Bhattacharya

Editor

Arindam Sen

Editorial Board

V. Shankar

Sanjay Sharma

Sucheta De

Ajit Patil

Clifton D' Rozario

Maitreyi Krishnan

Akash Bhattacharya

Editors' e-mail:

liberation@cpiml.org

Design: V Arun Kumar

Manager: Prabhat Kumar

Phone: 7042877713

Website: liberation.org.in

E-mail: manager.liberation@gmail.com

36 pages including covers

Annual Subscription Rates

India Rs. 300

Abroad US\$ 60

Digital Subscription Rs. 200

Online Payment: liberation.org.in

Pay By Bank transfer:

Account Name: Liberation Publications

Account No.: 90502010091855

IFSC Code: CNRB0019050

MICR Code.: 110015388

Bank: Canara Bank

Republic Day 2026: Dented Republic, Battered Citizen, Determined People

India observes 26 January as Republic Day to mark the commencement of the Constitution on 26 January, 1950 and the transition of India to a constitutional Republic. The Republic Day should therefore be an occasion to celebrate the constitutional goals and commitments which define the character and direction of the Republic and the rights of the citizen as proclaimed by "we, the people of India". But over the years, the Republic Day has become all about the Indian State, with the parade in Delhi becoming a curated exhibition of the economic and military might of the State and publicity of various schemes of the government.

Ironically enough, even as in the Modi era the Constitution is being subjected to a relentless attack and citizens face a growing threat of mass disenfranchisement, we have official celebration of two additional days in the name of the Constitution and the elector. November 26 is observed as the Constitution Day to mark the anniversary of the adoption of the Constitution by the Constituent Assembly on 26 November, 1949. 25 January is observed as National Voters' Day to mark the anniversary of the foundation of the Election Commission of India on 25 January, 1950.

The Preamble to our Constitution describes India as a Sovereign Socialist Secular Democratic Republic. The Sangh-BJP establishment wants to remove the words 'socialist' and 'secular' ostensibly because these two words were not there in the original version of the Preamble and were inserted subsequently through the controversial 42nd Amendment during the Emergency. It is true that these two words were not there in the original Preamble, but it did not mean that Ambedkar and the Constituent Assembly were opposed to the notions of socialism and secularism. On the contrary Ambedkar had argued that the ideas and principles of socialism and secularism were built into the text of the Constitution and for the sake of brevity of the Preamble, the words sovereign and democratic were considered sufficient as the core characterisation of the Republic.

We should also remember that following the withdrawal and defeat of the Emergency in 1977, the Janata Party government had considerably undone the 42nd Amendment by means of the 44th Amendment. Bharatiya Jan Sangh, the predecessor of the BJP, had dissolved itself in the Janata Party and both Vajpayee and Advani were important



On Republic Day 2026, the seventy-sixth anniversary of the proclamation of our Republic, this is the foremost challenge that confronts us all who have inherited the legacy of the freedom movement and enjoyed the rights and dignity that came with India's independence and the adoption of the Constitution.

ministers in the Morarji Desai government. Yet while reversing many of the changes made through the 42nd Amendment, the 44th Amendment did not remove the words Socialist and Secular from the Preamble. If the BJP today is desperate to remove these two epithets, it is clearly because of the Sangh brigade's essential ideological antagonism to the very notion of socialism and secularism.

That the Sangh is a sworn enemy of secularism and socialism is of course no revelation. Indeed, the Sangh has been opposed to the entire Constitution right since the time of its adoption. The Constitution, according to the RSS, was an un-Indian document as it did not draw on the 'ideal Indian code of Manusmriti'! It was only to wriggle out of the ban imposed by Sardar Patel following the assassination of Mahatma Gandhi that the Sangh had to give a written undertaking about its acceptance of the Constitution. Today we therefore have to experience the dichotomy of our constitutional republic being administered by forces that are ideologically inimical to the foundational principles and core vision of the Constitution.

Speaking on the occasion of the adoption of the Constitution, Babasaheb Ambedkar had warned us precisely against this eventuality. A good constitution in bad hands, Ambedkar had cautioned, would produce disastrous results. He had also pointed to the structural vulnerabilities of the Constitution. The Constitution, he reminded us, was only a top dressing of democracy on an undemocratic (social) soil. The equality of 'one vote, one value' would be rendered infructuous, Ambedkar had warned, if social and economic inequalities were not checked. Today even that formal universal adult suffrage principle is in grave danger with millions of voters having already

been disenfranchised through the electoral purge being executed in the name of Special Intensive Revision of the electoral roll.

Parliamentary democracy, federal framework and separation of power among the executive, legislature and judiciary have provided the functional foundation till date for India's democratic republic. With relentless overcentralisation of powers in the hands of the executive, the powers and roles of both the legislative and judicial wings of the Republic have suffered considerable erosion. Constant executive intrusion into federal powers of the states and attempted steamrolling of India's cultural diversity into a centralised and standardised mould of uniformity are constantly undermining the very foundation of national unity. When a Hindi-speaking migrant worker from Chhattisgarh is lynched to death on suspicion of being a 'Bangladeshi infiltrator', a tribal student from Tripura gets killed in Uttarakhand for his allegedly 'Chinese look', Christmas celebrations are attacked across the country and Muslims are arrested even for the 'crime' of offering prayers at home, we can clearly see how the Sangh-BJP drive to turn secular India into a Hindu Rashtra is proving to be India's worst calamity about which Ambedkar had forewarned us eighty years ago.

No wonder the sovereignty secured by ending the colonial rule is also at stake. The way Indians are being deported from the American soil in handcuffs and chains and Indian goods and services are being subjected to punitive tariffs to stop India from buying oil from Russia or having transactions with Iran exposes an ominous erosion of India's sovereignty. Yet in the realm of foreign policy the Modi government continues to pursue a line of shameless appeasement

of US imperialism and the Trump Administration.

While the Republic thus gets dented from all angles, the citizen is being constantly battered with relentless assault on livelihoods and liberties. The Citizenship Amendment Act turns citizens into refugees, the SIR disenfranchises citizens by dubbing them suspected infiltrators, and draconian laws like the UAPA subject dissenting citizens to prolonged incarceration without trial by terming dissent a threat to the nation. While the dissenting citizen is being disempowered in every possible way, lynch mobs are being empowered and granted impunity, and rape and murder convicts are being felicitated as heroes.

How do we rescue the Republic from this morass? How do we reclaim the spirit and vision of the Republic in such challenging times? How do we stop the corporate takeover of the economy and the fascist takeover of our polity and society? On Republic Day 2026, the seventy-sixth anniversary of the proclamation of our Republic, this is the foremost challenge that confronts us all who have inherited the legacy of the freedom movement and enjoyed the rights and dignity that came with India's independence and the adoption of the Constitution. There are no easy answers, but a country that could secure freedom from the British colonial rule and end the British Empire will surely be able to find its way through the current juncture of imperialist encirclement and fascist eclipse. We, the people of India who had the power to proclaim India as a sovereign socialist secular democratic republic also have the onus and power to defend it and steer it through to victory over fascism. ■

The Call of 2026: No Impunity for Perpetrators of Hate and Injustice

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

The period from Christmas to New Year's Day is celebrated worldwide as a festive season of joy and happiness. But in the Modi era hate seems to have emerged as the biggest all-weather festival or sport for the fascist brigade. The mere sign of Santa Claus appears to 'hurt the sentiments' of the self-proclaimed Hindutva warriors and provoke them into vandalism and violence. While Hindutva groups targeted Christmas decorations and festivities, BJP-led state governments too advanced the agenda by cancelling Christmas holidays. Amidst this all-pervasive environment of attacks on Christians, Prime Minister Modi tried to pretend that all was well - visiting the Cathedral Church of the Redemption in New Delhi without uttering a word of condemnation about the anti-Christian campaign by his supporters. No wonder Bajrang Dal members detained for vandalising Christmas decorations get not just bail but a hero's welcome on their release.

While assaults on Christians became more visible during Christmas, attacks on Muslims have become an everyday affair across large parts of India. Bengali-speaking Muslim migrant workers find themselves particularly vulnerable with lynching now becoming a pan-Indian phenomenon. Several cases have been reported in recent weeks from BJP-ruled Odisha. There was a particularly disturbing case of a migrant worker from

Chhattisgarh being beaten to death in Kerala on suspicion of being a Bangladeshi. Bajrang Dal members attacked a birthday party of a young Bareilly woman in a cafe for the simple reason that her guest list included two Muslim friends. The majoritarian arrogance and hate-filled aggressive Hindutva promoted by the Sangh-BJP establishment is also fomenting racial attacks in India today.

The killing of Angel Chakma, a young MBA student from Tripura, for protesting against racial abuse in Dehradun, the capital of Uttarakhand, has again brought to the fore the issue of racism in India. The people of North-Eastern India have long been subjected to racial slurs and attacks, and now protest against racist abuse makes them liable to be lynched in the 'New India' of the Modi era. It was left to Kiren Rijiju, Modi's cabinet colleague from Arunachal to deplore the 'death' of Angel Chakma while Uttarakhand CM Pushkar Dhami turned a belated phone call to Angel Chakma's father Tarun Chakma, a BSF jawan posted in Manipur, into a PR exercise in a vain attempt to absolve his own government. The fact is it took several days for an FIR to be lodged and the Uttarakhand government and police are busy downplaying the very angle of racist hate that caused this murder.

From unmitigated hate in social life to an environment choking in toxic air in the national capital, and government-supplied contaminated water claiming more than ten lives in Indore of

Madhya Pradesh, India's 'cleanest city' in official records, there are unmistakable signs of a growing rot in every sphere of India's national life. The rot gets reinforced when the judiciary - which should ensure the constitutional principles of justice and rule of law - starts granting impunity to perpetrators of hate, loot, injustice and violence. The Supreme Court order that threatened to turn vast sections of the Aravalli range into real estate business, and the Delhi High Court verdict staying the sentence delivered to rape and murder convict BJP leader Kuldeep Singh Sengar, naturally shook the public faith in the very system of justice. Protests ensued to save the Aravallis and cancel the relief granted to the notorious former Unnao MLA. For once the Supreme Court responded quite promptly and positively to the voices of the people on the streets. The Aravalli order has been scrapped and the matter referred to an expert Committee while the High Court relief to Kuldeep Singh Sengar has been stayed. The apex court's correctives on these two issues marked a much needed sign of hope for free India's beleaguered democracy and betrayed people for the crucial year of 2026. The alertness and activism of the people must continue to serve as the most reliable bulwark against fascist aggression. ■



SIR in West Bengal: From Voter Verification to a Regime of Fear

▲ MALAY TEWARI



What was being pedalled by the ECI as a routine exercise of voter list revision has, during the hearing phase of the Special Intensive Revision (SIR), has revealed itself to the people of West Bengal as something far more coercive and punitive. The issue of hearing notices marked a decisive turning point. It was then that ordinary citizens began to understand that SIR was not an innocuous administrative process, but a deeply political intervention with grave consequences.

Booth Level Officers (BLOs) sensed this much earlier. The pressure on them was the most severe—and they were the first to resist. Their protest soon spilled over into the wider public sphere. By the third week of January, public anger had reached a boiling point. Public resentment was no longer directed only at the Election Commission of India (ECI); it increasingly struck at the BJP leadership itself.

Election Commission of Harassment

For years, BJP leaders and Union ministers have repeatedly threatened that “infiltrators,” “Rohingyas,” and “fake voters” in West Bengal would be identified and pushed into Bangladesh. The announcement of SIR immediately triggered widespread fear. Many people, particularly among the poor and marginalised, lack documents required as proof. The BJP’s persistent rhetoric of expulsion inevitably created panic. These fears were not unfounded. Bengali migrant workers have already been detained in other states and pushed across the border by the Union Home Ministry.

The anxiety was therefore existential: would losing one’s name from the voter list mean losing citizenship itself? Across Bengal’s villages and towns, people began to mentally collapse under this uncertainty. Reports emerged of elderly people suffering fatal heart attacks, and of suicides driven by

fear and humiliation. Suspicion and anger steadily accumulated.

In the initial phase, the ECI had clearly stated that those whose names appeared in the 2002 electoral rolls, or who could establish a link with them, would not be required to submit supportive documents. This assurance brought temporary relief. Until the publication of the draft rolls, the situation remained relatively calm. Yet a series of contradictory decisions by the Commission gradually eroded public trust.

What emerged instead was a lived experience of arbitrary and cruel harassment. Many people who stay away from home for work rushed back just to fill out the forms. Many people visited BLOs multiple times. Everyone submitted all required information. Yet, on the basis of an undefined and weaponised category called “logical discrepancy,” citizens were forced into hearings for the most trivial inconsistencies. Hearings became sites of humiliation rather than redress.

Even the Commission’s own list of acceptable documents has been altered mid-process. For large sections of the population, the Election Commission no longer appears as an impartial constitutional body, but as a commission of persecution ‘Nirjatan Commission’. This targeting has been particularly stark in the case of Muslims, whose citizenship and voting rights appear not as inherent rights but as privileges that must be continuously proven. Members of the Namasudra community have also begun to recognise, through this process, the long history of deception surrounding promises of citizenship and inclusion. The hollowness of assurances made under the CAA stands exposed through the everyday harassment

of SIR. Protests have already erupted from Matua-dominated regions.

The undemocratic SIR process and the lies of the EC stand clearly exposed, and the entire exercise has become a collective social experience marked by fear, humiliation, and existential insecurity.

Systematic Humiliation of Booth Level Officers

BLOs have witnessed the process from the inside and have borne its heaviest burdens. Initially told that they were merely couriers tasked with distributing and collecting forms, they were soon subjected to extraordinary pressure. They were informed that this was not routine work but an urgent and special “mission.” Within impossibly short deadlines, they were expected to ensure correct data collection from vast numbers of households and upload it onto an app. No additional remuneration or institutional protection was provided. Schoolteachers, health workers, and panchayat staff were saddled with double workloads.

Since the Commission had initially stated that no documents were required where a 2002 linkage existed, many BLOs conducted verifications accordingly. But the Commission later reversed its stance. Previously approved cases were suddenly labelled suspicious. New oral and written instructions declared that even 2002-linked cases might require fresh documentation, rendering earlier verification meaningless. The anger of citizens fell squarely on BLOs.

This was compounded by flawed AI-based matching systems that failed to account for ordinary variations in spelling, age, names of parents, or village names. Instead of

acknowledging technological failures, the Commission shifted blame onto BLOs, accusing them of negligence. Millions of forms were returned. Even after BLOs resubmitted forms under written responsibility, the Commission ruled that these would also be subjected to hearings—nullifying their accountability while retaining the option to hold them culpable in the future.

BLOs have no voice in hearings. They cannot defend their own verification work. Decisions lie entirely with EROs, DEOs, and observers. Responsibility without rights. The deployment of observers from outside the state reinforces the presumption that local officials are politically suspect, amounting to a direct assault on their professional dignity. A barrage of sudden circulars, WhatsApp instructions, oral orders, cancelled directives, revised app formats, and changing procedures has created procedural chaos. The humiliation of BLOs has merged seamlessly with the anger of the people.

An Assault on India's Federal Structure

SIR has also functioned as a direct attack on West Bengal's administrative autonomy. Pressure was exerted on BDOs, SDOs, and District Magistrates—officials who, though constitutionally placed under the Election Commission during elections, remain employees of the state government. The crisis reached such proportions that the Chief Minister publicly urged officials not to succumb to fear.

From the outset, SIR was not a neutral administrative exercise but a centralised attempt to seize control over the state's electoral machinery. While the Commission claimed that EROs had final authority and that even the Election Commissioner could

not override their decisions, this proved illusory. In practice, EROs were reduced to forwarding cases to DEOs, where fresh “verification” began. Even DEO decisions were not final, subjected instead to scrutiny by roll observers, special observers, and micro-observers brought in from outside the state—many closely aligned with central administrative networks.

This layered override structure makes West Bengal's SIR distinct from that in other states. Its stated rationale is to prevent the elected state government from “using” its own administration—an assumption of bad faith that effectively renders the state government irrelevant. Ground-level verification by BLOs is similarly nullified.

West Bengal has thus become a laboratory where the Centre demonstrates how the Election Commission's institutional architecture can be used to subsume a state's electoral process entirely. In the process, India's federal structure is weakened, and the right to vote is transformed from a constitutional guarantee into a conditional privilege dependent on central approval.

A Political and Cultural Assault on Bengal

Underlying this process is a deeper political and cultural attack on Bengal itself. In BJP discourse, “Bengali” increasingly becomes synonymous with suspicion, infiltration, and illegitimacy. Linguistic differences, spelling variations, names, and pronunciations are criminalised through AI systems. Bengali language and identity themselves become grounds for punishment.

The symbolic violence of this assault was laid bare when notices were reportedly issued to Nobel laureate Amartya Sen—someone who has never renounced Indian

citizenship. Notices to other eminent figures have also surfaced. While the Commission presents this as evidence of neutrality—"no one is exempt"—the underlying message is unmistakable: no one is safe. If Amartya Sen's citizenship and voting rights can be questioned, what security remains for ordinary citizens?

Artificial Intelligence (AI) here is not a neutral tool. It has become an instrument of intimidation. Minor discrepancies in documents are converted into grounds to question identity, citizenship, and voting rights. Even with documents in hand, people are unable to prove that they are who they claim to be. This technological violence has rendered the relationship between citizen and state deeply inhuman.

At its core lies Hindutva politics, rooted in Brahmanical hierarchies sustained by fear, surveillance, and control. Citizens are reduced to suspect profiles. The state ceases to be a protector and becomes a punisher. Technology is transformed from an instrument of progress into a weapon of domination. These are unmistakable features of an authoritarian, fascist project—now being tested in West Bengal through the machinery of electoral revision. ■

The New Labour Codes –Ushering in the Era of the “Dictatorship of the Private Employer”

▲ MAITREYI KRISHNAN

On 21st November, 2025 the Union Government issued notifications bringing into force four Labour Codes - the Code on Wages, 2019, the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code, 2020, (OSH Code) the Social Security Code, 2020; and the Industrial Relations Code, 2020 - that had been passed between 2019 and 2021. The four Labour Codes, presented as an anti-colonial “labour reform”, essentially constitute a reorientation of the State's role in mediating class relations in the country. That corporate India has largely hailed the labour codes indicates whose interests the new Labour Codes serves. Trade unions have taken this as an attack on the working class and indications are that the coming months will see a concerted challenge on the streets.

The very passing of these Codes in Parliament was marked by an undemocratic approach by the Union government – three of the four bills were passed without any debate in 2020 on a day when the Parliament was in a furore over the passing of the farm laws. Trade unions have consistently resisted this codification process and have held 4 nationwide strikes. Yet, ignoring all objections, the Government has proceeded to issue notifications on 21st November 2025, bringing the Codes into force.

The Codes have a serious impact on the rights of workers, while the Union government claims that the Codes are worker-friendly. In this, they are ably supported by the unquestioning main stream media. Given these distortions, it is imperative to examine the actual substance of the Labour Codes to understand its true impact on the working class in particular, and the socio-economic structure of society at large. Simply put, it grants employers greater freedom while curtailing even the most basic rights of workers, with the harshest consequences borne by the most marginalized workers.

Pushing Workers Out of the Ambit of the Law

One of the fundamental changes that the Labour Codes make in comparison with the previously existing law, is that it reduces the applicability of the law. Labour laws generally prescribe a worker threshold for their applicability, and the laws apply only to those establishments that employ workers meeting that threshold.

Take the Factories Act, 1948 for instance. Enacted to ensure basic health, safety, welfare facilities, working hours, and leave for workers in factories, it set a threshold of 10 workers for its applicability to establishments operating with power, and 20 workers for those without power. It has now been replaced by the OSH Code, 2020. This raises the threshold to establishments with 20 workers with the aid of power and 40 workers without power. According to the Annual Survey of Industries 2022–23, 43.2% of factories employ fewer than 20 workers, and the workers in these industries are denied the benefits and protection of this law.

The relationship between workmen and management is inherently unequal. Leaving service conditions entirely to the employer's discretion opens the door to arbitrary and discriminatory employment practices, with workmen

subject to unilateral terms. To address this, the Industrial Employment (Standing Orders) Act, 1946 was enacted, which mandated that establishments employing 100 or more workers must frame standing orders i.e. rules governing conditions of service and these must be certified by the State authorities after hearing the workmen and ensuring that the terms are fair and reasonable. The Industrial Relations Code, which replaces this law, raises the threshold to 300 workers. This means that workers in establishments with less than 300 workers are pushed into a legal vacuum, leaving their service conditions entirely at the mercy of employer discretion.

The Industrial Relations Code makes another shift vis-à-vis the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947. Under the 1947 Act, establishments employing 100 or more workmen were required to obtain prior government permission before effecting any lay-off, retrenchment, or closure, ensuring public scrutiny over decisions that affect livelihood and job security of workers. The Code raises this threshold from 100 to 300 workmen. Employers in units employing fewer than 300 workmen can now lay off, retrench, or shut down operations without any prior approval, effectively granting them unchecked power to terminate employment and exposing workers to sudden and arbitrary loss of livelihood.

The Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970 was enacted to protect workers in the exploitative contract labour system by prescribing its abolition under certain conditions, and mandating basic safeguards – timely payment of wages, provision of essential amenities, liability of the principal employer, etc. This Act applied

to all establishments employing 20 or more workers. The OSH Code that replaces it, raises this threshold to 50 workers, pushing the workers below this threshold outside the purview of the law.

The overall trend in the Labour Codes of raising the threshold for enjoyment of rights and entitlements under them strip workers of hard-won rights and narrow the scope of regulation, pushing lakhs of workplaces outside of legal regulation.

Blunting workers' freedom of association and right to strike

The working conditions and enforcement of labour laws in any establishment is contingent on the workers organisation and militancy, a product of the eternal conflict between capital and labour. This explains why, even today, workers who are organised enjoy comparatively greater security, while those in the unorganised (rather consciously disorganised) sector, where workers are actively prevented from organising, are subjected to extreme exploitation.

The right to form trade unions is protected by the freedom of association guaranteed under Article 19 of the Constitution. The Trade Unions Act, 1926, which gave statutory expression to this right, has now been replaced by the Industrial Relations Code.

The Industrial Relations Code empowers the Registrar to withdraw or cancel the registration of a trade union "on the information received by him" regarding an alleged contravention of the Code. While a power of cancellation existed under the Trade Unions Act, the scope of the Industrial Relations Code is far wider, as it now governs strikes and several other

aspects of industrial relations. This significantly expands the Registrar's discretion and exposes trade unions to arbitrary interference.

Under the Trade Unions Act, 1926, office-bearers and members of registered trade unions enjoy statutory immunity from civil proceedings and criminal prosecution under Section 120B(2) of the Indian Penal Code, for actions taken in furtherance of legitimate union objectives. This protection is retained in Section 17 of the Industrial Relations Code, but is rendered meaningless by the Code's expanded power of deregistration. Once a union's registration is cancelled, its members lose immunity. The threat of cancellation thus operates as a weapon to intimidate unions and create a climate of fear that undermines the freedom of association

The Labour Codes also attacks the right to strike, an essential component of collective bargaining. For workers, whose only bargaining power lies in their labour, the withdrawal of that labour is often the sole means to be heard in the face of unequal power relations. In his opposition to the Industrial Disputes Bill in 1938, Dr Ambedkar said "...A strike is simply another name for the right to freedom; it is nothing else than the right to the freedom of one's services on any terms that one wants to obtain. And once you concede the right to freedom, you necessarily concede the right to strike"

The attack on the right to strike under the Industrial Relations Code is two-fold. Firstly, the Code effectively makes strikes illegal through procedural traps. Under the Industrial Disputes Act, 1947, prior notice of strike was required only in public utility services. The IR Code expands this by mandating

a 14-day advance notice for a strike in every establishment. The issuance of such notice triggers conciliation proceedings, and once conciliation is underway, strikes are prohibited. This new regime effectively acts as a prohibition on strikes, hollowing out the right to collective bargaining.

Secondly, in addition to prohibiting any strikes, the Codes escalates penalties. Under the Industrial Disputes Act, the penalty for an illegal strike was imprisonment up to one month or a fine of ₹50. The IR Code increases this to a minimum fine of ₹1,000 going up to ₹10,000, or with imprisonment or both.

The effect is an assault on collective action and the silencing of working-class actions.

Systematic Erosion of the Rights of Women Workers

Article 39(d) of Constitution mandates that the State shall direct its policy towards securing equal pay for equal work for both men and women. This constitutional provision was strengthened in the Equal Remuneration Act, 1976, which prohibited discrimination in wages on the basis of sex. The Code of Wages has effectively dismantled this. While on the face of it, equal wages are mandated, the devil lies in the details. Wages, under the Code, is now redefined to exclude key components, including various allowances, allowing employers to structure wages in a way that appears compliant, but perpetuates gender-based discrimination. In a labour market where women already face discrimination, this redefinition risks legitimizing direct wage discrimination, directly contravening the guarantee of equality.

The second major setback

to women workers' rights in the reduction in maternity benefits payable to women. The Maternity Benefits Act, 1961 is now replaced by the Social Security Code that narrows the very definition of "wages" to exclude various allowances. In practice, employers split wages across multiple heads to avoid liabilities. By excluding these components, the Code legitimizes such avoidance and will result in women workers receiving lower maternity benefits.

The introduction of night shift for women, hitherto prohibited under the Factories Act is being heralded as freedom for women. In reality, it does precisely the opposite. It offers greater freedom to employers to extract labour from women under conditions that are inherently unsafe and unequal. Although the provision requires the "consent" of the woman worker, such consent is illusory in a workplace marked by stark power imbalances. Studies have shown that night-shift work exposes workers to serious risks, affects workers health and overall well-being, while adding to emotional and psychological stress. Rather than regulating night shifts to protect all workers, the Code now legitimizes the use of this oppressive practice against women.

Institutionalizing Caste and Class Inequality through Contract Labour

As far back as 1990, the Supreme Court, in Sankar Mukherjee vs. Union of India 1990(Supp) SCC 668 case, described the contract labour system as "an improved version of bonded labour." Yet, despite the enactment of the Contract Labour (Regulation and Abolition) Act, 1970, contract labour has

only expanded over the years, particularly as part of the neo-liberal restructuring of the workforce. Contract labour is overwhelmingly concentrated in forms of work labelled as "unskilled" or "menial," categories that are deeply intertwined with caste. Occupations such as sanitation, housekeeping, gardening, and similar forms of labour have historically been caste-ordained and continue to be performed almost entirely by Dalits and other marginalised communities.

The contract labour system is marked by non-payment of minimum wages, delays in wage payments and the absence of social security. This precarity traps workers into poverty, and has intergenerational consequences, forcing children out of school and into the same caste-ordained occupations.

Rather than end this exploitative system, the Labour Codes legitimises the same. The OSH Code, which replaces the 1970 Act, prohibits employment of contract labour in core activities only in name; the very definition of "core activity" reeks of casteist classist tendencies excluding precisely those forms of work where contract labour is most pervasive and exploitative. Sanitation work, watch and ward services, canteen and catering services, loading and unloading operations, housekeeping and laundry services, gardening and maintenance of lawns, transport and ambulance services, construction and maintenance work, are specifically excluded from the definition of core work. By excluding these activities from the definition of core work, the OSH Code institutionalizes this exploitative new form of bonded labour. Instead of protecting these workers who have been

continually marginalized, the Code gives legitimacy to a system that has historically been designed to exploit them, embedding inequality and discrimination into the very structure of the law.

Paving the way for the Dictatorship of the Employer

In States and Minorities, Dr. Ambedkar stressed on the necessity of State intervention to prevent economic exploitation, warning that the absence of regulation would not produce freedom, but lead, instead to the “dictatorship of the private employer.” The Labour Codes, in that sense, represent the abdication by the State of any responsibility towards workers. Indeed, the very Manusmriti, that Dr. Ambedkar burnt, is invoked in the draft Shram Shakti Niti 2025, National Labour and Employment Policy of India, which characterises labour as a “sacred and moral duty”. The Labour Codes, on the one hand enable what Dr. Ambedkar described as the “dictatorship of the private employer,” and on the other deepen poverty and reinforce caste and gender inequalities. The Labour Codes must be understood within the broader effort to dismantle Constitutional rights, one that seeks to recast exploitation as a right of the employer and resistance by workers as criminal and a failure of duty. The way forward in this class war mounted on the working class is not only to demand status quo ante, but a labour law regime that guarantees the job, wage and social security – in the true sense, to all. ■

(This article was first published in Frontline, 24th December 2025)

The Struggle for Justice for Ankita Bhandari Continues

▲ **INDRESH MAIKHURI**

Nineteen-year-old Ankita Bhandari was a young woman from a modest family in Dobh-Shrikot village in Uttarakhand’s Pauri district. In search of a livelihood, she began working as a receptionist on 28 August 2022 at the Vanantara Resort in Ganga Bhogpur near Rishikesh. The resort was operated by Pulkit Arya, the son of BJP leader Vinod Arya, who had previously been given the status of a Minister of State in the Uttarakhand government. Pulkit Arya himself was also closely associated with the BJP.

Ankita Bhandari had barely been able to work at the resort for around twenty days when news of her disappearance emerged on 19 September 2022. Notably, the first missing report was filed by the resort owner himself, Pulkit Arya, with the revenue police, not with the regular police but.

In Uttarakhand, a system dating back to the British era grants patwaris (revenue officials) limited policing powers in hilly regions. Since the area where the resort is located falls under a revenue jurisdiction, it is apparent that Pulkit Arya tried to avoid the regular police hence the missing person complaint was deliberately submitted to the patwari.

When Ankita Bhandari’s father, Virendra Singh Bhandari, learned of his daughter’s disappearance, he approached multiple police stations in Rishikesh, including the Laxman Jhula police station, the Muni Ki Reti police station, and the Chilla police outpost. Instead of recognising the gravity of the situation, officials at all these locations deflected responsibility, on the pretext that the case fell under a revenue area. Even the patwari who registered the missing complaint refused to speak to Ankita Bhandari’s father properly.

Ankita’s disappearance attracted attention in the media, and Pauri District Magistrate transferred the case from the revenue police to the regular police. On 24 September 2022, near the Chilla Barrage, the police and the State Disaster Response Force (SDRF) recovered the body of Ankita Bhandari. On the same day, the Uttarakhand government constituted a Special Investigation Team (SIT) led by DIG P. Renuka Devi to probe the case.

The investigation revealed that on 18 September 2022, resort owner Pulkit Arya, along with his two associates, Saurabh Bhaskar and Ankit Gupta, took Ankita Bhandari to the Chilla Barrage on the pretext of an outing. There, they allegedly pushed her into the barrage, killing her.

However, the motive that came to light shocked and enraged the entire state of Uttarakhand. Ankita Bhandari’s friend Pushpdip informed the police about WhatsApp chats he had exchanged with Ankita shortly before her death. In these messages dated 17 September 2022, Ankita wrote that Ankit Gupta had told her that a “VIP” was expected to visit the resort on 19 September and would require “special service,” for which the VIP was willing to pay up to ₹10,000. According to the same

chat, Ankit Gupta also asked Ankita to arrange two or three more girls. Ankita Bhandari refused to comply and expressed her intention to leave the resort. Pulkit Arya and his accomplices prevented her from leaving, partly by intimidating her and partly by trying to placate and mislead her. Subsequently, they took her out on the pretext of an outing and murdered her, in an attempt to project the incident as if she had simply gone missing on her own.

Once the “VIP” angle came to light, it became evident that the resort functioned as a prostitution hub for influential and powerful individuals. Ankita Bhandari’s chats themselves indicate that as early as 13 September 2022, three girls had been brought to the resort. Despite this, the police did not pursue this line of investigation any further.

The people started asking for the identity of the VIP, and rattled by the growing public outrage the BJP government in Uttarakhand attempted to deflect attention by staging a bulldozer action. Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami and the then Director General of Police, Ashok Kumar, formally announced the bulldozer action on Vanantara resort through public tweets. Shockingly, the bulldozer was deployed only on the specific room in the resort where Ankita Bhandari had been staying. It was evident that this action was aimed at destroying crucial evidence.

The demand for revealing the identity of the VIP, for whom “special services” were sought and whose refusal allegedly led Pulkit Arya and his associates to murder Ankita Bhandari, continued to gain momentum. Yet, throughout this period, the Uttarakhand government and the police SIT remained conspicuously silent on this crucial aspect of the case.

On 30 May 2025, the court of Additional Sessions Judge in Kotdwar sentenced three accused, Pulkit Arya, Saurabh Bhaskar, and Ankit Gupta, to life imprisonment. In its detailed 160-page judgment, the court explicitly acknowledged that the “VIP” factor was the central reason behind Ankita Bhandari’s murder.

Without the identity of the VIP, there is a deep sense that justice remains incomplete. Ankita Bhandari’s mother, Smt. Soni Devi, has publicly named BJP’s Uttarakhand Organisation General Secretary Ajay Kumar as the VIP. However, the BJP as well as the state government maintained complete silence on this serious allegation.

In December 2025, this case and specifically the unresolved VIP angle resurfaced from an entirely unexpected quarter. Urmila Sanawar, who claims to be the second wife of a former BJP MLA Suresh Rathore, played an audio recording of her conversation with Suresh Rathore during a Facebook Live broadcast. In this audio, Suresh Rathore can be heard naming BJP National General Secretary and Uttarakhand in-charge Dushyant Gautam as the “VIP”. In the same recording, Rathore also mentions the name of Ajay Kumar, BJP’s Uttarakhand Organisational General Secretary.

This audio disclosure once again brought the question of justice to the forefront. Public demands grew louder that the alleged VIPs should be brought before the law. One of the alleged VIPs, Dushyant Kumar Gautam, initially chose silence and later adopted a strategy of intimidation. He first wrote to the Uttarakhand Home Secretary, seeking action against 28 social media accounts and handles. Subsequently, he filed FIRs in Dehradun against Suresh Rathore, Urmila Sanawar,

and opposition political parties, and also initiated a defamation suit worth ₹2.01 crore in the Delhi High Court.

What further shocked people was that the Delhi High Court, on the very first hearing and without hearing the other parties, passed an ex parte order directing the named individuals and political parties to remove all social media content referring to Dushyant Gautam as the VIP.

A renewed mass movement demanding justice for Ankita Bhandari began to gain momentum, the BJP initially dismissed it as a conspiracy orchestrated by the opposition. Many BJP ministers and Members of Parliament offered explanations in the media, but sharp and persistent questioning by journalists and activists left them visibly cornered.

Additional SP Shekhar Suyal, who was part of the SIT, and BJP Rajya Sabha MP Naresh Bansal and Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami himself, attempted to project before the media that there was no VIP at all in the case. Whereas available evidence suggests the contrary. Ankita’s WhatsApp chats, as well as the court’s judgment in the case, clearly establish that the murder took place because she refused to provide “special service” to a VIP. When an SIT officer denies the existence of a VIP, it effectively amounts to repudiating the conclusions of his own investigation. Similarly, the Chief Minister’s denial of the VIP angle not only is an attempt to shield his party leaders named as VIPs, but also potentially paves the way for the eventual weakening of the case against those already serving sentences for the murder.

Against this thousands of people marched towards the Chief Minister’s residence on 4 January demanding a CBI inquiry under

the supervision of the Supreme Court into the VIP angle. This was followed by a statewide Uttarakhand bandh on 11 January.

Now, the Pushkar Singh Dhama government has announced a CBI investigation under mounting public pressure. However, even as this announcement was made, the entry of dubious and controversial figures into the narrative, apparently with tacit political patronage, continued to raise serious questions. Urmila Sanawar, who had suddenly gone missing from public view, reappeared alongside a man named Darshan Bharti, who had no prior connection whatsoever with the Ankita Bhandari case and he has been known in Uttarakhand primarily for spreading communal hatred as part of Hindutva agenda.

Very unexpectedly one Padma Shri and Padma Bhushan awardee Dr. Anil Prakash Joshi, described as an environmentalist, had lodged an FIR in the matter. He has been perceived largely as a government-aligned 'environmentalist'. Notably, over the past three years, he had shown no inclination with the struggle for justice for Ankita Bhandari, never even issued a public statement on the issue. His sudden filing of an FIR, followed by the government's assertion that this very FIR would be referred to the CBI, gave rise to a fresh set of suspicions regarding the intent and direction of the investigation.

Following public objections and protests, the Uttarakhand Police issued a statement saying that a letter submitted by Ankita Bhandari's parents to the CM earlier would also be added to the case record. Earlier, after maintaining silence for nearly fifteen days, the Chief Minister stated that the future course of action would be decided after consulting Ankita Bhandari's

parents. And, in apparent haste, Ankita's parents were brought to Dehradun the very next day, and they reiterated their demand and submitted a written statement to the Chief Minister. In this letter, they categorically demanded a CBI investigation under the supervision of a sitting judge of the Supreme Court, specifically to ensure the disclosure of the VIP involved in the Ankita Bhandari case.

When Ankita Bhandari's parents had already submitted a written demand, it is logical that their letter ought to have been treated as the primary complaint and foundation for the CBI probe. Instead, the decision to base the investigation on an FIR filed by Anil Joshi, clearly indicates that the BJP is determined to leave no stone unturned in protecting its own criminally implicated VIPs.

These incidents have once again laid bare reality behind the BJP's slogans of "chaal, charitra aur chehra" and "Beti Bachao" and its actual conduct. The BJP continues to deploy full weight of the state to shield leaders accused of sexual violence.

Whether it is Kuldeep Sengar, Ram Rahim, Asaram Babu, Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh or the convicts in the Bilkis Bano case, the BJP's record is a recurring pattern of protection of the accused. In Uttarakhand alone, cases involving BJP leaders - from a mandal president in Salt, to a councillor in Rudrapur, to the chairman of the Nainital Milk Federation - with serious allegations of sexual assaults, yet the party's response towards them has remained conspicuously soft. In Haridwar, the situation was even more disturbing, where a BJP woman leader facilitated the gang rape of her own daughter and is currently in jail for the crime.

The Ankita Bhandari case has further exposed how, under BJP rule in Uttarakhand, the tourism and resort industry is becoming a front for organised prostitution catering to influential and powerful individuals. Alongside the ongoing plunder of the state's resources - water, forests, and land - white-collar VIPs preyed upon young women who step out of their homes in search of livelihood and independence.

The Ankita Bhandari case is no longer just about one brutal murder; it stands as a stark indictment of a political system that systematically prioritises the protection of power over justice, dignity, and the safety of women.

A prominent figure of the Left-democratic movement in Uttarakhand, CPIML leader Comrade Raja Bahuguna, who passed away recently, often used to say in his speeches during the Uttarakhand statehood movement that Uttarakhand must not be allowed to develop into the infamous "sex-hub model" of tourism. By this he clearly meant a model of tourism in which women are reduced to mere bodies, priced and consumed for pleasure. The struggle to save Uttarakhand from this anti-woman, anti-human, and anti-people government has become urgent and unavoidable.

People's struggle on streets played a crucial role in the fight for justice for Ankita Bhandari. This case moved further from an SIT to a CBI investigation solely through struggles on the streets, no doubt that the justice in the future will also be achieved only when streets continue reverberating with slogans for justice for Ankita. ■

In Amrit Kaal, Rapists and Murderers Roam Free, Activists Rot in Jail

▲ DIPANKAR BHATTACHARYA

When the Supreme Court of India finally heard the bail petition of Umar Khalid, Sharjeel Imam, Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa-ur-Rehman, Mohd. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmed after more than five years of detention without trial, the overwhelming expectation was that the accused would now be set free on bail. After all the Supreme Court has repeatedly invoked the principle that bail should be the norm and jail only an exception. Even under the draconian UAPA, a three-judge bench of the Supreme Court comprising Justice Surya Kant (currently CJI), Justice Aniruddha Bose and Justice N. V. Ramana, had famously upheld the supremacy of Article 21 which guarantees a citizen's right to life and liberty while granting bail in 2021 to petitioner K.A. Najeer who had been detained without trial under UAPA since 2016. A belated bail for all petitioners therefore seemed the natural outcome to expect.

But the judgment by Justice Arvind Kumar and Justice N. V. Anjaria in the Delhi Riots bail petition case has now been delivered contrary to the Supreme Court's own earlier position. Five of the seven petitioners have been granted bail while Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam - neither of whom were in Delhi at the time of the riots with Sharjeel already being in jail - have been stopped from filing another bail petition within a year. The distinction has been made by identifying Umar and Sharjeel as ideological

masterminds and the rest as local level facilitators. Instead of upholding the constitutional rights of the petitioners, the judges have endorsed the conspiracy narrative put forward by the Delhi Police. Instead of being an exception, jail has thus been defined as life for the activists. *Yahi aab zindagi hai* (this is now my life), as Umar said after the denial of bail.

Like the infamous conspiracy cases of the British colonial era against India's freedom fighters, the Delhi Riots Case and its predecessor, the notorious Bhima Koregaon Case, are conspiracy cases hatched under the Modi-Shah-Doval doctrine against India's dissenting activists and intellectuals. Instead of focusing on the actual incidents and their well known triggers - like the open incitement of violence by BJP leaders like Anurag Thakur, Parvesh Verma and Kapil Mishra against the Shaheen Bagh protesters - the cases are based on absolutely concocted allegations like threat to the life of the Prime Minister or to the unity and integrity of the country. Consequently, the victims of violence in both Bhima Koregaon and Delhi riots have not got any justice, the perpetrators and instigators continue to roam free, while activists framed in the conspiracy cases rot in jail without trial for years on end.

If the Delhi riots were orchestrated to crush and defame the peaceful constitutional protests against the divisive and discriminatory Citizenship Amendment Act, the Delhi Riots

Case is being weaponised to run a witch-hunt against anti-CAA campaigners. And as pointed out by actress Swara Bhaskar, a prominent equal citizenship campaigner herself, the witch-hunt is being specially directed against Muslim scholars and activists like Umar and Sharjeel. For the five accused who have been given bail, the conditions attached are so stringent that they cannot exercise several fundamental constitutional rights like the freedom of expression or freedom of assembly. For Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, the future of course looks way too uncertain with even their right to make a renewed appeal for bail deferred by yet another year.

The most sinister implication of the verdict is the precedence it now provides to the government's fascist design to conflate peaceful constitutional protests and democratic movements with terrorism and treason. Ironically, just before the denial of bail to Umar and Sharjeel, rape and murder convict Ram Rahim was again granted parole for 40 days, for the 15th time since his conviction in 2017. And just the next day, the same Supreme Court granted bail to businessman Arvind Dham in a money-laundering case related to ₹27,000 crore bank fraud. India's apex court seems to be endorsing a doctrine that singles out activists and dissenters to rot in jail while allowing rapists, murderers and economic offenders to roam free and enjoy their liberties. The Constitution which promised "justice, social, economic and political" and "liberty of thought, expression and belief" is being put to a severe test by its supreme custodian, the apex court of the country. ■

US Imperialist War on Venezuela: Stand With the People of Venezuela in Defence of Their Sovereignty!

The people of Venezuela are under attack! In the early hours of January 3, the United States, under the Trump administration, unleashed a criminal war of aggression against the people of Venezuela, with brutal bombing and a military invasion targeting the capital city of Caracas. During the murderous attack, which killed over 100 people, including several civilians, President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, were kidnapped and taken to the United States.

This war is not just against Venezuela, but an open threat against every people in the region and across the world who strive to determine their own future free from imperialist dictates.

The same lies used to justify the invasion of Iraq, the seizure of its oil, and the devastation of its

people are now recycled as so-called “narco-terrorism” to justify a regime-change operation against President Maduro and the plunder of Venezuela, a country with largest oil reserves in the world.

Trump’s war on the people of Venezuela aims to impose a U.S.-backed colonial order. It seeks to crush the Bolivarian Revolution that overthrew a U.S.-supported oligarchy and returned the nation’s oil wealth to the people. The war is to seize Venezuela’s oil once again for U.S. multinational corporations and install a puppet government to serve imperialist interests.

This war is the latest chapter in the bloody history of U.S. intervention across Latin America and the Caribbean, manipulating elections, overthrowing democratically elected governments, subjugating people’s movements, unleashing bloodshed,

and imposing destruction. From Guatemala to Chile, from Grenada to Panama, the U.S. Monroe Doctrine, which treats the Latin American region as its “personal backyard” and which Trump seeks to reinforce, has always meant subjugation, exploitation, and repression, denying the peoples of the region their right to sovereignty and self-determination.

CPIML stands in unyielding solidarity with the people of Venezuela as they defend their sovereignty and their right to determine their own political and economic course, free from imperialist interference.

We call upon all democratic and peace-loving forces worldwide to stand against this imperialist aggression and the attempts to impose a new order of colonial subjugation under the Trump regime.

Hands off Venezuela!

Free President Nicolás Maduro and Cilia Flores!

Down with U.S. imperialism!

Letter: Solidarity with Cuba Against Imperialist Threats

On January 16, the Central Committee of the CPIML (Liberation), expressing its firm solidarity with the people of Cuba and the Cuban Revolution, sent a letter to the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Cuba. The following is the text of the letter:

We write to reaffirm our unwavering solidarity with the heroic people of Cuba and the glorious legacy of the Cuban Revolution at a time when US imperialism is intensifying its aggression and threats across Latin America and the Caribbean. We pay our revolutionary homage to the 32 Cuban martyrs who laid down their

lives in Venezuela while courageously defending the banner of internationalism and anti-imperialist solidarity.

US imperialism remains the principal enemy of the peoples of the world, as seen recently from Venezuela to Palestine. The US aggression against Venezuela and the criminal kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, once again exposes the brazen drive of imperialism to crush sovereignty, impose colonial subjugation, and enslave the peoples.

What is unfolding in Venezuela today is a continuation of the same nefarious designs unleashed against Cuba since the 1960s, after the victorious Cuban Revolution under the leadership of Comrade Fidel Castro liberated the Cuban people from dictatorship and US corporate domination.

Today, as the world confronts the aggressive drive of US President Donald Trump to impose a new order of colonial subjugation, the steadfast resistance of the Cuban people against more than six decades of illegal, inhuman and genocidal US blockade stands as a beacon of hope and inspiration for all struggling peoples across the world.

We unequivocally denounce the imperialist intimidation and threats of the United States against socialist Cuba. We stand shoulder to shoulder with the Communist Party of Cuba and the people of Cuba in defence of their socialism, sovereignty, dignity and peace. We fully support the global demand for the immediate and unconditional lifting of the brutal US blockade against Cuba.

**Together, we shall defeat imperialism!
¡Hasta la victoria siempre!**

Oil, Empire, and Kidnapping: The Monroe Doctrine's Latest War on Venezuela

▲ PRAKASH

In the early hours of January 3, 2026, the United States crossed a line from hybrid war into outright kidnapping of the head of a sovereign state. This so-called "Operation Absolute Resolve" was not a covert sanction or a financial sanction, but was a direct military assault on Caracas, culminating in the unprecedented kidnapping of a sitting head of state. The U.S. military operation to abduct President Nicolás Maduro, which began with airstrikes and ended in a helicopter raid, caused the deaths of 47 Venezuelan soldiers and 32 Cuban soldiers assigned to protect the president. Dragged from his country, President Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores were arrested on hilarious and fabricated charges of "narco-terrorism". This was an act of imperial desperation. With this single, lawless act, the mask of a "rules-based order" slipped completely, thereby revealing the naked face of a declining imperialist power.

The Revival of Monroe Doctrine and Empire in Decline

Washington's antagonistic policy towards leftist governments in Latin America, such as those in Venezuela and Cuba, operates as a modern enactment of the 1823 "Monroe Doctrine," President James Monroe's declaration that asserted the Western Hemisphere as an exclusive U.S. sphere of influence. Originally framed as a warning to European imperial powers, the Monroe Doctrine was transformed into the ideological bedrock of U.S. imperial domination in the 20th century. During the Cold War era, this doctrine was employed as a systematic

campaign of overthrowing socialist and left-leaning governments in Latin America, including in Brazil (1964) and Chile (1973). The empire supported state terror through Operation Condor (1975-1983), with the singular goal of eliminating socialists and communists in Latin America. The Trump administration's revival of the Monroe Doctrine, rebranded as the "Trump Corollary," is merely old wine in a new bottle. This corollary, and the hybrid warfare it justifies against Venezuela, are the direct ideological descendants of the empire's two-century legacy of hemispheric and global domination.

The current actions of the US empire in Venezuela and their threats to Cuba and Colombia, however, represent the desperation of an imperialist power in decline. Global industrial dominance has decisively shifted in recent times. From over half of the world's production in 1950, the U.S. now accounts for only about 17%, while China leads at nearly 30%. This trajectory points toward a 2030 landscape where the U.S. may hold a mere 11% share to China's 45%. This economic weakening undermines Washington's ability to fund infrastructure investments that could compete with China's Belt and Road Initiative, which 21 Latin American and Caribbean countries have joined. Moreover, China has become Venezuela and broadly South America's largest trading partner, with exchanges growing from \$12 billion in 2000 to over \$518 billion in 2024. This economic reality makes Washington's calls for hemispheric decoupling from China impractical. The Monroe Doctrine's 200-year-old logic, which assumed U.S. industrial superiority could

force markets open, is no longer tenable to the same degree owing to the relative decline of the United States as an industrial powerhouse, crumbling infrastructure, and diminished industrial capacity. Despite remaining the world's largest economy with significant technological advantages and the strongest military-industrial complex, this shift has led Washington to abandon its former economic diplomacy in favor of naked military aggression and actions such as kidnapping, revealing the emptiness behind its imperial posturing.

Venezuela's Oil and Gas: A Critical Target of the Empire

Venezuela holds the largest proven oil reserves on the planet, estimated at over 300 billion barrels, and possesses the world's 8th largest natural gas reserves. In proven oil reserves, Venezuela is followed by Saudi Arabia (297.5 billion barrels), Iran (208.6 billion barrels), Canada (170.3 billion barrels), and Iraq (145 billion barrels), according to the BP Statistical Review of World Energy 2023. A cursory look at this list reveals a telling pattern: nations that govern their vast resources outside the dictates of Washington, Venezuela, Iran, and previously Iraq, are invariably branded as "rogue states" or "undemocratic," a label that is routinely used by the empire as a pretext for economic warfare and regime-change operations. In particular, for years, a significant segment of Western international media has consistently portrayed Venezuela's government as illegitimate and authoritarian, creating a dominant narrative that has shaped global perceptions and often vilified its leadership. Venezuela's assertion of sovereignty over its oil has historically encountered persistent friction with US interests. The 1976 nationalization that created the state-owned company PDVSA established state control that resulted in lasting resentment in

Washington. A neoliberal reopening in the 1990s briefly allowed foreign corporations back in, only to be reversed by Hugo Chávez's socialist government, which reinstated strict state majority control. This move provoked a failed international legal challenge by ExxonMobil and started a three-decade-long conflict over who controls the nation's resources.

The recent military escalation for grabbing Venezuelan oil is the culmination of this long-drawn conflict. While the US succeeded in kidnapping President Maduro, it failed to achieve its main objective. Donald Trump, immediately after Maduro's kidnapping, met with corporate executives to demand a USD 100 billion private-sector investment to rebuild Venezuela's oil industry. The corporate response exposed the limits of the empire's ambitions: ExxonMobil's CEO declared the country "uninvestible," citing that twice their assets were seized by the revolutionary and sovereign state. While Trump's simultaneous boast of seizing 30-50 million barrels of oil, a haul worth about 2.75 billion USD, which represents less than 3% of the demanded investment and equals just two-and-a-half days of U.S. oil consumption. This highlights how aggression cannot guarantee plunder, especially against a revolutionary state like Venezuela.

The Deeper Threat: How Venezuela's Mission to Create New Socialist Humans Triggered Imperial Aggression

Beyond its vast resources, Venezuela has posed a political and ideological threat to U.S. hegemony by establishing a sovereign, socialist model of development, one that prioritises people over profit and fuels regional integration. The very existence of this sovereign socialist project in what Washington claims as its "backyard" has become the empire's greatest Achilles' heel. The Bolivarian Revolution under

Hugo Chávez and its continuation under Nicolas Maduro was never merely an economic project of redistribution; it was a conscious project of human transformation, fueled by oil revenue but aimed at creating a new socialist society. The Chavez government created thousands of grassroots communes and launched national "Missions," which used oil wealth to redistribute not just wealth but political power directly to the people. These programs delivered massive gains: Misión Mercal built a national network for subsidized food; Misión Robinson eradicated illiteracy, educating 1.5 million adults; Misión Barrio Adentro provided 163 million free medical consultations in its first 18 months, deploying doctors into neglected neighborhoods; and the Gran Misión Vivienda Venezuela constructed over 2 million homes for the homeless. Moreover, Chavez argued in 2007, echoing Che Guevara, "A revolution has to produce not only food, goods, and services, it also has to produce, more importantly than all of those things, new human beings." The mission networks served as centres of social welfare and schools of political practice, where participation would, as Chávez insisted, change the people themselves: "We have to practice socialism... this practice will create us, ourselves, it will change us; if not, we won't make it." After the death of Hugo Chavez, the Nicolas Maduro government carried on with social welfare programs with the long-term goal of building socialism. These revolutionary goals pose a political and ideological threat to the very foundations of US imperialism.

The commitment of the Bolivarian Revolution to Internationalism has been one of its most defining features. Venezuela led the creation of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our America (ALBA), conceived as a direct alternative to US-backed financial initiatives. Unlike the

existing neoliberal model, ALBA emphasized solidarity economics based on complementarity rather than competition, social welfare cooperation across member states, and energy integration via PetroCaribe (Petróleos del Caribe). For instance, PetroCaribe allowed Caribbean countries to purchase Venezuelan oil under concessionary terms, 17-25 year maturities with 1-2% interest and payment flexibility through goods and services. This allowed participants to finance 40-60% of oil imports through low-interest loans, thereby providing crucial breathing space and reducing dependency on Washington-controlled financial institutions. These attempts extended far beyond Latin America. Venezuela's unwavering solidarity with Palestine, from hosting legendary Palestinian revolutionary Leila Khaled to leading UN condemnations of apartheid by Israel, constitutes a direct rejection of the imperial order, framing the Bolivarian and Palestinian struggles as a single, global fight for liberation. Venezuela's success in building sovereign power and a regional alternative triggered a sustained imperial counterattack. The USA's response has been a continuous hybrid war over the last three decades, characterized by crippling sanctions and multiple regime-change operations designed to reverse the ongoing political transformation.

Venezuela's response to US imperial aggression mirrors the hydra, a serpent with multiple heads from Greek mythology. When Hercules cut off one of the hydra's heads in a battle, two more would grow back in its place, making it nearly impossible to defeat. Nassim Nicholas Taleb refers to the hydra in his book "Antifragile: Things That Gain from Disorder" as a metaphor for systems that grow stronger or more complex when confronted with challenges. Unlike things that are fragile (which break under

stress) or robust (which resist stress but remain unchanged), antifragile entities thrive in uncertainty and chaos. In today's world, Venezuela's Bolivarian Revolution embodies this antifragile principle. For over two decades, each external assault has been met with a more organized and widespread popular response, proving its hydra-like capacity to grow stronger from disorder.

Hours after President Maduro's capture, Vice President Delcy Rodríguez declared, "We will never again be a colony of any empire." This statement was not mere rhetoric but represents the deep-rooted resilience developed through decades of struggle. The immediate response proved its substance: the core leadership, the armed forces, and the People's Militias held a united front, while thousands mobilized in the streets, demonstrating that popular power, built over the years, commune by commune and mission by mission, could withstand even the most brazen imperial attack.

This moment of cohesion and mass mobilization is the latest chapter in a continuous story of popular sovereignty, from the 2002 coup overturned by a people's uprising in 48 hours to the present-day defiance. It is this very resilience and political consciousness that ensures no temporary setback, however severe, can reverse the historical process of social transformation it represents. ■

Venezuela, Greenland, and a Waning Empire in Desperation

▲ SURYO

In early January 2026, the United States government invoked a reimagined Monroe Doctrine, a declaration of hemispheric dominance, following which it launched a major military operation against Venezuela, carried out air strikes, and forcibly captured President Nicolás Maduro. Soon after the smoke had barely cleared over Venezuela, the U.S. administration reignited demands to bring Greenland into U.S. control. The U.S. government tied this objective to perceived economic and security threats from Russia and China. Although imperialism has always shaped U.S. foreign policy, under Donald Trump it has taken an unusually blatant and coercive form – a symptom, I argue, of desperation in the face of declining economic and geopolitical influence.

For half a century, the U.S. has reaped considerable benefits from the post-war economic arrangements it created. Through the dominance of the Dollar in international trade, especially oil trade, and neoliberal structures under globalization, the U.S. has been able to consume more, borrow more, purchase more, and, as a result, exert geopolitical power at low costs. This arrangement did not sustain itself automatically. It was enforced politically and militarily, from the defence of dollar-denominated oil markets to sanctions, coups, and wars. The petrodollar system, globalization on U.S. terms, and American military supremacy functioned together as a single structure of dominance. However, over time, shifts in global trade, finance, and resource diplomacy have begun to challenge the automatic dominance of the U.S. dollar and the economic privileges it conferred.

In 1944, the Bretton Woods system was established, where the U.S. dollar was pegged to gold reserves in the U.S., while other countries' currencies were valued against the dollar. Due to the Vietnam War and other domestic and foreign expenditures, the U.S. began running large deficits by the late 1960s, flooding international markets with U.S. dollars while U.S. gold reserves stagnated, ultimately leading to the collapse of the Bretton Woods system.

After the collapse of the Bretton Woods gold standard, the U.S. managed to maintain the Dollar's dominance through oil. By ensuring that crude oil was priced and traded exclusively in Dollars, the U.S. ensured a permanent global demand for the dollar. Any country that wished to purchase oil was forced to earn, borrow, or hold U.S. dollars. This granted the United States extraordinary financial privileges. However, over time, this arrangement has begun to weaken, and oil has been traded at times in the Chinese Yuan, Russian Ruble, and Indian Rupee. Today, while the dollar remains dominant, its role is no longer uncontested.

From the 1980s onward, U.S. dominance was further reinforced through a wave of globalization structured largely on American terms. Enforced trade liberalization, financial deregulation, and the protection of corporate and intellectual property rights allowed U.S. firms to expand globally and extract surplus value from artificially cheapened labour in poor countries. Apart from generating profits for U.S. firms, it subsidized consumption in the U.S. Over time, as developing countries industrialized, the benefits of globalization became less unequally distributed. This reduced the U.S.'s advantage in trade and, thus, its appropriation through unequal exchange. Slower productivity growth at home and rising competition abroad further eroded the material rewards of globalization and the relevance of the U.S. and the dollar in international trade.

As dollar dominance in energy markets faces pressure and globalization yields diminishing returns, large economies have strong incentives to reduce exposure to U.S. financial power, sanctions, and monetary policy. Proposals ranging from expanded local-currency trade to common settlement mechanisms reflect this impulse. This reflects an increasing perception in global markets of the dollar as a risk, rather than a guarantee. The Trump administration's alarm at talks of a BRICS currency must also be understood in this context.

Faced with these structural pressures, the U.S. response under Donald Trump was to attempt to restore U.S. hegemony in international trade through tariffs as a negotiation tactic that allows the United States to dictate the terms of international trade. The Trump administration had hoped that this would allow the U.S. government to maintain its influence despite reduced profitability through existing trade. However, instead of countries surrendering to the threat of tariffs, as the U.S. had expected, countries began reorganizing trade while the tariffs likely put severe inflationary strains on U.S. firms and consumers. The U.S. government responded by intensifying U.S. imperialism transparently.

The military intervention in Venezuela must be understood as an attempt to enforce and preserve U.S. hegemony over petroleum resources and the oil trade, in an attempt to resuscitate dollar dominance. Venezuela possesses the world's largest proven oil reserves (about 17% of the total), and individuals in the U.S. government have made it no secret that oil played a crucial role in motivating the intervention, explicitly arguing the merits of U.S. oil companies in the Venezuelan oil industry. It would seem that the U.S. government hopes that material gains from neocolonial extraction in Venezuela will help remedy some of the damage caused by the failure of the tariffs.

The United States' assault on Venezuela includes open admissions regarding the pursuit of oil, which is more convenient for the Trump administration, which has refused to implement policies protecting against climate change, and renewed unabashed expansion of fossil fuels, a crucial instrument of U.S. imperial control. The U.S. government's climate policy itself must be understood as an attempt to prolong resource extraction around the World to support U.S. imperialism at the cost of natural resources and people's habitats.

Greenland is another, more symbolic, case of Trump's brand of new U.S. imperialism. Although the United States frames the Greenland issue in terms of security and geopolitical advantage over rivals Russia and China, in reality, Greenland gives the U.S. control over Greenland's own reserves of fossil fuels and rare earth minerals. However, unlike Venezuela, Greenland is formally a part of Denmark, a long-standing Western ally. The Greenland spectacle demonstrates that the U.S. is willing to subordinate even its allies to imperial ambition, revealing how far coercion has replaced consent in maintaining U.S. dominance.

Taken together, these developments point to an empire no longer able to rely on the institutions that supported its imperialism. The petrodollar system is under strain, globalization no longer delivers effortless gains, tariff wars have backfired, and even limited moves toward alternative currencies provoke outsized reactions. Thus, the projects in Venezuela and Greenland signal insecurity, rather than confidence. Venezuela and Greenland, especially the former, must thus be understood as the newest in a long tradition of U.S. military operations over crude natural resources, especially crude oil reserves. ■

Protests Across India Denounce US Aggression Against Venezuela



Protests erupted across India denouncing the US military aggression against Venezuela and the kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores. These protests reflected a growing international resistance against US imperialism and reaffirmed the historic commitment of the Indian Left to anti-imperialism, national sovereignty, and the right of peoples to determine their own destiny.

A joint protest demonstration was organised at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi on January 4 by CPI(ML) Liberation, CPI, CPI(M), AIFB, and other left and progressive organisations against Trump's war on Venezuela. Addressing the protest, CPI(ML) Central Committee member Sucheta De said that what the world is witnessing in Venezuela, Palestine, Iran, and several other countries is a coordinated attempt by war criminal US President Donald

Trump to impose a new colonial global order. This order seeks to subjugate peoples and nations that attempt to chart an independent future free from US imperialist diktats.

She further stated that it was the Bolivarian Revolution in Venezuela that overthrew a US-backed oligarchy which had long exploited the country's resources and its people. For decades, Venezuela has faced coups, covert operations, economic sanctions, and blockades imposed by the US. Today, Trump has resorted to open military aggression and bombing of civilian areas in a desperate attempt to recolonise the country. However, the people of Venezuela remain resolute and determined to defend their sovereignty, freedom, and revolutionary gains.

A 'Hands Off Venezuela' protest rally was organised by CPI(ML) in Kolkata near the US Centre on December 5, where hundreds of people marched condemning the US military bombing of Venezuela. Expressing steadfast solidarity with the people of Venezuela in defence of their sovereignty, peace, and freedom, protesters burned an effigy of Donald Trump. They also condemned the silence of the Modi government, which has failed to speak out against this illegal and criminal military aggression. The protests noted that the Modi government's silence reflects not only a bankrupt foreign policy but also its growing submission to US imperialist diktats. This surrender was earlier seen when the US handcuffed and chained Indian citizens and deported them in a brutal and inhuman manner. It was also evident when the US imposed tariffs and openly threatened India's sovereignty and economic self-reliance.

In Patna, a protest near the Buddha Smriti Park on January 5 expressed strong solidarity with the people of Venezuela

and highlighted that this attack represents yet another chapter in the long and bloody history of US intervention in Latin America and the Caribbean. This history is marked by election interference, overthrow of democratic governments, suppression of popular movements, widespread violence, and destruction. They noted that this war is not just against Venezuela, but an open threat against every people in the region and across the world who strive to determine their own future free from imperialist dictates. Speakers strongly condemned the kidnapping of an elected President and his spouse as an act of international piracy and a grave violation of international law, exposing the rogue and lawless character of US imperialism.

Protests were also held in Ranchi, Jharkhand, and Odisha on January 5 by CPI(ML) Liberation and other left parties. In Karnataka, protests were organised on December 6 as part of a joint call by left parties against Trump and his imperialist plunder.

The protests across the country called for the expansion of nationwide and international actions against US aggression in Venezuela and across Latin America. In one voice, the protests exposed Trump's global colonial project, which he describes as the "Donroe doctrine", a crude rehash of the old Monroe Doctrine aimed at reasserting imperialist domination over the region.

Hands Off Venezuela

On January 12, a joint convention was organised by CPI, CPI (ML), CPM, AIFB, RSP, SP, RJD, AAP, DMK, and VCK at Surjeet Bhawan in Delhi in support of the people of Venezuela. The convention condemned the ongoing imperialist attacks by the United States on Venezuela and other Latin American countries. It also called for the immediate release



of Venezuelan President Nicolás Maduro and his wife, Cilia Flores, who were kidnapped by US forces.

Comrade Ravi Rai, a Politburo member of CPI (ML), while addressing the gathering, expressed solidarity with the people of Venezuela in defence of their sovereignty and peace. A large number of people from Delhi participated in the convention and raised their voices in support of Venezuela, Cuba, and Palestine.

The convention also adopted a resolution extending support to the struggling people of Venezuela and expressed solidarity with the people of Cuba, who are facing an inhuman blockade by the United States and ongoing military threats. It also stood with Palestine and condemned the Modi government for its silence and subservient foreign policy.

On the same day in Kolkata, a massive Venezuela solidarity march was organised by Left parties, including CPI (ML), CPI, CPM, and others, from Esplanade. The march condemned Trump's colonial-imperialist project against the people of Venezuela and other Latin American countries such as Cuba and Colombia. ■

Bulldozers on Forest Dwellers and Arrests of CPI(ML) Leaders in Mirzapur

▲ OM PRAKASH SINGH



In the Adivasi regions of Uttar Pradesh, particularly Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, and Naugarh in Chandauli, the Yogi government, the forest department, and a nexus of land and forest mafias are attacking the land and forest rights of tribals and other traditional forest dwellers. A repressive bulldozer campaign is underway against the poor Adivasis in these areas. The CPI(ML) has been consistently leading the struggles against the

forced displacement of villagers and for the land and forest rights to them. This is the reason CPI(ML) leaders are being targeted by the Yogi's BJP government in the state.

UP State Secretary Sudhakar Yadav and State Standing Committee member and Mirzapur District Secretary Jeera Bharati were arrested by Special Operations Group of UP Police (SOG) without any warrant or telling any reason at Adalhaat

on 3 January 2026, while they were returning after attending the funeral of a party comrade.

At the time of arrest and under custody, a senior woman leader comrade Jeera Bharati was brutally beaten up by the male police leading to many injuries. For the next 24 hours people were in the dark about the whereabouts of these two comrades. The district SP and DM did not pick up phone calls and local thana personnels kept a silence.

The police arrested CPI(ML) leaders after framing them on false charges because villagers had resisted a mid-night bulldozer operation in Tendua Khurd village which falls under Lalganj police station. Comrade Jeera Bharti is named in the FIR, State Secretary Comrade Sudhakar Yadav's name is not mentioned in that. However, the administration implicated the CPI(ML) State Secretary among the fifty unnamed individuals mentioned in the FIR. Both leaders were not present at the site of the incident, but they have been targeted for leading movements against the displacement of Adivasis and the poor. They were arrested first (around 3:30 PM), and the FIR was registered later (3:46 PM).

Comrade Jeera Bharti



all oppressed people across the entire region.

In the broader context of Uttar Pradesh politics, Comrade Jeera Bharti represents a rare phenomenon:

Comrade Jeera Bharti comes from a poor rural family in Mirzapur. Today, she stands out as one of the most outspoken and visible political voices in the district. Her leadership is not confined to women merely because she herself is a woman; rather, she has emerged as one of the most assertive and consistent voices of

a woman leader from a rural, poor background who, through sustained struggle, has earned recognition at the national level. She is a national leader of the Khet Mazdoor Sabha (AIARLA) and a member of the State Standing Committee of the CPI(ML). In Mirzapur, her presence and influence are widely acknowledged. She has contested several Assembly elections from Mirzapur and has fought Lok Sabha elections once.

What is particularly striking is that a Dalit woman leader has been deliberately targeted by the police—framed, arrested, and assaulted. The fact that she has been lodged in jail underscores that the struggle she represents is part of a long-running battle against repression, injustice, and the systematic targeting of voices that challenge entrenched casteist power structures. ■

The next day, a party delegation went to Mirzapur that included Central Committee member Ishwari Prasad Kushwaha and State Standing Committee members Om Prakash Singh, Rampyare Ram, and Anil Paswan. Even on the second day, the District Magistrate and the Superintendent of Police avoided meeting or engaging with party leaders. However, after sustained efforts, officials eventually disclosed that both leaders had been sent to jail late in the evening on the very day of their arrest.

The CPI(ML) team also visited Tendua Khurd village and extensively interacted with local residents to understand the situation on the ground. Party leaders also met the detained leaders and villagers inside the jail as well. Comrade Jeera Bharti told the team that she still being specifically targeted and subjected to harassment even while in custody. The matter was subsequently taken up with jail authorities by the visiting leaders.

The members of the Kol and Dharikar communities have been settled in Tendua Khurd village for four generations, sustaining themselves through agriculture. Several villagers have been granted residential land titles. The Kol community is recognized as an Adivasi group; however, despite persistent demands, they have not been accorded Scheduled Tribe (ST) status in Uttar Pradesh. For a long time, the Forest Department and the government has been attempting to evict them from their homes and farmlands.

The officials of the Forest Department had earlier, around one and a half month ago started digging pits with JCB machines in the fields of poor villagers in Tendua Khurd—fields where wheat and mustard crops had already been sown. The CPI(ML) Mirzapur District Secretary Comrade Jeera Bharti reached the spot and intervened, asking the officials to halt the operation. While the forest officials withdrew at that time, they attempted to resume the action later, prompting an indefinite sit-in protest at Lalganj tehsil in mid-December.

During the protest, officials from the Revenue Department, the local administration, and the Forest Department held discussions with party leaders and protesting villagers. Forest and revenue officials assured the protesters that within fifteen days, the dispute over land ownership in Tendua Khurd would be resolved between the Revenue and Forest Departments. They further committed that the Revenue Department would provide written confirmation stating that the lands occupied by Adivasi and poor villagers fell under the jurisdiction of the Revenue Department, not the Forest Department. On the basis of this understanding, the bulldozer action was halted.

There was a big protest rally and demonstration

CPI(ML) MP's Visit to Mirzapur

On 11–12 January, CPI(ML) Member of Parliament Comrade Sudama Prasad visited villages facing threats of imminent evictions in Mirzapur. He met many tribals and villagers who have borne the brunt of repression and also visited the jail to meet imprisoned party leaders and villagers.

Comrade Sudama Prasad also submitted a memorandum of complaint and demands to the District Magistrate of Mirzapur, formally registering his protest. He demanded the unconditional release of the jailed leaders and villagers and the withdrawal of the fabricated case, and an immediate halt to bulldozer operations on the lands and forest rights of the poor. He further demanded that land rights be granted to poor cultivators on the land they are currently tilling; that strict action be taken against male police personnel who assaulted woman leader Jeera Bharti; that cases be registered against forest personnel and lumpen elements who attacked women in Tendua Khurd; and that lands under illegal occupation by land mafias be freed.

He also addressed a press conference and said villagers had informed him that the Forest Department, in collusion with land mafias, had facilitated the felling of entire forests of khair (catechu) and sandalwood, turning the area into a hub of illegal plunder. He alleged that the Forest Department was evicting people by claiming ownership over all land—whether ceiling land, revenue land, or patta land. In villages such as Matwar and Nadna, land loot was being carried out under the pretext of cancelled pattas, with strongmen forcibly occupying land. Hundreds of acres in these villages, he said, were under illegal occupation by land mafias, yet administration takes no action against them.

This administrative bias against villagers was also reflected in granting permission to comrade Sudama Prasad to visit the bulldozer-affected villages. Several CPI(ML) leaders, including Mirzapur district committee member Bhakt Prakash Shrivastava, were placed under house arrest on the day of his visit. Such mistreatment of opposition leaders, particularly those from the Left, has become a routine occurrence in Yogi's Uttar Pradesh, he said. Drawing a sharp comparison, the MP asked why CPI(ML) leaders were framed in false cases when 23 cases against Chief Minister Yogi Adityanath could be withdrawn. ■

on 2 January 2026 organised by CPI(ML) at the office of the Vindhyanchal Divisional Commissioner (Mirzapur) against the ongoing bulldozer actions in many villages, including Tendua Khurd and Matwar, in the district. The Additional Commissioner assured the protesters that no bulldozer action would take place. However, just after a few hours at around 2 a.m. on the night of 2/3 January 2026, Forest Department officials arrived with approximately 150 people and seven JCB machines at Tendua Khurd. Among them were several local strongmen and lumpen elements.

Forest guards and those accompanying them forcibly entered homes and began dragging women out. One woman's arm was broken, while another sustained serious injuries to her chest. A girl aged around 15-16 suffered severe injuries to her thighs, and another girl of the same age was picked up and thrown violently to the ground. These attacks created panic and chaos in the village. When the villagers regrouped and resisted collectively, the forest officials and other persons fled the scene.

The Forest Department later filed a complaint and the police registered FIR No. 04/2026 (dated 03 January 2026) at Lalganj police station. The FIR invokes sections 221, 352, 351(3), 324(5), 121(1), 132, 191(2), 191(3), and 109(1) of the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita (BNS), along with Sections 5 and 26 of the Forest Act and Section 7 of the CL Act. These are serious criminal charges, including provisions relating to attempted murder. Since the party State Secretary Sudhakar Yadav was not initially named and no direct case could be established against him, the police subsequently added Section 61(2) of the BNS, pertaining to criminal conspiracy.

In protest against these arrests

and repressive bulldozer action, CPI(ML) organised a statewide protest on 6 January 2026. Other major Left parties—including the CPI, CPM, and Forward Bloc—also participated at various locations.

In the Adivasi regions of Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, and Chandauli, Adivasis and other traditional forest dwellers are being forced into a two-front struggle to defend their land and forest rights. On one hand, non-Adivasi strongmen and mafias from outside are systematically grabbing their ancestral lands, forest produce, and mineral resources. On the other hand, the government, administration, and Forest Department are relentlessly pursuing campaigns to evict Adivasis and the rural poor. Through their actions, the government, administration, and Forest Department are effectively extending protection to land mafias and forest mafias at the expense of indigenous communities.

Only a few years ago, in July 2019, in Umbha (Ghorawal) in Sonbhadra district, land mafias attempted to seize Adivasi lands. When the Adivasis resisted, they were subjected to a brutal massacre in which nearly a dozen Adivasis were killed. More recently, in the name of setting up power plants, large-scale displacement of Adivasis from their ancestral lands is underway in Sonbhadra.

After prolonged struggles, a survey and settlement scheme was introduced in the Adivasi regions of Sonbhadra. However, instead of recording the names of Adivasis on the lands they had been cultivating and occupying for generations, land mafias influenced the government machinery and succeeded in getting vast tracts of land registered in their own names. This has led to repeated and often violent clashes over possession of land.

The Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act—commonly known as the Forest Rights Act—has effectively been transformed into an instrument of their dispossession, defeating its very purpose of securing land titles for Adivasis and other forest dwellers. In the above three districts, the majority of applications filed under this law have been rejected. Adivasis are being branded as illegal encroachers on their own ancestral lands, and bulldozer actions are being carried out against them.

This mirrors a broader national pattern where in Adivasi areas across the country, big corporations have cast a predatory eye on forests, land, and mineral resources. Acting in concert with forest officials, the government and its administration are facilitating this project of plunder by extending protection to corporate interests as well as land and forest mafias.

In Chandauli's Naugarh as well, a sustained movement is ongoing, where on 9 January 2026 an angry 'lathi march' was organised. The bulldozer action being carried out in Tendua Khurd village is part of the same continuum of forced evictions and repression. It is this resistance movement that comrades Sudhakar Yadav, Jeera Bharti, and five villagers were sent to jail.

The two leaders were granted bail by the Sessions Court on 14 January.

The CPI(ML) has called for a big protest rally on 28 January at Mirzapur against the ongoing bulldozer evictions. Party General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya will address this rally. ■

UP's Bulldozer Raj

Across Uttar Pradesh—and indeed across the country—the government has been relentlessly pursuing policies that displace and dispossess the poorest and most marginalised sections of society. Vulnerable sections and poor are badly facing the brunt of BJP government's bulldozer terror across the state. Bulldozers are being unleashed on people's homes, lands, and religious places of the minority community, their democratic rights are being bulldozed too.

Despite repeated observations by the Supreme Court declaring such bulldozer actions to be wholly unlawful, the Yogi Adityanath-led BJP government continues to carry out evictions and demolitions arbitrarily with impunity.

In Bahraich, Siddharthnagar, Shravasti, Lakhimpur Kheri, Pilibhit, and now Deoria, mosques, shrines, and madrasas belonging to minority communities have been demolished. In different parts of the state, eviction drives are underway against poor families settled on gram sabha land, barren land, and fallow land. In Ghazipur, bulldozers have been deployed on the lands of forest dwellers, while in Bhadohi as many as 340 villages face the looming threat of displacement.

In the Adivasi regions of Mirzapur, Sonbhadra, and Chandauli, the nexus between the Forest Department and the police administration has made life increasingly unbearable for Adivasis and other forest dwellers. Their fields are being dug with earthmovers and their homes are being bulldozed.

People are being jailed under serious criminal charges merely for collecting mahua, firewood, or other

forest produce for subsistence. At the same time, under the protection of forest officials and the police administration, mafias are engaging in indiscriminate tree felling, illegal mining, and the forcible takeover of Adivasis' ancestral lands.

In Mirzapur villages such as Tendua Khurd, and Matwar, Pirdhani, and Silhata in Haliya, Adivasis are being targeted for eviction. Yet in these very villages, powerful local strongmen have for years illegally occupied hundreds of acres of patta land recorded in the names of Kol Adivasis, and also Forest Department land. From Lalganj and Haliya to villages like Talar in Rajgarh; from villages around Shivdwar in Ghorawal, Sonbhadra, to those being displaced for power plants; and across Adivasi villages in Chandauli, eviction and displacement drives are underway everywhere. In Chandauli too strongmen have illegally occupied vast tracts of land in connivance with the ruling party and the administration.

In Sonbhadra's Dudhi region, with the manipulation of survey and settlement processes under FRA, the outside strongmen are trying to seize Adivasi lands. This is leading to violent clashes when Adivasis stand in resistance. The Forest Rights Act—enacted to provide legal recognition to Adivasis over their ancestral lands—has instead been made into a tool by the BJP government for their dispossession. Applications submitted by Adivasis under the Forest Rights Act have been rejected, and they are being branded as encroachers on their own land, paving the way for bulldozer action against them.

Under BJP rule, large-scale

deforestation has taken place in the country to the extent that forest cover has fallen well below the nationally prescribed standards. Protected forests have shrunk significantly in area, far below mandated norms. In other words, there has been indiscriminate and massive destruction of forests.

Now, in an apparent attempt to cover up this depletion and compensate for declining forest cover on paper, the government has turned its bulldozers against those who have lived in and preserved these forests for generations—Adivasis, Dalits, and other marginalised communities. What is being witnessed in Mirzapur reflects a broader pattern across the state. Lands that were allotted as pattas to poor and marginalised families by previous governments are being taken away. Adivasi and forest-dwelling communities, whose ancestors have lived on and sustained themselves from these forests and lands for hundreds of years, are being summarily evicted.

These bulldozer actions are being carried out without notice, without prior information, and without any arrangements for rehabilitation or resettlement. Homes are being demolished, and bulldozers are being driven through small plots and fields where crops have been carefully cultivated. This is abundantly clear that the current actions of the government are not only illegal but are in direct violation of Supreme Court directives and judgments. More fundamentally, this is a blatant assault on the constitutional rights that guarantee citizens the right to life and dignity.

The government is demanding documentary proof from Adivasi communities who have lived in these forests since long, even before the independence of the country—these are communities

whose histories stretch back to historical revolutionary figures like Birsa Munda. They have been living in these forests for generations, it ought to be the duty of the governments to provide them proper documents, if they are needed, instead of making documentary proof a flimsy pretext for their evictions in order to serve their corporate masters.

Now when people are rising up against the assaults on their livelihoods and democratic rights, the government is deliberately and selectively targeting the opposition voices with a calculated political strategy—particularly those political forces that stand with the poor and the dispossessed. When there is an alarming silence elsewhere against bulldozer rule, CPI(ML) has emerged as a strong and consistent voice articulating the concerns of rural and poor communities. ■

- With inputs from Sunil Maurya

Uttarakhand - Dhami Government's Bulldozer of Hate

▲ KAILASH PANDEY

The focus of Dhami's government in Uttarakhand is basically on two things - the sectarian politics of hate and eviction of the poor from their decades-old inhabited lands. The CM Pushkar Singh Dhami has perpetually led his hate campaign by spreading lies of 'Demographic change', 'Love Jihad', 'Thook Jihad', 'Land Jihad', and 'Nakal Jihad'. The eviction drives of the poor have been labelled an act against 'Land Jihad'. The BJP's government is desperate to displace a significant population in the state.

The language of the Chief Minister, in a multi-cultural and sensitive state caters to communal polarisation endangering the social fabric and peace of the state. This has intensified the fear of violence and insecurity among landless, poor and minorities.

The BJP government is continuously bulldozing and destroying homes, shops, and decades-long settlements without following proper legal procedures. The Government is displacing people in the name of legal compliance, but the poor and marginalized sections remain the most affected by this. The question of ownership rights of inhabitants on the Nazul and forest land in the hill state is quite sensitive. The people in several places residing for decades were displaced with the allegation of "encroachers". Options of alternative rehabilitation, sufficient time for notice, and opportunities for hearing were not provided. The constitutional right of equality and the principles of natural justice are being violated outright. The bulldozing and displacements without following proper legal process and norms, has caused anxiety and fear among the affected population.

On 7 December 2025, more than 52 homes were demolished without rehabilitation in Puchhadi of Ramnagar, among whom the most affected were poor, Dalits, and people from minorities. In Bagjala, eight houses under construction were demolished two years ago, and eviction notices for thousands were issued; all development and construction works were stopped including the Jal Jeevan Mission scheme by the authorities.

After the bulldozing of the residences of the poor in Puchhadi in Ramnagar of Nainital district, the district's SSP Manjunath T.C. blamed demographic change as one of the reasons for the demolition in a video statement. The statement in itself was astonishingly irresponsible, anti-constitutional, and communal. The agenda of the BJP-RSS for correction in demography is being carried out by an SSP who is expected to be accountable to the Constitution. During the Bagjala village movement near Haldwani, when a delegation went to the Kumaon Commissioner, he too mentioned demographic change. Bureaucracy is implementing CM Dhami's drive of displacing the poor in the name of "Demographic corrections"!

The state of Uttarakhand has around 225 forest villages and many other types of traditional forest dwellings. These forest villages and settlements have been populated since 1950-60 or much earlier. There has been a continuous people's movement with the demand for a revenue village for the past five decades in Bindukhatta in the Tarai region. The BJP during the election promised for the same, later the CM' declared the formation of revenue village only to retreat from his own promise. Now, the residents of Bindukhatta are gearing up for the bigger struggle.

The residents of Bagjala are protesting under the leadership of Kisan Mahasabha. After 100 days of the protest sit-in, the work on road construction has been resumed. Because of the movement, all the notices are on hold, but there is a constant threat of

losing one's own land and homes and subsequent eviction. Thousands of people in Rishikesh are under a similar threat of displacement. Thousands of people are living under fear of displacement in Banbhoolpura locality in Haldwani town. The matter of Banbhoolpura is in the High Court. In Lalkuan, the Nagina colony was completely demolished, and poor households in Rudrapur town are constantly facing bulldozers. From Haridwar to Dewal, Ramnagar to Chorgaliya, and Haldwani to Dehradun, the poor and marginalized sections' housing and agriculture is under a constant threat.

Lakhs of people, mostly in urban areas, have been residing in Nazul Lands (lands leased for long periods) since the British period. It is high time for the people to unite and launch an effective movement to force the government to provide documents to the actual owners who are residing on these lands. The BJP government is more interested in giving the same lands to its corporate friends. Various Development schemes, construction of big dams, have already led to the loss of land for agriculture and housing in the state along with a huge destruction of the ecology. There is an urgent need to reclaim rights for the landless, Dalits, and marginalized from the fascist bulldozer raj. ■

165 Days Long Chennai Sanitation Workers' Struggle Ends on a Positive Note

After more than 160 days of relentless struggle, on January 12 the sanitation workers of Chennai, organised under UUI-LTUC-AICCTU, concluded their fight on a positive note with the DMK government agreeing to their core demands. The workers will continue to be paid directly by the Chennai Corporation, successfully defeating privatisation attempts. Minister P.K. Sekar Babu, along with Mayor R. Priya, visited the LTUC office to end the fast by offering juice to the fasting workers.

The Minister assured that the services of nearly 1,400 workers, who had been on a path of relentless struggle since 1 August 2025, braving arrests and cases and the police brutality would be restored by the end of January 2026. He also assured to protect wages and consider restoration earlier than the end of the month, preferably by 20th January, as requested by the Uzhaipor Urimai Iyakkam (UUI or the Toilers Rights Movement) union president and the state president of AICCTU, Barathi, during a meeting with sanitation workers following the visit.

The struggle began after 1,400 temporary sanitary workers, protected under the Madras High Court's order until 31 July 2025, were illegally terminated on 1 August 2025, after the government reference to the court. The corporation demanded that they forgo 5 to 20 years of prior service and accept employment with private contractors, despite an industrial dispute pending since 29 July 2025, in violation of the Industrial Disputes Act 1947. These workers are predominantly SC (Arundhadhiyars, Adi Dravidars), poor people of all castes, and women, many of whom are single parents.

A historic struggle began at Rippon Building on 1 August 2025, with workers sitting day and night in scorching heat and rain. All political parties, including DMK allies CPI, CPIM, VCK, and Congress, supported the strike. A police crackdown on 13 August 2025 led to arrests, but the High Court protected the leaders from arrest on 14 August 2025. The issue of sanitation workers and their struggle snowballed into a major political issue in the state.

The workers' demands were restoration of employment under the same conditions as on 31 July 2025, with direct payment from the Corporation, along with compensation for lost wages and withdrawal of police cases.

Workers continued relentless weekly, and later daily, struggles, including standing hip-deep in the sea of Bay of Bengal, polluted waters of Koovam river or graveyards, to force the government to respond. They faced repeated arrests and remained without wages for over five months, while their families endured extreme hardship. The union UUI, LTUC-AICCTU, provided relief such as rice, oil, and dal twice.

From 17 November 2025, women workers undertook indefinite fasts in batches, lasting up to 57 days, with High Court permission. In support of the struggle, progressive intellectuals, activists, writers, professors, lawyers, and concerned citizens launched a signature campaign and addressed a press meet in solidarity with the sanitation workers.

CPIML Liberation congratulates the sanitation workers, especially the women workers, for sustaining their struggle and upholding their spirit in the face of all odds. We also extend our heartfelt congratulations to the union leaders at all levels, as well as to all citizens and progressive organisations who expressed solidarity with the workers' long and courageous fight. ■

From Toxic Cough Syrups to Poisoned Water in Indore: BJP Rule Turns Madhya Pradesh Into a Killing Field

January 02, 2026: More than ten people, including children, have lost their lives and over thousands have fallen ill in Indore, Madhya Pradesh after consuming toxic drinking water. Indore, repeatedly projected as India's "cleanest city" under the Swachh Bharat Abhiyan, has turned into a death trap, poisoning its own people after drinking water pipelines leaked and mixed with sewage in the Bhagirathpura area.

This catastrophe has occurred despite over Rs 1,070 crore being allocated this year under the AMRUT 2.0 scheme for strengthening Indore's water supply infrastructure. Where did this money go? Why were repeated complaints by residents ignored? Indore in BJP-ruled Madhya Pradesh has effectively become a killing field where poisoned water is pumped into working class neighbourhoods while the administration looks the other way.

The arrogance and rot of the BJP regime were on full display when Minister Kailash Vijayvargiya responded with abusive language when questioned by journalists about patients being forced to pay huge bills in private hospitals and the absence of safe drinking water arrangements.

The Indore water killings are not an isolated incident. Madhya Pradesh has become an epicentre of administrative apathy and human tragedy under BJP rule. Just weeks ago, five children suffering from thalassemia, aged between three and fifteen, were found HIV positive after blood transfusions in the state. In October 2025, several children died after consuming cough syrups contaminated with deadly levels of diethylene glycol, an industrial solvent.

These are the outcomes of a system where regulatory oversight has been dismantled, safety checks diluted and public health sacrificed. From medicines

to drinking water, toxic substances are entering everyday life. These tragedies expose the brutal reality behind the slogan of "Ease of Doing Business" and the hollow rhetoric of the "Viksit Bharat Agenda", where the Modi-led BJP regime has deliberately dismantled regulatory safeguards, weakened testing and monitoring systems, and destroyed accountability across the country, turning people's lives into expendable costs for profit.

CPI(ML) Liberation expresses its solidarity with the families of the deceased and all those affected. We demand free treatment for all, adequate compensation for the families of the deceased and all those affected, strict criminal action against all responsible officials and contractors, and urgent provision of free, safe and clean drinking water in all affected areas.

The responsibility for these deaths lies squarely with the BJP-led Madhya Pradesh government. The Chief Minister has completely failed to protect the lives of the people and has no moral right to continue in office. ■

Free India's Prisoners of Conscience

January 05, 2026: The Supreme Court today while granting bail to Gulfisha Fatima, Meeran Haider, Shifa Ur Rehman, Mohd. Saleem Khan and Shadab Ahmed, has shockingly denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam holding that there is sufficient material to demonstrate a prima facie case under the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act, 1967, against them. The Court has "permitted" them to renew their bail applications after a year or after protected witnesses are examined, whichever is earlier!

The denial of bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam after more than five years of detention without trial

marks a blatant negation of the very idea of justice and constitutional liberty of Indian citizens. We appeal to the democratic public opinion of India to rise in rage against this brazen travesty of justice.

This is beyond a travesty of justice; indeed travesty does not begin to describe their ordeal at the hands of the "justice system". Denying them bail, even after more than 5 years of jail without trial, confirms their specific targeting by the state, and an abject failure of the part of the Supreme Court to stand up against those unjustly incarcerated under fabricated charges by the Delhi Police. After the

Delhi High Court failed by denying bail to these young activists and scholars, eyes were on the Supreme Court to stand in defence of civil liberties and the right to dissent.

In a judgment akin to the infamous emergency-time ADM Jabalpur case, where the Supreme Court capitulated to the authoritarian Indira Gandhi regime, today's judgement reflects its failure to stand in defence of civil liberties and the right to dissent. The Supreme Court was on trial in this matter, and it has indicted itself. It now rests with the people of the country to rise up against this erosion of democratic institutions and restore the constitutional ethos in the country. ■

'Board of Peace': India Must Reject the Attempt to Create a Trump led Colonial Institution and Trample Palestinian Self-Determination

January 19, 2025: The formation of Board of Peace by Trump administration seems to have cynically shifted away from its original purpose and objective agreed upon by the parties at the Sharm el-Sheikh agreement. It is now clear that the Board is being projected as an alternative to the United Nations Organization, with all authority concentrated in the hands of the Trump-led United

States. The recent US aggression against Venezuela serves as a clear warning of what such concentration of power under Trump entails: colonial subjugation and the denial of peoples' dignity and sovereignty.

Despite the October 2025 ceasefire and the creation of the Board, Israel, with the full backing of the US and Western powers, continues daily indiscriminate killings, systematic destruction of remaining homes and infrastructure, and the deliberate starvation of the people of the besieged Gaza Strip.

As per the reports, Indian government has been invited by Trump to be part of the board. India, with its rich anti-colonial legacy and long-standing solidarity with

the Global South, must not be part of this ploy to create a Trump-US power-centric new colonial world order. It is shameful that during the Israel-US led genocide in Gaza, the Modi government has betrayed this historic legacy and instead chosen closer cooperation with colonial and oppressive forces.

India must immediately course-correct and strengthen its solidarity and support to the people of Palestine and their struggle for their liberation. We must stand with the Palestinian people and uphold their right to determine their own future, free from occupation, apartheid, and foreign domination.

-- Central Committee, CPI(ML)
Liberation ■

Iran Protests: As People Fight for Bread and Liberty, Iran Also Has to Remain Alert against Imperialist Intervention and Shahist and Zionist Conspiracies

January 12, 2026: Amid a deepening economic crisis in Iran, protests that began as a movement of workers and traders in December last year in Tehran's bazaar have now spread across the country, developing into a mass uprising for livelihood, dignity, and democratic rights. Protests are unfolding across Iran as workers organise strikes and pickets in several sectors, and students rise up in resistance despite repression unleashed by the forces of the theocratic regime. According to reports, several people have been killed, with widespread violence reported from across the country, including the capital city of Tehran.

At the same time, as the Iranian people fight for bread and liberty, we are witnessing cynical attempts by US imperialism, the Israeli Zionist state and forces linked to the deposed brutal Shahist monarchy to infiltrate and hijack the

movement and further their own Islamophobic narrative and clamour for regime change. The Trump regime, emboldened by its recent aggression against Venezuela and the bombing in Iran in 2025 and driven by imperial hubris, uses the pretext of "standing with the people of Iran" to recolonise the country politically and economically and subjugate its people, just as the United States did in 1953 through the CIA orchestrated coup (Operation Ajax) against the democratically elected government of Mohammad Mosaddegh.

The economic crisis in Iran is inseparable from the criminal sanctions imposed by the United States and Western powers, which amount to collective punishment of an entire population. They have devastated livelihoods, weakened public services and deepened inequality. This crisis is further aggravated by a monopolistic

economic model within Iran that concentrates wealth and power in the hands of a few individuals and foundations, while working class and toiling masses are made to bear the burden.

Like many historic struggles in Iran, including the 2022 Zan, Zendegi, Azadi (Woman, Life, Freedom) movement, the ongoing protests reflect the anger of the people against a tyrannical economic and political system that has for decades crushed democratic rights, suppressed trade unions and popular struggles, and denied freedom of association.

We stand in solidarity with the democratic and working-class movements of Iran that have called for strengthening the struggle for livelihood and liberty against the repressive regime and for firmly rejecting any attempts to push the country back into the tyranny of monarchy or to exploit the protests as a pretext for imperialist intervention. The people of Iran alone have the right to determine the future of their country.

-- Central Committee, CPI(ML)
Liberation ■

Turkman Gate Demolitions: A Case of Lawlessness and State Repression



A joint investigation team from CPI(ML) Liberation, AICCTU, AISA, AIPWA, and AILAJ visited Turkman Gate, Delhi, on 11 January to investigate the large-scale arrests following the demolitions in the area. The demolitions were carried out under the cover of darkness in the early morning hours of 7 January 2026, with a heavy police presence accompanying the officials. Following is the report of the fact-finding team:

The Turkman gate demolition is part of the larger project of the BJP ruling regime's "Bulldozer Raj" prevalent across the country from Uttar Pradesh to Different parts of Delhi. What is portrayed as a standard administrative procedure, constitutes a pattern of "Managed" "planned" State Repression on particular communities. The fact finding team interacted with multiple locals, legal counsel, affected families and elderly community members. The interaction points out to a desperate attempt of judicial supervision and a total

abandonment of the due process, attack on constitutional rights and breach of the Juvenile Justice act.

Based on testimony from source 1 (an elderly community member), the Faiz-E-Elahi Masjid complex consisted of three distinct sections- Worship Area, General Usage/Utility space and Tuition & Social Area.

He pointed out - "Maine apne chote se dekha hai yahan par hamare mazhab ke kayi program saal bhar hote rhe hain. Yahan saalo se to dono dharm ke log kaam bhi karte aa rhe hain, ye masla zamin ka hai hi nahi, warna court ne 3 din ka waqt diya tha us par chalna chahiye tha, usi din raat ko 2 baje pahuch gaye ye log(police) todne." [I have seen since my childhood that many programs of our religion keep taking place here throughout the year. For years, people of both religions have been working together here. This issue is not about land at all; otherwise, the court had given three days' time, and that should have been followed. Instead, these

people (the police) arrived at 2 a.m. that very night to demolish it.]

By using severe intimidation tactics, the state sought to crush local opposition before it could reach the courts. The timing of the demolition carried out at 2:00 AM was a calculated move "so that the court could not grant a stay," effectively rendering judicial oversight. Furthermore, the transfer of the Commissioner of the area to J&K just two days prior is characterized by residents as a tactical action to hide accountability. After visiting the site, we saw the part of the mosque which comprised facilities like the Tuition Centre, Shadi Hall, and Dawa Khana (Clinic) had been demolished.

In a horrifying violation of several rights granted by constitution the fact finding found that the police did not just assist with the demolition, but also orchestrated a state of fear, intimidation and carried out various detentions and arrests, including those of minors. They targeted the home of Salim(changed name) and forcibly detained his two sisters aged 15 and 11 years, and kept them at Turkman gate police station for nearly two hours, the mother of the two despite several appeals was not allowed to accompany them to the PS. Shifa narrates, "Sawal puchne le gaye humko, 1 female police thi 3 male officer, aur vo humko yehi keh rhe they baar baar ki apne bhai ko bulao, vo aajayega to tum dono ko chhod denge." [they took us away saying they wanted to ask questions. There was one female police officer and three male officers, and they kept repeatedly telling us to call our brother. They said that if he came, they would release both of us.]

The police on them failing to bring their brother to the PS, left them but confiscated their phone, which has not been returned to them till now. This was not an isolated incident but a broader Capture by

Proxy program was executed. By picking up elderly parents and sisters to use as bait, the police forced young men to buy back the freedom of their loved ones. This strategy allowed the state to meet a number of "rioter" arrests, creating a false narrative of guilt by coercing surrenders through emotional and psychological warfare.

Internal Subversion of the WAQF board

A key finding of this report is the evidence that suggests deliberate attempt to weaken the WAQF board from within, locals state that Ashwini Kumar who serves as the commissioner is also the administrator of the WAQF board. Because of this despite a designated management committee, the board neglected to submit petition against the demolition or did not provide adequate representation and complied with the demolitions.

The Turkman Gate demolitions are yet again another attempt targeting a Muslim majority area, driven by the politics of communal hatred and attempt to further frame and vilify the community through false narratives. By conducting demolitions at 2 AM, disregarding court orders, using minors as leverage and framing young men by capturing their family members, the state agenda stands clear, to treat them as second-class citizens.

We demand -

- Immediate inquiry into the breach of juvenile justice procedures and the illegal arrests and detentions.
- Immediate release of all arrested individuals.
- Restoration of the WAQF autonomy.
- Full compensation for the destroyed facilities (tuition centre, clinic and the community hall). ■

CPIML Fact-finding Team Visits House of Murdered Migrant Worker in Murshidabad

On 29 December, a delegation of the CPI(ML) Liberation WB State Committee visited the house of Jewel Rana Sheikh in Chakbahadurpur village under Suti police station in Murshidabad district. Jewel lost his life after being subjected to Hindutva violence in Sambalpur, Odisha, on 24 December. Two others who were attacked in the same incident survived. Among them, Sanwar Hossain is currently admitted to Dhulian Hospital. The party delegation also visited the house of Anwar in Madhupur village under the same police station area and met his family. In both villages, the delegation expressed solidarity with the families and held detailed discussions with them and other villagers.

Jewel Rana Sheikh was a 19-year-old youth from a poor working-class family of Chakbahadurpur village. His father, Ziarul Haque, and three uncles live together in a small single-storey house. All of them are daily wage labourers. Jewel's mother, Nazima Bibi, is distraught and is currently under severe shock due to the brutal killing of her only son.

It is learnt that Jewel's father, Ziarul, was himself physically attacked about a year ago while working in Sambalpur, Odisha. Though he survived, the injuries severely reduced his capacity to work, and he is no longer able to go out for labour. Of his two daughters, one is married. Jewel had earlier worked in Kerala for some time and had gone to Odisha just five days before the tragic incident. Relatives said that Jewel was attacked on the head with iron rods with such force that his skull was cracked open during the assault.

In Madhupur village, Sanwar's mother and other women narrated the incident based on what they heard from Sanwar. Sanwar is 24 years old and had previously worked in Odisha as well. This time, he was staying together with Jewel and another worker.

In Sambalpur, a group of five people first surrounded Jewel outside their room and asked whether he was Hindu or Muslim. On hearing that he was Muslim, they branded him a Bangladeshi. When they demanded to see his Aadhaar card, Jewel went inside the room. The five followed him, saw Anwar and the others, branded them Bangladeshis as well, forced them to chant "Jai Shri Ram," and then assaulted all three with iron rods and wooden sticks. All three fell unconscious. Speaking about her son's condition, Sanwar's mother said that he suffered a deep injury at the back of his head and that both his hands and the left side of his body have gone numb. Sanwar's father is a cancer patient, and there is no other earning member in the family. After caring for the patient and managing household responsibilities, Sanwar's mother is unable to earn even a small income by rolling bids.

Villagers from Jewel's village said that following this incident, many migrant workers have returned home from Odisha out of fear. They said that more than 75 per cent of the youth from Murshidabad migrate to other states for work and face attacks of varying degrees, particularly in BJP-ruled states. They also reported that another attack took place in Odisha just yesterday, on 28 December. Expressing anguish, villagers said that if there were employment opportunities in the village, no one would leave their parents and migrate for work. When the 100-days work scheme was functional, some employment was available, but it has been effectively shut down in recent years. They also said they were unaware that the central government had replaced the NREGA Act with a new bill.



(L) House of Jewel Rana Sheikh in Chakbahadurpur village. (R) A recent photograph of Jewel. (Photos: Liberation Multimedia)

Women in the village mainly work as bidi workers. They cut leaves, fill them with tobacco, roll and tie them with thread, and deliver bundles of 25 bidis to agents. The wage is ₹200 per thousand bidis. After managing household chores, women are able to earn only ₹70–80 per day.

The village has a primary school and a higher secondary school at some distance. However, even children from poor families are now being sent to private schools, as villagers feel that teaching does not take place properly in government schools. They said they are willing to pay fees even at the nursery and primary levels. They clarified that it is not that boys are preferred over girls; rather, girls tend to study longer as boys migrate for work once they grow older. Jewel Sheikh had studied up to Class V–VI.

Villagers stated that such violence, hatred, and organised attacks have increased significantly under BJP rule. Many said that speaking Bengali itself invites attacks, and identification as Muslim makes the violence more brutal. They pointed out that while the local BJP organised marches against attacks on minorities in Bangladesh, no one from the party came to express

even basic solidarity with Jewel's family.

On behalf of the state government, the district administration handed over a cheque of ₹2 lakh to Jewel's family. The police administration facilitated Sanwar's hospital admission. The families and villagers demanded strict punishment for the perpetrators. Several villagers also stated that the BJP government, which they allege promotes hatred and allows such crimes to go unpunished, must also be held accountable.

The delegation was led by Apurba Lahiri, State Committee member and Murshidabad district leader. Others included Ibrahim Sheikh, Malda district secretary; State Committee members Malay Tewari, Indrani Dutta, Madhurima Bakshi, and Ranjay Sengupta; Comrade Arun from party's Liberation magazine; and Murshidabad RYA leader Comrade Manbhola Chowdhury.

CPI(ML) Liberation, WB, organised a statewide Protest Day on 30 December, against this heinous attack arising from the BJP government's aggressive and dangerous campaign of identifying "foreigners." ■



An Endless Run Towards a New Horizon, Away from the Fetters of Caste

▲ RANJANI

Bison Kaalamadan, a recent Tamil film directed by young director Mari Selvaraj, is based on the life of national kabaddi player Manathi Ganesan. Set in the 1990s in Tuticorin district in Southern Tamil Nadu, infamous for fierce caste

clashes and gruesome violence, the sports genre film comes alive with the remarkable performance of Dhruv Vikram as the player. The film traces the struggles of Kittan, a poor boy from a lowered caste, in attaining the goal of becoming a kabaddi champion. In the course

of it, Kabaddi is transposed beyond a sport into a social commentary against all forms of hatred and enmity. It calls upon us to step back and rethink about all kinds of rivalries - family, caste, class, language and nation, for the irreparable damage it does to the human psyche and life.

The film foregrounds Kittan's desperate journey into the sport amidst bitter caste feuds, violent gang wars and intense fear and misery of marginalised community in the village hamlets. Kittan's Kabaddi, entangled with caste

order and violence, transforms into a game of survival, hope and honour for the downtrodden community. With honesty and conviction, Mari Selvaraj constructs a seamless narrative in which both hierarchical social structure and sports are inextricably linked.

The film begins with the final Kabaddi match of India versus Pakistan at the 1994 Asian Games in Japan. The coach pushes the captain and team into a do or die situation as the emotions in any match against Pakistan soar high. Sports too will be fought like war between the two nations. The coach strikes out Kittan, a junior player, from the match. Back home the entire hamlet of Kittan is eagerly watching Doordarshan telecast with high expectations on him to bring laurels to the land.

Between the gross denial and the nail-biting match, the broken Kittan goes down the memory lane - the beginnings, the hardships, the obstacles, the rejections and the final entry into the national team, unwinding the age-old oppression that keeps the entire community in constant fear, anxiety and subjugation and any attempt to seek opportunity, even in sports, is viewed with suspicion, disapproval and erasure.

As a school boy, Kittan is drawn to Kabaddi. He admires Sundaram, the captain of the village team and a relative and family rival. His humble father Velusamy discourages him as he fears Kittan's engagement with Kabaddi could kindle casteist backlash and will end his son's life. His elder sister Raji, who lost her lover, supports him in pursuing his passion. The school physical education teacher motivates Kittan and convinces his father.

The fearsome and reclusive teenager Kittan bears witness to the violence and bloodshed unleashed by Kandhasamy, the dominant caste

leader against the suppressed caste and their leader Pandiaraja. Later, in a horrible incident, while his father takes a goat for sacrifice to guard Kittan, the goat's urination in bus leads to a tussle, the goat is killed and in the ensuing fight Kittan fights back resulting in an enmity with the dominant caste that overshadows Kittan's future. Kittan is attacked repeatedly and his hands and sexual parts brutally assaulted.

Kittan doesn't cower down and surrender to adversity. In appreciation of his talent, Kandhasamy enrolls Kittan in his team with the assurance that caste and sport will not be mixed up. Yet, when Kandhasamy's men are attacked, his henchmen suspect Kittan and he is sent back home. Amidst severe stumbling blocks and struggles at every crossroad, Kittan's passion and mastery in the sport takes him forward and he leads the nation to victory in the Asian Games.

Through the liminal character of Kittan, the film captures how caste foreshadows people wherever they go and life will not hand out anything easily to the marginalised. And despite this, if someone ever makes it to the top, instead of recognizing their competence and hardwork, it will be discredited as a matter of quota or recommendation or sheer luck. The caste domination and supremacy thrives from invisibilising their contribution, their worth and their very existence.

The film subtly shows the adulation of dominant caste leaders through personifications like "The Gold of Our Community," "The Lion of Tuticorin" in posters, the tattooing of leaders names, adorning images of leaders in homes and creating wall writings hailing them. People sport daggers and swords as if in an undeclared war. Country bombs are hurled without any fear of law. The footsoldiers of the dominant

caste are on high guard over their supremacy and honour. This macabre of killings and counter-killings are unflinchingly laid before us.

In contrast, the protagonist is reticent and restrained for most part of the film, unable to make sense of the hatred and violence around. Kittan's fury, frenzy and frustration is channelized like bison and comes alive in the sports. Bison as the symbol of restraint, rage and strength is invoked in the film at various points and is used as a metaphor for the hero who will take the bull of oppression by horns.

Throughout the film there is the run, the deadly run, the mad run of the protagonist Kittan as if he were in the last leg of an athletic event, as if it were the last run of life. This is the literal and metaphorical run - a run without a starting line, finish line; a run for a destination unbeknown; but certainly, a run away from a place where hostility is the order of the day, where the spectre of violence numbs, mutes and murders reason and rationale, and where hatred and animosity waits at the door before one is even born. At every instance of humiliation, at every instance of rejection, the protagonist breaks into run. Running as an escape from this suffocation, running as a means of processing the unspeakable grief, running as chartering a path for freedom. The indefinite run signals the endless tide against the volcano of hate and insanity.

The power of the film is in its ability to hurt and question the thoughts, bias and actions of people in the unjust social order and feel the pain of the suppressed at every step of their life to survive and fight erasure. Behind Kittan's recognition lays the huge aspiration of the entire marginalised community to gain dignity and honour. ■

Sankalp Sabha at Bagodar on Mahendra Singh's 21st Martyrdom Anniversary

DN Bedia

A massive Sankalp Sabha was organised at Bagodar on January 16 to mark the 21st martyrdom anniversary of Comrade Mahendra Singh. The people's convention reverberated with the slogan "I am Mahendra Singh," reaffirming a collective resolve to carry forward his revolutionary legacy and to sharpen and strengthen the relentless struggle against injustice, exploitation and corporate-fascist attacks.

On this day, the state capital Ranchi, and districts including Bundu, Rahe, Mandu (Ramgarh), Gola, Giddi, Barkakana, Hazaribagh, Dhanbad, Latehar, Koderma, Jamtara, Deoghar, Lohardaga, Chatra, Garhwa, and throughout Jharkhand, people remembered their martyred, struggling comrade Comrade Mahendra Singh with renewed energy and resolve. The entire state transformed grief into determination while remembering its popular leader.

Before the Sankalp Sabha, at CPI(ML) office in Bagodar, floral tributes were paid to the statue of Mahendra Singh by the Party General Secretary, members of the Polit Bureau, Central Committee, State Committee, and other senior comrades. On the occasion of the third death anniversary of his wife, Shanti Devi, she was also remembered with respect.

At the Bagodar bus stand, lakhs of people gathered at Sabha. Addressing the gathering, CPI(ML) General Secretary Comrade Dipankar Bhattacharya recalled the circumstances of Comrade Mahendra Singh's assassination. "The killers had asked, 'Who is Mahendra Singh?' Comrade Mahendra Singh identified himself

and wondered what had brought them to him, only to be met with the assassin's bullets," he said. It was January 16, 2005. Assembly elections were underway and Comrade Mahendra Singh, the legendary CPI(ML) Liberation MLA from Bagodar, had just filed his nomination to seek a renewed mandate from his beloved people.

Twenty-one years later, after a narrow BJP victory in Bagodar in the November 2024 Assembly elections, the BJP MLA has arrogantly repeated the same question asked by the assassins: "Who is Mahendra Singh?" Dipankar Bhattacharya said that on the 21st martyrdom anniversary, the people of Bagodar have sent out a thunderous reply, asserting who their beloved leader was and continues to be in the hearts and struggles of the people.

He said that the ruling BJP is dividing the country on the basis of hatred and violence. If someone speaks Bengali, BJP leaders label them as "Bangladeshi infiltrators" and insult citizens of their own country. He also noted that the Modi government is dismantling MGNREGA to push workers onto the streets and destroy their wages. MGNREGA was meant to prevent workers from migrating to other states, but by weakening this law, the government wants to turn workers into migrant labourers and snatch away their minimum means of income. By imposing four labour codes, the central government has adopted every method to strip organised and unorganised workers of job security.

Under the name of SIR, millions of votes were cut in Bihar, and now notices have been sent in Bengal to delete the names of three crore people from the voter list. Through SIR, the BJP government is directly attacking citizens' voting rights,

turning all government institutions into puppets and imposing oppressive laws.

He also condemned the Modi government for bowing before the United States, remaining silent against American imperialism. He said US imperialism seeks to seize Venezuela's resources, abducts leaders of sovereign nations, and yet Modi appears submissive before leaders like Trump.

Former CPI(ML) MLA from Bagodar and son of Comrade Mahendra Singh, Comrade Vinod Singh, said that the country is witnessing an all-out fascist attack on the rights and dignity of the people, while livelihoods are being handed over to corporate forces.

He said India has become a hub of crime—rape and murder incidents are rampant. Those who speak against corporate rule are jailed, while rapists are released on parole. Women are most unsafe under the Modi government. Incidents of rape occur daily in Bihar and Uttar Pradesh, while the government protects the accused in cases like Ankita (Uttarakhand). Courts are being misused to protect criminals. Education has been made expensive, jobs have vanished, youth are deliberately kept unemployed, hatred is being spread, voting rights are being snatched, labour rights destroyed, and MGNREGA dismantled—showing the utter failure of the Modi government.

In such times, he said, the revolutionary legacy of Comrade Mahendra Singh serves as a guiding light to strengthen resistance against these attacks and to ensure the defeat of corporate-fascist forces.

Resolutions Adopted at the Sankalp Sabha

1. The Sabha strongly condemns the Modi government's assault on rural India through the effective dismantling of the MGNREGA Act, which seeks to snatch away livelihoods of the rural poor and undermine rural

development. The repeal of labour laws and the imposition of the four labour codes have rendered the working people defenceless against corporate attacks and pushed them towards corporate servitude. The Sabha demands that the Modi government immediately roll back these measures and appeals to the people to force the government to retreat through mass struggles. The Sabha also demands that the Jharkhand Assembly pass a resolution on this issue.

2. The Sabha strongly condemns the killing of tribal leader Edal Padha Sona Munda of Khunti, who was at the forefront of struggles to protect jal, jungle and zameen, and extends full support to the bandh called by Adivasi organisations against the murder. The Sabha demands that the Hemant government provide employment to the dependents of the deceased, develop the school run by him, ensure the immediate arrest of the killers and secure exemplary punishment.
3. The Sabha condemns the mob lynching of Pappu Ansari in Godda and demands speedy punishment for the guilty. It further demands strict action against communal forces that spread tension, and calls for firm action against gangs involved in violence and extortion in the name of cow protection.
4. The Sabha expresses deep concern over the expanding interference of the Adani group in the state and declares solidarity with the acquisition-resistance movement in Barkagaon-Gondalpur. The Sabha demands that all agreements entered into with Adani be cancelled. In Godda, people displaced by Adani are still struggling for employment and proper compensation. The state government must intervene immediately to resolve their issues.
5. The recent statement of the Chief Election Commissioner, Gyanesh Kumar, that "2003 is the basis for determining citizenship" is highly misleading and aimed at influencing the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) of electoral rolls to suit the political interests of the BJP. Using SIR as a tool to disenfranchise Adivasis, Dalits, minorities and migrant workers is a constitutional crime.
6. Rapid privatisation of public resources and public sector undertakings has pushed the environment to the brink of destruction and created acute shortages of air and water in both urban and rural areas. This process has virtually eliminated planning and employment opportunities. The Sabha demands an immediate halt to privatisation. Contract and outsourced workers in all collieries and other undertakings must be immediately provided wages fixed by the HTC along with all statutory benefits.
7. In the name of land business, the menace of land mafias and related crimes has increased sharply across urban and rural Jharkhand, with land officials acting in collusion. The land bank must be scrapped and all land recorded in it released and returned to gram sabhas. Consent of gram sabhas must be made mandatory for any future land acquisition.
8. The Sabha demands enhancement of OBC and Dalit reservation as earlier passed by the Jharkhand Assembly. An appropriate domicile policy must be implemented in the state and strictly enforced in Group C and Group D recruitments. The policy of domicile must also be strictly followed in outsourcing and other private appointments.
9. To promote agricultural development in Jharkhand, farmers must be provided special subsidies on diesel and electricity. Irrigation systems must be strengthened and old canal schemes updated and made functional.
10. The Sabha demands that the state government prevent the infiltration of communal elements into educational campuses and institutions. Irregularities in scholarship distribution must be stopped, and students' participation and positive role in campuses must be ensured by conducting students' union elections on a regular basis.

The Sankalp Sabha also celebrated the safe return of five migrant workers from Dondlo and Mundro villages who had been kidnapped in Niger on April 25, 2025 and remained in captivity for over eight months. Phaljit Mahato, Uttam Mahato, Chandrika Mahato, Raju Mahato and Sanjay Mahato were working as skilled transmission line workers for Kalpataru Projects International Limited, one of India's largest engineering and construction companies with global operations, when they were abducted by a rebel group.

Neither the company, a major donor to the BJP, nor the Modi government or the Jharkhand BJP leadership showed any seriousness in securing the release of the kidnapped workers. In sharp contrast, the Giridih district unit of CPI(ML) Liberation launched a sustained mass campaign for their release. CPI(ML) MLAs Arup Chatterjee and Chandradev Mahato, and MPs Rajaram Singh and Sudama Prasad, raised the issue repeatedly in the Assembly and Parliament and pursued the matter with the concerned ministries in Ranchi and Delhi.

For eight months, the kidnapped workers remained on the move under the custody of the rebel group, maintaining morale despite extreme uncertainty and isolation. The sustained pressure generated by the people's campaign eventually forced the company to negotiate their release. The workers returned home a few days ago after eight months of bondage. ■



Sankalp Sabha at Bagodar on Mahendra Singh's 21st Martyrdom Anniversary.

TRIBUTE

Comrade Madhu Mishra

Comrade Madhu Mishra, former member of the Central Control Commission of CPI(ML), leader of AIPWA and Managing Editor of Aadi Zameen magazine, passed away on January 18. A committed revolutionary and organiser, her passing is a deep loss to the Party, the women's movement and the broader progressive movement. It may be recalled that Comrade Madhu Mishra's father, Comrade Surendra Prasad Singh, was an IPF leader from Nawada district who attained martyrdom.

CPI(ML) pays heartfelt tributes to Comrade Madhu Mishra and resolves to carry forward her struggles. Red salute to Comrade Madhu Mishra.



Comrade Anadi Behera

Comrade Anadi Behera, a leader of Chilika fisherman's movement and an organiser of CPI(ML) Liberation in Odisha passed away on January 13 at the age of 73. He was a pillar of the Chilika Fishermen movement, fearlessly leading the fight against the exploitation of the fishing community. From the Sorana firing incident on 29 May 1999 to his lifelong commitment to CPI(ML) Liberation, he remained a steadfast defender of the marginalized and the working class.

Red Salute to Comrade Anadi Behera.



Comrade Rama Rao Mutuka

We mourn the passing of Comrade Rama Rao Mutuka on January 11, 2026, after a long struggle for his health at Berhampur Medical College, Odisha. From his early days in the IPF, he was a fighter for the rights of the tribal communities of Rayagada. Comrade Rama Rao dedicated himself to grassroots struggles and the cause of the marginalized as a member of CPI(ML) Liberation through out his life.

Red Salute Comrade Rama Rao Mutuka.



Chennai Sanitation Workers' Struggle. After more than 160 days of relentless struggle, on January 12 the sanitation workers of Chennai, organised under UUI-LTUC-AICCTU, concluded their fight on a positive note with the DMK government agreeing to their core demands. During the determined struggle, CPIML MP Raja Ram Singh raised the issue with Chief Minister M.K. Stalin. CPIML Liberation congratulates the sanitation workers, especially the women workers, for sustaining their struggle and upholding their spirit in the face of all odds.



Statewide protest by ASHA workers in Uttar Pradesh. The strike began on 15 December 2025, demanding government employee status and fair, dignified wages for ASHA workers.

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

liberation@cpiml.org

www.liberation.org.in

PH.: 91-11-42785864