

Proletarian Era

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Acquire class angularity, understand class politics Comrade Provash Ghosh at the huge rally on 5 August in Kolkata



They braved all odds, overcame all hurdles—sweltering heat, torrential rain, water-logging—commencement of harvesting season—to throng in thousands at Rani Rashmoni Road, Kolkata, venue of 48th Memorial Day meeting of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, Founder General Secretary of the SUCI(C) and an outstanding Marxist thinker of the era, who taught them how to lead an honourable life by taking active part in the revolutionary struggle of the masses premised on higher proletarian culture, ethics and morality, to bring about a

revolutionary transformation of the society. So before the scheduled time of the meeting, there was overflowing crowd bearing testimony of how Comrade Shibdas Ghosh's invaluable teachings have imbued them in such a way that they have voluntarily come forward to shoulder the task history has enjoined them. True that the day of 5 August is a day of profound grief to all those dedicated to the cause of revolution because it was the day Comrade Shibdas Ghosh who unleashed a historic arduous struggle for over thirty years to build up SUCI(C) as

the genuine communist party on the Indian soil and in the process exhausted himself so much that he passed away prematurely. But at the same time, this day demands of all to renew their pledge to remain unflinching in their resolve to prove themselves as worthy students of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, spread out Party organization throughout the length and breadth of the country, holding aloft the banner of revolutionary leftism against all reactionary forces and pseudo-Marxists, and reach out to maximum number of toiling people with

Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Thought.

Just one year ago, on this very day, a mammoth rally held at Brigade Parade Ground, Kolkata, on the occasion of the conclusion of Birth Centenary of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh (Comrade Ghosh's birthday is also 5 August). That rally organized in full-fledged rainy season proved how deeply and widely Comrade Shibdas Ghosh and the SUCI(C) have been able to rouse the masses. That rally, biggest in terms of gathering and steeled in revolutionary spirit, created an indelible mark on

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Comrade Provash Ghosh on Bangladesh situation

(As said in the mass meeting on 5 August in Kolkata)

The student community of Bangladesh has been conducting a historic movement. Facing batons, bullets and bayonets day after day, sacrificing hundreds of lives, they are struggling to overthrow the despotic government there. A massive mass uprising is taking place in Bangladesh, millions of people are still on the streets today, 5 August, 2024. A little while ago the news came that the Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina had been forced to resign bowing down to the demand of the people. This news has reached here. The Bangladesh military wanted to take over power. But the people are saying that they want an interim government. Now the discussion over this is going on. I would like to remind you that those who are canvassing that the Islamic fundamentalist force Jamaat, or another corrupt bourgeois party BNP are behind this historic movement, are not correct. It is a false propaganda. Singing Rabindra Sangeet, Nazrul Geeti, Dwijendralal's song, songs of victory, Mohini Chowdhury's

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A fruitless exercise in attempt to veil pro-monopolist pro-rich policy directives

One columnist has rightly compared the budget speech 2024 of Union Finance Minister (FM) with a character of the acclaimed movie, *The French Dispatch*, where the character says of another, "We have to accept it. His need to fail is more powerful than our strongest desires to help him succeed. I give up." Nothing could be more apt in describing this year's budget. The FM cosmetically reiterated existing schemes and policies, peppered them with high-sounding numbers

and made this sound sweet to the audience comprising the youth, farmers, women, middle class, and poor—all sections that the BJP is trying

Budget 2024-25

to win back to recover from electoral losses. But though PM Modi contended that it would empower the poor and the marginalized, it would clearly not do any such thing. All basic problems the people at large are grappling with, have either been skirted or alluded to in a most

perfunctory manner with the solutions prescribed based on nothing more than ritualistic hollow optimism. The basic economic approach of the

BJP government—of relying on big corporate players, and within those a few

favoured industrial tycoons, to come out in rescue of a tumbling economy—also remains unchanged. This means continuing to subsidize large corporates in various ways and giving them tax breaks while cutting essential social spending that deeply

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Budget

All basic problems people are reeling under have been skirted

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affects the lives of people.

Budget speech-abounds in jugglery

The 90 minute long Budget speech, which began by rejoicing over the third term of the ruling party, claimed without any material substantiation that "India's economic growth continues to be the shining exception and will remain so in the years ahead." The FM boasted that "This budget details some of the specific actions to be initiated in the current year towards fulfilment of these priorities with potential for transformative changes. The budget also covers some of the previously made announcements with an intent to strengthen them and step up their implementation for expediting our journey towards the goal of *Viksit Bharat (Developed India)*". Flip over the pages of previous budgets and the same refrain would be found! The FM has not cared to give any report over implementation of her previously announced economic and fiscal measures stated to be aimed at "inclusive growth". The reason is simple. Growth has been exclusive for a few monopoly houses backing the ruling dispensation while the toiling millions have been finding life being dragged into greater misery with every passing day. Yet, the FM felt no qualm in repeating the stereotyped old phrase—"Our government is committed to all-round, all-pervasive and all-inclusive development of people, particularly, farmers, youth, women and poor. For achieving social justice comprehensively, the saturation approach of covering all eligible people through various programmes including those for education and health will be adopted to empower them by improving their capabilities." Let us dissect a few areas of budget proposals to see how far are they poised to translate the promised "social justice" into reality. Incidentally, it warrants to be pointed out that in the text of the budget speech, one hardly finds any mention of important figures or concrete action plans. Those have all been given, though not in a comprehensive manner, in the annexures which are not in public domain. So, for scrutiny of figures, one needs to refer to the annexures and read between the lines. Further, in their budget-crafting the BJP regime has been resorting to cynically undermine the sanctity of budgetary numbers. The trick was simply to promise a large-sounding number as an outlay, quietly slip it down in the revised figures presented the following year, and then tweak them even lower when the actuals arrived a couple of years later. Bereft of media attention or scrutiny, the

regime could bask immediately in the glow of a "massive" increase in outlay without delivering anything substantial at all. We will see that as we proceed.

Spiralling price line

But then the lurking reality cannot be wished away altogether. The BJP's losses in the recent Lok Sabha election were attributed to stagnant, even declining incomes, and widespread unemployment, both of which contributed greatly to a general fall in rural and urban consumption levels. A significant drop in household savings was seen as a crucial factor for poor growth indicators. As is evident, prices of essential commodities including basic food items are soaring sky high. In June last, food inflation crossed 9.5 percent. After ten years of BJP rule, people expect more than mere platitudes about strengthening supply chain and the actual, reining in the roaring hoarding, black marketing, various manipulations, and creation of artificial scarcity by an evil nexus of vested interest groups in order to counter price rise. But the government has preferred to maintain

an eerie silence in the matter. Food inflation hit 9.4%, with vegetable inflation reaching 29.3%. Analysis of household consumption survey shows that more than 80 percent people are spending less than Rs. 200 per day, while almost 34 percent people spend less than Rs. 100 per day. Even, as per TBI estimates, household savings have fallen to 47-year low as net financial savings fell to 5.1 percent of the GDP. RBI's latest consumer confidence survey (May 2024) shows growing pessimism amongst people. Reality is that Indian people are facing a generational income crisis. But the government is deriving satisfaction that core inflation (the change in the costs of goods and services, which, however, does not include those from the food and energy sectors. This measure of inflation excludes these items because their prices are much more volatile.) is at a record low of 3.1% in June. (ET 16-07-24) The FM could not but address these issues in her budget speech, but eventually ended up alleviating the hardships of none of the suffering sections that bore the brunt of poor policy making over the last decade.

Unemployment

Tasked with leading and advising on critical economic issues, the chief economic advisor in the

Economic Survey that was published a day before budget presentation, made a cruel joke about how much, or how little the government cares about what India's majority is struggling with. In this part fantasy, part mythology document, there is no jobs problem, there is no household distress and social media is the source of all evils. What should one then expect from the upcoming Union budget? The honest answer—and we hope to be proved wrong—would be very little. The Economic Survey perhaps banked on the RBI report issued on 8 July, seemingly doctored on the eve of the budget to disregard reality and all objective surveys to claim that "the total number of employed people as a ratio of the total population has increased to 44.2 per cent in FY24 from 34.7 per cent in FY18, with the workforce growing by 168 million during the period at 643.3 million. Also, the total employment was increased to 643.3 million in FY 24 from 596.7 million in FY 23 by adding 46.6 million". While acknowledging that 7.85 million non-farm jobs are needed annually till 2030, the Survey plays two tricks simultaneously. It disregards a decade of jobless growth, disregards the core challenge of unemployment as cited by several economists and instead cites Periodic Labour Force Survey data, making no reference to often cited flaws and reaches the conclusion that there is employment recovery in both urban and rural areas. The BJP government also said in a statement in June last that "India has generated more than 80 million employment opportunities between FY18 and FY22, in an average of over 20 million jobs a year, despite the Covid-19 pandemic during 2020-21." (Business Standard-08-06-24). When there is no problem to acknowledge, there is no problem to solve.

So, the FM had to resort to summarizing its goals in ten different phrases to generate the acronym "EMPLOYMENT", but it had relatively little in terms of real content. For example, a scheme would provide one-month's wage to all persons newly entering the workforce in all formal sectors. The direct benefit transfer of a month's salary in three installments to first time employees, as registered in the EPFO, will be up to Rs 15,000. But, preliminary data shows there was a 5 per cent drop in new subscribers to EPFO, down to 736,015, and a 10.5 per cent decline in the Employees' State Insurance Corporation, down to 1.16 million, in November 2023 when compared to the previous month.

Secondly, the FM has announced that the Model Skill Loan Scheme will be revised to facilitate loans up to Rs 7.5 lakh, with a guarantee from a government promoted fund. To help youth who are not eligible for any benefit under government schemes and policies, the

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Brutal rape and murder of a PGT doctor in Kolkata

The semi-nude body of a woman post-graduate trainee doctor was found inside the seminar hall of government-run R G Kar Medical College and Hospital in Kolkata on 9 August last. The incident came to light around 11.30am, when some group D men of the hospital found her lying on a stretcher. According to police, prima facie, she was sexually assaulted and murdered. A preliminary post-mortem of the victim has also confirmed that. Mystery shrouded the death of a the 31 year old as it is not clear how could any outsider climb upto the third floor eluding all security check mechanism and brutally killed her. This brutal murder in a front-ranking government hospital once again shows how unsafe are the women even at their place of work and the sordid state affairs in the healthcare system in West Bengal.

All India Democratic Students Organization (AIDSO) immediately registered vehement protest and organized demonstration at the hospital demanding immediate arrest of the culprits and mete out exemplary punishment to them, a judicial enquiry to this horrific crime, resignation of the Principal of the Medical College, fully securing the

safety of the doctors, nurses and health assistants and creation of a separate room for the female doctors and other staff on a war footing in all hospitals. AIDSO has also criticized the worthlessness of the hospital authorities in providing minimum safety to the working members and alleged that the authorities are trying to suppress truth by constituting a showy enquiry committee. AIDSO gave a call of strike in protest in all



medical and dental colleges as well as paramedical and nursing colleges on 10 August last which was a total success. Doctors, nurses and health activists of almost all medical colleges in the country have joined the movement including participation in strike. A unique programme "Women reclaim the Night" was successfully observed on 14 August in Kolkata where aggrieved women and men assembled at various spots throughout West Bengal and in some other states at 11.00 PM to voice protest.

5 August meeting

Steeled in revolutionary spirit, resplendent in revolutionary discipline

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the people of the entire West Bengal and even of other states and advanced the progress of the Party on a large scale. Even the mainstream media, who generally remain silent about big meetings or rallies organized by the SUCI(C), had no alternative but to cover the rally either live on electronic media or in print the next morning. They were taken aback as to how could a party with no MLA or MP, not a vote-bird, virtually blacklisted in the media and dependent entirely on public support and contributions, emerge so big with the passage of time bearing the torch of Marxism-Leninism-Shibdas Ghosh Thought. Public discussions went on for days. How did the SUCI(C) acquire such strength almost unnoticed? How was it possible to turn lush green Brigade Parade ground into a red Brigade worthy of the name? But they do not know that truth is invincible, truth is concrete and decisive. Those who pursue truth, scientific truth, cannot but emerge victorious in the long run. Moreover, truth has never been majority in an exploitative society. It always remains as minority but finally plays decisive role in revolutionary transformation of the society.

When the meeting commenced, the venue was fully packed with crowd spreading beyond the boundaries. When several thousands of chairs were filled up, those who came late sat on the street. The well-decorated dais bedecked with a huge

carried away away by the propaganda of the parliamentary party or parties backed by the ruling class. The General Election of 2024 has again proved his words. Though people were severely aggrieved against the ruling BJP, the capitalist class was successful in bringing back the party in power, albeit without absolute majority. The electioneering was marked by unabated use of foul languages, mud slinging, and slanders, without focussing on



Comrade Provash Ghosh offering Red salute at Shibpur Party Centre

engineering genocides throughout the world. War is a crying necessity of crisis-ridden capitalism-imperialism. That's why, Russian imperialism has

upon erasing the teachings of Rammohan, Vidyasagar, Jotiba Phule and other pioneers of the Indian Renaissance. They are tacitly eliminating renaissance literature and scientific theories from the school and college curricula thereby destroying the process of development of rational scientific bent of mind. He showed that not only the Sangh Parivar, but

also the Congress leaders and leaders of the other regional parties also peddled soft-Hindutva by visiting temples and fanning Hindu religious

Observance of 48th Memorial Day of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, the great leader of the proletariat, all over the country



Patna, Bihar

Inset, Comrade Satyawan, PB member addressing



Guwahati, Assam. Inset-Comrade Asit Bhattacharyya, senior PB member speaking

people's issues. This once again exposed the debased form of bourgeois politics. It has once again proved that no problem of the common people can be solved through election. Outbreak of powerful mass movement is the only way to achieve people's demands.

Comrade Provash Ghosh then referred to the historic movement of the students of Bangladesh and pointed out that as campaigned by the vested interest in India, this movement is not launched by any communal-fundamentalist forces or power-greedy bourgeois parties. It has been a spontaneous outbreak of accumulated grievances centering on

also launched a war on Ukraine which is backed by NATO members.

Turning to the national situation he said that the country is suffering from severe unemployment. Economic disparity has risen manifold. 40% property of the country has been accumulated in the hands of the capitalists who are only 1% of the population. Whereas, the poorest 50% have only 1% of the property. Recently, the country has witnessed the majestic marriage ceremony of Ambani's son where more than Rs 5000 crore were spent whereas the majority of the population is languishing in utter poverty. The parliamentary parties

sentiments before election which is starkly opposed to secular democratic values and conduct.

He referred to the rampant corruption of the TMC leaders and ministers in the state and said that this party is also purchasing votes offering money and doles to the poor people. They are following the path of the previous CPIM-led Left Front Government, by patronizing syndicates of land-dealers, promoters, and money swindlers.

Comrade Provash Ghosh said that the CPI(M) has maligned leftism during their 34 years of rule in West Bengal. They had unleashed brutal firing on the workers and peasants.



Theni, Tamil Nadu



Comrade Satyawan addressing at Pilani, Rajasthan



Agartala, Tripura

To suppress the anti-eviction movement at Nandigram, they even used the miscreants for gang-rape of the women. When the need of the hour is to build up a united powerful left

portrait of Comrade Shibdas Ghosh beckoned from afar. Garlanding and floral tributes were done by the party and frontal leaders. Comrade Chiraranjan Chakraborty, Central Committee member, presided over the meeting.

In his address as the main speaker, Comrade Provash Ghosh, our beloved General Secretary, said that as shown by Comrade Shibdas Ghosh, election is a bourgeois politics. During election, people are

the employment quota verdict.

Dealing with international issues, Comrade Provash Ghosh said that the bourgeois democracy is now totally degenerated. The USA which once raised the slogan of "By the people, For the people, Of the People", has now become the worst imperialist power and is



Comrade Gopal Kundu, veteran PB member, addressing at Ahmedabad, Gujarat

are serving the interests of the ruling capitalist class and have become their servants.

He said, the RSS-BJP are bent

movement against the exploitation and oppression of the ruling capitalist class and form a struggling left alternative to the bourgeois vote politics, they are tailing the Congress to bag a few seats.

He appealed to the honest workers of the party to judge on the anvil of logic, reason and acts whether the CPI(M) ever practised Marxism. He appealed to the people to view each and every development from class angularity and class

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Budget

Food, Fertilizer subsidies and allocation to Railways reduced

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FM has announced financial support for loans up to Rs 10 lakh for higher education in domestic institutions. So, before entering an uncertain job market, the youths would be entangled in debt cobweb with no definite means to come out of it.

Thirdly, the Government claims that it has unveiled spending of Rs 2-lakh crore (\$24 billion) for job creation and skilling for 4.1 crore youth in the next five years. This very term 'skilling' has become a convenient term for the government for several past years to justify unemployment on the pretext of non-availability of skilled hands. Earlier, it was told that National Skill Development Corporation (NSDC) and other programmes will train 30 crore people by 2024. However, despite partnering with various organizations and raising awareness, these programmes have not been as effective as envisioned. If skill was the problem, how is it that the ILO estimates 29 percent of India's young university graduates to be unemployed? Why are approximately 38% of the Indian Institute of Technology (IIT) graduates of 2024 yet to secure jobs, according to data obtained through Right to Information (RTI) applications? This figure marks the highest percentage in three years, with a steady increase from 19% in 2021 and 21% in 2022. (News Bytes-23-05-24)

And finally, as a panacea, the Budget has declared launch of "a comprehensive scheme for providing internship opportunities in 500 top companies to 1 crore youth in 5 years. They will gain exposure for 12 months to real-life business environment, varied professions and employment opportunities. An internship allowance of Rs 5,000 per month along with a one-time assistance of Rs 6,000 will be provided. Companies will be expected to bear the training cost and 10 per cent of the internship cost from their CSR (Corporate Social Responsibility) funds." On an average, every company will be taking on 20,000 interns. What a novelty! But if demand does not pick up and production capacity remains the same, which company will risk reducing profit margins by adding more workers? Secondly, what will happen to these interns after one year? Will they be absorbed or shown the door? No answer to that. In fact, this is an ornamental version of fixed term employment at a paltry wage. The company would, if it so desires, through this scheme get cheap labour for one year. This, in fact, is a further incentivisation of the corporates which have been enjoying substantial profits and slew of tax benefits and exemptions with minimal private capital expenditure (Capex) over the past decade. Further, at present, the best 500 companies are having 73 lakh employees on payroll. Of them, only 137

companies have more than 10,000 employees. Now, how can the companies which have less than 10,000 employees afford to absorb 20,000 interns even for a year? Absurdity par excellence! Many nationalized banks at present have been recruiting apprentices with a salary of Rs 15,000 per month for one year. Their future is uncertain, like the much-touted 'Agniveers' of the Indian army. The FM has, therefore, offered neatly crafted palliatives when the diagnosis called for a surgery. Let us reiterate once more that unemployment is now highest in last 45 years and nearly 83% of the jobless population are under the age of 34, according to the India Employment Report 2024 published by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Institute of Human Development (IHD). Under-employment (PhDs applying for peon or mortuary assistant jobs) and pseudo-employment (self-employed) are in galore. But the government is unfazed. What prohibits the filling up of over 9.64 lakh posts currently vacant in government departments? Why is regular work being performed through contract employees at dismal wages in government departments, as well as in banks? How is it that 93% of the workforce is in the unorganized sector with no job safety, guaranteed minimum wage or social security? None of these issues have been addressed in right earnest by the FM. Nor has she cared to explain why MGNREGS (Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme) budget has been kept stagnant at Rs 86,000 crores, the same as was spent last year meaning, 5 percent less in real terms, when this financial year 5.8 crore people have demanded jobs already and 25 lakh new persons have been included in the job cards for being eligible in getting job under MGNRES. It is reported that many applicants are being deliberately kept outside the scheme so that demand could be shown as diminishing and hence lower allocation of funds could be justified. What a novel way of depriving the poor and needy of their legitimate right to work for eking out a bare living.

Education and healthcare

Education and healthcare are the two most important social welfare areas and the responsibility of making services under these two areas is vested with a government which calls itself democratic, civilized and concerned about people's causes. Universal education means state-funded education. But the BJP government following the directives of globalization-liberalization are on a spree to hand over both the sectors to private operators for selling them as profit maximizing service products. The desired secular-scientific-democratic-universal education under the aegis of the government has long been abolished and the National Education Policy 2020 (NEP 20) is the final nail in the coffin. There is virtually no or negligible direct support to

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5 August meeting

We have to save our children and young from degraded bourgeois culture

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politics. Ours is a class-divided society. So, every political party in our country is either a bourgeois party or a working-class party. So, the working-class people have to recognize which is the genuine working-class party.

political parties, also came to listen to him. One of them said that it was not a meeting, it was a political class. A passer-by stopped at the roadside to hear his words. He could not go away till the end of the meeting. "Just unthinkable", he commented. "The SUCI(C) leaders do not use foul



Comrade Saumen Basu, PB member, at Indore, MP

Comrade Provash Ghosh pointed out that the existing capitalist system has become obsolete. It does not hesitate to push the world to the brink of ruination by endangering the environment to reap maximum profit. The decadent moribund capitalism is out to destroy ethics, culture, social values and finer

language like other political parties." A police officer on duty was standing nearby. He exclaimed: "This party has become so big!" His fellow policemen said, "Don't forget. They dared to hold a Brigade Rally last year." A veteran came from the South 24 Parganas district. He was telling his grandson, "Perhaps I will not be



Comrade Chandidas Bhattacharjee, PB member (third from left), at Angamaly, Kerala

feelings. The only way to get rid of it is to overthrow this exploitative system through accomplishment of socialist revolution. For that, we have to build up the mass struggle committees in every locality, in every area. We have to save our children and young from the

able to attend this rally next year. But you must come. It's the only hope!"

The sun was setting. But the red flags were fluttering. They were beckoning to march ahead. The meeting ended with The Internationale. The crowd was returning. They know that it is not



Cuttack, Odisha

deadly attack of the degraded bourgeois culture.

People listened to the speech of Comrade Provash Ghosh with rapt attention. Many supporters or workers from other

dark everywhere; there's a party which is struggling imbued with Marxism-Leninism-Comrade Shibdas Ghosh Thought to usher in revolutionary transformation of the society.



Port Blair, Andamans

Death journey of Indian Railways

India has been witnessing several deadly train accidents and frequent derailments of goods and passenger trains after PM Modi-led BJP Government came to power. From 2014 to March 2023, under the BJP rule, the number of these mishaps has been 638, recording 781 deaths and 1,543 injuries as per official figures. According to the Ministry's data, as reported in the Business Standard, in the past five years there have been three train accidents on an average every month. The recent incidents include the Howrah-Mumbai Mail accident near Barabamboo in Jharkhand, the Kanchenjunga Express accident near Rangapani (Jalpaiguri) in West Bengal, and a train accident near Gonda in Uttar Pradesh. In last six weeks, 17 lives were lost and hundreds injured in train disasters. The heart-breaking Balesore (Odisha) rail tragedy that occurred last year causing over 300 deaths, still haunts our memory. An average of 56 passengers died in rail accidents per year between 2015 and 2022.

In the past five years, Indian Railways has been in the news for Prime Minister Modi flagging off high-speed Vande Bharat express trains with much fanfare. Since 2019, he has flagged off 50 such trains, with ten of them being launched on a single day in the run-up to the recent general elections. He also boasted of introducing several high speed trains which are enormously expensive and hence beyond the reach of common passengers. However, the PM has been conspicuously silent when massive train accidents repeatedly thrust Indian Railways into the headlines. The Kanchenjunga Express accident occurred almost exactly a year after the horrific Balesore train tragedy. Investigations after every accident have repeatedly raised red flags about rail safety. They have highlighted the need for modernizing the signaling system and upgrading railway safety measures. Railway Minister Aswani Vaishnav has often made big claims about the Railways installing state-of-the-art, anti-collision "Kavach" devices. However, the reality is that to date, only about 1 percent of the total rail track length of over 1,04,000 kilometers has been covered.

A travesty of truth

The string of accidents has raised the demand of the resignation of Union Railway Minister Ashwini Vaishnav. Hence, the BJP camp is trying to defend their government arguing that the number of train accidents has declined during the period of BJP rule compared to what happened during the tenure of erstwhile Congress rule. It's true that the former Congress governments were also callous and utterly flawed in this respect. From 2004 to 2014, a total of 1,711 railway accidents happened. In terms of casualties, the Congress regime saw 2,453 lives lost

and 4,486 injuries in train accidents, while the BJP period recorded 781 deaths and 1,543 injuries.

While these numbers are true, this is only half the story. The number of consequential train accidents has been declining continuously since 2003-04 except for 2014-15 when the number of accidents increased sharply compared to the previous year. Hence, it will be a travesty of truth to claim that the Indian Railways is performing better in the period of the BJP. When more advanced technology is available today, the number of accidents could be reduced to almost zero. But, accidents are occurring unabated.

Meager budget allocation for safety measures

Investigations after every accident have repeatedly raised red flags about rail safety. They have highlighted the need for modernizing the signaling system and upgrading railway safety measures. But till date, 98% of railway tracks are unsafe. The 2023-2024 budget earmarked Rs. 710 crore for the system. In the interim budget for fiscal 2025, Rs. 560 crore was allocated. But, a back-of-the-envelope calculation shows that the total fund requirement for 100 percent roll out of KAVACH across the Indian Railway network comes to about Rs. 42,500 crores without taking escalation factor and other inputs. On the other hand, the most uncalled for Mumbai-Ahmedabad bullet train project has a total budget of Rs. 1,08,000 crore. Already, Rs. 21,000 crore has been allocated for this project in the Union Budget - 2024. Now, there is one important question: Which is more important for the country? A luxurious "bullet train" for a handful of elites or safe travel of ordinary passengers?

Massive manpower shortage in Railways

Whenever an accident occurs, scapegoats are sought to be found in cabin crew, station master, points-men or loco-pilots. But the fact conveniently suppressed is that of acute shortage of manpower particularly in safety sector. About 1.5 lakh positions responsible for railway "safety" are lying vacant, the BJP government said in an RTI response earlier this year. In total, the Railways empanelled 3,02,550 candidates in five years till 2023. But no one knows the actual number of the employed. In fact, many of the important functions including track inspection etc. are now outsourced and hence there is hardly any supervision of work being done by these contracted agencies. All the government, whether it was Congress governments, Vajpayee-led first NDA government, two UPA governments, or the present BJP-led governments—all have retrenched railway employees on a massive number when the Indian Railways has been continuously expanded.

As a result, the Loco Pilots (LP) and Assistant Loco Pilots (ALP) are over-worked. According to multiple safety committee recommendations, LPs should not be asked to do more than two consecutive night duties, but the Railway officials have been blatantly ignoring these recommendations and forcing the LPs and ALPs to work beyond the stipulated hours. This deprives them of the needed rest and can also cause accidents as happened. For instance, in the South East Central Railway, the duty hours of the LPs who were on duty for more than 12 hours in March, April and the first half of May this year, exceeded by 35.99%, 34.53% and 33.26% respectively. The goods LP involved in the Kanchenjunga accident had already completed three consecutive night duties and when taking a rest on the fourth night, he had been rudely woken up at 2 am and asked to take charge of the goods train. He resisted and finally he came to take the train at 6.30 am. On 3 June last, in Ambala, Punjab, both the LP and ALP of a goods train fell into micro-sleep and collided with another goods train. This LP was doing his 4th consecutive night duty. He had already been forced to do 12 night duties in the month. High railway officials put extreme pressure on safety category workers, which is another major reason for the increasing number of railway accidents. The other factors such as track defects and inadequate maintenance are also significant factors.

Is deliberate negligence a step towards privatization?

The spate of lethal accidents shows that contrary to what the government claims, the railway operation is full of snags, subversion of working norms, abject callousness on ensuring passenger safety, poor maintenance of safety devices, overloading of tracks because of whimsical increase in the number of trains and severe shortage of manpower. Are precious resources being squandered on high-speed trains like Bullet Trains, Vande Bharat, or Tejas Express that are ill-suited for the specific conditions of India? Why pursue the 'grandiose' idea of running Bullet trains when the core issue of caring for people's lives is being glossed over? Train is a premier transport service and passengers' life is precious. But the bourgeois governments irrespective of hues are criminally negligent on both counts.

The Modi-led BJP Government is drastically curtailing the conveniences of the common passengers. The number of sleeper coaches in most of the trains has been reduced. Moreover, many seats of the remaining sleeper coaches are reserved as dynamic fare seats (which are obviously more costly). The general compartments are packed with passengers so densely that they even cannot go to the toilets, which are also in shambles. Ordinary bogies and even the reserved compartments are in a dilapidated condition. Punctuality of running has been foregone long past. Even premier trains like Rajdhani Express run late even by 10-12 hours at times. But passengers have to pay full for their journey. Not only that. The number of general coaches has been drastically reduced in the express trains forcing people to travel packed to the utmost like herds of animals huddled together. During Corona pandemic, fares of passenger—as well as express trains, were hiked exorbitantly. Passenger trains running beyond 150 kms were re-designated as express trains by doubling the fare but with no facility of an express train. Of late, the Railways have introduced a new "Premium Tatkal" ticketing system in which an AC 2-tier berth reservation from Bangalore to Kolkata costs Rs 10,000 as against normal fare of Rs 2900. And when accidents occur, the passengers die like cats and dogs as the general coaches are placed at the two ends of the train. Even their bodies are not found and the bereaved families do not get minimum compensation. Of late, even local trains are being run beyond scheduled time. So, a train journey in India has virtually turned into a nightmare,

But what is the secret plan behind such utter mismanagement? Like the Telecom department, the government is destined to privatize the Railways in a phased manner. Many stations, trains, routes, catering services, ticket-booking systems, and cleaning departments are already handed over to private enterprises. More the failure of the Railways, more expedient will be the process of privatization. The corporate sharks are greedily waiting for that. Should suffering people of the country accept this lying low or is there an urgent need of organized joint protest by the common passengers-railway workers which should gradually be so consolidated as to offer resistance to such sinister moves.

Jewish Community in USA protesting against Zionist Israel's genocide in Palestine under the banner "Not in our name".



Budget

BJP government once again exposes its pro-monopolist pro-rich policies

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public education. In the interim budget placed in February last, 61% of UGC budget (from Rs 6,409 crore in last year's revised estimate to Rs 2,500 crore) was reduced. This time, out of the total budget of over Rs 48.2 lakh crore, only Rs 1.25 lakh crore are allotted to education. This means as against hitherto advocated spending of 10% of central budget towards education, the BJP government has progressively reduced it to 2.59%. In place of desired 6% of GDP (which is also mentioned in the text of NEP 20, education budget is now merely 0.38% of current nominal GDP (Rs 326.4 lakh crores). This allocation falls far short of even arranging minimal infrastructure required for implementation of the prescripts of NEP 20. The PM-Poshan scheme, earlier known as the Mid Day Meal programme, has been allocated Rs 11,600 crore for 2023-24, down from the revised allocation of Rs 12,800 crore in 2022-23 and now inhumanly cut even further by Rs 213.5 crore this year. In other words, government education system is being gradually led to extinction and the sector is handed over to the private houses on a silver platter.

Similar is the case of the crucial healthcare sector, the perilous condition of which was evident during Covid 19 pandemic—shortage of bed, doctors, nurses, medical assistants, medicines and even oxygen cylinders. Towards healthcare, the FM has allotted this year Rs 87,565 crores boasting to have increased it by 12.56% and constituting 2.5% of GDP. But calculation shows that the allocation is only 1.81% of the entire budget and, when adjusted to inflation it is a reduction compared to last year. The allocation towards healthcare is less than in the Interim budget as well. Further, because spending towards healthcare was less by Rs 27,222 crores of the budgeted sum of Rs 86,175 crore (meaning a reduction of nearly 26%), it was actually 0.35% of the GDP. The government claims GDP has increased by 6.8%. In that case, why has such a lesser amount been provided for healthcare? In a country where 47% people face catastrophic expenses towards healthcare and most of the countrymen are deprived of basic medical needs, the very motive behind granting such a meagre amount is to gradually privatize the entire medical system. And we know, the profit-greedy private sector does not respond to stark realities of socio-economic necessities, but operates aiming at profit maximization.

Further, FM mentioned a corpus of Rs 1 lakh crore, that would be available on 'minimal or nil interest

rates' to "encourage" the private sector to invest in research and development in 'sunrise sectors.' It was not clear if this corpus was targeted at a specific Ministry or intended as a more broad-based encouragement to research. In the Union budget for 2021-22, the Centre had announced that it would set aside Rs 50,000 crore for National Research Foundation (NRF) over five years. However, the following year, it was allocated a budget of just Rs 1 lakh. Further in 2023-24, the Union budget allocated Rs 2,000 crore for

mere 3.15 per cent has been the share of agriculture and allied sectors. In 2023-24, expenditure under the head 'agriculture and allied activities' was Rs 1,40,533 crore while it had been allotted Rs 1,44,214 crore which after adjusting for inflation shows hardly any increase. The share of agriculture has declined during the past budgets from 5.44 per cent in the year 2019-20, to 5.08 per cent in 2020-21, 4.26 per cent in 2021-22 and 3.23 per cent in 2022-23, indicating how much the BJP government cares for the peasants. Under pressure of year-long historic peasants' movement, the government was forced to withdraw three Black Farm Laws. But it is yet to honour its

demanding for long. Even though the RBI has transferred Rs 2,10,874 crore as surplus to the union government for the accounting year 2023-24, the budget has cruelly neglected the long-pending demand of comprehensive loan waiver to farmers and workers, although as per official records 31 farmers are committing suicide daily in India. The budget also did not repeal GST on farm inputs including seeds, fertilizers, machineries, spare parts and tractors thus helping the farmers to reduce the cost of production. Rather, fertilizer subsidy fixed at Rs 164,000 crore is down 13.18 % from the revised estimate of last year and fuel subsidy estimated at Rs 11,925 crore, 2.57 % less than the revised estimate. Likewise, despite dip in international crude price and import of oil from Russia at a very low price, no reduction in retail fuel tariff has been done. So, it is an out and out anti-peasant budget.

Hunger and malnutrition

India has gone down to 111th position out of 125 countries in the Global Hunger Index-2023. About 60% of India's of nearly 130 crore people live on less than Rs 250 a day, the World Bank's median poverty line. And 21%, or more than 25 crores people, survive on less than Rs 166 a day. 20 crore Indians sleep on empty stomach and 25 lakhs die every year out of hunger. According to the recently released Household Consumption Expenditure Survey (HCES) only 56% of Indians reported eating three meals a day, while a study published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* found that India had the largest number of zero-food children (6.7 million or nearly 7 crore) among 92 countries surveyed. The NFHS-5 showed alarming levels of stunting (35%) and wasting (19%) among children and anaemia among women (57%) and children (67%).

Currently, around 81 crore people are provided 5 kgs of free rice or wheat every month under the National Food Security Act (NFSA) which has remained stagnant for more than a decade despite the increase in population, due to the failure of the Union government to conduct the decennial census after 2011. In April 2023, the Supreme Court directed that ration cards be issued to the eight crore migrants/unorganized sector workers who do not possess ration cards under NFSA and are registered on the National Database of Unorganized Sector workers. It was anticipated that the budget would reflect the resources required for additional allocation of food grains as directed by the Supreme Court. It is, therefore, shocking to note that the budget for food subsidy has been slashed by 3.3% when compared to the revised estimate of the previous year—from Rs 2.12 to 2.05 lakh crore. What this means in effect is that a part of the

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Haryana State SUCI(C) on wrestler Vinesh Phogat's disqualification in Olympics

Comrade Rajender Singh, Secretary, Haryana State Committee, SUCI (Communist) in course of a press statement issued on 08-08-24 said that wrestler Vinesh Phogat fought brilliantly for brightening the face of the country in the Paris Olympics and reached the final by defeating one after one the world famous wrestlers including the world champion.

But the Indian government appears to be against Vinesh. When the entire country was cheering Vinesh Phogat and she was on the way to be the gold medalist, PM Modi, who is always found to be amidst the star sportsmen to show how proud he is for them, did not speak a single word lauding Vinesh for her commendable performance. This inexplicable silence on the part of PM Modi and his government is indeed conspicuous. But when Vinesh was declared disqualified for being overweight, PM Modi immediately became vocal saying that this setback is hurting and he felt sad about it. The Union Sports Minister informed the parliament about the total expenses born by the government on Vinesh Phogat when the need has been to take up the disqualification issue with the Olympic apex body demanding to award the due silver medal to Vinesh and file a review petition to ascertain whether she was victim of any flawed decision. The Sports Minister should have rushed to Paris and find out whether the team of experts like the dietitians and other support staff defaulted in discharging their due role and responsibility and also probe into the allegations of conspiracy that Vinesh has raised.

It bears recall that Vinesh was not in the good books of the government because of her participation in the protest dharna at Jantar Mantar, Delhi, against Brij Bhushan Singh, the BJP MP and former President of Indian Wrestling Federation, who was accused of having molested the women wrestlers for long. Is that the reason the Indian government is not inclined to probe into the actual state of affairs?

SUCI (Communist) fervently appeals to the sports-loving people to honour Vinesh Phogat as the nation's pride in wrestling and strongly demand to give her opportunity to contest for the gold medal.

the NRF, which was then revised to Rs 258.60 crore.

Agriculture

What is ailing agriculture or the fulcrum of rural economy in our country? Answer will be exorbitant rise in agricultural inputs like fertilizers, seeds, pesticides etc., lack of proper irrigation facilities, high cost of diesel used for running shallow pumps, soaring power tariff, non-receipt of remunerative price by the peasants for their produce entailing distress sale, inability to repay loan and rising pauperization of the farming community. Have any of these problems found any solution in the budget in concrete terms? Again it is a big NO. Out of Rs 48.25 lakh crore estimate of the Union budget 2024-25, only Rs 1,51,851 crore or a

commitment of legally guaranteeing Maximum Support Price (MSP) of all the kharif and rabi crops at minimum 50% above the weighted cost of farming i.e. @C2+50 (which includes the input cost of capital, interest foregone on land, farming machinery owned by farmers and the rent on the land), no corporatization of agriculture, no MNC's in agricultural production and trade, no GST on agricultural inputs such as fertilizers, seeds, pesticides, electricity, irrigation, petroleum products, machineries and tractors. etc., among others. Cunningly, in June last, the government declared raising MSP for paddy by 5.35 per cent to Rs 2,300 per quintal for the 2024-25 which is far short of what the aggrieved farmers have been

Comrade Provash Ghosh on Bangladesh situation

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'Mukti Mandir Sopano Tale which had once inspired the youth of Bengal during the anti-British freedom movement, the struggling students of Bangladesh are marching in protest, breaking barricades, making supreme sacrifice and embracing martyrdom in thousands. The influence of these songs which once spread throughout India are now reverberating in the voice of this struggling students of Bangladesh, today. I am not aware whether you know or not, that there is a university hall in Cumilla, named after Sheikh Hasina. This student community has changed the name to Shanti-Suniti hall and dedicated it to the memory of Shanti and Suniti. Who were Shanti and Suniti? Most of the people of Bengal have forgotten their names. When these two girls were the students of class nine, they shot a tyrant British superintendent. They were sentenced life imprisonment for their revolutionary feat. As a legacy of the glorious tradition of undivided Bengal, the people of Bangladesh once built up a historic language movement in 1952. Later that movement gathered huge momentum and overthrew the erstwhile autocratic Pakistan Government, drove them away from the soil of former East Pakistan and established independent sovereign Bangladesh. Similar to autocratic Pakistani rulers, Sheikh Hasina's Government was also ruthlessly oppressing people, butchering thousands of students. So, the student community of Bangladesh raised demand of her resignation.

This movement is not against India, not against the people of India. Indian monopolists who are looting this country, are looting Bangladesh also as imperialist power. And in plundering Bangladesh, they are competing with Chinese imperialism who are also trying to exploit the market of Bangladesh. For this reason, the Indian government has not opened its mouth against Sheikh Hasina-led Awami League Government; rather supported it so far. So, the people of Bangladesh are against the Indian monopolists and big industrialists. Their wrath is against the exploitative Indian government.

(Interview to a social media portal on 7 August 2024)

As I said on 5 August, the demands of the students of Bangladesh are totally democratic and legitimate. I have also said that when lakhs of students were fighting against the autocratic Hasina regime, facing bullets, shedding blood and

embracing martyrdom, songs of Rabindranath, Nazrul, Dwijendralal and Mohini Chowdhury were on their lips. There was no Hindu-Muslim divide among them. Those who have laid down their lives belonged to both Muslim and Hindu communities. Hasina government sought to brutally and fascistically suppress the movement with bullets and batons, let loose armed stormtroopers of Chhatra League and police on the protesting students. When the students tried to resist the onslaught,

movement, Hasina was forced to tender resignation. This has been a historic victory. In this sub-continent, a similar upheaval of the masses had taken place in Sri Lanka a few months back. Now such an upsurge was seen in Bangladesh. No political leader had led this movement from the front. Nor was there any political party behind it. This has absolutely been a spontaneous outburst of accumulated grievances just like the way a spark causes a prairie fire. This is my observation. I shall read

police force in which many Awami League supporters got jobs, was instrumental in orchestrating brutal suppression of the movement. Now, there is no police, no military patrolling the streets. So, there is indeed a ploy behind it. There have been some incidents of loot, vandalism and attack on the religious shrines of the minorities. In some cases, the people belonging to minority community were also attacked. I do not know whether anyone was killed. There might be one or two isolated incidents. But the moment such things were noticed, the student community raised their voice of protest and came out on the streets.

I shall read out the statement of Asif Mahmood, one of the chief coordinator of the movement, from which you will understand how seriously they have been viewing such heinous activities of the defeated forces.

"By launching attacks on the Hindus, Buddhists and Christians, Awami League is trying to fuel the old nasty divisive politics. We call upon the students and masses to rise in vehement protest and foil the conspiracy, frustrate any attempt to attack any temple, pagoda or church.


Give a befitting reply to the vandals. We have been able to undo all the noxious moves of the Awami League and shall be successful in doing so this time as well. National unity is our strength."

This is their call. Responding to this call, thousands of students have taken the field to thwart any move to persecute the minorities. They are guarding various religious shrines. I myself have seen photos of Madrasa students guarding Hindu temples. The speech I have just read out is being broadcast through mike from every mosque. The Hindu localities are also being guarded to repeal any attack. So, there is no reason to believe that the fighting students have any link with the communal-fundamentalist forces. Rather they are staunchly opposed to such divisive incendiary forces. They have been mustering all their strength to keep such evil forces at bay.

I have already said that this movement is democratic and is voicing people's demands. Now there can be a possibility of opportunist forces taking advantage of the movement to buttress their own sectarian agenda of riding to power. BNP and Jammata are chief opponents of Awami League in power game. The left forces are very weak in Bangladesh and their role in this movement is also not anything worth mentioning. So, the

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Workers of the world, unite!



Socialist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist)
Central Executive Forum
22/1, Topkhana Road, Dhaka-1000 | Phone: 2223356373 | Website: spbm.org

Press release Date: 6 August, 2024

Congratulations to the students for this victory achieved in exchange of the bloodshades of hundreds of martyrs

An interim government should be formed based on the discussions with the student protesters and all democratic political forces

Comrade Masud Rana, co-ordinator of 'Socialist Party of Bangladesh (Marxist)', said in a statement, "The dictatorial government of Sheikh Hasina fell through the popular uprising of the students. Today, at the moment of this victory, we remember those hundreds of heroes with deep respect who were martyred in this movement. They will live in the hearts of students and liberterian people of this country for years.

The movement was started by students, and later in one definite point people from all walks of life joined it. The student movement turned into a mass uprising. Sheikh Hasina's downfall came through persecution and a series of sacrifices.

At this time, the future outline of the state is being discussed. Plan of an interim government has been announced. We clearly feel that no government can be formed without discussion with the student protesters and the democratic political forces. In the past, we have seen examples of government formation by compromising with various domestic and foreign powers. This is not acceptable. Doing so will devalue the self-sacrificing martyrs and make the movement fail.

This interim government will set up a special tribunal to trial the July Massacre, treat the injured at state expense, return all the missing bodies to their families, bring Sheikh Hasina back to face trial and undertake necessary state reforms.

The incidents of arson and looting that are happening in various places at this time are not being done by the protesters, but by the opportunists. Morally forced by unnumberable martyrs like Abu Sayeed, protesters have joined the movement to lay their lives as martyrs. They will resist any such activities. It is their responsibility to protect the homes and businesses of the minorities and common people. The leaders of the student movement have also given this call to them. We call on them to remain vigilant and provide security to the general public at this time."

the police opened fire indiscriminately. Consequent to that, the student community of Bangladesh became more aggrieved and enraged, burst into protest. Even the common masses also became vocal with protests. With every passing day, many fell to the bullets of Hasina government and the number of precious blooming lives so lost might be over a thousand. Nobody is in a position to say correctly how many lives were lost. This movement was not organized by any fundamentalist force. That is the reality. Under pressure of

out a statement of the protesting students. According to them, after beating retreat, Awami League and Chhatra League are hatching a conspiracy to malign the movement. My supposition is that the police had only opened fire but the military was not involved in it. The lower rank of the military had mounted immense pressure on their leadership for not opening fire on the protesters. But the



Muslim brothers guarding Hindu temple in Bangladesh

Comrade Provash Ghosh on Bangladesh situation

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leftists are not at this moment any formidable opposition to Awami League. If election takes place, these right-wing forces might come to power. I am confident that the way the students have fought against the anti-people fascist autocratic rule of the Awami League, they will in the same way rise against the anti-people communal politics of BNP-Jammat. I firmly believe that the students will also direct the blow against them once they find their rule as pro-capitalist class.

I am of the opinion that the conscious people of our country have no reason to be confused. There is another sinister motive by the vested interest of our country. Those who cultivate arch communal anti-Muslim doctrine of Hindutva are on the lookout for any opportunity which can be used as a plea to fan up communal fanaticism and anti-Muslim hatred. Some of the media houses are also party to this noxious design. The social

media also abounds in such nasty campaign. Neither these media houses nor the ill-motivated social media groups are really highlighting what is the stand of the struggling students of Bangladesh. They are not giving any coverage of how the Madrasa students are guarding Hindu temples or protecting the Hindu localities. Without bringing such positive features to the fore, these news quarters are only propagating what would suit the sinister interest of the ruling dispensation by creating an anti-Muslim communal environment in this country, destroying the unity of the toiling masses and establishing Hindu vote banks.

I appeal to the people of West Bengal as well as entire India not to be carried by such baseless motivated propaganda cunningly spread by the quarters of vested interest. I reiterate that in the movement of Bangladesh, not only Muslim but Hindu students, both male and female, have sacrificed their lives. Blood of both the



AIMSS Convention in Bhopal, MP, on 28-07-24 on growing crime against women, reckless spread of obscenity etc

communities have soaked the streets. There was no communal divide. Awami league is weaving this ploy with an ulterior motive by keeping police inactive so that such a glorious movement can be maligned, communal forces can gain strength in West Bengal and the Hindu communal forces who are trying to exploit the developments in Bangladesh to their advantage are helped. I once again fervently call upon the Indian people not to fall victim to this motivated campaign.

Budget

BJP unconcerned about growing inequality

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food subsidy has been shifted on to the shoulders of the peasant whose support prices have been kept inordinately low. But the budget did not fail in increasing most unproductive defence budget from Rs 5,93,538 crore to Rs 6,21,940.85 crore (approx. US \$75 Billion), the highest among the Ministries. Not just that. Despite a countrywide row over the most atrocious 'Agnipath' scheme (recruiting in army for four years at a low remuneration and then termination), allocation towards the scheme has been raised from Rs 3,800 crore in last year to Rs 5,207.28 crore.

Railways

PM Modi-led BJP government after assuming office in 2014 eliminated the practice of presenting a separate railway budget. Since then, financial and operational details of this highly important service are hardly made public. This year, the budget has not attempted even a token pretence of a reference to the Indian Railways. "Railways" figured just once in the entire speech. The capital outlay for the railways in 2024-25, has been increased to Rs 2.51 lakh crore - an increase of just about 5 per cent - not even enough to keep pace with inflation, as a result of which safety of train journey has been criminally compromised and there has been a spate of major railway accidents (44 on average) since full-year budget was moved by the FM in 23-24. The day PM Modi was taking credit of increasing outlay for Railways by 8 times in 10 years, a major train accident occurred.

In several major trunk

routes, tracks are handling capacities that are in excess of 140-150% of the rated capacity. The gap between declared outlay and actual spending last year amounted to more than Rs.31,000 crore. This has shown up in overused tracks and lack of basic safety equipment that are the prime causes of recent rail derailments and other accidents. Kavach has been waved as a magic wand that was to usher in an *amrit kaal* of sorts for railway safety, but there is nothing—absolutely nothing—in the budget for this grand pipe dream of a project. Things have become worse through the whimsical arrangement of priorities in the overall constrained environment. This relates to the emphasis placed on select marquee projects—most notably the Vande Bharat trains or the over-the-top station beautification projects at arbitrarily select locations that cannot be justified by any objective criteria. Maintenance of the rakes of normal trains, punctuality of running have all become things of the past despite several times hike in fare. In fact, train travel is now a horror, but the government is unfazed and making moves for privatization of this artery of the country.

Rising fiscal deficit and national debt

The budget says: "For the year 2024-25, the total receipts other than borrowings and the total expenditure are estimated at Rs 32.07 lakh crore and Rs 48.21 lakh crore respectively. The net tax receipts are estimated at Rs 25.83 lakh crore. The fiscal deficit is estimated at 4.9 per cent of GDP. The gross and net market

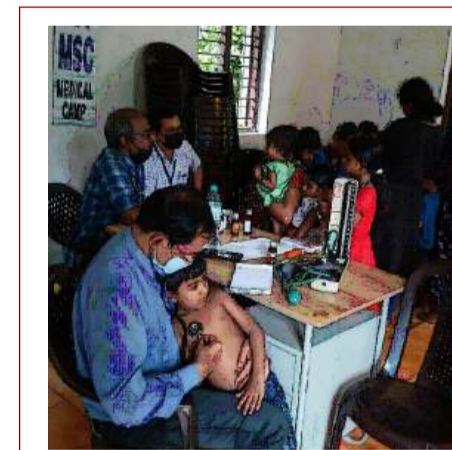
borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.01 lakh crore and Rs 11.63 lakh crore respectively." Notably, the corporate sector share in that tax collected has inched by only a fraction, just 24.45%. The share of government revenue from individual income tax at 19% is more than the 17% that corporates have contributed. The fiscal deficit estimate is stated to be slightly lowered to 4.9 per cent of GDP thanks to a bumper Rs 1.3 lakh crore in extra dividends from the Reserve Bank of India. Individual tax collection figure is projected at Rs 11,87,000.00. But the interest to be paid on past borrowing is Rs 11.6 lakh crore meaning income tax receipt will be exhausted to pay interest on the past borrowings. Yet the budget stipulates that "the gross and net market borrowings through dated securities during 2024-25 are estimated at Rs 14.01 lakh crore and Rs 11.63 lakh crore respectively". It means national debt which is now Rs 181,68,456.91 crore (81.68 percent of the GDP) will go up further. Why this deficit? Over the last five years, without compounding, the approximate aggregate revenue foregone is reportedly an astronomical Rs 8.7 lakh crore. In September 2019, the BJP government announced a cut in base corporate tax from 30% to 22% and for new manufacturing firms, incorporated after 1 October 2019, from 25% to 15%.

In this budget also, on the pretext of attracting more FDI, corporate tax rate on foreign companies has been brought down from 40 to 35 per cent. But there is no such relief to individual tax payers. Rather, there is an increased burden of both direct and indirect tax on them. So, inequality would rise further. When asked about the severe and growing income inequality, PM Modi said in a television interview, "shall I make everyone poor?", reflecting an abject lack of concern with widening income inequalities.

Conclusion

So, despite effusive praise and

drum-beating of the ruling dispensation and its servitors including pliant corporate media, the vision of the BJP government is proved once again to be brazenly pro-monopolists pro-rich and direction is towards squeezing even the last drop of blood of the suffering people. When one talks of growth, one wants that to be translated into more permanent remunerative jobs, higher income, better living conditions of common masses and diminishing inequality. If the top 1% grows at over 1000% per year and the rest struggle harder and harder to merely survive, that cannot be called 'Growth'. So-called growth story of 'Vibrant India' has seen that the share of wealth of top 1% of the population in the country constitutes 40% of the country's wealth while the toiling millions are pauperized with every passing day. This budget would make the scenario more horrific in the days to come and no pedantic discourse on economics would be able to suppress the reality. Suffering people need to imbibe this truth and rise up in movement against such a fruitless exercise in attempt to conceal reality euphemized as budget.



Volunteers of Medical Service Centre, an organization of Doctors, Nurses and Health activists, running a medical camp in landslide-ravaged Wayanad in Kerala.

Official Website of the SUCI(C): sucic.org

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF : PROVASH GHOSH

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