SPARK*

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నలభైఎడవ స్వాతంత్ర్యం



Spark*

UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS



Multitude of Adivasis at Paderu call for the restoration of tribal reservation

On July 17, at the headquarters of Alluri Sitarama Raju district, thousands of adivasis from across the Integrated Tribal development agency rallied demanding the issuance of a fresh government order to reinstate 100% reservation of agency jobs for scheduled tribes that were earlier provided under GO No.3, rigorous implementation of the 1/70 Act to protect tribal lands from alienation, and fulfilment of prior election promises made regarding rights and constitutional safeguards.



Protesters defy the felling of more than 3,000 trees to save Shivaliks

Citizens of Uttarakhand opposed the Bhaniyawala-Rishikesh highway widening project by echoing the chipko movement, hugging trees and halting chainsaws by physical blockades. They observed the monsoon festival of harela as a black-day of mourning, instead of planting new saplings. Protesters demanded a permanent halt on the tree felling plan and called for an alternative route to bypass the forest and protect wildlife. The public outcry has temporarily halted the tree felling.



Amazon data centres has sparked resistance in Thane

On July 18 mass protests erupted near housing societies and schools at the former Colorchem industrial area in Balkum, Thane opposing the Amazon data centre. These data centres were dreading the high electricity demand, noise pollution, and severe water shortage. Citizens demand the facility be shifted to a designated industrial zone altogether .



Karapur-Sarvan mega project protest

Residents of Karapur-Sarvan, Goa, protested, demanding the complete scrapping of the contentious mega-housing project over concerns about resource shortages and damage to the local ecology. On July 18, the movement reached its 100th day, prompting activists and villagers to stage demonstrations at Jantar Mantar in New Delhi.



Sanitation workers of Indore stage a hunger strike demanding employee benefits

Indore Municipal Corporation sanitation workers protested demanding permanent employment for long serving workers and implementation of a 12 point charter of demands. The police tried to thwart their march towards the cabinet minister's residence, but as the administration assured them that their formal memorandum would reach higher authorities and the minister after which on 12th of july the workers concluded their hunger strike.



Protest in Bengaluru demanding implementation of minimum wages

A protest organised by the Joint Committee of Trade Unions was held in Bengaluru on 30th July demanding immediate implementation of the revised minimum wages. Despite a mandate to revise minimum wages every 5 years, in Karnataka there has been no revision since 2017. while the long-overdue revision was approved by the labour department during the tenure of Siddaramaiah, there were proposals to review it under the newly appointed CM DK Shivakumar. All trade unions unanimously demanded immediate implementation of the revision.

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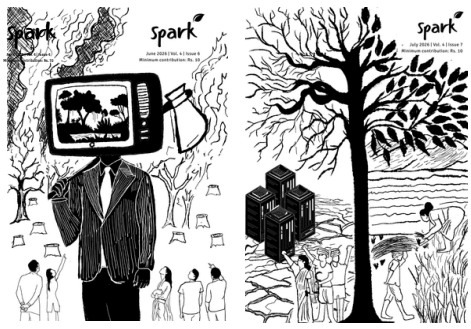
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Today, the state and the corporate-controlled media are constantly propagating fabricated news that suits their interests. This makes exposition of the truth a pressing task. Spark* aspires to provide an alternative perspective on issues that affect the masses. Please send your valuable opinion, comments, criticism, and articles to **spark_karnataka@protonmail.com** or call us at **8584056936**





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The People Will Sing!

Ganga

The astounding silence of a minister of a fascist government while students died by suicide was the moment many of the upper-middle classes got a shocking, unsettling thought: "is our democracy dying?". The question itself reveals a presumption that democracy was alive, until reality knocked on their own doors. For millions across this country, be it post-1947 or before, democracy or not, their existence has been about survival. The stifling of democratic rights too have been tightening with passing time.

This stranglehold is perhaps most visible in our educational institutions. Universities have historically been imagined as spaces of debate, dissent, and political activity. Today, they are being reshaped into factories producing employable and obedient subjects rather than politically and morally conscious individuals. Democratic student spaces are violently shrinking through suspensions, police complaints, restrictive codes of conduct, and weakened or absent student unions. Elections are indefinitely postponed, political organising is discouraged, and fear has become institutional policy. In Karnataka, student unions have been banned for more than three decades. Recently, the state budget included reviving union elections, but no concrete steps have been taken on ground.

Depoliticising campuses has become one of the most successful projects of authoritarian forces. Students are repeatedly told that politics does not belong in universities even though it is those very policies that determine their futures. A campus without politics is not neutral; it is merely a factory manufacturing those in favour of the status quo. The ruling classes have always feared the politically conscious masses because history has shown that when people organise, empires crumble.

Rampant fee hikes continue to make education inaccessible for millions. Placements grow increasingly uncertain amidst rising unemployment. Faculty recruitments remain inadequate while public education is increasingly privatised and deprived of resources. Schools and colleges across the country continue to face closures and budget cuts.

It is this simmering anger against the system that brought lakhs of students and young people onto the streets spontaneously in various cities and towns, despite brutal state repression. The Gen-Z today are carrying ahead the history of the glorious struggles waged by past generations of students and youth. At every point in history, it was the Gen-Zs of their time that stood against injustice. From Bhagat Singh and his comrades, to the youth who sacrificed their lives during Naxalbari, from those who resisted colonial rule to those who stood against CAA-NRC, the youth have always stood at the forefront of progressive struggles.

The struggles unfolding within campuses today cannot be separated from the larger struggles being waged across the country against the erosion of democratic rights. And the response of the state remains predictable. Where else have we seen this scale of police atrocities? Everywhere in India. Not to normalise it in any way, but these are day-to-day occurrences in Kashmir, Manipur, Bastar, and other regions the Indian state calls ‘conflict zones’; conflicted because the demands of the people there do not sit well with the rulers. The conflicts are not between equal opponents, but between people demanding rights and a towering state determined to suppress them.

From Chennai, where sanitation workers protesting privatisation were assaulted and detained by the police, to the rampant detention of Kashmiri youth over mere suspicion, voices are jailed, fired at, or killed. The people of this country have been living through internet lockdowns, militarisation, bulldozers, and violence. Section 144 criminalises collective action. The UAPA imprisons dissenters for years without trial. Extraordinary laws like the Armed Forces (Special Powers) Act continue to normalise militarisation and impunity.

As another ‘toll of the midnight hour’ approaches, we are once again asked to celebrate our ‘freedom’. But looking around us, one cannot help but ask: who is free in India? Freedom for whom? Democracy for whom? If democracy means uninterrupted corporate expansion, we are living in it. Democracy for bigshots like Adani and Ambani thrives. For everyone else, democracy has become a question of survival.

Fascism is the art. Who is the artist? It is the police, the military, the executive, the legislative, and the courts. They have always functioned to defend the interests of the ruling classes. Workers are beaten for striking, students face arrests and sexual assault in custody, activists are killed in encounter killings, and entire communities are held at gunpoint in the name of development.





Credit: Kaveri

This is not unprecedented in history. Fascism emerges during moments of deep economic and political crises, when the ruling classes seek to preserve their power through suspension of basic liberal democratic rights. Nazi Germany taught us that fascism does not arrive overnight. It is built patiently through propaganda, stifling of communist organisations, the destruction of democratic institutions, attacks on minorities, criminalisation of dissent, and the cultivation of fear.

Today, the authorities ask us to remain apolitical, to co-operate with our oppressors, and to negotiate peacefully while they drop all pretense of upholding the constitution. Gandhian methods of protest will be effective only when the viewer can be moved by the voluntary suffering of those protesting. Today, the state no longer has any iota of moral obligation to the people. The solution then lies in overthrowing this tyrannical system with one that is genuinely built on the principles of democracy for the majority. This is no utopia. Historically, Russia and China have shown us the possibility of this.

The march towards people's liberation has been ongoing, with its own ebbs and flows. Every right we enjoy today is the product of the blood and sweat of thousands before us. The task therefore is not to merely reclaim a democracy that never belonged to us in the first place; but to build one that does- one for the workers, peasants, students, and all the oppressed! We have stood against fascism before, we will continue to do so! Democracy will be won only because the people refuse to surrender it!

The Little Boy Rings the Warning Bell

Aratrika

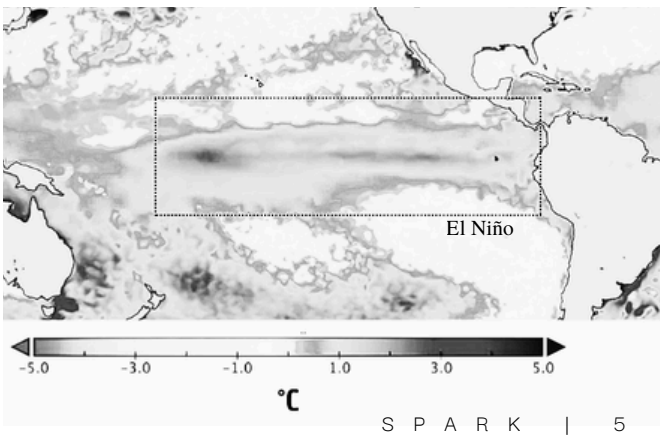
It was predicted that India will experience below-average rainfalls this monsoon. The June rainfalls have already proved this, July too has followed the same trend. Inadequate rainfall has far-reaching consequences. particularly in the agricultural sector. Compounded with the waning of state subsidies in this sector, India might be faced with another spate of farmer suicides in a few months. The maximum and minimum temperatures are expected to be above average, creating a hot and water-stressed situation.

This however, is not a local phenomenon, almost the whole of the globe is experiencing unnatural heatwaves this year. Western Europe experienced the hottest June on record this year. There were reports of wildfires due to dryness and drought situations in different parts of Europe. Rising temperatures are contributing to the formation of a 'super El Niño' that is expected to gain maximum strength before the end of this year and drive extreme weather events till almost the spring of next year.

El Niño is a natural climate phenomenon characterised by warming of the sea surface temperatures in the central and eastern tropical Pacific Ocean. This causes dramatic shifts in weather patterns globally, causing violent storms in some parts and droughts in others. The current one is expected to be the strongest since 1950. It is expected to cause smaller harvests, increasing food scarcity at a global scale. This unnaturally strong climate phenomenon can be directly traced to untamed use of fossil fuels causing global heating. The countries of the global south least responsible for running the fossil-fuel industry, will be the most disproportionately affected by El Niño.

In Karnataka for example, the government has suddenly woken up to the havoc that the El Niño can cause, particularly in the agriculture sector. The state government has decided to prioritise rainwater harvesting, construction of check points, and restoration of traditional sources of water in rural areas under the Viksit Bharat-Guarantee for Rozgar and Ajeevika Mission (Gramin) (VB-G RAM G) that displaced the MGNREGA scheme. The government is also planning to use treated waste-water for industries, parks, and construction. Farmers are being asked to cultivate jowar, ragi, etc. that require less water and are heat-tolerant.

These measures aimed towards combating the danger posed by El Niño sound half-hearted when combined with the active land acquisition happening in different parts of Karnataka to promote unbridled urbanisation. Concretisation is one of the main reasons behind delayed recharging of groundwater, that leads to water-stress. The increasing concentration of data centres that guzzle water at a rate of around 2 litres per kilowatt-hour in Bengaluru will also add to the dangers posed by El Niño. In a nutshell, the apathy towards countering global heating that is being displayed by the imperialist nations at a global level is also being echoed by the Karnataka government. The effects of El Niño or similar climate disasters can only be mitigated through a thorough dismantling of the system that promotes profit over people.



Dharmendra Pradhan Resigns! What Next?



From dawn on Monday, July 20, students, young people with precarious employment, and families arrived in New Delhi from several Indian states to participate in the march called by the Cockroach Janta Party (CJP) and left student organisations to the Parliament, on the first day of the monsoon session. The simmering anger generated by the Delhi police's direct attack on the protest site on 18th July and the abduction of Sonam Wangchuk, assumed greater proportions by 20th July. Thousands spontaneously joined the call to march to parliament demanding justice from the proclaimed representatives of the people.

By morning, the area was already heavily surrounded by security. Despite the restrictions, the crowd began moving directly toward the parliament complex. Metal barriers, some welded, had been erected along the route to prevent access to the 'red zone' around the parliament. Several metro stations in the city centre, including Rajiv Chowk and Patel Chowk, were closed for several hours. Internet shutdown also caused breakage of communication among protesters stranded in various parts of the stretch.

Over the course of the day, the total number of participants reached at least one lakh, according to estimates circulating among organisers and the media, with lines of protesters filling the streets and intersections of central Delhi. Authorities had called in reinforcements from all districts of the capital, in addition to the paramilitary units already deployed in recent weeks. Evidently, the outpour was a consequence of people's anger against more than a decade of the oppressive BJP governance.

The first moment of intense tension occurred when groups of protesters reached the barriers closest to the parliamentary area. The crowd pushed against the barriers, and the police responded with batons and tear gas to disperse the groups closest to the cordon. Some protesters were detained and loaded into police vehicles, while others remained seated on the ground, chanting slogans and holding signs about 'paper leaks'. Water cannons and pellet guns were also used liberally on the protesters leading to hearing and eyesight losses in some cases. There were incidents of stone-pelting committed by hired goons of the Delhi police in plainclothes on the protesting masses. Women were beaten up in a humiliating manner by the Delhi police as evidenced by recordings. A truck loaded with stones was discovered near the protest site that was later traced to a police seizure list. Godi media too jumped in trying to discredit the protesters vehemently. Nothing could deter the protest from continuing in Jantar Mantar. Inside the parliament, the opening of the monsoon session was marked by strong opposition protests over the NEET issue and the demonstrations underway just a few kilometres from the assembly.

The same week, the fire of the protest spread across different cities in India, most prominently in Patna, Kolkata, Mumbai, and Ahmedabad. In Patna, police abducted many student activists including AISA and CPIML Liberation activists. In Mumbai and Kolkata, multiple FIRs were filed against the protestors. In West Bengal, the current BJP CM targeted the protesters using communal language while the police disproportionately targeted Muslim youth leaders through FIRs. In the background, Sonam Wangchuk ended his hunger strike inside a hospital in Gurugram on 23rd July in the presence of Union Ministers JP Nadda and Jitendra Singh. The movement by that time had already surpassed the CJP leadership and Sonam Wangchuk, becoming synonymous with the untamed rage of the Gen-Z in India. Despite deploying all its resources, the battle of narratives as well as the battle on the ground were lost by the BJP-RSS juggernaut. Ultimately, Dharmendra Pradhan had to bow to people's pressure and resign on the 25th of July, marking a historic victory of the power of Gen-Z over this fascist regime. The issues surrounding centralisation of exams through NTA and the privatisation of education through the NEP 2020 persist and the fight must continue. In Chennai particularly, protests demanding the banning of NEET continues.

Despite initial promises, the BJP-led state governments and the union government continued to hound the leaders of the movement. With mounting public pressure, the Supreme Court had to intervene and order for immediate withdrawal of FIRs against all protesters. Interestingly, in the Congres–ruled Karnataka, an FIR invoking section 192 of the BNS (intent to cause riot) was lodged against an unidentified protester for holding a poster on Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in Freedom park. This incident poses a question mark on the verbal support extended by the Congress towards the movement.

While Pradhan has been replaced by an equally competent RSS strongman Prahlad Joshi, the spark of the movement continues to ignite spontaneous protests, this time led by the Gen-alpha in different parts of the country. In many places, school students have won the fight for basic facilities through demonstrations outside their schools. This shows the far-reaching impact even a movement on economic demands can have on the general psyche of the masses. For the first time in more than a decade, BJP's communal rhetoric has failed, the police stand discredited, and the yellow journalists have been silenced by the people united.

(*Based on a ground report published on 21st July, 2026)*

Street Vendor Evictions in Bengaluru:
A State-led Crime Against the Working Class

GUEST

Vinay Sreenivasa

In 2023, as Karnataka was heading for elections , the current Leader of the Opposition in the Lok Sabha, Rahul Gandhi came to Bengaluru and held a convention with Powrakarmikas and Street Vendors, calling them Bengaluru's assets. He promised to stand with street vendors and protect their rights.

Cut to July this year, when Krishna Byre Gowda, minister in charge of Bengaluru development and considered to be part of Rahul Gandhi's team, announced a city-wide, illegal and inhuman eviction of street vendors. The Minister's reasoning for the street vendor eviction was twofold - that the Supreme Court had ordered encroachments to be removed from footpaths; that Bengaluru saw a high number of accidents where pedestrians got injured or died and therefore action had to be taken. He ordered that all street vendors must be evicted from all the main roads of the city.

In this article I will show how this reasoning was flawed, how it violated the Street vendor's act, and also point to the impact of his illegal announcement.

Street Vendors Act 2014 – a landmark legislation to democratically govern street vending

In 2014, after years of agitations by Street Vendor Unions from across the country, Parliament unanimously passed the Street Vendors (Protection of Livelihoods and Regulation of Street Vending) Act, 2014 (referred to as 'the act'). This landmark law not only protected the right of street vendors to vend on the street but brought in a democratic structure in the form of a town vending committee which would both protect the rights of street vendors and regulate street vending itself. The very definition of a street vendor and of a vending zone includes footpath/sidewalk etc. The law also mandates a survey of all existing street vendors, a bar on evictions (only relocation is allowed, that too after a 30-day notice) and offers creation of vending zones as a means of organised vending. The Town Vending Committee is to have 40% of its members as street vendors (elected by street vendors of the city). The other members include the police, town planning officials, health officials, representatives of a central trade union, a local Resident Welfare Association and others. In mandating that the survey of vending and zoning should be done by the Town Vending Committee, the act truly created a democratic structure.

Flawed Reasoning of the government

The government stated that since the Supreme Court asked for the removal of encroachments on the pavements, street vendors had to be evicted. As already demonstrated, Street Vending on the footpath is legal as the act allows for the same. In fact in 2010 itself, the Supreme Court in Gainda Ram and Ors. Vs M.C.D and Ors stated as follows –

"*The hawkers' and squatters' or vendors' right to carry on hawking has been recognised as a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(g). At the same time the right to commuters to move freely and use the roads without any impediment is also a fundamental right under Article 19(1)(d). These two apparently conflicting rights must be harmonised and regulated by subjecting them to reasonable restrictions only under a law*".

Thus, Street Vendors cannot be considered as encroachers! The government in fact is yet to clear actual encroachments such as private gardens on footpaths, is yet to shift transformers on footpaths, has failed to regulate shops and restaurants who occupy the footpath, etc.

The second reason for the government is that there are a high number of accidents involving pedestrians. The government implied that because street vendors are on the pavement, pedestrians walk on the road and are getting affected. Data from the Traffic police and other agencies shows that the maximum number of pedestrian accidents are while crossing wide roads such as the Outer Ring Road and due to drunken driving. The Street vendors unions have in fact asked the state to show any FIRs which name street vendors as cause for accidents but to date there is no data to show the same.

Illegality of the evictions

The Street Vendors Act sections 18 and 19 mandate that no vendors shall be removed without a written notice, without an alternate space of same business potential being identified; that if any goods are seized, it should be only after a list of such goods is made and verified by an independent witness. However the vendors were evicted without a notice, were given no alternate space for vending and there was no list made of the goods and tables seized! Additionally it is only the Town Vending Committee which can decide which spaces can be no-vending zones, however here the minister decided on his own that main roads should be no-vending zones.

Who owns the streets?

The Street Vendors unions demanded from the government that even if vendors cannot be accommodated on a pavement, they should be given space to vend at the edge of the same road, next to the pavement. However the government refused. The number of private cars in Bengaluru has now touched 25 lakhs. Most of these cars park on the street. A city which has no qualms providing free car-parking for the rich, on the edges of the road, refused to provide the same space for vendors. Streets are public property and they are meant to be used equitably. However, in saying that it is fine for cars to be parked but unacceptable for poor vendors to eke out a livelihood, the government is showing that it intends to protect

the privileged and indicate that the poor really have no right to the city. This notion must be challenged and fought.

Evictions of street vendors a blow to common people

Many students, auto drivers, gig workers, and others depend on street vendors for their food. A plate of two idlis costs Rs. 50 in a darshini, but with a street vendor you get 5 idlis for Rs. 50! Go outside any garment factory and you will see lines of carts selling vegetables, fruits, and other goods. Garment workers cannot afford to go to a shop, nor do they have the time. Similarly street vendors keep the street safe from sexual harassment and reduce incidents of crimes like chain snatching. Street vendors make streets safer. An absence of street vending thus affects the city in many different ways.

Urgent need for public support

The street vendors' eviction received wide support from the middle classes and upper classes on social media. This is one of the reasons that the government brazened it out, in spite of it being illegal. There is a need for more people to speak out in favour of street vendors, publicly. Additionally during the eviction drive, the unionised vendors who fought back against the eviction were not affected; many of the non-unionised vendors have not been able to fight the eviction. There is an urgent need for students and youth across the city to reach out to vendors in their areas and see if they need support in resuming vending, in ending harassment, and then connect them to unions. There is also a need for more vendors to be unionised.

We must challenge the notion that the pavements can be either only for pedestrians or only for street vending. Both are in fact inter-dependent and through political will and good design it is possible to ensure both needs are met. It is only when both needs are met will we have a vibrant, happy, and just city.

[The author is an advocate and a member of the Karnataka Pragaptipura Beedhi Vyaparigala Sangha (affiliated to AICCTU)]



Predictable Floods, Avoidable Disaster: Assam 2026



Vagisha and Parsa

As floodwaters swallowed homes and highways across Assam in July 2026, Chief Minister Himanta Sarma pointed to a cloudburst in neighbouring Nagaland as a key trigger for the disaster. While extreme weather may indeed have intensified the flooding, the explanation left an uncomfortable question hanging in the air: can a single cloudburst explain a crisis that returns with unsettling regularity every monsoon? For the millions displaced by the overflowing Brahmaputra, the debate was never just about where the rain fell; it is always about why a predictable disaster continues to produce predictable devastation.

It is easy to attribute Assam's annual floods to heavy rainfall and its geographical location along the Brahmaputra. But doing so overlooks how climate change, itself a product of ecocide, disproportionately affects the poor and marginalised, a huge majority of it depending on agriculture. Assam has always been on the receiving end of floods from time immemorial. This has also benefitted the people in the region because the Brahmaputra would carry fertile silt with its water, which would rejuvenate the farmlands of South, Southeast, and East Asia. People were accustomed to the floods; they constructed houses at elevations that would let the water pass and deposit the silt along its way. The picture gets blurry when we see how human-made interventions have intensified flooding. Rising temperatures have made Himalayan precipitation more intense and unpredictable, while ill-planned dams and embankments have worsened their impact. Dam walls trap silt, preventing it from replenishing downstream land; instead, floodwaters scour riverbanks, increasing erosion, while rushing water strips sand from riverbeds and deposits it on farmland, reducing soil fertility. Embankments, often weakened by poor planning, corruption, and substandard construction, can be damaged or washed away during major floods. While they cannot prevent inundation, they can obstruct water from flowing back into rivers, leaving the land waterlogged for much longer. Despite years of flood control efforts, the BJP led state government continues approving dam and embankment projects that have become a playground for corruption. While dams are justified as flood-control measures, authorities increasingly release large volumes of water during the monsoon to prevent them from being overwhelmed, creating sudden and often more destructive flood surges downstream than natural flooding.

For those stranded by the floods, survival has become a matter of chance and, it seems, so has relief. Several residents in flood-affected areas alleged that food packets dropped from helicopters often landed not in their hands, but in the floodwaters themselves. "The river is eating better than we are," one resident remarked. While officials continue to highlight relief operations in press briefings, many on the ground say the reality looks very different. Announcing aid is one thing; ensuring it reaches the people it is meant for is another. In a disaster that returns almost every year, the irony is difficult to ignore: the government appears remarkably efficient at dropping promises from above, but far less effective at delivering them safely to those below.

Whither Freedom?
The Special Intensive Revision

Harish

The pain endured by the people of this land is not something that can be described in mere words! From the Aryans to the British, it has been 4,000 years of continuous agony, with the baton passing from one oppressor to another. Yet, eight decades ago, at the stroke of the midnight hour, we were told that all this suffering would end in a single night, and that from the next day onward we would finally be free. Instead, what followed was eight decades of broken promises, thus, becoming the most treacherous chapter of all. Whenever the people raised their voices, they were told, "No, we are a democracy. You have the right to choose your oppressors." Now, those very oppressors have come up with the Special Intensive Revision (SIR) exercise, which strips millions of common masses even of that right to choose.

During the first phase of SIR in Bihar, 6.5 million poor citizens were disenfranchised. One of the globally accepted measures for assessing the quality of an electoral roll is the Electoral-to-Adult Population (EP) Ratio. Before the exercise, Bihar's EP Ratio stood at 97%, slightly below the national average. Following the exercise, however, the ratio fell sharply to 88%, representing a decline of nine percentage points.

During the second phase of SIR, when the process happened across 9 states and 3 union territories the damage was more severe, especially in West Bengal. Approximately 9.1 million names were deleted from the state's electoral rolls, accounting for more than 10% of its electorate. Of the total deletions, around 3.1 million names, roughly 34%, belonged to Muslims. The deletions were heavily concentrated in districts such as Murshidabad, Malda, Uttar Dinajpur, Bankura, and Purulia, many of which have substantial Adivasi population also.

In Karnataka, where the third phase of the process is underway, as of 28 July 2026, nearly 54% of voters in Bengaluru are either unmapped or have been classified under the ASDDO (Absent, Shifted, Duplicate, Dead, and Others) category. Owing to inadequate training of the Booth Level Officers (BLOs) and unrealistic time constraints, there have been numerous instances of incorrect progeny mapping, particularly affecting married women. In areas such as Yelahanka and Mahadevapura, entire polling stations are missing from the digitized 2002 electoral records, making it impossible for many voters to be mapped.

India till now has had only ‘Special’ revisions or ‘Intensive’ revisions. The destructive fusion of both ‘Special’ and 'Intensive’ revisions, an approach not supported under the framework of Registration of Electors Rules, 1960, combined with the document-intensive nature of the exercise, has serious consequences. Implementing such a process in a land where stable documentation and access to bureaucratic institutions are already lacking, and doing so within an unrealistically



short timeframe, is bound to disenfranchise millions of marginalised people, particularly Muslims, Dalits, women, and Adivasi communities. The more fascist aspect of the SIR, however, is its striking similarity to the National Register of Citizens (NRC) exercise.

The NRC demanded every citizen to produce documentary evidence, known as "legacy data”, to prove that they were Indian citizens. The current SIR demands that: (i) those born before 1987 must prove their date and place of birth; (ii) those born between 1987 and 2004 must prove that one parent is an Indian citizen; and (iii) those born after 2004 must prove that both parents are Indian citizens. As proof, voters are required to submit one of the 11 documents listed by the Election Commission of India (ECI). Thus, it is clear that SIR is not merely an attack on one’s right to choose; it is an attack on one's very right to exist legally.

While this circus was unfolding, one would expect opposition mainly from two forces. One was the Supreme Court, which, through its Association of Democratic Rights v. Election Commission of India (27 May 2026) decision, gave a full green signal to the SIR. The second was the opposition parties, most of whom did little to nothing, apart from a few obligatory growls here and there. Even in a Congress ruled state like Karnataka, Chief Minister D. K. Shivakumar called for the successful implementation of SIR, while senior Congress leader Shashi Tharoor claimed that the SIR had helped the Congress secure victory in Kerala.

Thus, the burden of resisting this fascist onslaught fell fully upon the people and the democratic civil society organizations. In Karnataka, these organizations came together to launch the "My Vote, My Right!" campaign. Under this banner, they have organised several help desks to assist people to navigate through the process. The campaign also organised protests and Jathas, spreading awareness among the masses about the anti-people nature of the process.

Even after eight decades of so-called freedom, the people are still forced to take to the streets to fight for their citizenship, their right to vote, and, as we have seen in recent times, even for basic accountability. In moments like these, the wise words of Comrade Bhagat Singh come to mind: "What difference does it make whether Lord Reading is the head of the Indian government or Sir Purshottamdas Thakurdas?"

It was never about Reading or Thakurdas; it was, and continues to be, about the entire system that produces them, a system that keeps the toiling millions under its iron fist to exploit them. So long as this system exists, hundreds of NRCs and SIRs are bound to emerge!

Linking Rivers, Unlinking Lives!

Nishanth

Last month, adivasi protests in Madhya Pradesh made headlines. Their demonstrations progressed from *Chita*, *Mitti*, *Jal* and *Phansi satyagraha* – lying on funeral pyres, smearing mud on their bodies, submerging their bodies in water and finally tying ropes around their necks - all symbolizing the devastation that river interlinking would cause.

This has drawn attention to the Ken-Betwa Link Project (KBLP), the first of 30 projects proposed under the National River Linking Project (NRLP). These claim to provide water and electricity to drought prone regions. The entire project has an estimated cost of more than Rs. 5.5 lakh crores! (for perspective, that is 1 followed by 12 zeroes!)

Like most 'development' projects pushed by the BJP and promoted by the Godi media, this is just another disaster in disguise for both the environment and the people.

Exterminate the Environment!

Rivers Ken and Betwa are tributaries of Yamuna that run between Uttar Pradesh and Madhya Pradesh. Ken flows through the Panna Tiger reserve (PTR) which is home to species like tigers, leopard, rusty-spotted cat, sloth bear, chausinga, vulture, etc. many of which are threatened or critically endangered. Ken river also deposits silt downstream, making it a crucial habitat for aquatic animals, specifically for *gharials* to lay eggs.

With a budget of Rs. 44,605 crores, the KBLP project aims to transport surplus water from Ken into Betwa and claims to provide irrigation to the water deficient region of Bundelkhand. It involves building the Daudhan dam on the Ken river inside PTR along with a 230 km canal. However, the construction will flood 9000 ha of land where 10% of the PTR will be submerged. The dam will also stop the flow of silt - changing soil composition and damaging aquatic habitats. Together, animals both on land and water will be affected. This includes tigers, foxes, deer, *gharials* and fish.

Around 30-40 lakh trees will be lost to the KBLP. There is agriculture already happening in the region which has caused water stress in recent years. The loss of lakhs of trees is expected to further amplify water stress.

Plunder the People!

The construction will also submerge 24 villages displacing 22,000 people, 95% of whom are adivasis. However, in 2019, researchers found that locals had no idea that the project was coming despite advertisements in national media, highlighting lack of communication on ground. Also, project surveys have been conducted without consulting gram panchayats.

Although compensation has been promised, the ground reality is different. Many names are missing from rehabilitation lists. Of those, only half have received money - that too below the promised amount. 60-70% of compensations have gone to ineligible and fake beneficiaries. Even though the adivasis own land for agriculture, compensation has focused mostly on money, land has rarely been compensated. Moreover, the lives of adivasis are closely tied to their land and forest. Their knowledge systems help them collect, use and sell forest products. Displacement will not only strip them of land but also erase their culture and identity.

This led to wide-spread adivasi resistance to KBLP. The government reacted by brutally evicting them. Reports show that schools and homes have been destroyed and electricity has been cut off leading to difficulties in preparing food. This led to last month's protests, when the Gond, Biga and Kol communities conducted demonstrations in the Ken river. One of the lead organisers, Amit Bhatnagar, went on an indefinite hunger strike. On the 14th day, in the early morning, the police came, mishandled and beat up protesters and loaded them onto vans and cleared them from the site. Amit was forcefully admitted to a hospital and people were restricted from seeing him. The incident sharply mimicked the police brutality unleashed on student protestors in Delhi!





Adivasis in Chita Satyagraha (left) and Mitti Satyagraha (right, ©Unnati) in the Ken river

Ignore the truth, eyewash the nation!

In 2017-18, the Supreme court asked the Central Empowered Committee (CEC) to review KBLP. Since PTR is a tiger reserve, the CEC highlighted legal protections that prevent activities threatening wildlife and opposed the Daudhan dam. Importantly, the CEC's investigations also found that to provide water to Bundelkhand, local alternative approaches already exist at much cheaper costs. Hence, the supreme court's own findings show that the entire ken-betwa project is completely unnecessary!

Despite this, the government began construction in 2025. Daudhan dam's contract has been given to NCC Ltd. Records show that they donated Rs. 60 crores through electoral bonds to BJP. So the contract is just a payback. Meanwhile, the government runs several ads in popular media to portray the project as a miracle solution to the water crisis - all while destroying nature and people!

State: A repeat offender!

The river-interlinking project echoes a repeating pattern in India. Mega "development" projects are pushed with the promise of water and electricity only to destroy our natural resources and decimate dalits and adivasis. The Sardar Sarovar Dam submerged 37,000 ha of land, wrecked fish populations and displaced more than 1 lakh people across 245 villages. The Tehri Dam submerged fertile lands, displaced more than 1 lakh people and even triggered landslides! From Narmada to Bastar, from Vizhinjam to Ken-Betwa, the government has made way for "development" ravaging both people and their Jal-Jangal-Jameen - only to benefit the rich (like Adani, Ambani, Tata, etc.).





Adivasis in Jal Satyagraha (top) and Phansi Satyagraha (bottom, ©Unnati) in river Ken

Paradise Under Suspicion: Kashmir's Unhealed Wounds

A student from Kashmir



Kashmir is famous for its beauty: snow covered mountains, calm lakes, valleys full of flowers. But that is only the postcard version. Behind it are graves, prison cells, demolished homes and families still waiting for people who never came back. Decades of conflict have taken tens of thousands of lives, and even when the numbers are disputed, the loss behind them is not.

On the Pakistani side, the region is called Azad, which means free, Jammu and Kashmir. This year showed how far that name is from the truth. Since June, people have been protesting for electoral reform and equal representation. The state's response has been to open fire. Dozens have been killed across Rawalakot, Poonch, Mirpur and Muzaffarabad. Internet and phone networks were shut down almost immediately, because a government that fears its own citizens' phones is a government that fears the truth.

On the Indian side, the pattern looks different but the logic is the same: treat the population as suspects first and citizens second. This July made that clear. After a policeman was shot dead near Lal Chowk in Anantnag, police detained over a thousand people within a day, and the number crossed 3,500 within two days, most of them labelled 'over ground workers,' a term vague enough to cover almost anyone. Two homes were bulldozed before any court had even heard the case. This is not new. India's own government has admitted that more than 7,300 people were taken into preventive custody in the months after Article 370 was abrogated in 2019. Since 2012, Kashmir has faced internet shutdowns more than 450 times, more than anywhere else in the world.

Even the people who try to document these events are punished for it. Khurram Parvez and Irfan Mehraj spent nearly five years in jail simply for recording human rights violations. The United Nations called Parvez's detention arbitrary. They were released on bail this July, but they still cannot go home.

On both sides of the line, the story keeps repeating itself: security concerns take priority, and the voices of ordinary people get lost in between. The student, the shepherd, the shopkeeper, none of them chose this conflict, yet they are the ones who live with its consequences every single day.

Perhaps the real need is not to keep score of who is more at fault, but to find the will, on every side, to protect civilians first and build lasting peace instead of temporary calm. Kashmir's people deserve a future where their safety and dignity are no longer conditional.

Understanding 13th July:
An Erstwhile J&K State Holiday

Online submission

By the mid 19th century, Jammu and Kashmir was governed by the Dogra dynasty. The people suffered from the feudal Zaildari agrarian system, punitive taxation, and forced labour. Despite Muslims being the majority, they had no representation. The 1931 uprising was the culmination of decades of oppressive Dogra rule set up by the British in 1846. The Viceroy of the time, Sir Henry Hardinge, writing to the Queen on two separate occasions following the Treaty of Amritsar in 1846 noted that it was logistically hard for them to govern Kashmir unless the Sikhs were weakened. It was from this interest that the British Empire installed not just a puppet, but a ruler willing to call himself a slave to the British Crown. Maharaja Gulab Singh, founder of the Dogra dynasty, proclaimed himself a gold-bought slave (*Zar-Khureed*) of the British Crown. The subservient nature of this relationship was codified in Article 10 of the 1846 Treaty of Amritsar, "Maharaja Gulab Singh acknowledges the supremacy of the British government and will in token of such supremacy present annually to the British government one horse, 12 shawl goats of approved breed (six male and six female) and three pairs of cashmere shawls."

The Dogra rulers bought Kashmir for a sum of 7.5 million Nanakshahi rupees (1£ = 10 Nanakshahi rupees) from the British who themselves had no ownership of the region. Addressing the East India Association in 1889, Sir Edward E. Meakin commented, "It was clearly wrong for the East India Company to cede Kashmir to Gulab Singh for £750,000 when it was not in possession of theirs and they had no manner of right to deal with it, but 'a bargain is a bargain'."

In the face of such tyranny, the 1931 uprising was not the first act of resistance. One of the earliest acts of resistance was on 29 April 1865, where the workers of the shawl weaving industry took to the streets in Srinagar to protest the oppressive taxation and exploitative working conditions. In this instance, at least 28 workers lost their lives and many more were left injured. This incident is also known as the Zaldagar massacre. Many credit this moment as Asia's first labour uprising.

The subservient relationship between the Dogra monarchs and the British Crown, dictated the region's governance for nearly a century. The Dogra rulers consistently strengthened the British Empire in order to be favoured. For instance, during the First War of Independence in 1857 ('Sepoy Mutiny'), the Dogras provided crucial military support to the British, cementing their status as loyal, indispensable allies. This alliance was stark even during the events of 1931; as widespread public outrage threatened to overwhelm local authorities, the British dispatched 500 troops to the valley to help the Dogras suppress the people's rebellion.

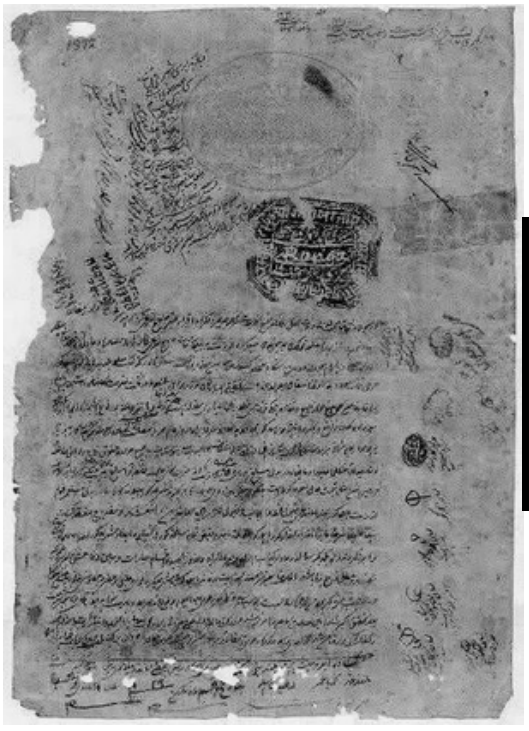
Following an incident of disrespect towards the Quran on 21st June, 1931, a man named Abdul Qadir Khan at Khanqah-e-Maula, Srinagar, had delivered a speech addressing the people to wage a war against the brutalities of the Dogra rulers. On 25th June, he was arrested on charges of sedition and treason. This sparked widespread outrage among the people in the valley, catalyzing the existing emotions.

On 13th July, 1931, while an in-camera trial of Abdul Qadeer khan was ongoing in the Srinagar Central Jail, thousands of Kashmiris assembled outside in protest. Dogra police fired at the crowd of people upon the orders of Rayzada Trilok Chand, the governor at the time, which resulted in killing of 22 Kashmiris.

The loss of 22 innocent Kashmiri lives on 13th July, 1931 left its mark on the people of Kashmir and its impact can be felt nearly a century later. This day was remembered as the Martyrs' Day and observed as a public holiday post-1947 across Jammu and Kashmir. After the removal of Article 370, the state was reduced to a union territory and the public holiday was struck off in an attempt to rewrite the regional history.

Sunil Sharma of the BJP, current leader of the opposition in the Jammu and Kashmir legislative assembly, stated last year that the 13th July martyrs were traitors and anti-nationals for rebelling against the Dogras. He later added that "we are sitting in Maharaja's state, enjoying the Maharaja state." By communalising a just resistance against the British and its puppets, Sunil Sharma and his ilk carry forward the legacy of subservience to the crown.

From the Zaldagar weavers of 1865 to the twenty-two Kashmiris who laid down their lives outside the Srinagar Central Jail, Kashmir has a history of valiantly fighting against the tyrannical Dogra rule. The memory of these atrocities, and the courage of those who faced them, serves as a lasting reminder to look back, admire, and pay tribute to all who fought against feudalism and imperialism.



The Treaty of Amritsar, 1846

D. D. Kosambi:
Understanding the Role of Science from a Marxist Lens

Sushant

Its (Marxism's) importance lies not only in the interpretation of the past, but as a guide to future action. By its correct use, men can make their own history consciously, rather than suffer it to be made as helpless spectators, or merely to study it after the event.

- D. D. Kosambi (Exasperating Essays: Exercises in Dialectical Method, 1957)

D. D. Kosambi used Marxism as an analytical framework and scientific approach to study science and society. Following Lenin's idea of concrete analysis of concrete conditions of society, he used dialectical and historical materialism creatively for studying the history of India. He showed that Indian society had its own trajectory, and European historical categories could not simply be imposed here, and established a non-Eurocentric Marxist interpretation of Indian history. He showed how Indian society developed through internal contradictions between productive forces and production relations, and between old and new social forms. He criticised Nehru's book 'The Discovery of India' (1946) for a shallow reading of history. He also criticised S.A. Dange's book 'India from Primitive Communism to Slavery' (1949), arguing that Dange treated Marxism not as a method of investigation but as a ready-made formula. Instead of investigating, Dange began with a preconceived scheme of historical stages and searched ancient Indian texts for quotations that appeared to fit that scheme, ignoring regional diversity and historical complexity. This critique later became central to debates about how to apply historical materialism to the study of history and helped shape the development of modern Marxist history-writing in India.

Science, Scientific Temper, and Human Emancipation

There is no reason for science to remain bound any longer to the decaying class that brought it into existence four centuries ago. The scientist needs this freedom most of all, namely freedom from servitude to a particular class. Only in science planned for the benefit of all mankind, not for bacteriological, atomic, psychological, or other mass warfare can the scientist be really free.

- D. D. Kosambi [Science and Freedom, Monthly Review (New York), vol.4, 1952]

D. D. Kosambi was respected internationally as a mathematician before becoming widely known as a historian. He developed important mathematical concepts in both pure and applied mathematics (e.g., the Kosambi-Karhunen-Loève transform). He taught mathematics at BHU, AMU, Fergusson College, and TIFR. He was deeply interested in applying mathematics to practical scientific problems and was one of the first Indian scholars to combine advanced mathematics with humanities research. One of Kosambi's most original contributions was introducing quantitative methods into the study of ancient coins. Using statistics, he developed the 'Kosambi mapping function', which revolutionised genetics. His statistical work on the seasonal death rate resulted in the saving of a considerable number of lives. His expertise in mathematics, statistics, probability, and data analysis enabled him to make important contributions to physics (e.g., the Kosambi-Cartan-Chern (KCC) Theory). Like his pioneering contributions to history, Kosambi's work in mathematics and science was far ahead of its time. Many of his works were later rediscovered by other scientists and mathematicians (e.g., Proper Orthogonal Decomposition and Principal Component Analysis, which form the basis of machine learning and artificial intelligence, were first developed by Kosambi).

D. D. Kosambi's scientific outlook was dialectical, and he argued that science itself develops within historical and social conditions. He frequently wrote about the social functions of science. He said that scientific knowledge without social responsibility could become catastrophic. The resources that could eliminate poverty, disease, and illiteracy will instead be directed towards weapons production and the war industry. He admired the development of science and technology in the USSR and China after the revolution. He criticised bourgeois science and argued that science under capitalism is subordinate to war and profit, whereas under socialism it could serve humanity collectively. As a major advocate of scientific temper, he strongly opposed pseudoscience, mysticism, communalism, irrationalism, and blind glorification of tradition.

As a Marxist, Kosambi was deeply concerned about the social and political consequences of modern science. He believed that intellectuals could not remain politically neutral. For him, freedom did not mean liberal individualism detached from society, but collective human development and the end of exploitation. After the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, he criticised the military use of nuclear science, arguing that scientific discoveries should serve humanity rather than destruction, and became involved in anti-imperialist, anti-fascist, and peace movements. He was a member of the World Peace Council, a left-leaning organisation of intellectuals, scientists, writers, and anti-colonial thinkers.

China: An Example of Revolutionary Transformation

No honest and reasonably alert visitor to China can fail to be impressed by the remarkable changes in the country and the people. The material advances shown by the new system since so recent a year as 1952 leap to the eye. New factories, mines, oil fields, steelworks, dams, co-operatives, roads, buses, hospitals, schools, cultural palaces, theatres have sprouted

virtually overnight. Literacy is almost universal and the language is being reformed. The rise in the general standard of living is equally remarkable. The normal noonday meal even of the unskilled labourer now compares with his rare holiday feast in the old days. Conditions of work have improved out of all recognition.

- D. D. Kosambi [On The Revolution in China, Monthly Review (New York), 1957]

D. D. Kosambi viewed the Indian freedom movement and the post-1947 development model dialectically. He criticised the Indian National Congress and the leadership of Gandhi and Nehru for representing the class interests of the bourgeoisie. He also criticised the CPI leadership for not understanding the Indian society dialectically and applying the methods of revolution in Europe directly to India without considering the feudalism and agrarian question as primary. He viewed British colonialism not merely as foreign rule but as an economic and structural system, which destroyed the indigenous industrial development and strengthened feudalism, and any true freedom movement is not possible without an agrarian revolution. He believed that 1947 marked the end of direct British colonial rule but did not fundamentally transform Indian society. The oppressive social structures remain unchanged. He called it a transfer of political power without a social revolution. This became central to his critique of post-independence India and the Nehruvian model of development and modernisation. He argued that Nehru attempted modernisation without fundamentally transforming class relations. He criticised India's modernisation as a slow, bureaucratic, elite-driven, and socially limited process serving the class-interests of capitalists and landlords.

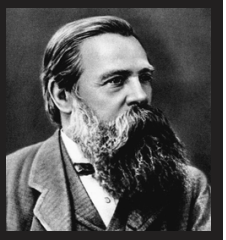
D. D. Kosambi considered the Chinese Revolution (1949) as a model for transformative change in Asian society. He showed that revolutionary changes in China contrasted sharply with the extreme poverty and social inequality still visible in India during the same period. He visited the People's Republic of China several times after its establishment in 1949. He was deeply impressed by what he saw, calling it an example of socialism, development, modernisation, and postcolonial transformation for Asian countries. He was astonished seeing how socialist construction had transformed a poor Asian country devastated by war and semi-colonial domination. He was especially impressed by literacy campaigns, mass education, and social consciousness. The Chinese Revolution demonstrated that radical transformation towards socialism was historically possible in Asia. He defended the Chinese Revolution against critics who dismissed or ignored it. He argued that many critics failed to understand that revolutions in Asian peasant societies would necessarily differ from European revolutionary models. For Kosambi, science without a social purpose was an empty pursuit

His work serves as a reminder that the highest duty of an academician is not merely to interpret society but to illuminate its contradictions, defend scientific inquiry, and contribute to the struggle for a more just, democratic, and humane world.

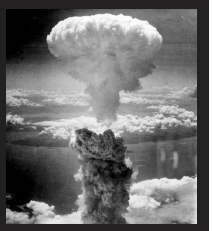
*Scan to read **Science, Society, and Peace** by DD Kosambi*

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

August 5, 1895 - German revolutionary communist and Karl Marx's closest friend and collaborator, Friedrich Engels passes away due to throat cancer. His works include 'The Origin of Family, State, and Private Property', 'Dialectics of Nature', etc. He and Marx co-wrote 'Manifesto of the Communist Party'.



August 6, 1945 - USA dropped the atomic bomb on Hiroshima, (and Nagasaki on August 9), killing 1 lakh+ people and causing generations of radiation-related illness. This came at a time when Japan was already willing to surrender to the Allied forces. Hiroshima Day honours the victims and calls for peace, and global awareness against nuclear weapons.



August 15, 1973 - The Dalit Panthers organised a protest in Mumbai, calling it 'Kala Swatantrya Din' or Black Independence Day. This demonstration, attended by around 200 people, marked the 27th independence day and challenged the narrative of a complete independence for all Indians, particularly highlighting the continued oppression faced by Dalits.



August 23, 1791 - Enslaved Africans in the French colony of Saint-Domingue (now Haiti) launched a powerful revolt, starting the Haitian Revolution. It was the first slave uprising, leading to the abolition of slavery, and established the world's first Black republic.

August 30, 1948 - Anti-fascist leader and Deputy Chairman of the Black Panther Party - Fred Hampton was born. He founded the anti-capitalist Rainbow Coalition, a multicultural political organisation to help end infighting among gangs and work together for social change. He was murdered by the FBI in 1969.



UPDATES ON STUDENTS' MOVEMENTS

Karnataka agricultural students protest the recruitment of BE/BTech students for AO/AAO posts



Students of Karnataka's agriculture institutes have been protesting against the Karnataka Examination Authority's decision to allow BE/BTech graduates to apply for Agriculture Officer (AO) and Assistant Agriculture Officer (AAO) posts. Agriculture students demand that only candidates trained under the ICAR-prescribed curriculum should be eligible, as engineering students coming into the picture will increase the competition for posts which already provide less jobs. The protests, ongoing since July 15, have forced the postponement of the August 9 recruitment exam for 945 vacancies. The government is yet to take a final decision on the students' demands.



Students of CUSAT protest against 200% exam fee hike

On July 24th students of Cochin University of Science and Technology (CUSAT) protested against the proposed 200% increase in examination and administrative fees. Students marched to the university gates and admin blocks. The protest has now escalated to an indefinite strike.

Indefinite hunger strike at Savitribai Phule Pune University



Students and local activists started an indefinite hunger strike on 27th July, targeting corruption and recruitment malpractices. This was due to irregularities in tests, exam transparency and delayed publishing of Police sub inspector recruitment advertisement causing age limit eligibility concerns. They demand accountability, re-examinations and age limit relaxations.



Students of Fatehpur protest over lack of amenities

On July 28, at the gates of Sarvodaya Inter College in Fatehpur, Uttar Pradesh, young school students from class 6 to 12 protested demanding basic amenities like clean drinking water, functional fans in classrooms, clean toilets, proper desks and benches. The protest lasted for hours until the District Inspector of Schools (DIOS) and local educational authorities arrived with written documentation, promising that corrective measures would begin within 24 hours.

Bihar Bandh called by the All India Students' Association (AISA)



Bihar Bandh was enforced on July 25th by AISA to protest the NEET-UG exam paper leak. The protest escalated into police firing in the Siwan district, authorities detained around 694 individuals statewide and protesters clashed with security forces. Police booked 144 students and 5,000 unidentified protestors under various sections of the BNS. Later on 27th July, under increasing public preasure the Bihar police said it will withdraw all the cases.



Students of Mohammad Ali Jauhar University protest against the demolition order against the institution

The Rampur Development Authority served a notice to demolish 38 out of the 40 buildings at the university over alleged unapproved construction plans on July 15. Students launched an indefinite sit-in protest outside the university's main gate, demanding a written assurance that the proposed demolition will not take place. Over 2000 enrolled students are concerned that the proposed action would put their future at stake. This district has no other university, with the nearest being at least 50 km away. The court has now granted an interim stay order until the final hearing.


Delhi


Patna



Perhaps the rest of us can take lessons from our farmers and our cockroaches on how to become a little dangerous. The young have given us a gift. It is up to us all, every one of us to make what they have done matter. Once a prime minister flees physically, it can't be long before he has to flee politically.

- Arundhati Roy

The language of revolt is seldom parliamentary. It is emotional rather than measured, mocking rather than deferential, often deliberately transgressive – and what looks like vulgarity to the establishment is frequently the first public expression of accumulated humiliation and anger.

- Anand Teltumbde





Bengaluru



Kolkata