

spark★

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OUR
FOREST

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◆— UPDATES ON PEOPLE'S MOVEMENTS —◆



Left Parties Protest US Imperialist Attack on Venezuela

Left parties protested in Freedom Park on January 8th condemning the US imperialist attack on Venezuela. The protesters condemned the assault and the kidnapping of President Nicolás Maduro and his wife Cilia Flores, stating that this is an attack on a sovereign nation. They called out the imperialist agenda of controlling Venezuelan oil.



Protest Against Demolitions in Bengaluru

Multiple protests were held against the government-led demolition drives across Bengaluru. Over 200 houses, belonging mostly to Muslims and Dalit Tamil families, were demolished by the Congress government from the end of 2025, in areas like Kogilu Layout, Thanisandra, and KG Halli. The protestors also raised the issue of not receiving notice, shelter, or relief from the government.



Bailadila Protests Rekindle Against Mining in Bastar

Protests have flared up again on the Bailadila hills in Dantewada, Chhattisgarh, on January 5th, as youth and political parties oppose proposed mining of deposit number 4, as it threatens Bastar's ecology. Dozens participated in a bike rally and sit-in, demanding protection of water, forests, and land. Leaders said the movement aims to protect biodiversity and cultural heritage, vowing to continue protests toward deposit number 13.



Hundreds Protest Against Deletion from Gujarat Rolls

Hundreds of Muslim voters in Ahmedabad's Jamalpur constituency protested on the 21st of January against the wrongful deletion from electoral rolls during Gujarat's Special Intensive Revision. Voters claim they were falsely declared dead or shifted using Form 7 objections, allegedly filed by BJP workers, raising concerns of targeted disenfranchisement and misuse of electoral procedures.



Midday Meal Worker Protestors Die in Chhattisgarh

Two midday meal cooks protesting for higher wages in Chhattisgarh's Atal Nagar–Nava Raipur died after their health worsened during the agitation. Rukmani Sinha and Dulari Yadav passed away amid the 31-day protest, intensifying outrage among workers, even as the BJP government denied any link between the deaths and the struggle.



Raichur Protest Demands Withdrawal of Labour Codes

On 31st January, AICCTU and AIARLA activists in Raichur staged a rasta roko protest at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Circle, demanding that the central government withdraw the four Labour Codes and the VBGRAMG Act. During the protest, the police detained the protesters who expressed their outrage by shouting slogans against the central and state governments.



Basti Residents Protest Bulldozer Evictions in Bhubaneswar

Basti Suraksha Manch held a protest in Bhubaneswar against bulldozer-raj and forced evictions of slum dwellers by civic authorities. Over 150 residents from nearly 30 bastis across Bhubaneswar remembered the November Salia Sahi demolitions, where 556 homes were razed and around 12 acres of land were reclaimed for a road project.



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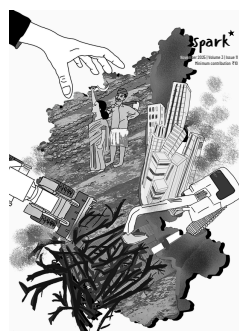
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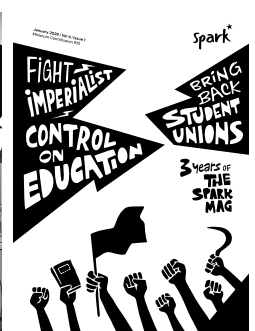
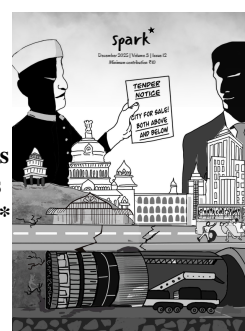
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Spark* is a monthly magazine run by students and youth.

Today, the state and the corporate controlled media are constantly propagating fabricated news that suit their interests. This makes exposition of the truth an imminent 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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Political Ecology of Nagarhole: A Tale of Exploitation and Resistance



COVER

Sushant, Harish, Shashirekha, Sharanya, Arindam

On December 21, the Adivasis of Nagarhole started their historic 13-day Padayathra (December 21 - January 2), organised by Nagarhole Adivasi Jammapale Hakku Sthapana Samiti (NAJHSS), the federation of Gram Sabhas in Nagarhole, to reclaim their rights. In Padayathra, people from each haadi (hamlets and villages) visited other haadis, and gram sabhas were held to raise awareness among the gram sabha members about the Forest Rights Act (FRA, 2006) and to promote the idea of a struggle for forest rights. The Gram Sabhas were held in 29 haadis. This Padayathra concluded with a protest on 1st and 2nd January at the Udhuru forest gate in H.D. Kote. Demands were submitted to Additional Deputy Commissioner Mysuru.

A team of comrades from All India Students Association (AISA) joined this Padayathra in solidarity with the Adivasis of Nagarhole, to understand their socio-economic conditions, their struggle against displacement, eviction and state violence in the name of conservation.

Nagarhole National Park: Displacement in the Name of Conservation

Nagarhole forest, spread across Kodagu and Mysuru districts of Karnataka, is part of the Western Ghats-Nilgiri Biosphere Reserve. It is among India's most significant biodiversity hotspots. Declared a wildlife sanctuary in 1955, expanded and converted into a national park in 1983, later notified as the 37th Project Tiger Reserve in 2003, and critical tiger habitat in 2007, each transition extended the protected area (from 284.15 sq km in 1955 to 1205.76 sq.km today), and tightened restrictions on human habitation and livelihoods.

These successive changes and expansion were not merely ecological reclassifications, but a tool to displace the Adivasis. It intensified state control over forest land and imposed increasingly restrictive regulations on human habitation and livelihood practices. It facilitated the looting of jal-jangal-jameen through large-scale evictions and coercive relocations, particularly during the 1970s, 1980s. Haadis located within newly demarcated core and buffer areas were forced to relocate, homes were destroyed, and traditional livelihoods were criminalised under wildlife protection and forest laws. Adivasis were forcibly displaced in the name of conservation, while tourism infrastructure and safari activities were simultaneously expanded within the same landscape. International and local NGOs working on conservation reinforced the 'fortress conservation' narrative of pristine wilderness, portraying Adivasis as threats while legitimising tourism and corporate interests. In Nagarhole, corporate NGOs are working with the forest department to displace Adivasis.

Adivasis of Nagarhole

Nagarhole forest and its fringes are home to several tribal and traditional forest-dwelling communities (Jenu Kuruba, Betta Kuruba, Yerava, Paniya, Koraga, Soliga, etc.) who traditionally lived in and around these forests. Jenu Kurubas are the largest group in the Nagarhole area. Adivasis historically inhabited large tracts of what is now the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve. According to the Madras Census Report, 1891, they have lived in Nagarhole since the 7th century and are deeply connected to the landscape at cultural, economic, and spiritual levels. Before state intervention, they lived in the forest under their traditional system of governance, which ensured the sustainable use of forest resources. All these communities are legally recognised as Scheduled Tribes (STs), with Jenu Kurubas and Koraga also being Primarily Vulnerable Tribal Groups (PVTGs) (Ministry of Tribal Welfare: State/UT-wise List of the Particularly Vulnerable Tribal Groups). These Adivasi families live in small forest haadis and fringe villages spread across Mysuru and Kodagu districts. The haadis typically range from 10 to 40 households, depending on the location, access to services, and past experiences of displacement. As reported to the Lok Sabha on December 12, 2011, 45 villages (1353 families) live within the Nagarhole core area, and 86 villages (16896 families) in the periphery of Nagarhole. State intervention dismantled their systems, replacing them with bureaucratic authority enforced through forest laws.

Historically, Adivasi livelihoods combined minor forest produce collection with small-scale subsistence agriculture. Practices such as interspersed cultivation and shifting cultivation (kumri or podu) were ecologically integrated and community-regulated. These were banned after the area's conversion into a national park, forcing communities into wage labour and market dependence. Today, honey collection remains a key livelihood, carried out sustainably by cutting only part of the hive. Yet incomes are meagre. Honey sold through Large Area Multipurpose Society (LAMPS) in Thithimathi fetches far below market prices, while direct sales are restricted. Annual earnings from forest produce rarely exceed subsistence levels. Plantation labour, particularly in coffee estates, has become unavoidable.

Images from the Padayathra in Nagarhole



Images from the Padayathra in Nagarhole

Working conditions are harsh, wages are low and uneven, and cases of bonded labour persist. Displacement from forests created a captive labour force for plantations, binding Adivasis into cycles of debt and exploitation. Kodagu's coffee economy, rooted in colonial land grabs, rests on large-scale forest clearance and labour exploitation. While a small minority of large landholders control significant acreage, thousands of landless Adivasis toil seasonally for survival wages. Plantation owners profit, while displaced forest dwellers bear the costs of conservation and development. As Adivasi leaders point out, agriculture and habitation are prohibited for them inside the reserve, yet plantations, resorts, and safaris are permitted. Describing their condition, Thimma J.K. said, *Moor thingalu Jenuthuppa, moor thingalu gandasu-soppu, moor thingalu thota kelasa, moor thingalu upavasa, idhe namma jivana* [3 months of honey harvesting, 3 months of wild leafy vegetables and yams, 3 months of estate work, and 3 months of fasting, this is our life].

History of Resistance against Displacement in Nagarhole

Adivasi resistance in Nagarhole is decades old. The anti-Taj resort struggle of the 1980s and 1990s became a landmark in environmental justice. When the Taj Group proposed a luxury resort inside the protected area, Adivasi communities mobilised, blocked construction, and pursued legal action. The Karnataka High Court ultimately struck down the project, ruling that eco-tourism is a non-forest activity. The struggle demonstrated that conservation cannot be separated from social justice and that corporate eco-tourism is incompatible with indigenous rights.

The biggest shift in forest rights and conservation came with the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act, 2006, which corrected the historic exclusion by colonial and post-colonial laws and recognised the rights of forest-dwelling communities to land they traditionally used. FRA provided pathways for the legal recognition of the customary rights of Adivasis. But the bureaucratic resistance and enforcement gaps have prevented FRA from fully transforming forest governance, with new policy amendments sometimes undermining the spirit of FRA. In recent years, Adivasi communities of Nagarhole have been asserting their rights under the Forest Rights Act, 2006. Since 2010, several evicted Adivasi families have been trying to

return to Nagarhole but have been mercilessly beaten and harassed whenever they attempted such a comeback. In Nagarhole, the FRA claims are delayed or rejected, and displacement continues to be promoted. In May 2025, 52 families returned to the ancestral land they were evicted from in the mid-1980s, invoking their legal rights under the FRA. Adivasis now challenge the logic that lets tourism and tiger safaris flourish while their own habitation and customary authority remain unrecognised.

In Nagarhole, Gram Sabhas are formed under the FRA. There are 43 haadis in the Nagarhole Tiger Reserve area. Each Haadi has a Gram Sabha that includes all adults in the Haadi.

The Gram Sabha together elects a 15-member Forest Rights Committee (FRC), comprising 5 women and 10 men. This election occurs every three years. To strengthen the movement for forest rights, adivasis are forming a higher committee, the Grama Sabhada Okkutta, with 2 representatives from each Haadi. The recent padayathra symbolised this renewed assertion of self-rule, rejecting the forest department's monopoly over administration.

In the Padayathra, people walked from one haadi to another through the forest, raising powerful slogans and songs against the displacement and oppressive forest laws, and asserting their forest rights. These slogans and songs powerfully represented the struggles and valour of the Nagarhole Adivasis. People in different haadis were eagerly and deeply invested in the Gram Sabhas, eager to discuss and decide. From energetic youngsters to calm elderly men, from new leaders with well-matured ideas to active old women throwing sharp criticisms, we could see a clash of ideas. In Padayathra, middle-aged women marched in the front rows, while teenage girls excitedly carried banners. In every haadi, the inhabitants welcomed the protesters with aarti. People cooked food with great care for strangers they had never met before, united by a shared commitment to the struggle. In some haadis, such as Golur and Balle, even enthusiastic children took part in the Padayathra, believing they were fighting for a just cause. With passion and innocence, they raised revolutionary slogans, adding to the collective spirit of resistance.

Loot of Jal-Jangal-Jameen and Adivasi Resistance

Today in India, the nexus of the corporates, landlords, and their political pawns steamrolls Adivasis, peasants, and workers. Adivasis are being displaced in different parts of the country in the name of development (e.g., for mining in Chhattisgarh, Jharkhand, Odisha, Maharashtra, and Telangana) and conservation (e.g., in Karnataka and Madhya Pradesh). Natural resources are increasingly opened to private capital for exploitation. Corporations benefit from state-backed land acquisition, tax concessions, and legal immunity, while displaced adivasis are forced into wage labour and shift from subsistence-based autonomy to dependency on markets. National parks, wildlife sanctuaries, and tiger reserves are created by evicting forest-dwelling communities who have

lived there for generations. Adivasi communities that historically protected forests are portrayed as threats to wildlife, while resorts, safaris, and corporate eco-tourism projects flourish within or around protected areas. Wherever displacement meets resistance, the Indian state responds with militarisation. Adivasi regions are among the most heavily policed and militarised areas in the country. Peaceful struggles for land and forest rights are criminalised, while state violence is normalised.

Since the British Raj, Adivasis have continued their struggle against state oppression. Movements for forest, land, and self-rule rights challenge the imperialist model of development and conservation. Nagarhole today is not just a local forest conflict, it is a node of global capital, conservation ideology, state power, and Adivasi resistance. From colonial forest acts to World Bank eco-development projects, external forces have repeatedly shaped forest governance in ways that marginalize Adivasis. Conservation here has meant enclosure,

displacement, and pauperism of forest dwellers, while profits flow to eco-tourism operators, plantation owners, and NGOs. Adivasi movements asserting Forest Rights Act claims, habitat rights, and community control are not anti-conservation, they are anti-colonial struggles for justice.

The main demands of the movement are:

- Recognition of Forest Rights under FRA, 2006.
- Set up a judicial inquiry committee to assess the effects of the declaration of the National Park and Tiger Reserve.
- End of forced and coercive displacement and relocation of the displaced Adivasis in their original habitat with legal documents of land ownership.
- Stop eco-tourism, safaris, and the commercial exploitation of Nagarhole.
- Democratization of Forest Governance and inclusion of Adivasis in decision-making.
- Rejection of the colonial-imperial model of conservation.

NEP in disguise:

School Merger Proposal = School Closure Proposal

Anoushka

The Department of school education and literacy under the Congress government on October 15th 2025 announced their plans to merge 25000 government schools by starting 800 KPS-magnet schools at a cost of about ₹3,000 crore. The scheme will consolidate small schools into centrally located large Karnataka Public Schools - meaning the closure of nearly 25000 schools across Karnataka. These KPS (Karnataka Public Schools) magnet schools will provide education from pre-primary to II PUC, with introduction of computer science education, vocational skills and special coaching for competitive exams in the curriculum. Each school will be developed to cater to 1200 students.

The government states that the aim of this scheme is to curb high dropout rates in schools and ensure a better use of infrastructure and relocation of resources. But realistically, this scheme would only increase dropout rates - students from villages - lakhs of children will be deprived of education and higher transportation burden on those who can afford it. The government has promised free transport for students, but how feasible is this and how safe would it be for the students? It's easy to spot that the government isn't aiming to aid students but instead aid their own pockets, a smaller number of schools would mean they would be able to reduce the budget for education as well as privatise education. By centralising resources they are undermining and weakening the existing public education system. And it is also important to note that out of the ₹3000 crores cost, ₹2000 crores has been loaned by the Asian Development Bank. The involvement of an imperialist institution creates dependencies and cost-cutting measures - promoting Public-Private Partnerships and privatisation and corporatization of education, focusing on profits over education.

The Karnataka government has also had the same approach towards higher educational institutions as well, they have been focusing on bringing in private and foreign institutes to increase competition and reduce brain drain, while ignoring the dire state in which state universities are in - a chronic staff shortage and infrastructural issues. This would only benefit a small section in society, only deepening the rift of inequality.

Interestingly enough, in 2020 the NEP proposed by BJP included a school merger proposal which this very same Congress government had opposed then, but now their KPS magnet school proposal aims to do exactly what the NEP they opposed aimed to do. By closing schools on such a large scale they are simply repurposing the NEP they rejected after coming to power, a tool to oppress marginalized communities by making education less accessible to them. And it is not new for Congress, BJP or even CPM and DMK to pretend to oppose an anti-people policy when they are the opposing party only to bring back the same policy after coming to power.

Many student groups as well as educators have been strongly opposing this scheme across Karnataka. Student organisations such as AISA and AIDS0 have been very vocal in their opposition to the scheme, conducting flash protests and petitions. There have been other very vocal groups, such as the Save the Government School Committee formed in Chatnahalli Palya and Chatnahalli village consisting of local villagers and office bearers to protect local schools. Instead of the school merger scheme, what is required is an emphasis on preexisting public education systems by increasing public spending, addressing vacancies in teaching positions by appointing adequate permanent teachers and ensuring access to education for all.

Spate of Demolitions across Bengaluru

A Case of Arbitrary Eviction and State Neglect

A fact-finding report by All India Students Association

Bengaluru recently saw a spate of three demolitions in almost consecutive months in KG Halli, Kogilu layout, and Thanisandra. In all three places, demolitions were done without due process and zero compensation or rehabilitation. The use of force was also common to all these places. AISA comrades paid visits to KG Halli and Thanisandra demolition sites to understand the situation on the ground. The following observations are based on the visits and in case of Kogilu layout, the information has been taken from news articles.

KG Halli:

In the early hours of October 31, 2025, bulldozers rolled into a densely populated settlement called Suna Line 1, near the Kadugondanahalli (KG Halli) Railway Gate, leaving more than 100 families homeless in a matter of hours. The demolition drive, carried out by the Railway Protection Force (RPF) with the assistance of local police, was part of preparations to clear alleged encroachments for the Bengaluru Suburban Rail Project (BSRP), an initiative to expand and double railway lines in the region.

Residents from the affected area, many of whom belong to a largely Tamil-speaking Dalit community with some Muslim families, said they were taken completely by surprise. They were not given proper notice or sufficient time to vacate, with bulldozers arriving abruptly and starting demolition while many families were still inside their homes. Some people reported that officials had visited earlier under the pretext of a “survey” and collected personal details, leading them to believe no immediate displacement would occur.

The drive reduced significant parts of 29 multi-storey houses to rubble, displacing around 150 residents who were left to fend for themselves along the railway tracks with their salvaged belongings. Several families, including daily-wage labourers, domestic workers, and garment factory employees, described spending nights in makeshift tents with no shelter, sanitation, or basic facilities. Videos and firsthand accounts from residents show that police used force, including lathi charges, when people tried to secure their belongings or seek answers from officials. They were arranging for food through crowdfunding, however it was inadequate.

Residents shared that they had longstanding ties to the area, some families said they had lived there for multiple generations and even had documents showing approvals for house construction under government schemes. They argued that they had been paying for electricity and water for years and had no indication that their homes would be demolished. Officials from the South Western Railway (SWR) defended the action, stating that the eviction followed due process and that multiple warnings had been issued to clear the encroachments. Police personnel present during the operation said that they were there only to assist the railways and denied

responsibility for planning or executing the demolition. Residents said they planned to approach the High Court to seek legal remedies as proper notice and rehabilitation were not provided.

Kogilu Layout:

The demolition drive carried out in Kogilu, on the northern periphery of Bengaluru, has emerged as a stark illustration of the human cost of the city’s aggressive urban expansion. In late December, authorities razed large sections of informal settlements in areas such as Fakir Colony and Waseem Layout, displacing hundreds of families, many of them migrant workers who have lived and worked in the city for years. The demolitions were officially justified as the removal of “illegal encroachments” on government land earmarked for a solid waste management project.

Families reported that they were given no advance notice, with bulldozers arriving early in the morning under heavy police presence. Houses built incrementally over years were flattened within hours, leaving behind piles of debris and people scrambling to salvage belongings. The displaced included daily-wage labourers, domestic workers, street vendors and sanitation workers who form the invisible backbone of Bengaluru’s economy. With no immediate rehabilitation or alternative accommodation in place, families were forced to spend nights in the open, relying on community support and temporary relief arranged by activists. Children’s schooling was disrupted, and access to food, water and toilets became an immediate crisis.

The Kogilu demolitions quickly escalated into a political flashpoint. Opposition parties accused the Congress-led Karnataka government of engaging in ‘bulldozer justice’, drawing parallels with demolitions carried out in other states and alleging selective targeting of Muslim and migrant communities. The controversy spilled beyond Karnataka, with leaders from Kerala, including the CPI(M), strongly condemning the demolitions and questioning how a government that claims to be progressive could carry out such an action without ensuring rehabilitation. The BJP joined the fray banking on the identities of the evicted families and accused Congress of appeasement for promising the bare minimum of alternative shelters.

In the days following the demolitions, reports began to surface of groups affiliated to Hindutva groups targeting other migrant settlements around Bengaluru, emboldened by the Kogilu drive. Activists warned that the demolitions had sent a signal that informal housing, particularly that inhabited by



Demolition at KG Halli

migrants and minorities—could be removed with impunity. This intensified fear among thousands of families living in similar settlements across the city, many of whom possess identity documents, voter IDs and Aadhaar cards but lack formal land titles.

Public anger within Bengaluru also grew. Residents and activists staged protests, including a demonstration outside the residence of Revenue Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, demanding immediate relief, housing alternatives and accountability for the manner in which the demolitions were conducted. Protesters challenged attempts by some political actors to label the displaced residents as ‘illegal’ or ‘foreigners’, arguing that such narratives were being used to dehumanise people and shift attention away from the state’s failure to provide affordable housing and follow due process.

The Karnataka State Human Rights Commission took cognisance of the situation, raising concerns about whether the demolitions violated basic human rights and whether authorities had followed established norms requiring notice, consultation and rehabilitation before eviction. Legal experts and civil society groups pointed out that even when settlements are deemed unauthorised, the state has a constitutional obligation to protect the right to life and dignity, which includes access to shelter.

The Kogilu demolitions have reopened long-standing questions about Bengaluru’s model of urban development. The city’s rapid growth has depended heavily on migrant labour, yet housing policies have consistently failed to accommodate low-income workers. Informal settlements have proliferated not out of choice, but necessity, filling the gap left by the absence of affordable rental housing and inclusive urban planning.

Ashwath Nagar (Thanisandra):

The demolitions commenced at 6 AM on January 8, 2026, and continued until 2 PM. Authorities returned at 4 PM to resume operations, indicating a rushed and aggressive approach. No prior notices were issued to the residents, violating basic legal procedures for evictions. This sudden action left families unprepared and in distress. Although the BBMP, now Greater Bengaluru Authority, had issued e-Khata (electronic property records) to some residents, the land falls under the jurisdiction of the Bangalore Development Authority (BDA). BDA officials claimed the area is part of the Arkavathy Layout Project notified in 2004 and alleged that the land was illegally sold and subdivided over the years. Out of approximately 64 houses in the area, more than 30 were demolished. Primarily kuccha structures were targeted, while pucca (permanent) houses received notices prior to any action, revealing inconsistencies in enforcement. A local Congress leader claimed that the property belongs to D.K. Shivakumar, a prominent real estate giant and the Deputy Chief Minister, raising questions about conflicts of interest and selective enforcement.



Demolished houses in Thanisandra

Residents reported being manhandled and dragged from their homes while still asleep. This included vulnerable groups such as women and children, and disabled people across ages (including heart and stroke patients), exacerbating the trauma of the event. Some residents protested by threatening self-harm, such as drinking acid, in a desperate bid to halt the demolitions. Police vans were deployed at the site, and officers, along with Congress leaders, allegedly threatened evicted families to vacate using brute force by the morning of January 12, 2026. Women were specifically instructed to stay with relatives, and police warned that any protest would be dispersed within 30 minutes. Just two days before the demolitions, Cauvery water was supplied to the area for the first time, creating a false sense of security among residents.

Affected families have erected makeshift tents without adequate protection from the elements. Toilets in the area are in abysmal condition, posing health risks. Some residents had built and rented out temporary structures, which were also demolished, leading to a loss of rental income. An elderly man shared that his three sons had not gone to work for three days following the demolitions due to the chaos and need to salvage belongings. The area is home to daily wage earners and low-income families, many of whom now face homelessness. School-going children have been unable to attend classes, with their books and study materials stuck under the rubble or destroyed. The neighbourhood is predominantly Muslim, with a significant number of Tamil Dalits, making this eviction particularly impactful on marginalised communities already facing socio-economic challenges.

Local Congress leaders distributed ₹25,000 to some affected families, an amount insufficient for finding alternative housing in Bengaluru's expensive real estate market. Additionally, Congress and the Social Democratic Party of India (SDPI) workers provided biscuits and packaged drinking water as immediate relief. The local MLA and Minister Krishna Byre Gowda, who has won elections in the constituency for the past four terms, has reportedly never visited the area, showing a lack of interest. Some residents had previously challenged the government in the Karnataka High Court six years ago and won their case. They now express intent to approach the Supreme Court to seek justice and prevent further encroachments on their rights.

The minimal relief provided fails to address the long-term needs of displaced families, who are now living in precarious conditions amid ongoing threats from law enforcement. We demand immediate halt to further demolitions and rebuilding of the destroyed property, provision of adequate temporary shelter, sanitation, and basic amenities for affected families; a transparent investigation into the ownership claims and the decision-making process behind the evictions; fair compensation and rehabilitation packages that enable families to rebuild their lives, including support for education and livelihoods; accountability for police and officials involved in manhandling residents and issuing threats; and engagement from elected representatives to address the grievances of marginalised communities in the area. This report calls for solidarity with the affected residents in all these areas spending sleepless nights in an uncertain present and future. The civil society, activists, and political organisations must strive to amplify their voices against such injustices.

These demolition drives exemplify a pattern of state-sponsored evictions targeting the urban poor without adequate rehabilitation or legal safeguards. It must be seen in conjunction with the broader agenda of city expansion for the benefit of real estate giants and multinational corporations setting up shop in Bengaluru, one of the biggest hubs of foreign investment. The absence of notices, combined with allegations of political ownership, shows that Congress, despite its slogans of social justice, will stoop to any level to appease its corporate masters. It must be noted that this ‘bulldozer raj’ is not confined to the city limits, it is connected with the displacement of farmers from their land in the outskirts too. With the pushing out of industries from the cities, the newer ones, be it godowns serving the service sector or factories, are coming up on the peripheries. Thus, demolitions in KG Halli, Kogilu layout and Ashwath Nagar, and land grab in Devanahalli, Anekal, Bidadi, are all part of the same neoliberal agenda.

The Anti-Imperialist Legacy of Chandrashekhar Azad

Ganga

Chandrashekhar Azad (23 July 1906–27 February 1931) stands as a symbol of uncompromising resistance against British Imperialism. Born in Bhavra (Madhya Pradesh), Azad became politically conscious very early on; he was aware of how brutal the system of colonialism was, and he was greatly affected by the mass killing of Jallianwala Bagh. At 15 years Azad entered the freedom movement as a participant in the Non-Cooperation Movement (1921). He was arrested and brought before court for picketing. In the court, the judge asked the young satyagrahi :

“What is your name?” - “Azad.” (Free)

“Your father’s name?” - "Swadheenta." (Freedom)

“Residence?” -“Jail.”

Infuriated by these answers, the magistrate sentenced him to fifteen lashes. The young Chandrashekhar later gave real meaning to the name ‘Azad’, and was never arrested later.

Disillusioned by the abrupt withdrawal of the Non-Cooperation Movement by Gandhi after the Chauri Chaura incident in 1922, he joined the revolutionary movement. Soon, he became a member of Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) formed by Ramprasad Bismil, Sachindranath Sanyal and others. HRA rejected the bourgeois leadership of Gandhi and Congress which compromised with British after each movement. Gradually, he became a central figure in HRA. Azad never aspired to formal leadership positions. Yet, naturally, everyone looked to him in moments of crisis. His decisions were practical, his judgement sharp, and his courage steady. He neither panicked nor hesitated. After the Kakori Action and subsequent arrest and execution of Ram Prasad Bismil and his fellow Comrades, Azad assumed the responsibility of re-organising HRA and helped

mentor a new generation of revolutionaries, who followed him and continued a link in the ideological tradition. HRA was later renamed as Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) in September 1928 to give an ideological direction to the revolutionary movement, that was missing earlier. HSRA declared the aim of the revolution is not only the national liberation from British imperialism, but to bring Socialism, to establish the dictatorship of the proletariat, and finally to establish a classless society. Chandrashekhar Azad was elected Commander-in-Chief of HSRA. He was also the chief organizer and military strategist of the HSRA. Their adoption of socialism and vision of a republic free from exploitation of workers and peasants marked a step beyond narrow nationalism toward class-conscious anti-imperialism. Under Azad’s leadership, HSRA carried out propaganda and actions aimed at destabilizing colonial rule and inspiring mass awakening. Betrayed by a spy, Azad was surrounded by the British police on 27th February, 1931 in Allahabad’s Alfred Park. A fierce encounter followed. Azad took shelter behind a tree and returned fire with remarkable calm. Several policemen were injured. The police could not advance despite being in large numbers. When his ammunition began to run out, he assessed the situation clearly. Escape was no longer possible. Azad had long resolved that such a fate would never be allowed. With his last remaining bullet, he fulfilled his vow. He shot himself, choosing death over captivity.

Today, 95 years after his martyrdom, his life and legacy inspires ongoing struggles against imperialism, and all forms of exploitation. Today when the workers and peasants of India are still suffering, true emancipation of people demands fulfilment of dreams of early revolutionaries like Azad.

The Corporate Plunder of Aravallis Digs India's Grave

Saniya

The Aravalli range is one of the oldest mountain ranges of the world, dating back nearly 2,000 million years. It spans over 700 km, stretching across Gujarat, Rajasthan, Haryana and Delhi. The present-day Aravallis are remnants of a much larger prehistoric mountain system, reduced over millions of years by weathering and erosion, sped up by mining activities over the past few decades. The Aravallis act as a natural barrier against Thar desert expansion into Delhi, Uttar Pradesh, Haryana and Madhya Pradesh. They also play a crucial role in replenishing groundwater and absorbing heat and dust.

In November 2025, the Supreme Court accepted a new definition of the Aravalli Hills proposed by a central government-led committee. According to this definition, Aravalli Hills were those landforms rising 100 m above the surrounding base area, and two or more such hills within 500 m of each other would qualify as an Aravalli range. This is dangerous in many aspects. Usually, the height of hills and mountains are calculated with the sea level as the baseline. However, in the new definition, the height is calculated from the surrounding base area. This definition opens up more than 90% of the hills to mining and construction activities. According to the Forest Survey of India, only 1,048 out of 12,081 hills are more than 100 m above the surrounding base area. Aravalli hills, with their natural cracks and fissures, have the potential to add 2 million litres of water per hectare in the ground every year. The groundwater aquifers under these hills hold large quantities of water and can release it slowly, contributing to the stability of groundwater level.

Post the LPG reforms of the Indian economy in the 1990s, the government policy framework on mining has seen a major shift. Mining operations, which used to be owned and controlled publicly by state enterprises were now handed over to private entities. Mining regulations were relaxed for the ease of business and profit-making, making India an attractive investment site. This allowed for increased mining leases in the Aravallis, a “protected” zone. Since then, mining and real estate business had been prevalent in the region illegally, with politicians, ex-SC judges and MPs owning pieces of land there. Now, after the redefining of Aravalli and the subsequent exclusion of over 90% of the hills from protection, mining is only going to increase and exacerbate the pollution and climate crisis.

The redefining of Aravallis sparked huge protests especially in northwestern India. Thousands of people were out on the streets resisting this move, calling out the government for prioritizing corporate interests and profits over ecological sustainability. To dissolve these protests and manipulate the public, the government put out a press-note declaring that no mining leases will be given in the Aravallis. This is nothing but a reiteration of the order given by the Supreme Court in November 2025, which directs the Ministry of Environment,



Protests against mining projects in Aravalli

Forest and Climate Change to prepare a Management Plan for Sustainable Mining (MPSM) for the Aravallis through the Indian Council for Forestry Research and Education (ICFRE). The aim of this is to identify “permissible areas for mining”, and it says that no mining leases should be granted until the MPSM is finalized. In the government’s statement however, they conveniently refused to comment on the people’s concerns of the new definition of the Aravallis and make changes to it.

Environment Minister Bhupendra Yadav went to the extent of saying that the new definition will bring more than 90% of the Aravalli region under “protected area”. The government also reached out to influencers who had posted content in favour of Aravalli hills, asking them to delete their content and market the new definition as a favourable move that would save the Aravallis and improve infrastructure and development. Many influencers denied and exposed the government online for paying influencers to shape public opinion in their favour. Godi media, on the other hand, said that the Aravallis, which absorb heat and dust and help reduce pollution, are responsible for Delhi pollution.

The Supreme Court has put a temporary stay on its judgement accepting the redefinition of the Aravallis. A high-powered panel of domain experts is responsible to review and assess the committee’s report in detail. Legalizing the corporate plunder of the Aravallis is going to have drastic impacts on the already worsening climate of India. Delhi NCR, Gujarat, Uttar Pradesh, and Haryana would turn into semi-deserts in a few decades without the Aravallis. Agriculture would be severely hampered due to groundwater depletion. The Aravallis hills are also home to diverse flora and fauna that play a crucial role in preserving ecological balance that will be doomed to oblivion.

At the heart of the Aravallis crisis lies the state-corporate nexus where both players benefit off each other. Large foreign and domestic corporations dictate policies and bend regulations to loot resources and maximize corporate profits, and in turn provide electoral funding. Under capitalism, the state’s role is to maintain the hegemony of the ruling classes so that they can continue to make large profits. It is the need of the hour to jointly resist the looting of our natural resources and expose the false “development” narrative that prioritizes profits over people, or the graves they dig will eventually swallow all of us.

Adani's Green hunt

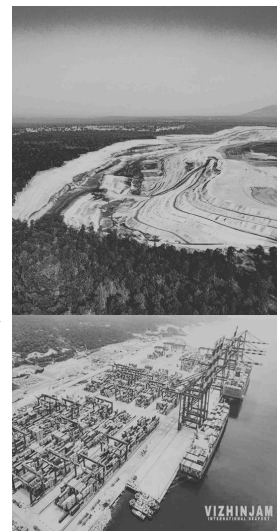
Aratrika

The world has seen a meteoric rise of the Indian business magnate Gautam Adani since 2014, exemplified by his quantum leap in the Forbes richest list to the 29th position as of 2026, from the 609th position in 2014. Around 2022, before the whole Hindenburg fiasco, Adani even climbed to the 3rd position for a while. In stark contrast, India's Global Hunger Index has risen to a 'serious' 25.8 in 2025 as compared to a 'moderate' 17.8 in 2014. Wealth being a creation of labour, the rise of Adani and the fall in mass standards of living have to be seen in the light of private appropriation of surplus while it is generated collectively. This article will explore in particular Adani's assault on nature, propped primarily by the BJP government, that has led to massive displacement, loss of livelihoods, pauperisation, and environmental collapse.

Despite a worsening climate crisis, Adani Power has been investing majorly in coal extraction and thermal power plants. It is doubling its thermal power capacity to 38,000 MW in the coming years through consumption of 155 million tonnes of coal. A total of 20 proposed and operational coal mines have Adani enterprises as the Mine Developer and Operator (MDO) within India. Internationally, Adani owns the Carmichael mines in Australia and Bunyu coal mines in Indonesia. The displacement of indigenous people remains a common thread. These mines together have a reserve of over 7 billion tonnes of coal. Most of these reserves coming under dense forests, mining would involve clearing of huge tracts of forest land. The most recent images coming from Hasdeo exhibit both the human and natural cost of these projects. Adani Power is also planning to expand its thermal power production capacity to 37.83 gigawatts. These plants are in various stages of approval, functioning, or have been halted due to ongoing local protests. One close example is that of Udupi Power Plant that has faced local protests due to its polluting effects. The use of police forces to evict villagers and forest-dwellers have often been reported. The collusion of government agencies with the Adani enterprises is also visible in the interplay between Adani-operated mines supplying coal for government utilities and vice versa.

As of today, the Adani Ports and Special Economic Zone Limited (APSEZ) operates 13 ports across India, emerging as India's biggest private port operator. The APSEZ website states that it manages 24% of the national port capacity. Adani Ports also has their fingers dipped in international ventures at Haifa (a recent acquisition in Israel, amidst the ongoing genocide of Palestinians), Colombo (Sri Lanka), Dar-es-Salaam (Tanzania), Chabahar (Iran), besides operating a port facility in conjunction with the Carmichael mines in Australia. Recently, the Adani group has expressed interest in investing in a massive trans-shipment port in the Great Nicobar islands at a debilitating human and environmental cost, as part of the Government of India's ambitious Great Nicobar Development Project. The locals as well as observers from the mainland

have been protesting this plan that will obliterate a biodiversity hotspot. Around 2022, there was a massive popular movement against the then upcoming Adani port in Vizhinjam, Kerala, that was crushed by the state government through the use of brutal state machinery, in collusion with the BJP at the centre. Since the start of operations, at least two people lost their lives to truck accidents in the area. If the struggle to protect the Nicobars is not strengthened, it may meet the same fate.



Adani's 'Pocket Squires': What stands out in the Vizhinjam movement is the role of the CPI(M) in enabling the Adani takeover and brutalising the protesters through the use of police force, false cases, and defamation. It exposed the class collaborationist character of CPI(M) and its consonance with any other bourgeois party when it comes to serving the ruling classes. In the neighbouring Tamil Nadu, residents of Ennore have been protesting the expansion of Adani's Kattupalli port since 2021. The locals have repeatedly appealed to the DMK government to halt the expansion into the surrounding eco-sensitive zones. Despite verbal assurance by MK Stalin, the project remains on the cards, with significant delays resulting from popular resistance. In December, 2025, Adani Group bagged the lowest bid for the Bangalore tunnel road project. This tunnel road project spearheaded by Deputy CM DK Shivakumar, is anticipated to be disastrous for the city. Despite wide opposition from different quarters, the Congress government in the state has not budged.

As for the BJP, the rise of Adani can be visibly traced to BJP's coming to power at the centre. With Modi's allyship, Adani has expanded its presence in the coal sector, ports, airports, weapons, solar power, aerospace, etc. at unprecedented scales. In 2017, an agreement was signed by Adani Power with the Bangladesh government for transport of electricity from Adani's 1600 MW Godda (Jharkhand) power plant. Recently, a committee from Bangladesh discovered 'egregious anomalies' in this deal and has pushed for its annulment. In 2018, Adani Enterprises and Elbit Systems (Israel's largest arms producer) launched a joint venture, Adani Elbit Advanced Systems India Limited to manufacture weaponry for the Israeli Occupation Forces. In 2023, when Adani's string of cons was exposed by the US-based Hindenburg firm, the company responded with a statement equating the attack on Adani group to an attack on the sovereignty of India. Despite the filing of bribery charges, securities fraud, wire fraud and related conspiracies against the Adanis, both the US and Indian governments have so far failed to summon the accused.

The bottom line is, Modi's rule did manage to bring Achhe Din, however it remains limited primarily to the Adani enterprises.

Kidnapping Sovereignty: US Imperialism and the Assault on Venezuela

Anagha



The United States' kidnapping of Venezuela's president through an overt military operation against a sovereign state, followed by the public arraignment of a sitting head of government in a US court, marks a decisive rupture in the already eroded landscape of international law. Whatever rhetorical disguises are employed, whether 'capture', 'law enforcement', or 'counter-narcotics', the substance remains unchanged: it was a naked act of imperial coercion.

Under both customary international law and the United Nations Charter, the operation is indefensible. Heads of state enjoy immunity except in one narrowly defined circumstance: an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court. No such warrant exists for Nicolás Maduro or for any member of the Venezuelan government. By contrast, an ICC warrant does exist for the Zionist prime minister Benjamin Mileikowsky, aka Netanyahu, who recently flew through European airspace and entered Washington.

What we are looking at is not a one-off, but a model being tested for export. If this decapitation play works even partially, if a sovereign government can be struck, its head of state seized, and the world can be trained to call it "law enforcement", then every Latin American government that has ever tried to resist US-imperialism is in threat. Even in the case of Europe, Trump's calculation is long-term: he does not need today's so-called centrist politicians. He is betting that within a decade, Europe's fascists will consolidate, with figures like Nigel Farage in the UK, Le Pen types in France, the AfD, and similar parties in Germany gaining power. The Arab world, meanwhile, remains highly compromised. Not because Arab populations lack courage, but because the regimes have perfected an art of silence. The Arab League has basically gone to sleep, and the governments that should be threatening to tear up agreements with the Zionist regime instead normalise, provide diplomatic cover, and act as if genocide is a weather report. Imperialism thus manufactures a class of compradors serving the imperial interests.

The Venezuelan operation also clarifies something else. Unlike in Iraq, Afghanistan, or Libya, this intervention was not preceded by extensive ideological conditioning of domestic US audiences. There was no decade-long, focused Hollywood propaganda, nor was there a sustained narrative of humanitarian rescue. The justification was rushed, incoherent, and quickly abandoned. Even within the United States, the narcotics narrative collapsed almost immediately, replaced by open admissions that the real objective was oil and geopolitical leverage. This reflects a structural change in US power, where, while the capacity to destroy remains overwhelming, the capacity to persuade is degraded. It is essentially a system that compensates for economic and industrial decline by intensifying its reliance on military and police force. The United States can flatten infrastructure, disable power grids, and abduct leaders, but it cannot translate

this violence into stable political outcomes.

That contradiction is already visible on the ground. Despite the seizure of the president, the Venezuelan state has not collapsed. Constitutional succession mechanisms were activated, the military command structure remains intact, and mass mobilisations demanding Maduro's return have been taking place. On the other hand, the loudest applause to the kidnapping has come from a narrow, privileged diaspora and the local compradors: English-speaking, affluent, and structurally aligned with US capital. Their visibility is amplified through online bots, astroturf campaigns, and AI-generated imagery portraying grateful Venezuelans welcoming their own destruction. On the ground, among the poor and working classes who bore the costs of sanctions and blockades, the response has been defiance, not gratitude.

The geopolitical implications extend far beyond Caracas. Venezuela has functioned for over two decades as a nodal point of anti-imperialist coordination in Latin America: sustaining Cuba, enabling regional integration, and offering material support to left movements across the continent. In this sense, the attack on Venezuela parallels the ongoing campaign to weaken Iran and the axis of resistance in West Asia. The kidnapping of Maduro is about disciplining the Global South, and that international law will not be allowed to constrain imperial action. It is, of course, also about sending a warning to other defiant actors such as Cuba, Colombia, Mexico, and Iran.

Yet the operation also exposes imperial limits. The United States has not occupied Venezuela, nor is it likely to. The scale of mobilisation required would be catastrophic, both militarily and politically. What we are witnessing instead is coercive bargaining through terror: strikes, seizures, and threats designed to force compliance without full-scale invasion. This strategy, however, rests on the assumption that people will accept colonial humiliation, but history suggests otherwise. Latin America remembers the consequences of U.S.-backed regime change: mass repression, disappearances, and counter-revolution. The kidnapping of Venezuela's president is therefore not a demonstration of imperial confidence but of imperial desperation by a power that can no longer rule by consent and increasingly governs through spectacle and force. In doing so, it accelerates the erosion of the illusion of legitimacy and consolidates resistance in the Global South.

This is not merely a Venezuelan question. If a head of state can be abducted in broad daylight and the world is instructed to call it "order," then sovereignty becomes a myth. What stands before us is a choice: either surrender and help consolidate an imperial world order, or resist by coming together, across the Global South, to defend sovereignty and collective dignity.

Justice on a sliding scale:

Denial of bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam

Kamran

On January 5, 2026, a Supreme Court bench comprising Justice Aravind Kumar and Justice N.V. Anjaria denied bail to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam, while granting bail subject to many conditions to Gulfisha Fatima, Shifa ur rehman, Meeran Haider, Mohd. Saleem Khan, and Shadab Ahmad. While the decision brings relief to those released, it cannot undo the injustice of their prolonged incarceration. Liberty was restored only after a significant portion of their life was lost to the grind of judicial process, effectively punishing them with more than half a decade of imprisonment while they were still presumed innocent. In its ruling, the court reiterated that a delay in trial alone cannot serve as a sufficient ground for bail. However, this approach shields the prosecution from accountability for stalling such trial proceedings.

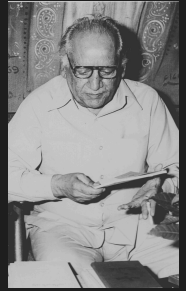
Disparity of the court in treating Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam was rooted in the court's application of the rigid prima facie test under Section 43D(5) of the UAPA. The Court held that the prosecution material, prima facie, attributes a central and formative role to Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam in the alleged conspiracy, while others were mere facilitators. Further restricting their legal options, the Court ruled that Umar Khalid and Sharjeel Imam may apply for fresh bail only after one year or once protected witnesses are examined, whichever occurs first.

The prosecution (State) controls the pace of the trial, including witness examination and the production of evidence. Consequently, the delays inherent in this arrangement force the accused to remain in prison, making their eventual release uncertain and dependent on the state's procedural conduct. Given that both have already been incarcerated for over five years without conviction, this additional waiting period highlights the nature of liberty under the UAPA where bail has lost its role as a right and becomes a conditional relief.

On January 18, 2026, former Chief Justice D.Y. Chandrachud while speaking at the Jaipur literature festival addressed the denial of bail to Umar Khalid, asserting that bail should be a matter of right, grounded in the presumption of innocence. Nevertheless, these reflections stand in sharp contradiction to the reality of his tenure; under his watch, Umar Khalid's bail plea languished through roughly 14 adjournments. Despite possessing the absolute authority to prioritise such sensitive cases, he presided over a system where judicial evasion allowed the process itself to become the punishment. Consequently, his post-retirement concern for the lost years of undertrials reads less like wisdom and more like a hollow attempt to sanitise a legacy defined by the very delays he now criticises.

THIS MONTH IN HISTORY

February 10, 1898- Birthday- Faiz Ahmad Faiz was a Pakistani poet, and author of Urdu and Punjabi literature. Faiz was one of the most celebrated Pakistani Urdu writers of his time. Outside literature, he has been described as "a man of wide experience" having been a teacher, an army officer, a journalist, a trade unionist, and a broadcaster.



February 18, 1946 - The Royal Indian Navy mutiny or revolt, also called the 1946 Naval Uprising, was an insurrection of Indian naval ratings, soldiers, police personnel, and civilians against the colonial British government. From the initial flashpoint in Bombay, the revolt spread and found support throughout British India,

from Karachi to Kolkata, and ultimately came to involve over 20,000 sailors in 78 ships and shore establishments. It was repressed brutally by the British.

February 23, 1991- The Kunan Poshpora incident occurred in Kashmir's Kupwara district, where Indian Army personnel raped at least 23 women during a cordon-and-search operation. Despite survivors' testimonies, the incident faced cover-ups and denials, symbolizing the state violence and struggle for justice in Kashmir.

February 25, 2024- US Air Force member Aaron Bushnell, 25, self-immolated outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C., protesting US support for Israel during the Gaza conflict. He livestreamed the act, declaring he would "no longer be complicit in genocide" and shouting "Free Palestine!" as he burned.

February 26, 1848 - The Communist Manifesto pamphlet was published by two young communists, Karl Marx and Friedrich Engels. It advocated the abolition of all private property and an economic system in which workers own all means of production- land, factories and machinery.

February 27, 1931- Chandra Shekhar Azad killed himself with his last bullet on being surrounded by the British in Alfred Park in Allahabad. He was an Indian revolutionary who alongside Bhagat Singh, reorganized the Hindustan Republican Association (HRA) into Hindustan Socialist Republican Association (HSRA) after the death of its leaders. *(Read the article on pg-9)*



February 28, 2002 - The 2002 Gujarat violence, was a three-day period of anti-Muslim pogroms in Gujarat under the behest of the then CM Narendra Modi.

Socialism and Nature During Stalin:

Environmental Conservation in the Soviet Union

Harish and Sushant

We must demand the nationalisation of all the land, i.e., that all the land in the state should become the property of the central state power. This power must fix the size, etc., of the resettlement land fund, pass legislation for the conservation of forests, for land improvement, etc.

- V.I. Lenin (The Tasks of the Proletariat in Our Revolution)

The grand success of the Five-Year Plans and the socialist industrialisation that followed created clear discontent among the Western imperialist powers, whose own model of blood-sucking capitalist development stood in stark contrast. To defame the Soviet model, leading bourgeois historians seized upon the environmental degradation of Russia in the late 1980s and blamed it on the socialist industrialisation carried out under Stalin. However, a careful reading of history shows that it was during the Stalin era that environmental conservation was actively championed, and that the real ecological decline began only after the capitalist restoration in the Soviet Union post 50's.

The October Revolution and the Birth of Socialist Environmental Policy

Russia experienced massive deforestation during the Tsar's rule, which intensified during World War I. Immediately after the October Revolution (1917), Lenin and Stalin advocated for the nationalization and conservation of forests, as well as aggressive afforestation to repair the damage caused to the forests, in Party conferences in the 1920s (from 1917 to 1920, 268 decrees on nature protection were adopted). In the early years of the Soviet Union, there were two lines of thought regarding development, one of which focused solely on the urgent need for rapid industrialisation to overcome the destruction and poverty caused by the war, while the other considered the sustainable development and conservation of forests a necessity for society. Since the Soviet Union was fundamentally a scientifically oriented society, it adopted the second line (despite the famine, poverty, and economic ruin caused by World War I and the Russian Civil War), becoming the first nation to do so. From then on, the USSR witnessed unprecedented efforts in afforestation and the introduction of environmental protection laws on a scale never seen before in history. (Note that before the 1960s, in the capitalist world, there was no concept of environmental protection, and environmental law did not exist anywhere in the world except the USSR. For example, the US Environmental Protection Agency was founded in 1970.)

Planning the Forests: Stalin and Environmental- onservation

During Stalin's government, environmentalist policies were



A Soviet poster saying protecting nature is the duty of every citizen

strongly supported, establishing levels of protection unparalleled anywhere in the world. The Soviets understood--that humanity is not separate from nature, but is a product of nature, and deeply connected with nature. The Soviet Union--developed a comprehensive and effective environmental program, which encompassed more than just conserving natural resources. Millions of hectares of forest were left untouched, considering that wild forests are best suited to regulate water flows. They even made meaningful economic and political sacrifices in the interests of environmentalism. The concept of nature being fragile and susceptible to harm from human actions was researched and pioneered by Dokuchaev, and further developed during the Soviet period. The concept of the biosphere, and ecology as the science of the biosphere, was developed by V.I. Vernadsky. Environmental Education was added to the school curricula in the 1920s, and a comprehensive study of local nature was started in schools, combining extra-curricular theoretical and practical classes and labour environmental education (Forest Subbotniks, Green and Blue patrols, etc.). Propaganda work began in popular science magazines, newspapers, and children's literature to promote understanding and protection

of nature. These efforts contributed to the formation of useful environmental skills and a reasonable attitude towards environmental protection in schoolchildren and citizens. The All-Russian Society for the Protection of Nature (VOOP) was created in 1924.

The period of 1947 to 1953 was the Zenith of environmentalism and Soviet forest management. In 1947, the Ministry of Forest Management (Minleskhoz) was established with significant authority over the nation's administration. Minleskhoz introduced many radical reforms. The ministry set up around 200 forest protection stations to oversee industrial projects and ensure they did not cause environmental harm. Forest cutting areas were reduced, and the amount of sowing and planting of new groves was sharply expanded. The annual volume of forest sowing and planting increased sevenfold.

According to a Pravda report: "Shelter forest belts have already been planted on more than 800,000 hectares, 306,800 hectares in this spring alone. An irrigation system for 122,000 hectares has been completed, requiring the construction of 8,000 irrigation pools and water tanks. The tasks for this year include planting 700,000 hectares of forest and building 7,587 irrigation pools." (Kommunisti, no. 6, 1950, p. 387). The Soviet Union also undertook numerous hydrological projects to conserve its prominent rivers.

Capitalist Restoration and Environmental Decline

As the revisionists captured power after Stalin's death, all the achievements in forest protection and environmental

conservation were undone, and forest conservation fell into deep decline. Notably, Minleskhoz was dissolved on March 15, 1953, just six days after Stalin's funeral, and forest protection bureaus were demoted or eliminated entirely. Within 6 months, the number of workers

assigned to forest matters in Moscow decreased from 927 to 342 (a drop of 63.1 %) and then to 120 (a drop of 87 %) after a year. From the regional administration, 701 workers out of 1458 were removed. Revisionists promoted capitalism, and the environment was neglected after Stalin's death.

Today, when India is facing a decline in natural forests and ecological health for capitalists' profit, we can learn from the Soviet experience in environmental planning. The USSR's model of centralized ecological policy, scientific forestry, strict legal protections, and state-managed land use planning is the only way to protect the environment.



Stalin's statue near a forest in Lithuania

The Sanitation Workers of Chennai Defeat Privatisation and Emerge Victorious!

The sanitation workers of Chennai waged a 165-day-long historic struggle against the DMK government's corporate policies and privatisation drive and have emerged victorious. The struggle began on July 31st with the outsourcing of solid waste management in Zone 5 (Royapuram) and Zone 6 (Thiru. Vi. Ka. Nagar) of the Greater Chennai Corporation (GCC) to the private contractor Ramky Enviro Engineers Limited. This decision put the livelihoods of nearly 2,000 workers in jeopardy. The workers, backed by the UUI-LTUC-AICCTU trade union alliance, launched a massive protest outside the GCC head office, which drew national attention. The threatened DMK government unleashed a wave of repression, brutally beating and detaining nearly 1,000 protesters.

But the workers did not back down. They immediately regrouped and carried out various other protests. They protested at the memorial of former Chief Minister and DMK leader Karunanidhi, held a protest next to the funeral of Ravi (a sanitation worker) who committed suicide due to these policies, and, as part of their protest, waded into Marina Beach and stood waist-deep in the highly polluted Coovum River. All these actions were met with massive police detentions and violence. The DMK employed every shady tactic to undermine the struggle, from running negative social media campaigns



Sanitation Workers protest in Chennai

against the workers and activists to attempting to distract them with nominal welfare schemes. Despite this, the workers stood firm and launched an indefinite hunger strike in coordinated batches at the LTUC Ambattur office, lasting up to 57 days, forcing the government to bend to their demands. Minister Sekhar Babu, who had earlier dismissed the struggle and made arrogant remarks, now came rushing to their office with a shameless smile and announced that the workers' jobs would be reinstated under the GCC, thus declaring the naked defeat of privatisation in front of the workers' resolve.

It was once again proved that no mighty government or state repression can stop the people, the people united shall always be victorious!

◆— UPDATES ON STUDENT MOVEMENTS —◆



Protest Against Government School Closure Across Karnataka

Student organisations, parents, and teachers across Karnataka, protested to save government schools that face closure and possible merger with Karnataka Public Schools, due to the new KPS Magnet plan by the state government. The demonstrators gathered outside the school and appealed to local officials to prevent the shutdown, warning that closing it would leave children without accessible education. They urged the government to improve the quality of teaching staff, facilities and support to keep the school running for the children.



Gathering to Remember Rohith Vemula

Students of All India Students Association (AISA) gathered in Cubbon Park on January 17th to remember Rohith Vemula. The day marked 10 years since he was institutionally murdered by the BJP-RSS administration of HCU. The gathering pushed for the implementation of the Rohith Act and a call to end all forms of institutional discrimination.



MANUU Students Protest for Restoration of Student Union Elections

Students at Maulana Azad National Urdu University (MANUU), Hyderabad, have been protesting since January 27, demanding the restoration of student union elections that have been stalled for over one and a half years. Despite warnings by the university administration, students launched a protest with sit-ins held during the day and night. Through prayers, poems, songs and slogans, protesters highlighted their demands. Students said repeated appeals to the administration have received no concrete response.



Students in the US Protest Against the ICE

After an ICE (Immigration and Customs Enforcement) agent killed Renée Good on January 7, protests spread across the US, including demonstrations by students and staff at the University of Washington on January 23, joined earlier by about 50 Yale University students, calling for an end to ICE operations and denouncing Trump. Protesters, many organised by the Socialist Alternative, also urged for a general strike. In 2026 alone, at least eight people have been killed by the ICE.



Students in Iran Rally Against Corrupt Government

On January 4th, 2026, security forces locked down students protesting at Tarbiat Modares University (TMU) in order to prevent them from staging public protests. The protests are part of the larger discontent felt in Iran beginning in December 2025 due to plummeting currency rates, untrammelled inflation and the lack of basic amenities being provided by the government. The students at TMU were locked within their campus and also reported arrests happening within their campus. The government of Iran has also severed access to the internet within the country.

CONDEMN THE REACTIONARY PROTESTS AGAINST THE RECENT UGC EQUITY GUIDELINES

We condemn the protests led by BJP-backed organisations and Savarna groups against the new UGC guidelines, titled 'Promotion of Equity in Higher Education Institutions Regulations, 2026'. The guidelines aimed to curb caste-based discrimination in universities and among other things proposed the creation of an Equality of Opportunity Cell which would be chaired by people belonging to the backward castes. The guidelines also sought to increase the scope of what counts as discrimination and harassment. The stay on these guidelines by the Supreme Court upon this backlash, must be revoked immediately.