

**THUS SPAKE
SUBHAS**

“Victory or defeat is not important, but the fight itself is everything”

TOWARDS SOCIALISM



Vol. 23

Issue - 11

November - 2024

English Monthly

RNI Reg. No. DELENG/2002/06389

PRICE HIKES EXORBITANT: GOVERNMENT DOING NOTHING

As of October 2024, India is grappling with a sharp rise in prices of essential goods and services, creating a severe strain on household budgets across the country. Despite the government's assurances, inflation has spiralled out of control, negatively impacting millions of Indian families, especially those from lower-income and middle-class backgrounds. While this price rise has resulted in significant gains for corporations and multinational companies (MNCs), the common man is facing heightened economic distress. The government's failure to implement effective measures to curb inflation has only exacerbated the situation, leading to widespread public disillusionment.

The price rise in India has affected nearly every aspect of daily life. From food and

fuel to housing and healthcare, the cost of essential goods has skyrocketed in recent months. According to official data, inflation in food items has hit double-digit levels, with staples like onions,

G. DEVARAJAN
General Secretary
All India Forward Bloc

Transport costs have also surged, making commuting a heavy financial burden for

Here's a comparison of the prices of essential commodities in India between 2019 and 2024:

Commodity	Price in 2019 (Rs./Kg.)	Price in 2024 (Rs./Kg.)	% of increase
Rice	30	55	83.33
Wheat	25	45	80
Tur Dal	100	160	60
Urad Dal	90	140	55.55
Onion	20	50	150
Potato	15	40	166.66
Tomato	25	50	100
Sugar	40	52	30
Mustard Oil	120	165	37.5
Milk	40	58	45

This table highlights the significant increase in prices of essential commodities over the past five years.

tomatoes, pulses, and cooking oil seeing price hikes that make them unaffordable for many households. Fuel prices, despite periodic adjustments and government interventions, remain stubbornly high, fuelling the broader cost of living crisis.

working-class families.

The inflationary pressure has not been confined to food and fuel. Healthcare costs, including medicines, doctor consultations, and medical tests, have increased steadily. This is compounded by the rising cost of

education, both domestic and foreign, making it harder for families to provide for their children's future without incurring significant debt. In urban areas, rents have been increasing, and home loan EMIs have surged with rising interest rates. The overall impact has been a destabilization of family budgets, forcing households to either cut back on essentials or take on greater financial risks.

While there are several factors contributing to inflation in India, one of the most significant drivers is the rising cost of imports. India is heavily dependent on imports for energy (especially crude oil), industrial inputs, and consumer goods. The depreciation of the Indian rupee in 2024 has further exacerbated this issue, as it makes imports more expensive. Oil prices, which

had already been volatile due to global geopolitical tensions, have spiked in the last year, directly affecting fuel prices. As fuel costs increase, transportation and production costs also rise, leading to a domino effect on the prices of everyday items. Another contributing factor is the lack of adequate government intervention in curbing inflation. While the Reserve Bank of India (RBI) has raised interest rates in an attempt to cool down the economy, the central bank's measures have been slow and insufficient in addressing the root causes of inflation, such as supply-side constraints, rising import costs, and increasing commodity prices. Additionally, structural inefficiencies in the domestic agricultural sector and disruptions caused by weather events have further strained food supply chains,

On Page 2...

A LETTER FROM THE TRADE UNION LEADER SUBHAS CHANDRA BOSE

THAT MADE THE TATAS REVAMP THEIR HR POLICY

During his eventful years in India, before his great escape from house arrest, Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was very closely associated with Indian Industrial Relations. Among the top Indian Nationalist Leaders, the contributions of Netaji to Industrial Relations in India is next only to Mahatma Gandhi, writes

Like Mahatma Gandhi, Netaji too had a clear understanding and views on Indian Industrial Relations. Mahatma Gandhi's

approach to Industrial Relations is popularly known as the "Trusteeship Approach". We can seriously think of a "Subhashite Approach to Industrial Relations.

Netaji's first association with Indian Industrial Relations was in the year 1922 when his political mentor and veteran Indian Nationalist Desh Bandhu Chittaranjan Das got him associated with the Lahore Trade Union Congress. His contributions to Indian Industrial Relations is a direct result of his

Anuplal Gopalan

association with the Indian working class and their trade unions, especially as the Outside Trade Union Leader [President] of the Jamshedpur Labour Association, Tinplate Workers Union, and TISCO Worker's Union. He was elected President of India's first Central Trade Union Federation, the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) in 1931 thereby emerging as the most

important Trade Union Leader of not only British India but also in the entire British Colonial Empire. His political ideology was Left Wing Nationalism. Thus, it is well-known that he was sympathetic to the Indian working class and the stance of the political party he founded in 1939 (after his resignation from the Indian National Congress) – The Forward Bloc reflected this (Bose, 2002, p.13). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was closely associated with the trade union movement in

Calcutta, Bombay, Nagpur, Jamshedpur and Bokaro. As a Nationalist, Netaji was strongly in favour of employing Indians in all Industries operating from Indian soil. His role as an outstanding outside trade union leader was instrumental in the TATA Group preferring Indian workers and higher officials in all its plants. In his letter dated November 12, 1928, addressed to the then Chairman of TATA Steel Mr. N. B. Saklatvala, Netaji

On Page 4...

Editorial

Money Power is Undermining Democracy

The influence of money in Indian elections has been a persistent issue, raising concerns about the integrity and fairness of the democratic process. The recent Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections have once again highlighted the pervasive role of money power in shaping electoral outcomes.

Money plays a crucial role in elections, influencing everything from campaign strategies to voter behavior. Political parties and candidates often rely on substantial financial resources to fund their campaigns, which include advertising, rallies, and voter outreach programs. The increasing cost of elections has led to a greater dependence on wealthy donors and corporate contributions, raising concerns about the potential for corruption and undue influence.

The 2024 Maharashtra and Jharkhand Assembly elections provide a stark illustration of the influence of money power in Indian politics. In Maharashtra, the BJP-led Mahayuti alliance and the opposition Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) coalition engaged in a high-stakes battle, with both sides deploying significant financial resources

to secure votes.

In Maharashtra, the ECI reported seizures worth Rs. 858 crore, which is almost seven times higher than the seizures made during the 2019 Assembly elections. This included significant amounts of illegal cash, precious metals, and other inducements. The BJP General Secretary, Vinod Tawde, was allegedly caught with Rs. 5 crore in cash, leading to a major political controversy.

In Jharkhand, the ECI also reported record-breaking seizures, with a total of Rs. 198 crore worth of cash, drugs, and other inducements confiscated. The BJP-led National Democratic Alliance (NDA) and the opposition Jharkhand Mukti Morcha (JMM)-led INDIA alliance both engaged in intense campaigns, with substantial financial resources deployed to secure votes.

The pervasive influence of money in elections has several implications for Indian democracy. Firstly, it undermines the principle of a level playing field, as candidates with greater financial resources have a distinct advantage over those with limited means. This disparity can skew electoral outcomes and marginalize smaller parties and independent

candidates.

Secondly, the reliance on wealthy donors and corporate contributions raises concerns about the potential for corruption and policy capture. Political parties may feel compelled to cater to the interests of their financial backers, rather than the broader electorate, leading to governance that prioritizes the few over the many.

Lastly, the use of money to influence voter behavior erodes public trust in the democratic process. When voters perceive that elections are being bought, their faith in the integrity of the system diminishes, potentially leading to disengagement and apathy.

Addressing the issue of money power in Indian elections requires a multifaceted approach. Political finance reforms, such as capping donations, enhancing disclosure requirements, and promoting public funding of elections, can help reduce the dependence on private money. Additionally, voter education campaigns can raise awareness about the detrimental effects of money power and encourage citizens to make informed choices.

The Election Commission, political parties, and civil society to ensure that elections remain a true reflection of the people's will.

PRICE HIKES EXORBITANT: GOVERNMENT DOING NOTHING

from page 1..

contributing to the rise in food prices.

The government's failure to take decisive action to control inflation has left many families vulnerable to these price shocks. Despite political promises, the administration has struggled to stabilize the economy, and its focus on short-term measures, such as providing subsidies or direct cash transfers, has been seen as inadequate in the face of a rapidly escalating crisis.

While the price rise has wreaked havoc on the average family's budget, it has worked to the advantage of large corporations and multinational companies. The weakening of the rupee has been a boon for Indian exporters, making their goods more competitive in global markets. Corporations in sectors such as technology, pharmaceuticals, and textiles have benefited from the increased revenue generated by their exports. The depreciation of the rupee also makes India an even more attractive destination for

foreign investment, particularly in manufacturing and services that rely on cheap labor and currency advantages.

MNCs, particularly those in the retail, oil, and automobile sectors, have found ways to leverage the inflationary environment to their benefit. With the rise in fuel prices, oil companies and multinational corporations involved in the energy sector have maintained or even increased their profit margins. Retail giants, both domestic and foreign, have raised prices on goods and services, capitalizing on the demand for consumer products that remain strong despite price hikes. These companies can afford to pass on the costs to consumers while maintaining their bottom line, further widening the gap between corporate profits and the financial hardships faced by the average citizen.

Moreover, multinational companies often benefit from a weaker rupee in ways that Indian businesses cannot. For instance, MNCs with significant dollar-

denominated revenues see their profits rise when converted into rupees. These gains, however, are not shared with the broader population, and their impact on the real economy is minimal compared to the hardships faced by the common people. For the average Indian, wages remain stagnant while costs continue to rise, leading to a further erosion of purchasing power.

For most Indian families, inflation has translated into a painful reduction in their standard of living. The rising prices of essential commodities, coupled with stagnating wages and limited social security benefits, have forced families to tighten their belts. Many have been forced to cut back on discretionary spending, delay important purchases, or rely on credit to make ends meet. Families that were once able to save for future goals, such as children's education or buying a home, now find themselves living paycheck to paycheck. This financial strain is particularly acute for the

working poor and lower-middle-class families, who are the hardest hit by price rises but have the least capacity to absorb the shock. With limited access to credit or savings, many are unable to weather the inflationary storm without sacrificing essentials like health care, education, or adequate nutrition. In rural areas, where incomes are already lower and access to affordable goods is limited, the impact of inflation is even more severe.

Despite the growing discontent among the public, the government has been slow to respond effectively to the crisis. While the political leadership has repeatedly emphasized the strength of the Indian economy and its resilience in the face of global challenges, the ground reality tells a different story. Government initiatives to provide relief, such as subsidies on essential goods or targeted cash transfers, have not been enough to mitigate the widespread hardship. These measures, although helpful in some

cases, have been seen as temporary fixes rather than long-term solutions.

To address the root causes of inflation, the government must take immediate and bold steps. This includes controlling fuel price hikes, strengthening domestic supply chains, increasing agricultural productivity, and addressing the structural inefficiencies in the economy. Additionally, more sustainable fiscal policies are needed to reduce the reliance on imports and build up domestic production capacity, particularly in the food and energy sectors.

Furthermore, the government must focus on policies that benefit the broader population, not just the corporate sector. This could involve enhancing social safety nets, providing direct support to low-income families, and ensuring that wages rise in tandem with inflation. A comprehensive, inclusive economic strategy is essential to ensure that the benefits of growth are widely shared and that ordinary families are not left to bear the brunt of the price rise.

End Corporatisation; Protect People's Livelihood

Worker-Farmer Joint Protest - 26th November 2024

The working people of India are facing distress under the policies of the NDA-3 Government aimed to enrich the Corporates and Super Rich. While the cost of cultivation and inflation is rising at higher than 12-15%, every year, the Govt. is increasing MSP by only 2 to 7%. It raised national paddy MSP by only 5.35% to Rs. 2300 per quintal in 2024-25 without applying C2+50% formulae and no guarantee of procurement. Earlier at least in Punjab and Haryana Paddy and Wheat were procured. But the Central Govt. failed to lift the crop procured last year, stalling paddy procurement this year due to lack of space in Mandis. Farmers are forced onto the streets again even to save their meagre MSP, APMC Markets, FCI and PDS supply.

To further aid MNCs, the Modi Govt. is imposing digitization of land and crops, through Digital Agriculture Mission-DAM- as announced in the Union Budget 2024-25. Plans are afoot to promote contract farming and change cropping patterns from growing food grains to commercial crops, helpful to multinational corporate giant's market supplies. GST - imposed in 2017, and the formation of the Union Cooperative Ministry- in 2019 were an assault upon the federal character of the Constitution and had trimmed the taxation rights of State Governments. The National Cooperation Policy announced in the Budget 2024-25 is aimed at facilitating corporate takeover of post-harvest operations and divert cooperative sector credit to corporates. Indian Council of Agricultural Research (ICAR) has signed many agreements with MNC's for this. In the public sector, the FCI storage, Central Warehouse Corporation and the APMC market yards all are being rented out to corporate companies like Adani and Ambani.

Perpetual deficit in farming causes higher debts and more eviction from agriculture. The acute agrarian crisis forces rural youth in lakhs to migrate to towns and inflate the reserve army of labour. This has a grave impact on workers in the Industrial and service sectors. The 4 labour codes – being imposed by the Modi Govt. - annuls any guarantee on statutory minimum wages, job security, social security, eight-hour working day and right to unionise and collective bargaining. The money from the public exchequer is being syphoned off to corporates in the form of incentives under various heads- Capex, Production Linked Employment and so on. Contractualisation with different names and no recruitment policies push the existing workers and job-seeking youth to virtual slavery. Trade Unions are on a struggle path also to protect the basic right to form Trade Unions; for the revival of the Old Pension Scheme, retirement benefits, workplace safety, effective functioning of legal machinery for redressal of complaints, etc. Build and strengthen worker-farmer unity is of utmost importance for liberating peasantry from pauperisation and agrarian crisis and for workers to win their struggles.

The government is taking away the basic entitlements of the people for the right to food, health and education. Govt. has reduced food subsidy by Rs. 60,470 Cr. (from Rs 2 72 802 Cr. to Rs 2, 12, 332 Cr.) and fertiliser subsidy by Rs. 62,445 Cr. (from Rs 2.51,339 Cr. to Rs 1, 88,894 Cr.) in the last three consecutive years. The PDS has been crashed through a cash transfer scheme in many states as per the WTO diktats. Cash transfer is very meager; food in the market is much costlier. Food deprivation of workers and poor people is rising. 36% of children less than 5 years are underweight, 21% suffer wasting, while 38% are

stunted due to lack of food. 57% of women 67% of children are anemic. Public health and Education systems are being privatized rampantly with thousands of government schools getting closed down and higher education is out of bounds to common people. Even district hospitals are being privatized in various states with a shift in



healthcare to an insurance-based system where only private insurance companies and private hospitals prosper. Privatisation of all strategic production including defence and basic and crucial services including electricity and transport will totally jeopardise the self-reliance of the country and is affecting the income of the government. Farm and forest lands are being forcefully acquired in the name of industrialization, but actually it is for entertainment facilities for the super-rich, commercial use, tourism, real estate, etc. with the Govt. shamelessly refusing to implement LARR Act 2013 and the Forest Rights Act-FRA and forceful eviction of tribal people from their land.

Corporates are allowed to extract high revenue from the people for electricity through smart meters, high tariffs of mobile networks, rising toll charges, high prices of cooking gas, diesel and petrol etc. The corporate taxes are further being reduced. On the contrary, working people - farmers, industrial and agricultural workers- and the middle classes are getting

crushed under debt burden due to price rise, and increase in expenditure on basic services causing alarmingly increasing suicides of all sections. The GST is being extended to even the premium of health insurance for the poor. Rural poor and landless are further forced to take microcredit loans on high interest rates to survive, worsening the situation. The already low real wages of the workers, especially in rural India is getting reduced. Modi Govt. has waived more than Rs 16.5 lac Cr. debts of Corporate Houses, but refused to free farmers and agriculture workers from indebtedness through a comprehensive loan waiver and credit policy.

The Modi Govt. has violated the written agreement of 9th December 2021 with the SKM. It is continuously trying to polarize working people along communal lines and instigate violence to divert attention from the real livelihood issues. The atrocities on women and socially backward sections are increasing alarmingly. In this context, the first ever all India worker-farmer convention at Talkatora Stadium on 24th August 2023 had adopted a charter of demands and called for continuous struggles. The Mahapadav in November 2023, Industrial strike and Grameen Bandh on 16th February 2024 and the campaign that followed to expose and oppose BJP were major factors that resulted in a decisive setback to NDA in the 18th Lok Sabha election. In the Haryana assembly election, despite staying in power, NDA's vote share declined from 44% to 39.9%. Intensifying mass struggles across India is the right path to politicise people thus decisively to defeat pro-corporate political parties in electoral struggles.

It is to be noted that many state governments opposed to the BJP are also many times pursuing anti-farmer anti -

worker policies which also need to be opposed. It is also important that we must wage war for alternative pro people policies opposed to the pro-corporate policies for improving the working and living conditions of the people. State Governments must enact the Cooperative Farming Act to promote the Consortium of Producer Cooperatives, Collectives, Micro- Small- Medium Enterprises supported by the Public Sector in Credit, procurement, processing and branded marketing.

A massive mobilization of farmers, rural poor and industrial workers on 26th November in districts all over India marks the momentous occasion of the 4th anniversary of the beginning of the grand struggle of the farmers coordinated with the countrywide general strike of workers that day against 3 Black Farm laws and four labour codes. In the background of the aggressive war on the working people by the BJP-led NDA government, the protest action is based on the 12 focal demands and the charter of demands of workers and farmers adopted on 24th August 2023. To get these demands realised continuous, massive united struggles are the need of the hour.

We appeal to all sections - workers, farmers, women, students, youth, marginalized sections, cultural activists, and progressive individuals, to join this action and create awareness that massive mobilisations and agitations are the only path to achieve victory. Major Demands

1. MSP@C2+50% with Legally Guaranteed Procurement for all Crops
2. Repeal 4 Labour Codes; No Contractualisation or outsourcing of labour in any form.

3. Implement National Minimum Wage of Rs. 26000/month and pension @Rs.10000pm and Social Security benefits for all

on page 7...

THAT MADE THE TATAS REVAMP THEIR...

from page 1...

said, "One of the most important problems before the Company (TATA Steel) is that it lacks senior officials from India. I have no doubt that if you go ahead with your policy of Indianisation of Tata Steel, you will be able to ingratiate yourself with your Indian employees, your countrymen as well as with public leaders of all shades of opinion". This letter was taken seriously by the TATAs and paved the way for the appointment of more Indians in key positions in that Company (Simeon, 1995). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was given the post of the President of TATA Steel Workers Union in the year 1928, as the third President of the union formed in the year 1920. Though the TATA group is now well known as the initiators of various progressive labour welfare and social security schemes, it was Netaji's relentless fight including the 1928 strike which he led that ultimately resulted in all these. In fact, there was an attack on Netaji during a meeting in the year 1931 (September 20) which resulted in the disruption of the meeting. Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose's efforts were indeed responsible for the implementation of maternity benefits for women employees of TATA and also the extension of Gratuity and Pensions for all sections of TATA workers. Netaji's fearless and relentless struggles also resulted in a historic Memorandum of Agreement (signed by the Chairman N. B. Saklatvala, General Manager C.A. Alexander, and Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose) resulting in the first ever profit Sharing bonus for Tata Steel workers. It may be noted that profit-sharing bonus for Indian workers became statutory in free India only in the year 1965 with the introduction of The Payment of Bonus Act, 1965 (Simeon, 1995, p.70). It is a fact that initially, the Tatas feared that Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was a new threat to their capitalist interests. Labour Historians cum Journalists such as Dr. Dilip Simeon and Jane Ajaz Ashraf have brought out

evidence to prove the fact that the then TATA big bosses had a role in violently disrupting the meeting of September 20, 1931, addressed by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. However, no one could (including the 300 plus hooligans who were involved in attacking Bose's meeting) break his willpower or courage in his fight for worker's rights. The TATAs, who were totally unwilling to negotiate with the strike committee of TATA Steel Workers, had to budge when Netaji Bose took over as the President of the said Union. This was one of the reasons for Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose to strongly advocate the presence of Outside leaders in Trade Unions (Simeon, 1995). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose strongly advocated the "Tri-Partite Scheme of Industrial Relations wherein the Government or the State should play a major role in every sphere of Industrial Relations. He considered the State as an indispensable Party in the Industrial Relations Scheme and regarded that the State has the duty of providing employment to citizens or take up the responsibility of maintaining the unemployed citizens. He emphasised the need for Social Security and Labour Welfare Programmes (Bose, 2002, p.153). In the case of any retrenchment of workers, the State must interfere to solve the associated problems satisfactorily and establish Industrial Peace in the Country. Netaji considered labour problems as political problems and highlighted the necessity of various ameliorative programmes for the benefit of Labour. Netaji was fully aware of the vulnerable position of the Indian workers and thus favoured outside leadership in Trade Unions as one of the means of preventing victimization of Trade Union leaders by the employers. He, therefore, strongly opposed the proposal of the Royal Commission of Labour to amend The Indian Trade Unions Act, 1926 which was enacted as a result of a five-year-long struggle by another

veteran Nationalist Narayan Malhar Joshi, who is revered as the father of modern Indian Trade Union Movement. It is interesting to note that in Independent India, the first major amendment to the Trade Unions Act, 1926 actually resulted in tightening of outside leadership in Indian Trade Unions (Bose, 1997, p.124). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose envisaged a Socialist Republic of India wherein every citizen should have the right to work and the right to a living wage (highest wage) and not merely a minimum wage whatever be the occupation. He respected the dignity of labour. Netaji had strongly opposed the recommendations of the Royal Commission of Labour for a minimum wage. He was among the first leaders to strongly advocate equality of wages for both men and women in all type of work. On the 4th of July 1931, in his famous speech at the Calcutta Session of the All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC) Netaji proclaimed "I have no doubt in my mind that salvation of India, as of the world, depends on Socialism.....but India should be able to evolve her own environment..... India should, therefore, evolve her own form of Socialism". During his Presidential Address to the third Indian Political Conference in London on the 10th of June 1933, clearly spelling out his vision for the future (of independent India), Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose proudly proclaimed "Free India will not be a land of capitalists, landlords, and Castes". He was also dead against separate electorates (on Communal lines). He was optimistic that once the New Free Regime in India is established sufficient attention could be given for the eradication of social problems. He wrote in his August 1942 Article, "India will be able to concentrate her whole attention on the solution of social problems. The most important social problem is that of poverty and unemployment" (Bose, 2002, p.149). Netaji considered literacy of workers as very important. He often warned the peasants

and workers to keep away from communal feuds. He considered secular and scientific education as the means to remedy fanaticism and to initiate an economic consciousness. In "Vision of a Free India" (1928), he stated, "There is much in common between a Hindu peasant and a Muslim peasant than between a Muslim peasant and a Muslim Zamindar" (Ayer, 1972, p.33). Netaji wrote extensively on the Indian trade union movement. He advocated the organization of peasants and workers on a Socialist Programme. He was against the policy of the most prominent political party in British India – the Indian National Congress (INC) – which tried to accommodate various capitalist groups, as it is often detrimental to the working class interest. He was very optimistic about the inner strengths of Indian Trade Unions and advocated the use of trade union power against the British imperialistic rule in India. According to Netaji, the organised forces of Labour (including peasants) must strive to promote the cause of India's political emancipation. He warned that if trade unions were to become a loose federation, it would be suicidal to the Indian working class. He considered strikes as an effective weapon in the hands of the exploited working class, to strongly express their grievance and gain their legitimate rights when all other methods fail. In this case, his ideas of strike matched with the ideas of Mahatma Gandhi. Netaji has the credit of leading some major strikes in India for genuine reasons, to great success (Ayer, 1972, p.63). Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose was very clear that in Free India, it would be the responsibility of the Nationalist Government to look after the welfare of the labourers providing them with a living wage, sickness insurance, and accident-related compensation. He wanted various institutions for labour welfare in India. Netaji was greatly impressed by the German and other European Labour Welfare Bodies. He gave a detailed account of all these in his article "Free India and Her Problems" published

in August 1942 (Bose, 2002, p.154). It is important for students of Industrial Sociology and Industrial Relations to note that many of the suggestions and ideas of Netaji regarding socialist state, literacy of workers, secularism, worker's rights, national integration, labour welfare, etc., finds a place in the objectives of the leading Central Trade Union Federations. All India Trade Union Congress [AITUC], Indian National Trade Union Congress [INTUC] and Centre of Indian Trade Unions [CITU]. These also find a prominent place in the Constitution of India and the recommendations given by the First National Commission of Labour. Netaji's commitment to establish Socialism and develop an exploitation free world order particularly for the working class was "seriously" taken note of by the British-Indian Intelligence. The Head of the Political Wing of the Bengal Presidency Administration, Mr. A. B. Moberly, in a secret report to his political masters of the British Colonial Government, informed that the Trade Union activities of Subhas Chandra Bose were detrimental to the interest of road transport and the supply of petrol as well. And so "He (Subhas Chandra Bose) should be removed from this form of activities" (Basu, 2009, p.284). One of his greatest contributions to Industrial Relations was his ability to instill a sense of patriotism and a sense of responsibility to the motherland among the workers with whom he was associated. He was of the strong view that Indian Trade Unions should take an anti-imperialist stand. Left wing Trade Union Federations of India like The All India Trade Union Congress (AITUC), Centre of Indian Trade Unions (CITU), Trade Union Co-ordination Centre (TUCC) & Hind Mazdoor Sabha (HMS) have incorporated Netaji's ideas of Socialism and anti-imperialism in their Constitution. (Prof. Anuplal Gopalan is Assistant Professor of Industrial Relations, St. Joseph's College (Autonomous), Bangalore. He is a philatelist & numismatist besides being a 'Subhas Chandra Bose' researcher.) Courtesy: The Edition.

DOES DATA JUSTIFY THE SUBDIVISION OF QUOTAS?

Recent debates have questioned whether a 'quota-within-quota' system is needed to ensure that affirmative action policies are more equitable across Scheduled Caste subgroups. Using data from six major States, one explores whether some SC castes have disproportionately benefited from reservations. India's reservation system has long been a tool for uplifting historically marginalised communities, particularly the Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs). Born out of the need to correct centuries of social and economic exclusion, reservations have opened the doors of higher education, government employment, and public offices for groups once condemned to the periphery of society. Yet, over 75 years since independence, questions are being raised about whether the system is serving its intended purpose - especially when some subgroups within the SCs appear to be

Recent debates, spurred by a Supreme Court ruling, have questioned whether a 'quota-within-quota' system is needed to ensure that affirmative action policies are more equitable across SC subgroups. The idea is to subdivide the SC quota to provide targeted assistance to the most disadvantaged communities within the broader SC category. While some States, like Punjab, have experimented with such policies, the effectiveness of subdividing quotas is still a matter of contention.

The question at the heart of this debate is: do all SCs benefit equally from reservations? And if not, should the system be redesigned to ensure a more balanced distribution of opportunities?

A deep dive into caste quotas

Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, the principal architect of the Indian Constitution, believed that formal legal equality (one person, one vote) would not be enough to dismantle the deeply entrenched inequalities of caste. Thus, reservations were mandated to become a mechanism to move from legal equality to substantive equality by creating opportunities for SCs and STs in higher education, public sector jobs, and government institutions.

The argument underlying the Supreme Court verdict is that despite its progressive aims, India's reservation system is plagued by uneven outcomes. Some SC groups seem to have progressed more than others over the decades. This has led to calls for a more nuanced approach to affirmative action - one that recognises the heterogeneity within the SC category itself.

Here, we use data from six major States - Andhra Pradesh, Bihar, Punjab, Tamil Nadu, Uttar Pradesh, and West Bengal and explore whether some SC castes have disproportionately benefited from reservations, leaving others behind.

What data from different States tell us

In Andhra Pradesh, our estimates reveal that while there are slight differences between the two major SC groups - Malas and Madigas - the disparities are not significant enough to warrant subdivision of the quota. By 2019, both groups had seen improvements in education and employment, and both were equally likely to benefit from white-collar jobs. A similar story emerges in Tamil Nadu, where the two largest SC groups - Adi Dravida and Pallan- were almost indistinguishable in terms of socio-

economic outcomes by 2019. But other States paint a more complicated picture.

In Punjab, where the SC quota has been subdivided since 1975, the data suggests that this policy has led to better outcomes for more disadvantaged SC groups, such as the Mazhabi Sikhs and Balmikis. These groups, once marginalised even within the SC category, have begun to catch up to more advanced groups such as the Ad Dharmis and Ravidasis.

On the other hand, Bihar's experiment with subdividing the SC quota into a 'Mahadalit' category in 2007 is a cautionary tale. Initially designed to target the most marginalised SC groups, the policy eventually faltered as political pressure led to the inclusion of all SC groups in the Mahadalit category, effectively nullifying the purpose of the subdivision. The broader takeaway from these findings is that while there is some heterogeneity within the SC category, the disparities between SC groups and upper-caste groups (general category) remain far more pronounced. In other words, the gap between SCs and the privileged castes is still much larger than the gap between different SC subgroups.

Are reservations accessible?

We need good jati-wise data on actual use of reserved category positions. The closest we can get is based on a question from the India Human Development Survey (IHDS) that asks potential beneficiaries if they have a caste certificate - a prerequisite for accessing reserved positions in education and employment. These numbers can be seen as proxy for actual access in the absence of authoritative official data.

In States like Uttar Pradesh and Bihar, less than 50% of SC households report having these certificates, meaning that a large portion of SCs are excluded from the benefits that are supposed to uplift them. Tamil Nadu and Andhra Pradesh fare better, with over 60-70% of SC households holding caste certificates, but these States are the exception rather than the rule.

This highlights a fundamental problem with the current system - access. Without ensuring that all eligible SCs can actually benefit from reservations, subdividing the quota becomes a secondary concern. The focus should first be on improving access to reservations across the board, ensuring that those who are entitled to these benefits can avail them.

Is quota-within-quota the solution?

The idea of a 'quota-within-quota' is not without merit. In States like Punjab, where there is a clear disparity between SC subgroups, subdividing the quota has helped bring more disadvantaged groups into the fold. But this is not the case everywhere. In many States, like Andhra Pradesh and Tamil Nadu, the data suggests that there is little need for further subdivision, as the benefits of reservations are already being distributed fairly evenly across SC groups.

Moreover, the political motivations behind quota subdivision, as seen in Bihar, can often undermine the policy's effectiveness. Decisions about who gets to be included in the most disadvantaged category are often driven by political expediency rather than empirical evidence. This dilutes the impact of

affirmative action and risks turning the reservation system into a political tool rather than a genuine instrument for social justice.

Furthermore, the Supreme Court's suggestion of introducing a "creamy layer" exclusion for SCs - similar to what is in place for Other Backward Classes needs a stronger evidentiary basis.

The affirmative action policy consists households of quotas as well as monetary benefits (scholarships or freeships, lower fees). The income criterion can be used to decide on eligibility for the monetary component to keep the monetary benefits for those who genuinely need it. However, there is no evidence that for historically stigmatised groups, improvement in class status necessarily reduces discrimination, whether it be in jobs or housing. Despite untouchability being abolished, covert and overt instances of untouchability persist. As elsewhere in the world, the stamp of a stigmatised social identity doesn't disappear easily with economic mobility. Reservations have helped in creating a Dalit middle class, which over time can reduce stigma and gradually set the stage for creamy layer exclusion in the future. However, we are not there yet.

Finally, the urgent need for updated data cannot be overstated. India's national Census, delayed for years, is the only source that can provide comprehensive data on caste-based disparities. Without this information, any attempt to reform the system will be based on incomplete/outdated evidence.

India's reservation system has undeniably helped lift millions out of poverty and into the middle class, but it is far from perfect. As debates around 'quota-within-quota' policies continue, the focus should remain on improving access to affirmative action for all SCs and addressing the larger disparities between SCs and upper-caste groups. If carefully implemented, reservations can continue to be a powerful tool for social justice - but only if the system is based on robust data and genuine need, rather than political calculations.

(*Courtesy: The Hindu by Ashwini Deshpande (Ashoka University) and Rajesh Ramachandran (Monash University). Views expressed are personal.*)

LIST OF AIFB CANDIDATES IN JHARKHAND ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2024

No.	Name of the Constituency	Name of the Candidate
1	Bhavnathpur	Com. Aditya Gupta
2	Girdih	Com. Ajeet Rai
3	Gandey	Com. Rajesh Yadav
4	Baghmara	Com. Rajesh Swarnakar
5	Tundi	Com. (Ms.) Bani Devi
6	Sindri	Com. Hiralal Sankhwar
7	Bokaro	Com. Niaran Digar

LIST OF AIFB CANDIDATES IN MAHARASHTRA ASSEMBLY ELECTION 2024

No.	Name of the Constituency	Name of the Candidate ¹
1	Ramtek	Com. (Adv.) Govardhan Namdev Somdev (Ex. Law College Principal)
2	Nagpur East	Com. (Adv.) Suraj Balram Mishra
3	Jaina City	Com. (Adv.) Yogesh Gullapelli
4	Badnapur	Com. Dyaneshwar Nade
5	Ghansawangi	Com. Vilas Mahadev Waghmare
6	Fulambri	Com. Rajesh Wankhede
7	Sillod	Com. (Adv.) Sheikh Usman Sheikh Taher
8	Bhokardan	Com. Anjali Made
9	Ulhas Nagar (Mumbai)	Com. Amar Joshi
10	Solapur City	Com. Khizer Qudus Peerzade
11	Chinchwad	Com. Siddhiq Ismail Sheikh
12	Morshi	Com. Ramrao Ghodaskar
13	Jhambhed Karjat	Com. Ram Shinde
14	Aurangabad East	Com. Vishal Uddhav
15	Uran	Com. Krishna Pandurang Waghmare
16	Sangmner	Com. Bhagwat Gayakwad

AIFB CANDIDATE IN SITAI ASSEMBLY CONSTITUENCY OF WEST BENGAL
Com. Arun Kumra Burma



Election campaign of AIFB Candidates of Tundi and other Constituencies of Jharkhand.



Election campaign of Left Front supported AIFB Candidate Com. Arun Kr. Burma, in Sitai Assembly Constituency of West Bengal.



The Election Campaign of AIFB Candidates in the Maharashtra Assembly election with the participation of local people.



As a part of the National Women's Protest Day, the All India Agragami Mahila Samiti (AIAMS) Bengal Committee organized a rally and Rasta Roko at Kolkata on 20th November 2024.



All India Agragami Kisan Sabha (AIKS) organised National Kisan Protest Day on 12th November 2024 across the country. In Kolkata the AIKS activist held a march to Raj Bhavan and submitted a memorandum to the Hon'ble Governor of West Bengal.



Assam Workers Union Joint Forum (where TUCC is playing an important role) organised a meeting and submitted a detailed memorandum to the authorities concerned on the 12th of November 2024.



As a part of National Kisan Protest Day, the AIAKS Kerala unit has organized a rally and Dharna at Kochi on 12th November 2024.



AIFB Bihar Madhubani District workers convention held at Madhubani on 17-11-2024.



Election campaign of AIFB Candidates in Jharkhand.



AIFB Uttar Pradesh Balia District workers meeting held at Hanumanganj on 17-11-2024.



Election campaign of AIFB Candidate of Sillod Assembly Constituency of Aurangabad District of Maharashtra.



The AIFB Kerala Committee has organized a day-long dharna in front of the Secretariat, Thiruvananthapuram on 1st November 2024 against price rise, police atrocities etc.



Union government must abandon its indifference towards Manipur

(Following Statement has been issued by Com. G. Devarajan, General Secretary of the All India Forward Bloc)

Manipur, an important state in northeastern India, has long been a mosaic of diverse cultures and ethnicities. However, this diversity has often been accompanied by conflict, the most notable being the ongoing strife between the Kuki and Meitei communities. This conflict that began in May 2023 has resulted in significant human suffering, displacement, and a climate of perpetual fear and instability. The Kuki-Meitei conflict is rooted in historical, socio-economic, and political factors. Historical grievances, competition for resources, land rights, and political representation have fuelled tensions between these communities. The conflict has been marked by violent clashes, leading to loss of lives and widespread displacement.

It was reported that more than 250 people have been killed and about 60,000 people have been displaced, forced to live in temporary shelters with inadequate access to food, water, and medical facilities. The psychological impact on children and families, who live in constant fear, is immeasurable.

The Manipur state government's inability to effectively quell the ongoing violence has led to a significant loss of control and trust among the people. The persistent ethnic conflict has created a volatile environment, with reports of arson, abductions, and brutal killings becoming alarmingly frequent. The state government's response has been perceived as inadequate, exacerbating the sense of insecurity and frustration among the residents.

The All India Forward Bloc, the party founded by Netaji

Subhas Chandra Bose has an emotional attachment to the state of Manipur as Netaji established his first office of Azad Hind Government in Moirang in Manipur. The people of Manipur are in dire need of a coordinated and comprehensive approach to resolve the conflict and restore peace. The Union

Government must engage in meaningful dialogue with all stakeholders in Manipur, including insurgent groups, ethnic communities, and civil society organizations. A political solution that addresses the legitimate aspirations of the people is essential for lasting peace and stability. The AIFB urges upon the Union

government to abandon its indifference and take proactive measures to address the pressing issues in Manipur without further delay. This approach should encompass political, economic, and social dimensions, ensuring that the people of Manipur are active participants in the development process.

AIACS NATIONAL CONFERENCE AT PATNA

The 10th National Conference of All India Agragami Kisan Sabha (AIACS) will be held at Patna, Bihar on 15, 16 and 17th of December 2024. The open session of the conference will be held on 15th December and will followed by the Delegate Sessions. The National Conference of AIACS will deliberate on the burning issues of the farmers and agricultural workers. The AIACS, which is a participant of the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) will also review the activities of the joint platform of the farmers. The 10th National Conference will chalk out the future course of action of the AIACS and will elect the New Central



Committee.

The State units of AIACS are organizing their lower-level conferences prior to the National Conference.

A Reception Committee under the leadership of Com. Ramayan Singh and Com.

Amerika Mahato is working tirelessly for the smooth conduct of the Conference. The District Committees of AIACS in Bihar are making door-to-door campaign and other mode of publicity for the conference.

AIFB Leaders Visited China



A portrait of Netaji made as a collage presented to the International Department of the Communist Party of China.

Under the leadership of Com. G. Devarajan, General Secretary of the All India Forward Bloc, a five-member team of the party, visited China from 4th to 9th November 2024. The team met the senior leaders of the International Department of the Communist Party of China and discussed about strengthening the bilateral relationship between two parties. Besides the General Secretary, Com. Gobinda Roy, Ex. MLA (West Bengal), Com. G.R. Shivashankar (Karnataka), Com. Dharmender Kumar Verma (Delhi), Com. Com. Baiju Menachery (Kerala) were the members of the team.

Apart from Beijing, the team also visited Shanghai, Huzhou, and Hangzhou. The visit to the Exhibition Hall of the Communist Party of China inaugurated on the occasion of the centenary of the CPC, was unforgettable. The AIFB visited the Memorial Hall of the First National Congress of the CPC in Shanghai. The team also visited various Agricultural Science and technology innovation incubation parks, Agricultural Robot Demonstration Base in Zhangjiang Town, Modern Agriculture Digital Centre in Huangfen Village, 'Ten Thousand Mu Sqaure', Meijiawu Tea Garden etc.

from page 3...

workers including organised, unorganized, scheme workers and contract workers and the agriculture sector

4. Comprehensive Loan Waiver for farmers and agricultural workers to end Indebtedness and suicides; Ensure credit facilities for farmers and workers at low interest rates.

5. No Privatisation of Public Sector Undertakings and Public Services including Defense, Railways, Health, Education, and Electricity. Scrap National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP). No prepaid Smart Meters, free power for agricultural pumps, 300 units of free electricity to domestic users and shops;

6. No Digital Agriculture Mission (DAM), National

Cooperation Policy and ICAR Agreements with MNCs that encroach on the rights of State Governments and facilitate the Corporatisation of Agriculture.

7. End indiscriminate land acquisition, Implement LARR Act 2013 and FRA;

8. Guaranteed employment and Job security for all. 200 days of work and Rs. 600/day as wage in the MGNREGS. Expand it to urban areas. Immediately withdraw the exclusion of families from MNREGA. Pay the pending wages.

9. Comprehensive Public Sector insurance scheme for Crops and Cattle, Ensure Crop Insurance and all the schemes' benefits to the Tenant farmers;

10. Arrest price rise. Strengthen PDS. Ensure

quality public health care and education to all. Rs.10000/monthly Pension at the age of 60 years for all. Tax the super-rich for the resources.

11. Strict laws to stop Communal division in society and ensure their effective implementation. Uphold secularism as envisaged in the Constitution.

12. End violence against women and children through gender empowerment and fast track judicial system; End violence, social oppression and caste-communal discrimination against all marginalised sections including Dalits, Tribal People and Minorities.

(By - The Joint Coordination Group - Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) & Joint Platform of Central Trade Unions, Independent/Sectoral Federations/Associations)

The Devaluation of Indian Currency in 2024:

A Boon for Corporates, a Burden for Common People

The Indian rupee's steady depreciation in 2024 has sparked widespread concern, with critics arguing that the devaluation of the currency disproportionately benefits large corporations while exacerbating the economic difficulties faced by the common people. As the rupee weakens against major global currencies, India's growing reliance on imports, mounting inflation, and shifting global economic dynamics have compounded the hardships for ordinary citizens. While the devaluation may offer advantages to export-oriented businesses and certain corporate sectors, it has had a largely negative impact on the purchasing power of the Indian middle and lower classes.

Over the past few years, the Indian rupee has been on a steady decline against the US dollar and other major currencies. The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) and government authorities have attributed this decline to a combination of factors such as a high trade deficit, increased global oil prices, and shifting capital flows. In 2024, this depreciation has become even more pronounced, with the rupee falling to its lowest levels in over a decade. While the government has reassured the public that this is part of a global trend, the consequences are not evenly distributed across society.

The most notable beneficiaries of a depreciating currency are India's large export-oriented corporations. A weaker rupee makes Indian exports cheaper and more competitive in international markets. Companies involved in the information technology (IT) sector, pharmaceuticals, textiles, and manufacturing stand to gain significantly as their products become more affordable for foreign buyers. These industries are a key part of India's economic structure, and a cheaper currency boosts their profitability, often leading to higher revenues and stock market performance.

Furthermore, multinational

corporations with significant revenue streams in foreign currencies also benefit from the depreciation. Their costs, which are often denominated in rupees, become cheaper when converted back to their home currencies. This leads to a surge in corporate profits, which can, in turn, drive up share prices and enrich top management.

Moreover, companies with foreign investments or those engaged in outsourcing also stand to benefit as the weaker rupee makes India an even more attractive destination for foreign capital. Lower labour costs and favourable currency fluctuations encourage foreign investors to increase their holdings in Indian markets. For multinational corporations, this dynamic can lead to greater financial stability and growth. While the corporates have reaped the rewards of a depreciating currency, the Indian public—especially the middle and lower-income groups—has borne the brunt of its adverse effects. The most immediate consequence of a weakening rupee is the rise in the cost of imports. India is a major importer of crude oil, electronic goods, machinery, and various consumer products. As the rupee falls in value, the cost of these imports rises, leading to an increase in fuel prices and the prices of consumer goods. This, in turn, fuels inflation, which directly affects the purchasing power of everyday Indians.

The surge in fuel prices is particularly distressing for the common people, as it triggers a chain reaction across sectors. Transportation costs increase, pushing up the prices of food, goods, and services. For many families, already grappling with rising costs of living, these price hikes make it even more difficult to make ends meet. Public sector employees, pensioners, and workers in low-income jobs, whose wages do not adjust to inflation as quickly as those in the corporate sector, are particularly vulnerable.

Additionally, the cost of education, healthcare, and housing—sectors that often rely on imported goods, materials, or services—has also escalated. Students and professionals seeking education abroad or those relying on international education platforms are now faced with higher costs due to the exchange rate. Healthcare costs, including medicines and medical equipment that are often imported, have similarly increased, creating a significant burden for families who already struggle with these essential expenses.

The devaluation of the rupee also erodes the value of savings for ordinary citizens. With inflation running high and the rupee losing its value against foreign currencies, the real value of savings and fixed-income investments (such as bank deposits and pensions) diminishes over time. The middle class, which depends on stable savings for future financial security, finds that its wealth is effectively shrinking in real terms. Furthermore, Indian savers who invest in foreign assets or hold dollar-denominated savings suffer more, as the exchange rate loss leads to a reduction in the value of their investments.

While the stock market may experience a short-term rally due to the increased profitability of export-oriented companies, this often does not translate into broad-based wealth creation for the average person. The majority of Indian investors, particularly those in rural areas or from lower-income backgrounds, have limited exposure to the equity markets. Consequently, they are less likely to benefit from rising stock prices, and instead, bear the brunt of inflation and rising costs.

The government's role in the currency devaluation is also a matter of debate. While authorities argue that the global economic environment, including rising oil prices and geopolitical tensions, has played a significant role in the rupee's

decline, critics argue that the government's fiscal and monetary policies have contributed to the rupee's weakness. Excessive borrowing, lack of adequate foreign exchange reserves, and a failure to address the widening trade deficit have all contributed to the weakening of the currency. Moreover, the government's inability to shield the common people from the worst effects of inflation, particularly with regard to food, fuel, and essential services, points to a failure in governance.

It is also worth noting that India's economic growth in 2024 is still being driven largely by the corporate sector, while the benefits to the general public remain elusive. Growth in sectors such as technology, manufacturing, and exports has not translated into significant job creation or wage increases for workers in the informal sector or low-paying industries. Instead, many workers are stuck in low-wage jobs that offer no protection from inflationary pressures, exacerbating economic inequality.

In short, the devaluation of the Indian rupee in 2024 has created a paradoxical situation: while large corporations and export-oriented businesses thrive, the common people—especially those from lower-income and middle-class backgrounds—are left grappling with inflation, rising costs of living, and eroding savings. The growing disparity between the corporate sector and the general population is a cause for concern, as the benefits of economic growth are not being equitably distributed. If the government fails to implement measures that mitigate the adverse effects on the public, the continued depreciation of the rupee could worsen inequality and further entrench the struggles of the average citizen. For a truly inclusive economic recovery, policies must focus on safeguarding the interests of all segments of society, rather than favouring the corporate elite.

Printed, Published & Edited by Debabrata Biswas, Ex-M.P. for the Central Committee of All India Forward Bloc, T-2235/2, Ashok Nagar, Faiz Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005. Printed at Kumar Offset Printers, 381 Patpar Ganj Industrial Area, Delhi-110092

TOWARDS SOCIALISM

If undelivered please return to :

ALL INDIA FORWARD BLOC

Netaji Bhavan, T-2235/2, Ashok Nagar,

Faiz Road, Karol Bagh, New Delhi-110005

Ph.:011-28754273

e-mail : biswasd.aifb@yahoo.co.in

Website : www.forwardbloc.org

To,