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OLYMPICS 2024: PARIS SAYS 'AU REVOIR'

RUDDERLESS BUDGET

GLOBAL MEANING OF GAZA

PEOPLE WHO ABANDONED HER

SPLENDID 20-year CAMPAIGN for withdrawal of GST on Insurance Premia echoes in Parliament

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EDITOR : AMANULLA KHAN

A SPLENDID CAMPAIGN

The campaign of AIIEA against GST on life and health premium has brought this issue to the CenterStage of the national discourse. The issue came to be debated in the Parliament and the general public through their writings in the newspapers welcomed the campaign and urged upon the government to withdraw the GST to make the life and health insurance affordable. A number of senior ministers in the Union Government too asked the finance minister to look into the issues raised by AIIEA. The finance minister initially raised the question why such campaign was not undertaken earlier when the life and health premiums were subjected to service tax. But in the face of this idea getting support from everyone cutting across the political affiliations, she was forced to assure the parliament that this issue will be taken up in the GST council which is expected to meet in the first week of September this year.

The campaign undertaken by the units of the AIIEA was breathtaking. More than 400 MPs from every political party were met and they were explained as to how levying GST on life and health premium in reality mean taxing the uncertainties of life. The units of AIIEA also met the senior ministers who saw merit in the arguments and they requested the finance minister to consider the demand of AIIEA. Perhaps in the history of Indian trade union movement, such large number of members of members of parliament were never mobilised on a single idea as the AIIEA could do on this issue. This is another brilliant achievement of AIIEA after it had recorded a historical first by mobilising 15 million signatures from the general public on the issue of privatisation.

The finance minister is wrong in saying that there was no protest earlier against the service tax on life and health premium. The service tax was first imposed effective from the financial year 2004-05 on life premium which was later replaced by GST. Initially the LIC absorbed this tax without passing the burden to the policyholders. The AIIEA

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began its campaign against this in May 2004 with collection of nearly 30 lakh signatures from the policyholders. Since then, the AIIEA has continued to campaign against this in a sustained manner. However, the present campaign with its breadth and sweep has been a crowning glory.

Why did the AIIEA take up this campaign? It is because of its commitment to the Indian society and more so the vulnerable sections within it. The Indian constitution guarantees the fundamental right to life under Article 21. The right to life without any doubt also means right to health. The Judicial pronouncements of the Supreme Court have held this position by saying that it is obligation of the government to provide adequate medical facilities to all citizens. But today we find that the State has forgotten this basic responsibility and is promoting more and more privatisation of the health services. The Covid 19 crisis exposed the fragility of the public health system. Rather than building a universal health care system, it is strange that the government has chosen to tax the life and health premium. The AIIEA undertook the campaign with this understanding.

In the absence of a strong public health system, people are forced to meet the medical expenses out of their pockets. It is estimated that 52% of the medical bills are paid by the citizens themselves through out of pocket expenses. Only around 26% have availed of the government services. Even the much touted Ayushman Bharat scheme is restricted to inpatient treatment and there is no assistance to those who seek medical services as out-patients. This has put the Indian families under tremendous hardships. The Niti Ayog in its report has estimated that 7% of India's population accounting for about 10 crore are pushed into poverty every year due to the amount they spend on health care. In such a situation what is expected of a government is to take steps to create a universal health structure to meet its obligations under Directive Principles of the Constitution. The government do not even seem to be thinking in this direction. In the current Union Budget, the allocation to health sector is a meagre 0.3% of the GDP. The National Health Policy 2017 has estimated that by 2025, India should spend atleast 2.5% on health. India is nowhere near this target. The combined health spending by the Centre and State is just around 1.3% of their GDP as on date.

The splendid campaign of AIIEA may succeed in reducing the burden of GST on life and health premium. If it so happens, AIIEA would have done a great service to the fellow Indian by bringing some relief to them. But this itself is not enough. The struggle must go on against privatisation of health services and for the State to put in place a universal health care system. The government must be made to realise through a sustained campaign that this is its obligation under Article 21 of the Constitution and various provisions under Directive Principles of the State Policy. The AIIEA, therefore, must expand the scope of the present campaign. ●

DEVELOPMENTS IN BANGLADESH

Sheik Haseena resigned as Prime Minister of Bangladesh and fled the country on 5th August 2024. She sought refuge in India and since then is in our country. The developments in Bangladesh will have profound impact on our relations with this neighbouring country.

Since July, Bangladesh was in turmoil. What started as student protest against controversial quotas for government jobs to dependents of participants in freedom struggle gathered momentum with the government taking recourse to repressive measures. Instead of holding discussions with the students and arriving at a solution, Sheik Haseena chose to brutally repress the movement. Police became trigger happy and more than 450 persons, majority of them students, lost their lives. This created huge anger in the country and the students gave a call for march to Dhaka on 5th and this inevitably led to Sheik Haseena resigning and fleeing the country.

Even before the revolt by the students began, there was quite a lot of dissatisfaction with the government of Sheik Haseena. During her 15 year rule, she had progressively become authoritarian. The voices of dissent were brutally suppressed. The democratic rights of the people were under constant attack. She won the last election without the opposition parties participating in the process. With this, what developed in Bangladesh was a one party rule and squeezing of the opposition parties out of

the political system. This deprived the citizens of the true democracy.

Bangladesh recorded impressive growth in the economy during her rule. But as is common in all neoliberal regimes, the fruits of development were cornered by a small section of the population and those closely connected to the Awami League. The government was unable to solve the basic problems of the people like unemployment and price rise. As a result, income and wealth inequalities were rising fast. This along with denial of freedoms, created huge dissatisfaction and anger against the government.

The army which took control of the State has established an interim government headed by Noble Laureate Muhammed Yunus. This interim government also has representations from the student community. The interim government is tasked to bring about normalcy and help conduct of free and fair elections as soon as possible. It is to be seen whether these developments will lead to restoration of genuine democracy or the country will fall into chaos as the fundamentalist forces which were lying low see an opportunity to set their agenda.

In the aftermath of these developments, there were revenge attacks against the police, leaders and cadres of Awami League. There are reports of attacks on the minority Hindu community and vandalising of the temples. However, the student community has taken up the task of safeguarding the minorities. It is gratifying that when extremists threatened to destroy Hindu temples and homes, the students took it upon themselves to mount a vigil and deployed volunteers to defend the temples, homes and shops from religion-inspired vandalism. The head of the interim government has also visited temples and assured the minority Hindu community of their safety.

The people of Bangladesh suspects India to be a staunch supporter of Sheik Haseena. The statements of Sheik Haseena from India have angered the interim government which has lodged protest with the Indian government. The people of Bangladesh also nurture deep mistrust against Indian government which sees them only as infiltrators and termites as described by the Home Minister. The attacks on Hindu minority will also give opportunity to rightwing organisations in India to launch a tirade against the Muslims in our country. The government while expressing legitimate concerns over the treatment of Hindu minority in Bangladesh should contain the rightwing organisations in India and prevent any virulent campaign against the Indian Muslims.

India has huge stake in the political stability in Bangladesh. It must help in whatever manner possible for the restoration of democracy in that country. It must refrain from any interference in the internal affairs of Bangladesh. This is the best course for the government of India to adopt.

एक शानदार अभियान

जीवन और स्वास्थ्य बीमा प्रीमियम पर जीएसटी के खिलाफ एआईआईईए के अभियान ने इस मुद्दे को राष्ट्रीय चर्चा के केंद्र में ला दिया है। इस मुद्दे पर संसद में बहस हुई और आम जनता ने अखबारों में अपने लेखन के माध्यम से इस अभियान का स्वागत किया और सरकार से जीवन और स्वास्थ्य बीमा को किफायती बनाने के लिए जीएसटी वापस लेने का आग्रह किया। केंद्र सरकार के कई वरिष्ठ मंत्रियों ने भी वित्त मंत्री से एआईआईईए द्वारा उठाए गए मुद्दों पर गौर करने को कहा। शुरू में तो वित्त मंत्री ने सवाल उठाया कि जब जीवन और स्वास्थ्य बीमा पर सेवा कर लगाया गया था, तब उस समय ऐसा अभियान क्यों नहीं चलाया गया। लेकिन इस विचार को सभी राजनीतिक दलों से समर्थन मिलने के कारण, उन्हें संसद को यह आश्वासन देने के लिए मजबूर होना पड़ा कि इस मुद्दे को जीएसटी परिषद में उठाया जाएगा, जिसकी इस साल सितंबर के पहले सप्ताह में बैठक संभावित है।

एआईआईईए की इकाइयों द्वारा चलाया गया अभियान विस्मयकारी था। सभी राजनीतिक दलों के 400 से अधिक सांसदों से मुलाकात की गई और उन्हें समझाया गया कि जीवन और स्वास्थ्य प्रीमियम पर जीएसटी लगाने का मतलब वास्तव में जीवन की अनिश्चितताओं पर कर लगाना है। एआईआईईए की इकाइयों ने वरिष्ठ मंत्रियों से भी मुलाकात की, जिन्हें तर्कों में दम नजर आया उन्होंने वित्त मंत्री से एआईआईईए की मांग पर विचार करने का अनुरोध किया। शायद भारतीय ट्रेड यूनियन आंदोलन के इतिहास में कभी भी इतनी बड़ी संख्या में संसद सदस्य एक विचार पर लामबंद नहीं किए जा सके थे जितनी कि एआईआईईए इस मुद्दे पर कर सकी। एआईआईईए की इकाइयों द्वारा चलाया गया अभियान विस्मयकारी था। निजीकरण के मुद्दे पर आम जनता से 1.5 करोड़ हस्ताक्षर जुटाकर ऐतिहासिक उपलब्धि हासिल करने के बाद यह एआईआईईए की एक और शानदार उपलब्धि है।

वित्त मंत्री का यह कहना गलत है कि जीवन और स्वास्थ्य प्रीमियम पर सेवा कर को लेकर पहले कोई विरोध नहीं हुआ।

सेवा कर पहली बार वित्तीय वर्ष 2004–05 से जीवन प्रीमियम पर लगाया गया था जिसे बाद में जीएसटी द्वारा प्रतिस्थापित कर दिया गया। शुरू में एलआईसी ने पॉलिसीधारकों पर बोझ डाले बिना इस कर को अपने ऊपर ले लिया। एआईआईईए ने इसके खिलाफ अपना अभियान मई 2004 में पॉलिसीधारकों से लगभग लाख हस्ताक्षर एकत्र करने के साथ शुरू किया। तब से, एआईआईईए ने इसके खिलाफ निरंतर अभियान जारी रखा है। हालाँकि, वर्तमान अभियान अपनी व्यापकता और विस्तार के साथ अत्यंत गौरवपूर्ण रहा है।

एआईआईईए ने यह अभियान क्यों शुरू किया? इसकी वजह भारतीय समाज और खासकर इसके भीतर कमजोर तबकों के प्रति इसकी प्रतिबद्धता है। भारतीय संविधान अनुच्छेद 21 के तहत जीवन के मौलिक अधिकार की गारंटी देता है। बिना किसी संदेह के जीवन के अधिकार का मतलब स्वास्थ्य का अधिकार भी है। सर्वोच्च न्यायालय के न्यायिक फैसलों ने यह कहते हुए इस स्थिति को बनाए रखा है कि सभी नागरिकों को पर्याप्त चिकित्सा सुविधाएँ प्रदान करना सरकार का दायित्व है। लेकिन आज हम पाते हैं कि राज्य इस बुनियादी जिम्मेदारी को भूल गया है और स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं के निजीकरण को बढ़ावा दे रहा है। कोविड 19 संकट ने सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली की कमजोरी को उजागर कर दिया है। एक सार्वभौमिक स्वास्थ्य देखभाल प्रणाली बनाने के बजाय, यह अजीब है कि सरकार ने जीवन और स्वास्थ्य प्रीमियम पर कर लगाने का विकल्प चुना है। एआईआईईए ने इसी समझ के साथ यह अभियान चलाया।

एक मजबूत सार्वजनिक स्वास्थ्य प्रणाली के अभाव में, लोगों को चिकित्सा खर्च अपनी जेब से वहन करने के लिए मजबूर होना पड़ता है। अनुमान है कि 52 प्रतिशत चिकित्सा बिलों का भुगतान नागरिकों द्वारा स्वयं अपनी जेब से किया जाता है। केवल 26 प्रतिशत ने ही सरकारी सेवाओं का लाभ उठाया है। यहां तक कि बहुप्रचारित आयुष्मान भारत योजना भी आंतरिक रोगी उपचार तक ही सीमित है और जो लोग बाह्य रोगियों के रूप में चिकित्सा सेवाएं चाहते हैं उन्हें कोई सहायता नहीं मिलती है। इससे भारतीय परिवारों को भारी कठिनाइयों का सामना करना पड़ा है। नीति आयोग ने अपनी रिपोर्ट में अनुमान लगाया है कि भारत की लगभग 10 करोड़ आबादी , 7 प्रतिशत आबादी स्वास्थ्य देखभाल पर खर्च की जाने वाली राशि के कारण हर साल गरीबी में धकेल दी जाती है। ऐसी स्थिति में सरकार से यही अपेक्षा की जाती है कि वह संविधान के निर्देशक सिद्धांतों के तहत अपने दायित्वों को पूरा करने के लिए एक सार्वभौमिक स्वास्थ्य संरचना बनाने के लिए कदम उठाए। सरकार इस दिशा में सोचती भी नजर नहीं आ रही है। मौजूदा केंद्रीय बजट में स्वास्थ्य क्षेत्र के लिए आवंटन जीडीपी का मात्र 0.3 प्रतिशत है। राष्ट्रीय स्वास्थ्य नीति 2017 में अनुमान लगाया गया है कि 2025 तक भारत को स्वास्थ्य पर कम से कम 2.5 प्रतिशत खर्च करना चाहिए। भारत इस लक्ष्य के कहीं भी आसपास नहीं है। आज की तारीख में केंद्र और राज्य का संयुक्त स्वास्थ्य खर्च उनकी जीडीपी का लगभग 1.3 प्रतिशत है।

एआईआईईए का यह शानदार अभियान जीवन और स्वास्थ्य प्रीमियम पर जीएसटी का बोझ कम करने में सफल हो सकता है। अगर ऐसा होता है, तो एआईआईईए ने साथी भारतीयों को कुछ राहत देकर उनकी बहुत बड़ी सेवा की होगी। लेकिन यह अपने आप में पर्याप्त नहीं है। स्वास्थ्य सेवाओं के निजीकरण के खिलाफ संघर्ष जारी रहना चाहिए और राज्य को एक सार्वभौमिक स्वास्थ्य सेवा प्रणाली लागू करने के लिए प्रेरित करना चाहिए। सरकार को निरंतर अभियान के माध्यम से यह एहसास कराया जाना चाहिए कि संविधान के अनुच्छेद 21 और राज्य नीति के निर्देशक सिद्धांतों के तहत विभिन्न प्रावधानों के तहत यह उसका दायित्व है। इसलिए, एआईआईईए को वर्तमान अभियान के दायरे का विस्तार करना चाहिए। ●

बांग्लादेश के घटनाक्रम

शेख हसीना ने बांग्लादेश की प्रधानमंत्री के पद से इस्तीफा दे दिया और 5 अगस्त 2024 को देश छोड़कर भाग गईं। उन्होंने भारत में शरण ली और तब से हमारे देश में हैं। बांग्लादेश के घटनाक्रम का इस पड़ोसी देश के साथ हमारे संबंधों पर गहरा असर पड़ेगा।

जुलाई से ही बांग्लादेश में उथल–पुथल मची हुई थी। स्वतंत्रता संग्राम में भाग लेने वालों के आश्रितों को सरकारी नौकरियों में विवादास्पद कोटा देने के खिलाफ छात्रों के विरोध के रूप में जो शुरू हुआ, उसने सरकार द्वारा दमनकारी कदम उठाने के साथ गति पकड़ ली। छात्रों के साथ चर्चा करने और किसी समाधान पर पहुंचने के बजाय, शेख हसीना ने आंदोलन को क्रूरतापूर्वक दबाने का विकल्प चुना। पुलिस ने गोली चलाई और 450 से अधिक लोगों, जिनमें से अधिकांश छात्र थे, ने अपनी जान गंवा दी। इससे देश में भारी गुस्सा पैदा हुआ और छात्रों ने 5 तारीख को ढाका तक मार्च का आह्वान किया और इसके परिणामस्वरूप शेख हसीना को इस्तीफा देना पड़ा और देश से भागना पड़ा।

छात्रों का विद्रोह शुरू होने से पहले ही शेख हसीना की सरकार के प्रति काफी असंतोष था। अपने 15 साल के शासन के दौरान वह उत्तरोत्तर अधिनायकवादी होती गयीं। असहमति की आवाजों को बेरहमी से कुचल दिया गया। लोगों के लोकतांत्रिक अधिकारों पर लगातार हमले हो रहे थे। उन्होंने पिछला चुनाव विपक्षी दलों की भागीदारी के बिना ही जीता था। इसके साथ, बांग्लादेश में जो विकसित हुआ वह एक पार्टी का शासन था और विपक्षी दलों को राजनीतिक व्यवस्था से बाहर कर दिया गया। इसने नागरिकों को सच्चे लोकतंत्र से वंचित कर दिया।

उनके शासनकाल के दौरान बांग्लादेश की अर्थव्यवस्था में प्रभावशाली वृद्धि दर्ज की गई। लेकिन जैसा कि सभी नवउदारवादी शासनों में आम है, विकास का लाभ आबादी के एक छोटे हिस्से और अवामी लीग से निकटता से जुड़े लोगों द्वारा छीन लिया गया। सरकार बेरोजगारी और महंगाई जैसी जनता की बुनियादी समस्याओं का समाधान करने में असमर्थ रही। परिणामस्वरूप, आय और संपत्ति की असमानताएँ तेजी से बढ़ रही थीं। इसने स्वतंत्रता के हनन के साथ–साथ सरकार के खिलाफ भारी असंतोष और गुस्सा पैदा किया।

राज्य पर नियंत्रण करने वाली सेना ने नोबेल पुरस्कार विजेता मुहम्मद युनुस के नेतृत्व में एक अंतरिम सरकार की स्थापना की है। इस अंतरिम सरकार में छात्र समुदाय का

भी प्रतिनिधित्व है। अंतरिम सरकार को सामान्य स्थिति लाने और जल्द से जल्द स्वतंत्र और निष्पक्ष चुनाव कराने में मदद करने का काम सौंपा गया है। यह देखना होगा कि क्या इन घटनाक्रमों से वास्तविक लोकतंत्र की बहाली होगी या देश अराजकता में डूब जाएगा क्योंकि कट्टरपंथी ताकतें जो चुपचाप बैठी थीं, उन्हें अपना एजेंडा सेट करने का मौका दिख रहा है।

इन घटनाओं के बाद पुलिस, नेताओं और अवामी लीग के कार्यकर्ताओं पर बदला लेने के लिए हमले हुए। अल्पसंख्यक हिंदू समुदाय पर हमले और मंदिरों में तोड़फोड़ की खबरें आ रही हैं। हालाँकि, छात्र समुदाय ने अल्पसंख्यकों की सुरक्षा का बीड़ा उठाया है। यह संतुष्टिदायक है कि जब चरमपंथियों ने हिंदू मंदिरों और घरों को नष्ट करने की धमकी दी, तो छात्रों ने खुद निगरानी करने का जिम्मा उठाया और मंदिरों, घरों और दुकानों को धर्म–प्रेरित बर्बरता से बचाने के लिए स्वयंसेवकों को तैनात किया। अंतरिम सरकार के प्रमुख ने भी मंदिरों का दौरा किया और अल्पसंख्यक हिंदू समुदाय को उनकी सुरक्षा का आश्वासन दिया।

बांग्लादेश के लोगों को शक है कि भारत शेख हसीना का कट्टर समर्थक है। शेख हसीना के भारत से जारी किए बयानों से अंतरिम सरकार नाराज हो गई है और उसने भारत सरकार के समक्ष विरोध दर्ज कराया है। बांग्लादेश के लोगों में भी भारत सरकार के प्रति गहरा अविश्वास पल रहा है जो उन्हें केवल घुसपैठियों और दीमकों के रूप में देखती है जैसा कि गृह मंत्री ने उनके बारे में कहा है। हिंदू अल्पसंख्यकों पर हमले से भारत में दक्षिणपंथी संगठनों को हमारे देश में मुसलमानों के खिलाफ हल्ला बोलने का मौका भी मिलेगा। सरकार को बांग्लादेश में हिंदू अल्पसंख्यकों के साथ हो रहे व्यवहार पर वैध चिंता व्यक्त करते हुए भारत में दक्षिणपंथी संगठनों पर लगाम लगानी चाहिए और भारतीय मुसलमानों के खिलाफ किसी भी तरह के जहरीले अभियान को रोकना चाहिए।

बांग्लादेश में राजनीतिक स्थिरता भारत के लिए अत्यधिक महत्व रखती है। इसे उस देश में लोकतंत्र की बहाली के लिए हर संभव तरीके से मदद करनी चाहिए। उसे बांग्लादेश के आंतरिक मामलों में किसी भी तरह के हस्तक्षेप से बचना चाहिए। भारत सरकार द्वारा अपनाने के लिए यही सबसे अच्छा रास्ता है।

AIIPA MEETS GIPSA CHAIRPERSON

A delegation of AIIPA comprising of Coms M.Kunhikrishnan (General Secretary), J.Gurumurthy (Vice President), and P.Bagchi (Jt. Secretary) met Shri. R R Singh, Chairman, GIPSA at Delhi on 14th August, 2024. Coms Achint Kaur Uppal, Anil Kr Malhotra and Braham Prakash Bhatia of GIRA, Delhi also accompanied the delegation. Ms Madhumita Jena (Chief Executive), Shri Sanjeev Seth (Sr. Vice President) and other officials from GIPSA were present.

The delegation submitted a memorandum to the Chairman and made a detailed presentation on the urgent need to get approval of Ministry on the long pending issue of agreed increase in Family Pension. We also urged the Chairman to get the Family Pension matter delinked from other issues for expeditious approval in view of its long pendency and the sufferings of the widow pensioners.

The Chairman shared his concern on the delay for reasons beyond their control saying that there is no let up from the management side in follow up with the government and he assured of continued effort with the ministry.

Among other issues relating to pension, we made an appeal to Chairman to get the matter of one more option for pension for erstwhile Tariff Advisory Committee employees reconsidered by the Ministry. The matter needs to be pursued further.

Earlier, on 13.8.2024, the AIIPA delegation met the officials of DFS too and discussed the above issues.

PERFORMANCE HIGHLIGHTS of LIC for Q1 of FY 2024-2025

- Profit After Tax increased by 9.61% to Rs. 10,461 crores.
- Overall Market share by First Year Premium Income (FYPI) increased to 64.02% from 61.42% on YoY basis.
- Total Premium Income increased by 15.66% to Rs. 1,13,770 crore
- New Business Premium Income (Individual) increased by 13.67% to Rs. 11,892 crore.
- Overall APE increases by 21.28% to Rs. 11,560 crore.
- Individual Business Non Par APE increased by 165.63% to Rs 1,615 crore.
- Group Business APE increased by 34.37% to Rs. 4,813 crore
- Non Par APE share within Individual business at 23.94% for Q1 FY25 as compared to 10.22% in Q1 FY24.
- Value of New Business (VNB) increased by 23.66% to Rs 1,610 crore.
- VNB Margin (Net) increased by 20 bps to 13.9%
- AUM increased by 16.22% to Rs 53.59 lakh crore.
- Solvency Ratio increased to 1.99 from 1.89
- Overall expense ratio reduced by 98 bps to 11.87% from 12.85%

(Source: LIC Press Release dated 8/8/24)

A RUDDERLESS BUDGET

Dr Santosh Kumar Mohapatra

India needs equitable growth and benefits of growth should reduce inequality by taxing the rich and imposing wealth tax on them. The government has no political will to do so. This budget will further increase inequalities in Indian society and does nothing to improve the life and living conditions of the majority of Indians.

The Budget -2024-25, presented by Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman was a continuation of the policies laid down in the interim budget. It failed to address many of the pressing issues confronted by the Indian economy.

Nominal GDP is estimated to rise by 10.5% from Rs. 326.4 lakh crore in 2023-24 to Rs. 327.7 lakh crore in 2024-25. Nominal GDP is projected to rise by 10.5% which means real GDP is expected to grow between 6.5% to 7%). This budget is contractionary as budgetary outlay of Rs.48,20,512 crores for 2024 -25 is only 7.34% more than Rs.44,90,486 crores of the previous fiscal. Further, increase of budgetary outlay does not match with growth of revenue receipts which is expected to rise by 14.69% . It means priority has been given to fiscal fundamentalism than expansive budget.

The size of budget as percentage GDP is 14.7%, lower than 17.7% in 2020-21. Prime Minister Modi said that in 10 years, his government has tripled India's budget. Actually, the budget has grown 3.80 times or 280% in 10 years of UPA regime as against 2.69 times or 169.66% in 10 years of the Modi regime

It is publicised that capital expenditure that rose from Rs.7,40,025 crore in 2022-23 to Rs 9, 48,506 crores in 2023-24 and is estimated to rise by 11% to Rs.11.11 lakh crore in 2024-25 which reflect the government's commitment to bolstering the nation's infrastructure. But many roads especially in cities and villages are in decrepit stage. What is worrying is that a total of 448 infrastructure projects in India, with investments of over Rs.150 crore or more, experienced cost overruns of more than Rs.5.55 lakh crore in December 2023 as per the Quarterly Project Implementation Status Report (QPISR) on Central Sector Project.

In an agrarian economy like India, where farmers are forced to commit suicide due to distress sale, there is need for providing more fertiliser subsidy to reduce the cost of production. Similarly, there is imperative for enhancing food subsidy as 74.1% of Indians unable to afford healthy diet and 16.6 percent are undernourished according FAO. But both food fertiliser subsidy has been cut.

Allocation for fertiliser subsidy was reduced from Rs.2,51,339 crore in 2022-23 to Rs.1,88,894 crore in 2023-24 (RE) and estimated to decline further to Rs.1,64,000 crores in 2024-25. Similarly, allocation for food subsidy which was reduced from Rs.2,72,802 crore in 2022-23

to Rs.2,12,332 crore in 2023-24 (RE) is budgeted to fall further to Rs.2,05,250 crore in 2024-25.

In order to improve the living standards, it is imperative to provide education and health facilities free of cost. However, expenditure on education has shrunk from Rs.1,16,417 crore in 2023-24 (BE) to Rs.1,08,878 crore in revised estimate of same year. It has budgeted to increase marginally Rs.1,25,638 crore in 2024-25. This amounts to 0.38% of GDP, which is lower than 0.44% in 2014-2024 (NDA regime) and 0.61% of UPA regime. The total allocation for higher education has decreased from Rs.57,244 crores in 2023-24 (RE) to Rs.47,620 crores in the 2024-25 (BE), marking a significant reduction of 16.8 percent

However, the overall expenditure on education by Centre and states combined together as percentage of GDP revolves around 2.9%, which is much less than the outlay by developed countries such as the US (6%) and the UK (4.2%). Therefore, there is scope for India to increase its budgetary allocation in education from a mere 2.9% of its GDP to 6 % as envisaged by Kothari Commission.

Cartoon courtesy: Sandeep Adhwaryu, Times of India

The budget notes increase in health allocation from Rs.79,221 crores in 2023-24 to Rs.89,287 crores in 2024-25 reflecting a 12.70 % rise and the government's continued commitment to strengthening healthcare. It is said that this increase is intended to enhance funding for health services and infrastructure.

However, health allocation has shrunk from Rs.88,956 crore in 2023-24(BE) to Rs.79221 crore 2023-24 (RE). This represents a 0.4% increase only and negative in real term. Centre's health expenditure revolves around 0.27% of GDP and overall Centre and states combined together is around 1.35 % of GDP, which falls short of the target set by National Health Policy 2017 to allocate at least 2.5% of GDP to healthcare.

However, allocation of Integrated Child development Scheme (ICDS) has declined from Rs.21,523 crores in 2023-24 (RE) to Rs.21,200 crore. The budget allocation for MGNREGS is Rs.86,000 crore in 2024-25, same as announced in the interim budget.

According to ILO report on Global Employment Trends for Youth 2024, youth unemployment has doubled from 5.7% in 2000 to 12.4% in 2022. According to world Bank, 23.5% of Indian youth were classified as NEET - not in employment, education or training in 2023 as against world average of 20.4 %. The latest economic survey 2023-24 emphasized that India

Cartoon courtesy: R Prasad, Economic Times

needs to create 7.85 million non-farm jobs annually until 2030 to accommodate the growing unemployment. However, challenges remain, with higher unemployment rates among graduates and women.

In the name of addressing unemployment, the budget resorts to gimmickry. The employment subsidies are either directly or indirectly given to employers. Under the proposed scheme, employees will be paid Rs.15,000 (in three instalments Rs.5000, each) for having secured a new job with salary up to Rs.1 lakh a month. It is more than likely that the availability of this benefits would influence the compensation package offered by companies attempting to garner that subsidy. But another set of subsidies, such as the Rs 3000 a month contribution for two years to be made by the government against provided fund subscription accrues directly to employers.

Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman said the

Budget carries an allocation of more than Rs 3 lakh crore for schemes benefitting women and girls across various ministries, which signals the government's commitment to enhance women's role in economic development. The total budget for the ministry stands at Rs.26,092 crore in current fiscal, up from the previous year's revised allocation of Rs.25,448 crore. However, a marginal increase of 2.5 per cent is negative in real term.

The biggest problem confronting people is consumer inflation especially food inflation and hike in prices of essential commodities. In last few years, prices of essential commodities have been doubled eroding the purchasing power of people. Further household debt has increased to 40 percent of GDP while financial savings has declined to multi decade low of 5.3% of GDP. Private investment has ebbed. The budget does not address those problems. Though budget talks about ameliorating conditions of poor, farmer, youth and women, actually, none of their problems are addressed efficaciously.

Middle class are worst sufferer. Finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman said that if it was in her hands, she would have reduced taxes to almost nil for all. But a progressive tax system means rich should be taxed more while poor and middle class should get more relief. But middle class that constitutes 31 percent of Indians were upset with budget and disillusioned with government.

There was no relief to middle class as compared to corporates. Corporate taxes were cut on foreign companies from 40% to 35 %. In 2019-20 for Indian companies, it was cut from 30% to 22%. Whatever mild concession is given inform of rise of rise of standard deduction from [1]Rs.50,00 to Rs.75,000, and from [1] 15,000 toRs.25,000 for family pensioners is negligible. And change in tax rate slab is still negative if inflation is factored. "Around 14.9 crore senior citizens had expected govt to restore their senior citizens' railway concession, a facility which was withdrawn during the Covid-19 pandemic in 2020

Despite all talks of 'cooperative federalism', the state governments face discriminated except Andhra Pradesh and Bihar, under political compulsions. However, the Finance Commission grants (apart from the tax devolution) to states has been reduced from Rs.172760 crores in 2022-23 to Rs.140429 crores in 2023-24 and this budget reduced it further to Rs.132378 crores. As state governments have no share from resources generated by centre by way of cesses and surcharges, states share has declined.

Consequently tax-related litigation has also sharply increased, more than doubling to Rs.12.21 lakh crore in 2022-23, compared to Rs.5.03 lakh crore in 2013-14. Corporate tax litigation accounted for Rs.6 lakh crore and income other than corporate amounted to Rs.4.5 lakh crore.

Despite huge demand for not taxing uncertainty and emergency, Finance minister has neither abolished nor reduced 18 percent of GST on health insurance, term insurances ULIP premium and risk component of other insurances. By contrast Infosys gets Rs.3,898 crore partial GST tax relief for 2017-18 out of the Rs.32,403 crore tax notice for 2017-22

India needs equitable growth and benefits of growth should reduce inequality by taxing the rich and imposing wealth tax on them. The government has no political will to do so. This budget will further increase inequalities in Indian society and does nothing to improve the life and living conditions of the majority of Indians. It is a retrograde budget and the policies of the government are bound to meet with increasing resistance from the working and toiling masses.

The writer is President of CDIEA.

Cartoon courtesy: Sajith Kumar, Deccan Herald

Olympics 2024:
Paris says 'au revoir'
India misses out at big stage

HKN Murthy

Paris said 'au revoir' (good bye, see you again) as it brought the curtains down on a spectacular Olympic Games with an electrifying but emotional closing ceremony that highlighted the core values of excellence, respect and friendship which the French capital displayed in abundance over the 19 days of competition. Paris hosted the Olympics, after exactly 100 years, for the third time after 1900 and 1924.

The XXXIII Olympiad in Paris kicked off on July 24 - the official opening was two days later - with plenty of concerns - local and global but the games ended very successful.

A total of 10,714 athletes from 206 National and IOC refugee teams represented in 32 sports and 48 disciplines. There were 5,084 medals to be won in 329 medal events in all.

Sports is a great healer and it did so marvelously with some of the superstars delivering blockbuster performances. Leon Marchand's [France] sensational swims in the pool breaking Michael Phelp's record, Pan Zhanle of China creating a new world record in 100 Mts freestyle, Simone Biles' gravity-defying acts on the mat, Sydney McLaughlin-Levrone's [USA] breaking her own world record run in the 400 meter hurdles, unbelievable men's 100m sprint won by Noah Lyles by five-thousandths of a second, American all-star men's basketball team's box-office act, Novak Djokovic completing his trophy cabinet with an Olympic gold, these Games had several magical acts. Tamirat Tola of Ethiopia ended Kenya's dominance in the in the men's marathon breaking the previous record. Arshad Nadeem of Pakistan won the men's javelin throw gold medal which was the first for their country after 40 years. Armand Duplantis [Sweden] improved his own pole vault record to 6.25 meters and the legendary Sifa Hassan of Netherlands leaving a mark with a fantastic win in women's marathon.

The XXXIII Olympiad in Paris kicked off on July 24 - with plenty of concerns - local and global, but the games ended very successful, displaying in abundance the core values of excellence, respect and friendship over the 19 days of competition. A total of 10,714 athletes from 206 National and IOC refugee teams represented in 32 sports and 48 disciplines.

The United States topped the medal table with 40 gold medals and 126 medals in total. Tied in terms of gold medals, China finished second with 40 gold medals and 91 medals in total. Japan finished third with 20 gold medals and sixth in the overall medal count. Australia finished fourth with 18 gold medals and fifth in the overall medal count. The host nation, France, finished fifth with 16 gold and 64 total medals.

Dominica, Saint Lucia, Cape Verde and Albania won their first-ever Olympic medals. For Dominica and Saint Lucia both were gold medals. Botswana and Guatemala also won their first-ever gold medals. The Refugee Olympic Team also won their first-ever medal, a bronze in boxing. In all 125 Olympic records were

broken in 10 disciplines and 32 new world records were set in 8 disciplines.

India's Performance:

Among the bright spots for India in Paris, Manu Bhaker won the first medal for India. She bagged a bronze and became the first Indian woman to win an Olympic shooting medal. She then created history by becoming the first Indian to win two medals at a single edition of the Olympics after she clinched a mixed team 10m air pistol bronze with Sarabjot Singh.

Swapnil Kusale added a third medal in shooting to make it India's biggest haul in a sport in a single edition of the Olympics. The Indian men's hockey team matched their Tokyo 2020 success with the bronze in Paris with the help of heroics from Sreejesh while Neeraj Chopra became the most successful individual Olympian after he claimed a silver medal in the javelin throw. Later, Aman Sehrawat became India's youngest Olympic medalist when he won bronze in wrestling.

We must appreciate the achievement of our athletes who brought laurels to the country. However, India as a nation left the Paris 2024 Olympics with more heartbreaks than cheers. India missed out on six potential medals, most by a whisker, with the athletes finishing fourth in their respective events. This included Lakshya Sen, Mirabai Chanu and Manu Bhaker, who could have bagged her third medal at the Games. Vinesh Phogat's disqualification ahead of a historic final also added to India's woes.

With a contingent of 117 athletes competing for 69 medals across 16 sports, India won only six medals. India's performance is nothing short of pathetic for a nation with such a large share of population and GDP. Home to more than 1.40 billion people, India surpassed Britain as the world's largest economy in 2022. Last year India became one of just four countries to successfully land a spacecraft on the Moon. But when it comes to the Olympics, India punches below its weight.

India's history of untapped Olympic potential can be explained by several factors, according to experts, with underinvestment in sports being a major culprit. Another important factor is the politicization of the sports bodies. New Delhi has never poured resources into a national training program like those of traditional Olympic powerhouses, which have long regarded gold medals as a symbol of national strength. Indian athletes often face obstacles such as inadequate funding and a lack of access to facilities. India sends far fewer athletes and support staff to the Olympics than top teams like the US which has sent nearly 600 athletes.

India also faces broader health challenges that impede development and curtail sporting potential from childhood. India ranked 111th of 125 countries in the 2023 Global Hunger Index report. At 18.7%, it has the world's highest child wasting rate – the number of children who are too thin for their height – reflecting acute undernutrition. More than one third of children under age 5 in India are stunted due to malnutrition, meaning they are too short for their age, according to the report. Until we address some of these basic concerns around nutrition, it will be very

We must appreciate the achievement of our athletes who brought laurels to the country. However, India as a nation left the Paris 2024 Olympics with more heartbreaks than cheers.

With a contingent of 117 athletes competing for 69 medals across 16 sports, India won only six medals. India's performance is nothing short of pathetic for a nation with such a large share of population and GDP.

hard for us to achieve greater excellence at the highest level of sport where victories are counted in milliseconds.

Another challenge to Olympic progress is the additional barriers faced by women athletes in India, in what remains a deeply patriarchal nation. Sakshi Malik, wrestler who won bronze at the 2016 Rio Olympics, quit wrestling last year amid controversy over sexual harassment allegations against India's wrestling chief also a political heavy weight. Sakshi Malik, Vinesh Phogat and other wrestlers sleeping on the streets of Delhi for weeks demanding action against him.

Earning a single medal at the Olympics requires a lot of planning, investment, and hard work. Raw josh no longer wins medals. As we've seen, the mismanagement of the weight of an athlete by 100 grams can cost a gold medal. To make India competitive in sports it requires massive investment in facilities, equipment, coaches, and athletes. Indian sports bodies must be managed by successful sportspersons rather than politicians. India's performance at the Asiad and the Olympics has improved over the past few decades and this has come from the youth in rural India, in wrestling, boxing, shooting, and hockey. A takeaway here is that it is a good idea to channel the raw energy of our youth in rural India into sport. We hope that in the coming days our athletes win more and more accolades for the country with encouragement to the field of sports it deserves.

(Writer is Joint Secretary, ICEU, Bangalore II)

Vinesh Phogat & the people who abandoned her

She is equipped to deal with this shock. Rest of us have lessons to learn from an Olympic dream run cut tragically short

Sandeep Dwivedi (Courtey: Indian Express 8/8/24)

She took down someone who had never been defeated. She reached a peak no wrestler had climbed. And just when it seemed she was staring at a sliver of gold at the end of a dark tunnel, she was felled by a rule that had never been this cruel to any Olympian. This was the first Vinesh Phogat didn't deserve.

What was to be the most inspiring moment for Indian sports — a woman repeatedly undermined by the system becoming the country's first female gold medal winner — turned out to be a day of mourning. Sports picked the most inopportune time to showcase its flip side to the world. At an event where athletes were climbing podiums every hour, experiencing indescribable joy, there was a gloomy corner in Paris where a 29-year-old was dealing with a gut-wrenching disqualification.

Phogat had the will and the heart to take on the five-time BJP MP and Indian wrestling supremo Brij Bhushan Sharan Singh and compel the court to hear charges of sexual harassment against him. On the mat, she had the resolve to stun the so-far-unbeatable Japanese wrestler Yui Susaki.

It would be tempting to burn the rule book, tell the officials to have a heart, question the fairness of the world or moan at the cruelty of fate. But that ship has sailed, it wouldn't help. Outrage, at best, can be cathartic. The fact is the 50kg Olympic podium wouldn't have Phogat. The reason: She weighed more than others. By how much? Walk to your dining table, lift the salt-sprinkler, to get an idea. Take a pinch from it and gulp down a glass of water to push the lump down your throat.

In days to come, the world will move on. We might get busy celebrating a javelin medal or hockey's sparkling consistency. Phogat, too, is sure to get sympathy. She will be called for felicitation functions and may even get cash awards. She would be made to feel like a winner. But there are lessons to learn from Paris, a few for the athletes, many for the high and mighty.

First, about Phogat. If there is anyone in Indian sports equipped to deal with this shock, it has to be her. When she was nine, her father was shot dead by someone who is said at her village to be a mentally disturbed relative just outside the front door of their home. That day, Phogat would later say, her mother, a young widow, lost the right to smile. But she did raise a gutsy daughter who wouldn't get intimidated by anything.

Growing up, her cousins, living at a stone's throw from her home in Balali in Haryana, were the more famous Phogats. They were the wrestling royalty, they had a movie made on them. As a junior, she was, at best, the fourth Phogat. But a fearless girl with big dreams wasn't born to be a side story. The Vinesh story is more layered as her hurdles were far higher than those of her sisters. Dangal 2, if it's ever made, will not be a Greek tragedy, it will be a feel-good story. It's unlikely to have a podium finish at the end but then Phogat, after Paris, is perched higher than what an Olympic medal would lift you to.

Phogat has in her what most Indian sportspersons lack. She has the courage and conviction to take on the system and not care about consequences. Even in the company of taller, bigger male wrestlers, Vinesh would stand out because of the fire in her eyes. In those high-pressure Jantar Mantar street-fighting days, she was the one with the strongest spine and resolve. There were times when others would talk about finding a middle-path but Phogat's anger would prove to be a deal-breaker.

Those covering her Olympic march at the Paris wrestling halls talk about the same rage when she took on the best in the world. After winning a bout, she wouldn't wait for applause or appreciation. With blazing red eyes, breathing heavily, she would walk inside the tunnel.

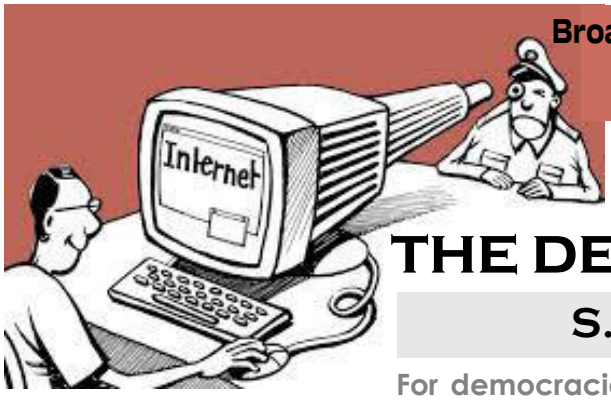
The wrestler from Haryana had systematically channeled her anger. Her opponents didn't know what hit them. Susaki had never lost, but against Phogat she did. Maybe, it's because the Japanese legend had never been up against an opponent who had the angst and anger of Phogat. There was no one who wanted this medal so desperately. In one of her many defiant interviews, during her fight against Singh, she had said: "I will look him (Singh) in the eye and medal leke aoongi main, tu dekh (I will bring a medal, you see)." The medal might have been missed but a very important point has been made.

By reaching the gold-medal round, Phogat has shown how little the government and sports officials know about the nation's sporting icons. When she had raised the importance of women's safety at sporting arenas, she was dismissed as a seasonal slogan-raiser trying to blackmail the federation into agreeing to her demands. They weren't even moved by the graphic details of sexual abuse in the police complaint filed by the country's elite wrestlers. She was labelled a "has-been", dismissed as "khota sikka". They would plant stories against her. "She didn't want to attend the trial, she is scared of young wrestlers", "This is politically motivated" — they would tell their media friends. How wrong they were about the only woman in the world to beat the great Susaki.

Phogat's dream run, until it took the nightmarish turn, had cast the focus on those who were silent when the wrestlers needed them most. There have been memes, a sad anticipation of what they will say now. Tragically, there are totally unsubstantiated whispers about the possibility of a conspiracy by an insider. It's an unhealthy Us vs Them atmosphere where a win is seen as a vindication and not a collective celebration of a sporting ecosystem. This is not ideal for a nation with dreams of hosting the Olympics and climbing high in the medals tally.

Phogat was able to take her personal rage to the mat and succeed as a wrestler, now she faces a tougher task. She would now need to get over her Olympic hurt and move on. She might have been denied the silver but she will always be remembered as the one who was neither intimidated by Singh, nor ruffled by Susaki. ●

Image courtesy: The Leaflet



Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2024

Detrimental to the democratic rights

S. Sivasubramanian

For democracies to thrive, citizens must have access to plurality of views and opinions. There should be a space for discussion. The provisions in the bill are something serious which will drag us into the colonial era. It gives the government the unbridled power to curb free debates and discussions. In short, the bill aims to stifle the voices of dissent. It aims to curtail the constitutional rights of the people. It is aimed to suppress democracy. It will violate the fundamental right to free speech and writing, Therefore, it should be opposed..

The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting has prepared the draft Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill, 2024 which will replace the Television Network Act of 1995. The Ministry has reportedly held closed door meetings with a few select stakeholders on the draft Bill. It seems, there has been no representation of digital associations, civil society and non-industry stakeholders in the discussions.

Legal Framework for the Broadcasting Sector

The available reports indicate that the bill will classify influencers and social media pages that produce content or discuss current affairs or news online as "digital news broadcasters". The draft bill extends its scope beyond Over The Top (OTT) content and digital news to include social media accounts and online video creators. This bill revises the 2023 draft which was earlier released in November 2023 by the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, aiming to consolidate the legal framework for the broadcasting sector.

The bill defines Professional as anyone engaged in systematic or structured activities and expands the definition of 'news and current affairs programs 'to include textual content alongside traditional formats. Thus, individuals offering tax advise platforms like YouTube or frequently posting news updates on Twitter could be classified as digital news broadcasters and subjected to the Bill's regulations. A Chartered Accountant providing financial advice on YouTube or a journalist sharing updates on Twitter could fall under this regulatory framework.

The bill broadens the definition of 'intermediary 'to include internet service providers, social media platforms and online search engines. It requires these intermediaries to provide data to the Central Government about OTT broadcasters and digital news broadcasters. Non compliance could result in fines and the loss of safe Labour protections as outlined by the Bharatiya Nyaya Sanhita, 2023. Importantly, if digital news broadcasters or OTT services use these platforms, the compliance burden shifts to them rather than the intermediary.

If creators are classified as news broadcasters, they must notify the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting about their work. They are also required to form Content Evaluation Committees (CEC) at their own expense, with diverse representation including individuals knowledgeable about various social groups, women, child welfare, scheduled castes, scheduled tribes and minorities. The names of CEC must be shared with the government. This is in addition to the existing Standard & Practice mechanism under the three tier self regulatory model. "This is really bizarre as both inside the Parliament and before the judiciary, the current government always maintained that the three tier self -regulatory model was working well. Pre-certification, if retained, will be a blow to the independent and creative expressions, and one could very well imagine what would be the

predicament of a documentary like the one telecast on the BBC on the Gujarat riots " says John Brittas, MP, CPIM. He further says, "compliance with paper work, the appointment of a grievance Officer and the formation of a self Evaluation Committee - all regardless of the size of the broadcaster - are disproportionate and stifling. This will hinder competition, stifle innovation and dampen the growth of alternative media".

The bill says - matters of news, opinion, interpretation, inference, deductions, understanding theories, explanation, analysis, critique, satire and art - everything requires the certification and approval of the government. This reminds us of the emergency which was declared in 1975 which undermined the democratic rights of the people.

The expansion of the draft Bill's scope compared to the version released in November 2023 is attributed to the role played by the independent Content Creators during the time of Lok Sabha elections 2024. Business Standard (9.8.2024) reports that according to official sources there were instances where creators made videos on current affairs with sensational claims about government and its leaders during the election 2024.

Non-compliance and Penalties

The penalties for failing to appoint Content Evaluation Committees can be severe. News creators who do not inform the Union government about the members of their CEC will be fined Rs.50 lakh for the first violation and Rs 2.5 Crore for subsequent violations within 3 years. The draft bill allows the government to exempt certain players or groups from these requirements.

Experts expressed the fear that the proposed changes to the broadcasting law aim to impose a license raj to muscle digital content creators. With textual content now under the purview and within the meaning of "broadcast", it is clear that the bill enables breaching the democratic lines. Content creators believe that in the name of regulations, the government wants to control the internet. "The bigger problem is not what kind of control they (the government) are going to go after, right now the concern is what kind of content they are going to forgive" fear YouTubers.

Possibilities of arbitrariness

There is all likelihood that the law is applied selectively and arbitrarily. The law is unlikely to be used against those who are close to the powers that be. It is to be remembered here that just weeks before the Lok Sabha elections, the Prime Minister awarded 23 content creators at the first ever National Creators Award. Highlighting the importance of recognising Online Creators, Modi said at the event, "I can sense time ahead of time". It is significant to note that the awards were given to content creators who had the ruling Party's ideological line. This creates concerns about the government picking and choosing the type of content it wants to reward or target.

Programme codes and Certification (by the Content Evaluation Committees) may predictably be applied differently to different groups i.e differently for the supportive media of the government (godimedia as it is called) and to the critics of the government. As there are no specific standards to distinguish between critical content and malicious content, and going by the record of the government, there are possibilities that the content creators and the sites are subjected to harassment and legal enforcement.

One more important thing to be understood is, the bills regulations belong to a large set of restrictions - defamation, sedition, anti - terror, promoting enmity, hurting religious sentiments and spreading disaffection. It has to be remembered that, in India during the last one decade, it is under these premises only the political adversaries of the ruling dispensation and other intellectuals and social activists have been put to embarassment including jail term utilising the law enforcing agencies. So these restrictions will definitely put the online sites and the social media at the mercy of the ruling dispensation.

Bill has to be condemned

Many social media groups have condemned the provisions of the bill and also the manner in which it is being pushed. Ananth Nath, President, Editors Guild of India, states that the manner in which the consultation is being done is deeply problematic. "It seems like confidential copies of the bill have been shared with a few select stakeholders. They have also shared these copies in a manner in which they cannot be shared further".

▶▶▶ **Contd on Page 16**

आयकर रिटर्न के आंकड़े: संख्या विशाल या असमानता विशाल!

सचिन जैन

As far as inequalities are concerned , we find lot of similarities in the data of, Income Tax returns, and data in Oxgfam Report, ADB Report and even in the Economic Survey of Govt of India, as well. That we are sitting on a volcano, is unmistakably evident. Obviously, there can not be sustainable development with inequalities reaching such a vulgar level..

उम्र एक सर्वमान्य उपलब्धि है, एक प्रसिद्ध कथन है और यह भी कि उम्र तो बस एक नंबर है, तो इस लिहाज से भी और लोगों की इस तरह की सोच से भी कि यदि उम्र के खाते में अधिक नंबर हैं तो वह एक उपलब्धि, हासिल, पवित्रता, इज्जत और सराहना की चीज हो जाती है। भारत जैसी विशाल जनसंख्या वाले देश में हर आंकड़ा विशाल नंबर वाला हो जाता है चाहे वह जीडीपी के आंकड़े हों या इस लेख की विषय वस्तु वाले आयकर रिटर्न के आंकड़े।

पिछले दिनों, 31 जुलाई, जो कई श्रेणी के आयकर निर्धारितियों के लिए रिटर्न भरने का अंतिम दिन था, इस अंतिम तिथि के गुजर जाने के बाद आयकर विभाग ने कुछ आंकड़े जारी किए। जिसमें बताया गया कि जुलाई 31 तक कुल 7.28 करोड़ रिटर्न भरे गए। पिछले वर्ष 2023 में यही संख्या 6.77 करोड़ थी। यानी कि 31 जुलाई तक 51 लाख अधिक रिटर्न भरे गए। इस वर्ष 31 जुलाई तक भरे गए रिटर्न में से नई टैक्स रेजीम के अंतर्गत 72 प्रतिशत, लगभग 5.27 करोड़ रिटर्न भर गए हैं। पहली बार रिटर्न भरने वाले लोगों की तादाद 31जुलाई तक 58.5 लाख बताई गई है।

इसके साथ ही टाइम सीरीज डाटा वर्ष 2022–23 तथा 2023–24 वर्ष के आयकर रिटर्न का संपूर्ण डाटा भी आयकर विभाग ने जारी कर दिया। इसके अनुसार वर्ष 2023–24 के लिए 7.97 करोड़ आयकर रिटर्न के अंतर्गत 102.53 लाख करोड रुपए की सकल कुल आय (जीटीआई) घोषित की है। वर्ष 2022–23 की यह संख्या 7.26 करोड़ रिटर्न तथा जीटीआई 89.53 लाख करोड़ रुपए थी। इसके अतिरिक्त वर्ष 2022–23 में 1.9 करोड़ तथा 2023–24 में 2.35 करोड़ आयकरदाता इस प्रकार के थे जिनका आयकर स्रोत पर कट गया किंतु रिटर्न नहीं भरा। इस प्रकार वर्ष 2023–24 में कुल आयकर दाता की संख्या 10.33 करोड़ हो जाती है और 2022–23 की 9.16 करोड़।

वित्त वर्ष 2023–24 की समाप्ति तक यानी 31 मार्च 2024 तक देश में कुल जारी किए गए पेन की संख्या 74.67 करोड़ थी। वहीं 31 मार्च 2023 तक यह संख्या 67. 67 करोड़ थी इस प्रकार वर्ष 2023–24 में कुल 7करोड नए पेन जारी किए गए। कुल जारी पैन में पुरुषों एवं महिलाओं का अनुपात 58 और 42का है।

वर्ष 2023–24 के जारी किए गए आयकर रिटर्न के आंकड़ों के अनुसार शिखर के एक प्रतिशत, 7. 97 लाख रिटर्न के द्वारा 48.25 लाख करोड़ रुपए की सकल कुल आय (जीटीआई) प्रदर्शित की गई है जोकी कुल आय का 47 प्रतिशत है। शीर्ष 50 प्रतिशत ने, 3.99 करोड़ रिटर्न के द्वारा 88.77 लाख करोड़ रुपए की जीटीआई दर्शाई है जो की कुल जीटीआई का 86.6 प्रतिशत होता है, वहीं नीचे के 50 प्रतिशत रिटर्न वालों की जीटीआई सिर्फ 13.76 लाख करोड रुपए रही जो की 13.4 प्रतिशत होती है। 500 करोड़ रुपए से अधिक की जीटीआई वाले देश के शीर्ष 966 लोगों ने वर्ष 2023–24 में देश की कुल आयकर रिटर्न भरने वालों की जीटीआई का 22.5 प्रतिशत के साथ 23.03 लाख करोड़ रुपए दर्शाई। 100 करोड़ रुपए से ऊपर की आय वाले कुल 4521 लोगों की कुल आय 29.3 प्रतिशत थी।

आश्चर्य की बात है की पहली बार आयकर रिटर्न भरने वाले लोगों की संख्या 58.5 लाख है वहीं इसी अवधि में 7करोड नए पैन जारी किए गए। कौन लोग हैं जो पेन जारी करा रहे हैं और रिटर्न नहीं भर रहे। यह भी आश्चर्य की बात है कि जिस देश में 74 करोड़ पेन धारक हैं वहां कुल करदाता सिर्फ 10 करोड़ के आसपास हैं। ज्ञात हो कुल करदाता उनका योग होता है जो रिटर्न भरते हैं तथा जिनका टैक्स श्रोत पर कट जाता है किंतु रिटर्न नहीं भरते हैं। भारत के कुल मतदाताओं में व्यक्तिगत करदाताओं का हिस्सा केवल 10 फीसदी है जबकि अमेरिका में यह 75 फीसदी और नार्वे में शत प्रतिशत है। भारत में संगठित क्षेत्र के रोजगार और व्यवसाय से लाभ हासिल करने वाले लोग इन आंकड़ों में शामिल हैं। भ्रष्टाचार

से तथा कृषि आय के द्वारा भ्रष्ट अनैतिक काले धन को छुपाने वाले भी कम से कम आयकर रिटर्न तो भरते ही हैं भले ही वे अपनी आय को कम दिखाएं।

आयकर रिटर्न का डाटा और अन्य सभी डेटा विश्लेषण जैसे ऑक्सफैम की रिपोर्ट, एशियन डेवलपमेंट बैंक की रिपोर्ट और यहां तक कि भारत सरकार के आर्थिक सर्वे में असमानता को लेकर काफी समानता है। एक वर्ष में 966 लोगों की सकल आमदनी रिटर्न भरने वाले लोगों की सकल आमदनी का 22.5 प्रतिशत है वहीं शिखर के 4521 लोगों की सकल आमदनी 29 प्रतिशत है। सारे आंकड़े हमको चीख–चीख के बता रहे हैं कि यह दुनिया असमानताओं के बारूद पर खड़ी है। इतनी असमानताओं के साथ दुनिया स्थिरता के साथ प्रगति नहीं कर सकती है।

भारत के वेतन भोगी करदाता सबसे गए गुजरे हैं वह गैर वेतनभोगी करदाताओं की तुलना में करीब तीन गुना ज्यादा इनकम टैक्स देते हैं। इसमें अधिकांश टैक्स वेतन मिलने से पहले ही कट जाता है। भारत में हम जिन सुविधाओं के लिए सरकार को टैक्स देते हैं उन्हीं को निजी क्षेत्र से महंगी दर पर खरीदते हैं। हैरत है कि हमने इसे सामान्य बात मान लिया है जैसे कि टैक्स देकर सुविधा लेना हमारे अधिकार का हिस्सा ही नहीं है। इसी दौर में हमने कॉरपोरेट टैक्स को 30 प्रतिशत से घटाकर 22 प्रतिशत कर दिया। कॉरपोरेट सेक्टर को कंसेशन के तौर पर रेवेन्यू फोरगौन लगभग 1.03 लाख करोड़ रुपए दी गई।

संविधान के अनुच्छेद 39 (बी) के अनुसार समुदाय के भौतिक संसाधनों के स्वामित्व और नियंत्रण को जनता की भलाई को ध्यान में रखते हुए वितरित करने की दिशा में नीति निर्धारित करना राज्य का कर्तव्य है। अनुच्छेद 39(सी) यह सुनिश्चित करता है कि धन और उत्पादन साधनों का सर्वसाधारण के लिये अहितकारी संकेंद्रण न हो। किन्तु भारत की सरकार और उनकी नीतियां समाज के सबसे संकटग्रस्त लोगों तक सीधी मदद की क्षमता तैयार नहीं कर पाई इसलिए इनका बड़ा हिस्सा अर्थव्यवस्था के ऊपरी तबके तक ही पहुंच पाया। दुनिया भर में पिछले 10 साल में जो भी नई समृद्धि और धन पैदा हुआ है उसका आधा शिखर के सिर्फ एक प्रतिशत पर गया है। कोविड के बाद तो दो तिहाई इन शिखर बाले एक प्रतिशत पर गया है। ट्रिकल डाउन थ्योरी काम नहीं कर रही है। लगातार कंसंट्रेशन ऑफ वेल्थ की ट्रैजेक्टरी पर देश चल रहा है। व्यवस्थित रूप से अरबपतियों को लाभ पहुंचाने के लिए नीतियां बनाई जा रही है।

1991 में भारत की आबादी का सिर्फ एक प्रतिशत मध्य वर्ग माना जाता था अब 10 फीसदी से थोड़े अधिक को इस श्रेणी में रखा जा सकता है। यहां तक की शीर्ष 10 प्रतिशत के भीतर भी एक प्रतिशत आबादी शेष 9 प्रतिशत की तुलना में काफी समृद्ध है और इन एक प्रतिशत में भी शिखर पर मौजूद 0.1 प्रतिशत शेष एक प्रतिशत की तुलना में बहुत ज्यादा अमीर है, और इसी तरह 0.001 प्रतिशत 0.1. से अमीर, अश्लीलता की हद तक। यानी कि भारतीय मध्य वर्ग मुहावरों वाली भारतीय विविधता का आर्थिक अजायबघर है।

इस तरह की असमानता अराजकता ही फैलाएगी, समाज के संबंधों को तोड़ देगी। यह हमने ऐसी स्थिति पैदा कर ली है जो समाज को व्यवस्थित रूप से रहने नहीं देगी, विध्वंस का कारण बनेगी। भारत में गैर बराबरी को सिर्फ आर्थिक असमानता के रूप में नहीं समझा जा सकता। सामाजिक, राजनीतिक, शिक्षा आदि के आधार पर असमानता हो चाहे, लिंग, जाति, धर्म पर आधारित हो, इन सभी के आधार पर इसे समझना होगा। यदि आयकर रिटर्न के आंकड़े जाति, लिंग और धर्म के आधार पर जांच कर लिए जाएं तो सारी की सारी पोल खुल जाएगी। पूर्व विदेश सचिव और पूर्व मुख्य सुरक्षा सलाहकार श्री शिवशंकर मेनन ने बांग्लादेश की राजनीतिक अस्थिरता और अशांति के पीछे का एक कारण आय, श्रोत और संसाधनों का असमान नियंत्रण और वितरण बताया है।

बाबा नागार्जुन कहते थे जैसे गरीबों की रेखा होती है वैसी अमीरी की रेखा भी होनी चाहिए एक सीमा के बाद अश्लील, असभ्य, भौंडी और अनैतिक।

हालाते जिस्म, सूरते जां, और भी खराब,
चारों तरफ खराब, यहाँ और भी खराब।

नजरों में आ रहे हैं, नजारे बहुत बुरे,
होंठों में आ रही है, जुबाँ और भी खराब।
(दुष्यन्त)

Writer is former President, Aligarh Division IEA

BROADCASTING SERVICES (REGULATION) BILL, 2024

Contd from Page 14

He also said that despite two formal requests asking the Ministry for a copy have not yielded any response.

"Technically, any bill that regulates broadcasting would be examined and scrutinized by a Parliamentary Committee. This is crucial to ensure there are no gruesome errors and mistakes in the bill. It is the right of every citizen to know the conditions of the bill that the government wants to pass. This kind of attempt to push a bill which likely is to be so controversial does not look good "says Paritosh Joshi, an independent media and communications consultant and ex-CEO at India TV.

For democracies to thrive, citizens must have access to plurality of views and opinions. There should be a space for discussion. "A monopoly - whether by the State or an individual - on the medium of information is detrimental to democracy" says John Brittas. The provisions in the bill are something serious which will drag us into the colonial era. It gives the government the unbridled power to curb free debates and discussions.

In short, the bill aims to stifle the voices of dissent. It aims to curtail the constitutional rights of the people. It is aimed to suppress democracy. It will violate the fundamental right to free speech and writing, Therefore, it should be opposed, The progressive forces should launch a bitter campaign on this issue and the government should not be allowed to legislate this controversial bill.

(Writer is Treasurer, SZIEF)

THE LONG ROAD BACK TO DEMOCRACY IN BANGLADESH

Image courtesy: Al Jazeera

Muhammad Yunus has the confidence of the students and opposition parties for now. But it's not yet clear how long his interim govt would take to hold elections. Yunus has packed his advisory council with five other members from non-government organisations, raising questions about its competence in running an administration that can sail through the turbulent waters.

Farid Hossain

Editor of *United News of Bangladesh* based in Dhaka

(Courtesy: New Indian Express 16-8-2024)

After a student-led upsurge ended former Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina's 15-year rule early this month, Bangladesh installed its most famous citizen—Nobel peace laureate Professor Muhammad Yunus—as its interim leader until a new election is held. Yunus, 84, has the backing of the country's powerful military and the endorsement of a group of anti-Hasina political parties that suffered during her rule characterised by highhandedness, widespread corruption, and denial of a free and fair national vote for years. Yunus, founder of Grameen Bank, is known as a "banker to the poor". He is credited with pulling out millions of Bangladeshis, mostly women, from poverty by giving them small loans to start businesses.

Ironically, on August 5—the day Sheikh Hasina stepped down and left for India before tens of thousands of protesters overran her official residence in Dhaka—Yunus was set for a court appearance to answer charges of embezzling over $2 million from Grameen Telecom, an allegation he has always denied. He could have been handed a long jail term in addition to the six-month imprisonment (granted bail) he was given earlier for alleged violation of labour laws. Since his taking over as chief advisor to the interim government, all the cases—up to 190 filed by Hasina's government—have been withdrawn. "The monster is gone," exulted Yunus, referring to his bitter critic Hasina, who would dismiss him as a "bloodsucker of the poor".

Yunus's first week in power saw him grappling to restore law and order, reorganising the battered administration and reaching out to minorities, especially the Hindus who suffered mob attacks on their homes, businesses and

temples in parts of the country. "We are one family, no room for division," he reassured Hindu leaders during a visit to the Dhakeshwari temple in downtown Dhaka. "Establishing people's democratic rights and human rights is the main goal of this government."

Meanwhile, the Yunus-led interim government is talking more about "fixing the state" and reaping benefits of what has been called "the second independence", than a plan to hold national elections and hand over power to elected representatives. Fixing the state means cleansing institutions such as the judiciary, Election Commission, Anti-Corruption Commission, government administration, universities and the central bank of Awami League loyalists.

As Yunus's law advisor Asif Nazrul put it: "We are caught in the middle of two aspirations: the political parties want us to hold an election as soon as possible, while the people want us to reform the system." His remarks come amid speculation that this interim administration may stay longer than expected—from two to six years. The Gen-Z that spectacularly deposed the longest-serving female prime minster in the world seems to be in no mood to let the politicians return soon and rule the nation of 170 million people. They have succeeded in getting two of their representatives, Nahid Islam and Asif Mahmud Sajib Bhuiyan, both 26 years old, into the Yunus-led 17-member council of advisors.

Yunus is also mulling having student representatives as assistant advisors in all ministries to ensure that the movement's goal of building a clean and transparent administration does not get derailed. In their scheme, they see no role of the existing political parties, which they find rotten and selfish. This may sound odd and idealistic, but Yunus and his team are heeding what the students are saying. For example, the students reacted angrily when home affairs advisor Brig Gen (Retd) Sakhwat Hossain praised the Awami League's role in the country's 1971 war of liberation and advised the "good people" in the party to reorganise and prepare for polls. The students are now waging a street campaign to keep vigil against the advisors' activities.

But with the Awami League in disarray, Yunus has been able to persuade the key contenders for power, the Bangladesh Nationalist Party and its long-time ally Jamaat-e-Islami, to give him enough time to create an environment conducive to free and fair election—something Bangladesh has not seen since 2014. The big question, however, is how long they will wait. Right now, these parties, together with the extremist Islamic outfit Hefazat-e-Islami, are happy as the interim government is doing what they would have done to Hasina and her party. The former prime minister has already been sued on charges of genocide and crimes against humanity for the death of over 560 people, many of them children and students, during the anti-government rioting. Some former ministers have been arrested.

As Yunus's administration is still settling down, it is unclear how the change in government will impact Dhaka's close relations with New Delhi. Prime Minister Narendra Modi was the first foreign leader to welcome Yunus, saying India wants to continue working with Bangladesh on their shared vision. But when Indian High Commissioner Pranay Verma met Foreign Affairs Advisor Touhid Hossain on Wednesday, he was told that Hasina making statements while in India was not "conducive to friendly relations or to fostering better bilateral relations". Hasina has reportedly stated that the US had a role in her ouster, an allegation denied by Washington.

Touhid said Dhaka also wants to end border killings by India, conclude the Teesta water sharing deal and ensure the supply of essential commodities. In another development, Farida Akhter, fisheries and livestock advisor, called for halting the export of hilsa fish, a delicacy among Bengalis, to India in order to keep the local prices down.

Yunus has packed his advisory council with five other members from non-government organisations, raising questions about its competence in running an administration that can sail through the turbulent waters. He waded into a controversy after the advisory council, in its first formal meeting, cancelled the public holiday on August 15 to mark the assassination of the nation's founding leader and Sheikh Hasina's father, Sheikh Mujibur Rahman, in 1975. Freedom fighter Mahboob Zaman wrote, "In the new Bangladesh, there is every freedom but one to express mourning."

THE GLOBAL MEANING OF GAZA

Gaza, the Congo, and other such hellscapes are real-time alarm bells that genocide may become a powerful tool in the decades to come for resolving capital's intractable contradiction between surplus capital and surplus humanity. Simply put, political chaos and chronic instability can create conditions quite favorable for capital. It is difficult not to heed the wakeup call as the global police state perfects its mechanisms of surveillance and repression .....This is the "big picture" behind the intifada of solidarity with Palestine that exploded on and off our campuses in recent months.

William I. Robinson
is Distinguished Professor of Sociology
at the University of California at Santa Barbara.
(Courtesy: Znetwork.org August 14, 2024)

One of the hallmarks of radical social science is to place the "noisy abode" of headlines and the swirl of current events in a larger historical and structural context that give them deeper meaning. The genocide in Gaza and the repression and criminalization of Palestine solidarity on and off U.S. university campuses and around the world tell a larger story of global capitalist crisis. The absolute savagery of the unfolding genocide has touched a raw nerve throughout the world precisely because it brings home the high stakes involved as the dynamics of global crisis play out, from Kenya to Argentina, from France to the United States, from Bangladesh to Nigeria.

Structurally this crisis is one of overaccumulation. Chronic stagnation places mounting pressure on the political and military agents of transnational capital to crack open new spaces of accumulation. At the same time, these agents have to contain rebellion from below brought about by mounting discontent with the global status quo. But the crisis is as much political as it is economic. Rising inequality, impoverishment, and insecurity for working and popular classes after decades of social decay wrought by neoliberalism undermine state legitimacy, destabilize national political systems, jeopardize elite control, and give impetus to the rise of a neofascist Right. The Ukraine and Gaza wars along with the New Cold War between Washington and Beijing are accelerating the violent crackup of the post-WWII international system.

The crisis of social reproduction is particularly acute. The past half century of capitalist globalization has involved a very profound and ongoing restructuring and transformation of world capitalism that has involved a vast new round of primitive accumulation and expulsions around the world. Hundreds of millions of people have been displaced from the countryside of the former Third World and by deindustrialization in the former First World. The ranks of surplus labor, of those structurally excluded and relegated to the margins of existence, now number in the billions. The level of inequality worldwide is unprecedented. One percent of humanity controls 52 percent of the world's wealth and 20 percent of humanity controls 95 percent while the remaining 80 percent has to make do with just five percent of that wealth. Billions of people cannot survive as

social disintegration spreads. Whole regions and countries are collapsing. Millions more face displacement by conflict, climate change, economic collapse, and political, ethnic and religious persecution.

Surplus capital finds its alter ego in surplus labor as crises of overaccumulation expand the two antagonistic poles of this dialectical unity. The process of capitalist development "constantly produces and produces in direct ratio of its own energy and extent, a relatively redundant population of laborers, i.e., a population of greater extent that suffices for the average needs of the self-expansion of capital, and therefore a surplus-population," famously noted Marx in *Capital*. "*This is the absolute general law of capitalist accumulation*" (emphasis in original). Decades of globalization and neoliberalism have relegated great masses of people around the world to marginal existence. In the coming years new technologies based on automation, machine learning and artificial intelligence combined with displacement generated by conflict, economic collapse, and climate change will exponentially increase the ranks of surplus humanity. In this age of global capitalism the system produces an historically unprecedented multiplication of surplus humanity; people who are proletarianized to be sure, but too numerous to be useful to capital as a reserve army, unable to consume, restless and on the move. They must be contained through the global police state whose contingent end game is extermination.

There is no more potent and tragic symbol of the fate of surplus humanity than the genocide now being perpetrated by Israel. The Palestinian proletariat in Gaza ceased serving as cheap labor for the Israeli economy when the blockade was imposed in 2007 and the territory became a vast, open-air concentration camp. Of no use to Israeli and transnational capital, Gazans stand in the way of global capitalist expansion in the Middle East and are entirely disposable. The October 7, 2023, Palestinian resistance attack came just as Israel and Saudi Arabia were to normalize relations, which in turn was supposed to stabilize the Middle East, deepen the Israeli-Arab regional economic integration that has taken off in recent years, and pave the way for a new round of transnational corporate and financial investment throughout the region.

While the attack put a temporary hold on those plans, the Israeli government, even in the midst of the genocide, set about granting licenses to transnational energy companies for gas and oil exploration off Gaza's Mediterranean coast while Israeli real estate companies advertised for the construction of luxury homes in bombed out Gaza neighborhoods, and others spoke of resuscitating the Ben Gurion Canal Project. Donald Trump's son in law, Jared Kushner has openly talked about seizing prime beachfront real estate in Gaza. In the larger picture, the siege appears as a form of primitive accumulation through genocide.

Capital's Extermination Impulse

If these are the particular historical circumstances that constitute the background to the Gaza war, they also help us understand how the world-historic conjuncture of globalization and crisis can activate capital's always-latent potential for extermination. Gaza and other such spaces around the world must be cleared for capitalist expansion. The ruling class fear mass uprisings in the face of ongoing and growing popular protest. Gaza is a microcosm and extreme manifestation of ruling class strategies to create new geographies of containment and butchery of surplus populations that stand in the way of transnational capitalist appropriation and expansion.

Gaza as a giant open-air concentration camp may be an extreme case of managing surplus humanity yet such mega-prison geographies are spreading around the world. In 2023, the Salvadoran government inaugurated its draconian mega-prison, Center for the Confinement of Terrorism, the largest in the world, locking up 40,000 prisoners, virtually all of them young, unemployed and impoverished. If Gaza shows us the extermination option, El Salvador provided a model of control over surplus labor based on manipulating insecurity and inducing fear in the face of crime and social violence, themselves the consequence of chronic poverty, unemployment and deprivation.

Mega-prisons as a method of containing surplus humanity has spread very rapidly. After the Salvadoran prison was opened, Brazil, China, Turkey, Thailand, the Philippines, and India, among other countries,

announced similar plans for prisons holding tens of thousands of people. Between 2016 and 2021 construction began in Turkey on no less than 137 new prisons. In Sri Lanka the government announced in 2021 plans to build a 200-acre prison complex that would allow 100,000 people to be detained across the country – more than three times the prison population in that year. Egypt announced that year it would soon open a new prison to lock up 30,000 people. While there were already some 200 private for-profit prisons around the world, many of those under construction were to be "public-private partnerships," with corporations contracted to build and run prisons – for a handsome profit, of course.

Paramilitary insurgencies and multinational military deployments have displaced upwards of seven million people in the Congo in recent years, most of them in the Eastern provinces, with the aim of opening up access to the country's vast mineral resources, including abundant deposits of gold, diamonds, silver, cobalt, coltan, tin, oil, gas and more. Often reported as ethnic conflict or struggles among local factions for political control, these are proximate causes of transnational wars by capitalists and states to seize resources in which twin dimensions of the global police state merge: *militarized accumulation*, or accumulating capital and seizing resources through war and conquest, and *accumulation by repression*, or accumulating capital by mass repression of the working and popular classes.

Borders become less physical markers of territory than axes around which intensive control over those expelled is organized. They are ever more militarized. In the half century of capitalist globalization, no less than 63 border walls have been built worldwide to lock in or keep out surplus humanity. Along with repression meted out by states, transnational migrants are subject to the predation of human traffickers, slavers, drug cartels and other criminal gangs. Borders between national jurisdictions become war zones and zones of death. The US border patrol reported more than 7000 deaths at the Mexico/US border from 1998 to 2023, likely a great underestimate since it does not take into account those whose bodies were not recovered or the many who have died making the long journey through Central America and Mexico. The figures for deaths in the Mediterranean are shocking – more than 20,000 drowned or disappeared from 2014 to 2023.

Gaza, the Congo, and other such hellscapes are real-time alarm bells that genocide may become a powerful tool in the decades to come for resolving capital's intractable contradiction between surplus capital and surplus humanity. Simply put, political chaos and chronic instability can create conditions quite favorable for capital. It is difficult not to heed the wakeup call as working-class populations abandoned by parties that once represented them turn to ethnonationalist ideologies and charismatic personages, as the global police state perfects its mechanisms of surveillance and repression with the aid of more and more sophisticated technologies, and as our communities continue to be pillaged and scorched, rendering the planet increasingly uninhabitable for vast swathes of the world's population.

This is the "big picture" behind the intifada of solidarity with Palestine that exploded on and off our campuses in recent months. University administrators viciously attacked our free speech and academic freedom, calling in police and paramilitary forces to violently repressed peaceful student protests. But they were not acting alone. They were responding to the threat represented by the tidal wave of solidarity with Palestine to the interests of transnational corporate capital and the capitalist state, especially a military-industrial-security-

intelligence-big tech complex. Research universities are heavily funded by corporations that are in turn intertwined with the state's military, security, and intelligence agencies. My own campus, the University of California at Santa Barbara, receives multimillion dollar funding from Northup Grumman, Lockheed Martin, Raytheon, General Dynamics, Caterpillar, Hewlett Packard, and so on, in coordination with state agencies. These corporations invest heavily in Israel, including partnering with the Israeli Defense Forces to develop and deploy the military hardware and technology used in the genocide.

The demand by student and faculty protesters that our universities divest from these corporations is a direct threat to the interests of the transnational capitalist class (TCC). It should be no surprise that a consort of multimillionaires and billionaires in New York City instructed Mayor Eric Adams to send police to storm Columbia and other campuses in that city. The CEO of Palantir, Alex Karp, made clear the very high stakes that the TCC believed were at play in the protests. Palantir, a multi-billion-dollar high technology corporation based in Silicon Valley, signed an agreement in early 2024 with the Israeli Ministry of Defense to supply the Israeli Defense Forces with artificial intelligence and other digital technologies that were used in the Gaza genocide. "College campus protests are not a side show. They *are* the show," said Karp. "If we lose the intellectual battle, we will not be able to deploy any army in the West, ever."

Comrade Buddhadeb Bhattacharya

Comrade Buddhadeb Bhattacharya, outstanding leader of the working class and former Chief Minister of West Bengal passed away on 8/8/2024 after a prolonged respiratory illness. He was aged 80 years.

Buddhadeb Bhattacharya emerged as a student leader in the 1960s and later went on to become the Secretary of the West Bengal Democratic Youth Federation. He was first elected to the West Bengal State Assembly in 1977. He shouldered the responsibility as the Minister for Information and Public Relations from 1977 to 1982 and thereafter was in charge of various ministries including that of Cultural Affairs under the leadership of legendary Com Jyoti Basu.

Com Buddhadeb succeeded Jyoti Basu as the Chief Minister of West Bengal in the year 2000 and led the Left Front Government for another two terms. He was known for his simple living. He lived with his family in a two bed-room apartment and operated as Chief Minister from the same residence. He was elected to the Polit Bureau of the CPI (M) in 2000. As a member of the Polit Bureau till 2015, he made important contributions in shaping Party policies.

Buddhadeb's passion was literature. He was a poet, playwright and writer. He translated many international literary works into Bengali. He made significant contribution to the development of cultural institutions and sustaining progressive cultural values.

In his death, India lost a valiant son and the working class a great friend. The AIIEA and Insurance Worker deeply mourn the unfortunate demise of Com Buddhadeb Bhattacharya and shares the grief with his family, friends, comrades and tens of thousands of admirers.

Com Chandrakant Dalvi, former Vice-President, WZIEA passed away on 15th August 2024 due to a massive heart attack. Com Dalvi made significant contribution to the struggle for absorption of temporary employees under CGIT. He also discharged responsibilities as the Secretary of Pensioners' Association of Mumbai.

Com MAF Benarji, Former President of ICEU, Rajahmundary Division succumbed to a massive heart attack on 14th August 2024. Com Benarji played a big role in the development of the organization at Rajahmundry.

Com S.R.Jaysimha, Former President, ICPA, Bangalore passed away on 7th August 2024 due to multi organ failure. He was ailing for sometime. Com Jayasimha also worked for the Bangalore Insurance Institute.

Insurance Worker mourns the unfortunate deaths of these three comrades and shares the grief with the bereaved families.

62nd Conference of ICEU, Thanjavur

The 62nd General Conference of ICEU, Thanjavur Division was held at Thanjavur on August 10 & 11, 2024. More than 500 comrades including 120 women and around 50 Pensioners attended the conference. The conference commenced with the flag hoisting by Com S. Selvaraj, President amidst thunderous slogans.

The General Conference was inaugurated by Comrade T.V.N.S. Ravindranath, Jt.Secretary, AIIEA and General Secretary of SCZIEF. In his inaugural address, he dealt with the present political situation prevailing all over India. He pointed out that the result of the 18th Loksabha election had given clear message to the BJP that governance has to be on the basis of consensus and people reject divisive politics. He asserted that people had given a message that common People issues of eradicating the poverty, providing employment opportunity are to be given top priority. He cautioned the employees that we have to protect the rights and benefits of the employees which were earned through struggles. He gave a call for the employees to fight against the policies of Union Government and IRDAI which weaken the LIC.

Shri S. Murasoli, Member of Parliament of Thanjavur Constituency greeted the conference. He gave assurance that he and his party... DMK.... would continue to take the issue of GST on insurance Premium to the appropriate forum for withdrawal.

Comrades I.K. Biju, Vice President, SZIEF and R. Sarvamangala, Joint Secretary, J. Jaishankar, President of LIC

Class I Officers' Association, Thanjavur Division, D. Prabhu, President, MRGIEA, R. Punniamurthy, Secretary, AIIPA, Thanjavur Division and Shri Ramesh, Manager (P&IR) also greeted the conference.

Comrade V. Sethuraman, General Secretary welcomed the gathering and Com B.Saravanabaskar, Joint Secretary proposed Vote of Thanks.

In the Delegates session, the General Secretary placed a report on behalf of the Working Committee on which 30 comrades (majority of them young comrades who had been recently recruited) including 6 women comrades participated in the discussion. The delegates who participated in the debate thoroughly analyzed the political situation and our movements to protect the Nation and our industry. The speeches of our veteran comrades S.R. Krishnamurthy and R. Easudoss enthused the delegates. After the summing up by General Secretary, the report was unanimously accepted. The statements of accounts were also adopted unanimously. The conference has taken the decision to conduct two seminars in different centres in view of the 69th Year of LIC formation Day, Trade Union Class for Office Bearers and delegates Ultimately the conference had given confidence to the comrades to build a strong LIC for a stronger India.

Comrades S. Selvaraj, V. Sethuraman and S.L. Sridhar were unanimously elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the ensuing term.

The Conference had come to an end with the Vote of Thanks proposed by Comrade R. Seethala, Convenor of LIC Working Women Co-ordination Committee.

65th General Conference of ICEU Coimbatore

The 65th General conference and 38th General Council meeting of Insurance corporation employees union Coimbatore division was held on 27th and 28 July 2024 at Coimbatore. The conference started with the hoisting of the AIIEA flag by president of Coimbatore division , Comrade B V Kumar and floral tributes was offered to the Martyrs.

Comrade V. Ramesh, President , All India Insurance Employees Association, inaugurated the conference.. He in his inaugural address elaborated the process and tactics of AIIEA to achieve a wonderful wage revision . He dealt in detail about the current political and social scenario where in unemployment rate is on a all time high . He also said that the budget 2024 presented by the union finance minister is highly disappointing and had no fruitful measures to address the current situation.

Comrade M.Girija, Joint Secretary of AIIEA, in her greetings briefed about the challenges of the industry and the necessity of the employees to be united to face this challenges.

Comrade M.Gajendran former president of ICEU Coimbatore, was felicitated on his retirement from the services of LIC on 31st July 2024 by Com.K.Swaminathan, former General secretary SZIEF and by Com. A. R. Kalyana Sundaram,Veteran leader of ICEU Coimbatore division. Com.M Gajendran in his acceptance speech, acknowledged the role of AIIEA in shaping his character in every sphere.

Mr Shankar , a visually challenged student of Dr. Ambedkar coaching centre who came out successful and got appointed as probationery officer in Bank of Baroda was honoured. The employees who retired after the last conference were also felicitated. The inaugural session of the conference came to an end after the vote of thanks proposed by Comrade K. Thulasidharan, General Secretary of ICEU Coimbatore division. More than 450 comrades including 30 pensioners attended the inaugural session.

The delegate session resumed after lunch wherein the secretary"s Annual report was submitted. The deliberations of the report was initiated by Comrade C. Muthukumarasamy, Vice president of South Zone Insurance Employees Federation and in total 24 delegates including 9 women comrades participated in the debate on the report. The audited statement of accounts for the year 2023-24 was presented and accepted unanimously.

Comrades K.Swaminathan, Former General Secretary, R.Dharmalingam, Vice president and V Suresh joint secretary of SZIEF intervened during the course of the debate and enriched the deliberations.

Com. P V Kalyana sundaram, President, LICPA, Coimbatore, Com.R.V enugopal,General Secretary CRGIEA, Coimbatore region greeted the conference.

Com B V Kumar, Com K Thulasitharan and Com B Swaminathan were elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the ensuing year . 27 resolutions including opposing the amendments of insurance laws,opposing disinvestment of LIC shares and urging necessary action for recruitment in class 3&4 cadres and recognition to AIIEA were passed unanimously in the conference. The conference came to an end with the vote of thanks by Com.K.Thulasitharan.

57th Conference of Jabalpur Division Insurance Employees Union

The 57th Annual Conference of Jabalpur Division Insurance Employees Union started with great enthusiasm and grandeur on 06.07.2024 Saturday at 10.00 am at Jabalpur. The chief guest and inaugurator of the conference were AIIEA Joint Secretary and CZIEA General Secretary Com. Dharmaraj Mohapatra, former CZIEA President Com. N. Chakravarti, AIIPA Vice President Com. Vijay Malajpure were present. JDIEU President Com. J D Yadav hoisted the flag in the presence of a large number of insurance employees, representatives, observers, pensioners and comrades of the other organizations.

The conference commenced with Com J.D.Yadav in the chair. He read out the presidential address. JDIEU President Com. J D Yadav read out the presidential address. Com Dharmaraj Mohapatra inaugurated the conference. He said that JDIEU has contributed significantly for 68 years in taking LIC to the top position. AIIEA has a special contribution in this wonderful journey of LIC. The results of the 4 June 2024 Lok Sabha elections have created a new India and we are meeting in this conference after that. So this conference is very important in which we will discuss together on protecting our institution. We work in a better environment by strengthening our institution with our honesty, hard work and struggles. LIC and AIIEA complement each other.

Today our contribution to the institution is unprecedented, that is why today LIC is the world's leading insurance institution. Today, even in Parliament, the Prime Minister himself praises the development of LIC. The message of the election is clear – govern with concensus' shun divisive issues and find solution to the real problems of the people.

Senior Divisional Manager Shri RK Yadav greeted the Conference. Former CZIEA President Com. N. Chakraborty and AIIPA Vice President Com. Vijay Malajpure also addressed the gathering. They said that today's conference is definitely being held in a happy atmosphere after achieving the historic wage revision, but to keep it safe, we will have to prepare ourselves with the changing times in the coming times.

JDIEU General Secretary presented working committee report before the House. JDIEU Treasurer Com. Luv Kumar Koshta presented the audit report of the year 2023 before the House.

The discussion on the report was started by JDIEU Vice President Com. Viveksheel Hardaha 17 comrades participated in the debate and put forth their views. During the representative session, a total of 07 proposals were presented by the colleagues in the House, which were passed unanimously. Secretariat report and audit report were passed unanimously. The report was unanimously adopted after the summing up by the General Secretary.

The conference unanimously elected Com. J D Yadav, Com. Hiralal Kushwaha and Com. Harshvardhan Patel as President, General Secretary and Treasurer for the ensuing term.

The members of secretariat who relinquished responsibilities were honoured. The winner of the competition announced for Business Mega Day were also honoured. The conference successfully concluded with vote of thanks by JDIEU Joint Secretary Com. Subroto Som.

52nd General Council Meeting of Insurance Employees' Union, Dharwad

The 52nd Annual General Council Meeting of Insurance Employees' Union, Dharwad Division, was held on 28th July 2024 at Dharwad. The Conference had the opportunity of guidance by Com.Shreekant Mishra, General Secretary, AIIEA, Com.S.K.Geetha, Vice President, SCZIEF and Com. G Thirupataiah, Joint Secretary, SCZIEF.

The Conference commenced with the hoisting of AIIEA flag in front of Divisional Office by Com.A.H.Archak, President, Insurance Employees' Union amidst thunderous slogans. Despite heavy rains comrades from all the branches participated in the Conference enthusiastically.

The Conference commenced its business immediately after hoisting of the flag in the Conference Hall. Com.Uday Gadagkar, General Secretary, Insurance Employees' Union, welcomed the leadership of AIIEA and SCZIEF to dais. He also welcomed Coms .B.N.Poojary and A M Khan of LIC Retired Employees' Association, Dharwad, Coms. Shashwat Pawate and Smt. Venu Kari of Hubli Dharwad Region General Insurance Employees' Association (HDRGIEA), leadership of Insurance Employees' Union and LIC Retired Employees' Association of Belagavi and all comrades of the Branches who attended the Conference.

The General Secretary placed the Report on behalf of the Executive Committee for the year 2023-24. The Report reviewed the situation in the International, National arena,

happenings within the industry and activities of the Insurance Employees' Union, Dharwad.

Com.Shreekant Mishra addressing the Conference explained the prevailing political situation and he appreciated the people of Karnataka for halting the BJP's juggernaut in the Lok Sabha and Vidhan Sabha elections. He thanked members of AIIEA and IEU for reposing full confidence in the leadership in clinching the wonderful wage revision. He also expressed his satisfaction in implementing the calls of AIIEA Secretariat, meeting the MPs with memorandum for withdrawal of 18% GST on life and health insurance premium. He informed that comrades of AIIEA had met more than 300 MPs throughout the country.

Com.S.K.Geetha, Vice President, SCZIEF, said that today Democracy is safe because of the Constitution. The Karnataka Government is thinking of increasing the working hours to 14 hours a day which is an anti-worker move.

Com.G.Thirupataiah, Joint Secretary, SCZIEF asked the members to understand the legacy of AIIEA and to build the organisation both qualitatively and quantitatively. He said that the need of the hour is to concentrate on growth of LIC and to treat the agency force as our best friends.

12 comrades participated in the debate. Com.S.K.Kulkarni, General Secretary, Insurance Employees' Union, Belagavi and Com.Shashwat Pawate of HDRGIEA greeted the Conference. Sri.B S Chakravarthy, Sr.Divisional Manager, Dharwad also greeted the Conference.

The 52nd Annual General Council Meeting elected Com.U.M.Gadagkar, Com. Nagaraj Kamat and Com.Chaya Bangera, as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the year 2024-25.

The Meeting came to an end with Com.Anand Archak proposing Vote of thanks.

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37th General Conference of ICEU Vellore

The 37th General conference of Vellore Division was held at Tindivanam town on 11,12, August,2024. As a prelude to the conference a one day Van Jatha with an aim to spread the message "Strong LIC, Stronger India" on 06.08.2024 was flagged off by Com G.Anandhan, Vice President, Tamilnadu Untouchability Eradication Front at Kallakurichi. The Campaign with the able support of 'Kallai Kurinji' Art Troupe conveyed the message of the need to defend the nationalized insurance industry and how LIC is helping to build a strong India. The Campaign covered six centres and culminated at Tindivanam.

Inaugural Session.

Com S.Palaniraj, President, Vellore Division hoisted the AIIEA Flag and an exhibition comprising the photos of various movements and thoughtful cartoons was opened by Com V.Janakiraman, Assistant Treasurer, SZIEF. The women comrades of Pondicherry 1 mesmerized the audience with their beautiful welcome song followed by an emotional song of the Male Comrades of Divisional Choir Team. The Conference was presided over by Com S.Palaniraj, President and Com A.Gothandam, State Working President of All India Lawyers Union and Member of the Tamilnadu Bar Council and the Chairman of the Reception Committee read out the welcome address.

The Conference had the privilege to be inaugurated by Com Shreekant Mishra, General Secretary, A.I.I.E.A, He explained the present political and ecomomic situation of the country and how the efforts of AIIEA created the issue of GST on life insurance premium, a national issue. He called upon the comrades to march forward to defend the nationalized insurance industry in the midst of challanges posed by government and IRDA.

He released the book "Agavilaipadi – Thotramum Munnetramum", book on the history of Dearness Allowance written by Com N.Ekambaram, Former President of Vellore Division in his 86th year. Com V.Janakiraman, Assistant Treasurer, SZIEF, Com N.Saravanan, NFIFWI, Com p.Mayakkannan, LIAFI, Com S.Ramesh, LICAOI, Com V.Sukumaran, LICPA greeted the conference.

Comrades who retired after the last conference, Sportspersons who represented the division were honoured and felicitated. The Inaugural session came to an end after vote of thanks by Com S.Raman, General Secretary.

In the delegate session, Com S.Raman, General Secretary presented the report of the executive committee and Com C.Ganesan, Treasurer, submitted the Accounts statements. 35 Comrades including 5 women comrades took part in the debate on the report and made it purposeful and lively. Com Shreekant Mishra, V.Janakiraman, and Com C.Muthukumarasami, Vice President, SZIEF intervened during the debate and guided the deliberations. The report was adopted unanimously after the summing up by the General Secretary. Resolutions were passed unanimously. The Conference concluded with the vote of thanks proposed by Com B.Srinivasan, Secretary of Tindivanam Unit and the Reception Committee.

People's Unity Cultural Festival with various art forms in a public place is a part of the Divisional Conference of Vellore Division for nearly twenty years.

"Manidham" Art Troupe performed Thappattam, Oyilattam and karagattam, the various folk dance forms of Tamllnadu. Pudhuvai Safdhar Hashmi Troupe rendered progressive songs. The Comrades of Vellore Centre staged a drama " Mattikonda Maharaja" (Trapped Emperor), a political satire. Com

Nandhalala, Vice President, Tamil Nadu Progressive Writers and Artists Association spoke on the need to remember the history and keeping the unity of people.

The host unit Tindivanam with just 10 members put in lot of labour to make the conference a grand success. They excelled the earlier conferences in all aspects with meticulous planning and execution and received praises from all the participants.

The Conference elected Com P.S.Balaji as President, S.Palaniraj as General Secretary and Com C.Ganesan as Treasurer for the ensuing term.

15th Conference of LICEU Thrissur Division

The 15th Divisional Conference of LIC Employees Union, Thrissur Division, was held on 3rd and 4th of August 2024 at Town Hall, Kunnmakulam, which is a branch center. The meeting was preceded by flag hoisting by the first woman president of the union Com. K.R.Vini amid slogan-shouting that recalled the sacrifices of martyrs. Followed by it was a welcome song by comrades of Thrissur Division.

Distinguished guests sat on a specially arranged rostrum in front of a huge gathering comprising more than 400 people even as Smt. Seetha Raveendran, the Chairperson of Kunnamkulam Municipality, began delivering her welcome speech. The conference was presided over by Com. K.R. Vini, President of the Union.

The conference was inaugurated by the General Secretary of AIIEA. He pointed out that the democracies were in danger all over the world. The reason for the precarious situation is the re-defining of democracy based on the principle of citizenship that is rooted in religion and race. Though our constitution guarantees us a lot of entitlements, our prime minister, by presenting himself as god-sent, projects these are his freebies. This will undermine the values enshrined in the constitution", he reminded. He also lamented that "his guarantees are helpful to the corporate only. Ordinary people are left high and dry. The unemployment rate of our country is at an all-time high of 9.2%. Despite all of these adverse circumstances, we could achieve a decent wage revision of 17% only because of the unity we evinced. He urged us to preserve the verve and the passion we nurtured over the years to make the 'Strong LIC for Stronger India a successful feat.

Com. P.P. Krishnan, in his presentation of the keynote address, floated some serious thoughts before us that warrant urgent introspection. "Whether our experiences in the life have been allowed to sink in" he asked. He reminded us that "LIC Employees cannot alone live on an island of prosperity for ever. We have to undertake campaigns to inculcate a feeling among the public that LIC is also an asset of them, ipso facto, that should be protected at any cost. A united fight, transcending identity consideration based on caste and religion, would guarantee it".

Comrades V.Sreekumar, State General Secretary of Confederation of Central Government Employees and Workers, E.Nandakumar, District Secretary FSETO, K.R.Krishnadas, District Secretary, BSNLEU, V.A.Balu,General Secretary, NFIFWI, Thrissur Division, M.C.Ajikumar, President AILIAF, Thrissur Division, T.S.Shenil, General Secretary, LICAOI, Thrissur Division, M.Kesavan, State Committee member, KSGIEU and M.Rajeev, General Secretary, LIC Pensioners Association, Thrissur Division greeted the conference.

Com. Srikanth Misra released a short story book in Malayalam written by our Comrade K.P.Subramanian of Thrissur-2 base unit. Com. M.K. Balakrishnan, veteran trade union leader and former WC member of AIIEA, accepted the

book. The general conference concluded once Com. Deepak Viswanath, General Secretary, proposed a vote of Thanks.

In the delegates session, the report and statement of accounts were presented by Com. Deepak Viswanath and the treasurer Com. K.Vinod respectively. District Committee Convenor of Palakkad Com. P. Pradeep Sankar initiated the discussion. 18 other comrades from various units participated in the subsequent discussions. Both Com. P.P. Krishnan, President SZIEF, and Com. I.K. Biju, Joint Secretary, SZIEF, intervened in the discussions. Honorary member Com. M. Rajeev also chipped in with a brief spell.

After being satisfied with the reply of the General Secretary, the council unanimously approved the report and statement of accounts. In the meantime, the General Council gave assent to 11 resolutions. The meeting elected Comrades K.R. Vini, Deepak Viswanath, and K. Vinod as President, General Secretary, and Treasurer, respectively, for the ensuing year. The proceedings came to an end with a vote of Thanks by Com. K. Rajesh, Joint Secretary.

One of the highlights of this year's conference was a special address on the second day morning by Prof. P.J. Vincent, the renowned historian. Initially, he explained the characteristics of different generations and problems created by neoliberalism which he was confident can be successfully tackled by a united working class movement.

The conference recorded appreciation for the manner in which Kunnamkulam Branch Unit organized the conference.

SPECIAL CLASS FOR WOMEN AT MADURAI

AIIEA Madurai Division conducted a special class for women employees after 5 years on July 6th 2024 amid great enthusiasm. The event was inaugurated and presided over by Comrade Chitra.

The programme commenced with the song Manathil Uruthi Vendum" (Must be determined in mind) sung by Comrades Shantha Priya, Meenakshi and Srikala, followed by a welcome address by Comrade Maheshwari. She mentioned about "Mukta Salve," one of the first Dalit who openly questioned and criticized the caste discrimination and gender norms of the Indian society in 19th century. In 1855, Mukta Salve wrote 'Mang Maharanchya Dukhavisatha (About the Grief of Mahar and Mangs)' at the mere age of fourteen. Following this, Comrade Chitra delivered the keynote address where she emphasized the importance of gender equality in the present world.

Comrade Narmadadevi, renowned journalist and female activist, who has recently published a book titled "Pen Andrum Indrum" (Woman then and now) was the chief guest of the event. Her speech began with the apprehension that the contributions of women who are homemakers are neither recognized nor respected. While for working women, they have the double burden of earning a living as well as doing the hectic household works. Apart from cooking, other responsibilities such as child-rearing and caring for elderly parents are also assigned to women. Even in school textbooks, women are shown cooking in the kitchen and men doing other jobs. This was recently changed by the Kerala government in their textbooks as both men and women sharing kitchen works.

She explained in great detail the concept of necessary labor and surplus labor as defined by Karl Marx and demonstrated

how workers are subjected to massive exploitation in a capitalist society

Comrade Narmadadevi also spoke on the current political scenario of India with BJP as the ruling party and RSS being the ideological mentor and guide of the government of India, has made the present circumstance more repressive for women. If women are considered to be weak and in need of protection by men, then it becomes more acceptable to commit violence against them. For example, in Delhi Nirbhaya case, we have witnessed people engaging in victim blaming-publicly scrutinizing the victim for going to theatre late night. It remains as an unresolved question whether a 33% reservation of legislative assembly seats for women could revolutionize such misogynistic attitudes for the creation of a gender equal

society. Till now this reservation remains a post-dated cheque. If a woman spends 2 hours less on housework, her participation in the labor force increases by 10%. Childcare is another major responsibility imposed on a woman. Adequate childcare centers, like schools, colleges and clinics, should be available in a society that aims for women empowerment. She concluded by saying that the goal of the working class is a just society and we have to work towards that society despite the difficult situation.

Com Swaminathan gave his concluding remarks by informing the audience about the commitment of AIIEA for a just fair and equal society. He said both men and women have to work together to construct such a society.

All comrades who participated in this class have become a part of this fight for women's rights. The class came to a successful conclusion with a vote of thanks wasby comrade Sivaranjani.

Working Women's Convention of Chennai Division 2

The 28th women's convention of Chennai Division 2 was held on 27th July 2024 at BKN Hall, Vepery,Chennai. The convention started with the screening of a short film of 13 minutes titled " FILTER COFFEE OR RED WINE"

The convention was inaugurated by Com KALAPIRAN, Dy Gen.Secretary of TN Progressive writers & artists Association. His impressive and elaborate speech threw light on the various inventions like in the field of agriculture by women made the comrades spell bound. His speech motivated our comrades to increase their reading habits.

The Women Sub Committee Convenor Com K.THULASI presented the report. 4 women comrades, Bhuvaneswari (CBO-11), Com Anila (CBO-17), Com Lakshmi (Ambattur) and Com Jenith Metilda (Ponneri) participated in the debate.

Com S.SHOBANA General Insurance WWCC CONVENOR South Zone greeted the convention .She spoke about the challenges in the General Insurance sector and also the role of women in society .

Com Y.RENUKA, LICAOI Women Coordination Committee greeted the convention and she spoke about the problems faced by the women agents in the business field.

The discussions was summed up by the Gen Secretarry Com R.SARVAMANGALA. The new team of Office Bearers of Women Sub Committee elected are : 1.Com K.Thulasi,CBO-1,Convenor, Joint Convenors Com R.Sindhuja do 2, Com D.Latha Maheswari CBO-1,Com Bhuvaneswari CBO-11,Com Haripriya CBO-18,Com S.Vijayalakshmi CBO-22 and Com D.Leelavathi CBO-31.

Com V.Anuja Jt Sec ,ICEU CHENNAI DVN 2 and R.Sindhuja Jt Convenor, Women sub committee presided over the meeting.

11 resolutions were passed in the convention. The Convention was welcomed by Com D.Latha Maheswari Jt Convenor and Com S.S.Geetha Asst Treasurer ICEU,CHENNAI DIVISION 2 gave the vote of thanks.

More than 164 comrades including 126 women and 38 male comrades took part in the convention.

TRADE UNION CLASSES AT VIZAG

ICEU Visakhapatnam has organised trade union classes for 2012 batch recruits on 10th August, 2024 at Visakhapatnam. The batch comprised of the 30 sub staffs who were absorbed consequent to the supreme court judgement of 18.01.2011, and are now elevated to the cadres of RC, Assistants and HGAs.

The first class was on the topic on "Staff Regulations and employee benefits" , and was dealt by Com M Kameshwari, President ICEU.She dealt at length on the staff regulations and the need to maintain proper discipline in office and also the various struggles initiated by AIIEA in achieving all the benefits .

The second class on " Organisation & Task Ahead" was dealt by Com. Varaprasad, General Secretary, ICEU. Com. Varaprasad dealt in detail on the history of AIIEA coupled with the necessity to strenghten LIC and AIIEA.

The paticipants appreciated the efforts of the organisation right from its inception and said that they are ever indebted to AIIEA for its out and out efforts in their absorption.

Com. GSRK Govinda acted as the principal for the classes. Other ICEU leaders participated.

Seminar on 'Budget 2024 and Inflation' at Anakapalle

As per the call of AIIEA and and as a part of the Golden Jubilee Year of ICEU, Vishakapatnam, a seminar was organised at Ankalapalle Centre on the topic 'Budget 2024& Inflation', on 12.08.2024 involving people from all walks of life. Teachers, doctors, lawyers, state government employees, BSNL and CITU participaed. Com. Aja Sarma, former ICEU leader and General Secretary, Forum for Development of North Andhra (FDNA) addressed the gathering. Com. Aja Sarma dealt in detail on the anti-people and pro-coroporate budet and the various causes of inflation. He also said that government is now eliminating the food inflatio, thereby causing a bigger blow to the common man. The neo-liberal policies are responsible for the stark inequalities and the government is hiring away from its responsibilityof providing basic necessitiesof life to the citizens. The high rate of inflation and employment are the two major causes of India's decreasing rank in the human development index, he said.

Com. JN Sastry, Vice President, ICEU presided over the meeting, Com. G S RK Govind, Joint Secretary also spoke on the occassion.

11th General Conference of LICPA Thanjavur

The 11th General Conference of LIC Pensioners Association-Thanjavur was held on 2nd August 2024 at Kamatchi Medical Center, Thanjavur.

Com. T.Rajasekar presided over the conference and Com. M.Asokan welcomed the gathering. Com M.Kuhnikrishnan, Com K.Swaminathan and Com N.Srinivasan garlanded the portrait of departed leaders Com. S.S. Pothi, Com S.Rajappa and Com K.Jegannathan (former Office bearer of ICEU and LICPA, THANJAVUR).

Com M. Kunhikrishnan, General Secretary, AIIPA, in his inaugural spoke on the totally negative attitude of the LIC management as well as the Central Government in settling the long pending issues viz.. updation of pension enhancement of Ex-gratia payment to the pre 1986 retirees/their surviving widows, monthly cash Medical benefit and the like. He strongly condemned the decision of the LIC management to exclude the pensioners falling under the age group of 60 to 70 when one lump sum payment was paid to pensioners. This is the right time to mobilize the long pending demands, he averred. He also referred the extensive and unprecedented damage caused by the flood/ landslides in Wayanad in which hundreds of citizens lost their lives and belongings. LIC Pensioners Association, Thanjavur Division presented a cheque for Rs.1,00,000/- as the first instalment to provide succor to the victims.

Com K.Swaminathan, former General Secretary of SZIEF traced the history of achieving pension through a protracted struggle and pointed out that sustained struggle is essential even to protect it. For this, LIC should continue not only as a Public Sector institution but It should be further strengthened in the context of the amendments proposed to be brought by the present government.

Shri S.Mohan, Chief Medical Advisor appreciated the LIC employees for their dedication and commitment to preserve it as a strong Public Sector Institution.

Dr.Arun of Kamatchi Medical Center, in his lucid presentation narrated the health issues one has to face right from birth. He explained the various types of health problems in different ages and gave valuable solutions to overcome them.

The Report submitted by Com R.Punniamurthy, General Secretary was unanimously adopted. The audited Statement of Accounts placed by Com P.Periyasamy was also adopted unanimously. Also more than 12 resolutions concerning pensioners were passed unanimously.

Comrades who have completed 80 years of age were honoured. Comrades of DO/OS/Pension cell, who rendering excellent services to the pensioners were also honoured.

Com J.Jayasankar, President, LIC Cl-I Officers Association and Com S.Selvaraj, President, ICEU, Thanjavur Division greeted the conference.

The conference was attended by more than 160 pensioners including 20 women.

Coms T.Rajasekar, R.Punniyamurthy and P.Periyasamy were elected as President, General Secretary and Treasurer respectively for the ensuing term.

Com R.Easudoss, Vice President proposed the Vote of Thanks.

People for India Seminar on NEP at Raipur

A seminar on the topic "New Education Policy - Claims and Reality" was organized by "Bharat Ke Liye Log Manch" on 16th July in Raipur. A large number of members of organizations like RDIEU, SFI, DYFI, CNSSS, STUC and CGSPU, theatre artists, students, teachers and intellectuals participated in the seminar. The seminar was chaired by educationist Mrs. Neetu Awasthi. The program was conducted by the convener of the forum Com. Dharmaraj Mahapatra Joint Secretary AIIEA. He said that in the sequence of ongoing debates in the country on the new education policy, this seminar held in the capital of Chhattisgarh expressed serious anger towards the increasing privatization of education, inclusion of religious beliefs of the majority community in the national education system, abandoning the secular, democratic and socialist content of the Constitution in the new education policy and the efforts to dominate the anarchic autocracy of the state in the education system.

Professor R.K. Mandal of Indian Institute of Technology, Banaras Hindu University, Varanasi said that the new education policy does not follow both constitutional values and Indian ethics. This policy will forever close the doors of education for the marginalized and weaker sections of our society. Despite claims of becoming a world leader, the attitude of NEP is towards ending academic freedom and autonomy of educational campuses. There is no scope for asking questions, reasoning and discussion in the new education policy. As the government has not made any clear provision of funds for education, public education will be outsourced to corporate and private entities. This will make education much more expensive. Emphasis is being laid on indiscriminate digitalisation of education.

Students present in the seminar, Garv Gabhane, Harsh Mandhani, Roza Ali, Fiza Ali also demanded a scientific and secular education system so that students can be freed from the burden of examinations or bags and can freely try to find truth and knowledge. A question session was also held at the end of the seminar in which the keynote speaker Prof. R.K. Mandal answered the questions of the audience. In the question-answer session, Prof. Mandal said that such bills need to be stopped on the floor of the Parliament and for this political change has become necessary. The seminar ended with a vote of thanks presented by RDIEU General Secretary Surendra Sharma.

BLOOD DONATION CAMP BY KDLIEA

A Blood Donation Camp was organised with great spirit by the Women Sub Committee, Kolkata Division Life Insurance Employees' Association on 23rd July 2024 at L. I. E. Sports Club premises at Hindusthan Building Annexe, Kolkata. It was inaugurated by Com. Amitava Ghosh, General Secretary, E. Z. I. E. A. In his brief speech he mentioned that AIIEA apart from championing employees' issues always sensitizes members on social causes. Sri. Anirban Saha, Sr. Div. Manager, K. M. D. O. - I was Chief Guest at that

brief inaugural program. Marketing Manager and Manager (P&IR) were also there. They all appreciated Women Sub Committee for organising Blood Donation Camp on regular basis. It is worth mentioning that Women Sub Committee have been organising such camp every year since a long time. Comrades were immensely inspired by the presence of veteran leaders of KDLIEA, like Com. Anup Chakraborty, Com. Amitendra Chatterjee and Com. Tarak Banerjee. The camp was a huge success. With great enthusiasm employees of all sections, agent and others participated in the camp. 110 donors, in all, family members of the employees included, donated blood in the said camp.

The women subcommittee is committed to carry on such social activities in an enthusiastic and determined way in days to come.

KITU Protests against 14-hour Work Day

The Government of Karnataka is considering a proposal to increase the working hours to 14 for the IT and ITES employees. Such a proposal is retrograde and impacts the health and social life of the workers. This effectively makes the IT and ITES workers as wage slaves. Naturally, the proposal has come for massive opposition from the workforce of IT industry. The other trade unions and progressive forces in Karnataka too have criticised this proposal and supported the agitation of the KITU.

The proposed bill, the 'Karnataka Shops and Commercial Establishments (Amendment) Bill 2024,' seeks to normalize a 14-hour workday. The existing act currently allows a maximum of 10 hours of work per day, including overtime, which would be entirely removed under the amendment. This change would enable IT/ITES companies to extend daily working hours indefinitely.

The KITU which represents the IT and ITES workforce in Karnataka held massive protests in front of all major IT companies. This was followed up with a centralised demonstration in Freedom Park on 3rd August 2024. A large number of IT and ITES workers gathered here to register their protest against the proposed legislation and to demand withdrawal of the same.

Comrade Suhas Adiga, General Secretary of the union addressed the protesting employees. He said that the proposed amendment is an attack on workers' basic right to personal life and said that the union will resist any efforts to implement this change. He urged the government to withdraw the proposal and warned that any move to proceed with the amendment would be met with a strong resistance from IT and ITES sector employees. He also pointed out the various studies on the health impacts of extended working hours on IT employees. He warned of further intensification of the struggle if the government does not drop the proposed legislation.

ADLC (Karnataka Labour Department) Dr. G Manjunath came to the protest venue and received the memorandum from KITU leadership. In view of the strong resistance put up by KITU, the government has paused the bill. The KITU is fighting a very important struggle and this needs to be supported by the entire working class of the country.

HUMAN CHAIN IN PROTEST AGAINST RAPE & MURDER OF DOCTOR

Employees of KMDO-I, under the banner of Kolkata Division Life Insurance Employees' Association, organised human chains on 14/8/2024 at six places in our division during recess hours, to protest against the brutal rape and murder of a doctor and Post Graduate student of R G Kar Medical College & Hospital.

Participation of the employees was total and spontaneous. Employees forming the human chains expressed their intense anger against the state administration and demanded immediate and exemplary punishment to the culprits. It is worth mentioning that a number of officers and managers also participated in this programme.

INSURANCE NEWS IN BRIEF

● **A.M. KHAN,** Dharwad

In the first four months of FY25, LIC's 'Individual Premium' segment generated a total of Rs 17,348.92 crore, reflecting a 14.02 per cent growth from Rs 15,215.84 crore in the same period of fiscal 2024. The 'Group Premium' segment experienced significant growth, increasing by 30.09 per cent to Rs 58,230.17 crore, compared to Rs 44,761.82 crore last year. ,'Group Yearly Premiums' grew by 18.82 per cent, amounting to Rs 292.44 crore in the first four months of fiscal 2025, compared to Rs 246.12 crore in the corresponding period of fiscal 2024. For the first four months of FY25, the total number of policies and schemes issued by LIC grew by 6.49 per cent to 51.99 lakh, compared to 48.82 lakh in the same period last year. In FY 24, LIC, the largest capital market player, has invested Rs 1,32 ,000 crore in the domestic equity market. The corporation currently has a total equity portfolio of Rs 15 lakh crore.

Net profit of Life Insurance Corporation of India rose 9.44% to Rs 10544.33 crore in the quarter ended June 2024 as against Rs 9634.98 crore during the previous quarter ended June 2023. Sales rose 15.80% to Rs 114360.99 crore in the quarter ended June 2024 as against Rs 98755.22 crore during the previous quarter ended June 2023.

Net profit of General Insurance Corporation of India rose 43.27% to Rs 1400.66 crore in the quarter ended June 2024 as against Rs 977.66 crore during the previous quarter ended June 2023. Sales rose 16.11% to Rs 10097.61 crore in the quarter ended June 2024 as against Rs 8696.42 crore during the previous quarter ended June 2023. GIC Re has expanded its premium income by almost 40 per cent y-o-y to Rs 12,406 crore during the quarter ending in June 2024

The finance ministry has asked state-owned general insurance companies to focus on profitable businesses and not to chase top-line but aim for improving profitability. The government has recently infused Rs 7,250 crore in instalments in three public sector general insurance companies — National Insurance Company Limited, Oriental Insurance Company Limited, and United India Insurance Company. Oriental Insurance has earned Rs 18 crore profit in FY24 as against a loss of Rs 5,000 crore a year ago, while National Insurance Company narrowed its loss to Rs 187 crore from Rs 3,800 crore, and United India Insurance to a loss of Rs 800 crore as against the loss of Rs 2,800 crore in the preceding year that is FY23. New India Assurance has continued to perform well, increasing its profits from Rs 1,000 crore in FY23 to Rs 1,100 crore in FY24.

Aimed at protecting the interests of policyholders, IRDAI has formulated detailed advertising guidelines for insurance companies. The IRDAI has asked insurers to ensure that the advertisements are true and not misleading. It has said that advertisements for unit-linked insurance products, index-linked products, and annuity products with variable annuity payout options must contain adequate, accurate, explicit, and updated information, presented in simple language.

The Corporate Affairs Ministry (MCA) has gazetted the new accounting standard Ind AS 117 on 'Insurance Contracts', taking Indian accounting standards for insurers closer to global standards. Ind AS 117, applicable to insurers' financial statements from 1 April 2024 (FY2025), corresponds with IFRS 17, issued by the International Accounting Standards Board, which has been implemented since 1 January 2023. IFRS 17 is described as the "first truly international IFRS Standard for insurance contracts to help investors and other users to better understand insurers' risk exposure, profitability, and financial position". Ind AS 117 supersedes Ind AS 104 ('Insurance Contracts') which took effect on 1 April 2020. MCA has notified Ind AS 117, based on the recommendations of the National Financial Reporting Authority (NFRA), which is the country's sole independent audit regulator.

Global Natural Catastrophe insured losses at $ 62bn in H1 24, significantly higher than 10-yr average of $ 37bn, Munich Re report

"Global aviation insurance premium to hit a 20-year high of more than $8bn in 2024", says Allianz It further states "Analysis of more than 32,000 industry claims from 2019 – 2024 with a total value of US$15bn (€14bn) shows that collision or crash incidents (63%) and faulty workmanship or defective products (22%) are accountable for 85% of the value. Other incidents like natural catastrophes (4%). machinery breakdown (3%) or fire (1%) account for a much smaller proportion of claims by value. Overcoming all challenges, the continual growth of the global aviation sector, will see premiums hit a 20-year high in 2024 of more than US$8bn" ●

WORKING CLASS STRUGGLE

● **S. SRIDHARA,** Mysore

NATIONAL HEALTH MISSION WORKERS IN HARYANA AND TELANGANA STRIKE OVER POOR PAY AND JOB SECURITY : Nearly 14,000 National Health Mission (NHM) contract workers have been on strike across Haryana state since July 26 with several demands including higher wages and permanent jobs. Staff nurses, as well as ambulance drivers and operators, are participating in the strike, which was called by the NHM Karmachari Sanjha Morcha, Haryana. IN TELANGANA STATE, NHM workers demonstrated at NHM Commissioner's office in Koti on 30/07/24. There are more than 17,000 contract NHM workers in Telangana. According to the NHM Contract and outsourcing Employees Union their salary is Rs. 15600 a month, but field-level healthcare workers receive only 7000 to 8000 rupees per month. Demands include job permanency implementation of the 7th pay commission benefits approved in principle by the former chief minister in 2021, reviewing issues in leave approvals and compensation for wages deducted during strikes.

MASS RALLY OF VALPARAISO, CHILE TEACHERS AND SCHOOL EMPLOYEES AS PART OF 24 HOUR REGIONAL STRIKE : Thousands of education workers rallied in Valparaiso, on August 7, as part of a 24 hour regional strike in Chile. Among the issues in this protest strike are super exploitative working conditions, management abuse of education workers, lack of funding for schools and school buildings, and poor health benefits. The protesters, who were joined by educators from other regions, assembled at O'Higgins square in downtown Valparaiso and then marched to the legislature building.

BRAZILIAN POSTAL WORKERS STRIKE : On August 7, postal workers initiated a strike in 11 of Brazil's 26 states. The issues in this walkout are inadequate wages adjusted for price increases, speed-ups and poor working conditions. The strikers are demanding that more workers be hired, improvements to health benefits and that temporary workers be made permanent. The strike call followed extensive negotiations with federal authorities that settled none of the workers' demands.

VEGETABLE OIL WORKERS BLOCK PORT OF ROSARIO IN ARGENTINA : Vegetable oil workers went on strike on August 5 over wages, blocking the port of Rosario, in the Parana River, one of the main ports used for the shipment of agricultural good in Argentina. The strikers are members of the Food oil, Cotton and Agricultural Employees (FTCIODYARA) and the San Lorenzo Union of Food Oil Workers (SOEA).

QUEBEC HOTEL WORKERS LAUNCH 24-HOUR STRIKE FOR WAGE RISE: Hotel workers in Qubec City, Motreal and Sherbrooke staged a 24 hour strike August 8 impacting 23 hotels to press their demands for a 36 percent pay increase over four years and a ban on the use of workers from outside agencies. The workers are affiliated with the Federation du commence.

PAKISTAN : KHYBER PAKHTUNKHWA TEACHERS PROTEST PENSION CUTS: Thousands of Young Teachers Association (YTA) members demonstrated in several districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa on Tuesday against abolition of their pensions and ad hoc recruitment in the education department. The YTA, which represents 34,000 teachers, said it would resist the government's plan to force them into the contributory pension (CP) fund. Teachers threatened to stage a sit down protest outside the chief minister's house in DI Khan if their demands are not accepted by August 11.

NEW SOUTH WALES WORKERS DEMAND HIGHER PAY AND STAFFING : Nearly 10,000 woolworths supermarket workers voted for industrial action, after pay and staffing negotiations failed. While the First Union boasts this is a "strike" the union is in fact ensuring that the workers stay on the job. First Union is seeking the so-called "Living Wage" as its bargaining standard, which is $ 26 per hour, with an increase to $27.80 on September 1. Woolworths is offering a 6.6 percent increase, taking the current start rate from $24.93 to about $26.60. Workers have rejected the offer while also protesting low staffing levels.

HEALTH WORKERS IN GREECE CONTINUE FIGHT AGAINST PRIVATISATION OF MENTAL HEALTH AND ADDICTION TREATMENT : Healthcare workers in Greece continue to oppose the right-wing New Democracy government's "psychiatric refer" bill, which will privatize the provision of mental health and addiction services. On 5th August 2024, when the bill was voted on doctors joined a one-day strike and protested outside parliament.

PHILADELPHIA AIRPORT WORKERS RALLY TO DEMAND UNPAID WAGE INCREASE : Workers at the Philadelphia International Airport rallied for higher wages and benefits July 23 as their contract is set to expire July 30. Baggage handlers, security guards and other airport workers represented by the service employees International Union 32BJ accuse airport contractors of refusing to pay wage increases that were due to kick in on January 1 of this year. The increase was mandated by the city of Philadelphia's prevailing wage law . Pay was to have been increased from $15.71 to $17.20 per hour. The law also called for an additional $4.98 hourly healthcare supplement.

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ECONOMIC TID BITDS

● **J. SURESH,** Mysore

- According to an analysis of data released by Standard & Poor, hopes of a recovery in the eurozone economy for the second half of this year, after stagnation for 2023 and the first six months of this year have taken a significant hit. The purchasing managers index (PMI) compiled by S & P Global fell to a five month low of 50.1, barely above the level of 50 which is the boundary between expansion and contraction. This was mainly as a result of a weakened growth in services and falls in manufacturing in Germany, the region's largest economy. The PMI for services fell from 52.8 to 51.9 while that for manufacturing went from 45.8 to 45.6%. The European experience is the expression of what is a growing trend in major economics. Global growth is predicted to reach 3.2% this year and 3.3% in 2025, "well below the 3.8% average from the turn of the century until the pandemic. This situation suggests that periods of stagnation lasting four years or more tend to push inequality within countries by almost 20% considering higher than the increase due to outsight sessions". According to the IMF, "many economies were facing severe fiscal pressures" and in developing countries "debt-servicing costs are taking up a bigger share of tax revenue".

- China has become Mexico's fastest growing foreign investor, more than quadrupling its investment in the last four years, but the USA remains its largest source of Foreign Direct Investment, accounting for roughly 40% of the total US $40 billion. Due to US attempts to sanction China and "nearshore" production, Mexico has surpassed China as Washington's top trading partner. Mexico is now also the US's second largest export market. Despite Increasing investment from the world's two largest economies, in theory an economic plus, Mexico decided to impose tariffs between 5 to 50 percent on over 500 products from countries with which it does not share a free trade agreement, including China thereby impacting around 90% of Chinese exports to Mexico. While US pressure played the biggest role in imposing tariffs, Mexico also took these measures in an attempt to reverse its trade imbalance with China. It imports about nine times what it exports. SInce china joined the World Trade Organisation (WTO) 22 years ago, it has increased its contribution to global trade from 3.8% to 14%.

- According to the Economic Survey 2023-24 submitted to the parliament, India's real GDP is projected to grow between 6.5-7% in 2024-25 showing resilience. India's real GDP grew by 8.2% in FY 24, exceeding the 8% mark in three out of four quarters of FY 24. Shares of agriculture, industry and services sectors in overall GVA at current prices in FY 24 were 17.7%, 27.6% and 54.7% respectively. Manufacturing sector grows by 9.9% Retail inflation declines to 5.4% in FY 24 after averaging at 6.7% in FY 23. The fiscal deficit of the union government has been brought down from 6.4% of GDP in FY 23 to 5.6% of GDP in FY 24, according to a provisional data released by CGA. The growth in gross tax revenue (GTR) was estimated to be 13.4% in FY 24, translating into tax revenue buoyancy of 1.4%. The growth was led by a 15.8 % growth in direct taxes and a 10.6% increase in indirect taxes over FY 23. The Survey adds that broadly, 55% of GTR accrued from direct taxes and 45% from indirect taxes in FY 24 was mainly driven by a 12.7% growth in GST Collection.

- In the wake of recent turmoil on global stock markets, which saw the Tokyo market experience its biggest one-day fall since the October 1987 stock market crash before rebounding, attention is increasingly being directed to the strengthening recessionary trends in the world economy. They are apparent in the top four economies-the US, China, Japan and Germany. Germany's GDP in the 2nd quarter contracted by 0.1%. In China, GDP growth for the second quarter was 4.7%, a significant fall from growth of 5.3% in the first. After something of an upturn in 2023, the Japanese economy appears to be sliding back into a cycle of low growth. In the first quarter, it contracted at an annualised rate of 2.9%, which recorded a decline for four consecutive quarters, the largest streak since 2009. The US economy is on the verge of recession, with a mountain of debt. The total credit card debt in the USA has hit a record $1.4 trillion which is a matter of serious concern. ●

FOR OUR FIELD FORCE

● A. ARIVUKKADAL
Thanjavur

Wayanad claims: LIC has relaxed the claim settlement norms for the victims of the Wayanad landslide. (LIC has announced relaxations on August 2nd, ie. within 2 days. But, IRDAI, on 4th August, had to ask other insurers to 'settle claims quickly'. ***That is LIC***.)

No complaints: While presenting the Economic Survey 2023-2024 in the Lok Sabha, Union Finance Minister Nirmala Sitharaman highlighted that over two lakh insurance complaints were lodged via the centralised grievance portal, with a significant portion targeting life insurers for unfair business practices, ***excluding the Life Insurance Corporation of India***.

LIC's AUM: Market value of LIC's investment in stocks of various companies stood at around Rs.15 trillion at the end of June. LIC has exposure in 282 companies through investment in their shares as of June 30, 2024. The Assets Under Management(AUM) increased to Rs.53,58,781 crore as at June-end as compared to Rs.46,11,067 crore at the end of same quarter previous year, registering an increase of 16.22%.

Investment profits: LIC has earned a profit of Rs.15,500 crore from its investments in equity markets during the first quarter. It was higher by 13.5% quarter-on-quarter. LIC MD and CEO Siddhartha Mohanty has said that the corporation is looking to make ***fresh investments of around Rs.1.30 trillion in equities during the current financial year***. During April-June FY25, the insurance behemoth made an investment of about Rs.38,000 crore in shares as against Rs.23,300 crore in the same period a year ago.

LIC's profit: LIC has reported a 9% year-on-year(YoY) increase in consolidated net profit at Rs.10,544 crore for the first quarter ended June 2024. LIC reported a 16% YoY gain in net premium income during the quarter at Rs 1.14 lakh crore. LIC had a ***market share of 39.27% in individual business and 76.59% in the group business*** for the quarter ended June 2024.

July Growth: According to the latest data from Life Insurance Council, LIC's premium rose 20% Y-o-Y to Rs.18,431 crore, while private insurers posted a 7% rise in their premiums at Rs.13,392 crore.

LIC Agent: In a reply to parliament, Pankaj Chaudhary, Minister of State in the Ministry of Finance reveals that an LIC agent earns Rs.14,585 per month from commission income. The data shows that an LIC agent in Andaman & Nicobar earns the highest per month commission of Rs.20,446. Currently, there are close to 14 lakh LIC agents in the industry. This has come when the minister was replying to a query on impact of the launch of 'Bima Sugam' on LIC agents.

Bond FRA: LIC has received approval to enter in Bond FRA market. Forward rate agreements(FRA) are contracts between banks and insurance firms that allow the latter to lock in rates for a future date, protecting them from volatility. Insurers entering such deals can offer guaranteed returns to policy holders. LIC is getting ready to soon enter either the market for bond FRA or actual bond forwards. FRA trades worth around 113 billion rupees ($1.35 billion) took place between July 1 and August 2, clearing house data showed. Traders are anticipating a further jump with LIC entering the market.

Surrender value: "Insurance companies might introduce ***products with larger ticket sizes where surrender behavior is less frequent*** or with varying durations to meet customer needs. Adjustments may be necessary as regulations provide flexibility. If existing products remain unchanged, increased surrender values could have a significant impact. However, if surrender values are revised upward, product designs will need to be re-evaluated to ensure protection," LIC management noted.

New rules: General insurers seek an extension in deadline until December 2024 from the regulator to comply with the revised master circular guidelines on health insurance products.

Insurance GST: In 2023-24, the GST collection from health insurance premium stood at Rs.8,262.94 crore, while Rs.1,484.36 crore was collected on account of GST on health reinsurance premium. This is about Rs.21,256 crore during the last three financial years. Post budget 2024, insurance companies have increased the premiums on health and life insurance policies which, when clubbed with the 18% GST, makes it less affordable for many. In February 2024, the Standing Committee on Finance endorsed IRDAI's goal, 'Insurance for all by 2047,' but with the ***GST on insurance in India continuing to be the highest in the world*** (there is no tax on insurance in countries like Singapore and HongKong), it remains doubtful if the goal set by the IRDAI can be achieved at all.

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INSURANCE EMPLOYEES TAKE UP RELIEF WORK IN WAYANAD

The unprecedented rains and landslide caused massive death and destruction in Wayanad in Kerala. It was a series of landslides that occurred in a number of villages n Vythiri Taluk of Wayanad District. It is said that this disaster stands out as one of the deadliest in the history of Kerala. The official estimates put the death figures to over 450 and equal number suffering serious injuries. A number of persons are still missing and only after sometime the exact number of casualties would be known.

The Insurance employees immediately reached out to offer some help in the true traditions of the AIIEA. Every day, the employees went in batches carrying relief materials often on their backs in the most inhospitable terrain. The member of AIIEA from Kozhikode, Ramanattukara, Vadakara, Sultan Bathery and Kalpeta Branches are toiling hard to provide the immediate necessary relief.

The district collector himself has opened his heart and appreciated the fact that the insurance employees are standing in the field of relief as selected workers. They don't stand waiting for any order... Even the clock may run away, but they don't run away from reaching the right place at the right time, he said.

We are proud of these soldiers of AIIEA. Donations are being collected from the insurance employees from various places for the rehabilitation of those affected. This task will be carried out at the appropriate time.

DONATIONS

TO INSURANCE WORKER AND AIIEA

Com. Santosh Raj, Attingal branch	Rs.3000
Com. S.V. Shankar, GIEA Coimbatore	5000
Com. Shailendr	2500
Com. Sarawate, Retd, Pune	1001

Insurance Worker heartily thanks these comrades for their love and affection.

CONSUMER PRICE INDEX

Month Base	2016	2001	1960
Jan 2024	138.9	400.03	9131.09
Feb	139.2	400.90	9150.81
Mar	138.9	400.03	9131.09
Apr	139.4	401.47	9163.96
May	139.9	402.91	9196.83
June	141.4	407.23	9295.44

Base1960=Base 2001x22.8259
Base 2001=Base 2016x2.88

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CENTRAL ZONE INSURANCE EMLOYEES' ASSOCIATION

cz iea

EXTENDS Revolutionary Greetings

to all the Policy holders, Agents,
Officers and Employees
and all the citizens of India
on 68th Foundation Day of LIC

The Glorious Journey that began on
1st September 1956 continues
recording magnificent achievements

"The objective is spreading life insurance much more widely and in particular to the rural areas with a view to reach all insurable persons in the country, providing them adequate financial cover at a reasonable cost ."

- **C D Deshmukh,** Finance Minister
on the establishment of LIC

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