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Organ of the  
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# NEW DEMOCRACY

**In This Issue....**

**Oppose RSS-BJP's Attacks on Education**

**More on Results of Lok Sabha Elections**

**Homage to Com. Radhakka and Com. Rukmangathan**

**Reprint: On the Tenth Anniversary of Pravda**

**Will Tiny Gaza Become 'Mighty' Israel's Graveyard?**

**On Issues from Recent NEET, NET Exams' Fiasco**

**50 Years of Martyrdom at Nellimarla Jute Mill**

**Tale of Two Elections: UK and France**

**Opposing Repression on Students in Bangladesh**

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**CONTENTS**

|  |           |
|--|-----------|
| Oppose RSS-BJP's Attacks on Education                | <b>02</b> |
| More on Results of Lok Sabha Elections               | <b>07</b> |
| Homage to Com. Radhakka and Com. Rukmangathan        | <b>16</b> |
| Reprint:On the Tenth Anniversary of Pravda           | <b>23</b> |
| Will Tiny Gaza Become 'Mighty' Israel's Graveyard?   | <b>26</b> |
| On Issues from Recent NEET, NET Examinations' Fiasco | <b>33</b> |
| 50 Years of Martyrdom at Nellimarla Jute Mill        | <b>40</b> |
| Tale of Two Elections: UK and France                 | <b>40</b> |
| Opposing Repression on Students in Bangladesh        | <b>48</b> |

## **Oppose RSS-BJP Govt.'s Attacks on Education and Educational Institutions**

# **Redo NEET-UG Exams; Dissolve NTA; Annul NEP 2020; Restore Education to the State List**

NEET-UG Examination conducted by the NTA appointed by Union Govt. shows callous, nay criminal disregard for the futures of the students of the country. Controversies surrounding this examination, conducted for entry to Medical Colleges in the country, demonstrate the utter lack of concern of RSS-BJP rulers for Medical education, in fact Education itself, in the country. 23,33,297 students had appeared in this examination. The results shocked everybody, with 1563 students having been given grace marks. Discrepancies abounded. A large number of students felt cheated and lost hope for their future. Students all over the country have come out in protest demanding that the examination be redone.

The Union Govt. is taking the plea in the Supreme Court that cancelling the results and redoing the examination will be hard on the honest students who worked hard and have succeeded in the examination. This will be definitely hard on such students. But it is the Union Govt. and its thoroughly corrupt machinery that is responsible for this hardship to a number of students. This argument cannot be allowed to uphold the whole examination process, which remains shrouded in suspicions and allegations of

corruption. All those responsible for this including those at the top and at the centre of the scam should be brought to justice and not some peripheral actors. Attempts to shield those close to power at the Centre should not be allowed; they should not go free.

That gross corruption pervaded the whole examination is evidenced by the arrests being made across India- in Bihar, Jharkhand, Gujarat, Haryana, Rajasthan and other states. So this was not an isolated leak but an all India flood which calls for annulling the examination. Most of the students are so stunned by the results that they dare not articulate what they consider are discrepancies in their own results.

RSS-BJP Govt. has been undermining the Education system and educational institutions in the country. These were any way plagued by favouritism, discrimination and corruption. RSS-BJP did not address its shortcomings and failures but undermined the whole edifice for their political ends of curbing dissent and quest of scientific inquisitiveness. RSS-BJP Govt.'s Education policy is marked by unbridled pursuit of three Cs- Commercialization, Communalization and Centralization. Commercialization has made Education costly; Communalization (Saffronization) has made it unscientific and Centralization has led to control of the Union Govt. sidelining the state govts. and thus, undermining Federalism.

The thrust of RSS-BJP Education policy is to undermine its scientific content and take it away from the reach of common people. The high and rising cost of Education takes it out of reach of the common people's ability to educate their children. This monopoly of the rich is complemented by systemic discrimination of those from the oppressed sections in the higher streams of Education and educational institutions. Education, especially Higher education, is sought to be made the domain of only the rich and

powerful.

This massive scam comes on top of the repeated leaks of papers in all India and even state exams. Conduction of competitive examinations is outsourced to private players who obviously try to make quick money. Conduction of the examination bears the imprint of big coaching institutes who are in league with the ruling dispensation to make big money. There is a complex of these big coaching institutions, those responsible for setting papers and those connected to the powers that be. The whole process makes students into mugging parrots and psychological wrecks seeing their families spending large part of their income, their savings and even selling their assets. Is there no way out of this brutality against students, the future of India? There definitely is. But the Govt. in power is not willing to consider such steps, content as they are with packing all educational institutions with RSS appointees.

Union Govt. is insisting on not cancelling the NEET-UG Examination as people associated with them have been the main beneficiaries and perpetrators of this crime. Supreme Court is hearing a bunch of petitions on this issue and should not allow the Govt. to pull wool over the eyes of the people including the Judiciary.

This massive all India scam has lent further weight to the growing demand that it is time that Education be restored to the state list of the Constitution where it had been up to 1976, when during Emergency it was included in the concurrent list. RSS-BJP, who pretend to oppose that Emergency, are stuck on keeping central control over Education. In fact, they have strengthened Centralization to further their agenda of Saffronization and Commercialization. Educational institutions have been the prime target of RSS to fill the minds of youth with myths and fabrications in the service of their Hindu Rashtra and to make Education,

especially Higher education, a preserve of select few with the children from the vast majority of the people practically barred from Higher education.



## **More on Results of Lok Sabha Elections**

*(CC has already issued a statement on the results of Lok Sabha elections 2024 which has been published in June issue of ND. This assessment is in addition to some aspects highlighted in that Statement.)*

### **F**ascist Drive Loses Steam:

RSS-BJP have lost majority in Lok Sabha and even their vote share has declined, though marginally. Though loss of vote share has been significant in Northern belt of Hindi heartland comprising parts of Rajasthan especially North Rajasthan, Haryana, UP, Bihar and Jharkhand, their vote has risen in Odisha, Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Telengana and AP (where they contested in alliance with TDP and Jan Sena). Even NDA vote share has declined to an extent and the rival I.N.D.I.A. block has secured just 2% less votes than NDA. RSS-BJP could not whip up communal frenzy sans jingoism. Impact of farmers' movement, disillusionment among extremely backward castes also contributed by the fear of abolition of reservations by changing the Constitution. Anger among minorities and importantly substantial unity among opposition parties also contributed to this loss. Stopping the RSS-BJP drive to impose fascist system in the country was the most important issue in these elections and on that

basis our Party and several other CR organizations had called for defeat of RSS-BJP and its NDA allies. The results indicate that RSS-BJP fascist drive has lost steam and people have on the whole rejected it.

Decline of vote share of BJP in Northern and Western states where it rules in most of the states and rise in its vote share in Southern states and Odisha where it has not been ruling also shows the disenchantment of the people with the policies being pursued by the ruling class parties. Some decline in polling percentage is due to several factors including intense heat wave across northern states.

TDP and JD (U), on whose support this NDA Govt. is dependent, are not Hindutva parties but these are extremely opportunist power hungry parties of ruling classes. They may go along with Hindutva policies to an extent. One should remember that JD (U) had been part of NDA between 2017 and 2022 which covers the period when RSS-BJP Govt. had intensified its all round fascist offensive. Nitish had broken away from RSS-BJP for the fear of them creating a split in JD (U) and a similar fear from RJD sent Nitish back to NDA. There is a difference between TDP and JD (U). TDP has got a comfortable majority of its own in AP Assembly while JD (U) is not similarly placed in Bihar, though it is an important factor in ruling class politics in Bihar.

RSS-BJP are patting their backs for a historic consecutive third term for Modi, comparing his to a similar feat by Nehru. They paper over the fact that this third term is as leader of a coalition and moreover, these results have been achieved by gross misuse of state agencies and by partiality of the Election Commission.

However, the very loss of majority in Lok Sabha after securing majority of its own in 2014 and enhancing seats in 2019 has an

impact of slowing down of fascist drive of RSS-BJP and postponement of apprehensions of RSS-BJP imposing fascist system over the country which they would have done had they returned to power with two third majority as they had claimed. This is the most significant aspect of the election results. As we had noted earlier, fascists may come to power through elections but cannot impose fascist system without abolishing or substantially altering electoral system. While they continue their attacks against minorities and on democratic rights, they would not be in a position to change the Constitutional framework. Further, sections of ruling class state machinery which had succumbed to their pressure, may not feel pressure to the same extent.

While their drive to impose fascist system has lost steam at present, danger posed by them should not be underestimated nor the struggle against these fascist forces should be slackened. Communist revolutionaries should continue to mobilize all struggling sections and forces against Hindutva fascists, bearing in mind that people's struggles are the most potent weapon in pushing back fascist offensive and defeating fascist forces. It is a sort of pause which should be utilized to push back fascist forces by building people's struggles and isolating fascist forces.

### **Important Influencing Factors:**

These elections were held in the backdrop of intensifying contradictions among imperialist powers. Growing conflict between camps led by USA along with West European powers and Japan and by China-Russia has made India particularly important for both the camps. This is at the heart of Indian Govt.'s propaganda about its independent foreign policy. US has not succeeded in distancing India from Russia and with US opting for managing risks in relation to China rather than all out confrontation, there has been relative



cooling of relations of Indian Govt. with Western powers. It is important to note that while official media in Russia and China had been openly supportive of Modi Govt., western mainstream media had been less enthusiastic. This is seen in other spheres also, like in Nijjar and Panun cases and BBC telecasting its old documentary on Gujarat massacre of Muslims in 2002 and Biden refusing to attend Republic Day in 2024. I.N.D.I.A. bloc made an issue of Modi Govt.'s weak handling of border issue with China, apparently sending a message to Western powers. In fact, RSS-BJP Govt. had enjoyed very good relations with Trump Admn. and with that backing had been most aggressive in its fascist drive in 2019-2020. Another important factor has been that with US withdrawal (defeat) in Afghanistan in 2021, Pakistan has become very important for US imperialists as its gate to Central Asia. Pakistan is any way close to China. This situation has hampered RSS-BJP Govt.'s aggressive stance towards Pakistan, their favourite whipping boy. Whipping up of jingoist frenzy against China is not favoured by ruling classes who consider China as a long term main enemy. Indian Govt. however generally sides with US led efforts directed against China.

A very important factor has been worsening conditions of people. Govt. has been claiming high economic growth rate but there is no comprehensive data to substantiate Govt.'s claims. On the other hand, despite such claims, manufacturing has failed to pick up and India has not become an important part of global supply chain. Most of the growth has been due to Govt. expenditure, mostly on infrastructure sector. This expenditure has been mostly in PPP mode thereby enabling profits for the corporate. It is also aimed at securing foreign investment from western countries which cite poor infrastructure as the reason for not diverting their investments to India. RSS-BJP Govt. has also diluted rights of

workers through enactment of four Labour Codes, another key demand of western big capitalists. Indian ruling classes have been continuing on the path of imperialist dependent and export led economic growth. While big capitalists in India have deepened their ties relating to capital and technology with western countries, they are also profiting from cheaper oil supply from Russia and from trade with China. But India's alleged take off is in waiting mode while conditions of people continue to worsen. The very fact that Modi Govt. highlighted 5 kg of free cereals to 81 crore people, guaranteeing that this would continue for the next five years, shows not only the present dismal condition but also the fact that the Govt. does not visualize much improvement in near future.

### **Simmering Discontent in the country with Rural Areas as Centre:**

The election results have brought to light growing discontent in India. It is pertinent to note that RSS-BJP has performed relatively worse in rural areas than in urban areas. They have lost nearly a third of seats they had last won from rural areas. Worsening conditions of peasants, especially poor and middle peasants and growing unemployment in rural areas has been reflected in elections. Performance of BJP in Eastern UP, where it has lost a large number of seats it had won earlier, is attributable to articulation of rural discontent especially growing unemployment and rising prices.

As noted in Statement on Election Results (ND, June 2024) this discontent has been channelized where there have been movements or campaigns. It is evident from the complete washout of BJP in Punjab and defeat in rural areas of Haryana, parts of UP and North Rajasthan.

It should be kept in mind that in a society characterized by hierarchal division of castes, economic distress often finds its expression through movement of social groups. Rural distress finds its expression in anger among social groups constituting land owning peasants and social groups engaged in doing agricultural labour and also miscellaneous labour in rural areas. Socio-economic situation finds composite expression in movement of social groups facing economic hardships. In Hindi heartland, Extremely Backward Castes have been the determining factor for some time. Upper castes and dominant backward castes have their own parties. Muslims align with the dominant backward castes as upper castes increasingly rally behind Hindutva. This leaves Extremely Backward Castes and Dalits as the most targeted sections in the electoral battle among ruling class parties. In Bihar they rallied behind Nitish Kumar's JD (U), in MP these are mostly in BJP but in other Hindi states their allegiance is shifting. It must be noted that they become a decisive factor only in case of sharpening division among ruling classes and close competition among ruling class parties.

### **Crisis in 'Dalit Politics':**

Communist Revolutionaries have been fighting on the basic issues of the people, especially in rural areas. Dalits are most important part of the base of communist revolutionaries as these are most oppressed in the rural areas of the country. But there is a vast area outside the area of the influence of struggle led by CRs and in the areas of struggle too, struggle does not remain at the same level, at times ebbing. From 1980s, BSP has been organizing Dalits into a separate party. Though it started from Punjab, it gained maximum influence in the most populous province of UP. It had good influence in all Hindi speaking states- Haryana, Rajasthan,

MP, Uttarakhand, Bihar (especially in areas bordering UP) and even Chhattisgarh and Jharkhand. Gradually due to opportunistic politics and refusal to build struggles on the economic issues concerning Dalits, it lost base in most of the states except in UP. In UP too, where it had won a majority of its own in 2007, it has been declining and has polled just 9.4% votes in the recent elections, failing to win any seat. It has been largely confined to one social group. BSP's refusal to build any movement, only one-sidedly emphasizing electoral politics, forging opportunistic post-poll alliances only for securing power, has eroded its base. Its refusal to take position against RSS-BJP even on the question of attacks against Dalits and not taking on their plans to change Constitution, has reduced BSP further. What could be better evidence than Mayawati sacking her anointed successor (her nephew) for attacking BJP in an election meeting?

After victory from Nagina (UP) Chandrashekhar Azad "Ravan" may try to fill the vacuum but his success in doing so has to be seen. He has been active in agitation on Dalit issues especially against attacks on Dalits and for their education. He had also been active in movement against CAA-NRC-NPR.

This vacuum highlights the importance for revolutionary forces to energetically take up the issues of Dalits – pertaining to their ownership over means of production as well as on issues of caste oppression and against unequal treatment, including lack of filling up reserved posts in higher positions and discrimination in promotions.

### **Issues of Federalism:**

Attacking rights of states has been one of the important planks of RSS-BJP fascist drive. However, this issue is not synonymous

with regional parties of ruling classes, though these are important vehicles. BJD in Odisha has suffered a setback and so has Jagan Mohan Reddy in AP. These parties openly hobnobbed with RSS-BJP Govt. at the Centre, supporting it on all issues. Their help in Parliament, especially in Rajya Sabha, was important for enabling RSS-BJP to pass several legislations pushing their Hindutva fascist agenda. Naveen Patnaik had, for some time, kept himself formally distant from BJP and Congress though having initially aligned with BJP to dislodge Congress. But over last few years, especially since 2019, he had drawn close to BJP, gifting Rajya Sabha seat to RSS-BJP. BJD had even held talks with BJP for an electoral alliance in Odisha. It is worth noting that it was BJP which raised the issue of “Odia Asmita” against BJD. With BJP campaign in Odisha gaining momentum, tribals especially Christian tribals, rallied behind Congress which increased its assembly seats though its main leaders had not even campaigned in Odisha. This further reduced BJD seats. Jagan Reddy too had aligned with RSS-BJP Govt., refusing to take up issues related to states’ rights. On the other hand, his Govt. suppressed struggles of workers like Anganwadi workers recently. Akali Dal, the oldest regional Party in India, too suffered due to its old alliance with RSS-BJP and delay in severing its ties with BJP even after enactment of three black laws.

Mamata Banerjee, on the other hand, has been vocal on issues of Federalism and had taken on RSS-BJP on these issues. Despite issues of corruption and repression on people’s movements against her Govt., TMC could defeat BJP in West Bengal. Similarly, DMK has been vocal on state issues as well as against Hindutva. Though BJP has increased its vote share in Tamil Nadu, it is largely at the expense of opposition AIADMK. This demonstrates that issue of rights of states is very pertinent but parties which supported RSS-

BJP which attacked the rights of states have fared badly. On the other hand, those who opposed RSS-BJP have stood their ground.

Failure of AAP in these elections (they won three seats in Punjab) is noteworthy. AAP had an alliance with Congress in Delhi, but it was just at the top and was not taken down by either of the parties. There was no effective joint campaign which could galvanize anti-BJP sections. Decline in polling in Delhi was attributable to this and RSS machinery ensured victory of BJP, albeit with somewhat reduced vote share. AAP had not only supported RSS-BJP on Kashmir, they had long been coining the slogan “Modi at the Centre, Kejriwal in Delhi.”

It is also pertinent that in Telengana BJP has emerged winning eight seats. There are reports of transfer of votes from BRS to BJP in several constituencies, which is shown by very low votes of BRS candidates in several seats won by BJP, even losing of their deposits. However, rise of BJP in Telengana has been witnessed for some years.

In North East, BJP allies have lost several seats especially both seats in Manipur. It once again demonstrates difficulties for RSS Hindutva in NE outside Assam.

Results of elections in seats where tribal constitute major part of the electorate show that where their resentment got expressed through ruling class parties, BJP lost, as in Jharkhand, West Bengal, parts of South Rajasthan and in several states in Northeast. However, in Central India BJP did better in such seats.

### **Punjab Situation:**

While BJP has failed to win any seat, a Khalistani leader has won from Khadoor Sahib and a candidate supported by Khalistanis won from Faridkot. There are reports that RSS-BJP have lent

support to them through Sikh Sangat floated by RSS. It has dangerous portents for the state and reminds people of earlier misadventure of Indira Gandhi led Congress. However, this victory has other aspects too. Youth in Punjab including Sikh youth have been in ferment due to deepening agrarian crisis and lack of proper job opportunities. They are rushing abroad risking money and jobs to find proper jobs. This ferment in Punjab has been evident for last many years especially since 2019 with Punjab peasants, including youth, being in the forefront of struggle against fascist drive of RSS-BJP. Their opposition to attacks on Kashmiri students, against CAA-NRC and their role in historic Farmers' movement demonstrated that Punjab is on the move. This puts challenging tasks before the communist revolutionary forces to lead this wide discontent in the direction of revolutionary change.

It was the disillusionment with the established ruling class parties in Punjab- Congress and Akali Dal- that led to spectacular victory of AAP in 2022 state assembly elections. But AAP Govt. continued the policies of earlier Govts. adding only Mohalla clinics etc. AAP Govt. continued suppression of people's struggles, even opposition to people's organizations opposing BJP campaign in these elections. They suppressed struggle of Dalits and agricultural labourers and refused to meet their demands. Increasing disillusionment with AAP in Punjab is sought to be filled by Khalistani forces with tacit support of BJP which is banking on disturbing situation in Punjab to come to power. As pointed out, this situation of great mobility of the people especially youth in Punjab has put urgent and serious tasks before the communist revolutionaries. They have demonstrated their ability to lead the people of Punjab especially youth during the historic Farmers' struggle and must intensify their efforts to channelize this anger

towards revolutionary movement.

Though BJP has not won any seat but its vote share in Punjab has increased. This is partly due to BJP contesting all 13 seats in the state, partly due to entry of a number of top Congress leaders and partly due to disturbing trend of polarization of Hindu minority votes especially in rural areas.

### **Parliamentary Left:**

CPM, CPI and Liberation have won eight seats in these elections. Seven of these seats are won as junior allies of ruling class parties with four of them (two CPI, two CPM) won in Tamil Nadu. Liberation has won two seats as part of RJD led alliance in Bihar and CPM one in Rajasthan in alliance with Congress.

CPM has won only one seat in Kerala. Importantly its vote share declined much. Since returning to power in assembly elections in 2021, CPM has implemented neoliberal policies. Its Nava Keralan model is fashioned on such policies and has little difference with other ruling class parties. There has hardly been any significant mobilization in Kerala on any issue, though several all India movements came up. CPM led Govt. in Kerala also put UAPA cases against activists. In Kerala there has been significant rise (over 4 %) in the vote share of BJP, along with its winning a seat. What is significant is that this vote share has come largely at the expense of CPM and other left parties in the areas where they have traditionally been strong e.g. Kannur, Alappuzha. It reminds one of the rise of BJP on the ashes on parliamentary left in West Bengal.

In West Bengal, CPM did not win any seat. Its vote share also remained low, slightly better than that polled in 2019 but a decline as compared to assembly elections in 2021. Reports of its recovery



had been exaggerated. Liberation won two seats in South West Bihar from where opposition gained most seats. Their earlier base among landless and poor peasants also helped in this. On the whole, parliamentary left has been on its downward trajectory and decline in Kerala is most significant for CPM.

### **Conditions Favouring Rise of Movements:**

As noted earlier, the present situation is characterized by fascist drive losing steam but danger of fascist forces continuing. It is a sort of interregnum which may give an opportunity to fascist forces to regain ground and may also lead to fascist forces further weakening. This will depend on rise of movements of different sections of people. In this situation communist revolutionary forces have an important role to play and much scope to unleash militant mass movements of different sections of people. Initiatives and strength mustered by revolutionary and struggling forces will play a key role in this.

As noted in earlier statement, we should focus on building movements on issues of peasants and agricultural labourers, workers, tribals, students, youth and women. In this we should select some issues for concentration. Farmers' movement for MSP according to Swaminathan formula should be intensified. For this preparation should be made in all states and a political campaign in its favour should be conducted. Other important arena of struggle should be intensification of tribals' movement for defending their land from corporate and implementation of their rights. We should plan intensification of land struggles in states. We should pay due attention to plan and develop workers' movement in different sectors concretely. Building student organizations should be a priority as Education faces triple attack of Commercialization, Saffronization and Centralization. Students are facing increasingly

bleak future under RSS-BJP led Govt. In building these movements, joint actions should be creatively undertaken depending on the conditions of movement and attitude of other forces. We should shun sectarianism as well as tailism.

Favourable conditions do not mean that movements would come forth by themselves. It means that our efforts at building movements shall be more productive.

June 18, 2024



## **Homage to Com. Radhakka**

**S**enior Communist Revolutionary leader Com. Radhakka passed away today (June 11). She was 80 years old and had been suffering from cancer.

Born into a family of communists, Nirmala aka Radhakka was a student activist while studying in the Polytechnic college in Kakinada and in the aftermath of the Naxalbari movement she identified herself with the communist revolutionary movement. In the late sixties, when the movement in the Godavari valley began under the leadership of CP Reddy, she went into the forest to be a part of the movement and on many occasions had to face attacks by the police. In the forest area of Manuguru, in Gondigudem the police attacked a camp in which CP, Radhakka and others escaped sustaining injuries while Comrade Bathula Venkateshwara Rao was killed.

In the 1980 party congress she was elected to the then AP state committee. She was arrested soon after and was jailed. Later

she became a central committee member in CPI(ML) led by Com. K. Ramchandran.

CPI(ML) New Democracy pays homage to Com. Radhakka.

CPI(ML) New Democracy

June 11, 2024

## **Homage to Com. K. Rukmangathan**

**S**enior Communist Revolutionary leader, Com. K. Rukmangathan died on June 17, 2024. He was a founding leader of State Organizing Committee (SOC), CPI (ML), Tamil Nadu.

Com. K. played a very important role in the communist revolutionary movement in Tamil Nadu. He firmly stood by the path shown by Naxalbari peasant uprising which became a turning point in the history of Communist movement in India. Com. K. opposed revisionism in all its hues. He took principled position against 'left' deviation in the communist revolutionary movement. He wrote many important articles as RK on aspects of revolutionary mass line. His writings and work inspired a number of communist revolutionary leaders and cadres in Tamil Nadu. He also played an important role in building and developing SOC, CPI(ML)- both leaders and cadres and its base among the people in Tamil Nadu.

CPI (ML)-New Democracy pays revolutionary homage to Com. K. and pledges to continue struggle for New Democratic Revolution in India.

CPI (ML) New Democracy

June 24, 2024

# The Tenth Anniversary of *Pravda*

*(Reminiscences)*

● J. V . Stalin

## **1. The Lena Events**

The Lena events were the result of the Stolypin regime of “pacification.” The younger members of the Party, of course, have not experienced and do not remember the charms of this regime. As for the old ones, they, no doubt, remember the punitive expeditions of accursed memory, the savage raids on working-class organisations, the mass flogging of peasants, and, as a screen to all this, the Black-Hundred-Cadet Duma. Public opinion in shackles, general lassitude and apathy, want and despair among the workers, the peasantry downtrodden and terrified, with gangs of the police, landowners and capitalists rampant everywhere—such were the typical features of Stolypin’s “pacification.”

To the superficial observer it might have seemed that the epoch of revolution had passed away forever, and that a period of the “constitutional” development of Russia on the lines of Prussia had set in. The Menshevik Liquidators openly shouted that this was so and preached the necessity of organising a Stolypin legal workers’ party. And certain old “Bolsheviks,” who in their hearts sympathised with this preaching, made haste to desert the ranks of our Party. The triumph of the knout and the powers of darkness was complete. At that time the political life of Russia was described as an “abomination of desolation.”

The Lena events burst into this “abomination of desolation” like a hurricane and revealed a new picture to everybody. It turned out that the Stolypin regime was not so stable after all, that the Duma was rousing the contempt of the masses, and that the working class had accumulated sufficient energy to rush into battle for a new revolution. The shooting down of workers in the remote depths of Siberia (Bodaibo on the Lena) sufficed to call forth strikes all over Russia, and the St. Petersburg workers poured into the streets and at one stroke swept from the path the boastful Minister Makarov and his insolent slogan “So it was, so it will be.” These were the first harbingers of the mighty movement that was then beginning. *Zvezda* <sup>1</sup> was right when it exclaimed at that time: “We live! Our scarlet blood seethes with the fire of unspent strength. . . .” The upsurge of a new revolutionary movement was evident.

It was in the waves of this movement that the mass working-class newspaper *Pravda* was born.

## **2. The Foundation of Pravda**

It was in the middle of April 1912, one evening at Comrade Poletayev’s house, where two members of the Duma (Pokrovsky and Poletayev), two writers (Olminsky and Baturin) and I, a member of the Central Committee (I, being in hiding, had found “sanctuary” in the house of Poletayev, who enjoyed “parliamentary immunity”) reached agreement concerning *Pravda*’s platform and compiled the first issue of the newspaper. I do not remember whether Demyan Byedny and Danilov, two very close contributors to *Pravda*, were present at this conference.

The technical and financial prerequisites for the newspaper had already been provided thanks to the agitation conducted by *Zvezda*, the sympathy of the broad masses of the workers, and

the mass voluntary collection of funds for *Pravda* in the mills and factories. Truly, *Pravda* came into being as a result of the efforts of the working class of Russia, and above all of St. Petersburg. Had it not been for these efforts, the newspaper could not have existed.

*Pravda's* complexion was clear: its mission was to popularise Zvezda's programme among the masses. In its very first issue *Pravda* wrote: "Anyone who reads *Zvezda* and knows its contributors, who are also contributors to *Pravda*, will not find it difficult to understand the line *Pravda* will pursue." <sup>2</sup> The only difference between *Zvezda* and *Pravda* was that the latter, unlike the former, did not address itself to the advanced workers, but to the broad masses of the working class. It was *Pravda's* function to help the advanced workers to rally around the Party's banner the broad strata of the Russian working class who had awakened for a fresh struggle but were still politically backward. That is precisely why one of the aims *Pravda* set itself at that time was to train writers from among the workers and to draw them into the work of directing the paper.

In its very first issue *Pravda* wrote: "We would like the workers not to confine themselves to sympathy alone, but to take an active part in the conduct of our newspaper. Let not the workers say that they are 'not used to' writing. Working-class writers do not drop ready-made from the skies, they can be trained only gradually, in the course of literary activity. All that is needed is to start on the job boldly: you may stumble once or twice, but in the end you will learn to write. . . ." <sup>3</sup>

### **3. The Organisational Significance of *Pravda***

*Pravda* made its appearance in that period of our Party's development when the underground organisation was entirely in

the hands of the Bolsheviks (the Mensheviks had fled from it), but the legal forms of organisation—the group in the Duma, the press, sick-benefit societies, insurance societies, trade-union organisations —had not yet been completely won from the Mensheviks. It was a period in which the Bolsheviks were waging a determined struggle to expel the Liquidators (Mensheviks) from the legal working-class organisations. The slogan “Dismiss the Mensheviks from their posts” was then a most popular slogan of the working-class movement. The columns of *Pravda* bristled with reports of the expulsion from the insurance societies, sick-benefit societies and trade-union organisations of the Liquidators who at one time had entrenched themselves in them. All six deputies’ seats in the workers’ curia had been won from the Mensheviks. The Menshevik press was also in the same, or almost the same, hopeless position. It was truly a heroic struggle that the Bolshevik-minded workers waged for the Party, for the agents of tsarism were wide awake, hunting and rooting out the Bolsheviks, and the Party, driven deep underground, could not develop further unless it had a legal cover. More than that: under the political conditions prevailing at that time, the Party could not put out feelers towards the broad masses and rally them around its banner unless it won the legal organisations; it would have been cut off from the masses and would have been transformed into an isolated group, stewing in its own juice.

*Pravda* was the centre of this struggle for the Party principle, for the creation of a mass workers’ party. It was not merely a newspaper that summed up the successes of the Bolsheviks in winning the legal workers’ organisations; it was also the organisingcentre which united these organisations around the underground centres of the Party and directed the working-class

movement towards a single definite goal. Already in his book *What Is To Be Done?* (1902), Comrade Lenin had written that a well-organised all-Russian militant newspaper must be not only a collective agitator, but also a collective organiser. That is exactly the kind of newspaper which *Pravda* became in the period of the struggle against the Liquidators for the preservation of the underground organisation and for winning the legal organisations of the workers. If it is true that, had we not defeated the Liquidators we would not have had the Party which, strong in its unity and invincible because of its devotion to the proletariat, organised October 1917, then it is equally true that the persevering and devoted struggle of the old *Pravda* to a considerable degree prepared and hastened this victory over the Liquidators. In this sense the old *Pravda* was undoubtedly the herald of the future glorious victories of the Russian proletariat.

*Pravda*, No. 98,

May 5, 1922

Signed: J. Stalin

(J. Stalin, Works, Volume 5, pp. 131-135)

### **Notes**

1. *Zvezda (The Star)* — a legal Bolshevik newspaper published in St. Petersburg from December 16, 1910 to April 22, 1912, first weekly and later two or three times a week. It was under the ideological guidance of V. I. Lenin, who regularly sent articles for it from abroad. Regular contributors to the paper were V. M. Molotov; M. S. Olminsky, N. G. Poletayev, N. N. Baturin, K. S. Yeremeyev and others. Contributions were also received from Maxim Gorky. In the spring of 1912, when J. V. Stalin was in St. Petersburg, the paper came out under his direction, and he wrote a



number of articles for it (see *Works*, Vol. 2, pp. 231-54). The circulation of individual issues of the paper reached 50,000 to 60,000. *Zvezda* paved the way for the publication of the Bolshevik daily *Pravda*. On April 22, 1912, the tsarist government suppressed *Zvezda*. It was succeeded by *Neuskaya Zvezda*, which continued publication until October 1912. p. 132

2. Quoted from J. V. Stalin's article "Our Aims," published in *Pravda*, No. 1, April 22, 1912 (see *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 255). p. 133

3. See J. V. Stalin, *Works*, Vol. 2, p. 256. p. 134



## **Will Little Gaza become "Mighty" Israel's Graveyard ?**

● **P. Prasad**

**T**ime and again in history aggressors and conquerors of oppressed nations faced resistance and revolt from oppressed nations and their people. It has repeatedly been proved that the people ultimately defeat the powerful invaders, from the Roman and Greek empires to the modern world superpowers. This has been proved in Vietnam, Korea and more recently in Iraq, Afghanistan. There are the bitter lessons for UK, France, Nazi Germany, Fascist Italy, USA, Social imperialist USSR etc. The superpowers and aspiring superpowers can draw lessons from the past. They were thrown away from the occupied land by the indigenous oppressed people during the imperialist era. Even so-called modern weapon equipped regimes, including nuclear states,

can never withstand the resistance of the people of occupied soil. As Mao said, the so-called invincible imperialist regimes and aggressors are ‘paper tigers’, which has already been proved in the present world. This is the law of the history and no superpower is above this law nor can rewrite this law of history. This has now been proven once again in very tiny Gaza. History is again repeating itself. In fact, present tiny Gaza has become the epicentre for escalating all the international contradictions. Present day world order is collapsing and a new world order is in the process of emerging.

When Hamas launched an armed attack on Israel on 07/10/2023, the world’s reaction was mixed. To mention western powers and authoritarian regimes and their leaders’ response, from Biden to Modi they condemned the attack as the most barbaric act and also wholeheartedly supported Zionist Israel attacks on tiny Gaza as the acts of self defence. We need not worry about or take these opinions into account for valid consideration.

Mixed opinions have been aired among anti-imperialist political parties and forces that have long been supporters of the Palestinian people’s liberation struggle. They strongly opposed Zionist Israeli aggression against Gaza. They did not condemn the Hamas attack. But some of them had an opinion that the attack of Hamas may not be a proper action and is not useful in any way in the long term for the liberation of the Palestinian people. In fact, most of the social democratic parties as well as most of the progressive leftist intellectuals could not properly assess the ground realities of Gaza at the time.

Very few anti-imperialist forces, mainly from Arab countries and more so a few Marxist Leninist parties, could correctly assess the ground realities of Gaza. Only these forces have predicted that

this action would act as a catalyst in the Palestinians' long liberation struggle, though its immediate result would lead to bloodbath of Gaza. They could predict confidently that Gaza would finally win. Indeed 23 million people in Gaza are mentally ready to die for the right cause of liberation of their country. It is the consciousness of a struggle that defies Death itself. This is indeed the ground reality of Gaza.

Bookish Marxism is different from Marxism in practice. Practical Marxists can understand the real ground realities of then Gaza. Even many Marxist intellectuals failed to assess this aspect correctly. So, they misunderstood and miscalculated the move of Hamas. They deemed it as a needless move and they predicted it would definitely misfire. Some of them felt it was a childish act. Some of them felt it was a very immature adventuristic act. But in fact, the Hamas move did not belong to Hamas alone. It was done in accordance with not only the wishes but also mental preparedness of the entire Palestinian people. In fact, it was done not only in accordance with Gaza's people, more and more it reflects the wishes and also full and strong solidarity of the people of the West Bank and also Jerusalem. In one sentence, it reflects the aspirations, feelings and mainly preparedness of entire Palestinian people where ever they live in the world.

The ideology of Hamas may not be acceptable to us. But when they have represented Palestinian people in the anti-imperialist and anti-Zionist struggle, that must be acceptable to us. We should take into consideration time and space. Where there is no Industrial growth, where working class is not an organized force, we can't blame those struggles as being not proper. We should take into consideration Stalin's opinion with regard to revolution in Turkey led by Kemal Pasha. We should take into consideration Engels'

opinions regarding a very backward country, Afghanistan, which was defined as the graveyard of great empires. What is to be learned from this? The correct proletarian organizations or right ideology cannot come from the air or the sky. Therefore, Marxists must estimate the situation prevailing there with their ideological view, but should take steps to advance the people's liberation struggle there. Marxist Leninist forces should analyze in accordance with ground realities there and at that time. They must take into consideration its time and space dialectically. Then they could come to a final conclusion about propriety of the concrete action and concrete time selected by Hamas.

The Palestinian issue has been in the limelight since 1947. Four Arab-Israeli wars have taken place. The so-called Madrid Conference, Oslo Accord-I, Oslo Accord-II, Camp David Accord etc. have taken place after 1992. All those wars and treaties happened with the help of Arab Monarchs. The Palestinian people and their political forces had mainly depended on the Arab governments which, in turn, are subservient to the imperialist powers. More so many are also puppet governments of the USA. Again and again the Palestinian people were deceived by these puppets. For the first time the people of Gaza have decided to take their future course into their own hands through Hamas which is their elected body. It was a turning point in the liberation struggle of the Palestinian people. Therefore, the October 7th attack should not be treated as an isolated incident. It has indeed paved a new path to their liberation struggle. It is to be considered an important event and a milestone in their long history.

Whoever couldn't recognize this long evolutionary process properly, they have strong opinion in their minds that the action taken by Hamas on October 7th is one of the reasons for the current

deplorable situation in Gaza along with the Zionist regime. But history teaches us proper lessons. After long nine months of aggression by the Zionist regime with three and half lakh army, let us understand the real facts.

Was October 7th an unilateral, childish and hasty act by Hamas? If so, the bleeding people of Gaza should have revolted against Hamas. During this 9 months period there has been no protest against Hamas. Even after the death of 38 thousand people and about one lakh people suffering with serious injuries, there was no single protest from the people of bleeding Gaza. Instead, they are more determined to fight back. Even the people in Rafah, which now looks like a graveyard, where the barbaric Israeli Army is conducting guerrilla attacks and door to door combing against Hamas on a daily basis, are determined to fight back. The so called invincible mighty Israel army is now not able to achieve its declared goals in Gaza in general and Rafah in particular due to the resistance of the people.

It can be concluded that the heroic people of Gaza are defying death and are still continuing their national struggle. Moreover, they are receiving strong solidarity from all over the world. In fact, they have already achieved political and moral victory by gaining support from all corners of the world, including nearly 150 countries of the UNO. But now they are also moving rapidly towards victory in military field. After the long nine months of bloodbath there, the aim of their struggle seems now within reach to be materialized. Actually, till October 7th, the goal of their liberation was a dream, but now it is becoming a reality.

Mao said “A single spark can start a prairie fire”. Present situation is a classic example for Mao’s quotation. Gaza, a small land with an area of 365 sq kms, is now shaking the westernimperialist

world on an unprecedented level. It is also shaking the long-standing world 'order'. It is becoming a centre for concentration of western imperialist, authoritarian forces on one hand and anti-imperialist, anti-authoritarian resistance forces on the other hand to achieve their goals, aims and objectives. Gaza once again is proving as Mao said, that "Imperialism is a paper tiger". Now, most of the imperialist powers are supporting Israel, but in vain. Moreover, Israel itself is being driven into a death trap, after perpetrating genocide in Gaza for nine months. Indeed, Gaza is now drawing the Zionist regime into a death trap. Now, the world public opinion and impression is that Gaza is in a death trap. The reality is, Israel is also being pushed into a death trap. Now Israel is trying with all its might to stop the collapse.

Israel could be called a mighty regional nuclear superpower. But it is now being undermined at an unprecedented rate. A mighty Israel, which has a powerful army, called as ISRAEL DEFENCE FORCE (IDF), cannot sustain a war according to the Zionist agenda. More and more, IDF is openly expressing its opposition to the continuation of the war on Gaza. Now there are rumors that the IDF may resort to a coup against the Netanyahu govt. These rumours may either be true or false. But one thing is true, that there is a rift between the civilian regime and the military. It is not a simple thing, instead, a sign of deep crisis and also deep division in ruling classes also. Israel couldn't achieve its goals through long war with high budget allocations, body bags of its soldiers, and loss of credibility in the world, instead, now it is losing and weakening to an unimaginable level.

The IDF has been losing large numbers of its forces in recent times. Hundreds are on the death toll and thousands are on the injured list. But few days ago, a confidential news report says its

death toll had swelled to thousands. This is a big blow to the army. Now the conflict between the military and the civil government is escalating.

In all Arab Israeli wars of 1948, 1956, 1967 and 1973, the Israeli army was victorious and established itself as an invincible power. But its intervention in southern Lebanon in 2006 proved for the first time in its history that the IDF is no longer an invincible force. In fact, then IDF lost its credibility. Now not only its credibility, it is also losing a big number of its soldiers.

In the name of achieving two goals, Israel launched the war on Gaza. One was the release of hostages and another was to eliminate Hamas. War begun nine months ago and so far, only seven hostages have been released actively by IDF. It was also possible that this happened accidentally. Not even a single hostage was handed over to the IDF by Hamas through war. The Netanyahu government publicly stated before the invasion that there were approximately 25,000 to 30,000 Hamas guerrillas in Gaza. But not even one percent of guerillas are either been killed or arrested even after nine months of war. Therefore, both goals are not achieved by IDF. In this situation, domestic pressure in Israel is increasing day by day. A week ago, i.e. third week of June 2024, two of the six-member War Cabinet resigned in protest. Even a military chief has publicly stated that the military of Israel cannot defeat Hamas. He further stated that Hamas is not only a military force, but it is an 'ideology'. He made it clear that Hamas will survive in Gaza until the last man lives there.

Israel now is a crisis ridden state. It is increasing taxes in the name of war burdens. People are expressing their anger in different forms. They are now coming on to the streets. Recently, a number of protest rallies are taking place in Israel with a demand to

end the war. On 22-6-2024, a huge protest rally was held in the Tel Aviv, old capital of Israel, in which more than 1,50,000 people participated. Again on 24-6-2024 another rally was held in the Jerusalem, present capital of Israel, and the protesters clashed with the police. Now the Israeli people have come on to the roads mainly with three demands. One of those major demands is to stop the war immediately. The second demand is to dissolve the unstable coalition government immediately and call for fresh elections. The third one is to withdraw newly introduced taxes in the name of War Burdens.

This is broad domestic scenario of Israel now. But internationally also, Israel is being isolated politically and also being targeted in even military aspect. Let us try to understand that aspect also.

As per the very latest reports, many more war fronts are being planned to be opened in support of the Gaza. Lebanon based Hezbollah is preparing for an all-out war now against Israel. USA is trying to prevent it at its level. USA is going to hold its Presidential elections this year. It also has its domestic pressures. In case war extends to either Red Sea or Lebanon, USA may face a more critical situation and burden. But USA is unable to prevent this. Already Israel has officially declared that it is mobilizing military forces on the Lebanese border to open another war front. It is a sign of inability of USA. So, the war can break out at any time with Hezbollah. In case another war front is opened on Lebanon border, Israel may become a failed state.

Now let us come to the Red Sea zone. The Red Sea crisis is ongoing and getting escalated further. Two days ago, i.e. fourth week of June, a news came that Al Shadab, a well-trained, powerful armed group of Somalia affiliated to the Al-Queda, is joining hands



with Houthis. Somalia's armed group had come in to focus when 18 USA soldiers were killed, who had been sent to Somalia as part of so-called "Operation Restore Hope". Their bodies were dragged through the streets of the capital city Mogadishu in 1993. If this support to Houthis realized in practice, the Houthi guerrillas' military power may be increased. Somalia is in Horn of Africa bordering Gulf of Aden. It is located at a key place in geopolitical aspect. It is on the key route from Gulf of Aden to Red Sea.

The Houthi guerrilla organization has not limited its activities to the Red Sea. It is now expanding to distant targets as well. A few days ago, with the cooperation of Iraqi Islamic militant groups, it fired indigenous hypersonic missiles for the first time at Israel's naval military base near the Haifa port on the Mediterranean Sea. It is a sign that Israel is now being dragged in to a war trap.

The boiling Arab streets may burst at any time. There are reports that in some Arab countries there is a chance of unexpected coups against the present Monarchical governments. Let us keep in mind, at the time of Arab spring in 2011, unexpected revolts took place in Tunisia and Egypt. Gaza is terrorizing the monarchical govts. of few Arab countries now. So, they are not prepared to support USA's attempts in West Asia. Though USA formed a military alliance against Houthi Guerrillas in Red Sea with ten countries, no major Arab country had joined it. Iran, a Persian country, is now openly challenging Israel, a lackey of USA, but USA is not ready to wage war against or encircle Iran. One important reason is that no Arab country is ready to support USA against Iran. Because the major Arab countries like Saudi Arabia and Egypt are very afraid that it may lead to revolts or coups. The real reason is that bleeding Gaza is playing a role of adding fuel to the fire.

An Iranian-led resistance axis is now taking active steps to

defeat Israel and drive it out of the Gaza. According to the recent reports, pro Iran guerilla groups in Iraq are also gearing up for an all-out war against Zionist Israel.

Two days ago, i.e. end of June, a very important event took place in the West Bank town, Jenin. When IDF's violent combing operations were continuing, there was a sudden, sharp, flash guerrilla attack against the IDF forces, in which 17 IDF soldiers were seriously injured. It is a clear indication that the current zone of armed resistance has been expanded to the West Bank also. In fact, the West Bank has been a strong resistance zone till now. But unlike Gaza it was not an armed struggle area. After Oslo accord, PLO officially abandoned its armed path. It controls West Bank. In recent years, Fatah is being replaced gradually by Hamas in the hearts of the people of the West Bank, but Hamas's armed struggle has not yet filled the gap which is now taking a shape. Under the above circumstances, we can surmise that the West Bank is also gradually being converting into a burial ground for Zionist Israel along with Gaza. Such developments definitely provide a major breathing space to present bleeding Gaza.

Recently Rafah is also has becoming a very popular symbol of the trauma and sufferings of Gaza people. Further, Rafah has been converted in to a burial ground. But it is being converted into a guerilla zone also. In fact, here have been repeated armed attacks in recent times. IDF Soldiers are also defeated in Rafah on many occasions. The Netanyahu government wants to convert Rafah into a sacred Hebrew land through ashes, which is part of the secret Zionist agenda. But the ground reality is now moving in another direction and Rafah is also becoming a burial ground for the Israeli army. June 2024 is evidence of this process.

Russia has recently been taking some proactive steps in regard

to this war. China also may follow it. Now France and Germany are not actively supporting the USA. Many EU member states are also either opposing or distancing themselves from the USA.

It is a time to speak once again about few Marxist organizations and their analysis on Gaza's armed path and its torch bearer Hamas' role. Some European Marxist Leninist parties consider Hamas as a terrorist group. Such parties are making such sweeping comments. They are alleging that armed attack carried out by Hamas on 7-10-2023 is the main reason for Gaza's current sufferings. They are dividing Hamas from the people of Gaza. On the one hand, some so-called MarxistLeninist wings and intellectuals are taking this stand, but on the other hand, the Israeli military (IDF) chief could clearly see the bitter truth that Hamas is not just a military power, but an 'idea' of liberation struggle of the Palestinian people. It is a lesson to these academic Marxists.

Whatever the USA faced in Korea, Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan in the past is now being faced by Israel also in tiny Gaza. In fact, Vietnam, Korea has deep forests and hilly areas. Afghanistan consists of hilly areas and wide valleys. Iraq may not have forests and valleys but there is vast area of land. The most surprising thing is that Gaza has only 365 Sq km. On an average Gaza is 40 km long and 10 km width.

In the history of armed struggles of world, one more unique chapter is being written by the heroic Gaza people. They have used tunnel warfare as their mainstay. In earlier armed revolutions also, tunnels were used but only to protect underground leaders. But contrary to this, Gaza people have built big tunnel networks to wage guerilla warfare. It is a new underground guerilla struggle form that Gaza people have created for the first time in the world. Actually, all underground armed revolutions which happened till now were

politically underground but geographically over ground. Contrary to all those armed revolutions, the Gaza armed struggle is being waged through tunnel network. So, it is not only politically but also geographically an underground armed struggle.

Three and half lakh mighty IDF army could not find where the Hamas army hides, despite a 9-month encirclement. It indicates also a high density of tunnel networks in only 365 sq KM tiny land, really an eighth wonder of the world.

These Gaza people are proving that the armed revolutions are relevant even now. They are also proving that people can create history against invaders, aggressors and occupiers, despite no vast backyard lands. The people of this tiny land are creating a new chapter in the history of revolutions, with their death-defying struggle despite the odds against them. Let us salute them.

Long Live Palestine!

Long Live Revolution!



# On Issues Emerging out of Recent NEET, NET Examinations' Fiasco

● Mrigank

## Current controversies

The NTA announced the NEET 2024 results ten days ahead of schedule, which caught parents and students off guard. The results were released on June 4, 2024. The public's shock was increased by the early announcement's timing, which aligned with the nation's attention on the general election outcomes. Amidst concerns about the fate of approximately 25 lakh students who took the NEET 2024 exam, 9 lakh hopefuls were disappointed to learn that the UGC NET was cancelled due to unspecified reasons (although, unaware of this, UGC Chairman M. Jagadesh Kumar tweeted that the NTA had "successfully conducted UGC-NET June 2024"). CSIR UGC NET and NEET PG were subsequently cancelled as well (in both these examinations, about 2 lakhs each were expected to appear). The CUET results were delayed.

First, let us discuss NEET 2024, which initially caused the uproar. Reports that many of the highest scorers had consecutive roll numbers, suggesting they may have taken the exam at the same centre, added to the suspicions. This brought up allegations of collaboration and potential exam centre misconduct. Many toppers in fact, are from the same centre. There were reports of people from distant locations preferring a particular centre. 6 toppers were from

a Hardayal Public School in Haryana run by Anuradha Yadav who had campaigned for BJP several times. There were reports of paper leaks in Patna and Gujarat.

Stakeholders were left perplexed and suspicious when reports surfaced of candidates receiving scores of 718/720 and 719/720, which are not conceivable under NEET's grading scheme. This is because NEET gives 4 marks for every correct answer and deducts 1 mark for the wrong answer. So, if one question is omitted, one will get 716 and if 1 answer is wrong one will get 715. To justify this, NTA said they have given grace marks to the students whose exams started late. But NTA could not satisfactorily answer the criterion of grace marks. NTA referred to a Supreme Court judgement in CLAT 2018, where compensatory marks for time were awarded. But the difference is CLAT was conducted online, with a meticulous software, which tracks the activities, even eye movement. Login time and logout time can be seen precisely. NEET was conducted on OMR sheets, even if CCTV footages are scanned the exact time loss is difficult to determine. In competitive examinations like this, time management is the key to being successful, even one mark can make a big difference in ranks.

Secondly, in the case of CLAT, a grievance redressal system was ordered by the Supreme Court, and it was found that due to some technical glitches and lack of experience, multiple login attempts were made causing a waste of time. Such eventualities were not possible in NEET. Neither is the formula of compensatory marks followed by CLAT applicable in NEET due to the different scoring system. Moreover, it only allows computation of revised numbers of correct and wrong answers which can't explain impossible scores of 718 and 719.

Unsatisfied with NTA's response Supreme Court ordered a

Rexam for these students but only about half those students appeared in the re-examination- indicating that students were not confident of their performance and giving enough hints about the earlier malpractice.

Similarly, the response of NTA to other anomalies only turned out to be a cover up. The reason for increase in number of toppers, NTA says, is that this year 14% more students have appeared in NEET so obviously number of toppers has increased. But from 2 toppers in 2023 to 67 in 2024 is far greater a jump than can be justified by this logic. Another explanation given was that one answer key to physics was revised and therefore 44 candidates got 720. But again, the remaining number of 17 is still too large to be explained by NTA logic.

The problem with such a high number of toppers will also be that even top-ranked students will not be able to get their preference for medical college.

The NTA has not given a clear and transparent justification for using this algorithm for the offline NEET exam. How the compensatory marks formula was applied was left unclear. There was no established grievance redressal system that any of the applicants might have used to voice their concerns about the challenges they encountered.

NTA also said that revision of the syllabus, which has removed many portions of the science curriculum, might have made it easier for candidates to score more. This is a coverup, moreover, it is a commentary on NCF 2023.

Whatever the justifications, such unparalleled mark inflation has a negative effect on both tutors' and students' morale. This puts them in a highly precarious situation and erodes their confidence in the test (and the educational system) because it means that even a

very high score in a competitive exam like NEET, which requires enormous effort on their part to achieve, does not guarantee a decent result. Therefore, rather than attempting to dismiss the issue as a minor side effect of the rise of applicants, the NTA needs to recognize the seriousness of the situation.

Again, the reasons given for sudden cancellation of UGC NET were not clear. The government said that the National Cybercrime Threat Analytics Unit of the Indian Cyber Crime Coordination Centre, which is part of the Ministry of Home Affairs, provided the negative inputs on UGC-NET. The statement did not elaborate on the specific way the exam's integrity has been undermined, although sources indicated that I4C inputs indicate the existence of a dark web paper leak.

This strongly suggests widespread corruption, ingrained malaise, and the complete incapacity of the NTA to hold such important nationwide examinations.

Not just these exams and NTA-conducted exams, there have been at least 50 instances of leakage of papers of important examinations at the national and state level since 2015. Malaise is much more deep-rooted and what we see is only the tip of the iceberg.

## **Police Investigations**

The Director General of NTA has since been fired, an inquiry has been ordered, and the CBI has begun inquiries. Initially, Minister of Education Mr Dhirendra Pradhan denied any inconsistencies, but he later acknowledged certain errors. He admits only as much as is exposed in the media, and whenever it is exposed.

Although the police have found incidence of paper leaks in Patna and later in Haryana, Jharkhand and Gujarat too, the



Minister is still saying that these are localised problems only. The fact is that we know only as much as is exposed. The possibility of unreported leakage cannot be denied.

Investigations are still on, there is one report saying NTA is not cooperating with CBI. In any case, it will take time and many coverups will be done. Some locally involved people will be booked. But the real players will remain unscathed.

Much trumpeted new law will also be used to catch the last few in the chain. The main culprits will continue to plan another scam.

## **The NTA**

The origin of the idea of NTA can be found in the Programme of Action 1992 formulated for the National Policy of Education of 1986, which proposed administering common admission examinations at the national level for both professional and non-professional study programs. The National Testing Agency was founded in 2010 when a committee made up of some of the directors of the Indian Institutes of Technology (IITs) submitted a report to the Ministry of Human Resources Development (MHRD), which is now the Ministry of Education. The Committee recommended that the National Testing Agency be “created by an Act of Parliament.” According to the paper, a statutory agency can guarantee impartiality and openness in assessing the intended scope.

The National Testing Agency (NTA) concept was to be advanced through the creation of a special purpose entity, and the MHRD established a seven-member task force in 2013 to draft a blueprint for this purpose. This came after the decision to establish the agency was announced in April 2013.

The Finance Minister made a statement regarding the NTA during the 2017 budget speech, and Cabinet approval came next.

The government named Vineet Joshi as the agency's first Director-General.

The National Testing Authority (NTA) was to administer the National Eligibility Test (NET), the Graduate Pharmacy Aptitude Test (GPAT), the Common Management Admission Test (CMAT), and the Joint Entrance Examination–Main (JEE Main) twice a year, according to a press conference held on July 7, 2018, by former Union HRD Minister Prakash Javadekar.

A Governing committee comprising the chairperson, secretary, and at least eight representatives from various national-level institutes was to oversee the administration of the agency. The NTA was to begin operations in the first year with an initial allocation of Rs.25 crores from the Union Cabinet. The Ministry of Education's Department of Higher Education provides funding for the organisation.

It announced in 2018 that it would conduct 5 national level tests but started in 2019 and now it conducts 28 examinations every year including 15 for universities and colleges, 10 for recruitment and 3 for schools.

Controversies came up almost side by side from the beginning of the functioning of NTA. In 2017 itself, the Anitha case in Tamil Nadu put the drawback of the concept of NEET to the fore. It shall be discussed later. In 2020, the JEE mains exam had an impersonation issue when Neel Nakshatra Das used someone to answer his exam with his father being an invigilator. In the same year, Vidhi Suryavanshi of MP committed suicide when she found she had got only 6 marks, but later it was discovered that she had got 590 marks. Similarly, Mridul Rawat was declared unsuccessful; when the result was challenged, he was found to be a topper in the ST Category.

The JEE (Main) 2022 exam was improperly administered, lower results were the consequence of numerous students experiencing technical difficulties during the test, and errors in the exam's response sheet and answer key constituted a major issue as well. In JEE(main) 2024, there was some arbitrariness in the difficulty level, NTA had tonormalize the score to the discontent of many. In JEE (main) Session I numerous students have brought attention to the disparity between the number of pupils who appeared in the first four shifts on January 27 and January 29. It is said that the NTA arbitrarily assigned candidates to each of the ten shifts. According to claims, there were noticeably more students present on the first two days, which resulted in significant differences in the candidates' percentiles. There was also a noticeable increase in the cutoff, which added to several students' dejection. In session II, cases of the usage of unfair means were seen.

Two years back NTA conducted CUET for the first time and there was big mismanagement as centres were shifted on the day of exams. It also announced that apart from UG and PG it will also conduct exams for PhD but later it backed out for that year. Now Ministry has announced that NET scores will be a criterion for PhD admission, and scores will be valid only for a year. This has made NET more important than ever and therefore more stakes are involved.

Apart from the above, there have always been problems with the examinations conducted by NTA. The first CUET exam saw a sudden shifting of the exam centre at the last moment. Many students missed it. NTA has not been able to decide about the pattern of exams and mode of exams. The first 2 CUETs were conducted in online mode. But this year OMR sheets were given.

There is a very poor and non-transparent grievance redressal system. The complaints of candidates are not addressed and by the time it is, time for any corrective action is lost.

This shows the complete incompetence and total unpreparedness of NTA to conduct such important examinations of this level.

If we look at organizational structure and who is in charge, things will become clearer. The Chairman, Dr. Pradeep Kumar Joshi, has strong links with RSS. He had been president of ABVP and was recommended by RSS pracharaks to become chairman of MPPSC as well as Chhattisgarh PSC. He was at the helm of the affairs when infamous VYAPAM scam took place in 2013. The NTA chairman is sort of expert in scams in entrance exams. The government has not shifted him but only the Director General was shifted.

It is evident that the purpose of NTA is to centralize all entry and eligibility exams. It was visualized before the NDA government and NEP 2020. It is a component of the World Bank-GATS model. NEP 2020's implementation has expanded its scope and made it operational. It aligns with the RSS's strong central control vision as well.

## **Effect on Students**

The abrupt cancellations or anomalies have a detrimental effect on the students. It has an impact on them both monetarily and mentally. Following this, many pupils are experiencing shock and additional emotional damage. They have endured an extremely demanding schedule and years of preparation to prepare for these exams. Students now experience mental distress if exams are abruptly cancelled or if results are uncertain.

In the hopes that their efforts will be sufficient to pass the tests, many students work really hard and their families financially assist them. If the procedure is repeated, it will place an enormous financial strain on these students' families, who even borrow money to pay for the coaching as for coaching and preparations, they are forced to live away from home. Such events place pupils in really awkward situations where they will have to ask for support from their family once more.

## **Problems with Centralised entrance Exam**

Although the recent problem that has precipitated the matter is anomalies in the conduction of exams, it has also brought the centralized examination system into discussion. Progressive forces have always opposed this as also opposed NEP2020 which strongly bats for this. NEET is a classic example of this. We may recall the case of Anitha of Tamil Nadu who, despite being among the toppers in the stateboard, could not clear NEET. She even appealed to the Supreme Court that she could not afford expensive coaching and that she should be given a seat. Despite the support of the Tamil Nadu Assembly, the Supreme Court quashed her appeal and she committed suicide. Her suicide highlighted several important issues.

The arguments in favour of the Supreme Court's decision to stop corruption connected to admissions in private universities through tests like NEET have also been made. Some people think that students who take several entrance exams will benefit from a common exam, and that admission test corruption will be reduced under the watchful eyes of the Medical Council of India and the CBSE. Then there is the supposedly desirable idea of a single syllabus, which would guarantee the production of physicians with comparable backgrounds everywhere.

The argument is bogus as most of the states already conduct their entrance exams. It could have been ordered that private medical colleges in that state be asked to make admissions through these exams. Many states have been doing this. The incidence of corruption in a few states cannot be a ground to generalize the issue and change admission procedures everywhere to a central exam. As such only 5% of students opt for high-capital fee private colleges. That means it was a problem of a minuscule only.

Such central exams at UG level are heavily skewed in favour of CBSE. In a country like India with huge diversity, set central exams only tend to ignore this diversity and different syllabi and patterns followed in different states. This is also not a fact that the CBSE is the largest board conducting grade 12 exams. UP board and Maharashtra board examine more students respectively than CBSE. CBSE syllabus-based exams only means heavy urban and private schools' centric bias.

It can also be argued that the CBSE syllabus is not the best syllabus. All the boards have a thoughtful, well-conceived syllabus of science which is suitable for the students of their states. Such central exams will gradually force state boards to adopt the CBSE syllabus. Anil Kumar and Dibakar Chatterjee of the Indian Institute of Science have done rigorous research on this and found that in performance in science subjects, students of CBSE are not the best. West Bengal students have done better in all science subjects and Andhra Pradesh students have done well in mathematics and physics. But the NEET results show that students of these states are not among the best scorers.

Therefore, a Board of education's scientific syllabus's viability or "worth" is determined not by how well it instructs pupils in the subject but, astonishingly, by how well it has adopted—or not—the

fundamental structure of the curriculum of a Board located in Delhi. As a result, the Class 12 exam will become less significant, and coaching facilities will become more commonplace, functioning as informal replacement schools.

In fact, the corruption issue at the entrance also needs to be given another view. MCI led by Dr. Ketan Desai approached the court arguing for NEET as a solution when different states were reluctant to adopt NEET. Given his history and reputation, it is impossible to believe that his zeal for combating corruption is sincere. Immediately after the NEET judgment, the flourishing of CBSE-based coaching institutes was seen. The obvious need not be stated in words here.

We have seen similar discrepancies in the CUET undergraduate exam for entrance in Central Universities. Two years back, when it was conducted for the first time, Delhi University got only 2% of students from the states as opposed to approximately 40% on average in previous years. Students from government schools in Delhi too were reduced to a negligible number.

All these central exams are not only biased towards CBSE but also put socially and economically disadvantaged sections to a huge disadvantage. These exams were conducted in online mode, and many students touched computers for the first time in the examination hall. Almost simultaneously with the announcement of these exams Coaching centres have mushroomed. Which means the people who can afford this coaching will perform better and eventually only a small section of people will be able to access these exams.

Thus, these exams, on the one hand, violate the Federal rights

of the state and on the other hand, are heavily biased towards the elite section of the society.

The Union Government is arguing before the Supreme Court that it will be difficult for the deserving students who have put in the necessary effort and performed well in the test to have the NEET results cancelled and the exam redone. Such students will undoubtedly find this difficult. However, the cause of this suffering for many students is the RSS-BJP Government and its utterly corrupt apparatus. This argument must not be permitted to perpetuate allegations of impropriety surrounding the entire testing process. Justice should be served to everyone involved in this, including the highest-ranking members, at the heart of the fraud, not just a few supporting players.

As we have seen, the leaks were at both national level and state level. Entire machinery is mired in corruption. They are not concerned about the future of students or the country. The NEP 2020 only strengthens this as it bats not only for strong centralization and commercialization but also in a way seeks to institutionalize corruption.

While this NEET UG 2024 should be scrapped and rescheduled so that a fair exam be held for all, there should be further measure taken. NEP 2020 be withdrawn and central agencies like NTA be abolished, the conduction of examinations should be given to states as in past and the federal structure in education be restored by removing education from the concurrent list to the state list.

Obviously, the RSS-BJP government will not do it unless a strong movement of students and teachers takes place.





# **Commemorating 50th Anniversary of Martyrdom of Five Jute Workers on 10th July**

**O**n the 50th anniversary of the first police firing at Nellimarla jute mill on 10-7-1974, we commemorate the martyrdom of 5 jute workers.

We all know about the police firing at Nellimarla on 29-1-1994 in which five jute mill workers were killed. But we may not be aware of another police firing in the same Nellimara 20 years prior to this, which led to the death of the five jute workers and also a mill personnel officer. This happened on 10-7-1974. We salute their heroic sacrifice on their 50th death anniversary.

In the 1994 police firing thousands of jute workers including all their family members, mainly women, were participating in a rail roko programme demanding lifting of the Nellimarla Jute Mill lockout. It happened on a railway track about 2 km from the Jute Mill. But the police firing that took place 20 years before this was in the premises of the jute mill. This happened when the jute workers surrounded representative of the Jute mill management in a Gherao, demanding withdrawal of increased work load and against the reduction of wages. In the name of law order, police resorted to firing in which the five jute workers were killed. In retaliation, a jute mill personnel officer was also killed. In fact he became the scapegoat on behalf of the mill management, a target of the anger against exploitation.

Two police firings thus took place in the same Nellimarla Mill. The interval between the two is 20 years. But there are differences between the two events. The qualitative difference between the two firings is the nature of the labor movement. The 1st occurred when workers resorted to spontaneous agitation which was not supported by the outsider TU leadership belong to a reformist union. But the 2nd incident occurred when the state very consciously took steps to suppress the working class, which had built a protracted movement under the leadership of the revolutionary TU, IFTU.

A very interesting and inspiring incident is now to be told. One of the heroes of the earlier agitation was Comrade Kalla Appala Satya Narayana. He was an accused in the then case and was even sentenced to jail. The same hero, twenty years down the line, became one of the five martyrs in the 1994 police firing.

Both incidents are part of a heroic class struggle. Nellimarla jute mill workers have written a golden chapter for themselves in the heroic history of India's trade union movement. They played a heroic role on both occasions.

Let us pay our heartfelt respect to the five martyrs who were killed brutally by the state on 10-7-1974. Let us salute their heroic sacrifice.

Our heartfelt condolences to the surviving family members.

Martyrdom of Nellimarla of 1974 Zindabad.

Those martyrs are immortal and their sacrifice is invaluable.

**(By P. Prasad (PP), IFTU Vice President and IFTU AP  
President)**

# Tale of Two Elections: Britain and France

## ● Zameer

In the backdrop of slowing economy, rising cost of living and deteriorating conditions of working people, two major European countries went through parliamentary elections. Political expressions as evident in results of elections in two countries bore both similarities and differences depending on a number of factors-economic, social and political. Separated by the English Channel, Britain and France held their parliamentary elections, Britain on July 4 and France in two rounds on June 30 and July 7. In both countries ruling parties had called for snap elections, each of which turned out to be lifting a heavy stone to drop on one's own feet. While underlying economic malaise and social unrest were common in both cases, they found expressions in different ways. This difference was obvious in electoral turn out being tepid in UK and high in France, the highest since 1997.

Some common features have been the rise of ultra-right forces and increasing polarization of society; weakening of centrist forces of the ruling classes and plight of Palestinians especially those of Gaza coming into the main political discourse.

## UK: Phony Landslide

In UK, opposition Labour Party laboured to victory, though achieving a spectacular victory in number of seats by getting 413

seats out of a total of 650. This was largely due to the rise of Reform UK party which took away a large chunk of Conservative votes and its first past the post system which delinks seat allocation from votes polled. Labour Party got 33.8% vote (just over a third) but nearly two thirds of seats. This vote share was just 1.7% more than what they got in 2019 and much less (over 3%) than what they had got under the leadership of Jeremy Corbyn in 2017. The erstwhile Conservative Party, whose 14 year old rule ended, polled 23.7%, a drop of 19.9% while Reform (led by Farage) got 14.3%, an increase of 12.2% from the vote its earlier incarnation had polled in 2019 when it had contested in another name. Greens increased both their votes and seats but the largest increase came in the votes polled by Others which was second highest i.e. 27.3%, a whopping more than three times increase over last time when it was just 8.4%. The apparent landslide in number of seats achieved by Labour Party was largely due to decline of Conservative Party. Labour achieved vast majority of seats even while its votes declined in some regions e.g. Wales. Phony nature of this apparent landslide is apparent from the fact that this is the first time that any Party in UK has achieved a clear majority leave alone such sweeping majority with so small a percentage of votes.

There were a number of records set by the UK elections. Since 1885 it was the second lowest turnout at less than 60%. And in over a Century the two main parties – Labour and Conservatives-together polled less than 60% votes. Votes bled from both sides – from Conservatives owing to economic results of its main plank over last decade i.e. Brexit and from Labour owing to shedding whatever progressive aspects were there. Labour's full support to Israel went

as far as to support closure of water and electricity to the Enclave and to witch-hunting of progressive elements from Labour. Even former leader Jeremy Corbyn was expelled on the frivolous charge of not acting against Anti-semitism in the Labour Party.

Labour Party led by Keir Starmer fought this election on the most regressive platform in decades, even more than neo-liberal Tony Blair, and even some Conservative Party platforms of the past. That it could still win over Conservatives is largely due to the dire straits to which UK economy has been brought by 14 years of continuous rule of Conservative Party. Over last 16 years, UK registered slowest rate of growth in per capita GDP i.e. of only 4.3%. This was also accompanied by slowest rate of growth in wages and slowest rate of growth in productivity over last ten years which is worst for over more than two centuries i.e. since Napoleonic wars. Since the explosion of global financial economic crisis in 2008, annual real wage has reportedly fallen by \$14000 below the 2008 level. Reportedly 4.3 million children go hungry. With UK economy going through recession after 2008 great recession, a section of ruling classes led the Britons down the path of Brexit, flashing the images of past glory of British empire.

The decline of British imperialism could not be and was not checked by Brexit. In fact, it further exacerbated the decline. From 2019 onwards goods exports of UK increased by just 1.1%. Rise in energy prices after Ukraine war and disruption of supply chains led to cost of living crisis. There is increasing demand for mending fences with Europe especially in trade relations as much hoped for special pact with USA did not materialize. Their hopes of increasing their share in the markets of their former colonies like India too did not materialize. UK ruling class faced difficulties in EU and outside EU. They could not and did not come to terms with their decline as a

premier power of western Europe.

With the failure of Brexit in helping to overcome the deepening crisis, the ruling Conservatives faced one crisis after another. Ultra-right wing of Conservatives increasingly tilted towards Farage's positions blaming immigrants as the cause of the increasing difficulties faced by British People. Anti-immigrant plank was always an integral part of Brexit plank; at that time it was directed against immigrants both from third world countries as well as East European countries. Out of EU, it has now been turned against third world countries. This ultra-right streak was always part of Brexit but has now come to the fore when its negative effects cannot be overlooked. In coming times, this ultra-right wing will go even further, spewing venom against immigrants and creating social tension targeting them.

While ultra-right with its xenophobia targeting immigrants from third world countries rose from the ashes of Brexit, Labour Party increasingly positioned itself as the natural substitute, getting rid of its 'progressive elements' as well as some of its reformist agenda. This shift of Labour gave rise to many progressive elements leaving Labour. Attitude to genocide in Gaza became a fulcrum around which this opposition revolved. Jeremy Corbyn, who stood as an Independent, won comfortably from his predominantly Labour constituency, with Labour Party leaving no stone unturned to defeat him. 4 candidates who specifically stood on pro-Gaza platform won from their constituencies. More importantly, a number of them ran close second to the winning candidate. This good showing by the candidates openly espousing cause of Gaza should come as no surprise seeing the big demonstrations against Israel's genocide in Gaza.

## **France: “People have avoided the worst”**

Across the English Channel, in France, the battle against fascist Reassemble National (RN) led by Marie Le Pen took a different turn. Rise of fascist RN (earlier National Front), backed by the elements supportive of Vichy regime, has been over the decades feeding on the increasing resentment of the people, especially working class, owing to their deteriorating conditions. Faced with stagnant economy, Govt. of France under the Presidentship of Macron tried to overcome it by increasing burden on the working people. Minimum wages remained virtually stagnant even as cost of living went up. Through pension reforms, attack on working class was intensified. Macron Govt. proposed to increase retirement age to 65 years from 60 years and ultimately forced it up to 64 years, thereby reducing number of pensioners. Condition of civil services including medical services deteriorated and working class localities faced neglect and decline.

In this situation of economic stagnation and rising attacks on working people, RN gained strength, feeding on the resentment of the people including working masses. Macron tried to monopolize the anti-fascist plank under the French system of second round of polling thus presenting the people with the choice between two rightist planks – one of them extreme right and another right in the name of warding off that extreme right. Emerging out of the decadence of Socialists under Hollande and crowning itself with meaningless post-modernist phrases like March Ahead, Macron’s party posed as favouring all, especially trying to get over class struggle which is so deeply rooted in capitalist France. Leaving their link, even reformist link, with working class, Socialists declined while French communists could not recover from their abyss of Euro-communism. Attempting to sweep class antagonism under

the carpet, Marcon posed himself as a champion of European integration.

Macron, who likes to pose himself as little Napoleon, found that he could not be even de Gaulle. Since 2008 great recession, French economy had not recovered. Moreover, in this period especially since Sarkozy period, France had increasingly tied itself to the apron strings of US imperialism. On the other hand, rise of China and reassertion of Russia besides rising protectionism in US gave France little opportunity to increase its share in the world market and resources. Its overseas interests especially in Africa came under increasing economic pressure from China and increasing military pressure from Russia. Facing impulses to act as Napoleon and as de Gaulle by turns, Macron had to face reality that he could act as neither. Ukraine war gave ample evidence of display of these impulses and hard reality of French power.

While Macron was buffooning over the European and world stage, in France rightist RN was gaining strength. On the 'left' side of spectrum, with decline of Socialists, Melenchon led La France Insoumise (France Unbowed) emerged as the main party of the 'Left'. Adopting clearer position than Socialists, Melenchon filled the void in ruling class politics left by Socialists. He adopted a clear position against Israel's genocidal war against Palestinians in Gaza. Rise of these two forces i.e. RN and LFI deprived Macron's Ensemble of majority in the last parliamentary elections in France in 2022.

In the period this churching in French politics was going on, in European Union election, RN sprang a big surprise, getting 33% of vote which was almost double that of Ensemble. Faced with a hung parliament and hoping to benefit from the position of being main challenger to RN, Macron dissolved Parliament and called for new



elections. While RN was gloating over its success in EU elections, the announcement brought four parliamentary 'Left' parties together under the banner New Popular Front (French: Nouveau Front Populaire), bringing LFI, Socialists, Greens and Communists (PCF) though some forces on the left were not part of this Front. This new grouping upset the calculations of Macron and his party. First round of elections held on June 30 aroused a lot of interest with polling percentage topping 67% highest for decades. Results put RN led coalition at 33.14% of vote, with RN polling 29.5% (9.4 million votes, 1.3 million more than in the first round last time). NFP polled 27.99% easily beating Macron's Ensemble Alliance into third position (20.76%). Republicans (except Ciotti's group that aligned with RN) polled 10.23% while other Left forces polled 2.68%. In these bitterly contested elections, 501 seats (out of a total of 577 members of National Assembly) went to the second round with 306 of them resulting in triangular contest. According to France's election system, a candidate wins in first round if she/he secures majority of votes i.e. more than 50%. If no candidate reaches that number, two main candidates and any other candidate securing more than 12.5% of the registered voters progress to second round. Due to high polling, number of triangular contests were very high. Of the 76 seats declared in the first round, RN secured 39, NFP 32, Macron 2 and 3 to other parties.

After the first round, with RN emerging in lead and increasing sections of ruling bourgeoisie gearing up for its coming to power, the issue of stopping RN from coming to power started. In the first round, RN led in 297 constituencies, NFP 159 constituencies and Ensemble in 70 constituencies and Republicans in 20 constituencies. The issue of anti-RN withdrawing their third placed candidates came on the agenda. NFP led by LFI was first to announce that they would withdraw and indeed withdrew their

candidates from all but one constituency where other two were RN and RN rebel. 224 candidates withdrew- among them 134 from the Left, 82 from Macron party and Republicans 4. Among 33 candidates who did not withdraw 16 were from Macron Party- 10 against LFI, 3 against Greens and 1 against Socialists. Other candidates who did not withdraw mostly belonged to Republicans.

These withdrawal showed that 'Left' forces were most serious in defeating RN while sections of Macron's Ensemble and Republicans were against Left targeting both LFI and RN and thereby helping RN. After the second and final round of vote, NFP secured 188 seats, Macron's party 161 and RN led alliance 142. Though RN was relegated to third position, its vote share was the highest in second round, getting 37% vote with NFP at 26% and EN at 25%. Commenting on the results, Melenchon said, "People have avoided the worst." Defeat of RN saw big relief among vast sections of people while RN cadres attacked NFP celebrations at number of places.

Besides preventing RN from coming to power, French elections have not broken the political deadlock. No party has secured majority. Macron's party and Republicans want a front without LFI. With no front gaining majority, according to France's constitution and tradition, NFP should be asked to form Govt. But Macron has been delaying this in the name of coming Olympics. NFP has put forward some proposals for reforms which include rolling back of retirement age to 60 years, increase in wages and restoring wealth tax. These measures are being opposed by Macron's Party and Republicans. RN's advent to power is blocked but France is in political limbo from which upswing in working class movement alone can bring it out. France is known to be the land where all battles are fought to finish and the time has come for living

up to it. Different rightist parties are trying to split NFP but this would only be a gain to RN. In fact, though formally opposing, they dislike LFI more than they dislike RN.

## **Rise of Ultra-right Across Europe**

Stopping of RN in France and victory of Labour in UK cannot obfuscate the fact that extreme right has been gaining strength across European countries. After elections in the Netherlands, Wilders' Freedom Party has become part of ruling coalition. Extreme Right parties are becoming strong enough to become important players in deciding power equation in several countries. AFD in Germany has also become strong.

The main emphasis of these extreme right parties is their attack on immigrants, which is actually a camouflage for their attacks against working class. They want to divide working class and rally a section of workers for their anti-democratic plank. This is basically a reflection of intensification of the contradiction between Labour and Capital in developed capitalist countries. Extreme right parties are fomenting social trouble in the name of immigrants to intensify attacks against working class. Other section of ruling class following neo-liberal policies help these parties to corner the anger of working class. They are united in their opposition to working class, in their anti-communism even as they differ on how to serve their bourgeoisie. Only intensification of working class struggle can unmask the face of neo-liberalism and stop extreme right (fascist) groups in their tracks. It is an essential part of the struggle of working class.



## **Students of India Stand in Solidarity with the Agitating Bangladeshi Students**

# **Condemn Brutal Repression by the Sheikh Hasina Government**

PDSU-PSU stand in solidarity with the students of Bangladesh who have come out in protest in tens of thousands throughout Bangladesh. They are being subjected to attacks by police and groups of the ruling Awami League. 33 had reportedly been killed and over a thousand injured in these attacks on the first day of countrywide protests. Despite closure of all schools and colleges and complete internet shutdown, protests are spreading and becoming more determined.

Students are fighting against 30% reservations in govt. jobs for the descendants of 1971 war participants. There is additional 26% reservation for other categories – 10% for women, 10% for backward districts, 5% for minorities and 1% for disabled. Students are not opposing these reservations for women, backward districts, minorities and disabled. Repressive measures adopted by the government of Bangladesh to crush student protests have only led to further intensification of the protests. It should be noted that reservation for descendants of 1971 war veterans, so long after the war, has become irrelevant as it is third generation now. It has become a tool of serving the relatives of the leaders and cadres of the ruling party- Awami League. As such government jobs are

scarce and this reservation accounts for about one-third of total employment. Over 4 lakh Students competed for 3000 open seats last time. This shows the problem of unemployment which is fuelling the present agitation as these are better paying and secure jobs.

Sheikh Hasina Govt. was forced to cancel this 30% reservation after a strong Student protest in 2018 but this quota has been revived after a High Court order in June 2024 giving rise to the present agitation.

PDSU-PSU strongly condemn the highhandedness displayed by the Bangladeshi government in responding to these legitimate protests. Instead of addressing the valid concerns of the students, the authorities have resorted to serious repressive measures. It is extremely concerning and unacceptable when the police employ force as seen in the violent dispersal of unarmed student gatherings, resort to arbitrary arrests, and intimidation of students. Already besides over thirty students about 30 journalists have also been killed in police firing. Sheikh Hasina Govt. has labelled these protests as sponsored by opposition parties thus totally denying just nature of the demand of the students. Govt. response shows that it was behind the order of the Court.

What started as a protest against 30% reservation has turned into a strong challenge to Awami League Govt. due to its repressive, unresponsive and undemocratic acts. Students' protests have evoked strong sympathetic chord among the people of Bangladesh.

We- PDSU and PSU- are in solidarity with the agitating students and support their protest. We call on the students and youth to stand with agitating Bangladeshi students. The

government must immediately halt its oppressive measures, release all detained students, and accept the demands of the students immediately.

**All India Coordination PDSU-PSU**

July 19, 2024

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