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# MAKING A RIOT: THE HINDU EDITORIAL ON THE COMMUNAL CLASHES IN HARYANA

Relevant for: Modern India | Topic: Communalism and Trends

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August 04, 2023 12:20 am | Updated 08:36 am IST

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At a time when the tremors of ethnic clashes in Manipur have not yet settled, communal clashes in Haryana, in regions abutting the national capital, claimed six lives this week. [Two Home Guards and four civilians were killed](#) and 70 injured in clashes in Gurugram, Sohna and Nuh. Property worth crores has been destroyed, and hundreds have fled their workplaces. The trigger for the mayhem, when local Muslims pelted stones at a Hindu religious procession on July 31 in Nuh, was in the making for a long time. The day-long yatra between two temples in this Muslim-majority district used to be a local affair and has been held without incidents. But in recent years, the yatra has become a political event, with the Vishwa Hindu Parishad mobilising participants from neighbouring Rajasthan and Uttar Pradesh. In the procession this year, participants raised slogans and carried firearms and other weapons, according to reports. Facing attack, the pilgrims returned to the first temple and had to wait until police reinforcements arrived from neighbouring districts. The administration was caught off-guard and unprepared. Following the violence, 176 people have been arrested and 93 FIRs registered. The Haryana Chief Minister, M.L. Khattar, has said the violence was premeditated — it appears to be so.

Tension had been building up for days, beginning with a Bajrang Dal member and self-styled cow vigilante uploading videos on social media platforms, announcing that he and his team would be part of the yatra this year. The fresh threats from a person who is accused in the kidnapping and murder of two Muslim youth from Rajasthan's Bharatpur in February this year, evoked strong resentment among the Muslim population. Local social and political leaders had alerted the administration that there could be violence. On the day of the yatra, another Bajrang Dal activist uploaded videos that used provocative language, asking Nuh's residents to be prepared for their arrival. The violence spread to the Sohna sub-division of Gurugram; a mosque was also vandalised. An Imam at the Anjuman Jama Masjid in Sector 57 was killed by an armed mob around midnight on Monday, a staff member seriously injured, and the shrine set ablaze. The police at the mosque, who were outnumbered by the rioters, remained mute spectators. Policing in Haryana has been shown up to be inadequate in the face of communal incitement by groups associated with the ruling Bharatiya Janata Party. The Haryana administration must take strict action against the perpetrators of the violence, and be vigilant and impartial to ensure peace.

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# MINISTRY OF PANCHAYATI RAJ ORGANIZES TWO DAYS NATIONAL WRITESHOP ON PANCHAYAT DEVELOPMENT INDEX (PDI) PORTAL FOR PREPARATION OF BASELINE REPORT AND COMPUTATION OF PDI

Relevant for: Indian Society | Topic: Change and Development in Rural and Industrial Society

Ministry of Panchayati Raj, Government of India is organizing Two-Days National Writeshop on Panchayat Development Index Portal for Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of Panchayat Development Index from 10<sup>th</sup> August to 11<sup>th</sup> August 2023 at Dr. Ambedkar International Centre, New Delhi. The Two-Days National Writeshop aims at emphasizing the prominence of the Baseline Report for setting the local actions on measurable dimensions to achieve the local targets towards achieving Sustainable Development Goals in rural areas.

Opening the writeshop, Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj enlightened the participants by underscoring the policy framework for baseline report and PDI portal for computation of PDI, highlighting the landmark initiatives undertaken by the Ministry of Panchayati Raj to localize the Sustainable Development Goals, enabling to scale up the visibility of holistic development at all levels to strengthen grassroots democracy. Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, MoPR provided an overview of how the Panchayat Development Index will solve the issues and challenges related to proper monitoring of the developmental activities at PRIs level. Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, MoPR highlighted the role of data analytics, further mentioning how academic institutions/ research organizations can use data analytics information for research work, and thanked all the States/UTs for the support they have rendered so far.

Shri Sunil Kumar, Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj said that PDI Report, released on 28<sup>th</sup> June 2023, illustrates the mechanisms for computation of Panchayat Development Index based on the local indicators of 9 themes, its data sources and monitoring mechanisms that would empower Local Government as well as the Block and District Administration and the State Governments to objectively assess the performance of these grassroots level Institutions and thereby make plans based on evidence from PDI to achieve Sustainable Development Goals.

Delivering his address, Dr. Chandra Shekhar Kumar, Additional Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj underlined the significance of the PDI baseline report in National Panchayat Awards and Gram Panchayat Development Plan (GPDP), saying that it is expected that this report will lay the foundation for a nationwide quantified evaluation and monitoring mechanism that would encourage Local Governments to charter their paths to achieve the SDGs, making their actions more accountable & transparent. He further mentioned this Write-Shop will provide an opportunity for everyone present in the Writeshop to learn from the experience of the pilot conducted by the States/UTs and MoPR Team and will also provide an opportunity to learn through hands-on practice to operate the portal developed for PDI.

Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj set the context of the National Writeshop by presenting an overview of institutional mechanisms to roll out PDI as an instrument to monitor the progress of Localization of Sustainable Development Goals (LSDGs) in rural areas. Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, MoPR said that Panchayat Development Index will serve as Common Property Resource, and will help States/UTs in comparing District Panchayats and Block Panchayats for prioritizing development.

Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Panchayati Raj said that Panchayat Development Index will serve as a tool for incentivisation exercise by MoPR; it will help States/UTs to develop evidence-based system for Incentivisation of Panchayats, and it will also help in carrying out intensive Capacity Building & Training exercise. Shri Vikas Anand, Joint Secretary, MoPR informed that PDI will be calculated on 577 Local Indicators on 9 Themes, 144 Local Targets and 688 unique data points to monitor the progress of LSDGs.

Smt. Mamta Varma, Joint Secretary, MoPR, Dr. Bijaya Kumar Behera, Economic Adviser, MoPR, Shri Ramit Maurya, Director, MoPR, Smt. Malti Rawat, Director, MoPR and senior officers from line Ministries / Departments and NITI Aayog attended the National Writeshop. More than 375 representatives from Central Ministries/ Departments and almost all States/ UTs comprising State Departments of Panchayati Raj & Rural Development, Planning, Monitoring & Implementation, Women & Child Development, Health & Family Welfare, School Education and Public Health Engineering, National Institute of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (NIRD&PR), State Institutes of Rural Development & Panchayati Raj (SIRD&PRs), Knowledge Partners, UN agencies, NIC and other key stakeholders are participating in the Writeshop.

Shri Sunil Jain, DDG, NIC made presentation on “PDI Portal: Architecture, Functionality and Workflow”, whereas Shri Ram Pratap, Director, MoPR gave a presentation on Mechanisms of Data Validation.

State/UT Teams conducted brainstorming group exercises on the first day of the Two Days National Write-Shop on Panchayat Development Index Portal for the Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of PDI, over the handholding of the PDI portal for Baseline report and PDI computation.

The first day of Two-Day National Write-Shop on the Panchayat Development Index Portal for Preparation of Baseline Report and Computation of PDI provided a platform for insightful knowledge sharing under diverse topics including field experience on validation of data resources, mechanisms of data validation, demonstration of PDI portal, and presentation/discussion on indicators across themes, with Mentors assigned with the States/UTs to provide support in PDI portal and concluding with State/UT teams on handholding PDI portal for baseline report and PDI computation.

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# NEEDED, A WELL-CRAFTED SOCIAL SECURITY NET FOR ALL

Relevant for: Indian Society | Topic: Social empowerment

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'India's policymakers have largely ignored social security' | Photo Credit: The Hindu

Around 53% of all of the salaried workforce does not have any social security benefits in India, according to the Periodic Labour Force Survey Annual Report 2021-22, and which has been cited in the media. In effect, this means that such employees have no access to a provident fund, pension, and health care and disability insurance. Another conclusion is that just 1.9% of the poorest 20% quintile of India's workforce has access to any benefits. Meanwhile, gig workers, or approximately 1.3% of India's active labour force, rarely have access to any social security benefit. India's social security system is also ranked poorly; Mercer CFS ranked it at 40 out of 43 countries in 2021.

India's policymakers have largely ignored social security. While policies are often announced, budgetary allocation has always been limited and utilisation even less so. In FY11, the National Social Security Fund was set up for unorganised sector workers, with an initial allocation of just 1,000 crore to support schemes for weavers, rickshaw pullers and bidi workers to name a few. The amount was a pittance when compared to a requirement of over 22,841 crore — as estimated by the Centre for Budget and Governance Accountability.

A Comptroller and Auditor General of India (CAG) audit on the scheme in FY17 identified 1,927 crore (the entire amount accumulated since inception) had just not been utilised. Consequently, select social security schemes have been left moribund. Take the National Social Assistance Programme that was set up in the 1990s, with a focus on old-age poor individuals with no able-bodied earners in their household, who were eligible to earn a monthly pension of 75. Contribution by the Centre to old-age pension schemes has stagnated at 200 a month since 2006, i.e., below the minimum wage per day. Similarly, in July 2022, the CAG identified that the cess collected for the provision of social security to construction workers in Delhi was poorly utilised — approximately 94% of the money was not utilised. In Haryana, the CAG noted that the direct benefit scheme of the State's Social Justice and Empowerment Department had seen the transfer of 98.96 crore to the accounts of deceased beneficiaries. Meanwhile, budgetary cuts to the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act continue.

How is it in other countries? Brazil's General Social Security Scheme is contribution-based, substituting income loss for a worker (and his family), whether in partial or full. This covers any situation due to an accident at work, a disability that prevents the worker from working, death, an

illness/medical treatment that leads to time away from work, family burdens, or the prospect of unemployment (Brazilian Good Practices in Social Security, International Labour Organization, or ILO, 2013). Even income loss that occurs due to a worker being imprisoned is covered by the low-income insured (ILO, 2013). Unemployment insurance is paid from worker support funds, and health care is covered through the Unified Health System. The Constitution itself has established that if there is a lack of funds, the National Treasury will step in (ILO, 2013). Social security benefits can be availed of with a simple phone call or a visit to a bank, with no requirement to submit endless documents, as highlighted in Brazilian Good Practices in Social Security.

Approximately 91% (or around 475 million) of India's workforce works in the informal sector. It lacks access to social security. In two decades, India will be an aging society — for such workers with limited savings, there will be no significant social protection. While the Code on Social Security (2020) merged existing social security legislation, it dealt fundamentally with formal enterprises and did not cover informal ones.

India should aspire to provide social security to all of its workforce, in a manner that is fiscally and administratively feasible. Three broad principles come to mind: we must expand employer and employee contribution under the Employees' Provident Fund Organisation (EPFO) system for formal workers. For informal workers with meaningful income (whether self-employed or in an informal enterprise), partial contributions can be elicited, along with persuading informal enterprises to formalise and expand their total contribution. And for those who are unemployed or have stopped looking for work, or do not earn enough, the government should step in. It is estimated that the cost of providing social protection to the poorest 20% of the workforce would be 1.37 trillion (including those who are elderly, pregnant or disabled) — a cost of approximately 0.69% of GDP in FY20.

Additional reforms are needed. There has been some progress. It was heartening to see the government push for a Code on Social Security in 2020, which sought to provide a statutory framework to enable social security for the urban and rural poor, construction workers, those in the gig industry and informal sector workers — it proposed the provision of life insurance, disability insurance, accident insurance, as well as maternity and health-care benefits along with old-age protection and crèche facilities for gig workers. A push for greater digitisation under the e-Shram platform has enabled the enrolment of approximately 300 million workers while expanding coverage of accident insurance (of 2 lakh cover) and disability (of 1 lakh cover).

However, much more needs to be done; e-Shram puts the burden of registration on informal workers, who are required to furnish a self-declaration and share their Aadhaar card; there is no responsibility/incentive given to their employer (even temporary) to foster registration. Bringing employers into the process would have enabled the formalisation of employee-employer relationships. We could have done much more, pushing informal employers to make social security entitlements mandatory and not voluntary.

Greater support is required for financing social security for the majority of India's labour force, moving beyond construction and gig workers. There must be a push for a pan-India labour force card and an expansion of existing successful schemes such as the Building and Other Construction Workers Schemes to other categories of workers. Such expansion requires a loosening of existing restrictions on benefit portability, having a 90-day mandatory cooling period, as well as a more straightforward registration process.

Special attention is required for domestic workers (usually female), who are never sure when their employment may be terminated. Migrant workers often face discrimination and suspicion from authorities in their working area so coverage of social services such as child care can be

expanded. Domestic workers must also organise themselves across India's cities.

We may also strengthen existing schemes, for example the Employees' Provident Fund (EPF), the Employees' State Insurance Scheme (ESI), and the National Social Assistance Programme (NSAP), with budgetary support and expansion of coverage. Administratively, there is much tinkering that can be done. For example, the existing social security framework for unorganised workers has become complex, with overlapping areas of authority between the State and Centre, and confusing definitions being used such as between a platform worker, an unorganised worker and someone who is self-employed.

We need a more significant push to raise awareness about social security to ensure that more workers are aware of the available benefits. Organisations such as the Self-Employed Women's Association which run Shakti Kendras (worker facilitation centres), may be funded to run campaigns (especially for women) to provide greater information on social security rights, along with services and schemes that the government offers.

The time has come for India to consolidate its existing social security schemes/ad hoc measures and provide universal social security to its entire labour workforce. With jobs becoming increasingly on-demand and hire/fire policies proliferating, India's workers are increasingly insecure on the job front. To have the fruits of growth trickle down while offering a sense of social security, policymakers must discard supply-side shibboleths to embrace policies that enable equitable growth.

***Feroze Varun Gandhi is a Member of Parliament, representing the Sultanpur constituency for the Bharatiya Janata Party***

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