INEQUALITY ALERT

DISPATCHES FROM A WORLD GROWING APART.

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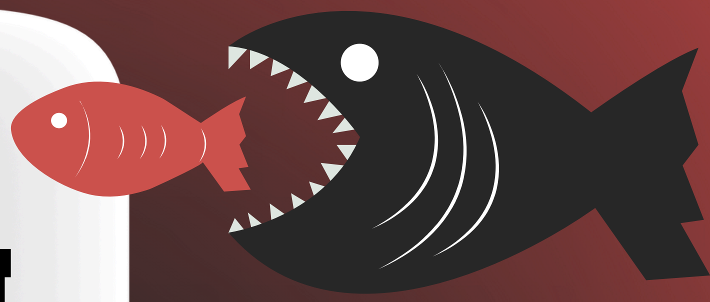

taxthetop.in

TAX THE TOP

1. TaxtheTop Campaign at Beawar, Rajasthan for RTI Day Programme

After all, the ultra rich & powerful will want no accountability, no oversight, no news, no information. So that they can continue their loot. But if we stand against inequality & exploitation, we must protect laws like the RTI.

It is with this idea that the Tax The Top Campaign and the Centre for Financial Accountability participated in the 20 Years of RTI mela in Beawar. There was a campaign and workshop stall. In the Media and Research workshop discussed how the ultra rich and powerful will want no accountability, no oversight, no news, no information. So that they can continue their loot. In the workshop undertaken by CFA, Reporters Collective and Land Conflict Watch there was discussion about how the corporstes and the powerful will not want us to know about their land grabs, their loan write offs, their shady contracts.

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हमारा पैसा हमारा हिसाब
अमीरों पर टैक्स बढ़ाओ, जनहित में पैसे लगाओ

सूचना का अधिकार अधिनियम (RTI) 2005 में लागू हुआ एक ऐसा कानून है, जिसने भारतीय संविधान के तहत बिना किसी भेदभाव के सभी नागरिकों को जानने का हक़ दिया। "हमारा पैसा, हमारा हिसाब" के सिद्धांत पर आधारित इस कानून ने देश में जवाबदेही और पारदर्शिता को मज़बूत किया, और असमानता के खिलाफ़ लड़ाई में अहम भूमिका निभाई।

आख़िर मालदार तो यही चाहेगा कि वह मलाई लूटे — और इसके लिए वह चाहेगा कि कोई जवाबदेही न रहे, कोई निगरानी न हो, और न कोई खबर पहुँचे। लेकिन अगर हम गैरबराबरी और लूटमार के खिलाफ़ खड़े हैं, तो हमें RTI जैसे कानूनों की हिफाज़त करनी ही होगी।

RTI का इस्तेमाल देश की संपत्ति और सरकारी कामकाज का हिसाब मांगने के लिए बड़े पैमाने पर किया गया है। वर्ष 2024 में इलेक्टोरल बॉन्ड की सच्चाई देश के सामने RTI के ज़रिए ही आई। इसी कानून से यह भी उजागर हुआ कि कौन-कौन सी कॉर्पोरेट कंपनियाँ जानबूझकर बैंकों को कर्ज़ नहीं चुका रही हैं। ऐसी जानकारियों ने लोगों को अन्याय और असमानता के खिलाफ़ एकजुट किया और न्याय व बराबरी की लड़ाई को मज़बूती दी।

लेकिन पिछले कुछ वर्षों से RTI पर लगातार हो रहे हमलों ने इस कानून को खतरे में डाल दिया है। डिजिटल व्यक्तिगत डेटा संरक्षण अधिनियम 2023 (डीपीडीपी) के ज़रिए “व्यक्तिगत जानकारी की सुरक्षा” के नाम पर RTI की रीढ़ पर चोट की गई है। पहले RTI अधिनियम की धारा 8(1)(j) के तहत ऐसी जानकारी जो व्यापक जनहित से जुड़ी हो, सार्वजनिक की जा सकती थी। लेकिन अब डीपीडीपी के ज़रिए इस प्रावधान में बदलाव कर दिया गया है — जिससे जनहित से जुड़ी ज़रूरी जानकारी को “व्यक्तिगत” बताकर रोका जा सकता है।

अब सवाल उठता है: क्या जो जनता के पैसों से खेल रहे हैं, ऐसे जानबूझकर कर्ज़ न चुकाने वालों के नाम पूछना भी “व्यक्तिगत” जानकारी है? जिन मज़दूरों को मनरेगा की मजदूरी नहीं दी जा रही है, उनके नाम मांगना भी क्या “व्यक्तिगत” जानकारी है? क्या किसी खास कंपनी को दिए जा रहे खनन ठेकों की जानकारी मांगना भी “व्यक्तिगत” है? क्या रोज़ टूटते पुलों, गड्ढों में तब्दील होती सड़कों के ठेकेदारों के नाम पूछना भी “व्यक्तिगत” है? क्या सीवर की सफाई करते हुए मारे गए मजदूरों के नाम या उन्हें ग़ैरक़ानूनी रूप से काम पर रखने वाले ठेकेदारों के नाम जानना भी “व्यक्तिगत” जानकारी है? क्या आत्महत्या करने वाले किसानों के नाम जानना भी “व्यक्तिगत” जानकारी है?

राजस्थान से निकला यह कानून देशभर के लोगों के काम आया है। लेकिन डीपीडीपी के आने से जनहित की जानकारी पाना अब लगभग असंभव होता जा रहा है। किसी भी लोकतंत्र की नींव होती है — जवाबदेही। बिना जवाबदेही के सरकारें ऐसे कानून और नीतियाँ बनाएंगी जिनसे सिर्फ़ कुछ लोगों को फायदा होगा — कुछ गिने-चुने मालदार सारी मलाई लूटेंगे, और आम लोग सच्चाई से अनजान रहेंगे। यह सिर्फ पारदर्शिता पर नहीं, लोकतंत्र पर हमला है।

ऐसा क्यों है कि सामाजिक सुरक्षा, स्वास्थ्य और शिक्षा पर खर्च करने को “फ्रीबी” या “रेवड़ी” कहा जाता है, लेकिन कॉर्पोरेट्स को टैक्स में छूट देने या उनके लाखों करोड़ों के कर्ज़ माफ़ करने पर कोई सवाल नहीं उठता? राजस्थान में ही सिलिकोसिस से हर साल सैकड़ों लोगों की जान जा रही है। हाल ही में एक सरकारी स्कूल की छत गिरने से सात मासूम बच्चों की मौत हो गई। ये घटनाएँ बताती हैं कि सामाजिक सुरक्षा, पेंशन, स्वास्थ्य सेवाएँ, शिक्षा और रोज़गार जैसी योजनाओं को मज़बूती से लागू करना कितना ज़रूरी है। और यह मुमकिन है — अगर हम टैक्स प्रणाली को न्यायसंगत बनाएं।

बराबरी पर आधारित भारत के निर्माण के लिए हमें सबसे अमीर लोगों, अरबपतियों और कॉर्पोरेट कंपनियों पर टैक्स बढ़ाना होगा, और उस पैसे को जनहित के कामों — शिक्षा, स्वास्थ्य, रोज़गार और सामाजिक सुरक्षा — पर लगाना होगा। आज भारत में सिर्फ़ 1% परिवार देश की कुल संपत्ति के करीब 60% हिस्से के मालिक हैं। 0.003% भारतीय परिवारों के पास औसतन 472 करोड़ रुपए की संपत्ति है, जबकि आधी आबादी रोज़ मुश्किल से 250 रुपए कमाती है। एक भारत है जहाँ 70 लाख लोग विकसित देशों की तरह ऐशो-आराम में रहते हैं, और दूसरा भारत है जहाँ 70 करोड़ से ज़्यादा लोग तीसरी दुनिया के सबसे गरीब नागरिकों से भी गरीब हैं। अगर हमें इस बढ़ती खाई को भरना है, तो अमीरों पर टैक्स बढ़ाना और जनहित में निवेश करना ही होगा।

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2. Time to Strengthen the Middle Class in order to Strengthen the Economy

The narrative, especially over the last decade, has been that helping the wealthiest through deregulation, corporate tax cuts, and business incentives will eventually lift everyone. But trickle-down philosophy is severely limited and only perpetuates inequality. We need to benefit the millions not just the millionaires.
The ongoing extreme inequality in the country has shown that the trickle-down theory, which assumes that wealth generated at the top will eventually reach everyone else, has failed. India's middle-income class, earning roughly ₹4,000–₹20,000 per month represents a diverse yet fragile group, from salaried employees to small business owners, many of whom remain vulnerable to financial shocks and limited savings. Income growth remains uneven, and rising debt has become a growing concern. According to the Reserve Bank of India, household debt reached 43.5% of GDP by mid-2025, with non-housing borrowings rising sharply. This dependence on debt reflects structural weaknesses that could eventually suppress consumption if not managed effectively.

This is the time to focus on these small-scale producers, workers, and small business owners who are the real engine of economic progress. What we need is to lift more into the middle class instead of squeezing them and pampering the corporates. Without an expanded a robust middle class we would never be able to build a domestic market needed to boost consumption and in turn manufacturing.

Read

3. The Sidelining of Social Justice by the Neoliberal Political Economy

Social Justice demands fair and equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for the well-being of all in the society and it becomes relevant in an unequal society and India is facing one such example with extreme inequality. In the last three decades, the Neo-liberal policies in India have posed a bigger challenge in the path of social justice as it has ended up supporting existing social and economic inequalities. Its non-intervention and continued decline of state intervention approach has resulted in high informalisation where more than 90% of the total workforce is engaged in informal work where there are no reservations and social security protections.

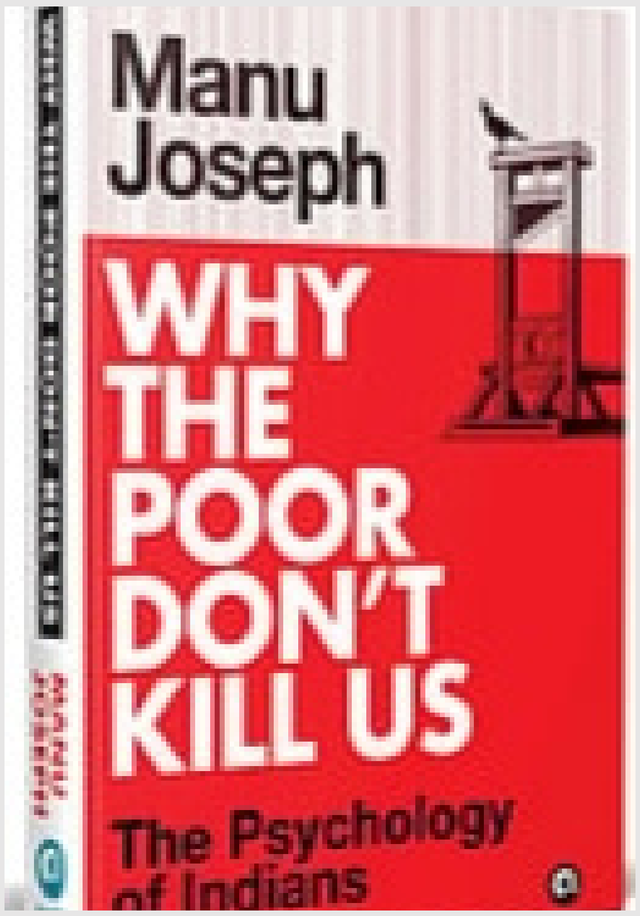
India's Constitution promises equality and social justice for everyone. But in practice, things look very different. The current economic system, To build the fair and equal society imagined by the makers of our Constitution, we need strong and united political action to establish social justice in its truest form. The constitutional values of justice and equality must shape the policies and working of the government which would lead to a progress that includes everyone and not just a few at the top.

Read

4. Why the Poor don’t kill us

In the book “Why the Poor Don't Kill Us” author Manu Joseph writes about India as a ‘Republic of nobodies’ and the poor existing witnesses to a wealth that they can never access but must serve daily. The Genevan philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau wrote, “When the people shall have nothing more to eat, they will eat the rich”. Yet, in India, in a country where inequality has reached levels, where is the outrage among the oppressed?
Every system has its breaking point. In physics, every object has a threshold: stress creates strain, and strain creates fracture. Even the strongest steel yields when enough pressure is applied. But what about societies? What about the moment when inequality becomes so extreme that the social fabric should, by any reasonable measure, tear apart?

Read



5. The Robinhood way to establish Tax Justice

The Unearned Income Factor aggravating Rich-Poor Divide in India.

The recent reforms in the form of income tax reduction and GST revised rates has led to fiscal gaps which can only be filled by taxing the rich. There is a need to bring back wealth tax and estate duty. A comprehensive wealth tax of, say, 2% on net assets beyond Rs 5 crore and likewise, an estate duty of 5% on the estate beyond Rs 10 crore may not hurt the middle class.

Prioritising the super rich through direct taxation is Robinhood taxation and in the current scenario of India it is the need to stop the unearned enormous income among the rich and establish Tax Justice. Subsidies the Poor and tax the Rich.

Read

6. Inequality impacting Children's brain development

Scientists have linked the impact of living in an unequal society to structural changes in the brains of children – regardless of individual wealth – for the first time.

A study of more than 10,000 young people in the US discovered altered brain development in children from wealthy and lower-income families in areas with higher rates of inequality, which were also associated with poorer mental health. The data was gathered from the Adolescent Brain Cognitive Development study and published in the journal Nature Mental Health.

Read

6. Modi Government promoting concentration of wealth; it's direct attack on soul of democracy: Congress

This huge concentration of wealth, driven by the Modi government's economic policies, is creating massive economic inequality in our country. Successful schemes like MGNREGA, which provided a social and economic security net for millions of people are now grappling with wage crises and workers are not getting paid in time.

The cumulative wealth of those in the M3M Hurun India Rich List 2025 is pegged at ₹167 lakh crore, equivalent to nearly half of India's GDP. Such extreme concentration of wealth is not just a problem for the economy but a direct attack on the very soul of democracy. This inequality is giving rise to widespread social insecurity and discontent, says Congress leader Jairam Ramesh.

Read

7. India’s Income disparity

The combined wealth of India’s richest is equal to nearly half of India’s GDP. The top 10 richest of the country hold 27% of total wealth, with Ambani and Adani accounting for 12%.

[Read]

[At the same time:]

Labour experts say millions hit as wages aren't hiked to at least factor in inflation

National minimum wage unchanged for eight years

SURYA SARATHI RAY
New Delhi, October 16

THE NON-BINDING NATIONAL Floor Level Minimum Wage (NFLMW) has remained unchanged since 2017, a situation that could worsen the income crisis among vast sections of population, mainly daily-wage workers.

Proper and timely revision of NFLMW by the Centre, typically conducted once every two years and factoring in the rise in the consumer price index for industrial workers (CPI-IW), would have enabled millions of workers in sectors like plantations and services to benefit from the economy's buoyancy and escape poverty, provided states has followed the norm.

Since it has only persuasive value, the Centre can only request the states and union territories to fix and revise the minimum wages for all scheduled employments in their respective domains, ensuring they are not below the NFLMW.

"The NDA government has taken credit for having passed the Wage Code in August 2019. In fact, none of the four labour codes has been implemented. Minimum wage is the bare minimum a worker should get. If it is not revised periodically, labour welfare will be seriously affected. It is time for the NDA government to implement the Wage Code and establish a statutory national floor-level minimum wage, which will benefit millions of workers," said labour economist K R Shyam Sundar.

Barring a couple of states, most of the states keep minimum wages for many 'scheduled employments' lower than the NFLMW. There are also wide disparities between the minimum wages actually enforced among states and across sectors.

Currently, the minimum wage for an unskilled worker in Delhi stands at ₹710 per day, whereas the same in Bihar is ₹428. In many states, like Kerala and Tamil Nadu, the actual wages are generally higher than the notified minimum.

The Wage Code, passed in Parliament and notified but not yet implemented, seeks to universalise the provisions of minimum wage across employment in organised and unorganised sectors. It mandates the central government to fix the floor wage, and that the minimum wage rates set by the state and Union Territories shall not be less than the floor wage.

As per the extant provisions, NFLMW lacks statutory backing. The timely revision is done to establish a uniform wage structure and reduce disparities in minimum wages across the country. In June 2017, NFLMW was hiked by 10% and in July 2015, by 17% to ₹160.

Ensuring minimum wages for the vast segment of informal economy workers was a priority of the government since Independence. The Minimum Wages Act 1948 was enacted to achieve that goal. On the recommendation of the National Commission on Rural Labour, the then government introduced the concept of NFLMW to address disparities in minimum wages within and across states in various scheduled employments.

NFLMW was first fixed at ₹35 per day in 1996 and has since been revised almost regularly every two years. NFLMW was raised to ₹137 in July 2013 from ₹115 a day fixed in 2011.

"The concept of NFLMW is to be made statutory through the Code on Wages, which has remained non-statutory to date because the code has not yet come into force, as the rules for the code have not yet been notified. Nonetheless, the NFLMW could have been raised upwards after 2017 to meet the rising cost of living, which has taken place since 2017," said Partha Pratim Mitra, former principal labour economic advisor, Union ministry of labour

In 2017, to enhance the effectiveness of the wage policy, the present dispensation introduced the Code on Wages in Parliament, which subsumes four Acts, including the Mining Wage Act 1948, and recommends the introduction of a binding National Minimum Wage.

"Even if the NFLMW is fo lowed, the wages wou remain woefully low. There a need to pay a genuine livi wage to workers," said At Gupta, partner at Trilegal.

Before the passage of t Wage Code, the Centre had 2018 constituted a commi tee, headed by Anoop Sathp thy, to develop a methodo ogy for the fixation national minimum wage Considering one wage earn per household for 3.6 co sumption units and takir 2,400 calories of a balanc diet and related non-fo expenditure, the committ recommended that the sing value of the NMW for Ind should be set at ₹375 perd as of July 2018. This would equivalent to ₹9,750 p month, irrespective of se tors, skills, occupations ar rural-urban locations.

INCOME DISPARITY

- Centre can only request states to revise wages, not enforce
- Wide disparities in minimum wages among states and across sectors
- Wage Code aims to universalise minimum wages across all sectors
- Experts say need to pay a genuine living wage to workers

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New Delhi

Take Inequality Head On!

This is a campaign by people's movements, trade unions, civil society organisations and common people demanding wealth and inheritance tax for the top 1% rich to generate resources so as to ensure universal social and economic rights for the people.

CFA

Centre for Financial Accountability

Secretariat at **Centre for Financial Accountability**
www.cenfa.org

TAX THE TOP

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