

Concept Note

Re-Imagining the Future: A People's Agenda for Post COVID Economy

The need today, amidst this pandemic induced global economic catastrophe, is not only ensuring the safety and survival of the most vulnerable sections of the society but also to start conversations of a paradigm shift that would envision a more inclusive, sustainable and equitable economy.

Twenty-nine years of structural adjustment has resulted in markets, western financial institutions and transnational corporations controlling the production systems. Home grown production systems suddenly found themselves exposed to unequal competitive markets, and unable to match such global competition, folded. This included a variety of large public sector enterprises which played foundational roles in building India's economy. Economic growth projected in the volumes of FDIs, double digit GDP figures, maintenance of fiscal balance became the facade to cover up deregulations, erosions of workers' rights and social security, exploitation of labour and widening of income inequality.

As much the neo liberal agenda is about pushing out the welfare state models and destroying labour unions to enable parasitic profit making of corporate houses, it is equally about enslaving the minds to not look beyond the framework presented. The repressive reforms are always pushed as the panacea and always with lies: 'There is No Alternative', 'Market regulates itself' etc., which clearly has not been the case.

Even now during the pandemic, most governments, especially the Indian government has not shown seriousness to stand with the majority population that is left vulnerable to infection and hunger deaths. Instead it has created a situation where the poor are pushed to povertisation, starvation, famine and possibly an epidemic of suicides. It is still aggressively pushing anti-people reforms. Changes in environment laws, labour laws, surveillance apps in the garb of health apps, cancelling trains for stranded migrants treating them like slaves and the attempts to hide and defend those responsible for industrial accidents that have killed people in the recent days, all point to the post COVID era that would further the interest of big corporates. Hence, as much we need to hold accountable this government and force it to ensure survival, the solution lies only in attempts to think outside the framework of neoliberalism. Especially for a generation that has been brainwashed into thinking poor means lazy, private means efficient, development means big projects, SEZs, roads mean corridors, infrastructure means smart cities; it is important to unlearn and reimagine.

Hence the need to deeply investigate the course correction needed to ensure future generations are not forced to live less and compromise more, because of the choices we now make. To ensure the success of this attempt it is critical that peoples movements, trade union and workers networks, progressive civil society, academics and journalists, farmers, fishers and artisanal networks,

politicians and political parties etc., come together in not only rejecting the notions of globalisation, finance capital and market dictated growth but also to strengthen local economies, deepen global solidarities and to reaffirm that ‘There is Always an Alternative to Capitalism’.

Co-Organisers:

All India Union of Forest Working People | BIRSA | Centre for Financial Accountability |
DASAM | Delhi Forum | Environment Support Group | Financial Accountability Network India
| Focus on the Global South | Indian Social Action Forum | Institute for Democracy and
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