

**A nation is a society united by delusions about its ancestry and by common hatred of its neighbors**  
William Ralph Inge

## Lalu Prasad's show of strength

If the size of the crowd is anything to go by, Lalu Prasad Yadav's Sunday rally at Patna Gandhi Maidan was a resounding success with most first-rank opposition leaders attending it. Sonia, Rahul and Mayavati were three prominent absentees at the meeting but that in no way detracted from the importance of the rally. Next to Lalu the person who, expectedly, drew the loudest cheers from the crowd was West Bengal Chief Minister Mamata Banerjee, who has emerged as the most uncompromising crusader against BJP. The Sunday meeting also pointed to another significant fact, namely, that the leadership of the two Yadav parties is passing into the hands of the next generation. Lalu is passing on his baton to his son Tejaswi Prasad who was the deputy chief minister in Nitish Kumar's Government, while Akhlesh Yadav is replacing his father as the leader of the Samajwadi Party.

The success of the Sunday rally, however, does not automatically mean that most if not all the opposition parties will be able to present a solid, united phalanx to the BJP in 2019. There are many hurdles to be overcome, personal ego being a major one. To emerge as a credible alternative to the BJP, the opposition parties will have to convince the people that they are able to subordinate their petty party and personal interests to the larger national interests. The people of this country have seen umpteen number of coalition governments at the Centre and in the States being formed only to disintegrate in no time. To take on and defeat a powerful party like the BJP, backed by the entire Sangh Parivar, the basic thing that a united opposition needs is to make the people believe that they will stick together and give a far better government than the present one.

People's discontent with the present regime is becoming manifest in Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Uttar Pradesh and right in the national capital Delhi. The Aam Admi Party which has been in the target of relentless attack of the BJP ever since it came to power for the second time in Delhi, has just won the Bawana by-poll by defeating the BJP with a margin of over 24,052 votes. The AAP polled 59,886 votes, the BJP came second with 35,834 votes while the Congress came a close third with 31,919 votes. The people will not fail the opposition leaders if they feel sure that the leaders will not fail them.

# Recent stance of US Capitalists

## REFLEX ACTION

C.J. Atkins

Wonderful Confederate culture and beautiful racist statues. Are these the things upon which the fate of the Donald Trump presidency rests? If the last few days are any indication, there is a distinct possibility it could be true.

The massive street protests against fascism and the efforts of some Republican accomplices to distance themselves from the Charlottesville Nazis are worries for Trump to be sure, but presidents have survived big demonstrations and the criticism of allies before. The strongest immediate threat to Trump's power now is the spreading of rebellion in his own ranks, and that doesn't necessarily mean among his hardcore base, as one poll indicates some 60 percent of Republican voters still stand by their man. Rather, it is among the titans of American business, the military brass, and the political establishment—the power centers of the capitalist state—where Trump's stock is falling fastest. The exodus of corporate CEOs from his economic advisory councils proceeded at such a pace this week that the president was forced to announce the bodies were being disbanded. He claimed it was to save the chief executives from pressure; they said the debate over their collaboration with Trump had "become a distraction from our well-intentioned and sincere desire to aid vital policy discussions." It was a polite way of saying, "There was no way we could continue to be connected publicly to this guy."

For many of these business leaders, their public divorce from Trump is not something they embraced eagerly if only he could control his Twitter impulses and refrain from saying anything positive about Nazis, they're certainly happy to continue cooperating in advancing his agenda of deregulation, tax cuts, and infrastructure spending that amounts to corporate welfare. On Thursday, Trump lost the backing of a top Republican senator widely respected by both political parties. The words of Sen. Bob Corker of Tennessee verged on branding Trump unfit for office. "The president has not yet been able to demonstrate the stability nor...the competence that he needs to demonstrate," he said in Chattanooga. Corker joins a short

but growing list of GOP senators, including Marco Rubio of Florida, John McCain of Arizona, and Lindsey Graham of South Carolina, who have called Trump out by name in recent days. Speaker Paul Ryan and Senate Republican leader Mitch McConnell have so far continued to dither, denouncing racism in general but not the president himself. There now appears to be a consensus emerging among at least a section of American capital and within the echelons of state power that Trump (and any prominent association with him) is a liability.

Few CEOs were ready to call him out as a white supremacist directly in the first day or two after Charlottesville, but the president's repeated expressions of sympathy for the Confederate cause and his praise for the cultural value of monuments to slavery are making it unavoidable. Even some of the most pro-Trump corporations are feeling the pressure to cut ties. James Murdoch, head of Twentieth Century Fox and son of Rupert Murdoch, said in an email Tuesday night, "I can't even believe I have to write this: standing up to Nazis is essential; there are no good Nazis. Or Klansmen, or terrorists." A sort of united front of capitalists is even emerging, as executives band together to oppose the president so that no single one of them alone has to face the fallout from a Trump attack like the one launched at Merck CEO Ken Frazier, an African American, after he quit the president's manufacturing council.

The conclusion many are reaching: Trump is bad for business. The façade of a post-racial America is an essential one for capitalism in this country. No doubt many

CEOs fervently oppose racism at a personal level. But at the macro-scale, the dredging up of the realities of systemic racism and the possible broaching of the topic of how big business benefits from the super-profits that come from racial inequality is a threat to the whole capitalist class. Because if he has accomplished anything, it is this: Trump has blown apart the idea that the United States has moved past racism or that discrimination is a relic of our troubled past. By emboldening white supremacists and fomenting racial animosity on the part of white workers, he has exposed the tactic of dividing working people by race. The threat for capitalism is that more people begin to put together the pieces and realize that it's not only Trump who is the problem, but the system itself, which thrives on built-in racial divisions.

The exodus from Trump has begun. Where or when it will end is not yet clear, but the likelihood of his presidency lasting for a full four-year term is diminishing by the day. Most reluctant to abandon the president are the companies which heavily benefit from their direct connection to the government—defense suppliers like Boeing or energy giants such as ExxonMobil. Those more dependent on the whim of consumers fed up with racism, like athletic clothing retailer Under Armour, have been some of the quickest to bolt. The turmoil is now spreading into the heart of the administration, as rumors swirl that Gary Cohn, former Goldman Sachs CEO and the head of the National Economic Council—the president's top economic policy-making body—may soon resign. The mere suggestion that he may step down sent the stock market into a panic on Thursday.

The task now is to take advantage of these splits and push for the ouster of a Nazi sympathizer from the White House and deliver a powerful blow to not only the racism he supports, but to the agenda of deregulation, privatization and tax cuts he's been pushing—an agenda which threatens the well-being of working people of all races and nationalities. (IPA/The writer is the managing editor of Peoples World, USA.)



A street vendor selling flutes and toys in Belagavi on Tuesday.

## Decoding a development aspect, MGNREGS

The Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Scheme (MGNREGS) is a social security scheme that attempts to provide employment and livelihood to rural labourers in the country. In an effort to make inclusive and overall development a reality, the scheme was passed as a Labour Law and implemented across 200 districts in 2006. By 2008, it came to cover the entire country. It's a guarantee to provide paid work opportunities for a predictable duration at a predetermined wage for public works.

Apart from the mandatory provision of resources required for MGNREGS, its success in enhancing the 'livelihood security' of rural households would critically depend on the effective implementation of the scheme. The scheme has generated more rural employment than any other government scheme or private initiative in the history of independent India. At the same time, it has spawned a great deal of controversy over its merits and demerits also. Criticizing the UPA introduced scheme the Modi government branded it a "monument to 60 years of failure."

Its critics have called it wasteful, ineffective, leaky, and argued that it hurts the poor by fuelling inflation. They claim that the assets created by MGNREGS works are of poor quality, as it

focuses primarily on wage-supported job creation. They also have pointed out kacha works like water conservation, afforestation, irrigation, rural connectivity etc. all are non-durable and hence expenditure on it is drainage of public resources and thus providing income security to the poor households could be achieved more efficiently through cash transfer in their accounts. According to them the money would be better spent on skill-development to encourage economic growth and policy to be made to pave the way for private investment in alleviating rural poverty.

The number of households that received the legally guaranteed 100 days of work fell from 51.73 lakhs in 2012-13 to 46.73 lakh in 2013-14 (under the UPA), and then dipped sharply to 23.24 lakh in 2014-15 (under the NDA). One explanation for this could be that funds are not being released by the Centre. If we look at the data on amount sanctioned, it shows a similar steep decline under the NDA government, from Rs. 27,484 crore in 2013-14 to Rs. 17,074 crores in 2014-15. India spends an estimated 4.2 percent of GDP on subsidies for food, fertiliser, electricity, oil, water, rail services etc., as documented in the Economic Survey. Much of these subsidies do not reach the

intended beneficiaries. Targeting is imperfect. An untargeted Universal Basic Income (UBI) framework can make it possible to reduce or eliminate price distortions, and have a better efficiency of the income subsidy, claims the Modi government. Interestingly the government here is not taking lesson from the result of the previously launched Jan Dhan Yojana (JDY). During note-ban a potential number of Jan

Dhan accounts were being used in a corrupted way and that also had cost the public resources. A secure, productive and well-paying job is what most people in the labour force want. That cannot be guaranteed in general, not even in India's rural areas, as the limited success of NREGS tells us. Jobs are needed for income security and poverty alleviation. Since only 10 percent of India's labour is in the organised sector, unemployment insurance is not a remedy. The idea behind UBI is

## FOCUS

Partha Roy

like guaranteeing a dividend to each citizen, for being part of India. It is also supported by right wing economists, as a negative income tax, receivable for everybody with a zero income. It removes the stress and anxiety of workers and households who face irregular monthly incomes. Many countries are already toying with this idea.

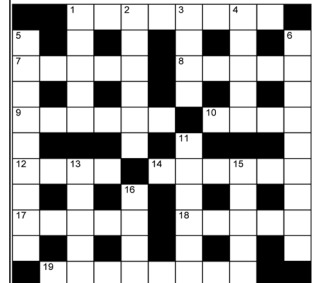
Despite the opposition, the Modi government has brought

strengthen the system of social audit used by the scheme. Will all the changes the Modi government has made on the existing scheme with an intention to give an asset-intensive tone augur well? It's hard to say. In country like India where average educational index is miserably low, the government initiatives on the development for poor class may miss the chance. Without proper education and understanding development can never happen. Government's initiatives and policies can't work until and unless it's being received properly.

So intended beneficiaries must learn the right process of being benefitted. Here the importance of cohesive participation comes and then the job creation will be the best asset creation and vice versa. Rather than criticizing each other whoever in the power should come forward with a comprehensive education policy, that's very important. Right education policy only could make the downtrodden fit to get what they are craving for, otherwise the government in the power will always remain a giver and another 70 years will not be sufficient enough. An enlightened mind, a genuine outcome of education, certainly could make the class free from the bondage of 'subsidy' and the best demographic dividend for the nation - and the algebra of 'MGNREGS & UBI' will be solved sustainably.

**Asset-intensive measure is also not enough; it should be backed by a cohesive participation**

## QUICK CROSSWORD 1680



- Across**  
1. Leading troops (8)  
7. Boring tool (5)  
8. Boredom (5)  
9. Escorted fleet (6)  
10. Fashionable (4)  
12. Encourage (4)  
14. Royal son (6)  
17. Waken (5)  
18. Consumed (5)  
19. Multinied (8)
- Down**  
1. Animal product abstainer (5)  
2. Having little width (6)  
3. Hand-me-down (4)  
4. Big cattle farm (5)  
5. Refuge (9)  
6. Villain (9)  
11. Loader (anag) (6)  
13. Net fabric (5)  
15. Famous (5)  
16. Yield (4)

**Previous solution**  
Across: 1. Migrants, 6. Nail, 7. Crisis, 9. Leech, 11. Water, 12. Gaunt, 13. Share, 16. Effort, 18. Vine, 19. Emphasis.  
Down: 1. Monologue, 2. Gullie, 3. Nice, 4. Spinach, 5. Lei, 8. Success, 10. Console, 14. Alias, 15. Stop, 17. Fix.

## SUDOKU: 1961

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		3	1	5		6		2
		1		7	8			3
3	5		9	6				
6					4	7		9
	3		4	1		2		
8		6			9	2	1	
	1							9

## Yesterday's Solution 1960

2	8	5	4	6	3	9	7	1
3	7	9	1	8	5	6	2	4
6	4	1	2	7	9	3	5	8
1	5	4	9	3	7	8	6	2
7	6	3	8	1	2	5	4	9
8	9	2	6	5	4	7	1	3
4	1	7	3	9	6	2	8	5
9	2	6	5	4	8	1	3	7
5	3	8	7	2	1	4	9	6

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