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International Conference on Karl Marx Day-5

Patna, June 20. Delivering the Paul Lafargue Memorial Lecture on Wednesday, the last day of the five-day International Conference on Karl Marx organised by the Asian Development Research Institute (ADRI), Kevin M Sanders, Vice-President, People Programme International and Palmer Institute, USA, said “the best way to predict the future is to create it yourself”. “And this is exactly what the capital production is doing through the decades for maximisation of profit by means ethical and unethical, legal and illegal,” he said. The topic of his lecture was ‘Artificial Intelligence and Exponential Technologies as Fundamental Game Changers: What Might the Future Hold?’.

The capitalist world system is going through a significant phase through development in information and communication technologies. This has huge implications for the way goods and services are produced across the globe. As things stand today, it can be predicted that robots would replace human beings in the production process, creating huge unemployment in its wake.

Without naming any Artificial Intelligence (AI) companies, he said for the past three decades, the world has been witnessing the rise of “digital oligarchs” in the information and communication sector.

Barbara Harriss-White, Emeritus Professor, Oxford University, in her special address on ‘Petty Production and India’s Development’, said Petty Commodity Production (PCP) is a theoretical problem for those who attempt to theorize capitalistic development. Giving an example, she said if a weaver does not own the loom and produces for the merchant who owns the loom, he is disguised; if he owns the loom instead, he is a petty producer.

She said PCP provides the core not only in agrarian and manufacturing production processes in India but also in commercial and even (rural) financial sectors. She added that the contribution of agriculture in the Indian GDP has been consistently falling over the years. However, those dependent on agriculture for livelihood continue to remain disproportionately very high.

PCP is actually persistent not only in South Asia including India but also in parts of Europe. Marx did handle petty production but his treatment of it was scattered, not in one place. He used terms like peasant, household, craftsman to describe petty producer.

Peter Beilharz, Professor, Curtin University, Australia, said capital production assigns everything an exchange value whether it is a commodity or love, sex, landscape or beauty. But it is the

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sociability of the individual, rather than possessive individuality, which enables her to have a peaceful coexistence with her surroundings. Marxism needs to be re-thought, re-constructed and re-imagined to suit modern times. Answering a question from the audience, he said Marxian utopia is not different from utopia that everyone seeks to achieve. In answer to another question, he said the tendency to turn Marx against Marxism, something which gained currency after the 1917 Bolshevik Revolution, is unnecessary and should be avoided. Commenting about 'Marxism of Ecology', he said public discussion should focus on the extractive form of capital accumulation so that cities continue to live with proper housing, water availability and other civic infrastructure. He delivered the E M S Namboodripad Memorial Lecture on 'Circling Marx'.

Other key speakers during the day included Peter Hudis, Professor Oakton Community College, USA, who delivered the Herbert Marcuse Memorial Lecture on 'The Intimation of a Post-Capitalist Society in Marx's Capital'.

Tian Yu Cao, Professor, Boston University, USA, delivered the Che Guevara Memorial Lecture on 'Marx's Ideas and Conceptions of Socialism in the 21st Century'. He said the collapse of the Soviet model along with the decline of Keynesianism since the 1970s has posed a serious challenge to socialists.

Dipak Gyawali, Chairman, National Water Conservation Foundation, and former minister, Government of Nepal, delivered the Vladimir Lenin Memorial Lecture on 'Is Communist-Ruled Nepal Red, Pink or Blue?'.

While Jean Joseph Boillot, Senior Economic Advisor, CEPII, France, delivered the P C Joshi Memorial Lecture on 'Marx and Economics of Wisdom', Chun Lin, Professor, London School of Economics, delivered the Kozo Uno Memorial Lecture on 'Marx and Asia: How did Asia Reshape Marx's Conception of Revolution and History?'.

Samuel Hollander, Professor Emeritus, University of Toronto, Canada, delivered his valedictory address on 'Karl Marx's Revolutionary Credentials and the Marx-John Stuart Mill Intellectual Relationship'.

Lord Meghnad Desai summarised the conference. Neeraj Kumar of ADRI gave the vote of thanks.

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