Within weeks of getting bail from the Supreme Court in connection with charges of sedition, Binayak Sen has been made a member of the Planning Commission’s steering committee on health, which will advise the panel on the 12th Five-Year Plan (2012-2017). Interestingly the mainstream media reported Sen as a human rights activist — whatever it is — rather than his conviction for sedition. The steering committee will review the National Health Policy, 2002, and explore the possibility of adopting the right to health as an approach with special focus on women, children, life-cycle care and preventive and curative healthcare.

Other than doing seditious activities, Sen is supposed to be running a healthcare organisation in Bilaspur and so Syeda Hameed, another jholawala [silk variety, not jute] in the Planning Commission, has appointed him as a part of the 40-member committee on health chaired by her. Hameeda’s claim to fame is being from Miranda House and a human rights activist, and a founder of the South Asian Human Rights group other than researching on Bhutto. None of it has anything to do with health.

His appointment has been confirmed by Montek Singh Ahuluwalia, deputy chairman of the Planning Commission, and the chairman of the Planning Commission, namely the PM, will claim, as usual, that he knows nothing about such events. Binayak Sen himself has also been gracious to accept it.

Many of the civil society groups, both in the NAC and outside, are silent. The rule of law is primary and critical for these groups if it pertains to Narendra Modi’s Gujarat but not to the naxals of Chhattisgarh. The session’s court has convicted Binayk Sen for sedition and facilitating Maoist insurgency, which seeks to destroy the Indian State and replace it with the dictatorship of the proletariat, where power stems from the barrel of the gun controlled by the politburo.

The conviction (remember these are not allegations) was upheld by the Jharkhand high court and he was refused bail. There was a hue and cry after the high court judgment, with reports mentioning him as a doctor and globally known right activist who has won several awards. As if a Nobel laureate, for instance, cannot be a murderer.

Suddenly, the mainstream media (MSM), which is part of the civil society jholawalas, forgot about the rule of law and the need to respect judicial verdicts. Then the Supreme Court gave him bail, which was reported by the MSM as Sen “walking free”. That is a distortion since he is still a convicted person and is out on bail.

Sedition, as we all understand, is a serious charge and there are civil rights groups that carefully tabulate the number of convicts and accused criminals standing for election. They have reported the number of persons with a criminal background in the various legislative assemblies and even in parliament. Civil groups and MSM routinely condemn their presence in these august bodies.
Sen has not committed a misdemeanour but felony, or a very serious crime. Unless he is acquitted, he is a convict for sedition.

He may be the national vice-president of the People’s Union of Civil Liberties, but he cannot work to destroy all our liberties under a Maoist rule.

The chief minister of Chhattisgarh, Raman Singh, has expressed his indignation at the appointment of a convict for sedition by the central government in the Planning Commission. Baijendra Kumar, principal secretary to the chief minister, said that “the chief minister had disapproved of Sen’s nomination as he is convicted and out on bail. The case against him continues in court.”

But Raman Singh is merely an elected chief minister and not an unelectable jholawala — who currently hold de facto power at Delhi. It is all the more surprising that the ministry of home affairs is silent.

What next? Arundhati Roy, who is accused of treason, can be put in the National Integration Council and of course, Kasab can be part of the foreign ministry panel on Indo-Pak Aman ki Asha. And rule of Law - what is that?

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