

# COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)



## Central Committee

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### **Report on Political Developments Since the Last Central Committee Meeting** *(Adopted at the Central Committee Meeting held on January 06-08, 2017 at Thiruvananthapuram)*

#### **International**

##### **Global Economy**

Since the last Central Committee meeting held from September 17 to 19, 2016, the global economic crisis continues, confirming the systemic nature of this capitalist crisis. The expectations of a better growth rate and a turnaround in 2016 now appear to be belied. The October 2016 Global Economic Outlook of the IMF states that global growth is estimated at 2.9 per cent in the first half of 2016, lower than what it was in the second half of 2015. This is also lower than what has been projected by the IMF Outlook in April 2016. Global industrial production remains subdued and the volumes have shown a declining trend lately. US economy has not been able to recover as expected earlier in the first half of 2016. Its domestic growth is expected to be 1.1 per cent for 2016. The Euro area growth declined to 1.2 per cent. The deceleration in domestic demand and hence investment is plaguing the larger Eurozone economies. Japan's growth in the second quarter of 2016 declined to 0.7 per cent from 2.1 per cent in the first quarter. This again shows that the hopes that the Japanese economy was showing a turnaround are not in tune with the reality.

Income disparities are rising globally. This has been mainly due to a very low level of growth of incomes for a large majority of the people. This in turn is reducing domestic demand and dampening investment which is slowing down further the employment rate. High corporate debt and declining profitability continue to plague the global capitalist economies. Consequent demands for bolstering of investor confidence is leading to renewed offensive by international finance capital globally affecting all developing economies.

The year 2016 has ended with the world's wealthiest people having \$237 billion more than when the year began. Notwithstanding the continuing

global capitalist crisis, the intensified exploitation of the people is resulting in the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. Reportedly, US billionaires profited by an additional \$77 billion in the post election rally following the triumph of Trump from the expectation of easier regulations that would benefit US industry.

These trends only confirm the conclusion we arrived at in our last CC meeting that the global capitalist economy is unable to emerge from the systemic crisis of capitalism that began with the 2008 financial meltdown. However, as noted by us in our last Party Congress and subsequent Central Committee meetings, notwithstanding the severity of the crisis, capitalism does not collapse automatically. In the absence of a strong socialist political alternative to capitalism, it emerges out of such crises by further intensifying the exploitation of the people. At the same time, in the absence of strong Left forces it is the rightwing political forces that marshal the people's discontent against this intensified exploitation.

## **Political Shift to the Right**

### **US Presidential Election**

Recent developments confirm the analysis of our September CC meeting of a rightward political shift in many countries of the world. The rise of the political Right in many advanced capitalist countries has now proceeded further with the triumph of Donald Trump in the US presidential elections. This result was received with shock and apprehension globally as well as domestically in the USA. Trump's strident campaign focusing on racism, misogyny, nativism and authoritarianism was accepted by a large section of the US electorate. Trump's campaign had an extreme rightwing agenda against immigrants, disdain for women, minorities, civil liberties and islamophobia. A majority of the white Americans appear to have responded to this campaign to revive the so-called lost 'American dream', centering on the opposition to growing burdens being imposed by neo-liberalism. During the last 25 years the employment of white Americans without college degrees has fallen by 30 per cent in the manufacturing sector and 25 per cent in public utilities.

International finance capital led neo-liberal globalization has drastically reduced the real incomes of the bulk of the working population while enriching the miniscule rich. Like in the Brexit vote in the UK where the English working class predominantly voted for it, in the US presidential elections, the US white working class responded to Trump's platform of keeping industries in America and reopening closed ones. It is indeed an

irony that a multi billionaire who has remote contact and touch with the lives of the working people could champion this popular discontent.

Though all pollsters predicted the victory of Hillary Clinton, this turned out to be wrong. Hillary Clinton polled marginally higher popular votes but given the US electoral system, Trump had a decisive majority of the States. Hillary Clinton was seen more as a pro-establishment conservative policy framer given the positions she took as the incumbent Secretary of State and earlier as a Senator. A Left-oriented campaign mounted by Clinton's Democratic rival, Bernie Sanders, initially drew good popular response but the Democratic Party apparatus was utilised by Hillary Clinton to ensure that he was out of the race. Many working class followers, with Bernie Sanders out of the race, appear to have switched to vote for Trump.

This victory is being viewed with apprehension as to the impact it may have on international affairs. Trump has already indicated that he will not proceed with the Trans-Pacific Partnership pact which the Obama administration had negotiated and hailed as the biggest trade deal of the generation. Trump's strident stand against shifting of production to third world countries and against US BPOs operating in foreign countries like India along with plans to restrict the quantum of visas for future immigrants is likely to adversely affect a large number of Indian people. He has already declared that he will deport more than 3 million immigrants in the US who are supposedly there without valid papers. How far such apprehensions will turn out as reality only time will tell.

While, overall, the Trump platform is rightwing, his policies can have a contradictory impact too. For instance, Trump is inclined to improve relations with President Putin and Russia, unlike President Obama. This will have a direct impact on the confrontation that has developed over Ukraine and Nato's eastward thrust. At the same time, Trump will take a hardline approach towards China, particularly on trade and economic issues. On the other hand, the cancellation of the TPP is a setback for international finance capital and the big corporates who were hoping to use this agreement to extend their sway and erode national sovereignty of the countries concerned. So there is an element of unpredictability and uncertainty on the direction of foreign policy under the Trump presidency.

### **Italy Referendum**

The anger of the working classes against the continuous burdens imposed by the neo-liberal economic reforms was once again seen recently in the referendum in Italy on the changes to the constitution that was defeated. The Constitution was sought to be changed to curtail the powers of the

upper house by the Senate and subordinate it to the lower house (like the efforts being made by the BJP government in India to bypass the Rajya Sabha on many crucial legislations by having them declared as 'money bills' on which only the Lok Sabha has the authority to legislate). This amendment was sought by the neo-liberal reformists who wanted speedy legislations to meet the demands of international finance capital. The Italian people responded with their rejection of these neo-liberal reforms which are widely seen as impoverishing the poor and enriching the rich and widening income inequalities, by roundly defeating this constitutional amendment. The Italian Prime Minister was forced to resign. The rightwing also had strongly campaigned against this Constitution amendment and are likely to gain in any future elections in Italy.

### **Post Brexit Developments**

The UK has not yet begun the two year withdrawal process negotiations from the European Union. This is due to the fact that the Supreme Court of Britain is now dealing with the matter challenging the referendum result. A eleven judge bench will consider the matter and the judgement is expected to be delivered in January 2017. UK PM Theresa May plans to trigger Article 50 to set in motion the withdrawal negotiations in March 2017. Only when the Supreme Court verdict comes will the UK have the legal power to start the negotiations. The key issue to be adjudicated by the court is if the referendum result must be put before parliament for approval.

Post Brexit there was a serious decline in manufacturing activity in the UK. However, most workers reported in a survey of being optimistic about the possibility of better employment and an increase in wages. Post Brexit the joblessness fell to 1.6 million in the first quarter of September 2016, the lowest since 2006. The number of people in work increased by 4,61,000. While wages rose by 2.4 per cent with higher inflation and fall in the value of the British pound, the real wage declined by 1.7 per cent.

A situation of uncertainty prevails and this is likely to continue till the withdrawal negotiations are completed. It appears that till 2020, the situation for the British economy would be in a state of uncertainty and turmoil.

### **Contrary Developments**

However, in some countries, the rightwing forces faced a defeat in recent elections. In Cyprus, the Communist Party (AKEL) secured significant victories in the local municipal elections indicating that the popular decline in the AKEL's influence has been halted with an upward turn in

its voting percentage being registered. AKEL held the country's presidency when the financial meltdown began and was soon replaced by the rightwing ruling coalition. In the presidential elections in Austria, the far right presidential candidate was defeated by the social democratic-Green coalition. In Romania, the Centre-Left Social Democratic Party won the election reducing the strength of the rightwing forces. In Germany the recent terror attack in Berlin has once again provided the opportunity for the rightwing forces to mount a renewed attack on the refugees and those who supported the German immigration policies.

Clearly, wherever resistance is being mounted by the leftwing forces, it can be seen that the right is being at least contained. Therefore, in the final analysis, as we had concluded earlier, the future course of political developments will be crucially dependent upon who marshals the popular discontent which is growing amongst the vast majority of the people – the Left forces or the Right reactionary political combinations.

### **Popular Struggles**

However, many countries have witnessed big protests against all austerity policies imposed on the vast majority of the people by neo-liberalism. A successful general strike took place in Greece alongwith large working class demonstrations and rallies reflecting the popular anger against the neo-liberal policies. Spain witnessed huge protests demanding increase in salary and pensions and roll back of austerity measures. More than 30,000 people joined the marches organised by the country's biggest trade unions. The British railway workers, postal workers and health workers continue with their protest demonstrations and strike actions. In the Czech Republic the post and communications workers struck work demanding hikes in their salaries and opposing measures that lead to further deterioration of the working conditions.

Though such popular struggles are on the rise, it is the rightwing that at this moment is able to politically marshal this popular discontent.

### **Latin America**

The death of Comrade Fidel Castro is a big loss to Latin American politics, particularly to the Left forces. There will be a renewed effort by US imperialism to interfere in the internal affairs of these countries, particularly those where people have elected Left-led governments. Such gross interference is very visible in Venezeula where the rightwing forces are seeking to destabilize the Bolivarian government. The opposition move to bring a motion of impeachment against President Maduro did not succeed due to technical reasons. The recently elected rightwing governments in Argentina and Brazil have engineered attempts to expell

Venezuela from the regional grouping Mercosur. However, this was resisted by Venezuela with the help of some of the countries that have progressive governments. The Venezuelan government recently demonetized its high denomination notes. It had to hastily reverse the decision in the face of problems being faced by the people and rising popular resistance.

In Latin America as a whole there are several tendencies that we need to note. Daniel Ortega has once again won the presidential elections in Nicaragua on the back of popular measures that helped reduce poverty by almost 13 percentage points. Evo Morales was again chosen to contest the presidential elections next year in Bolivia despite the defeat in the recent referendum seeking to permit a third term to an incumbent President. However, Rafael Correa, who led the paying of tributes to Fidel Castro at the memorial service in Havana recently, has declined to seek an additional term in next years elections in Ecuador. Both in Bolivia and Ecuador the rightwing forces supported by US imperialism are trying to regain control over the state apparatus. Protests against the impeachment of Dilma Rousseff continue with exposures of corruption of the interim President in Brazil. In Argentina, the working class protests against the recently elected rightwing government which is reversing the progressive measures introduced by the earlier Left led government are rising. The UN observers are in Colombia to oversee the implementation of the Peace Accord signed by the government of Colombia and FARC. A section of the FARC, which was initially opposed to the agreement, is still sticking to its positions. But this in no way impedes the implementation of the Accord as both the government, FARC and other opposition groups have agreed to its implementation, following the referendum results and consequent political discussions.

Clearly, in Latin America, the battle between the Left and the Right, aided and abetted by US imperialism, continues. The ability of the Leftwing forces to mobilise popular support to defeat the US imperialist backed rightwing machinations will determine the future political orientation on the continent.

## **China**

In the background of the continued global capitalist crisis the Chinese economy in 2016 achieved the target set by the State of 6.5 to 7 per cent growth. China has seen a strong domestic credit growth. In the background of the global economic turmoil its efforts to reorient its domestic demand and supply structure relying on expanding domestic demand further as a primary impetus for growth and employment appears to be on the lines of what they had targeted. During 2016 China has succeeded in meeting its target of lifting 10 million rural residents out

of poverty. Chinese poverty line is much higher than what is the definition in India and it is higher than the global standards. The 2016 national Poverty Alleviation and Development Work Conference has noted that a new level has been reached in China regarding poverty relief work and in the implementation and management of its poverty fund.

### **Climate Change Negotiations**

At the recent Marrakech conference on climate change the developed countries demonstrated a remarkable reluctance to discuss further the issue of enhanced 2020 actions on Climate change. So far 120 countries have ratified the Paris Agreement. However, with the change in US presidency and the triumph of Donald Trump there is a strong apprehension that the Paris Agreement may be sabotaged with the US either not implementing or withdrawing from it while the rest of the signatories will be bound to adhere to the agreement. This is similar to the fate of the Kyoto protocol which the USA refused to ratify earlier. The signing of the Paris Agreement does not in any way mean that substantive issues involved in the implementation of the agreement provisions are settled. They are bound to sharpen in the coming months and are likely to dominate the negotiations for the next two years.

### **Unprecedented**

#### **UN Security Council Resolution Against Israel**

The UN Security Council passed a resolution condemning Israel for continuing with its illegal settlements in East Jerusalem and West Bank areas of Palestine. This continues to dispossess Palestinians of vast tracts of their homeland. Significantly under the lame duck presidency of Barrack Obama, the USA broke with its past practice of vetoing any anti-Israel resolution by abstaining from the vote on this occasion. Israel in retaliation curtailed its relations with ten countries that voted in favour of the resolution. These ten countries are Britain, France, Russia, China, Japan, Ukraine, Angola, Egypt, Uruguay and Spain. As has been its consistent practice, Israel undaunted by this resolution, is reportedly brazenly preparing to advance its plans for creating illegally thousands of new homes for the Jews in East Jerusalem.

India on the contrary, under this BJP government, is consistently moving to improve ties with Israel which the RSS-BJP considers as an ally in counterterrorism and in defence cooperation. This BJP government is negating India's long standing support to the Palestinian cause and to the Palestinian struggle for their homeland. Recently, the Israeli Ambassador to India has expressed gratitude for the shifts in India's foreign policy towards Israel referring to India's decision to abstain from voting on

resolutions critical of Israel at the UN Human Rights Council and the UNESCO.

## **Syria & West Asia**

The liberation of Eastern Aleppo after an armed battle lasting over four and half years dealt a further blow to those forces who were seeking to achieve a regime change in Syria. The Syrian government of President Bashar Al-Assad is now in complete control of all the major cities in the country. The liberation of Aleppo was described by President Assad as a historic turning point in the Syrian people's struggle against US imperialism's machinations. The US-Russian agreement fell apart after it was sabotaged by the US attacking the Syrian army. Recently, in the third week of December, the foreign ministers of Turkey, Russia and Iran met and charted out a course for establishing lasting peace in Syria. The United States, miffed at being kept out of these negotiations, has threatened that no normalcy can return to the region without the US involvement. These talks were held despite the assassination of the Russian Ambassador in Turkey. The assassination was clearly aimed at disrupting the talks and to create a rift between Russia and Turkey. The UN Security Council recently approved a compromise French-Russian resolution urging the immediate deployment of UN monitors to watch over the eviction and well being of civilians remaining in Aleppo. Clearly these developments are a setback to US imperialism's anti-Syria, anti-Iran agenda in West Asia. This will further contribute to the deteriorating of US-Russia relations. Earlier, the USA had expelled 35 Russian diplomats for allegedly trying to influence US presidential elections. USA has also imposed another set of sanctions on Russia. Russia denied these allegations but did not retaliate expecting better relations once the new US administration takes charge in January. As noted in our earlier CC meeting the US efforts to expand Nato upto Russia's borders and US involvement in the Ukranian coup had contributed to the deterioration of relations between the two countries. With the latest Syrian developments this distancing between USA and Russia is likely to grow.

This along with the growing cooperation between Russia and China is bound to impact on international relations in the coming days.

## **National**

### **Demonetization**

The demonetization of the 1000 and 500 rupee notes announced by the Prime Minister on November 8 has caused immense loss to a large part of our economy plunging crores of people into agony and loss of livelihood. The Prime Minister's appeal for a fifty day time frame after which he

assured things will come back to normalcy is over and normalcy is far from being reached. On the contrary, the agonies of people continue to mount. The restrictions on cash withdrawals from the people's own money deposited in banks continue. All these facts are well reported but the government turns a blind eye and claims that its demonetization is a tirade against black money and corruption.

The November PB meeting communiqué exposed the fact that none of the four objectives – combatting black money; corruption; counterfeit currency and terrorist funding -- that the Prime Minister listed as the reason for the demonetization are achievable through this move. More than 90 per cent of the black money, the Prime Minister himself publicly said is parked in tax havens abroad. Not a rupee of this has been touched nor is there any move to pursue the recovery of these monies. With almost all the demonetized currency now returning to the banking system it is clear that whatever black money was held in cash has now been converted into white money and lies deposited in the banks. Final figures for the deposits in the banks are yet to be made public. If it exceeds the value of recalled notes then it means that all the counterfeit currency in circulation has also been legitimised. The seizure of huge quantum of new notes is indicative of the fact that high level corruption exists. Far from eliminating corruption, this move has only created newer and higher forms of corruption.

As far as combatting terrorist funding is concerned, that this demonetization has not made any dent is obvious from the fact that since the September 30 'surgical strikes' happened, 33 security personnel have lost their lives due to terrorist attacks. The death toll of security personnel in 2016 has been recorded as double the death toll in 2015

**Impact on Economy:** The Indian economy, particularly the rural economy and the overall 90 per cent of the economy that exists on cash transactions has been severely hit with some sectors devastated by this move. All international agencies and domestic institutions including the RBI have estimated that the GDP growth will take a hit as a result of demonetization in a substantial manner. All economic indicators have shown a sharp decline. The index of industrial production is estimated to have fallen by nearly 2 per cent, manufacturing has fallen by 2.5 per cent, capital goods production has fallen by a whopping nearly minus 30 per cent and the services sector has recorded a decline. The major export-oriented industries like textiles, leather and jewellery have reported a loss of over four lakh jobs in the first week following demonetization. 31.9 million people work in these three sectors on the basis of daily or weekly wages. In the subsequent period, the bulk of them have been rendered jobless. Retail trade was estimated to have fallen by a huge magnitude of 75 per cent. Trade in perishable commodities has fallen so drastically that

in many areas vegetables and fish continue to rot as people do not have sufficient cash to purchase.

The talk of shifting to digital payments is ridiculous because in rural India only 13 per cent, 108 of the 834 million people have access to internet connections. Only 26 per cent of the people have access to smart phones. Given this predominant dependence on cash transactions, the devastation of many of the sectors has been enormous.

**Impact on People's Livelihood:** The result of all this has been large scale growth in unemployment. There has been a reverse migration of daily agricultural labour who had moved to Punjab and Haryana for the agricultural season but have largely returned to their homes in Bihar and UP. Vegetable farmers are reportedly selling their produce at one-fifth of the price. Farmers in areas where grain has been harvested are being forced to sell their produce at one half of the MSP since procurement has come to a standstill due to lack of currency notes. All traditional commercial crops like rubber, cotton, spices etc have reported a sharp fall. The agrarian distress has deepened as a consequence with a sharp rise in distress suicides by farmers. According to reports, farmer suicides have risen by nearly 32 per cent in these two years. This demonetization will further aggravate the rural distress. There are reports that even supplementary nutrition for children has dropped by a whopping 16 per cent in the post-demonetization period from the previous eight months average due to the non-availability of cash.

All these put together mean that the lives of crores of Indians have been devastated by this demonetization. This is bound to impact upon the economic inequalities in the country. Already in the two years since this BJP government assumed office inequality has sharply risen. In 2014, 1 per cent of India's population, the ultra-rich held assets worth 49 per cent of our GDP. By 2016 as a result of PM Modi's neo-liberal policies this figure went up to 58.4 per cent. With these effects of demonetization the enriching of the rich and the impoverishment of the poor is bound to intensify.

**Shift to a Digital Economy:** With all the declared objectives not being met, the real objective of this demonetization became clear with the thrust for shifting from a cash economy into a digital economy and the cries for a cashless economy coming to the fore. Such a shift would first require that the amount of cash in circulation be restricted. The value of 1000 and 500 rupee recalled notes was Rs. 15,45,816. 97 per cent of these, according to reports, have returned to the banks by December end. The fresh new notes that have entered circulation as of December 19, 2016 was Rs. 5,92,613 crore. With the continuation of restrictions on withdrawal from banks at Rs. 24,000 per week and ATM withdrawals

being increased from Rs. 2000 to Rs. 4500 per day, it is clear that much of this cash will now remain deposited in the banks and out of circulation. Between November 1 and November 8, 2016 Rs. 1582.8 crores worth of currency notes were loaded in the country's ATMs. Since the Prime Minister's speech on November 8 till December 30, it is reported that only Rs. 455 crore have been loaded into the ATM machines. The thrust for shifting to digital modes of payment has been mounted. But this comes with a transaction cost which will only add to the burdens of the people even if this were to succeed. In India with a very low access to the internet and the banking system in large tracts in rural India such transactions through a digital system is well nigh impossible in the near future.

The real objective of this demonetization is clearly to promote further the process of neo-liberal reforms. We had analysed in our Kozhikode Congress ideological resolution that the current phase of imperialist globalization is being led by international finance capital which continues to constantly create newer and newer avenues for profit maximization. This can only be achieved through a greater squeeze on the livelihood of the vast majority of the people i.e. by intensifying economic exploitation further. We had analysed how this process has led to a sharp fall in the purchasing capacity of the vast majority of the global people creating a crisis for capitalist growth and the efforts made by global capitalism to overcome these constraints through the provision of cheap credit. That in turn set in motion a process which led to the financial meltdown in 2008 and subsequent phases of the current global economic crisis.

**Financial Stability:** International finance capital soon after the 2008 meltdown focused on the need to ensure financial stability i.e. to ensure that banks are never allowed to collapse. The Financial Stability Board (FSB) was set up in 2009 to ensure that banks never collapse. India as part of the G20 endorsed the FSB proposals at the Brisbane Summit in 2014. The resolution specifies financial institutions that must be set up in every country to make sure that banks do not fail and thereby destabilize the financial system and lead to another round of crisis.

The 2008 collapse of the financial institutions was overcome by massive bail out packages that we had noted earlier. These bailout packages in turn converted corporate insolvencies into sovereign insolvencies and the subsequent crises that continue to plague the global economy. The main effective resolution regime suggested by the FSB is to ensure a process of 'bail in' rather than a 'bail out'. The 'bail in' means that banks will protect themselves from a possible collapse by reining in the money of its depositors to 'bail out' the corporates who have taken large loans and are not repaying them to the banks. In other words, the 'bail in' package means that the loss the banks suffer due to profligacy of huge corporate

loans that are defaulted will be borne by the innocent bank account holders, overwhelming majority of whom are the working people. This will be ensured by applying severe restrictions on the withdrawal of cash by individuals from their very own accounts from these banks thus improving the banks cash-credit ratio and insulating them from losses. The first test run of this 'bail in' strategy was conducted in Cyprus in 2013 to bail out the insolvent banks. A similar exercise was implemented in Greece.

**BJP Government's Eagerness:** India, under this BJP government, eager to implement neo-liberal reforms aggressively, had, in order to comply with the G20 FSB recommendations, set up through the Finance Ministry a committee to draft The Financial Resolution and Deposit Insurance Corporation Bill 2016. This Committee had submitted its report in September 2016. Amongst others this Bill envisages the setting up of a Financial Regulations and Deposit Insurance Corporation with the objective of contributing to financial stability. Its priority is **not** the protection of consumers or all public funds. In case a bank reaches a state of collapse this FRDIC will have the power amongst others to exercise any one of the three measures to protect the bank. These are – sale to any other financial firm, including foreign corporates; the incorporation of a bridge institution (merger of banks as is currently being proposed in India) or initiating a 'bail in' process.

If this comes into effect as law then the RBI's mandate would shift from supervision, regulation and monetary policy to ensuring financial stability in the country. This would mean in fact that the interests of the ordinary depositors in the banks would be sacrificed in favour of protecting, both the banks facing collapse and the corporates who have heavily borrowed from the banks.

In the FSB proposal this resolution authority will have the power to ensure that a failing bank can be recapitalized with depositors money and material without the depositors consent.

The Deposit Insurance and Credit Guarantee Corporation in India under this regime will insure every individual depositor to a maximum of Rs. 1 lakh in the event of a bank collapse. The individual depositor may have any amount above Rs. 1 lakh in his or her account but if the bank collapses all that he/she would receive is Rs. 1 lakh and having no legal remedy to recover the rest of the amount.

**Crony Capitalism:** Thanks to the high level of crony capitalism that this BJP government under PM Modi has been promoting, the bad loans in most state owned banks doubled and in some case tripled in 2015-16. As of March 2016 the RBI Asset Quality Review estimated that more than

8.5 lakh crores of rupees of loans given by our banks have not been returned by the borrowers mainly large corporates. The top ten corporate houses owe a staggering amount of Rs. 7 lakh crores to the public sector banks and financial institutions. In July 2016 the CAG is reported in the media as having said that there is a belief that a large part of these amounts have been transferred abroad and may never get recovered. Instead of proceeding against these defaulters and ensuring that these monies which are the life long savings of crores of Indian people deposited with faith in our banks are returned by confiscating the assets of these corporates, this government in 2014 and 2015 altogether waived corporate loans worth Rs. 1,12,078 crores. This happened when this government refused to waive loans to our beleaguered farmers committing distress suicides.

This demonetization comes in this background. With the continued restrictions on cash withdrawal from the banks even after December 30, 2016 it means that a 'bail in' process been put into effect by this Modi government. Crores of Indian depositors who have put their lifetime savings in the banks are being penalized and forced into suffering to 'bail out' these banks and the corporates who have massively borrowed, amounting to a loot of people's money.

This is nothing else but the intensification of the process of primitive accumulation which we have noted as a hallmark of the current phase of imperialist globalization led by international finance capital.

Simultaneously, its thrust to move towards digital transactions is a bonanza for profit maximization to international finance capital and corporates. Each digital transaction carries a transaction cost which is an additional burden on the consumer and the source of profit for the corporates. Clearly this demonetization exercise has been undertaken by this government as part of India's subservience to its neo-liberalism reforms trajectory and a part of its larger subservience to imperialism.

India has not only emerged as a junior subordinate ally of US imperialism as seen in the recent defence agreements and as a major defence partner of the USA but is now also a subordinate partner of international finance capital's efforts to pursue aggressively the predatory profit maximization nature of capitalism.

## **GST**

As noted by us in the last CC meeting and as anticipated the efforts for an agreement on the GST rates of taxation and the delineation of authority to collect tax revenue between the central GST, state GST and inter-state GST have raised issues that are not yet resolved by the GST Council

consisting of the Union and state finance ministers. The main dispute is over the states' right to collect tax revenues from firms having a turnover of 1.5 crores or less. The Centre wants to take over this also.

Following demonetization many states have reported an anticipated revenue loss in the current fiscal year. Kerala estimates that its loss would be close to 25 per cent of its average annual revenues. Given this, any agreement on concrete rates of taxation under the GST will have to factor in this loss of revenue. The crucial battle to protect the rights of states is taking place now over these issues in the GST council. We will have to wait to see what the outcome is.

### **Latest Supreme Court Verdict**

The verdict of the seven-member Constitution bench of the Supreme Court held that the electoral process is a secular activity and religion can have no place in such an activity. The judgement of the Bench was by a majority of four to three.

Chief Justice Thakur delivered a separate but concurring judgement which said "...an interpretation that will have the effect of removing the religion or religious considerations from the secular character of the State or state activity ought to be preferred over an interpretation which may allow such considerations to enter, effect or influence such activities."

The apex court was considering the interpretation of Section 123 (3) of the Representation of the People Act 1951. Chief Justice Thakur said: "The sum total of Section 123(3) even after the amendment (1961) is that an appeal in the name of religion, race, caste, community or language is forbidden even when the appeal may not be in the name of the religion, race, caste, community or language of the candidate for whom it has been made. So interpreted religion, race, caste, community or language would not be allowed to play any role in the electoral process and should an appeal be made on any of those considerations, the same would constitute a corrupt practice."

While the assertion that elections are a secular activity is welcome, there is a thin line that differentiates an appeal made to the electorate on these considerations by anybody on behalf of a candidate and on raising issues of injustices and discrimination emanating from factors of religion, caste or language. Such issues will surely arise in debates in an electoral process.

The dissenting judges held that though the Indian State is secular in character, the Constitution is not indifferent to issues of religion, caste or language. They say: "The Constitution is not oblivious to the history of

discrimination against and the deprivation inflicted upon large segments of population based on religion, caste and language. Religion, caste and language are as much as a symbol of social discrimination imposed on large segments of our society on the basis of immutable characteristics as they are of a social mobilization to answer centuries of injustices. They are part of the central theme of Constitution to produce a just social order.”

It is necessary to clarify the difference between making an appeal on any of these elements for electoral gain or the defeat of an opponent candidate and the raising of issues of social discrimination and injustices. The latter are essential elements of any electoral discourse for attaining social justice and cannot be prohibited. Such issues of religious and social oppression negating the Constitutional guarantee of equality to all citizens “irrespective of caste, creed or sex” will necessarily be part of the political discourse during election campaigns.

### **Simultaneous Elections to Lok Sabha and State Assemblies**

The Prime Minister, of late, has intensified his campaign for simultaneous Lok Sabha and Assembly polls justifying it on the grounds of expenditure, time etc. etc. This is a thoroughly undemocratic proposal made solely with an eye for electoral gains through a Presidential form of election campaigning practiced by Narendra Modi.

In independent India, these elections were simultaneous to begin with. Subsequently, this simultaneity was ruptured when the Central Government began grossly misusing Article 356 of the Constitution by dismissing democratically elected state governments in pursuit of the partisan interests of the ruling classes. As long as the Central government retains this power, there is no guarantee for sticking to any simultaneous schedule.

Further, under a parliamentary democracy, on many occasions, a coalition government is formed. Such governments can be rendered unstable when one or the other of the coalition partners/supporters withdraw their support on political differences. Under such circumstances, there is no alternative, but to go back to the people and seek their verdict. Any imposition of a simultaneity would deny the people their democratic right and hence such a move would be anti-democratic.

Federalism is a fundamental feature of our Constitution. The rights of the State and the rights of the peoples of the State to elect their representatives in a democratic manner cannot be undermined.

## **Another Step in Cementing India As a Subordinate ally of the USA**

The Modi government has taken yet another step in entangling India in a military alliance with the United States of America. The terms for India being accorded the status of a Major Defence Partner of the US has been finalised during the recent visit of the US Secretary of Defence.

This follows the announcement of the signing of the Logistics Exchange Memorandum of Agreement (LEMOA) between the US and Indian defence ministries earlier this year.

The ‘Major Defense Partner’ designation is, as the statement says, “a status unique to India”, and brings “India to a level at par with that of the United States’ closest allies and partners”. This is a significant departure from India’s longstanding policy on defence relations and it has been done without taking the parliament into confidence.

While the US government has placed the details of ‘Major Defense Partner’ designation for approval of the US Senate as part of FY 2017 National Defense Authorization Act (NDAA), this BJP government has not even made a statement in the parliament about such a significant deal. The country can see the US side of the deal by reading the 2017 NDAA, but remains ignorant of the Indian commitments as a ‘Major Defense Partner’ of the United States.

Paragraph (E) of Sec. 1292 of 2017 NDAA, which talks of “**mechanisms to verify the security of defense articles, defense services, and related technology, such as appropriate cyber security and end user monitoring agreements**” for items and technologies sold to India. Paragraph (F) thereafter states that **India will align its “export control and procurement regimes with those of the United States”**. These are significant concessions made by this BJP government which will make Indian defence forces open to American scrutiny, and Indian defence production under the control of the United States of America.

Serious apprehensions arise about this BJP government compromising India’s sovereignty and strategic autonomy. Paragraph (I) of Sec. 1292, 2017 NDAA makes the facts amply clear. It explicitly highlights enhanced “**defense and security cooperation with India in order to advance United States interests in South Asia and greater Indo-Asia-Pacific regions**”. This cements India as a junior ally of the US in our own neighbourhood. This represents the final nail in the coffin of India’s independent foreign policy.

The Modi government has not made the text of both these agreements public. It is imperative that these agreements which have vital implications for India's national interests and sovereignty be made publicly available.

### **Efforts At Forging Unity Of Left and Democratic Forces**

Five specific initiatives were undertaken in accordance with the decision of our 21<sup>st</sup> Party Congress with regard to forging the unity of Left and democratic forces:

1. **Dalit Movements:** Forging links with the dalit movements was undertaken that resulted in the formation of the *Dalit Swabhiman Front* consisting of the Republican Party (Prakash Ambedkar), our agricultural labour front and our dalit platform and the CPI's agricultural labour organisation and dalit platform. Joint rallies by this front were held in Delhi and Bengaluru. There is a need now to plan such joint rallies in other important centres of the country.
2. **Anti-Communal Mobilisation:** West Bengal has witnessed an unprecedented rise in communal strife and violence for the first time after four decades. Both the BJP and Trinamool Congress appealing to the Hindu communal sentiments on the one hand and Muslim fundamentalist sentiments on the other are creating a dangerous situation. In this backdrop on the issue of safety and security for religious minorities particularly Muslims must be taken up at the national level with urgency.

In the last CC meeting we had given a call for the holding of anti-communal conventions at the state level and building on that moving towards a national level initiative. At the state level only a few conventions were held. This is a task that we need to undertake in the coming days. With proper preparations, we must initiate the process of holding an All India Anti-Communal Convention, after the current round of Assembly elections are completed, in April or early May.

3. **Forging Links with Intellectuals:** In the movement against growing intolerance and the return of awards of recognition by many artists we expressed our full solidarity and supported the holding of two popular conventions against intolerance and such activities under various banners. This process will have to be taken forward.

Initiatives must be taken to form a broad national level platform against the new education policy that this BJP government is seeking to impose on the country. We should take the lead in the

formation of such a committee of intellectuals, educationists and student-youth, teachers movements.

4. **Platform of Mass Organisations:** In moving towards the formation of a platform of mass organisations to take up issues connected with various strata of the people and to launch united struggles on that basis, we have initiated the process with the CPI. We will now have to take it forward by involving the other Left parties and democratic forces in the future. A meeting of our mass organizations must be held at the earliest followed by a meeting of the CPI(M) and the CPI led mass organizations. The objective of this platform would be to widen the scope beyond the mass organizations led by the Left parties to also include various social forces and movements. We must seek to build the broadest possible unity to strengthen the struggles against the communal offensive and the neo-liberal economic reforms.
5. **Forging Links with the Movements of Muslims and Other Minorities:** We had decided that state level conventions on the problems being faced by the Muslim minorities should be held and on that basis a national level convention would be considered. This however has not happened in any effective manner. This year marks the end of the first decade of the release of the Sachar Committee report and its recommendations. The follow-up concrete recommendations made by the Justice Ranganath Mishra Commission Report have not yet been implemented in a meaningful manner. Only West Bengal, under the Left Front government, implemented reservations for identified sections of Muslims as OBCs. Ten years down the line no substantive improvement on most of the parameters has been seen. We must consider the possibility of convening an all India convention on the issue of implementation of the Ranganath Mishra Commission recommendations and on other important issues that arise out of the growing communal polarisation in the country. We must target sometime after this round of Assembly elections to hold such a convention by preparing the ground to unite as many democratic and secular organizations of the minorities in this effort.

### **Central Committee Call**

In addition to the immediate steps outlined above, during the month of January, along with other Left parties we must initiate popular protests against the impact of the demonetization on various sections of our people at the state level. The form of action will be decided by the Left parties given the concrete conditions in each state.

The CPI(M) will mobilize people around the following demands:

1. Since the deadline of December 30 is over, all restrictions on the withdrawal of money by people from their own hard earned money in the banks must be removed forthwith.
  2. Immediate debt waiver for farmers suffering due to the disruption of normal agricultural activities.
  3. Double the allocation for the MNREGA to increase rural employment for all those who are enrolled.
  4. Immediate compensation to families of those who lost their lives standing in lines to change withdrawn notes or draw their own money.
  5. Compensate all those who lost their jobs and livelihood, particularly agricultural workers and daily labourers.
  6. Provide tax rebate to small and medium enterprises whose economic activity has come to a standstill as they are conducted mainly in cash transactions.
  7. Remove all restrictions on deposits and withdrawals of funds from the cooperative banks. If there are any specific cases of malpractices against any bank, they should be proceeded against on criminal charges, but the cooperative banking system which is the backbone for rural India cannot be destroyed.
  8. The Centre must compensate the state governments for the loss in revenue that they are incurring.
  9. No coercion should be employed forcing people to shift to digital transactions.
  10. All ration card holders must be ensured supplies. The condition of making Aadhar card compulsory has led to a very large number of people being denied their rations. This should be revoked.
- a) The CPI(M) will conduct an independent campaign in the last fortnight of January exposing the real intention of this demonetization as a part of this BJP government's commitment to neo-liberal economic reforms and on the above demands.

All the mass organizations associated with the CPI(M) will take up protest actions on the agonies being faced by the specific sections like the unorganized, daily wage labours; agricultural workers and the plight of the kisans; the impact on women, youth etc.

- b) The CPI(M) with other Left parties will initiate protest actions on the above demands.
- c) On the demands of (1) immediate withdrawal of all restrictions on people to draw their own money from the banks/ATMs and (2) no coercion forcing people to move to digital transactions, the CPI(M)

will cooperate with all parties and movements for joint protest actions.

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The Central Committee adopted the following resolutions:

- 1) Drought situation faced by southern states of India.
- 2) On Land Issues
- 3) Implications of NFSA implementation in Kerala
- 4) Legislate “Rohit Act”

### **Drought Situation faced by Southern States of India**

*Resolution adopted at the Central Committee Meeting held on January 6-8, 2017 at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala.*

THE south Indian states of Tamil Nadu, Kerala, Karnataka, parts of Telangana and Andhra Pradesh and Union Territory of Puducherry are facing severe drought.

Tamil Nadu is facing a serious drought ever known in the history of the state. Except Chennai, the whole of Tamil Nadu is in the grip of worst drought. Both the monsoons – south west and north east failed causing a deficit of rainfall to the tune of more than 62 percent. Lakhs and lakhs of acres of cultivable lands remain fallow due to scarcity of water. Crops which were cultivated with limited water, withered. Paddy, groundnut, cotton, corn, sugarcane, banana including other crops withered in few lakh acres.

The Cauvery delta which is the granary of paddy, which supplies nearly one-third of rice to the state, completely failed. More than 12 lakh acres of cultivable lands, that too two crop lands were left fallow, without sowing. The paddy crops withered in another few lakh acres which were cultivated with limited water.

All the tanks, lakes and reservoirs like Mettur and Vaigai are dried up. In many parts of the state, there is acute shortage of drinking water. Even Chennai is faced with drinking water scarcity. The ground water is depleting all over the state. Faced with innumerable difficulties, farmers in shock are committing suicides and their number is increasing every hour. Until now, more than 120 farmers died. The agricultural workers' livelihood has become very bad. It is difficult for the daily wagers' families to obtain a single meal a day, and this situation is leading to starvation deaths. Farmers are selling their cattle for a throw away price since it is difficult to provide water and straw.

Despite repeated appeals and agitation by the farmers associations and political parties, the government of Tamil Nadu has not taken up any fruitful measure to address the miseries of the people. Now

the state government has formed committees to study the drought condition. The union territory of Puducherry coming under Cauvery delta is also affected by drought.

Kerala is experiencing a historic low rainfall with the south west monsoon (June to September 2016) reporting 34 percent below normal rainfall and the north east monsoon (October to December 2016) reporting 61 percent below normal. The state government of Kerala declared the entire state as drought affected in the month of October. In Kerala, the overall storage has depleted to 47 percent while 90 percent was expected for the months. Ground water depletion is reported from even water rich segments.

Agriculture, dairy and poultry sectors have started facing heat and experienced water-stress related production losses. Pest attack on crops is reported from many parts of the state. Farmers involved in paddy, sugarcane cultivation, banana, cotton, corn, perennial crops such as rubber, coconut, coffee etc are all affected due to this situation. Distress sale of cattle and poultry has been reported. Cattle are sold at throw away prices as small and marginal farmers cannot afford to maintain them due to shortage of cattle feed and drinking water.

Karnataka received 20 percent below normal south west monsoon and 62 percent below normal north east monsoon. Karnataka has declared drought in 139 out of 175 taluks. This is the third consecutive year Karnataka is facing drought. Water levels in the reservoirs are reaching historic low levels. This situation is unprecedented.

The prediction was for a surplus rainfall during the south-west monsoon seasons and hence farmers had planned and worked towards cultivation in such water conditions. Deficit was not expected and this has severely affected the downtrodden farmers and farm labourers in these states. The situation, as it aggravates will affect all walks of life. Water stress is already felt in many parts of these states forcing the governments to undertake water supply through tankers.

The draconian attempt to sabotage the financial stability of the country through demonetisation has further added to the ongoing misery of the poor and the working class. With limited availability of hard earned cash and the forced decapitation of the cooperative sector has ensured that farmers have no choice but to suffer the misery, continue toiling and somehow survive or commit suicide. In light of this crisis, the Central Committee of Communist Party of India (Marxist) hereby urges the following to the respective governments:

1. The Kerala and Karnataka governments have already declared their states as drought affected. Tamil Nadu, Andhra Pradesh and

Telangana governments and government of Puducherry Union Territory should immediately declare the states as drought affected.

2. Government of India should immediately release the amount of additional assistance requested by the respective states from the National Disaster Response Fund, relaxing the norms of additional assistance.

3. Considering the unprecedented crisis and the deficit of rainfall in two seasons, all farmers should be provided twice the amount of approved rates of assistance under the National Disaster Response Fund.

4. Special assistance package for agricultural and animal husbandry sectors should be declared for the drought affected states.

5. Additional allotment of food grains, cereals and kerosene should be provided to the drought affected states for distribution through public distribution systems.

6. Allocation for NREGS be doubled and arrears be paid immediately.

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## On Land Issues

Communist Party of India (Marxist) expresses its solidarity and extends its support to the farmers who are struggling against illegal and forcible land acquisition in many states subverting the beneficial provisions of 2013 Land Acquisition Act.

After the assumption of power by BJP and its allies at the centre, the attempts to subvert the existing land reform, land acquisition, land lease and land use laws gathered pace. After its repeated attempts for amending the land acquisition Act of 2013 failed, the BJP government is pushing through its agenda of circumventing the land reform laws by pressurising/persuading the state governments with the help of Niti Ayog to take steps to dilute the beneficial provisions of various laws related to land. Several States have amended land ceiling laws and land use rules. AP has passed the land pooling Act, Telangana issued 123 GO. In August 2016, the Gujarat government passed a bill inserting amendments to the land acquisition bill 2013. Rajasthan also has made acquisition of land much easier by removing the safeguards for the rights of dependents on land. All BJP States are pursuing similar policies. BJD ruled Odisha also has brought a legislation which could Congress-led Karnataka government amended its land reforms act to enable it to acquire land to the extent of hundred acres.

Now the central government is preparing to bring a model agricultural land leasing act. Niti Ayog is persuading the state governments to amend their tenancy and land use laws to liberalise the provisions for the corporates to get hold of the lands and for changing land use pattern towards non agricultural purposes. Taking cue from the centre and Niti Ayog, many of the state governments are bringing legislations and administrative orders to bypass/replace the provisions in the earlier land laws which prevent indiscriminate taking over of lands from farmers and which impose restrictions on leasing of land. Madhya Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh amended their laws to permit leasing of agricultural land for other purposes. Now Odisha, Bihar, Telangana and Karnataka are in the process of doing the same. Jharkhand government passed a bill amending its tenancy laws that allow use of agricultural land for non-agricultural purposes. Jharkhand government is trying to amend the Chotanagpur Tenancy Act and Santhal Pargana Act. In Himachal Pradesh, Shamlat land enjoyed by Dalits, in Andhra Pradesh and Telangana d form patta land given to poor and in many other states the lands distributed to Dalits and other weaker sections is being targeted for taking over by the government.

Lakhs of acres are being acquired sometimes forcibly, sometimes deceptively from farmers by various state governments. AP government acquired four lakh acres, and is planning to acquire seven lakh acres more to put in its land bank. Telangana government acquired 2.5 lakh acres and proposing to acquire lakhs of acres more. It has already in possession of 1,75,000 acres of land, according to the chief minister. Rajasthan had amended its land reform laws and created a 10000 acre land bank. Gujarat created a land bank with 25000 hectares. In Karnataka 43 lakh cultivators of Government land called Bagair Hukum cultivators are faced with the threat of eviction due to the policies of the Congress Government in the State.

In the name of development, governments are facilitating corporate takeover of land, including fertile agricultural land. Lakhs of acres are being occupied in the name of industrial corridors without any transparency on the nature of industries and infrastructure. The lands are being offered to the corporates free or at throw away prices, while the peasants are evicted without offering proper compensation. All the beneficial provisions for the non-land owning rural poor and dependents on land provided in 2013 act are ignored. Worst victims of this land grabbing spree are poor and middle farmers, rural artisans and agricultural labour. There are struggles emerging in some points against the Delhi Mumbai Industrial Corridor, Bangalore Mumbai Economic Corridor, Bangalore Chennai Industrial Corridor, Chennai Vishakapatnam Industrial Corridor till Kolkata (East Coast Economic Corridor), Amritsar Delhi Kolkata Industrial Corridor. Thousands of acres of land acquired in the name of SEZs, industrialisation and on other pretexts are remaining unutilised for years. These could become sites for mobilisation of landless and occupation of land with the slogan of Zameen Wapsi could be explored.

Against forcible land acquisitions, nonpayment or inadequate payment of the compensation, denial of compensation to d form patta holders, against taking over of fertile multi-crop lands, inadequate rehabilitation and resettlement provisions etc farmers are protesting and putting up militant fight at many places in all the states. To suppress the agitators governments are resorting to all sorts of repressive methods. Thousands of people are being arrested. Hundreds are being jailed by implicating them in false cases. Hundreds were injured in brutal lathicharges. Police resorted to firing in in Jharkhand, Telangana and Odisha. Two people in Jharkhand and Odisha died in police firings. In Bhagalpur, Bihar there was brutal police action against Dalit landless, a large number of who were women. Despite severe repression people are bravely resisting the anti farmer land acquisition policies of state governments at many places.

Resistance to indiscriminate land acquisition and loot of minerals, forest and water resources is also indispensable for the fulfilment of redistributive land reforms as well as ensuring housing rights of the homeless and livelihood security of dependents on land. It is also linked to the struggle to prevent large scale evictions of cultivators of government surplus lands for generations as well as the forest rights of the Adivasis and traditional forest dwellers. Wherever objective conditions exist the need to launch struggles for land to landless has to be realised. CPI(M) Central Committee extends full support to these fighting farmers and urges all the democratic sections to mobilise solidarity throughout the country to beat back the anti farmer and retrogressive land policies of the BJP led central government. It urges all the party state committees to do everything to help the farmers and other rural poor in pressurising the governments to resolve the issues in the interest of the farmers.

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## **Implications of NFSA implementation in Kerala**

The Central Committee meeting of CPI(M) being held in Thiruvananthapuram demands the government of India to take immediate steps to increase the foodgrain quota for the state of Kerala.

The state of Kerala through long decades of struggle came to have statutory and universal rationing. It was the best performing PDS systems in the country with ration shops within walking distance of every family. The UPA government enacted National Food Security Act (NFSA) with a view of ensuring food security for the people all over the nation. It was presumed that 75 per cent of the rural people, 50 per cent of the urban population will be covered as the Priority Category under NFSA. However mechanically applying the criteria for identifying priority category, only 46 per cent of the population was included in the Priority Category in Kerala. This has undermined the functioning of PDS system in the state.

As per NFSA norms, the allotment of foodgrains to the state was limited to 14.25 MT, where as it was 16.2 MT in 2013-14 and 15.9 MT in 2014-16. The decrease in central foodgrain allocation has badly affected the rationing system in the state and smooth supply of foodgrains to the public. The fact that Kerala is a chronically foodgrain deficient state with domestic production contributing to around 15 per cent of the grain requirement was ignored and NFSA norms were applied for fixing the central allocation of foodgrains to the state.

An important point to note is that Kerala has around 35 lakh migrant workers from other parts of the country and as per NFSA, they are also entitled for the mandatory foodgrain allocation as a right. This aspect has not at all been considered while the central allocation was firmed up. This has serious social implications in the medium term.

It is true that consultations were done with state government while formulating the act. However, the then UDF government in office in Kerala has not presented the situation prevailing in Kerala effectively before the Central government. Moreover, the initial steps for implementing the Act were not taken in earnest resulting in the state not being able to meet the deadline in NFSA implementation. Further, ration card holders survey undertaken by the UDF government seems to have many irregularities resulting in large number of complaints as to inclusion in the priority categories. Now the present government has taken all possible steps to effectively implement the Act and identify the priority category scientifically.

Considering the fact that Kerala is a foodgrain deficient state with special socio-economic conditions and the large number of migrant workers, it is imperative to increase the central allocation to the state and also increase the eligible population under priority category to realistic levels.

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## **Legislate “Rohith Act”**

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) in its session at Thiruvananthapuram, Kerala, expresses solidarity with all those organizations of dalits, students, women and democratic sections who are observing the first anniversary of the institutional murder of Rohith Vemula on 17<sup>th</sup> January, 2017. It is a travesty of justice that a brilliant, young Dalit student was pushed into committing suicide because of the brutal insensitivity and caste prejudice displayed by two Cabinet Ministers of the Modi Government who exerted tremendous pressure on the administration of the Hyderabad Central University, where he was a Phd student, to victimize him for his commitment to social justice, secular thought and opposition to the death penalty. The Vice-Chancellor of the University, due to his own ideological moorings, did not defend the autonomy of the institution and behaved in the most unjust and vindictive fashion towards Rohith and his fellow-students. They were thrown out of the hostel and forced to live in a tent in the bitter cold, they were denied canteen facilities and they were even denied their scholarship money for several months. The police was also used to threaten these young men. All this created a sense of complete despair in Rohith who was driven to commit suicide on January 17, 2016.

Further, the Central Government has done everything in its power to try and prove that Rohith did not belong to the Scheduled Castes. This was done to protect all those responsible for his death from the provisions of the SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act. Neither the Central Government nor the Telengana State Government had helped Rohith’s mother, a poor single parent who is a tailor, or his family in any way.

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) supports the demand raised by many student and dalit organizations for the passage of a “Rohith Act” so that students can be protected from caste-oppression and caste-discrimination in educational institutions and also that those who resort to such measures face salutary punishment and removal from their posts.

The CPI(M) extends its complete solidarity and support for the passage of such a law.

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