

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

Report on Political Developments

*(Adopted by the Central Committee
at its July 24-26, 2017 meeting in New Delhi)*

International

During the last Central Committee meeting in April, we had discussed a detailed report on international developments, including the state of the global economy. Hence, we are highlighting only the major developments that have since occurred at the international level, especially those that have a direct bearing on us in India.

Global Economy

According to the World Bank's June 2017 *Global Economic Prospects*, the global economy is reportedly recovering in a moderate fashion. For the first time in many years, the global growth forecasts made in January have not been downgraded this year in June. Notwithstanding this, the World Bank states: "The risks to the global outlook remain tilted to the downside". It also predicts that over the long run, a protracted slowdown in productivity and investment growth could further weaken the growth potential of both the advanced economies and the emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs).

Of particular significance is the finding that since the global financial crisis of 2008, the fiscal position in EMDEs has weakened and private sector debt has risen. For India, this is testified by the humongous growth of the NPAs as a result of the non-repayment of the loans taken by the private corporates. Including interest, according to one estimate, this figure is likely to be over Rs. 10 lakh crores.

Globally, the EMDEs' fiscal balance worsened by about 6 per cent in the ten years between 2007 and 2016. The government debt in 2016 was more than 10 per cent of GDP in nearly 60 per cent of the EMDEs. This clearly shows that there is a severe financial stress that continues to plague the global economy.

The most important consequence of this would be a further reduction in government expenditures globally in order to meet the pressures of the

financial stress. This will worsen the situation for the vast majority of the world's people with consequent growing unemployment and severe cuts in social sector expenditures. The situation could well worsen sharply from the levels of austerity measures already imposed in major capitalist countries across the world.

Clearly, therefore, the global capitalist economy is seeking to emerge from its decade-long systemic crisis by further intensifying the exploitation of the vast mass of working people in the world.

Political Rightward Shift

In our earlier meetings, we have noted the continued global capitalist crisis and the political responses that are leading to a political rightward shift in the world. At the same time, the popular struggles against the imposition of burdens by this economic crisis and against the political rightward shift are also being seen in various parts of the world. This is reflected both in terms of the growth of strike actions by the working class and the electoral combinations formed to resist the right wing forces from capturing the government in some countries, notably France. The defeat of the right wing in the French Presidential elections, however, does not mean that the neoliberal economic policy trajectory will change.

British General Elections: British Prime Minister Theresa May called for a snap election to buttress her strength in the talks concerning exit from the European Union and to consolidate her own position domestically. In the event, this turned out to be a wrong calculation. Hoping to sweep the election, the Tory Party is now forced to make a deal with the most reactionary political grouping, the Democratic Unionist Party, which takes the most bigoted, racist and sexist positions, operating from Northern Ireland. The Labour Party, highlighting the people's issues and problems of imposition of greater economic burdens through its campaign has brought back class politics into British elections in a forcible manner. Though it did not get a majority, it vastly increased its strength and its leader Jeremy Corbyn has been able to restore people oriented political discourse in Britain.

Imperialist Aggressiveness

Syria: Mosul in Iraq has been declared a liberated city ousting the IS, though it has been reduced to a rubble with thousands killed and lakhs rendered homeless. The US and its allies have begun re-doubling their efforts to foil the Syrian army's advance all over Syria to re-capture its national territory fighting the Islamic State. The US air force in June bombed various strategic places in order to weaken the Syrian army's fight against

the terrorist groups. *The Wall Street Journal* recently reported that Israel has been regularly supplying the rebel groups in Syria with arms and materials. The Syrian army, supported by the Russian air force, continues to advance.

The US, now finding it difficult to achieve its objective of overthrowing the Assad regime in Syria, is shifting its focus in the region towards Iran which continues to remain the main target of the US strategy in the region. While this will require a further weakening of the Assad regime in Syria and the establishment of the new US military bases in the region, it also requires efforts to isolate Iran in the region.

Qatar: The attempts by Saudi Arabia and its allies to isolate and undermine the Emirate of Qatar have found the support of US President Donald Trump, initially. However, at the same time, the US signed a \$ 12 billion deal to sell fighter planes to Qatar. Qatar is host to one of the biggest US military bases in the region with more than 10,000 US servicemen. Qatar also hosts the forward headquarters of US CENTCOM, which was crucial for US military operations in Syria and Iraq.

Saudi Arabia has demanded that Qatar immediately sever its diplomatic relations with Iran, the suspension of the Al Jazeera electronic media network and the expulsion of those associated with Hamas and Muslim Brotherhood. Qatar and Iran share the joint South Pars gas field, the biggest in the world. Both need to cooperate in the Hydro Carbon sector as a consequence. While Saudi Arabia and UAE seek a regime change in Qatar, Qatar also has its allies in the region.

With the US focus now shifting to target Iran, this will be an important factor that will determine how this situation will unfold in the future. Israel remains the lynchpin of US military interventions in the Middle East.

Venezuela

Venezuela remains a major flashpoint in Latin America in the struggle against renewed imperialist aggressiveness. US imperialism has been pumping millions of dollars to various reactionary forces opposed to the Bolivarian revolution in Venezuela to create conditions of a civil war in the country to overthrow the Maduro government. These efforts are leading to large scale violence and the support to these armed groups is directly coming from imperialist agencies in the region and neighbouring countries.

Amidst these conditions, the Maduro government has made a controversial proposal to ask the National Constituent Assembly to draw up a new Constitution for Venezuela. The official Venezuelan press release lists out ten

reasons for a new constitution reform in the country. The main aspect of this is, "to create a constitutional process for peace" that can create conditions for resolution of conflicts instead of intensification of civilian conflict. President Maduro has made it clear that this new constitution will be put up for a popular referendum before being implemented. The Chavez constitution is held by many as a very progressive and pro-people one. Many are apprehensive about that being changed.

The Venezuelan government continues to make efforts to bring the opposing forces on to the negotiating table in order to restore peace. It is reported that they have even enlisted the support of the Pope in these efforts. The Pope in turn, it is reported, has come to the conclusion that the Venezuelan opposition is only interested in power and not peace and has refused all offers for negotiations.

Our solidarity is firmly with the Bolivarian revolution and the Maduro government in this ongoing struggle. How the situation in Venezuela will develop in the future will have an important bearing on the entire Latin American region.

Cuba

US President Donald Trump threatened at a public rally in Miami, speaking to mainly Cuban exiles that he would cancel President Obama's 'one sided' deal with Cuba. He also spoke of completely cutting off relations with Cuba and re-imposing economic sanctions to force Cuba into submission.

In response, Cuban President Raul Castro affirmed that Cuba will not be cowed down. The Cuban people have rallied behind the revolutionary Cuban government by enthusiastically reaffirming their commitment to socialism and resolving to continue to oppose US imperialist threats and gendarme tactics.

G 20

The G 20 agenda is promoting the international finance capital-driven neoliberal trajectory. India has become part of this global imposition, and has fully embraced such a trajectory for our country, to the detriment of our sovereignty and our people's livelihood.

Climate Change

US President Donald Trump lived up to his threat to pull out of the Paris Agreement on climate change. 195 countries in the world have endorsed this agreement and 147 of them have since ratified it.

The USA has, thus, repeated its betrayal of international climate agreements since it walked out of the Kyoto Protocol in 2001. Since then, the US has been continuously reducing its obligations for cutting down its carbon emissions and continues to be one of the world's worst polluters. The principle of "common but differentiated responsibility", which put the onus on the developed countries for having historically contributed over 77 per cent of global carbon emissions to bear greater responsibilities, is now being virtually jettisoned by the USA. The US exit will have serious implications for all countries, including India, which needs to urgently recalibrate its strategy.

Shanghai Cooperation Organisation

India, along with Pakistan, has been admitted as a full member of the Shanghai Cooperation Organisation (SCO) recently. This regional formation with the participation of Russia, China and India is home to 44 per cent of world's population and 25 per cent of the world's GDP. The SCO is primarily a security alliance set up with the goal to counter terrorism, separatism and extremism. Subsequently, it expanded its agenda for promoting cooperation in trade, economy, technology etc. India will have greater access to the Central Asian republics which are mineral and energy rich.

However, the increasing military and strategic cooperation with the USA and the consequent shifts in the direction of India's foreign policy will pose a question mark on how India's future in the SCO shall be. Further, India is the only country of the SCO not to be part of the 'One Belt, One Road' (OBOR) initiative of China. Further, with the current Indo-China standoff, it has to be seen how the SCO with India's participation will function in the future.

National

During the last Central Committee meeting, we had noted that following the BJP's victories in Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand and its formation of governments in Goa and Manipur, it has consolidated its position in the country. Since then, it has been using a combination of methods like CBI investigations, appeasement and outright purchasing of political support from various regional parties. The regional parties like TRS, both factions of

AIADMK, YSR Congress have openly supported the BJP Presidential candidate. Nitish Kumar and Naveen Patnaik have, for their own political reasons, supported the BJP Presidential candidate.

Four Pronged Attacks Intensify

The period after the last Central Committee meeting has seen an all-round attack on the livelihood of the vast majority of our people by the BJP-led government. The four pronged attacks – neo-liberal economic policies imposing greater miseries on the vast majority of our people; the sharpening of communal polarisation marked by a sharp rise in the attacks on dalits and minorities by the private armies like the *gau rakshaks* etc; further authoritarian attacks on democratic rights of the people and undermining of parliamentary institutions; and the further cementing of India as a junior strategic ally of US imperialism and the consequent shift in our foreign policy orientation – are very apparent.

After the Polit Bureau meeting on June 6-7, 2017, a detailed communiqué was issued by the Party and a booklet was also released highlighting the total betrayal of the electoral promises made by this government to the people of India as it was celebrating its completion of three years in office. These details are not being repeated here.

Sharpening Communal Polarisation

The BJP has been able to consolidate its position mainly through the massive sharpening of communal polarisation across the country. Every institution of parliamentary democracy is being penetrated and sought to be communalised. Education and research bodies including agencies like the Archaeological Survey of India are being penetrated with RSS personnel in order to sharpen communal polarisation and to rewrite history. There is a frenzied effort to communalise all public spaces. This is leading to a situation where many secular and democratic people are being intimidated before this offensive. This is a big challenge to our country.

Attacks on Dalits and Minorities

During the period since the last CC meeting the murderous attacks by the private armies in the name of *gau rakshak samitis* etc have sharply increased.

The communal attack on a Muslim family in a local train on the outskirts of Delhi led to the death of Junaid, a 15-year old student and serious stab

injuries to his brother 22-year old Shakir. The third brother Hashim was also injured.

These latest attacks clearly show that there is a pattern in this. The sharpening communal polarisation through such attacks is sought to be used for bolstering the electoral fortunes of the BJP. There is a widespread resentment that is growing in the country against such attacks and the activities of groups enforcing moral policing all across the country. Such instances are reaching serious proportions and efforts must be made to mobilise the widest possible opposition to such attacks.

The CPI(M) has demanded that there should be a central ban on all such private armies particularly *gau rakshak samitis*.

The BJP's doublespeak has once again been exposed when their Chief Ministers and leaders in the North East and Goa keep assuring the people of their states that their governments will ensure that there shall be no shortage of beef for the local population where this is a part of their customary diet.

Ban on Cattle Trade

The notification of the Ministry of Environment, Forests and Climate Change that bans sale of cattle for slaughter was an atrocious attempt by the Modi government to give legal cover for its wholly communal and divisive agenda to impose a diet code on the country.

It will destroy the livelihood of crores of farmers involved in animal husbandry, eliminate traditional cattle fairs, and put an unfair burden on farmers to care for useless cattle. This further burdens the farmers who are increasingly resorting to distress suicides due to escalating input costs. It will also impact on the leather industry and the meat export industry affecting the livelihood of lakhs of people. The notification was also an encroachment on the rights of the states under whose jurisdiction such issues fall.

This notification has now been stayed by the Supreme Court following the stay order issued by the Madras High Court. The BJP government has informed the Supreme Court that it will modify its notification and come back. There is no need or any scope for any modification. This notification has to be withdrawn lock, stock and barrel.

Attacks on Women

The Modi government has refused to include the Women's Reservation Bill in the business agenda of Parliament. The RSS has long opposed reservation on grounds that it "disrupts" family life. The CPI(M) has demanded that it should be introduced in this session itself.

The increase in atrocities against women have led to protests in several states. In Uttar Pradesh, under Adityanath where anti-Romeo squads were formed, the incidents of rape increased from 41 in March and April last year to 179 in the same period this year. In Shimla, Himachal Pradesh where a young school girl was raped and killed, the public protests continue. Two minor adivasi school girls in Raiganj were raped by TMC criminals in their office which led to a huge spontaneous protest and the office was burnt down. The Central government has refused to implement the recommendations of the Verma Committee. Shamefully, the Nirbhaya Fund is unutilised. Cases of involvement of political leaders, the most recent being the arrest of Congress MLA from Kerala, Vincent, on charges of rape show the degeneration of standards by ruling class parties. CPI(M) demands implementation of the Verma Committee recommendations.

Role of Media: There is virtual control by the central government of the official media to ensure that only the Modi narrative is propagated. The private media has come under large scale corporate control. The government-corporate nexus is ensuring that the narrative in the mainstream media is being dictated by the RSS/BJP.

Imposition of Hindi: In tune with the RSS slogan '*Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan*', its political arm the BJP and its central government are now seeking to impose the compulsory teaching and learning of Hindi all across the country. This is a clear violation of our constitutional provisions and the rights of linguistic groups for all recognised languages in India to be treated equally. This is yet another effort to sharpen communal polarisation and advance the Hindutva agenda.

Indian Economy: Increasing Burdens on the People

The Indian economy continues to remain on a downturn. The chaos caused by demonetisation is now clearly manifesting itself. The consequent economic disruption is leading to a further growth of unemployment and imposing economic insecurities on a large section of the people.

Agrarian Crisis

During this period, the agrarian distress has intensified. Spontaneous and organised protests by farmers have erupted in various parts of the country. The growing distress suicides by farmers triggered many of these protests. The firing at Mandsaur in Madhya Pradesh against protesting farmers and the general strike declared by farmers in Maharashtra around the same time brought the issue of agrarian distress to national attention.

The Modi government has betrayed its electoral promise of ensuring a minimum support price (MSP) for agricultural produce that would be one and half times more than the production costs which shall be estimated by a government agency like the Commission for Agricultural Costs and Prices.

Given these three years of betrayal, we have demanded that a law be enacted in Parliament that gives the right to the kisans to sell at the MSP at the rate as above. This means that when the kisans bring their produce, according to the law, the government will have no option but to procure the produce by paying them the legal entitlement of the MSP.

Growing Unemployment

With demonetisation having completely crippled the economy's informal sector, the huge mass of people that survived on daily or weekly employment have been virtually thrown on the streets. Even in the organised sector there is a very sharp drop in employment. The new data that has emerged since the last CC meeting by the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE) shows that between January-April 2016 and January-April 2017 formal employment declined from 93 million to 86 million i.e. 70 lakh people who were employed earlier are now unemployed. As noted by us in the last meeting the cut in the MNREGA funds continues, which means a further decline in rural employment. In the services sector, reports indicate that there are no new jobs that are emerging.

A recent survey conducted by the Federation of Indian Chambers of Commerce and Industry (FICCI) has shown that a staggering 73 per cent of the respondents said that they are unlikely to hire additional workforce over the next three months.

The employment situation in the services sector is also not showing any increased prospects for the vast army of skilled and educated Indian youth who seek jobs in this sector. The IT industry continues to face a slowdown leading to retrenchment with little prospects of future employment

enlargement. Newer technologies like robotics are also increasing unemployment by replacing human labour with robots.

The Modi government had promised to create two crore jobs annually. Instead what we have today is a large scale decline in employment. With nearly 1.5 crore youth joining the employment market every year, this is bound to generate more unrest among the youth.

Privatisation of PSUs

At the recommendation of the Niti Aayog, this BJP government is bracing itself for a large scale privatisation of the public sector. The Niti Aayog has been completely hijacked by the corporate sector and all its proposals are in tune with the demands made by the neo-liberal economic reform trajectory of international finance capital and domestic big corporate houses. This latest attack on the public sector is in tune with its aggressive pursuance of the neo-liberal economic reforms which include the handing over of prime public assets to foreign and domestic private capital 'for a song'.

Major privatisation of defence production centres is underway. Apart from providing a bonanza for foreign defence equipment producing corporates, this poses a serious threat to India's security. The Indian railways, which is the lifeline that unites our country and people, is now sought to be privatised. Various services connected with the railways are being given away to private operators. This will impose very severe burdens on crores of Indian people for whom the railways is the only lifeline for travel, livelihood and communication.

In the financial sector the new FRDI legislation that the government has proposed completely removes the banks and financial institutions from any degree of public scrutiny and social control. This again will have a very negative impact on the livelihood of the vast mass of our people.

Air India holds humungous real estate and has many other assets including a huge collection of precious paintings and art objects. Now in the name of privatisation all this is sought to be handed over to private capital for maximisation of profits.

This privatisation drive also undermines the limited opportunities provided for social justice vastly reducing the reservations in jobs for SCs, STs and OBCs.

The Party must be prepared to extend all support to and solidarity with the working class and trade unions when they give the call for protest against

this large scale sale of the people's assets of the country to fatten corporate profits.

GST

The Central Committee of the CPI(M) expressed its deep concern at the adverse impact of the Goods and Services Tax (GST) implemented from July 1, 2017. The GST has put new burdens on the common people, small and tiny enterprises, traders and unorganised sector occupations. Industries and services like textile, beedi, pharmaceuticals, construction, transport, tailoring, small newspapers, matches and fireworks also have been badly affected; agriculture and allied sectors are also impacted.

Though the government claims that the GST has brought down the prices of many commodities, the actual fact is that due to the iniquitous tax structure, there has been a rise in prices of many commodities and services. The scale of indirect taxation has been increased. The GST, as introduced, is part of the neo-liberal drive of the Modi government.

The GST structure is weighted in favour of the corporates. In areas where there has been reduction of tax rates, these are not being passed on to benefit the consumers, resulting in windfall profits for the corporates.

Particularly unjustified is the 5 per cent tax on equipment used by the disabled, the 12 per cent tax on sanitary napkins, the 18 and 12 per cent tax on food served in AC and non-AC restaurants respectively and the GST rate on essential medicines. Synthetic saris, largely used by women of low income households, have become more expensive with 18 per cent tax on the synthetic yarn.

The GST regime has subsumed the welfare related cess on non-coal mining, beedi, cine sector etc resulting in the taking away of welfare/social security related rights of the workers in the concerned sectors. The cess for clean energy and carbon tax is going to be diverted for SGST compensation fund which will be a big blow to clean energy promotion.

The small traders with turnover above Rs 20 lakhs per annum have to file their returns online and get their input tax paid by them, which makes it very difficult for them to conduct business.

There is an imminent threat of inflation and all-round increase in the prices of consumer goods. The GST regime has undermined the federal structure which will adversely affect the rights of states.

The Central Committee demands that the government take steps through the GST Council to immediately review and revise the GST tax structure to ensure that all unreasonable and iniquitous taxes be removed or reduced. For instance, the tax on the use of equipments by disabled must be reduced to zero; there should be no GST on the national list of essential medicines under the Drug Price Control order; the tax on sanitary napkins be scrapped; the limit on the annual turnover of traders, who were brought under the GST, should be increased substantially from the existing Rs. 20 lakhs and so on.

The decisions of the GST Council must be brought under Parliamentary scrutiny and supervision. The GST Network (GSTN) should be brought under the coverage of the CAG and the RTI Act.

The Central Committee notes that different sections of the people have come out in protest and strikes have taken place in different sectors since the introduction of the GST. The Central Committee calls upon all its Party units to organise, extend support and actively participate in the protest actions and struggles to ensure that the burdens imposed on different sections and sectors through the GST are removed.

Platform of Popular Struggles

On the basis of the last CC discussions, discussions with other Left parties and their mass organisations have been continuing. We have overcome the problems discussed in the last CC meeting regarding CPI's reluctance to invite mass organisations of the CPI(ML) and the SUCI on this platform and a meeting was held with their representatives. A small committee has been formed to work out the demand charter and the plan is to move towards the holding of a national convention in Delhi towards the end of August-beginning of September.

Aadhar and the Right to Privacy

A Constitutional bench of the Supreme Court is currently seized with the issue of privacy being a fundamental right of an individual. This BJP government says that there should be reasonable restrictions on this right and the government must have in specific conditions and for clearly defined reasons, access to such private information of individuals contained in the biometric data taken for aadhar.

The issue here is not the question of breaching privacy of an individual by the government, say for cases of fighting terrorism and internal security. The issue is that in today's world the personal data of individuals is accessed

by big global corporates and Indian corporates who use this information in various ways to bolster their profits and also harass individuals. There is a need to protect every individual from such mercenary corporate activity. We are therefore demanding that the government must enact a new law for protection of privacy of individuals and clearly stipulate the penal provision for any violation as seen in the latest breach of aadhar information on websites by the Jio.

Tripura

As discussed in the last Central Committee meeting, the RSS/BJP is making an all-out effort to try and dislodge the Left Front Government in the forthcoming assembly elections in Tripura. As anticipated, they have intensified efforts to create a polarisation in the state between the tribals and the non-tribals and in a sense provoked the IPFT into conducting the recent blockade of the national highway and railway in Tripura.

The BJP-led central government, using the CBI, is harassing the Party daily 'Deshar Katha' for having published some advertisements of chit fund companies under investigation. Strangely, such enquiries are proceeding only against our daily in Tripura, when many other dailies had carried the same advertisements. This clearly shows the targeting of the CPI(M) in Tripura.

The Tripura State Committee has worked out the details for meeting this concerted offensive by the BJP and has launched a vigorous campaign in the state. The Congress in the state has been reduced to a weak position. Six Congress MLAs who had earlier defected to the TMC, had in the presidential elections voted for the BJP candidate. It is also likely that they may shift to the BJP. The BJP, as is its methodology of work everywhere else in the country, has begun to attack CPI(M) cadre in some places in the state.

In the meanwhile, the latest data of the Government of India shows that among all the states in the country, two states in India with the best health and education indicators are Kerala and Tripura. As far as Tripura is concerned, with literacy of 96 per cent, and with life expectancy (men: 71 years, women: 73 years), the two indicators of public education and health, it stands at the top of all states in the country. It is these pro-people progressive policies that the CPI(M) and the Left governments implement that are also being targeted for attack by the BJP.

Kerala

Since the LDF government came into being in Kerala, 13 comrades have been killed in attacks by the RSS. More than 200 Party members and sympathisers have been injured and hospitalised. Over 150 houses and around 50 Party offices have also been attacked, set on fire or vandalised.

During the five years of the UDF government, 27 of our comrades were killed by RSS hoodlums. Such attacks are continuing even now. At the same time, unfounded allegations are levelled by the RSS about the CPI(M)'s 'atrocities' in order to cover up their own acts of murder and violence.

The LDF government has launched and successfully implemented four missions to take care of the burning problems of the people. These are: (i) 'Life' – for providing houses to all the homeless; (ii) 'Ar dram' – which is total health care project; (iii) To save public education system a massive programme has been initiated; and (iv) 'Haritha Keralam' – for total sanitation and organic farming. A special project to protect rivers, streams and watersheds has been launched and this has been widely appreciated.

The government is fixing minimum monthly salary of nurses working in the private sector at Rs 20,000/- and has also enhanced the minimum wage in all sectors to Rs 600/- per day.

In the roster followed for appointments in the reserved categories, the first would be the disabled, followed by others. The percentage of reservations for the disabled has also been increased to 4 per cent, in tune with the central legislation – the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016.

In the by-elections to local bodies, out of 86 seats the LDF got 51, the UDF 24, the BJP 9 and KC(M) 2.

In another development, a senior leader of the Kerala BJP has been caught in a corruption case related to procuring a no-objection certificate to start a new medical college. Another BJP leader has been arrested in a case related to the printing of counterfeit currency notes.

West Bengal

The BJP is conducting a systematic campaign to penetrate into various parts of West Bengal. It has intensified its activities for communal polarization including mobilizing school children with arms for processions on religious festivals.

Both the BJP and the Trinamul Congress are operating in tandem in the state. They are generating an atmosphere of competitive communalism which is having disastrous consequences. After more than four decades, communal riots have erupted in some parts of the state. The appeal of the TMC to Islamic fundamentalists directly feeds the activities of the RSS-BJP to intensify Hindutva communalism. The consequent communal polarization in the state is bound to have a far-reaching impact not only in West Bengal but also in the neighbouring parts of the country. Such competitive communalism, it is hoped by the TMC and the BJP would squeeze the Left particularly the CPI(M) out of Bengal's political space. In the meanwhile attacks, terror and intimidation unleashed by the TMC against the CPI(M) continues in various parts of the state. Our West Bengal comrades are bravely resisting such attacks and meeting the current challenges.

Darjeeling: Since June 8, eight people have died so far and many injured in police firing on protesters agitating against the state government's announcement of making Bengali a mandatory language. There are reports of serious violation of human rights due to a virtual economic blockade and even those who are in need of urgent medical treatment are unable to access hospital facilities.

The Gorkhaland Territorial Administration was created through the gazette notification of the GTA Act on March 14, 2012, following the assent by the President of India. This was the outcome of a tripartite agreement that was arrived at between the central government, the state government and the Gorkhaland Janmukti Morcha (GJM).

Given the worsening situation and gross denial of human rights and the hardships that the people in the area are being subjected to, urgent intervention is required. It is clear that the restoration of peace and normalcy in the area can happen only through a dialogue for which the process of talks between the three parties that created the GTA must immediately begin.

There is a need to urgently convene a tripartite meeting of representatives of the central government, the state government and the leaders of the movement to restore peace and normalcy in the region.

Kashmir

The situation in Kashmir has worsened further. The degree of alienation of the Kashmiri people with the Indian State appears to have reached a stage of near completeness. The BJP government continues to treat this as a mere law and order problem and refuses to address the reasons for this alienation.

This BJP government has reneged both on its assurance that it gave to the people of Kashmir, the Indian Parliament and the country after the visit of an all-party parliamentary delegation led by the Home Minister. It was announced by the government that they will undertake immediate confidence building measures like not using pellet guns; immediate measures to increase employment opportunities for Kashmiri youth etc. Simultaneously it promised to initiate a political dialogue with all stakeholders. Not a single forward movement has happened on both these promises for over six months now. This has contributed in a big way to the further alienation of the Kashmiri people.

The attack on Amarnath yatris was strongly condemned by the entire country and by all sections of the people in Jammu & Kashmir. The government has not been able to satisfactorily answer various security lapses that were noticed and why intelligence inputs, which the government itself accepts were received in advance, were not acted upon. Under these circumstances we must continue with our efforts to try and bring together a wide spectrum of political and people's movement forces, demanding the initiation of a dialogue through a political process with all stakeholders.

President/Vice-President Elections

Following our decision in the Central Committee, in consultation with all the other opposition parties, we supported the candidature of Meira Kumar for the post of President of India. While the BJP candidate has won as expected, the joint opposition candidate polled the highest vote by an opposition candidate in the last 50 years.

For the post of the Vice President, at our insistence that it should be a non-Congress candidate and on the basis of our proposal, all the opposition parties accepted to field Gopalkrishna Gandhi as a joint candidate. The JD(U), the BJD and the AAP have openly declared their support for the vice presidential candidate while the first two parties had supported the BJP presidential candidate. The electoral college for the Vice President (consisting of MPs of both Houses of Parliament) is heavily loaded in favour of the NDA. The choice of the opposition candidate, however, has generated much enthusiasm among the opposition parties MPs.

Mahagatbandhan

Following the cooperation of opposition parties during the President and Vice President elections, once again the calls for an all-in unity of all opposition parties or the *mahagatbandhan* have come to the fore. There is disarray

among the opposition parties themselves as noted earlier. But this slogan continues to be raised by one party leader or the other of the bourgeois opposition parties from time to time. As far as the CPI(M) is concerned, we have clearly stated that the alternative to the bourgeois-landlord class rule and its governments will be the Left and Democratic Front and its alternative pro-people policies. In order to develop this Left and democratic alternative, the CPI(M) had decided in its 21st Party Congress that:

“The Party will give primary attention to developing and building the independent strength of the Party. At the same time, the Party will strive to develop united actions on people’s issues, defence of national sovereignty, states’ rights and against imperialism with other democratic forces and non-Congress secular parties. Joint platforms for mass movements and united struggles are necessary if the Party is to expand its independent strength. The united actions of the class and mass organisations will seek to draw in the masses following the Congress, the BJP and the other bourgeois parties”.

India-China Standoff

For nearly six weeks now, the standoff between India and China over the Doklam Plateau, near the tri-junction between India, China and Bhutan has been continuing. This is a dispute that does not pertain to the border between India and China. This is an issue between China and Bhutan. India, however, feels that this area is strategic as it is close to the ‘chicken’s neck’, the strip of land that connects to the North East of India. Unlike earlier disputes, this has assumed seriousness because of the deterioration in the overall Indo-China relations. With India moving closer to the USA, we have joined the United States in its strategic designs in the Asia-Pacific and Indian Ocean region. The US’s main priority is to contain China. In this background, India has refused to be part of the OBOR and has openly taken pro-US positions on the South China Sea disputes. The Malabar Naval exercises jointly by US, India and Japan this year, have recently concluded in the Bay of Bengal. This is a clear signal by this BJP government that India is now a full-fledged strategic ally of US global strategic designs in South Asia, whose principal objective is the ‘containment of China’.

The Indian government has stated that it seeks to resolve the current standoff with China through diplomatic efforts and talks. We have welcomed this approach and stated that this is the only way in which this standoff can be resolved.

Foreign Policy

India's pro-US tilt in its foreign policy positions has become more pronounced. The Prime Minister's visit to Israel signals a major shift in India's foreign policy. The forging of a strategic alliance with Israel and the consequent downgrading of India's commitment to the Palestinian cause has now emerged with the sanction of our Prime Minister's visit. India has signed agreements sealing the strategic alliance with Israel on military and security collaboration. Over recent years, India had become the largest purchaser of Israeli arms and military equipments in the world. The RSS ideologically has a close affinity with Zionism. Thus, the rightwing Likud government in Israel and the RSS-led BJP government in India share an ideological bond. What is worse is that Prime Minister Modi did not even pay a visit to the Palestinian territories while he was on a state visit to Israel. Seven agreements were signed between India and Israel. This further cements the rightwing foreign policy shift under the Modi government. This is the virtual abandonment of the non-aligned independent foreign policy of India. This visit has realised the RSS long-term eagerness to have a US-Israel-India axis for global domination. This is a dangerous development.

CC Call

The Central Committee decided on the following programmes for the Party in the coming period:

1. Protest Movements must be initiated by all units of the CPI(M) across the country from August 15 to 31, 2017 demanding :

- a) Immediate loan waivers for the kisans who are being pushed into committing distress suicides due to the debt burden.
- b) Immediate implementation of the BJP's electoral promise of a Minimum Support Price (MSP) that is one and a half times the production costs.

The CPI(M) demands an immediate central legislation giving the right to the kisans to sell at such a declared MSP.

- c) Implement BJP's electoral promise of creating two crore jobs every year.
- d) Stop the large-scale privatisation of the public sector and public services.

- e) The reversal of burdens on various sections of the people imposed by the GST.
 - f) Immediately legislate the Women's Reservation Bill as promised by the BJP in the 2014 elections.
2. All Party units must observe the World Peace and Anti-imperialist day on September 1, 2017, highlighting the surrender of the Modi government to US imperialism and India being reduced to a junior strategic ally of US imperialism. The Prime Minister's recent visit to Israel and the BJP government's desire to have a global US-Israel-India axis must be highlighted as being against the interests of India and our people.
 3. The Party must take the initiative at all levels to mobilise all secular and democratic forces and conduct anti-communal programmes all over the country during the month of September.
 4. Strongly protesting against the growing attacks on Dalits and Muslim minorities, the Party at all levels must mobilise the people during the month of September demanding a Central law banning the *gau rakshak samitis* and RSS-sponsored private armies in the name of moral policing etc.