

Tel. 23344918,23747435
23363692, 23747436
Fax: 23747483



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

Central Committee

A.K. Gopalan Bhawan, 27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg New Delhi 110 001
Website: <http://www.cpim.org> email: cc@cpim.org

REPORT ON POLITICAL DEVELOPMENTS (Adopted at the January 17-19, 2020 Meeting of the Central Committee Thiruvananthapuram)

International

Global Economy

IMF, in its latest report (October 2019), forecasts that global growth will be 3.0 percent for 2019, its lowest level since 2008-2009 and a 0.3 percentage point downgrade from the April 2019. The World Bank estimates are even lower at 2.6 per cent. Momentum in manufacturing activity has weakened substantially to levels not seen since the global financial crisis. Rising trade and geopolitical tensions are also contributing. IMF has further downgraded its forecast for 2020 by 0.2 percentage points. This global growth pattern reflects a major downturn. The IMF suggests further “reform push in such areas as governance, domestic and external finance, trade, and labour and product markets”. Despite the bankruptcy of neo liberalism, IMF brazenly advises governments to deregulate domestic financial markets, implement labour reforms, by easing job protection legislations and cutting barriers to international trade and finance entry into the countries. In its *Annual Report 2019*, it wants the governments to reduce corporate tax, to make it ‘fair’. These will mean further severe ‘austerity’ policies that are an attack on the livelihood of the people. IMF advises the governments to ‘act swiftly following an electoral victory to implement them (reforms) during their political ‘honeymoon’ period’.

Protests Across the World

People around the world are in protests against the imposition of further economic burdens. In **Chile**, protests were against the increase in metro

fare; in **Lebanon**, it was the tax on WhatsApp calls; in **Iraq**, on an end to corruption, improved basic services and more jobs; in **Haiti**, they are against corruption, high inflation, fuel prices, and food shortages. In **Ecuador**, they started against the rise in fuel costs, but were basically against the reversal of the decisions of earlier government headed by Rafael Correa and accepting neoliberal prescriptions of the IMF. In **Liberia**, protests took place against corruption and economic hardships.

All these protests express popular anger and also reflect a deep political crisis. The inherent weakness of the capitalist system and its failure to come out of the global economic crisis, increasing burdens in the name of austerity and widening inequalities are leading to a socio-political crisis in many countries.

Chile: Protests began in Chile, when students rejected a 30 cent increase in the metro fare, but they developed into a broad movement against 30 years of neoliberal policies. People are demanding an overhaul of the socio-economic model on which the country is being governed. Chilean government had agreed to hold a referendum next April on replacing the constitution drafted by Pinochet's dictatorship. The drafting of a new constitution was a key demand of demonstrators who have taken to the streets against the government since October. The demonstrators have also demanded better access to healthcare and education and a departure from the neo-liberal economic system. At least 26 people were killed, hundreds injured, 300 with severe eye injuries and women sexually assaulted by the police and armed forces. During the plebiscite in April, voters will first decide whether they want a new constitution and who should draft it. Later, the draft will be put to another vote in a referendum. Even as the government agreed to this demand, protests are continuing against police abuses.

France: France's trade unions are leading nationwide strikes since early December against the government's decisions to overhaul pensions. Striking protesters have brought the country to a standstill as they were joined by the 'yellow vests' too in their demonstrations. Even the Paris Opera's orchestra has launched an unusual protest of its own. Gilets jaunes (yellow vests) protests in France are continuing for the last 55 weeks (more than one year). These have also propelled the firefighters' strike, students' mobilisations against education reforms, and the recent rail stoppages, were all indicators of the failed policies of the government

and have definitely gained from the gilets jaunes protests. In spite of the severe repression unleashed by the French government (never seen since the 1968 student protests), they are still continuing.

Iran: Iran was engulfed by a huge wave of popular protests which were confronted by unprecedented repression by the authorities. Popular demonstrations in 100 cities across 23 out of Iran's 31 provinces saw hundreds of thousands of people mobilized against the government's decision to remove subsidies on petrol prices, which were raised by as much as 300 percent. At a time when the impact of US sanctions has paralysed the economy with sky-high rates of inflation and unemployment, the decision of the government added to the miseries of the people. According to reports, more than 360 protesters in 21 cities have been killed. 3700 people have been injured and more than 8000 have been arrested. The regime shut down the country's entire internet system and phone lines are being actively monitored by the security agencies.

Against Atrocities on Women: Several thousand protesters marched through Paris demanding government intervention to prevent deadly domestic violence against women. 130 women have been killed in France this year by a current or former partner, which is about one every two or three days. France has the highest rates of domestic violence in Europe. Globally on an average, 30 percent of women are subjected to domestic violence, according to the UN. Similar protests against increasing violence on women were held in Spain, Ecuador and Brazil.

Global Rightward Shift

The October CC meeting 'Report on Political Developments' had noted the following regarding the global rightward shift:

"The 22nd Party Congress had noted the global political rightward shift as a consequence of the prolonged global capitalist crisis. The protests against the policies of neo-liberalism and profit maximization that are ruining the lives of billions of people across the world and intensifying exploitation has to be disrupted in order to ensure that they do not reach levels threatening the continuance of the neo-liberal order despite its bankruptcy. A slowdown in the levels of profit maximization cannot but affect adversely the interests of the global capitalism. Rightward political

shift of rousing passions, disruptive trends like racism, xenophobia, spreading hatred, suppression of democratic rights and civil liberties have all been brought into play to disrupt the growing unity of the working class led working people's protests across the world."

This political rightward shift continues in many countries also have its impact in India. There are, of course, growing resistance to this trend in many countries. This resistance will have to be further strengthened globally by forging international solidarity amongst communist and workers parties.

US Attack on Iran

The recent attack of the US against sovereign Iraq in which the Commander of the Iranian Revolutionary Guards' Quds, was assassinated in Baghdad along with high rank officers of the army of Iraq reflects further US imperialist aggression in the West Asian region. This unprovoked and reckless drone attack and the deployment of additional 3,000 troops clearly show the intention of the US administration to further escalate tensions in the region.

Trump had wanted the Iranian response to be 'proportionate' to the killing of the Iranian General. Iran has retaliated by launching 15 missiles on two US military bases in Iraq and claimed that at least 80 were killed while the US denied any casualties. With the impending elections in Israel and US (Trump also faces impeachment), attempts are made to shore up the support of domestic conservatives by escalating tensions in the region. The accidental shooting down of a Ukrainian passenger plane near Tehran airport has been admitted by the Iranian authorities. This tragic event has brought about a temporary lull in the confrontation between the US and Iran.

Bolivia

Evo Morales, elected president of Bolivia, was overthrown in at coup carried out by the opposition oligarchic forces, aided and abetted by the US. Morales was forced to seek asylum in Mexico and now in Argentina. Bolivia now joins the long list of countries where the US has intervened and aided the overthrow of progressive, Left leaning presidents in Latin America. Morales was forced by the army to resign, though he had clearly

won the elections by attaining 10 per cent votes more than his nearest opponent. The opposition, along with the Organisation of American States (OAS) had alleged electoral fraud and unleashed widespread violence. Flags and symbols of indigenous people are burned and desecrated. Women wearing indigenous dress were kidnapped and assaulted. The attacks continued, particularly targeting working-class neighbourhoods. Armed forces that were soft towards violent opposition demonstrations, attacked anti-coup demonstrators, leaving several wounded and at least two people killed.

The ruling classes of Bolivia, which were opposed to the nationalisation of natural resources particularly lithium, that powers batteries for clean energy and using the profits so generated for people's welfare, led the coup against Morales. This is another example of the sharpening divisions between right-wing authoritarian forces representing the interests of the ruling classes and the Left standing for the interests of the working class and other toiling sections.

Elections for a new government have been set for May 3, 2020. These elections will choose a president, vice president and members of the legislative assembly. Morales himself will not be a candidate in the elections, but has been appointed to lead his party's campaign. The coup plotters in government have announced that they will arrest Morales on charges of sedition, but the former leader has nevertheless said he intends to return to his country.

US Imperialism's Brazen Interventions In Latin America

US imperialism's direct and brazen interference in the internal affairs of many Latin American countries is emboldening the rightwing forces to dismantle progressive Left-leaning governments that were elected democratically by the peoples of various countries. In Brazil, the self-declared fascist Bolsonaro was elected after a rightwing reactionary destabilization of the Left of centre government and the arrest of former presidents Lula and Dilma Rousseff. Predictably, the Modi government has invited this president to be the Chief Guest at the India's 2020 Republic Day parade.

US moves against China

The United States under the Trump administration has been actively working to contain China. Trump initiated a trade war against China by increasing tariffs on a whole range of goods successively in the past one and a half years. This was followed by sanctions directed against the giant Chinese company Huawei and pressurizing other countries not to purchase its 5G technology. The United States is taking such aggressive measures, alarmed by the rapid advance China has made in developing new technologies including Artificial Intelligence and Machine Learning. However, such efforts have not succeeded. By end 2019, Huawei had signed 60 commercial agreements to supply 5G technology in over 30 countries and the number is rising, illustrating the failure of the US to blockade Huawei's export of communication technologies.

The imposition of over hundreds of billion dollars of tariffs has also failed to deter China. After prolonged talks, a phase one trade agreement between the two countries was signed between July 15-22. This deal has diluted some of the US tariffs on Chinese goods in return for China committing to buy more of certain American goods. However, this is only a temporary respite given the aggressive approach of President Trump to counter the growing prowess of China.

Along with this, the Trump administration has strengthened its military and strategic alliance directed against China in the so called Indo-Pacific region by forging the quadrilateral alliance comprising Japan, Australia, India and the US.

Recent Elections

Britain: In the General Elections held on December 12 in Britain, ruling Conservative Party has increased its vote share and secured a huge majority. Out of 650, the Conservatives won 364 seats, providing them with a 78 majority. The Labour Party was reduced to 203 MP's in the House of Commons. The conflict of opinion within Labour's own leadership and membership to remain or leave the EU (its attitude towards Brexit), became untenable. The Jewish Board of deputies led by the Chief Rabbi, intervened during the elections and accused Labour Party of anti-Semitism. The Overseas Friends of the BJP (OFBJP) and its hard-core ideological organisation Hindu Swayamsevak Sangh, also supported the Conservatives. For the first time, religious external political

organisations directly intervened in British politics. The Conservatives were successful in diverting the attention of the people from the economic issues and convert elections into a single point agenda – Brexit. Labour’s collapse was overwhelmingly in those areas that wanted the Brexit to be implemented. The social democratic policies mentioned in the Labour manifesto were considered too radical and revolutionary by the ruling classes. A study of the election results shows that while the Conservatives were able to win substantial number of votes from the older people, Labour succeeded in winning majority of the votes from the youth (Conservatives’ vote share among the over-65s was more than 60 percent).

Austria: Austria’s conservative party struck a coalition deal with the Greens to ensure their return to power and bring the Greens into government for the first time. Austria will join fellow European Union member states Sweden and Finland in having the Greens in government, albeit in a junior role.

Croatia: Centre-left, Social Democratic Party, won Croatia’s presidential elections, defeating incumbent president Kolinda Grabar-Kitarović. The result is a blow for the ruling conservatives before a parliamentary election later this year. This is a significant victory for the Left-wing in central Europe, where conservatives have been winning elections in recent years.

Spain: A new social-democratic coalition government has assumed office in Spain. This coalition, headed by outgoing Prime Minister, Pedro Sanchez, is between the centre left Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party (PSOE) and the leftist group, Podemos.

Climate Change Summit: The UN's 25th annual international COP (Conference of the Parties) on climate change ended with the world's major polluters refusing to accept increasing responsibility to stop global warming. In a major set back to global cooperation, the meeting put off the discussion of key issues like the regulation of global carbon markets, despite protests from smaller island nations. The negotiators came to a compromise agreement that will see new carbon-cutting plans ready to be negotiated in November 2020. Following Trump’s withdrawal from the Paris Accord, USA, the second biggest emitter of greenhouse gases, will be excluded from many of the negotiations at next November’s climate

talks aimed at finalising guidelines for implementing the 2015 Paris Agreement. The lack of action at the summit comes in the background of increasing protests demanding urgent actions on climate change. Around the world, thousands of mass rallies, particularly the massive protests of school students, demanded governments to take climate emergency seriously.

Status of women: According to the World Economic Forum's *Global Gender Gap Report*, at the current rate of change, the gender gap in economic participation and opportunity for women cannot be eliminated for another 257 years (up from 202 years in last year's estimate). This means that women have to wait roughly until the year 2277 for equal pay. The report measured the gender gap across economics, politics, education and health and ranked 153 countries. The report detailed the global widening of the economic gender gap. Of the four categories, politics had the largest gender disparity, although it has shown improvement from last year. Only 24.7 per cent of the global gender gap in politics has been closed. This year, women held 25.2 per cent of parliamentary lower-house seats worldwide and 21.2 per cent of ministerial positions.

National Situation

The seven-month period since the Modi government came back to power has seen an intensified push for the Hindutva agenda accompanied by a heightened degree of authoritarianism. The abrogation of Article 370 and the dismantling of the state of Jammu and Kashmir was followed by a brutal clampdown; then came the Supreme Court verdict on the Ayodhya dispute sanctioning the building of a Ram Temple where the Mosque stood; after this came the adoption of the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and the NPR-NRC process. All these signified an aggressive Hindutva offensive and a strengthening of the authoritarian attacks on democratic rights.

This divisive communal agenda was pushed at a time when the economic slowdown intensified and the people bore the brunt of economic difficulties through rising unemployment, lack of purchasing power and rural distress.

As against this onslaught of the Modi regime, there have been unprecedented protests against the CAA-NRC and the growing resistance to the attacks on secularism and the Constitution. The discontent against the BJP rule was reflected in the assembly elections to three states and the January 8 general strike.

Challenges Intensifying

The period since the last CC meeting in October has seen developments which dangerously confirms our apprehensions of the four-fold new challenges that will emerge after the 2019 victory of the BJP.

1. The economic crisis continues to intensify, pushing Indian into a virtual economic recession. Unemployment is the highest in half a century. Factories are closing down, laying off lakhs of workers, agrarian distress deepens, distress suicides of farmers continue, price rise particularly in fuel, cooking gas and vegetables like onions are crippling the livelihood of crores of people. Food inflation at 14.3 per cent is the highest since November 2013, while the overall inflation rate was 7.35 per cent in December 2019, highest since July 2014. Protests against all these issues have merged with the January 8 all India strike and grameen bandh call.
2. The communal polarisation is being aggressively sharpened. The CAA/NPR/NRC is significantly widening the Hindu-Muslim divide and polarization. Attacks on the Muslim minorities have further sharpened.

The situation in Kashmir continues to remain far from normal even after five months. Apart from the merciless denial of elementary human rights and democratic rights of the people, this has devastated the J&K economy, imposing further misery on the people. All these measures are clearly aimed at consolidating the Hindutva communal polarization and seeking to replace the secular democratic Indian Constitution with the RSS fascist agenda of "Hindu Rashtra".

3. All constitutional authorities and independent institutions continue to come under further pressure including the judiciary, the Election

Commission, the CBI, the ED, the RBI etc. to facilitate the advance of the Hindutva agenda. Parliament is increasingly becoming a show of numbers rather than conducting any meaningful deliberation in the law-making process. Respect for and faith in the judiciary is coming under severe strain. The amendments to the RTI Act virtually nullify the original intent of transparency and accountability and the murderous attacks on RTI activists and whistleblowers are directed at making the government unaccountable.

- 4. Growing Attacks on People's Civil Liberties & Democratic Rights:** Any expression of dissent against this government is brandished as being anti-national or of speaking the 'language of Pakistan'. Sedition cases are being slapped on those who oppose or dissent from government positions. Phrases like *urban naxals*, *tukde tukde* gangs are aimed at silencing the critics of the government and forcing them to turn into servile conformists. Widespread use of Section 144 and internet shutdowns have become the norm in BJP-ruled states.

Deepening Economic Distress

The Modi government continues to remain in a state of denial over the fact that the Indian economy has virtually entered a stage of recession with the GDP growth showing a decline for over two quarters. This has resulted in the heaping of unprecedented burdens on the vast majority of our people. The data released by the NSSO has shown that the consumer spending in rural areas declined by 8.8 per cent in 2017-18 indicating a fall after four decades and consequent rise in poverty levels. This report has now been withdrawn by the government over "data quality issues". This Modi government is indulging in gross data fudging. The lack of data credibility is additionally hitting India's global ratings.

Forbes describes the present economic conditions in India as the "worst economy in 42 years". The nominal GDP growth rate is the worst since 1978. This international publication says, "even these figures could be overly optimistic". The Modi government, it says "self-inflicted wounds" on the economy with demonetisation and "the GST roll out" depressing tax revenues.

All sectors of our economy, agriculture, industry and services, have been subject to severe slowdown. Industrial output recorded the steepest decline in eight years. Power demand fell the most in the last twelve years. All current estimates of GDP growth rate are constantly lowering the projections to around 4.5 per cent.

Unemployment levels have reached the highest in the last half a century. Massive lay-offs and retrenchment is taking place in factories across the board, including the IT sector.

Additionally, the government has embarked upon a largescale privatization of the public sector. This, apart from destroying India's self-reliant basis, also benefits directly the corporate cronies of this Modi government. Such privatization will add to already largescale growing unemployment in the country. Further, whatever little benefit that the marginalized sections of Indian society derived from reservations would be seriously eroded.

This economic recession has been caused due to a sharp decline in the purchasing capacities of the vast majority of our people. The answer to turn around the economy lies in providing people the capacity to purchase, thus increasing the levels of domestic demand which may lead to a revival of closed factories. The Modi government has announced a package in two instalments of Rs. 2.15 lakh crores providing tax cuts and benefits to the corporates with the hope that they will increase their investments. Increased investments cannot revive the economy unless people have the capacity to buy what is produced by such new investments. It is precisely this that is going to get further exacerbated by the government's so-called "solutions".

Instead, if this Rs. 2.15 lakh crores were used for enlarging public investment to build our much-needed infrastructure, social and economic, this would have resulted in the creation of lakhs of new jobs providing employment to our distressed youth. Once they start spending their earnings, the domestic demand would have risen providing the required kickstart for an economic turnaround. Cruelly, the government has turned back two out of the 13 crores who applied for work under the MGNREGA.

However, this Modi government in its urge to provide greater avenues for profit-maximisation to foreign and domestic corporates is providing them with concessions while further pushing the vast majority of our people into languishing misery.

Jammu & Kashmir

Post Article 370 Abrogation

It is now more than five months since the restrictions on communications, public transport movement was imposed in the state of Jammu & Kashmir. Though some easing of restrictions has been announced, the daily life of the people continues to be disrupted because of immense hardships.

Most of the political leaders have either been detained under the draconian Public Safety Act or continue to remain under house arrest. The government claims that they have not been arrested nor are they facing any charges. But the fact of the matter is that they can neither leave their residence nor can anybody go to visit them. Hundreds of others are reportedly detained in various jails in the country and there is still no clarity on how many have been detained and under what charges.

The CPI(M) demands the complete lifting of all restrictions imposed on the state that continue to affect the normal life and activities of the people. Internet and even SMS messaging continues to remain barred. This is grievously affecting the state's economy which is largely dependent on tourism and the sale of cash crops like fruits and saffron. Most of these orders and payments are made online. This continues to remain disrupted.

Annually, on an average, apple trade is in the range of Rs. 10,000 crore. This is totally ruined. The BJP government must declare this as a national calamity and compensate the apple growers.

The state of Jammu & Kashmir must be restored. The assurances given to the people of Jammu & Kashmir at the time of its accession to India must be honoured. The CPI(M) demands that all the political leaders detained should be released forthwith; restoration of internet communications; the complete restoration of democratic rights and civil liberties guaranteed by the constitution must be ensured. In particular, school going children have been subjected to tremendous trauma with uncertainty over their

careers, future and employment. This cannot be allowed to continue any longer.

**Ayodhya Dispute:
Verdict Delivered; Not Justice**

The CPI(M) has always maintained that the resolution of the Ayodhya dispute must be through a negotiated settlement, failing which, the only way is to resolve the matter through a court verdict. This is the only manner in which a secular republic governed by the rule of law can deal with such a dispute. The verdict has now been delivered. But the verdict has not upheld the secular principle and given precedence to faith over the facts and evidence in a tile suit.

- The five-member Constitution bench headed by the Chief Justice states repeatedly the commitment to uphold constitutional values and that “the adjudication of civil claims over property must remain within the secular.....”. “The title cannot be established on the basis of faith and belief.....” Despite such declarations, the end result of the verdict has given precedence to faith and beliefs of one side. Instead of dealing with the petitioners in this case, the verdict deviates by widening the ambit referring to Hindus and Muslims.
- The verdict states unambiguously that the demolition of the Babri Masjid in December 1992 was a “serious violation of law”. But finally, hands over the site to the very forces responsible for this criminal assault. The writ filed in 1989 was by a leader of the Vishwa Hindu Parishad, an organisation that led the agitation that resulted in the demolition of the Babri Masjid.
- The verdict states that the desecration of the mosque in December 1949 by the illegal placing of idols within the mosque was also a grave violation of law. Yet, the entire disputed site has been handed over to the violators of law.
- The verdict clearly states that the Archeological Survey of India findings do not provide any evidence for the destruction of a temple to build the mosque as claimed by the Hindutva forces. However, it goes on to say that no evidence was offered to indicate that the exclusive possession of the entire structure of the Babri

Masjid belonged to the Muslims between 1528 and 1857. Since the mosque was constructed in 1528, till the British annexation of Awadh in 1856, the mosque was, for over three centuries, under the rule – first of the Mughals, later of the Awadh nawabs. The fact that there was no dispute prior to 1857 cannot prove that the Muslims were not in exclusive possession or the mosque was not used for prayers. On the contrary the Hindu side's claims of continuous possession has been upheld not on the basis of facts but it appears that the display of faith and belief has taken the upper hand.

- The verdict has reiterated the Places of Worship Act, 1991 as a law which enforces constitutional obligations to uphold the equality of all religions and secularism. No place of worship can be altered from the status quo as it exists since August 15, 1947. However, the court failed to bar the future raising of such disputes in other locations like Kashi and Mathura. The RSS chief has in a veiled warning declared that the disputes of Kashi and Mathura are not on the agenda “for now”. This is an ominous declaration indicating that passions can be aroused on these issues at any time in the future. A firm resolve by the apex court to bar such possibilities was not forthcoming.
- Though the December 1949 and December 1992 incidents have been categorized as serious violation of law, justice has not been delivered on the perpetrators of such criminal acts. The case against those including L K Advani, Murli Manohar Joshi, Kalyan Singh etc. as being responsible for the demolition of the Babri Masjid has been languishing for nearly 28 years now. This must be expedited and guilty punished and this verdict of the Supreme Court should not impinge on the delivery of justice.

CAA-NRC-NPR

The CAA-NRC has become a burning political issue before the country. After the CAA was adopted by Parliament on December 11, 2019, countrywide protest erupted. The CAA is being seen by wide sections of the people as an attack on the secular concept of citizenship as defined in the Constitution. What the CAA has done is to introduce a religious criteria in determining citizenship. As per the amendment, Hindus, Sikhs,

Buddhists, Jains, Parsis or Christians who come from Afghanistan, Bangladesh or Pakistan before December 31, 2014 shall not be treated as illegal migrants. They will be eligible for applying for citizenship by naturalization, if they spent not less than five years in India. This is a relaxation of the time limit of not less than 11 years for naturalized citizens. But this provision does not apply to Muslims who have come to India from these countries. They will still be treated as illegal migrants. It is this discrimination based on religion which makes the amendment to the citizenship law unconstitutional and illegal.

The CAA and NRC must be seen in tandem. Amit Shah had announced in the Lok Sabha on December 9 that a nationwide NRC would follow after the passing of the CAA. While the CAA would legitimize Hindu migrants as citizens, the NRC would target the so-called Muslim infiltrators. The pincer movement of the CAA and NRC will be used to heighten communal anxieties and create a new divisive agenda suited to the BJP-RSS sectarian politics. The immediate focus of the twin policies is West Bengal, which has a large number of people who migrated from the East Pakistan and later from Bangladesh. The refugee population in West Bengal, who have settled there for decades, should have been naturalized as citizens with all relevant rights. However, the amendment to the Citizenship Act, 2003 introduced a new term of “illegal migrant” thus denying citizenship to a huge number of people. While the citizenship of these refugees must be guaranteed through naturalisation, the linking of religion with citizenship is unacceptable.

The BJP hopes to garner the support of the Bengali Hindu refugees in Assam and West Bengal through the CAA while targeting the Bengali Muslims for exclusion by the NRC process. All over the country, the NRC process will subject the Muslims for communal profiling and the threat of exclusion. As the experience of Assam shows, a large number of other poor people will also be subject to harassment and face exclusion as they will not be able to provide proof and relevant records to prove Indian citizenship. This is tantamount to waging a war against the poor and the marginalized people.

NPR-NRC Link

Our Party was the first to point out the link between the National Population Register (NPR) and the NRC. In the Report on Political

Developments adopted at the Central Committee meeting held on October 2-4, 2019, it was stated that a gazette notification had already been issued for house-to-house enumeration for the NPR to be done between April 1, 2020 and September 30, 2020. Further, it was said: “This is being done in preparation for an all India NRC on the basis of this NPR.”

The report had also noted that the CAB is being brought in the next session (winter session) of Parliament. The adoption of the CAA saw the emergence of a countrywide movement against the CAA and in defence of the Constitution and secularism. There are two notable features of this movement – firstly, many of the protests have been spontaneous; the second notable feature is the lead taken by students throughout the country. Students from elite and professional institutions like the IITs, IIMs, Indian Institute of Science etc. came out to protest.

In Assam, there were mass protests against the fact that the CAA blatantly violates the Assam Accord wherein the cutoff limit for citizenship was March 24, 1971. The CAA has now made it upto December 31, 2014. The Home Minister Amit Shah had also declared that the NRC will be re-done in Assam along with the all-India NRC. It is this violation of Assam Accord which has sparked off the sustained movement in Assam and the North-East against the CAA. Protests have been taking place continuously defying curfew and prohibitory orders. Five people were killed in police firing.

Faced with the widespread opposition against the CAA, the Modi government became defensive on the question of the NRC. Prime Minister Narendra Modi, while addressing a rally in Delhi, claimed that there had been no discussion on NRC in the Cabinet. He also said that the NPR process is being undertaken as part of the Census operations and had nothing to do with the NRC. Home Minister Amit Shah, who had earlier been categorically asserting time and again that the NRC would be taken up after the CAA, also fell in line and stated that the NRC process has not been notified. The Modi government sought to obfuscate the fact that the NPR is the first stage of the NRC. The Citizenship Act was amended in 2003 by the then BJP government. The NRC and a new concept of “illegal migrant” was introduced in the law then. The rules framed under this amended Act provided for the NPR, which would become the basis for the NRC, as per the rules. Without undergoing the NPR process, there can be no NRC.

Countrywide Popular Protests Against CAA/NPR/NRC

Spontaneous protests erupted all across the country soon after parliament passed the Citizenship (Amendment) Bill, 2019. The Left parties had given a call to observe December 19 all over the country as a protest day. This day coincided with the anniversary of the hanging of Ramprasad Bismil, Asfaqullah Khan and Thakur Roshan Singh by the British during the freedom struggle. This was widely observed and provided a further impetus to the ongoing people's protests.

So far thirteen Chief Ministers have announced that they will not implement the NRC process in their states. These are apart from the North Eastern states. Among these 13 are Chief Ministers are those belonging to parties who supported the CAB in parliament like the BJD, JD(U), Shiv Sena and the YSR Congress.

The Kerala State Assembly in a special session unanimously passed a resolution rejecting the CAA. Kerala Chief Minister also announced that the NPR process will not be implemented in the state. The Punjab legislative Assembly also adopted a similar resolution. The West Bengal Chief Minister also declared not to implement the NRC. However, the TMC and the Chief Minister refused to accept a resolution in the assembly moved by the secular opposition parties rejecting the CAA. We have appealed to all the Chief Ministers who have opposed the NRC to also oppose the NPR given the fact that the NPR is the foundation on the basis of which the NRC will be created.

Muslims everywhere have instinctively grasped the import of this anti-minority law and the whole community has risen in protest. The participation of Muslim women in large numbers is a significant feature.

The BJP tried its best to project the popular protests as a Hindu-Muslim confrontation. However, all across the country it was the people's protest cutting across communal divides, waving the tricolor and taking an oath to defend our Constitution by public readings of its Preamble. This protest movement has assumed the form of a patriotic movement in defence of India's secular, democratic Republican Constitution.

The BJP state governments unleashed a brutal repression against the protesters. All the deaths in these protests have occurred in BJP ruled states. Deaths due to police firing today stand at 21 in Uttar Pradesh, 5 in Assam and 2 in Karnataka according to admitted official sources. The UP State government has virtually unleashed a communal pogrom against the Muslims with the police indiscriminately ransacking and attacking, looting and harassing, molesting women in all Muslim dominated areas.

The most brutal police repression was unleashed in Uttar Pradesh by the Adityanath government. Adityanath called for “badla” against the protestors. The entire state was put under Section 144. The protests by Muslims after the Friday prayers on December 20 were sought to be brutally suppressed. 21 people were killed of which 20 have died due to police firing. The Uttar Pradesh police have denied that anyone has died due to police bullets except in one case where it claimed that a police officer fired in self-defence.

The police went on a frenzy of beatings and destruction of property in Muslim localities in many of the towns. Subsequently, notices have been issued to many poor Muslims to pay fines for damage to public property. In places like Lucknow and Varanasi, political and social activists who were peacefully protesting were arrested and charged with various sections of the Penal Code and sent to jail.

The blatant anti-Muslim bias of the police force was exhibited through communal abuse levelled at Muslim men and women by the rampaging police and the threat to send them to Pakistan.

In another BJP-ruled state – Karnataka – in Mangaluru, police fired on protestors and two young men were shot dead and injured others. The police went on a rampage in the Muslim localities.

In Aligarh Muslim University, the UP Police unleashed a reign of terror which is unprecedented in independent India. Many students sustained very grievous injuries in this unprovoked attack.

The Delhi police which is directly under the Union Home Minister unleashed a brutal attack against students who were protesting against the CAA. The police attack on Jamia Millia Islamia was unprecedented. Scores of students were severely injured and the Delhi Police finally had

to admit that they had fired against the students. The police ransacked the library and destroyed property in the students' hostels.

Later in JNU where the agitation was going on against the savage fee hike that was aimed to destroy the JNU's character and access of the marginalized sections to the university became coupled with the anti-CAA/NRC protests. On January 5 masked armed outsiders belonging to the Hindutva outfits entered the campus and mercilessly attacked and beat up students belonging to the Left organisations. Over 20 students and faculty members were treated at the AIIMS Trauma Centre. The JNUSU President was targeted for attack but she survived lethal blows on her head. Many students and faculty members had broken bones. For over three hours, the Delhi Police was standing by outside the university gates but refused to intervene to restore law and order. The Vice Chancellor is complicit in this attack for having permitted/facilitated the entry of armed outsiders and in not asking for police help for over three hours when this rampage went unchecked. He must be sacked immediately.

The violence unleashed by the police and police protected armed thugs belonging to the Hindutva outfits was captured on videos that went viral on social media. These negated the lies being propagated by the BJP that it was the protesters who indulged in violence. This evidence, instead of forcing the authorities to take some action against the culprits, as only led to further protection being provided to them. For instance, in the JNU incidents, the JNUSU President and other students belonging to the Left organisations have had FIRs lodged against them by the university authorities while not a single FIR has been filed against the masked armed outsiders.

These attacks in Jamia, AMU and JNU resonated with protest actions in solidarity in more than hundred institutions across the country. Educational institutions which normally distance themselves from political developments were also drawn into these protests in a big way. The IITs, IIMs, the Indian Institute of Science, Tata Institute of Social Sciences, the Delhi School of Economics, St. Stephens and many others joined the mainstream protests. In many universities the state governments unleashed repression against these solidarity actions like in BHU, in Jadavpur University, in Tamilnadu etc.

The public outrage against this was spread wider with sections of the film industry and celebrities joining the protests. Nearly eight thousand international scholars and academics have signed the petition in solidarity with the protesters and called upon the Modi government to rescind its steps to divide India communally. These include Nobel laureates, scientists, artists and intelligentsia other than from the academia.

Thus, this period from December 10, 2019 when the CAA was being adopted in Parliament, till now has seen a significant moment in the country's political history. There has been, on the one hand, a brutal offensive of the Hindutva authoritarian regime and, on the other, there has been the growing resistance and countrywide protests against CAA-NRC in defence of the secular democracy and the Constitution.

Future Course

Efforts are on to bring together various political parties who now stand opposed to the CAA/NRC alongwith civil society groups and eminent personalities on a common forum in defence of the Indian Constitution to launch nationwide protest actions. In the month of January three significant dates – Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose's birthday on 23, Republic Day on 26 and Mahatma Gandhi's assassination day on 30 – would be observed all over the country.

January 8 Strike

The all India strike call given by the central trade unions supported by the Kisan sabhas and agricultural labour organisations who gave a call for a Grameen Bandh, student organisations who gave a call for an all India strike against the CAA/NRC repression on the students and in solidarity with the working class and the peasantry was an big success. The strike took place across industries, public sector enterprises, financial and unorganized sectors. Across the country, tens of thousands of peasants and agricultural workers participated in the road and rail rokos. School, college and university teachers participated widely. The strike was a warning to the Modi government not to pursue anti-working class and anti-people policies.

In many states bandh like situation prevailed with rail and rasta rokos all over the country.

The joint trade union strike was a much bigger success than on previous occasions. An estimated 25 crore workers and people from various sections have reportedly participated in the strike and in several demonstrations and actions across the country.

This strike call came at a time when a huge people's protest is going on against the attacks on our secular democratic Constitution by the CAA/NPR/NRC. This added an additional dimension to the strike and the protest actions.

The strike was total in many industrial clusters across the country including in multinational corporations. Most of the industrial clusters in Karnataka, Maharashtra, NCR Delhi, Tamilnadu, West Bengal and other states were shut down. In West Bengal, despite the opposition by the ruling Trinamool Congress and the CM, the strike and a grameen bandh was a grand success. In the jute industry, 95 per cent of the works participated in the strike overcoming the threats and intimidation by the state government.

There was a total bandh in Kerala, Assam, Bihar, Odisha, Goa and parts of other states. The public sector workers enthusiastically participated in the strike. Most of the independent federations in the services sector joined the protests.

Clearly, this once again demonstrates that there is growing anger amongst the people. The massive response to the strike and the bandh call reflects the readiness of the people to protest against the mounting economic burdens and misery heaped on them by this Modi government and their determination to defend people's democratic rights. These strikes need to be further strengthened by the working class and other sections of the people.

This strike comes in the background of the forging of the links between the workers, peasants and the agricultural labour that have seen joint actions in the past few years. These are the beginnings of the forging of a worker-peasant alliance essential to carry forward the people's democratic revolution.

Growing Attacks on Federalism

This BJP government led by Modi has during the last five and a half years systematically attacked the constitutionally guaranteed rights of the states and federalism. GST has completely taken away all fiscal rights of the elected state governments. The Centre is adopting a very discriminatory and negative attitude towards non-BJP state governments. A glaring example is the manner in which the central government is curtailing the rights of Kerala. The Central Government has unilaterally reduced Kerala's entitlement of Rs. 24,915 crores through public borrowings to Rs. 16,602 crores on the basis of flimsy allegations. GST compensation to the state to the tune of Rs. 1,600 crore has not been paid. Likewise, Rs. 1,215 crore on account of MNREGA arrears and Rs. 1,035 crore for paddy procurement have not been paid, apart from denying any financial assistance for natural calamities that has caused damage of over Rs. 2,000 crores.

There is a need for all non-BJP state governments to come together to protect the rights of their states as well as uphold and strengthen federalism which is a fundamental feature of our Constitution.

Sabarimala Review Hearing

The five-member Constitution bench was to hear the review petitions and writ petitions regarding its September 2018 judgment allowing women of all ages to worship in the Sabarimala temple. Instead of disposing off the review petitions, the majority judgment, deviating from the norm, has widened the scope by making a reference to various points concerning religious rights under the Constitution to a nine-member bench. The minority judgment of two members has categorically rejected all the review petitions and upheld the 2018 judgment.

By diverting the matter to other issues concerning women's rights of other religions which are already being heard by other benches of the court, the majority judgment has failed to uphold the 2018 verdict and by keeping the review petitions pending has created an ambiguous and uncertain situation.

The Court has started hearings on January 13, 2020.

As far as the CPI(M) is concerned, it is committed to women's equality in all spheres and wants the court to come out with a definitive stand at the earliest.

Assembly Elections: Setback for BJP

The **Maharashtra** assembly elections saw the BJP-Shiv Sena alliance getting 161 seats which was a majority but lesser than its previous combined tally. However, the BJP and Shiv Sena could not agree to the coalition agreement and the sharing of the Chief Ministership. Faced with an imminent understanding between the Sena, NCP and Congress, the Governor swore in Devendra Fadnavis as Chief Minister and NCP leader Ajit Pawar as Deputy CM in a midnight operation. This maneuver failed as the NCP MLAs remained with Sharad Pawar and when Supreme Court directed a trust vote in the assembly, Fadnavis was forced to resign. The Shiv Sena-NCP-Congress formed a coalition government with Udhav Thackeray as the Chief Minister.

The loss of a key state like Maharashtra is a big setback for the BJP. With the BJP out of government in Maharashtra, there is a palpable sense of relief among the people. This was clearly seen in the fearless manner in which lakhs and lakhs of people came out in protest against the CAA and the repression on the students in various universities. The Maharashtra Chief Minister declared that his government would not implement the NRC process in the state.

In **Haryana**, the BJP failed to get a majority in the assembly. It could win only 40 out of 90 seats as compared to 47 seats in the previous assembly. The record of the Khattar government alienated sections of people who had voted for it earlier. The BJP had to strike a post-poll alliance with the Jannayak Janata Party to form the government. Though it managed to form a government, the results were an electoral setback for the BJP.

In the **Jharkhand** State Assembly elections the BJP suffered a resounding defeat reflected in the sorry position of its former Chief Minister, its Speaker and four of its Ministers who lost by big margins. Since the formation of the state this is the first time that the BJP was relegated to the second position. The alliance led by the Jharkhand Mukti Morcha comprising of the JMM, the Congress and the RJD won handsomely with 47 seats in an 81 seat Assembly. JMM emerged as the single largest party.

PM Modi and HM Amit Shah campaigned extensively mainly focusing on 370, CAA, reservations for poor upper castes. But clearly they failed in their vicious and divisive communal campaign.

The Government started off with a good decision to withdraw cases of sedition against tribals involved in the Pathalgarhi movement which has been widely welcomed.

In the three state assembly elections held in past three months, the net outcome has been a setback for BJP. In all these elections, both the Prime Minister and the Home Minister aggressively mounted a Hindutva communal nationalist campaign. Clearly, the jingoistic emotional appeal that was strong during the general elections is waning. The grim reality of increasing attacks on people's livelihood is making increasing number of people reject the BJP.

Growing Crimes Against Women

Barbaric incidents of sexual violence against women and children have registered an alarming increase. According to the latest NCRB report in 2017, on an average every day 93 crimes of rape were registered, one third of them on minors. Shockingly, if one takes into account all registered rape cases in that year, including the over 1.15 lakh cases pending in courts for years, less than 4 per cent have ended in convictions. It is this utter failure to ensure justice that provides impunity to rapists. Combined with the shameful attitude of the central ruling party leaders who blame and shame women for the crimes against them and who have supported the criminals on numerous occasions, an environment is created for increase in crimes against women.

Several incidents in the recent past have led to national outrage and protest such as the rape and murder of a young vet in Hyderabad and the equally horrific case in Unnao where a young rape victim was burnt to death by her rapists out on bail, courtesy the UP Government. The so-called encounter killing of those arrested for the Hyderabad crime was nothing but a desperate effort by the State Government to conceal its own failures to prevent the crime. It is essential to implement the long standing multi-dimensional recommendations of the Verma Committee for the prevention of crimes against women and to ensure swift certain justice in all cases of sexual crimes against women.

**Foreign Policy:
Further Cementing Ties with Imperialism**

In the short space of seven months of the second term of the Modi government, steps to strengthen strategic and military ties with the United States were speeded up.

The quadrilateral alliance comprising the US, Japan, Australia and India had begun in the year 2018 when secretary-level meetings began. In September 2019, the Quad format was upgraded with Foreign Ministers' participation. On September 26, the Foreign Ministers of the four countries met at New York in the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. The United States has been keen to make the Quad an active alliance in the "Indo-Pacific" region to counter China. The Modi government has now gone fully on board.

An informal summit between President Xi Jinping of China and Prime Minister Narendra Modi was held at Mamallapuram, near Chennai. This was in continuation of the informal summit held in Wuhan in China. Despite the façade put up that the Modi government was seeking to improve relations with China, all the steps taken in this period show India is going ahead with the US imperialist-led strategic and military alliances directed against China in the region.

The 2+2 format which consists of regular meetings between the Foreign and Defence Ministers of India and the United States began in 2018. This forum has become a key interface between the political leadership of the defence and foreign ministries of the two countries. The first 2+2 meeting after the Modi government's returned to power took place in Washington on December 18, 2019. One outcome was the signing of the Industrial Security Annex (ISA) agreement which facilitates transfer of sophisticated US military technology to India. For this, the Indian armed forces and tech companies have to take required steps to protect the US information and intellectual property. Out of the three foundational agreements at the military level, two were signed during the previous Modi government – the LEMOA in 2016 and COMCASA in 2018. The third agreement – the Basic Exchange Cooperation Agreement (BECA) – is still being negotiated and is expected to be finalized soon. The BECA has very disturbing features detrimental for our country's security interests. It has

a provision for sharing of geopolitical intelligence between the militaries of both countries. It further proposes a permanent link of the Indian Navy headquarters at Delhi with the Asia Pacific Command headquarters at Hawaii.

The 2+2 meeting also discussed more purchases of US military equipment by India. On the agenda was the buying of 24 multi-role helicopters, six more P-81 aircrafts and six more Apache helicopters. The US is ensuring that India becomes totally dependent on the US for military equipment.

The 18th Non-Aligned Summit was held at Baku, Azerbaijan in October 2019. The Prime Minister Modi did not attend this meeting, just as he has skipped the earlier summit held at Caracas – a clear signal that India does not consider the Non-Aligned Movement relevant any more.

After the steps taken to abrogate Article 370 and dismantle the state of Jammu & Kashmir and the clampdown there, there has been concern worldwide about the plight of the Kashmiri people and human rights violations there. After the “Howdy-Modi” event in Houston, Texas, where Modi virtually endorsed Donald Trump as the next President of the United States, the bi-partisan consensus between the Republicans and Democrats about India has got disrupted. The Democrats have been vocal about the situation in Kashmir and this was reflected in the House Committee on Foreign Affairs where strong criticism of the Indian government’s policies on Kashmir were heard. In Britain, the Labour Party had raised certain concerns regarding the Kashmir situation. In the run-up to the recently held mid-term elections, PM Modi on his visit declared open brazen support to the Conservative PM Boris Johnson. The overseas RSS/BJP organisations actively campaigned for the Conservatives openly calling for the defeat of the Labour candidates as their party is supposedly “anti-Indian”. In both the US and the UK PM and the BJP is brazenly intervening in their domestic elections.

The adoption of CAA has had an adverse impact in the neighbouring South Asian countries. The talk of religious persecution of minorities has upset Bangladesh and Afghanistan who have a friendly approach to India. Internationally the image of India has suffered with the United Nations Human Rights Commission and other bodies criticizing the legislation as sectarian and exclusive.

Central Committee Call

1. Extend full support to and active participation in all the joint protest calls against the CAA/NPR/NRC and to safeguard the Indian Constitution.
2. Actively support and strengthen the call for joint actions on the following, all across the country:
 - a) **January 23** is the birthday of Netaji Subhash Chandra Bose. The slogan coined by the Indian National Army under his leadership has become the regular greeting of all Indians, “*Jai Hind*”. The historic INA trial at Red Fort reverberated with the slogan “*Sehgal, Dhillon, Shahnawaz*” that galvanised the Indian people and bolstered the communal unity of our people during those difficult times of 1945-46.
 - b) **January 26** is the Republic Day. Readings of the Preamble of the Constitution and taking oath to safeguard it in all habitations across the country must be held.
 - c) **January 30** is the martyrdom day of Mahatma Gandhi. Observe it by highlighting his relentless campaigns in pursuit of communal harmony.

Given the current developments, these three significant days must be observed, in an appropriate manner, form and peacefully at maximum number of locations across the country.

3. **Campaign Intensively on:**
 - No to NPR – We shall not answer (*Jawaab Nahi Denge*)
 - Call upon the Chief Ministers opposing the NRC to also halt the NPR as this forms the basis for the NRC, like the state government of Kerala and Punjab have done.
 - Conduct house to house campaign explaining the NPR-NRC linkage and asking the people to answer the census questions but not to answer the NPR Questions.
 - This house to house campaign will culminate on March 23 marking the martyrdom of our immortal martyrs – Bhagat Singh, Rajguru and Sukhdev and to join the efforts to realize Bhagat Singh’s vision of an exploitation free, inclusive new India.

- Demanding dismantling of the existing detention centres and stop construction of new ones.
- The mass fronts of the Party while participating in these house to house campaigns will raise their issues of immediate concern and regarding livelihood conditions of our people.