

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)



Central Committee

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Review of the Assembly Elections in Kerala, West Bengal, Tamilnadu & Puducherry and Assam

(Adopted at the Central Committee Meeting held on August 06-08, 2021)

Overall Results: Setback for BJP : The results of this round of Assembly elections is a setback for the BJP in Kerala, Tamilnadu and West Bengal. In Assam, it managed to retain its government with a razor thin difference in the vote share of 0.78 per cent more than the opposition 'Mahajot'. Despite all its efforts to sharpen communal polarization, spending unprecedented amounts of money, aggressively misusing Central agencies and manipulating the electoral apparatus, intimidating and threatening opposition parties and its leaders, the BJP and its allies failed to get the people's support that they sought and have been decisively defeated in Kerala, West Bengal and Tamilnadu.

These results create opportunities to further strengthen people's movements and struggles in the country to safeguard the secular democratic character of the Indian Republic as laid down by the Constitution, which is under severe assault by the BJP Central government. This provides the opportunity for vastly strengthening people's struggles and popular movements on pandemic related life and death concerns of the people and for better livelihood conditions.

Kerala

In these elections, the LDF under the leadership of the CPI(M) registered a historic victory. That an incumbent state government has been reelected is a development that has not happened for more than four decades in the state. The LDF's performance is better than in the last Assembly elections. This shows the increase in people's acceptance of the LDF government. The people of Kerala gave this mandate to the LDF on the performance of the previous government, the alternative policies pursued as opposed to the disastrous policies pursued by the Central government, the manner in which severe natural calamities were handled,

the exemplary manner of tackling the pandemic and providing relief to all the affected sections along with the welfare measures undertaken in the last five years.

The LDF has won the people's mandate by vigorously countering the UDF and BJP's disruptive policies of heaping false allegations of corruption on the Chief Minister and the government. The people appreciated the LDF government as being the bulwark of secularism and the communally harmonious character of Kerala society. The firm stand of the LDF government against the CAA and other Hindutva measures of the BJP-RSS increased support amongst the minorities and people at large.

These elections saw the unprecedented use of the Central agencies like ED and CBI to target the Chief Minister and the government on false charges connected with the gold smuggling case and extending it to a whole gamut of government policies. The rightwing media launched a full-fledged campaign against the LDF government. The LDF strongly countered these moves which were supported by the BJP and UDF. It was the patent falsehood of these vindictive steps that incurred the people's displeasure.

LDF which had secured 91 seats in the 2016 elections was able to secure 99 seats this time. While LDF won two-thirds of the seats, CPI(M) along with its independents won 67 seats. It was the first time that any political party in Kerala secured 67 seats in the history of elections in Kerala. This is also the election in which all sections of society – the working class, peasantry, agricultural labourers, youth, students, backward sections, dalits, adivasis, religious minorities, middle class and women – all have extended support to the LDF. That we could ensure the support of large sections of people beyond the Party is the result of our organizational setup's ability to convey the good work of the Government to the people. The Congress-led UDF's attempt to once again raise controversial issues like the Sabarimala women entry issue, which it had emotionally utilized during Lok Sabha elections, was rejected by the people this time.

LDF's Seat Sharing: This was an election after the expansion of the LDF with Kerala Congress (M) and others joining. For that reason, it became necessary to share some seats which were contested by the constituents of LDF with the new constituent parties. Since all constituent parties co-operated, it was possible to make seat-sharing satisfactorily. That the LDF worked in the election with no discontent gave strength to the election work.

Of the 99 seats won by the LDF, the Party-wise break-up is as follows: CPI(M) – 67 (61+6 independents), CPI – 15, Kerala Congress (M) – 5, JD (S) – 2, NCP – 2, Democratic Kerala Congress – 1, LJD – 1, INL – 1, Congress (S) – 1, RSP (Leninist) – 1.

Selection of Party Candidates: The state committee took the bold decision that comrades who have contested twice consecutively from the same constituency need not be fielded again. The understanding was that comrades with long legislative and ministerial experience can be shifted for organizational and other responsibilities. Similarly, those doing organizational work for a long time can be given legislative responsibilities. On this criteria, it was decided that 33 sitting MLAs need not contest and new candidates were put up. This stand of the Party was appreciated by the people and the rank and file of the Party.

It may be recalled that the Central Committee in its rectification campaign document of 1998 had recommended fixing of two or three terms for elected representatives. This has been fully implemented in Kerala with good results.

Results: LDF votes increased from 87,25,939 (43.35 per cent) in 2016 to 94,07,662 (45.28 per cent) in 2021. UDF votes in 2016 78,08,743 (38.79 per cent) increased to 81,85,270 (39.49 per cent) in 2021. BJP votes in 2016 viz 30,20,886 (15.01 per cent) got reduced to 25,92,139 (12.47 per cent) in 2021. UDF had a slight increase in votes mainly because a portion of BJP votes were transferred to UDF. In 2016 elections LDF secured 4.5 per cent (9,17,194) more votes than UDF. This time it increased to 6.14 per cent (12,12,182) votes.

	2016 Assembly	2021 Assembly
LDF	43.35	45.28
UDF	38.79	39.49
BJP	15.01	12.47

LDF secured more seats than the UDF in 11 districts. LDF votes increased in 12 districts. UDF secured less votes in 5 districts. LDF votes declined in Kollam district and Ernakulam district.

UDF got more seats than us in Ernakulam with 9 out of 14, in Malappuram with 12 out of 16 and 2 out of 3 in Wayanad. BJP lost its lone seat in Nedom which LDF won.

All constituent parties in LDF have representation in Assembly this time. 9 out of 10 women elected to the Assembly are LDF candidates. Last time the number was 8. LDF secured 13 out of 14 seats for scheduled castes, 1 out of 2 seats for scheduled tribes. Among them 9 are CPI(M) candidates. However, the number of women candidates put up by the Party is still inadequate.

The LDF was able to defeat the BJP in the sole seat it held in the Assembly. From 2016, BJP votes are slightly above 15 per cent. This time it got reduced to 12.7 per cent. BJP votes had been gradually increasing from 2006 onwards. The decrease in votes it secured this time is important in the present national situation. BJP had used all the influence of the Central Government and huge money.

Majority of the basic classes voted for LDF. Aid provided by the Government to workers in traditional industries and other relief measures like distribution of food kits etc were beneficial. Peasants and agricultural workers supported the LDF. Workers in the unorganized sectors supported in general. There was no negative trend towards the LDF from the organized sector workers. Large sections of the middle class supported us. All these factors contributed to the big victory.

Main Factors that Ensured LDF Victory:

- (i) A clear political line which highlighted our fight against the BJP-RSS danger and exposed the Congress-Led UDF's opportunist collaboration with BJP.
- (ii) Expansion of LDF with entry of Kerala Congress (M) and LJD.
- (iii) Exemplary work of LDF Government which made qualitative changes in matters related to the life of people.
- (iv) Proper execution of social security programmes.
- (v) Protection given to all sectors of people on the firm foundation of religious amity. There was no anti-incumbency factor during the election. Popular vote got turned into vote for development.

Certain Concerns: While noting these favorable factors, we should not ignore the fact that our voting percentage in 2021 is less than our voting percentage in 2006. We have to seriously consider the reasons for this and to make efforts to expand our influence. We have to identify all factors that hinder our efforts to get more acceptability among people and take measures to find solutions. We have to attract ordinary people who have rallied behind UDF and BJP towards us and try to increase our mass influence. Appropriate corrective steps are necessary in certain areas where we lag behind.

It has to be noted that BJP has come in second place in nine constituencies. BJP is in second place for some time in the linguistic minority constituencies in Kasargode district. This time also BJP votes were transferred to UDF in many places. We have to pay more attention to the constituencies where BJP has reached second place.

The state committee review notes that while our votes increased in 12 districts compared to 2011, the LDF vote decreased in Kollam and Ernakulam districts. This should be specially examined, especially Kollam district as it is a strong base of the Left and working class movement, and necessary steps taken.

Correct Parliamentary Deviations

As a Party constantly engaging in parliamentary/legislative activities, we have to be on guard against parliamentary deviations and comrades becoming prey to parliamentary illusions and hankering for positions. This problem exists as pointed out in rectification documents of Kerala state committee and Central Committee at various times.

During this election too, certain wrong tendencies were seen in connection with candidature in two constituencies where public protests were held by Party members. This was harmful to the Party. In a few places, factionalism affected the election campaign. Such trends should be curbed and firm corrective measures taken. The Party must conduct a rectification campaign to counter such deviations.

Organisational Steps

The state election review has pointed out some organizational steps to strengthen the Party. Taking these into account, the following are to be undertaken:

- (i) Improving the quality of Party members by raising their political-organisational level, given the big expansion of Party membership.
- (ii) Large sections of people have come closer to the Party in the course of the election. Steps to draw them closer to the Party.
- (iii) New sections, including middle class, are coming to the Party in Muslim areas. Steps to recruit the best among them as Party members and build Party in those areas. Also attention to recruiting more members from amongst the Christian community.

- (iv) Increasing awareness of Party members and units about the political-ideological design of the Hindutva forces.

UDF After Elections

The strength of the Congress-led UDF should be recognized though we have been able to make advance in the election. The UDF vote share has actually increased slightly compared to the 2016 Assembly elections. It was 38.8 per cent in 2016 and it is 39.4 per cent now. Muslim League, with its big influence among the Muslim community, is giving strong support to the UDF. The anti-Communist media in Kerala is also providing strong support to the UDF. UDF also commands considerable influence among the upper middle classes.

The UDF had an understanding with Muslim fundamentalists and at the same time dealt with the BJP for vote transfer. They will continue their efforts in new form. The Party should continue efforts to weaken UDF further by seeking to attract the masses following them and by expanding our base among the basic classes.

The Position of BJP

BJP in trying to utilize the power at the Centre to sharpen communal polarization and expand their influence for the past few years. The power at the Centre enables them to spend money in a substantial way. Some social forces within Hindu religion are shifting their allegiance to BJP. However, compared to the previous elections, BJP's vote share declined substantially in this election. They lost their representation in the Assembly. The decline of the vote share of the BJP should not lead us to the conclusion that BJP has weakened substantially.

The poor people who have been supporting BJP are moving away from them. There should be efforts to see that such sections do not move to UDF. The efforts of the BJP to penetrate among sections under our influence must be checked. There should be careful examination of the new spheres of influence of the BJP and corrective measures adopted.

New Responsibilities of the Party

The progressive force in India have considerable expectations from the LDF government. In the current national scenario, the performance of the present LDF government in pursuing alternative policies against BJP and their Hindutva

communal extremist positions and globalization policies, will provide the necessary stimulus to the growing people's struggles.

The LDF vote share in terms of numbers and percentage has increased compared to the previous elections. However, one should consider seriously the fact that even after KC(M) and LJD joining the front and the better performance of the government and goodwill of the people towards the LDF government, the vote share has increased only by 1.93 per cent. We have not been able to reach the voting percentage of 48.81 per cent we got in 2006 neither in 2016 nor in 2021 election.

The continuance in government for a second term is a new experience and brings forth more responsibilities. At the government level, economic development has to be sustained in the face of adverse circumstances; production in agriculture and industrial spheres improved. There has been a rightward shift in Kerala society and pernicious trends are manifesting themselves such as dowry deaths, attacks on women, obscurantism and retrograde social customs. The Party and progressive forces have to counter these trends. Finally, concrete steps must be taken to heighten the political-ideological level of the Party members which alone will help us to discharge our responsibilities in the new situation.

Numerous cadres are holding responsibilities in Cabinet, as MLAs, in local bodies and cooperative sectors. Our approach and behaviour should earn the confidence of the people. We must eschew all wrong practices such as bureaucratism, arrogance and corrupt practices. The Party and class and mass organisations should function independently and not become appendages of the government and dependent on the administration. The cadres should be humble and adopt a responsible approach to the people.

The CPI(M) and LDF in Kerala should be able to blaze a new path which will inspire all the Left and democratic forces in the country to further endeavors.

West Bengal

The results in these assembly elections in West Bengal are devastating. Since 1946 the Communists never faced such a disastrous result. This is for the first time in independent India that no Communist was elected to the state assembly.

The state leadership has taken the responsibility. A review of these results cannot be a one-time exercise but has to be a continuous serious self-critical introspection.

This is because many of the factors that contributed to this dismal performance are those on which the Party had taken decisions in the past, both political and organisational, which could not be properly implemented. The reasons for this have to be sharply pinpointed and corrected.

The defeat of the BJP by the people of West Bengal is a salutary factor. The election process continued for over a month with eight phases for 294 assembly seats. 81.77 per cent cast their votes i.e. nearly 6 crores. Trinamool Congress won 213 seats, BJP 77 seats.

The Party along with the Left Front had seat adjustments with the Congress and the Indian Secular Front (ISF). Except for one seat won by the ISF, this combination which was named as Sanjukta Morcha could not win any other seat.

BJP has been defeated despite their high profile aggressive campaign, spending unprecedented amounts of money and the Prime Minister and Home Minister holding election rallies across the state. This aggressive campaign was seen by the people of West Bengal as an affront to their cultural way of life and an attempt to impose Hindutva on Bengal. People saw the TMC as the main vehicle to achieve this defeat of the BJP. Despite our anti-BJP campaign along with the campaign against TMCs ten year rule and politics of terror, people did not consider the Sanjukta Morcha as an alternative.

The 17th Assembly in West Bengal is a polarised one between the TMC and the BJP. The BJP's emergence as the main opposition party in Bengal is a dangerous signal for the future. These results will naturally strengthen the political bipolarity that emerged during the 2019 Lok Sabha elections where the BJP made substantial gains. The campaign then and since these elections was the projection of a contest between the central government and the state government; the PM and the CM and hence the BJP and the TMC. In the 2019 LS elections, the CPI(M) could not get a majority of votes in any single assembly segment. It was clear that the sharp polarisation between the BJP and the TMC has squeezed out any other political force.

Party state committee in its assessment when the preparations for these assembly elections began had come to the conclusion that the correlation of political forces that emerged from the 2019 elections have not changed. These results confirms this. But the question is why we could not change this political correlation between 2019 and 2021?

CPI(M) contested 138 seats on our symbol. We got only 4.73 per cent of the votes. The Sanjukta Morcha got 9.9 per cent of the votes. Of this the Left Front got 5.6 per cent, the Congress got 2.3 per cent and the ISF 1.38 per cent.

In the 2016 assembly elections, the Left Front won 32 seats. Among these 23 were won by TMC and 9 by the BJP this time. In 2016 the Congress had won 44 seats. Of these in 2021 the TMC won 29 and the BJP the rest of the 15.

The Left Front vote declined by 21.5 compared to 2016. In 2019 Lok Sabha election, Left front polled 7.4 per cent of the vote, this fell to 5.6 per cent in these assembly elections. Due to seat adjustments the number of seats we contested are fewer this time. In 2021, we contested 138 seats and got 4.73 per cent votes.

Certain Issues

As noted earlier, these results have been shocking. The state leadership has already taken responsibility for this. Party needs to undertake a serious self-critical introspection. The Central Committee is duty bound to discharge this responsibility.

Following these results, the Polit Bureau after its meeting on May 5, 2021 sent a note to the West Bengal State Committee asking them to look into certain important aspects while undertaking their review. The preliminary review of the state committee addressed these issues contained in the PB note. However, there are certain aspects that need to be more thoroughly addressed. The Central Committee must come to conclusions on these aspects which is essential for unifying the entire party. This is important as the impact of these shocking results in West Bengal is faced by the Party all over the country. Hence the review, though mainly concerns the West Bengal Party unit, is of importance to the Party as a whole.

This is also necessary for another important reason. Party has always maintained that West Bengal is the advanced outpost of the democratic movement in the country. This position has to be retrieved and it can be retrieved on the basis of a collective unified understanding on important aspects.

Sharp Decline in Our Mass Base: The main issue that needs a serious self-critical introspection is that the sharp decline in our mass base and social following that began in 2008 continues. The Party had since then at various levels including the Party Congresses have examined this decline and identified certain reasons that

need to be corrected. The Organisational Plenum of the Party also identified detailed measures to be undertaken in order to arrest and reverse this decline. But, however, as these election results show, we have not been successful in implementing these decisions. The process of self-critical introspection on why our Party has not been able to internalize these reviews will hence have to continue and the opportunity of the forthcoming Party Congress should be utilised to identify and set in motion steps to correct and rectify this situation.

During this period since 2008 our Party had to face very severe repression through fascistic attacks. There was resistance against these attacks. Between 2011 and 2018 we have lost 746 comrades. During this period, more than one lakh, two thousand of our Party members, sympathisers were driven away from their homes and Party had to make arrangements for looking after them in the urban areas. More than 1,30,000 of our members and sympathisers are subjected to false cases filed against them and the consequent harassment and intimidation. This situation of terror and violence contributed to demoralisation amongst much of our mass following.

During this period Party and mass organisations have conducted many big struggles, mobilised large number of people for central/state level calls and protest actions. Brigade rallies with the participation of more than 10 lakh people were also organised. Yet the question remains why such mobilisations and actions have not translated into better electoral results or reverse the trend of the decline in our mass base.

The following two aspects, which contributed to our decline in the mass following, have not been properly taken into account in assessing the situation in the state.

Political Rightward Shift: During this period, the RSS expanded rapidly in West Bengal. The number of RSS sakhas as well as an intense communal polarisation propagating the Hindutva agenda had grown significantly. This is part of the countrywide growth of the RSS/BJP particularly since after the 2014 Lok Sabha elections under this Modi government. This led to the consolidation of the Hindutva communal vote bank and the rousing of jingoistic nationalism.

Our 22nd Party Congress political resolution analysed the factors behind the growing rightward political shift as a consequence of the world capitalist crisis. This has become further strengthened with the global Covid pandemic being utilised by right-wing forces for further consolidation. The growth of racism, xenophobia and all sorts of divisive factors are growing globally. This has had its

impact in the rise of rabid communalism and polarisation in India. Its impact in Bengal and the extent to which the strength of secularism has been eroded, impacting sections of our mass base must be seriously assessed and countered. This struggle to combat the communal offensive unleashed by the RSS/BJP has to be met at multiple levels as decided by our Party Congresses, i.e., ideological, political, organizational, cultural levels etc.

Class Changes in our Society: The aggressive pursuit of the neo-liberal reform trajectory on Indian society was an issue that was seriously taken up by the Party Central Committee. Specific commissions were formed by the Central Committee to identify these changes in various sectors and the reports of these commissions were discussed by the Central Committee and on that basis certain organisational decisions were undertaken. The 2015 organisational plenum concretised many such measures.

Concretely, similar exercises by our state committees including West Bengal were undertaken. But the results of such a concrete study on the class shifts taking place within our society and the consequent implications for Party organisation, slogans and tactics in mobilising the people particularly the rural poor who were once the bedrock of our support did not materialise effectively. This weakness has to be addressed urgently. Its impact could be seen in these elections as well where the rural poor, the marginalised sections of our society remained alienated from the Party. This has to be properly addressed and a concrete direction for political-organisational changes must be undertaken.

Sharp Polarisation Between TMC & BJP

After the 2019 17th Lok Sabha elections, where we could not poll a majority vote in any assembly segment, the review noted the rising polarisation between the BJP and the Trinamool. It was decided that all efforts should be made to break this bipolarity. Yet, on the eve of the 2021 assembly elections, the state committee came to the conclusion that despite all the struggles and mobilisations that took place between 2019 and 2021, the political correlation has not changed and remained at what it was in 2019.

The CPI(M) vote share declined from 19.75 per cent in 2016 to 6.28 per cent in 2019, further to 4.73 per cent in 2021.

Situation of a political bipolarity was strengthening for some years now. This sharpened during and after the 2019 parliamentary elections. Such a BJP-TMC

bipolar projection negating any other political/electoral alternative in the state was actively supported and abetted by the corporate media and influential sections of the ruling classes. However, it was wrong to draw the conclusion that there was a collusion between the TMC and BJP to achieve such bipolarity.

It is a fact that the TMC served as the piggyback for the RSS/BJP to get a foothold in Bengal. The TMC's long alliance with the BJP and it being a part of the NDA and the Union Cabinet under the Vajpayee government cemented this alliance for some years. However, with the BJP's rise countrywide and its seeking to gain control in all the states of India created new ruptures in this alliance. The rightward shift and the accompanied communal offensive has been on the rise all over the country. In Bengal, this was challenging the TMCs dominance and proceeded to work on the slogan of capturing Bengal.

We had wrongly assessed that the largescale defections from TMC to BJP and their return post elections as a reflection of the collusion between the two in creating a bipolarity in the state. The history of the RSS and its political fronts Jan Sangh in the past and BJP now shows that whichever national or regional party they have aligned with in order to gain access to new areas they ultimately succeeded in weakening, dividing, in some cases like the Socialist Party from mid-1960s onwards, ultimately decimating them subsequently. Many regional parties met with similar experience. Parties like the AGP in Assam got weakened after aligning with BJP.

The Modi-Shah dispensation has employed a three-pronged strategy against opposition parties: outright monetary inducements for defections and promises of important positions in governments; secondly, using intimidation and threats by enforcement agencies; and finally, by slapping cases and jailing opposition leaders. We have seen how they managed to topple elected governments in Goa, Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh and in the North East. Such activities contributed to growing conflicts between the BJP with some of its oldest allies leaving them like Shiv Sena and Akali Dal.

The BJP government's attacks on federalism and the rights of the elected state governments led by regional parties; brazen interference through RSS pracharaks appointed as Governors has created conflicts between ruling regional parties and the BJP.

The consequent growing hostility between the BJP and the ruling TMC was underestimated by us. This resulted in diluting sharpness of the anti-BJP campaign

and often equating BJP and Trinamool Congress in practice, despite the statements and positions by the Party leading committees pointing out BJP as our principal target. The position of our Party as uncompromising defender of secular democracy opposing the BJP suffered.

The BJP's open call for a new India and the aggressive campaigns for capturing Bengal have played a big role in contributing to this result of consolidating anti-BJP resistance among the Bengali people.

Over-Estimation of Anti-Incumbency Against TMC: That there was anti-incumbency against the TMC government was correct. This was sharply manifested in the 2019 Lok Sabha election results.

However, what was underestimated was the efforts being made by the TMC to overcome this. At one level there were welfare measures that provided much needed relief to the people. It was a mistake on our part to brush these aside contemptuously by terming them as 'dole politics'. A section of those alienated from the TMC returned to support it.

Secondly, the personal tirade against the Chief Minister spearheaded by PM Modi and HM Amit Shah generated a degree of sympathy among the people for the TMC likening it to a David v/s Goliath fight. This sympathy was further bolstered with the CM campaigning on a wheelchair. However exaggerated her injuries may have been, this generated empathy particularly among the women voters.

Thirdly, they succeeded in a sort of social engineering targeting specific groups with specific concessions to earn their support.

These factors, which can be clearly seen in retrospect, were not properly taken into account by us.

Land Question: We continued to campaign on the presumption that the Left Front government with its land reforms and other pro-people policies could gather the support of the minorities, Dalits, adivasis and other marginalised sections. The slogan of land as our basis and industrialisation as our future given at the time of the Nandigram developments continued to be used even in this election campaign. In the current situation this slogan was seen by the people as a continuation of land acquisition policy reviving memories of that period which had alienated rural people from the Left Front. Further, in the current situation of deep agrarian crisis and the ongoing farmers' struggles for the repeal of the agri-laws and the legal

right of MSP, any talk of acquiring land from the peasantry, particularly when they are subjected to the terror of the land mafia, only strengthened the alienation of the peasantry from us.

Identity Politics: The influence of identity politics was underestimated leading to our failure to address these issues in a proper manner. Amongst the three issues the Sachar Committee identified regarding the status and welfare of the minorities – security; equity; identity – our focus was primarily on the first. Even under the Left Front government in the later years the Party had assessed that over emphasis only on the security issue did not meet the aspirations of the minorities. Thanks to the Left Front government, the near four decades of secular harmony without any communal clash or incident was accepted as a ‘given’ by the minorities. Their urge for improved livelihood, employment, etc. largely remained unaddressed. This needs to be corrected and a balanced approach should be worked out. Along with the issue of security, the issues of identity and equity should be taken up as part of class politics and struggles, guarding against falling into the trap of identity politics, dominating over class issues, thus negating classes and class struggle.

There are specific issues of the Scheduled Castes that must be properly assessed and addressed. Tribal issues, particularly in North Bengal, and the efforts by the BJP and TMC to rouse chauvinism and disrupt the unity of the people must be properly tackled.

Sanjukta Morcha & Alternative Government: The Central Committee had decided that the Party can have electoral adjustments with others to maximise the pooling of anti-BJP, anti-TMC votes. But during the course of the campaign the seat adjustments with the Congress Party and the Indian Secular Front were projected under the terminology of Sanjukta Morcha as a United Front calling for an alternative government. This was wrong and not in consonance with the CC understanding.

The Sanjukta Morcha cannot be any permanent structure or a United Front with a common manifesto or programme. During the elections a joint appeal was issued seeking people’s support for its candidates.

Even this electoral understanding based on seat adjustments did not emerge cohesive with the Congress Party largely disowning the ISF. Irrespective of the secular nature of its programme and candidates fielded, emphasising on candidates from marginalised sections could not completely erase the image of it being a

Muslim minority outfit. Both these factors affected the cohesiveness of this electoral understanding.

In the future, on specific issues for joint campaigns and struggles, along with the Left Front other democratic elements must be mobilised. Likewise in the forthcoming assembly by-elections or the local body elections, electoral understanding with anti-TMC, anti-BJP secular forces can continue.

Future Tasks of the Party

Amongst the tasks outlined and undertaken by the Party State Committee, the following need to be underlined.

The overriding sentiment amongst the Bengal people in these elections was to defeat the BJP and its efforts to capture Bengal. Now that, that has been achieved the people's preoccupation with livelihood concerns will once again rise to dominate. This is the time when politics in terms of championing people's causes arises. Our Party must be alert and capable in raising these issues, mobilising people on their various concerns, particularly those from the marginalised sections, like Dalits, adivasis, minorities, etc. into actions and struggles.

Organisational Tasks: The strength of such a political leadership through people's struggle is crucially dependent, as repeatedly analysed by us, on our independent strength and political intervention capacity. All the decisions taken earlier in this direction since after 2008 at all levels of the Party need to be properly reviewed. This is the meaning of continuous self-critical introspection we need to undertake to examine why the earlier decisions could not be properly implemented. These weaknesses must be identified, overcome and all efforts made to implement the decisions in right earnest.

The organizational position of the Party has been weakening over a long period. We have been trying to streamline and activate the Party on the lines suggested by the Kolkata plenum. However, serious weaknesses persist.

In the current situation, the ideological struggles and campaigns against Hindutva need to be enormously strengthened. We should not be misled to think that the commitment to secularism among the Bengali people cannot be undermined. There is a history of the partition and the vicious communal situation that arose then. The RSS-BJP thrived on reviving the memories of that period to spread the Hindutva campaign. As noted earlier, the struggles against the growth of Hindutva

feelings must be combatted ideologically, politically, organizationally, culturally etc.

There have been defections from the Party at various levels to the TMC and later to the BJP. This shows serious erosion in the political-ideological level in the Party. Weaknesses noted in Party committees and booth committees functioning during the election campaign must be rectified. Steps to check and remedy the situation must be undertaken urgently. Steps to protect our cadres and defend our support base against the continuous attacks by TMC must be strengthened.

The need is to activate our mass organisations, ensuring their independent functioning and maintaining the balanced relationship between the mass organisations and the Party as decided in CC resolutions.

Efforts should be made to consolidate the Left Front and its allies. On this basis we should work for strengthening broader unity of forces on common agreed issues in joint actions and struggles.

This post-election period in Bengal is, as noted earlier, a period of great potential for intensifying class and people's popular struggles on issues vital for existence and better life. This is a time for us to be prepared with confidence to launch and lead these people's struggles. Far from demoralisation this is the period for the renewal of class struggles and reenergising our links with the people. The most heartening factor of this election is the participation of the youth, their vitality and vibrancy in the election campaign must be harnessed for the Party's future.

Tamilnadu & Puducherry

The elections for the Assemblies of Tamilnadu (234 MLAs) and Puducherry (30 MLAs) along with a parliamentary by-election were held in a single phase on April 6. The main contest was between the ruling AIADMK-BJP alliance and the DMK-led secular alliance.

The AIADMK-BJP alliance, after Jayalalithaa's departure, continued with its high levels of corruption, administrative irregularities, anti-people measures actively supporting the BJP government and its policies at the Centre. The BJP Central government policies of aggressive implementation of neo-liberal economic policies and reforms, promoting corporate capitalism, large-scale loot of national assets and privatization of public sector enterprises, undermining federalism and the Constitutional rights of elected state government along with aggressively pursuing

the Hindutva politics were all supported by the AIADMK. The CPI(M) conducted big public protests and struggles against all these anti-people, anti-Constitutional measures taken by the BJP Central government. It was necessary that the AIADMK-BJP alliance be defeated in these Assembly elections and removed from heading the government.

With this understanding, the Party decided to join the DMK-led secular alliance and had seat adjustments. The DMK-led alliance consists of Congress and DMK, MDMK, CPI(M), CPI, VCK, MMK, AIML, Kongu Makkal Katchi, Tamizhaga Vaazhvurimai Kaatchi and Forward Bloc. Except the Congress, CPM, CPI, VCK and Muslim League, all other parties contested the elections (15 seats) under DMK's 'rising sun' symbol.

The DMK-led secular alliance won the election and the DMK formed the state government.

DMK Alliance Performance

The DMK-led alliance altogether won 159 seats receiving a total vote of 45.39 per cent (37.7 per cent for the DMK's 'rising sun' symbol). DMK and its alliance parties contested in 188 seats under the DMK symbol and won 133 seats. DMK alone had contested 173 seats and won 125. Allies won 34 out of 61 seats they contested.

The main factor behind the victory of the DMK-led alliance was the continuous people's movements against the state government's policies, corruption, livelihood concerns of the people and combating the efforts of sharpening communal polarization by the BJP. The minorities, significant section of the middle classes, scheduled castes, civil servants and employees voted for the alliance.

Though the alliance won, it should be noted that compared to the 2019 Lok Sabha elections, the alliance vote share decreased from 51.46 per cent to 45.39 per cent. This can partly be explained by the measures the AIADMK state government took after the parliamentary election results such as Pongal relief, farmers' loan waiver, jewellery loan waiver, 10.5 per cent reservation for Vanniyars etc. AIADMK invoked caste feelings to mobilise support. The social background of the Chief Minister was also a favourable factor for them.

AIADMK Alliance Performance

These measures benefited the AIADMK alliance to some extent. As against 30.29 per cent votes it got in the parliamentary elections, it has now received 39.72 per cent. While the Vanniyar reservation got them some benefit, it also alienated people belonging to other communities. Sections of the scheduled castes were alienated with the name change of Devendrakula Vellelar. The AIADMK, BJP, PMK and Tamil Maanila Congress contested in an alliance. The alliance got 39.72 per cent vote while the AIADMK winning 66 seats had a vote share of 33.29 per cent. The PMK won 5 out of 23 and BJP won 4 out of 20 seats it contested.

The BJP, winning 4 constituencies, has polled 2.62 per cent vote. There is a real danger of BJP using this victory to take forward its Hindutva communal politics in the state. Kamal Haasan's MNM, which polled 3.72 per cent of votes in Lok Sabha election got only 2.7 per cent votes in this election.

The AIADMK-BJP alliance displayed a massive amount of money power in these elections. Unprecedented amounts were spent on election campaign, vote gathering mobilizing people for campaign rallies by distributing money to party workers and paying the voters. This has, to a large extent, corrupted the election process and depoliticized it.

The trend of bipolarity between the DMK and AIADMK, present in the state for decades, continued in these elections as well. Between themselves, these two parties polled around 70 per cent of the vote. All efforts to break this bipolarity have not succeeded so far. With contesting alliances led by both these parties, this trend consolidates.

CPI(M) Performance

On the basis of our understanding and Central Committee decision to be part of the DMK-led secular alliance, the Party entered into prolonged negotiations with the DMK.

The DMK, while ensuring that alliance parties were necessary for its victory, on the other hand adopted an attitude of reducing the seats for the alliance partners clearly wanting to contest most on its own symbol and win more seats.

After prolonged arduous talks and negotiations, starting with DMK's offer of three seats each to all alliance parties (except Congress), it was increased to six for

CPI(M), CPI and VCK. Though the Party was unhappy with only six seats that does not reflected our influence, we went along considering the larger implications and the need to defeat the AIADMK-BJP alliance. Even the choice of these six were not to our satisfaction. Of the shortlisted eight seats we proposed, only three were allocated with no seat in Kanyakumari and Chennai districts. Contesting in these districts may have improved our success rate.

The Party contested in the following six seats: Dindigul, Kovilpatti, Kilvelur, Kandarvakottai, Harur and Thiruparankundram.

Of these six constituencies, we won only in two, viz., Kandarvakottai and Kilvelur. We have lost the remaining four constituencies by a considerable margin. Of the three (from our proposed eight constituencies) given to us, we were unable to ensure a win in two of them, Dindigul and Kovilpatti.

Kilvelur: Our traditional influence in this constituency, the strength of the party and the good work we have done in the past are the reasons for the success. And the fact that the DMK alliance has won with more popular support in the Delta and Central districts has confirmed our success. The fact that the PMK candidate contested in the opposition also helped us win by an extra margin of votes.

Kandarvakottai: The fact that the DMK alliance has won with more popular support in the Delta and Central districts was a strong factor in our success. Here we have earlier won sizeable local body posts and the good work done by our representatives has aided our victory. The fact that the AMMK candidate has garnered more votes has also helped our victory

CPI also won two out of the six it contested. The VCK, however won four out of the six it contested.

A more thorough review is being conducted by the district committees to understand our loss in Dindigul, Kovilpatti, Thiruparankundram and Harur constituencies. We had won Dindigul on five occasions earlier, but lost with a margin of 17,000 votes this time. We had won Harur on four occasions in the past. In Kovilpatti, the delimitation of the constituency adversely affected our vote. The entry of Dinakaran in the fray with his money power, amongst other factors, worked to our disadvantage.

Puducherry

As the elections approached, some legislators from Congress and DMK jumped to the BJP. Elections were held under governor's rule after Congress Chief Minister Narayanaswamy resigned. The Congress and the DMK contested as an alliance albeit with strained relations. The seat allocation was reached with Congress 15, DMK 13, CPI and VCK 1 each. Not even a single constituency was allotted to our party. In this situation, we decided to contest in Muthialpet constituency and to support the DMK-Congress alliance in other constituencies. On that understanding election campaign and public meetings were held in Muthialpet constituency. However, we only got 320 votes.

In Mahe Assembly constituency, which falls within the geographical borders of the Kerala state, the LDF usually fields an independent candidate. In the 2016 election, LDF independent candidate won the election polling 10,797 votes. However, in this election, the LDF candidate lost by a margin of 300 votes polling 9,444 votes. Congress won the seat.

Though Congress and DMK formed an alliance they didn't work shoulder to shoulder and hence the electoral task of overthrowing NR Congress BJP combine did not materialize. As a result, the Congress, which contested 15 seats, won 2 seats and the DMK, which contested 13 seats, won only 6 seats.

Since 2016, the BJP Central government was destabilizing the elected government led by the Congress by grossly misusing the office of the Lt. Governor. The Lt. Governor was running a parallel government there and not allowing the elected government to function.

In Puducherry, there is a provision that the Lt. Governor nominates three MLAs who have been given voting rights by the judiciary. In 2016 and 2021, the Lt. Governor nominated BJP people to these three positions, breaking from the tradition that the nominated MLAs will be decided by the ruling party amongst independent people. In 2016, BJP did not win a single seat, but had three MLAs as nominated. This time also, three BJP people have been nominated. In alliance with the NR Congress, BJP had won six MLAs and now has nine with this three nominated. The NR Congress won 10 seats and the NR Congress-BJP government has been formed.

In Puducherry this time 6 independent candidates have won. NR Congress-BJP coalition has assumed power amid much tug-of-war and hard bargainings with them.

Overcome Weaknesses

Party has been consistently getting a low vote share. In these elections, CPI(M), CPI and VCK contested six seats each as partners of the DMK-led alliance. Our vote share was 0.85 per cent, lower than CPI's 1.09 per cent and VCK's 1.5 per cent. In the 2016 Assembly elections, Party contested as part of the six-party People's Welfare Front. We contested in 25 seats and polled the lowest amongst all the six alliance partners. We got 0.71 per cent of vote share, while CPI got 0.79 per cent. The six parties altogether polled 6.1 per cent. The state committee review points that: "Even in the constituencies where we have contested many times, our vote share has not been increasing. This weakness needs to be properly analysed and overcome. Unless our independent strength and mass following is increased in these seats, we cannot ensure victory in the future". This must be seriously examined and necessary political-organisational steps be taken.

The weaknesses noted by the state committee review such as our choice of determining priority constituencies; combating parliamentary opportunism affecting the selection of candidates; lack of adopting proper procedures in the choice of candidates including youth, women and working class sections; delays in strengthening our links with the people even in the decided priority constituencies till the final list of candidates is announced; preparatory work of checking the voters list, enrolling new voters, preparing the polling booth agents etc., must be corrected and necessary organizational steps be taken.

A proper review of the Party committees, branches and Party members in the election work must be conducted. Regular branch meetings, taking up local issues, politicization of our ranks and strengthening capacity for influencing people must be undertaken urgently.

Assam

The BJP-led alliance has managed to retain the government for the second consecutive term securing 75 out of the 126 MLAs in the legislative assembly.

1,91,76,846 voters exercised their franchise out of the total number of voters which stands at 2,33,74,087 in the state. The polling was 82.04 per cent. The votes polled

decreased by 2.63 per cent compared to the last Assembly elections held in 2016. There was no wave in favour of any political party in this election.

The main contest took place between the BJP-led alliance and the Congress-led 'Mahajot'. The Bodoland Peoples Front (BPF) was with the BJP in 2016. The newly-formed UPPL was with the BJP in this election instead of the BPF. The BJP-led alliance secured 75 seats. Compared to the election held in 2016 the BJP and its allies lost 11 seats. The BJP got 60 seats (33.21 per cent), AGP got 9 seats (7.9 per cent) and the UPPL got 6 seats (3.4 per cent).

The Congress got 29 seats (29.67 per cent), the AIUDF got 16 seats (9.29 per cent), the BPF got 4 seats (3.39 per cent), the other parties of the 'Mahajot', namely CPI (0.14 per cent), CPI(ML) Liberation (0.14 per cent), Anchalik Gana Morcha (0.07 per cent) and the RJD could not win any seat. The CPI(M) contested two seats with seat adjustments with the 'Mahajot' and won the Sorbhog seat. Our Party polled 0.84 per cent of votes.

The BJP-led alliance secured 44.32 per cent votes as against the 'Mahajot's vote share of 43.54 per cent. The difference of vote share between them is only 0.78 per cent. The total votes secured by the BJP-led front is 85,56,059. The total votes secured by the 'Mahajot' and the CPI(M) is 83,96,486. The difference of votes between the two is only of 1,59,673 votes.

The Background

The BJP came to the power of Assam for the first time in 2016. The BJP has put forwarded a number of promises during the time of election in 2016. They gave the slogan of safeguarding the 'Jati, Mati, Veti' (Nation, Land) of Assam in 2016. But the BJP-led government had continuously carried forward the anti-people economic policies, politics of communal polarization, increased attacks on democracy during its last five year tenure. This had aggrieved the people of the state. Right from the beginning the BJP led government resorted to communal politics and propaganda in almost all the important issues creating a threat to peace, unity and integrity in the state.

In such a situation, the task of dethroning the BJP-led government became central task in the 2021 Assembly election and pave the way for a secular government in the state. But not a single political party had the strength to achieve this on its own. So, it became imperative for the Left and democratic parties to give a united fight so that BJP and its allies might be defeated. The AIUDF, the BPF, the CPI, the CPI

(M-L) Liberation and the Anchalik Gana Morcha formed a 'Mahajot' under the leadership of Congress party. Later on RJD also joined the 'Mahajot'. The electoral tactics were worked out on the basis of the discussion in the Party state committee.

The Reasons Behind BJP's Win:

1. The main reason behind BJP's coming back to power is the intense communal polarisation. During its last tenure the BJP successfully carried forward its rabid communal politics. It was successful in strengthening the organisation of RSS-BJP in Hindu inhabited areas. During the anti-CAA movement the pace of BJP-RSS's communal politics faced some hurdles. But due to the first wave of Covid-19 pandemic the pace of anti-CAA movement weakened. BJP took full advantage of the pandemic situation. In the name of fighting spread of Covid-19, the BJP-led government strangled all the democratic norms and movements and resorted to suppress agitations. In the early days of Covid-19 pandemic, the BJP-RSS and the Hindutva forces resorted to rabid communal campaign putting all the blame on Muslims as the sole conspirators for the spread of the virus. Even during the election campaign, BJP-RSS termed the election as 'clash of civilisations', 'fight against the Mughals', 'fight between 65 per cent and 35 per cent' etc. By such campaigns, the BJP-RSS could divide the people on communal lines. Due to their rabid communal slogans, communal polarisation was especially successful in constituencies where there are sizeable number of religious minority voters.

2. During the last five years, the activities of various organisations led by the RSS and Sangh Parivar continuously increased in a planned manner. Through their activities they continuously mobilised people on communal lines and spread communal venom.

3. Just before the elections, the ruling party was able to form a large base of beneficiaries through various schemes like the 'PM Kisan Samman Nidhi', 'Arunodaya', 'Jan-Dhan Yojna', 'Distribution of free scooty to girl students', 'Rs. 3000 in cash to the tea garden workers'. The BJP, through various schemes, could successfully increase its influence among the rural poor and the tea gardens. Likewise, the slogan of writing off all micro-finance loans attracted a large number of women into its fold. The BJP-led government distributed government money to temples, Namghars, Satras which also helped in increasing their influences.

4. By their continuous efforts for communal polarization, the BJP could successfully divert the people from issues concerning their lives and livelihood.

The greater number of votes of various ethnic groups and nationalities belonging to Hindu communities went in favour of the BJP. This trend was strong amongst the linguistic minority community.

5. The sheer strength of money power, abuse of government machinery was the hallmark of BJP's electioneering. The role of the Election Commission was out and out biased and favoured the ruling party.

6. Most of the media, both print and electronic, propagated the BJP thus helping them in the election.

7. The BJP started preparations for Assembly elections very early. The party organised booth committees one year before and increased their organisational activities. They also organised meetings of the beneficiaries, in many constituencies just before the elections. The government laid many foundation stones to attract the voters.

Reasons for the Defeat of the 'Mahajot'

1. To prevent the division of anti-BJP votes, the unity among the Left and democratic parties was neither complete nor satisfactory. The two newly formed anti-BJP regional parties the AJP and the RD participated in the elections separately. As a result, there was a division of votes. At the same time, this had a demoralising effect on many democratic and secular people. Just two months before polls, there prevailed an atmosphere of uncertainty as to whether the anti-BJP forces would be able to put up a united fight. This had an adverse impact on the people.

2. The role of the Congress party so far as uniting the anti-BJP political parties are concerned, is praiseworthy. But the internal contradictions among the state leadership, failure of a section of Congress party leadership to have a firm position against the Hindutva politics, failure to give adequate importance to the other political parties in the 'Mahajot' led to the overall failure of the Congress party to play its adequate role as the leading party of the anti-BJP coalition. Above all, the Congress party failed in regaining its influence lost five years ago.

3. The parties in the 'Mahajot' failed to fully challenge the lies spread by ruling BJP on issues of development. The general voters, under the propaganda of the BJP, seemed convinced that the state is on a path of development under the BJP rule and this will continue in the days to come.

4. In the last elections to the Bodoland Territorial Council, the UPPL wrested power from the BPF. As a result, the influence and strength of the BPF, a constituent of the 'Mahajot' this time, was decreased considerably. The BPF could win only in 4 constituencies. In 2016 BPF won 12 seats.

5. In 2016, due to vote division among the Congress and the AIUDF, BJP won as many as 12 seats in the state. This time, even after adjustments, the BJP could win in 6 of these assembly constituencies. This shows that there is weaknesses in transferring votes. There is a consolidation and division of votes on communal lines.

6. In five upper Assam districts, the BJP could win in as many as 10 constituencies due to the division in opposition votes. A sizeable vote share of anti-BJP fold went to the AJP. In certain pockets, the RD also played a spoiler. Moreover, during the campaign certain AIUDF leaders uttered irresponsible and communal remarks. This gave opportunities to the BJP to further its communal polarisation.

The CPI(M) and the Left

The CPI(M) contested in 2 seats. The CPI and the CPI(ML) contested 1 seat each. The CPI(ML) separately contested alone in the hill district of Karbi Anglong in 3 seats.

In the **Sorbhog** Constituency, our Party defeated the BJP by a margin of 10,662 votes. The CPI(M) candidate Manoranjan Talukdar polled 96,134 votes and captured the seat from the BJP. BJP got 85,472 votes. The CPI(M) got 50.7 per cent as against BJP's 45.2 per cent of total polled votes.

In **Rangia** constituency, our Party got 64,426 votes whereas the BJP got 84,844 votes. The BJP won the Rangia constituency by a margin of 20,220 votes and the CPI(M) came second. In Rangia, the AJP and the RD polled 3560 and 3505 votes respectively. The CPI and the CPI(ML) (4 seats) could not win any seat. They polled 27,290 and 21,531 votes respectively.

The state committee of the Party had directed all the district committees to conduct independent campaign for Party's candidates and for the candidates of the 'Mahajot' as decided. The district committees are yet to submit their reports due to Covid-19 situation. Many district committees are yet to have their district

committee meetings due to the prevailing pandemic situation. The reports available in the state Centre show that more or less all the district committees conducted campaigns as per Party guidelines. As per available reports there is no incident of violation of Party's electoral tactics.

There was no representation for our Party in the Assembly in the last ten years. Electoral tactics were adopted so that we can have a representation in the Assembly and a secular government is formed. To prevent the division of anti-BJP votes, our Party joined hands with the 'Mahajot' and decided to contest a limited number of seats. The state committee of Party initially proposed to contest on 9 constituencies. A number of districts did not undertake any preparation before the issue of seat adjustments came to the agenda. At last, the state committee dropped 4 seats from the shortlisted constituencies. Finally, party took the position that in case of Sorbhog and Rangia constituency, Party will not compromise. Care was taken so that BJP could not break the opposition unity on the issue of seat adjustments.

Overall Conclusion

As noted at the outset, these results provide new opportunities for us to further strengthen people's movements and struggles on burning issues. The Party must actively work to strengthen our independent mass base and links with the working people by launching movements and struggles within the framework of the Covid protocol and restrictions in the coming period.

From the issues of Covid mismanagement, Hindutva agenda of communal polarization, the farmers' struggle, the Rafale deal corruption, the Pegasus spyware surveillance, large-scale privatization and loot of national assets, phenomenal price rise, increasing attacks on people's livelihood, refusal to provide any substantive relief are some of the issues on which people's struggles and intervention must be strengthened. Along with joint activities with the Left parties, efforts must be made to rally together secular opposition parties willing to come into joint actions and struggles.
