

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](mailto:cc@cpim.org)

### Report on Political Developments

*(Adopted at the Central Committee Meeting held on July 30-31, 2022)*

### International Developments

The global capitalist economic crisis is worsening. The bankruptcy of neo-liberalism in its inability to offer any solutions to overcome this crisis and for economic recovery is reconfirmed. On the contrary, despite this weak economic performance the neo-liberal dispensation enforces the continuation of the trajectory of profit maximisation leading to further widening of economic inequalities. World's billionaires continue to amass greater wealth. This is a reflection of intensified economic exploitation of the people. With this economic downturn, further attacks on the livelihood of vast majority of people, more stringent austerity measures and further curtailment of the rights of the working people are on the cards.

### Global Economy

The global economy, far from recovering to the pre-pandemic levels, is seeing a growth downslide. The World Bank in its 'Global Economic Prospects Report', June 2022, has downsized its global growth forecast for calendar year 2022 to 2.9 per cent from the earlier 4.1 per cent.

It warned that if global inflation remains elevated, a period of sharp stagflation would lead to a further downturn in growth.

Growth in advanced economies is projected to sharply decelerate from 5.1 per cent in 2021 to 2.6 per cent in 2022 and further to 2.2 per cent in 2023.

The emerging market and developing economies (EMDEs) growth is projected to fall from 6.6 per cent in 2021 to 3.4 per cent in 2022 – well below the annual average of 4.8 per cent in the last decade. Growth forecast has been revised downwards in nearly 70 per cent for EMDEs and four-fifths i.e., 80 per cent of low income countries.

The IMF has also downgraded its forecasts with its chief warning of a possible global recession in 2023.

### Ukraine War

The Russia-Ukraine war entered the fifth month with counter claims by both sides. The Russian troops along with the forces of the Donetsk and Luhansk regions have taken control of most of the Donbas region in Western Ukraine.

The US imposed sanctions against Russia have triggered a global economic crisis with disruption of global supply chains contributing to severe food and fuel shortages and rampant inflation. Europe is the worst hit.

Under US imperialist leadership, the NATO continues to heavily arm the Ukrainian forces with modern weapons, equipment and logistics. As assessed by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress, this war is between US/NATO and Russia whose theatre is Ukraine.

### **Shifting Equations in West Asia**

Following the Ukraine war and sanctions against Russia, both US President Joe Biden and Russia's Vladimir Putin independently visited Saudi Arabia and other countries in the region. Biden's four day visit was aimed to give reassurances of Washington's influence in the region. However, none of his declared aims, including influencing these countries to contain Iran in the region; persuading them to increase global oil supplies to slash Russia's oil income were achieved. Saudi Arabia refused an oil deal that USA sought.

On the other hand, Putin succeeded in strengthening Russia's relations with Saudi Arabia which classified Russia as an integral part of 'OPEC plus' and doubled oil imports from Russia. Despite US led sanctions Saudi Arabia imported nearly 6.5 lakh tonnes of oil from Russia between April-June 2022.

Putin's visit to Iran succeeded in strengthening the strategic partnership between the two countries. Iran openly supported Russia's position on Ukraine. Russia and Iran signed a \$40 billion energy deal. Both have publicly stated that moving away from the use of US dollar as global currency is a priority for both. The Russia-Iran strategic partnership is aimed at strengthening strategic cooperation in three areas – regional issues; economic cooperation; and security collaboration.

However, Putin's visit to Turkey and his meeting Erdogan produced a mixed bag of results. While the issue of transportation through the Black Sea saw some advance, Turkey's insistence on military intervention in northern Syria in the name of fighting terrorism was opposed by Russia as well as Iran.

### **Illegal Occupation of Palestinian Lands**

Prior to his visit to West Asia, President Biden visited Israel. The visit was more of an effort to show to West Asia the strong US-Israel relationship.

Thousands of Israeli settlers, under the protection of the Israeli army and police, set up new illegal settlements in six locations across the illegally occupied West Bank.

The expansion of illegal settlements on Palestinian lands continues under the patronage of Israeli authorities. The current efforts are to establish settlements around Palestine capital Ramallah, the historic ancient settlements at Hebron and Salfit. New check points prohibiting the movement of Palestinians are being set up by Israel.

### **West Asian QUAD**

Officially termed as I2U2, USA, Israel, UAE and India have formed an alliance ostensibly aimed to “strengthen the economic partnership, trade and investment in respective regions and beyond”. It seeks to anchor a joint investment process in mutually identified areas such as water, energy, transportation, space, health and food security.

The political significance of this alliance referred to as the West Asian QUAD is to boost US efforts to contain Chinese influence in West Asia. However, apart from USA, the other three - Israel, UAE and India – have not followed US led imposition of sanctions against Russia.

### **Columbia’s Presidential Election**

The victory of Gustavo Petro, a former left-wing guerrilla, in the presidential elections in Colombia is a turning point in Latin America. Petro will be the first ever left-wing President to lead the country, traditionally ruled by elite pro-US right-wing parties. Until Petro emerged, no leftist candidate had managed to get into the second round of a presidential contest in Columbia.

Petro campaigned to rebuild agriculture and industry, expand social programs, tax the rich, and abandon an economy dependent on fossil fuels.

This Left victory in Columbia reinforces the growth of resistance in Latin America against US imperialist domination and neo-liberal offensive. This Left victory comes in the wake of victories in Chile, Venezuela, Bolivia, Peru and Honduras.

### **French Elections**

The 2022 French **presidential** elections were held on 10 and 24 April 2022. As no candidate won a majority in the first round, a runoff was held, in which Emmanuel Macron defeated Marine Le Pen and was re-elected as President of France. Left candidate Melenchon lost in the first round.

In France’s **parliamentary** elections, held two months after the Presidential election, left-wing parties more than doubled their number of MPs, numbering 142 (32.64 per cent), denying Emmanuel Macron a majority – 246 (38.63 per cent) out of 577. The alliance of parties is known as Nouvelle Union Populaire Ecologique et Sociale (NUPES). Formed in May, it brought together forces that have often had significantly divergent agendas. By the terms of their pact, they will collaborate in parliament to

pursue the policies in their common program — largely based on the one Melenchon ran on in April's presidential election — but maintain their independence where they differ.

Marie Le Pen's far-right National Rally won a record 89 seats (17.30 per cent) which marks more than a tenfold increase from the party's eight current seats. It thus emerged as the largest single opposition party.

### **Big Farmers' Protests in Europe**

Big protests by farmers are taking place in many countries of Europe. Dutch farmers were the first to hit the streets against the new emission rules which laid down reduced targets for nitrous oxide and ammonia emissions produced by their livestock. The shift to greener technologies is expensive and many farmers fear that without state subsidy they will be forced out of farming. Farmers from Germany, Italy, Spain and Poland have also taken to the streets, widening the agenda of protest against inflation, cheap imports, high interest rates and soaring fuel prices.

### **Working Class Struggles**

Following the three-day strike in June, the railway workers union in the UK – RMT Union - once again struck work on 27 July over job security and working conditions. Almost all trade unions in the UK have served notices for strike actions in the coming days over the phenomenal rise in costs of living, demanding better working conditions and higher wages.

Elsewhere in Europe similar such actions by the working people and the trade unions have been announced. More than 70,000 Belgian workers marched through Brussels demanding government take action against the soaring costs of living.

### **Sri Lanka**

The people's upsurge against the economic ruin of Sri Lanka under the Rajapaksas, the takeover of the Presidential palace by the people, the burning down of the Prime Minister's house, led to a situation where President Gotabaya Rajapaksa had fled the country to Maldives first and finally entered Singapore on a short term visit pass. He resigned after fleeing from Sri Lanka in a military plane utilising the immunity and official privileges of the President.

The President fled after appointing the ousted Prime Minister Ranil Wickremesinghe as the acting President, who addressed the nation amid crisis saying "fascists are trying to take over government" and ordered the military and the police to do whatever is necessary to restore order. An indefinite curfew was then imposed across the western province including Colombo.

Ranil Wickremesinghe won the presidential election on July 20, 2022. Members of parliament elect the interim president in Sri Lanka. In the three cornered contest Wickremesinghe, widely perceived as the candidate of the ousted Gotabaya Rajapaksa regime, got 134 out of 225 votes. He was pitted against former ruling party member and now independent Dullas Alahapperuma (82 votes) and the JVP's Anna Kumara Dissanayake (3 votes). Opposition leader Sajith Pramadasa withdrew from the contest declaring support for Dullas. The parliament is dominated by the party of the Rajapaksas, Sri Lanka Pudukana Peramuna (SLPP) or People's Front.

President Wickremesinghe will have to confront serious challenges, the first of the major ones being anti-incumbency. The recent people's upsurge had forcefully demanded his resignation both as the PM and subsequently as acting President. He is seen as being close to the previous dispensation responsible for the current crisis. Attacks and repression against popular protests are likely to intensify.

Protests against his ascendancy as president have the potential to continue. Sri Lanka's economic crisis is staggering with a near \$51 billion external debt, crippling fuel shortages, dwindling foreign exchange reserves and a virtual collapse of tourism. The President will have to convince the IMF to provide a handsome bailout package. But, this would come with strict conditionalities that have to be met, which could well impose more burdens on the people.

## **Myanmar**

The Myanmar junta has recently executed four political prisoners, sending a clear message both domestically and to the world that it entertains no plans for any political rapprochement. This puts at rest, at least for now, all illusions of any return to democracy. Seizing power in February 2021 through a coup, the junta had arrested Aung San Suu Kyi after unseating the elected government, convicted her on half a dozen trumped up charges in secret trials and sentenced her to 11 years in prison. Over 14,000 political prisoners were arrested of whom over 11,000 are still in prison. More than 2,000 civilians have been killed and thousands of houses of pro-democracy activists were burned rendering millions homeless. However, the resistance to this has begun through a violent underground movement which has caused significant losses to the military through ambushes and sniper attacks. The resistance has formed an alternative National Unity Government and claims to control half the country. A grave crisis and a period of prolonged conflict with a high loss of human lives appear on the cards. This situation will have a bearing on all the neighbouring countries with a possible flow of refugees.

Following the coup, the Myanmar economy has severely contracted by 18 per cent last year and GDP growth this year is expected to be 13 per cent lower than in 2019.

## **National**

The nearly four months since our 23rd Party Congress, saw a chilling confirmation of the key trends we had noted in the Political Resolution. The aggressive pursuit of the fascistic RSS's Hindutva agenda is unfolding menacingly. The multi-pronged attack of the pursuit of rabid neo-liberal reforms, strengthening the communal-corporate nexus, looting of national assets, promoting crony capitalism, legalising political corruption are all intensifying, heaping greater burdens on the people while destroying India's economic foundations.

The imposition of full-fledged authoritarianism, the gross misuse of central agencies like ED/CBI against political opponents, merciless attacks on people's democratic rights and civil liberties using the draconian preventive detention laws are intensifying. So are the efforts to change the character of the Indian Constitutional Republic.

This period is also witnessing the trend noted in the Party Congress of growing resistance to the policies of the Modi government by various sections of our people.

### **Economic Crisis**

The Indian economy is passing through a deep recessionary phase belying the propaganda blitz of an economic recovery by the Modi government. The data put out by the World Bank shows that India's annual growth over 2020, 2021 and 2022 was a mere 0.8 per cent.

The World Bank has lowered its January forecast of growth of the Indian economy from 8.7 per cent to 7.5 per cent in June. This hefty 1.2 percentage downward revision is due to rising inflation and supply chain disruptions.

The RBI in its June Monetary Policy Committee meeting projected 2021-22 quarter-wise GDP growth as 16.2 per cent for Quarter 1, 6.2 per cent for Quarter 2, 4.1 per cent for Quarter 3, and 4 per cent for Quarter 4. Between Q1 and Q4, growth projection has fallen by more than four times.

This is accompanied by the highest Wholesale and Retail Price Inflation in the last 24 years.

### **Foreign Funds Outflow**

At the same time India is witnessing an unprecedentedly high current account deficit (\$ 105 billion or 3 per cent of GDP); dwindling foreign exchange reserves that dropped by \$ 70 billion or 11 per cent since September 2021; and a record outflow of FII – Rs. 2.24 lakh crores between January-June 2022 and a tumbling rupee which has reached a historical low of over Rs. 80 per US dollar despite heavy releases of \$ 16.5 billion by the RBI to stabilise the rupee.

This economic slowdown is mounting further all-round assaults on the livelihood of the vast majority of our people.

## **Unemployment**

According to the CMIE Report for January-April 2022, the number of unemployed in the age group of 20-24 years was over 2 crore – a staggering unemployment rate of 42 per cent. In the 25-29 age group, this was over 60 lakh - an unemployment rate of 12.72 per cent. Together unemployment in the 20-29 age group is nearly 80 per cent of the over 3 crore unemployed Indians above 15 years who are actively looking for jobs.

India's working age population (15 to 64 years) is 67 per cent of the total or around 90 crores (2020). Of these, 61.2 per cent have simply stopped looking for employment as there are no jobs. The Labour Participation Rate has dropped to an all-time low of 38.8 per cent. The worst affected have been rural women whose work participation rate has fallen to a historic low below 10 per cent.

## **MGNREGS**

The non-release of funds by the central government has led to a cruel denial of work and timely payment of wages when rural unemployment is at its highest levels amid acute rural distress. In July 2022, according to official figures, 1.47 crore job seekers, which is around 20 per cent of the 7.26 crore job seekers under MGNREGS, were refused work. At the same time the fund allocation cuts have led to a huge backlog in unpaid wages of 1498 crore rupees of which as much as 862.57 crores is wages due from 2021-2022. The allocations must be immediately released, work guaranteed on demand as per the law and all wages paid with immediate effect.

In conditions of such high levels of unemployment and a drastic fall in the labour participation rate, MGNREGS is the only source of employment and livelihood for crores of rural youth. The allocations for this must be substantially increased.

## **Record Inflation**

The annual Wholesale Price Index (WPI) rose to 15.8 per cent in May 2022 – the highest level since 1998. Food prices are rising 14.4 per cent, primary items by 19.71 per cent, fuel and energy by 40.63 per cent, manufacturing products by 10.11 per cent.

**GST Hikes:** On top of this comes the latest round of unprecedented burdens through the GST hikes on all essential commodities such as pre-packaged rice, wheat, milk and on host of other items of daily use.

Independent India abandoned the policy of the colonial British government's tax on essential food items of mass consumption. This is the Modi government's 'gift' to the Indian people in this year of '*Azaadi ka Amrut Mahotsav*'.

The range of items on which GST has been increased also includes crematorium charges, hospital rooms, writing ink etc. Even to withdraw one's own savings from their bank account people have to pay 18 per cent GST on bank cheques.

While the burden of tax on luxuries has been brought down under GST from 30-45 per cent during the pre-GST regime to 18-28 per cent, the tax burden on necessities are being hiked. This makes GST an unacceptable highly regressive tax.

The claim of the Modi government that no opposition was raised against these hikes in the GST council is blatantly untrue. The Kerala Chief Minister has written to the Prime Minister conveying the state government's strong objections and reminding him that the state finance minister conveyed reservations as early as in November 2021 against these proposals when they were first mooted.

This price rise is imposing further hardships and reducing the purchasing capacity of the Indian people, further lowering the levels of demand in the economy. The shrinkage of domestic demand is pushing down manufacturing activity leading to further job losses.

### **Record Low Wheat Procurement**

The Modi government lowered wheat procurement in the current Rabi season to 19.5 MTs - the lowest in the last 13 years. This is more than 50 per cent lower than the government's own target of 44.4 MTs. At the same time wheat production was estimated at 105 MTs, nearly 6 per cent less than the earlier estimate. Consequently, wheat allocation has been cut for 10 states under the Food Security Act. The wheat stock in the central pool dwindled to its lowest level in 14 years.

In order to strengthen the Public Distribution System which is otherwise being rendered completely ineffective, adequate stock of food grains must be procured.

**Obscene Levels of Inequality:** The communal-corporate nexus, crony capitalism and the loot of our national assets is accelerating the widening of income and wealth inequalities to obscene levels. Companies listed on the Bombay Stock Exchange reported collective profits of over 9.3 lakh crores in 2021-22 – over 70 per cent more than the previous year and three times higher than the average profits earned annually for a decade before pandemic i.e., between 2010-2022.

Crony Capitalism Index published by **The Economist** says, "India's share of billionaire wealth derived from crony sectors has risen from 29 per cent to 43 per cent in the last six years."

## **Gross Aadhar Irregularities**

In the name of weeding out fake beneficiaries lakhs of children between the age of six months and six years will be denied the legal entitlement of the nutritional programme, that was enacted along with the National Food Security Act in 2013. Currently, 7.9 crore children benefit from this programme, but only 23 per cent of children below the age of five have Aadhar cards according to official records. India today has one of the worst records of child malnutrition in the world.

This order making Aadhar compulsory for children's nutrition programme must be withdrawn.

## **Attacks on Tribal Rights**

The Modi government has mounted a vicious attack on tribal rights by amending rules under the Forest Conservation Act. These amendments are aimed to facilitate private corporates to access and control India's forests for their profit maximisation. These rules eliminate the rights of the Gram Sabhas, tribal communities and other traditional forest dwellers whose prior consent was mandatory for diversion of forest land. This is also a clear violation of the Constitutional guarantees given to the tribal communities.

These amended Rules not only enable handover of huge tracts of our forest land to corporates and private sector projects, but they also enable corporates to take over non-forest government land in the name of afforestation thus dealing a blow to the demand of the landless for a right to such land.

## **Disastrous Climate Change Impact**

The Modi government's total absence of any efforts to contain the impact of climate change and, on the contrary, facilitate deforestation is creating devastating climate impacts. The floods in Assam have taken a heavy toll of human life, livestock and properties. The heavy rains lashing Telangana, Gujarat, Maharashtra and elsewhere are causing severe damage. In many other parts of the country such climatic calamities continue to wreak havoc. The union government must assist the concerned state governments to protect lives and properties and provide relief and rehabilitation.

## **Assaults on Education**

The aggressive pursuit of the National Education Policy, 2020 using the restrictions during the pandemic, together with all-out efforts to introduce online education is causing havoc. Lakhs of schools have been closed down and drop outs are growing at an alarming rate at college and university levels. There is an obnoxious aggressive assault against the secular and scientific content of education.

## **Agnipath**

The new Agnipath scheme introduced to recruit defence personnel for the three services does disservice to India's national interests. Professional armed forces cannot be raised by recruiting 'soldiers on contract' for a period of four years. Only 25 per cent of these are proposed to be regularized. This scheme, to save pension money, severely compromises the quality and efficiency of our professional armed forces.

For the last two years there has been no recruitment in the Indian army. Instead of recruiting regular soldiers into the armed forces, this scheme leaves such contract soldiers with no other prospects of employment after their four years. This creates a dangerous situation where they may end up serving private militias. This has hazardous implications for our social fabric already under severe strain.

This is an effort to remould the Indian armed forces to serve the fascistic RSS agenda. V D Savarkar, when he coined the term 'Hindutva', gave a slogan for its realisation; "Hinduise the military, militarise Hindudom". This scheme represents a grave attack on the secular democratic Constitutional republican order of India.

## **Growing Protests**

**Agnipath:** Massive protests erupted over the Agnipath scheme by the youth demanding permanent secure jobs. Secular democratic youth organisations have come together and announced the launching of nation-wide protest actions demanding jobs.

The Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) has worked out a nation-wide protest by farmers and agricultural labourers along with the ex-servicemen and unemployed youth against Agnipath, demanding permanent secure employment.

The SKM also decided to intensify the struggles against the betrayal of the assurances given when the government was forced to repeal the agri-laws, on a guaranteed MSP for all crops and all farmers and against the Electricity Amendment Bill.

A one and a half month long student jatha on the slogan "Save Education, Save Constitution, Save India" is beginning from August 1, 2022 and culminating on September 15, 2022. Five jathas from different corners of the country will crisscross across India.

Nation-wide protest actions involving the students, popular science movement, youth, educationists, intellectuals, teachers organisations, women's organisations and others is being planned against the New Education Policy (NEP) of the Modi government. The women's organisation has been leading struggles against price hike and for food security.

Trade unions' protests against large scale privatisation continue to intensify. General Insurance employees went on a nation-wide strike on 15 July and are preparing for another. The Postal employees are going on strike on August 10. Likewise, in all public sector undertakings protests are on-going. Anganwadi - Asha - Scheme Workers struggles are also continuing.

### **Authoritarian Assaults Intensify**

All the tendencies noted in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress Political Resolution of the aggressive pursuit of the Hindutva agenda of the fascistic RSS continue to unfold menacingly. The ED and the CBI continue to function as the political arms of the Modi government targeting opposition leaders.

**Supreme Court PMLA Judgment:** The recent Supreme Court judgment (July 27) upholding the Constitutional validity of the Prevention of Money Laundering Act will further strengthen strong arm tactics employed by the ED to further the political agenda of the BJP government. The Supreme Court upheld all the amendments brought to the 2002 Act by the Modi government in 2019 lethally arming the ED. However, the three member bench skirted the fact that these amendments were brought as a Money Bill depriving the Rajya Sabha which then did not have a BJP majority, of any say in the matter, saying that this issue is to be decided by a larger seven member bench. With this the Enforcement Case Information Report (ECIR) need not be formally registered or furnished to the accused before initiating penal action or prosecution. Unlike an FIR, which has to be registered and forwarded to the jurisdictional magistrate, the ED can thus arrest an individual on the basis of an ECIR without informing him/her of its contents. This is, per se, arbitrary and violative of the Constitutional rights of the accused. The Supreme Court observed that it is enough for the ED at the time of arrest to disclose the grounds of such arrest. It further upheld the search, seizure and attachment by the ED and that the burden of proof rests with the accused not with the accuser. This turns on its head the fundamental jurisprudence wisdom of "innocent until proven guilty".

**Assault on Parliament:** The Modi government has mounted an unprecedented assault on Parliament and its democratic functioning. Its refusal to discuss burning people's issues like price rise, unemployment etc., under rules as substantial motion is the root cause for prolonged disruption. In an unprecedented manner 27 members of Parliament have been suspended for the current session. This has never happened in independent India. Legislations are ramrodded without any discussion or consideration. The government is, thus, abdicating its responsibility to be accountable to the Parliament.

**Destabilizing Elected Governments:** This gross misuse of the Central agencies, combined with the gross misuse of the BJP's money power, continues to be used to destabilize opposition ruled state governments. The recent destabilization of the

Maharashtra Maha Vikas Agadi (MVA) state government has happened after rebel Shiv Sena MLAs were whisked away, first to Surat, then to Guwahati, and then to Goa – all three BJP ruled states. This is the hijacking and murder of democracy.

In the most brazen and condemnable manner noted champion of human rights and civil liberties and courageous fighter against communal forces Teesta Setalvad was arrested. The questionable verdict of the three member bench of the Supreme Court facilitated this arrest by an inversion of jurisprudence of treating the complainant as accused. Former police officers Srikumar, Sanjeev Bhatt (who is already in jail in another case) have also been arrested.

In a shocking manner the co-founder of a fact checker social media platform, ‘Alt News’, Zubair Ahmed was arrested on specious grounds. Alt News has been doing yeoman service in exposing fake news circulated to intensify the spread of hate poison and Islamophobia by the Hindutva forces. Under this Modi government those who promote and articulate hate speech leading to violence are protected by the state while those who expose such hate speech are arrested and put behind bars. The comments by a BJP national spokesperson against the Prophet invoked global condemnation. Even the Supreme Court passed serious adverse comments against these statements. Yet, no action is taken against this BJP spokesperson who remains free under state protection. Those like Zubair who have placed the truth before the public are arrested with several cases being slapped on him.

However, the Supreme Court finally granted Zubair interim bail in all the six cases registered by the UP police and disbanded the UP police’s Special Investigation Team to investigate Zubair Ahmed.

The Bhima Koregaon detainees continue to languish in jail for over three years. Likewise, several others including journalists remain under custody. The Supreme Court while granting interim bail to Zubair had said “ the existence of the power to arrest must be distinguished from the exercise of the power.” Clearly, the BJP governments do not accept such a distinction unless the judiciary intervenes.

### **Relentless Sharpening of Communal Polarisation**

The sharpening of communal polarisation continues simultaneously.

The Ram Navami and Hanuman Jayanti processions organized by the Bajrang Dal and other Hindutva outfits were used in various states to create provocations outside mosques and in Muslim localities. The resulting protests by Muslims were used to launch attacks on them by the police and large-scale arrests. Such attacks took place in seven states.

Other issues such as Hijab wearing, halal meat, Azan call and love jihad were used to target minorities and such efforts for communal polarization occurred in Karnataka, Maharashtra, Gujarat, Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Uttar Pradesh and other states.

The large-scale deployment of bulldozer politics in Delhi and several BJP ruled states especially Uttar Pradesh, has targeted the Muslim minorities, demolishing their businesses and houses. In the name of eliminating illegal encroachment, such use of bulldozers was resorted to. There are rules and procedures to be followed regarding illegal structures, none of which have been followed by the state governments of the BJP or the Delhi Police under the Union Home Ministry.

The horrendous killings in Udaipur and Amaravati, widely publicised as revenge of the Muslims against Hindus, turned out to be the handiwork of people who are associated with the BJP. Clearly, the intention was to trigger communal violence and tensions. But the exposure of the perpetrators of these murders being linked with the BJP dampened these efforts.

There have been increasing attacks on Christian minorities. The RSS has started a vicious campaign to divide tribal communities on the demand that tribals who have converted to Christianity should be deprived of their tribal status. The CPI(M) strongly opposes this demand.

It is clear now that the BJP and the Hindutva outfits will continuously resort to minority-baiting and raise communal issues to sharpen and sustain communal polarization, accompanied by spreading poisonous campaigns of hate and terror. Such tactics will not be confined to only purposes of mobilization at the time of elections. We must recognize that this will be a permanent feature in the coming days. This is the manner by which they seek to consolidate and strengthen, as we noted in our 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress, the “overarching Hindutva identity” to shape people’s consciousness in their favour, to achieve their objective of a “Hindutva Rashtra”. So far, the main secular opposition parties in the BJP-ruled states are at a loss on how to counter this sustained communal offensive. In such a situation, the Party and the Left, despite our limited strength in these states, must exert all efforts to mobilise the democratic and secular forces to wage an ideological and political struggle against the Hindutva forces.

### **Changing the Character of the Indian Republic**

In a clear violation of the Indian Constitution, the Prime Minister ceremoniously unveiled the national emblem on top of the new Parliament building.

The Constitution unambiguously separates the three wings of our democracy – the Executive (government), the Legislature (Parliament and state assemblies) and the Judiciary. The President summons and prorogues the Parliament. The Prime Minister is the head of the Executive. The Legislature has its independent role to

perform, amongst others, to legislate laws, keep the Executive accountable and answerable. This Constitutional separation of powers between the three wings is being subverted by the head of the Executive.

Furthermore, the Prime Minister performed a Hindu religious ritual on the occasion. The Constitution of India gives the right and protection to all Indians to practice and profess their faith. This is an inalienable right. At the same time, the Constitution of India clearly stipulates that the State does not profess or practice any faith/religion.

The Indian state under the Modi government is increasingly becoming identified with a Hindutva state. The Prime Minister, the President, the Governor of Uttar Pradesh, the UP chief minister officially launched the construction of the temple at Ayodhya. Earlier, the abrogation of Article 370 and dissolution of the only Muslim majority state Jammu and Kashmir was legalised. Now this Hindu religious ritual atop the Parliament building carries forward the efforts to change the character of the secular democratic republic of India into the Hindutva Rashtra of the fascistic RSS.

### **President, Vice President Elections**

In the current political situation in the country we had been pursuing the understanding of our Party Congress political line which directed the Party to work for the broadest mobilization of secular forces against Hindutva communalism. On this basis, we worked for bringing together the maximum number of secular opposition parties to contest these elections, treating them as a political/ideological contest against this BJP government that is furthering the Hindutva communal agenda of the fascistic RSS.

Finally, mainstream secular opposition parties came together to support the candidature of Yashwant Sinha after he was made to resign as the Vice President of the TMC. Other names were considered like Sharad Pawar and Farooq Abdullah, both of whom declined. There was widespread agreement on Gopal Gandhi as the candidate of the opposition and to conduct a campaign on the lines of Gandhi Vs Godse. Gopal Gandhi was in regular consultations with opposition leaders, but decided not to contest at the last moment creating a crisis. As the last date for nominations was fast approaching and with the necessity to put up a political contest by the opposition, agreement was arrived at on the name of Yashwant Sinha.

BJP, subsequently, announced Draupadi Murmu as its candidate projecting her tribal identity. Opposition parties campaigned pointing out that this is not a contest between individuals or identity but a political ideological one. The JMM which initially had agreed to support Yashwant Sinha shifted because they said they could not be seen opposing a tribal candidate. Jharkhand, as a separate state came into existence on the basis of tribal identity. The Shiv Sena, after the successful destabilisation of the MVA state government led by it, also shifted to announce support for the BJP candidate.

The BJP, to begin with, had a head start in the electoral college and with the support of the BJD and the YSR Congress, it had a clear majority. However, Yashwant Singh received the highest number of votes received by any opposition candidate since 1952 - 3,80,177 against 6,76,803 polled by Smt. Murmu.

Likewise, for the election of the Vice President, agreement was reached on the name of Smt Margaret Alva after she resigned from her primary membership of the Congress Party. In this election which is to take place on August 6, both the JMM and the Shiv Sena have declared support and joined the nomination. The TMC has declared that it shall be neutral in this election. This decision appears linked to the ED raids and the arrests of leading TMC Ministers on the recruitment scam in West Bengal.

The electoral college to elect the Vice President does not include MLAs, but only MPs of both the Houses. In terms of numbers, the BJP has a clear advantage.

Overall, all the non-BJP led NDA parties could not come together to put up a joint effective fight in these elections.

### **Kerala Developments**

The BJP Union government is intensifying efforts to target and destabilise the LDF government in Kerala misusing Central agencies. The gold smuggling case was investigated by the NIA and a charge sheet filed before the NIA court as smuggling is a Central subject. One of the accused who was under the protection of an RSS NGO as soon as she came out on bail made the most baseless personalized attack and charges against the Chief Minister and his family. Shamelessly the Congress and the BJP echoed her outlandish charges demanding that the CM should resign. It is reported that, using this as a pretext, the ED is seeking to enter in a case being handled by the NIA and is reportedly working towards transferring the case out of Kerala to a BJP ruled state for obvious reasons.

The Congress led UDF had launched a series of agitations targeting the LDF government since the time of completion of one year of its second term. These protests were conducted against the Silver Line project followed by the demand for resignation of the Chief Minister in the gold smuggling case. It is acting in tandem with the BJP against the LDF government demanding investigation by Central agencies.

The interventions of the Union government are damaging the development projects in Kerala by not giving timely clearances. Kerala tourism is internationally recognised and renowned. The Centre has stopped all funding in the tourism sector. Such denial of funds is leading to a huge fall in Kerala's share of the Central pool resources. Besides, Kerala's share in the Finance Commission award has declined from 3.8 per cent from the 10<sup>th</sup> Finance Commission to 1.9 per cent in the current 15<sup>th</sup> Finance

Commission. The BJP government is trying to throttle the state government financially by denying its legitimate annual borrowing. The stand of the Union government that the off budget borrowing or the borrowing by PSUs with state government guarantee will be treated as part of the normal borrowing of the state government is not acceptable. This never was the practice and does not apply to the Central government. This is a deliberate attempt to curtail the fiscal space of the states. With the GST compensation to states ending, the resource crunch in Kerala will be serious. The BJP Central government by pursuing the policy of discriminating against Kerala is hoping that consequent discontent among people can be politically mobilised by it.

After an SFI demonstration in Wayanad attacked the office of Rahul Gandhi, MP, which was condemned by the Party and the state police acted promptly, the Congress held protests all over the state and in other parts of the country in which many CPI(M) offices were also targeted.

The CPI(M) and the LDF have conducted a counter-campaign amongst the people and rallies have been held in all the district Centres to expose the conspiracy to defame the government.

### **Tripura Developments**

The BJP changed its Chief Minister in the state a year before assembly elections. This is a clear admission of the all-round failure of the government. The last four years have seen ruthless attacks on democracy and the people's rights and the mounting of fascistic attacks against our Party. The elections to local bodies during 2020-21 were totally rigged. More than 95 per cent of the seats were won uncontested by the BJP. The state assembly elections are due six months from now. The atmosphere of terror and fear continues, preventing people from actively participating in political activities.

Recently, by-elections to four assembly segments were held.

We lost our sitting seat, Jubarajnagar. The BJP won the seat by polling 51.8 per cent of the vote. We got 39.2 per cent.

The BJP won three of the four seats while Congress wrested the Agartala seat from the BJP. The new tribal party formed by the son of the former Princely state king and former Congress state president, Tipra Motha polled a significant 30.7 per cent of the votes, with Congress support, in the SC reserved Surma constituency.

Overall, in the four by-elections, the BJP got 44.9 per cent, the Left Front 22.01 per cent and the Congress 20.1 per cent.

The Tipra Motha emerged as the first party amongst the tribal people with the BJP being second and the Left Front being the third. It is unclear in which direction the Tipra Motha would go.

## **Bengal Developments**

The ED has arrested TMC strong man, confidant of the CM and Minister for Industry and Commerce, Government of West Bengal, Partha Chatterjee, on July 23 over the teachers recruitment scam in Bengal of 2014 when he held the portfolios of higher education and school education. ED recovered Rs. 21 crore cash along with jewellery and other valuables valued at crores from his close associate in the first raid, which is allegedly linked to the Minister's involvement in the scam. The ED also conducted raids on another Minister and an MLA and others. These actions by the ED and CBI have come under court orders.

The earlier chit fund scams including Narada and Saradha (which remain unpursued by Central agencies) and this current development vindicate what the Party has been saying about the deep rooted corruption under the TMC government. Separately, the CBI filed a first charge sheet in a multi-crore coal smuggling case in July 20 in which 41 individuals were implicated. Earlier, both the ED and the CBI questioned several times TMC national general secretary and nephew of the CM along with his wife regarding an alleged transfer of large sums of money allegedly linked to this smuggling case. However, in the July 20 charge sheet these names are missing.

On July 13 the Chief Minister met with the then West Bengal governor, now BJP's candidate for the Vice President and the Assam Chief Minister at the Darjeeling Raj Bhavan. There is widespread speculation whether any deal to shield her nephew from the CBI while permitting the arrest of Partha Chatterjee and the TMC's decision to abstain from the VP election was struck at this meeting.

It is clear that the TMC government along with its anti-democratic politics of violence and terror is involved in deep rooted mega corruption.

## **Summing Up**

The BJP is on the offensive using and misusing state power to push its communal-corporate agenda. The secular opposition parties are unable to put up a convincing united fight even on agreed issues. As stated in the Party Congress resolution, the Congress party in the intervening period has further shown its inability to rally all the secular forces against the BJP. In such a situation it is essential for the Party to gear up its independent activities at all levels while making sincere efforts for Left unity. In this period in some States the party has successfully organised programmes and mobilisations along with other democratic and secular forces against the communalism of the BJP-RSS. These efforts should intensify. The Party must devote its energies in building up such struggles at the local and State level while

simultaneously uniting people against the communal bulldozer politics of the BJP-RSS.

**CC Calls:**

1. August 1-15, Observe 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of India's Independence, culminating in the hoisting of the National Flag in Party offices and taking a pledge on the preamble of the Constitution. The campaign should highlight the role of the Communists in the Freedom Struggle; defense of democracy; democratic rights; civil liberties and India's secular, democratic, Constitutional values.
2. From September 14 to 24, conduct a campaign on the increasing assaults on people's livelihood. Concrete plan of action in each state should be planned by the state committees. This campaign will culminate in a central public meeting at state capitals.
3. As decided by the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress, strengthening of local struggles on local problems facing the people must be prioritized.
4. To conduct campaigns against the efforts to destabilize the Kerala LDF government all across the country. The campaign must also include the highlights of the pro-people alternative policies pursued by the LDF government.

\*\*\*