



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

Central Committee

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Review of the 18th Lok Sabha Elections

*(Adopted at the Central Committee meeting held on
June 28-30, 2024 at New Delhi)*

The results of the elections to the 18th Lok Sabha constitute a significant setback for the BJP. The people of India, asserting their defence of the Constitution and the secular democratic character of the republic, and expressing deep concerns over sharply declining livelihood conditions have deprived the BJP of a majority it had secured in the last two Lok Sabha elections of 2014 and 2019. Having campaigned to reach a figure of 400 plus, the BJP's tally is now 240 seats, 63 fewer than the 303 seats it held in the outgoing Lok Sabha. This is over a 20 percent reduction. The BJP is now 32 seats short of a majority on its own. However, with its allies winning an additional 52 seats, the NDA has 292 seats, which is 20 more than the required majority. In terms of the BJP's vote share there is a small decline from 37.7 per cent to 36.56 per cent. BJP, therefore, retains the potential to further consolidate the communal consciousness it nurtured in the last decade, particularly, to further sharpen polarization and intensify the pursuit of Corporate-Communal agenda and mount further attacks on people's livelihoods through neo-liberal reforms.

The INDIA bloc parties rose to the occasion and have together won 234 seats, 38 seats short of a majority. ECI data shows that all the constituents of the NDA put together got 42.5 per cent of the votes polled. The constituents of the INDIA bloc got 40.6 per cent. The difference of vote share between both the combinations is less than 2 per cent (1.9 per cent). This shows greater potential for people's resistance and strengthened struggles.

CPI(M)'s Electoral Tactical Line

The political line adopted by the Party at its 23rd Party Congress in Kannur in April 2022, amongst other aspects, decided that: "The main task is to isolate and defeat the BJP. This requires the growth of the independent strength of the CPI(M) and

the Left forces to mobilise the people in class and mass struggles in a powerful militant manner.

Strengthening the Party and the Left forces is also required to lead the fight against the Hindutva communal agenda and the activities of communal forces. The Party must work for the broadest mobilisation of all secular forces against Hindutva communalism.”

In order to achieve this objective, the political line concluded by stating: “As and when elections take place appropriate electoral tactics to maximise the pooling of anti-BJP votes will be adopted based on the above political line.”

Subsequently the Central Committee at its meeting in January 2024 stated, “The Hindutva communal consolidation has to be squarely confronted with strict adherence to secular democratic principles and values. The process of coming together of the secular forces must be based on such a firm position in order to maximize the pooling of anti-BJP votes. The INDIA bloc must firm up such an approach in order to strengthen the electoral battle in 2024.”

The election manifesto issued by the Party clearly defined the task in the forthcoming elections. It stated, “We should make no mistake about it – the Lok Sabha elections are about saving India, against the effort of the BJP to transform the secular, democratic character of the Indian Republic into a rabidly intolerant, hate and violence based authoritarian and fascistic Hindutva Rashtra.”

It further says: “It is imperative that every Indian patriot must strive to safeguard and strengthen India’s Constitutional order. Given the grievously deteriorating living conditions of the people **the current policy direction of crony capitalism and the communal-corporate nexus must be reversed.**”

“This requires a set of alternative pro-people policies that must be implemented. The assaults on our Constitutional order and the secular, democratic character of our republic have been mounted by the RSS/BJP using its control of the government and the State apparatus.

“The defence of our Constitutional order and democracy can only be achieved by ensuring that the BJP is separated from controlling government and State power. Likewise, any alternate set of pro-people policies can only be implemented when the BJP is removed from controlling the government apparatus.

“Hence, to safeguard the Constitutional republic, to further strengthen it and to change the policy direction towards a radical people oriented one, it is imperative

that the BJP and its allies are defeated in the forthcoming elections to the 18th Lok Sabha.”

“CPI(M) Appeals to the Indian Electorate to:

- 1. Defeat the BJP and its allies.**
- 2. Increase the strength of the CPI(M) and the Left parties in the Lok Sabha.**
- 3. Ensure that an alternative secular government is formed at the Centre.”**

BJP Campaign

The BJP campaign began with shrill pronouncements of winning 400 plus seats. A larger than life Modi persona was created and even the BJP manifesto was titled as ‘Modi Guarantee’. With the active support and collaboration of the RSS, it employed all the weapons in its communal arsenal to achieve this objective. Midway, after the first two phases of polling, the BJP launched a rabid offensive to sharpen communal polarization abandoning all references to development like ‘Viksit Bharat’ etc. Modi personally led these attacks with his incendiary communal speeches openly targeting and castigating the Muslims.

The BJP and Modi were totally supported by the Indian ruling classes and its leadership, the big bourgeoisie. The corporate-communal nexus that was cemented in the Modi decade promoted the most vicious form of crony capitalism and aggressively pursued the neo-liberal economic reform trajectory. Now leading the ND alliance government, Modi will continue to aggressively pursue the neo-liberal agenda and its pro-imperialist orientation.

Undermining Level Playing Field

Additionally, there are at least four other factors that the Modi government deployed before the elections which provided them the opportunity to at least reach 240 seats and reach a 20 seat majority as the NDA.

Weaponizing Central Agencies: First, these elections were held amid widespread attacks on the opposition parties, brazen misuse of Central agencies, and massive use of money power. The run-up to the elections saw two chief ministers jailed, and bank accounts of political parties like the Congress and CPI(M) (in one district in Kerala) frozen. Opposition parties like the NCP and the Shiv Sena were targeted and split through the use of money power and threats and intimidation by Central agencies. The BJP resorted to all sorts of political maneuvers to divide the opposition and succeeded in wooing back the JD(U) to the NDA fold. BJP also managed to woo back the RLD into the NDA.

Complicit Election Commission: Secondly, the results would have been more adverse to the BJP and the NDA if the election commission had discharged its Constitutionally mandated authority in the conduct of free and fair elections. The Elections Commission's role was more in the nature of being a partner of the NDA, complicit in advancing the BJP's agenda. Its abject failure, in fact, refusal, to curb the inflammatory communal rhetoric of Modi and many BJP leaders rendered the Model Code of Conduct infructuous. Its initial reluctance to disclose the data on votes polled raised suspicions of manipulation, which severely undermined the standing of this Constitutional authority.

Even post elections, the ECI is refusing to clarify the huge mismatch between the votes cast in the EVMs and the votes counted. At the all-India level it has been estimated that nearly 5.14 crore votes is the degree of this mismatch, i.e., more votes counted than polled. ECI must be made accountable.

In order to ensure greater transparency, Party had suggested that ECI must change the sequence of voting units in the polling booths. Currently, the ballot unit is followed by VVPAT and then the Control Unit. Vote cast is seen on VVPAT but what is transmitted from VVPAT to Control Unit is not known. Counting takes place from Control Units. Party suggested to change sequence – Ballot Unit, Control Unit and then VVPAT. But, ECI did not accept! Unfortunately, the Supreme Court rejected the plea for a 100 per cent paper trial confirmation of EVM votes. Thus, the struggle for greater transparency and accountability on EVM voting must continue.

Godi Media: Thirdly, the BJP exercised total control over large sections of the media to propagate its viewpoint exclusively and set the narrative to suit its interests. In addition to the complicit corporate media (godia media) the BJP spent a huge amount of resources for spreading its narrative and disinformation through the social media. Based on a post-poll survey conducted by the CSDS-Lok Niti, it has been estimated that if 1 person out of every 66 who followed the godia media narrative had voted against Modi, then the BJP would have lost this election. Such was the massive power of manipulation that the BJP deployed in these elections. Highly exaggerated Exit polls with almost all of them giving BJP 400 plus seats were put out by this complicit corporate media aimed at demoralizing the opposition during the counting process and enlarging the scope for manipulating results. These Exit polls also targeted the stock market. As the market boomed post-Exit polls, many made a killing in terms of profits while the vast majority of the common investors were ruined as the Sensex collapsed following the results.

Humungous Money Power: Finally, the BJP used its massive money power, amassed by legalizing political corruption like the electoral bonds etc., to influence

voting patterns, mobilize people for its rallies and roadshows etc. The BJP directly distributed thousands of crores of rupees to the voters personally.

While BJP's command over money power was and remains the maximum some other political parties, especially some regional parties also distributed money for votes.

All these four factors put together completely distorted the level playing field required for the conduct of a free and fair election.

BJP's Performance

A major factor for the BJP's setback in these elections was the losses it suffered in Uttar Pradesh. It had 62 out of the 80 MPs of the state and was aiming to increase this tally. However, the BJP could win only 33, losing 29 of its sitting seats. In this land of hardcore Hindutva politics and the vicious sharpening of communal polarization and bulldozer politics, the BJP vote share declined by 9 percent. It could have lost many more seats but for the division among the opposition votes. For instance, the BSP polled more votes in 16 constituencies than the margin of defeat of the Samajwadi Party/Congress candidates. The understanding between the INDIA constituents, basically SP and Congress, yielded results. The SP's focus on campaigning for advancing the interests of the PDA [Pichda (Backward), Dalits and Alpsankhik (Minorities)] struck a chord amongst the people. Clearly, the problems of day-to-day livelihood, such as unemployment, price rise, farmers' discontent, and youth protest against the Agniveer scheme, dominated the electoral narrative, pushing the hardcore Hindutva agenda into the background. This was reflected in the fact that the BJP lost its sitting MP from Faizabad constituency, where the Ayodhya Ram Temple was constructed with much fanfare. Here, it was a Dalit candidate of the SP who won in a general seat. In fact, the BJP lost a majority of the seats around Ayodhya.

In Maharashtra, the BJP lost 16 out of its 25 sitting seats and the NDA lost 25 of its sitting 42 seats. This happened despite engineering splits in both the NCP and Shiv Sena and ensuring that the assembly speaker ruled in favor of the split Ajit Pawar NCP and the Eknath Shinde Shiv Sena, giving them the original party symbols. The Sharad Pawar-led NCP and Uddhav Thackeray-led Shiv Sena received sympathetic support from the people, which resulted in such shocking results for the BJP.

In Rajasthan, the BJP had won 24 out of the total 25 seats in 2019. In these elections, it lost 10 of its sitting seats. The BJP lost 8 of its sitting seats in Karnataka and 6 in West Bengal. In Haryana, where it won all 10 seats in 2019, it lost in 5 seats. It lost 5 sitting seats in Bihar. Elsewhere, it lost sitting seats in

Jharkhand (3), Punjab (2), Assam, Chandigarh, Daman and Diu, Ladakh, and Manipur (1 each).

The growing popular discontent reflected in various people's struggles, especially in the historic Kisan struggle, had its impact in these elections. The BJP lost 38 of its sitting seats in the agricultural districts in five states of Western UP, Haryana, Punjab, Rajasthan, and Maharashtra. The continued rural distress with lack of a remunerative MSP and rural real wages stagnating during the Modi decade ensured that in 159 predominantly rural constituencies in the country people voted for a change.

The BJP lost 92 of its sitting seats, though the net loss is 63 as it gained 29 seats elsewhere. Of these 92 seats it lost 63 where from the general category, 18 SC reserved seats and 11 ST reserved seats.

A disconcerting feature of these elections is the reduction in the number of women elected. This fell from 78 (14.36 per cent) in 2019 to 74 (13.63 per cent). Likewise, of the 78 Muslim candidates who contested in 2024 only 24 managed to win across the country. This is down from 26 elected in 2019.

BJP: Offsetting Losses: However, the BJP managed to offset some of these losses with gains elsewhere. It gave a spectacular showing in Odisha, winning 20 of the 21 Lok Sabha seats and a majority in the assembly. In Andhra Pradesh, riding on the back of the alliance with Telugu Desam and Jana Sena, the BJP could consolidate the NDA's numbers. This alliance won 21 out of the 25 Lok Sabha seats and swept the assembly elections. The return of JD(U) and Nitish Kumar to the BJP fold helped mitigate potential big losses to the Maha Gatbandhan in Bihar. The BJP made a clean sweep of all seats in Madhya Pradesh and improved its position in Chhattisgarh.

The BJP registered gains in the southern states. For the first time, it won an MP seat in Kerala (Thrissur) and the BJP vote in Kerala increased from 12.99 to 16.68 per cent. In Tamilnadu, although it did not win any seat, it increased its vote share from 3.6 to 11.24 per cent and it came in the second position in 9 seats. In Telangana, the BJP's vote percentage increased from 19.65 to 35.8 per cent and it increased its seats from 4 to 8. In Andhra Pradesh, it increased its vote share from less than 1 per cent to 11.28 per cent in alliance with TDP and won 3 Lok Sabha seats. Karnataka is the only state where the BJP lost ground where its vote share fell to 46.09 per cent from 51.38 per cent in 2019. But with its ally, the JD(S), getting 5.64 per cent of the vote, the NDA polled a combined vote of 51.73 per cent. The BJP, however, contested many more seats this time than it did in the last election.

Regional Parties

The major regional parties such as DMK (Tamilnadu), RJD (Bihar), JMM (Jharkhand), SP (Uttar Pradesh), NCP-Sharad Pawar, Shiv Sena-Uddhav Thackeray (Maharashtra) played an important role in defeating the BJP. In Bengal, the TMC and the BJP succeeded in their efforts to make the elections as a political binary which benefited the TMC. The Left and the Congress together could not effectively change the narrative of this political binary.

However, there is a lesson in the rout of the BJD and YSR Congress Party. Both these parties supported the Modi government, its policies, and enactments on every single occasion in Parliament during the last five years. Ironically, though the BJD polled a marginally higher vote share than last time, it lost 18 Lok Sabha seats and 62 assembly seats. In Andhra Pradesh, the YSRP lost the assembly and 18 of its sitting MPs.

Our Party had noted earlier that the RSS has a record of decimating most of the parties that it allies with. This is particularly true of those allies who chose to cohabit with its political front, the Jan Sangh/BJP. Only those regional parties that strongly opposed and continue to oppose the RSS/BJP, like the DMK, SP, RJD, NCP (Sharad Pawar), Shiv Sena (Uddhav Thackeray), and JMM, emerged stronger.

INDIA Bloc

The INDIA bloc parties rose to the occasion, which was reflected in their creditable showing in the results. Their campaign focused on the issues of unemployment, price rise, agrarian distress, and the adverse impact of Modi's policies on people's livelihoods. It also highlighted the threats to our Constitution, democracy, secularism and civil liberties as a result of the activities of the Hindutva forces. The issues of social justice and the conduct of a caste census were also taken up and this had an impact. It is heartening to see that a large number of people responded positively and rose in defense of India's Constitution and the secular democratic character of our republic.

As decided earlier in the INDIA bloc, the issue of seat adjustments and electoral understanding were left to be done at the state level, depending on the concrete situation there. In states like Tamilnadu, Maharashtra, Bihar, Uttar Pradesh, Delhi and Haryana, such arrangements were put in place and they yielded positive outcomes.

BJP Efforts to Consolidate

Notwithstanding the adverse results and being forced to form a coalition government of the ND alliance, the BJP nevertheless will be relentless in its efforts to reestablish Modi's hegemony. The consolidation of the Hindutva consciousness that it has pursued during the last decade will be marshalled for further intensification of communal polarization. By reappointing the same NSA and the PM's Principal Secretary, Modi traveling to Italy to meet G7 leaders on the sidelines of the Summit with no agenda for India; by re-inducting nearly all elected former ministers to head the same ministries they held in the last cabinet and getting re-elected the incumbent as the new Speaker of the 18th Lok Sabha, who suspended nearly 150 MPs, Modi is trying to generate a narrative of saying that it is "business as usual." There is also no let-up in the use of draconian laws of UAPA and the misuse of Central agencies, ED/CBI etc.

Much, however, will depend on how the developments will unfold in the days to come. The principal BJP allies in the NDA, the TDP and the JDU, are primarily preoccupied and focused on controlling their respective states and consolidating their positions there. People, therefore, have to keep a strict vigil and follow the developments and contradictions that will surface in the ND alliance.

Under these circumstances, it is imperative that the struggles for the defense of the Indian Constitution, democracy, secularism, federalism and civil liberties, along with the struggles for improved livelihoods for the vast majority of the Indian people, will have to be intensified, both inside and outside of Parliament.

CPI(M)/Left Performance

The CPI(M)/Left played an important role in rallying the secular forces against the RSS/BJP and thereby strengthening the INDIA bloc. However, the performance of the Party is disappointing and needs critical evaluation. The Left as a whole has 8 seats (CPI(M): 4, CPI: 2, CPI(ML): 2), marginally higher than the five MPs in the 17th Lok Sabha. This is primarily due to the fact that the CPI(ML) has won two seats from Bihar.

The CPI(M) contested 52 seats this time compared to 71 (including 2 CPI(M)-supported independents) in 2019. The total votes we secured this time is 11,342,553 as against 11,400,783 in 2019. The average votes in constituencies contested in 2024 is 218,126 compared to 160,574 in 2019. Our vote share this time around is 1.76 percent compared to 1.86 percent, including 2 independents in 2019. Officially, the votes of independents are not considered as party votes.

Excluding independents, our vote share was 1.77 percent in 2019 as against 1.76 in 2024.

Party's Performance

Kerala: The results of the Lok Sabha election in Kerala have been a setback for the CPI(M) and the Left Democratic Front (LDF). Out of the 20 seats, the CPI(M)/LDF could win only 1 seat (Alathur). In the 2019 election too, the CPI(M) had won just 1 seat. The UDF led by Congress has won 18 seats and the BJP has achieved a major success by winning a Lok Sabha seat (Thrissur) for the first time in the state.

The vote share of the LDF is 33.35 per cent compared to 35.10 per cent in 2019, which is 1.75 per cent less. If we look at the figures from 2014, a decade ago, the LDF vote share has declined from 40.2 per cent to 33.35 per cent, i.e., almost 7 percentage points.

The UDF got a vote share of 45.12 per cent, which is 2.8 per cent less than in 2019. Over the period of ten years from 2014 (42.04 per cent), the vote share of the UDF has increased by 3.98 per cent.

The BJP/NDA have polled 19.2 per cent of the votes, which is an increase of 3.64 per cent compared to 2019. It should be noted that the BJP/NDA vote share has almost doubled over the last ten years – from 10.08 per cent in 2014 to 19.2 per cent in 2024.

The main political factor for the victory of the UDF and the defeat of the LDF is that for a considerable section of the people, particularly the minorities, the aim of defeating the BJP at the Centre was seen as feasible only by the Congress, which is leading the INDIA bloc. The Left was not seen by them as a major player in the defeat of the BJP and the formation of an alternative government. This was the same trend witnessed in the 2019 election when Rahul Gandhi contested from the Wayanad constituency. This trend continued with Muslims and a section of secular voters rallying behind the UDF. This overcame the strong campaign by the LDF that they are the most consistent fighters against the BJP and its majority communalism.

Another reason for the erosion in the electoral support for the LDF has been the discontent caused by the difficulties faced by different sections of people due to the financial constraints of the state government. The Central government had adopted a discriminatory attitude towards the LDF government and deprived it of its due financial resources. This led to the non-payment of social welfare pensions and

other benefits; providing adequate supplies of essential commodities through Maveli stores and Supplyco; and non-payment of DA arrears to government employees. The UDF and the media ran a hostile campaign against the LDF government which influenced some sections and they were not convinced about the Central government's culpability in the matter, despite the LDF campaign against the Centre's assault on the states' rights.

The erosion of traditional industries like coir, cashew and handloom and the resultant displacement of employment in these sectors have weakened the trade unions and the strong foundations of the Party in these working class sections. This has had an adverse effect on our voting strength in the affected areas.

A disturbing feature of the election results is the erosion of our traditional base in several constituencies to the BJP. While the main reason for the success of the BJP in Thrissur is the vote it got from the Congress base and a section of the Christians, it is a fact that some of our voting base has gone to the BJP in several places. This is particularly so in constituencies like Attingal and Alappuzha. In the former, we lost narrowly by 684 votes and in the latter, the BJP has come close to our vote share. "Hindu sentiments" and caste influence have affected our vote base to some extent in other seats also.

The BJP-RSS work to advance Hindutva politics has shown results. They have been using temples, religious and social activities as a means to propagate their Hindutva and anti-minority politics. They have been using various Central schemes which convey benefits to penetrate selected caste groups. Self-critically it must be noted that we have not paid sufficient attention to counter their politics and activities. This must be taken up on a priority basis.

Caste and communal organisations played a heightened role in this election. The SNDP (Ezhava organisation) leadership has worked in favour of the BJP by and large. The Jamaat-e-Islami and the SDPI – two extremist organisations – have combined with the Muslim League and campaigned vigorously against the LDF and in favour of the Congress.

The politics and ideology of extremist groups like the SDPI and Jamaat-e-Islami and the Muslim League's collaboration with these elements must be exposed and countered. Our approach to the Muslim minority is based on secular democratic principles which must be taken to the people directly. The false charge of Muslim appeasement must be rebuffed. The Party should also work out appropriate steps to expose and counter the dubious role of the SNDP leadership.

A section of the Christian church establishment has tilted in favour of the BJP. The BJP has utilized the growing anti-Muslim sentiments within the church and also

adopted a carrot and stick policy to woo church leaders. The support extended to the BJP candidate in Thrissur is an illustration.

The review of the state committee concludes that the social media campaign of the Party was far behind that of the UDF and the BJP. Urgent steps have to be taken to expand the coverage through social media at all levels and strengthen content generation.

The estimates of the votes we can get at the pre-poll stage and after polling in each constituency show a wide gap with the actual results. This shows that the Party units are unable to gauge the mood of the people and their preferences. The weakening of the Party's live links with people has to be corrected.

The state committee review has pointed to the weakness in the participation of the youth and students in the election campaign. An array of youth, who have just crossed the age of 18, display an aversion to politics and even to exercise their vote. Special attention has to be paid to raise the level of political consciousness in the youth and student movements. However, women squads worked extensively in all constituencies.

The review notes growing instances of corruption in the panchayats, cooperative institutions and at various levels. This must be checked and strictly curbed.

Instances of arrogant behaviour of cadres – from top to bottom – are alienating people from the Party. The importance of rectification to eliminate wrong trends and behaviour must be undertaken in a planned manner.

The Party has to evolve steps to counter the ideological and political influence of the Hindutva forces. It must continue to expose the opportunist stand of the Congress in Kerala, which acts as an opposition to the LDF in concert with the BJP. The state government has announced that it will prioritise delivery of social welfare pensions and other benefits to the working people without interruption.

There should be a prioritization of government funds allocation and expenditure oriented towards the poor and working people.

The state committee will be setting out tasks in different spheres and the steps to overcome shortcomings in the organisation and to rectify wrong trends in the post-review state committee meeting to be held soon.

West Bengal: The performance of the CPI(M) and the Left Front was disappointing in this election and we could not win any seat. Out of the 42 seats, the TMC won 29, the BJP got 12 and the Congress got only 1 seat.

The CPI(M) came second only in the Murshidabad seat. The Left Front contesting in 30 seats got 6.33 per cent of the vote as compared to 7.44 per cent, contesting 40 seats in 2019. The CPI(M) has got 5.68 per cent of the votes polled contesting 23 seats. In 2019, the Party had polled 6.28 per cent of the votes contesting 31 seats. There has been an increase in the average vote share per seat compared to 2019, but there is no significant increase in the overall vote share.

There were no complaints of booth capturing in the first four phases of polling. However, in the fifth, sixth and seventh phases, there were attacks on polling agents of the Left Front and Congress, voters were intimidated and manipulation of votes in booths took place in the absence of Central forces at the polling booths. The worst attacks by the TMC were in the Diamond Harbour constituency, which has completely distorted the verdict.

The Party and the Left Front campaigned for the defeat of the BJP whose ten-year rule at the Centre had posed a serious threat to the secular democratic character of the Indian State, through the institution of an authoritarian and communal-corporate nexus. At the same time, the Party called for the defeat of the TMC, whose government was ruling the state for the past thirteen years, had instituted a corrupt, criminal nexus, and governed by suppressing the opposition and assaulting the democratic rights of citizens.

The political situation in West Bengal saw a binary developing between the TMC and the BJP since the 2019 Lok Sabha election. Such a polarization continued during the 2021 assembly election. Both TMC and BJP were interested in such a bipolar situation existing, which would marginalize the CPI(M) and the Left. Despite a sustained and systematic campaign, we could not break this binary. Mamata Banerjee utilized the INDIA bloc to claim she was leading it in Bengal even when opting to keep away whenever it suited her. This led to secular voters, particularly the minorities, gravitating to the TMC.

The campaign conducted against the BJP and Modi's authoritarian rule also contributed to check the BJP's advance. BJP has lost 6 seats from last time – from 18 to 12. But it should be noted that the BJP's vote share has dropped only slightly by 1.51 per cent – from 40.25 per cent in 2019 to 38.74 in 2024. Moreover, compared to the 2021 assembly election, its vote share has gone up slightly by 0.77 per cent. It is, therefore, important to underline the necessity to improve and expand our political-ideological campaign against the BJP and the Hindutva forces.

Mamata Banerjee, during the election campaign, constantly accused the CPI(M) of helping the BJP by contesting against the TMC in the election. However, the falsity

of this charge has been proved by the fact that in several seats, the BJP lost because of the increased vote share of the CPI(M).

While calling for the defeat of the BJP and TMC, it seems in actual campaigning, the focus of fighting the BJP, especially as this was a Parliament election, was less and more emphasis in the campaign was against the TMC at the lower levels. This problem is persisting from the last Assembly elections and steps should be taken to educate the cadres about the thrust of the political line of the Party.

One of the factors which retains mass support for the TMC, especially among women, are the various schemes and welfare measures such as Lakshmir Bhandar. However, there was an erroneous approach of some Party units and cadres of attacking them as 'bribes' or 'doles' which only alienated poor people from us. There has to be a correct approach to the range of welfare measures which are being implemented by various state governments.

The selection of candidates, particularly youthful candidates, and the election campaign conducted in various ways were helpful in projecting the Party and the Left. However, this did not have the desired effect in terms of gaining more electoral support.

The state committee review notes that there were no polling agents in 12 to 14 per cent of booths. This points to the weak state of Party organisation. There are many areas where there has been no Party in existence for a long time. The grass-root work in rural areas in several districts to connect to the rural poor to build mass organisations and Party units are weak or non-functional. Without class-based movements and organisation, it will not be possible to re-establish our political influence and electoral base. There is a deficiency in the class orientation in the Party as noted in the review and this must be corrected.

The organizational weaknesses and lack of active Party units at the grass-root level have to be examined and steps be taken to overcome this shortcoming. For this, an extended meeting of the state committee will be held for the Organisational Review in August.

Tamilnadu: The DMK-led INDIA bloc achieved a sweeping victory winning all 40 seats in Tamilnadu and Puducherry (Tamilnadu-39, Puducherry-1). Last time it had won 38 seats in Tamilnadu, one less.

In the political alignments, the DMK-led alliance was intact with the same parties that were there in the 2019 election. The AIADMK-BJP alliance had split up. There were two alliances against the INDIA bloc – the BJP-led alliance consisting

of PMK and some smaller parties and the AIADMK-led alliance consisting of DMDK and two other smaller parties.

The INDIA bloc got 46.85 per cent of the vote. The break-up of this is as follows: DMK-26.93, Congress-10.67, CPI(M)-2.52, CPI-2.15, VCK-2.17, IUML-1.17 and MDMK-1.24. The alliance got a lesser vote share than last time (from 52.8 percent to 46.8 per cent) when it had polled more than 50 per cent. A division of opposition votes between the AIADMK and BJP alliances has helped the INDIA bloc to sweep all seats.

The CPI(M) contested two seats – Madurai and Dindigul – as part of the seat adjustments with the DMK. The DMK, in talks, insisted on taking Coimbatore, our sitting seat, and exchanged it for Dindigul. The Party won both seats with big margins.

In Madurai, our candidate was re-elected with a margin of 2.09 lakh, polling 43.84 per cent of the votes. In Dindigul, the Party candidate won with a huge margin of 4.43 lakh, polling 58.25 per cent of the votes.

The joint campaign led by DMK was conducted strongly and effectively against the BJP and the Modi government, which helped rally public opinion against the BJP. However, it must be noted that the BJP has made gains in this election. It's vote share has gone up from 3.66 per cent in 2019 to 11.24 per cent this time by contesting in an increased number of seats – 23 seats. It has come second in nine Lok Sabha seats and its allies in three more. In several seats, the BJP has garnered a section of AIADMK votes.

This underlines the importance of conducting a sustained political-ideological campaign against the BJP and the Hindutva forces. We have to creatively propagate how the interests of Tamilnadu, its tradition of social reforms, cultural identity and state's rights are in danger due to the BJP and the policies of the Modi government.

The Party daily *Theekkathir* played an effective role in helping the Party's election campaign in the two constituencies where our candidates fought. The social media teams also did good work in the two constituencies.

At the Party organizational level, the review of the state committee has noted that only 40 to 50 per cent of Party members belonging to the two constituencies have worked in the election campaign. This is the picture in the state as a whole too. This points to the looseness in Party membership and the low political-organisational level. One of the reasons for the declining independent strength of

the Party is our organizational weaknesses. The state committee has to address these issues.

Tripura: The Lok Sabha election in Tripura was held in the background of continuing terror and intimidation against the CPI(M) and the opposition. Earlier, in two assembly bye-elections held in September 2023 – in Boxanagar and Dhanpur – the BJP had resorted to large-scale intimidation and malpractices to win these two seats.

For the two seats in the Lok Sabha, the state committee decided to have an understanding with the Congress for seat sharing. Thereby it was decided that the CPI(M) will contest the Tripura East (ST) seat and the Congress will contest the Tripura West seat.

The BJP entered into an understanding with the Tipra Motha, the tribal party, which was successful in winning 13 seats in the assembly election on a platform of tribal issues. However, without any of their issues being accepted, under pressure from the BJP Central leadership, the Tipra Motha succumbed to the BJP by putting up the sister of the Tipra Motha founder to contest on a BJP symbol. This is a development which would help us to expose the Tipra Motha among the tribal people in the coming days.

The elections to the Tripura West seat were held in the first phase on April 19 and for the Tripura East in the second phase on April 26. The BJP created an atmosphere of terror and there was large-scale prevention of opposition voters going to the polling station. In a large number of polling booths, the BJP gangs cast false vote against the absentee voters. In the second phase of polling in Tripura East, there was a lesser degree of violence and rigging but it still affected a large number of polling booths.

Therefore, the results cannot be seen as the real mandate of the people. In Tripura West, the BJP polled 72.85 per cent of the votes polled while the Congress got 23.30 per cent. In Tripura East, the BJP polled 7,77,447, while the CPI(M) polled 2,90,628 votes (25.62 per cent).

The main reason for this lopsided verdict is the widespread election malpractices and casting of false votes. However, it should be noted that a number of measures of the BJP state government and Central government such as 5 kg free ration, housing for poorer sections in the PMAY scheme, a section of farmers receiving Rs. 6,000 per year from the PM Kisan Samman Nidhi and soft loans to women self-help groups etc., have created a considerable support for the BJP.

The Party was handicapped in our election work due to the disarray in the state of Party organisation at the lower levels. Though direct physical attacks have considerably reduced, various forms of intimidation of Party members and supporters by threatening their livelihood and safety have led to a situation where large number of Party members and primary units have become inactive. The work of revitalizing the Party organisation at all levels requires patient and sustained work.

Rajasthan: In Rajasthan, as per the understanding forged with the Congress, the Party fought the Sikar Lok Sabha seat with Amra Ram as the candidate. The Congress had entered into an understanding also with Rashtriya Loktantrik Party (RLP) whose leader Hanuman Beniwal contested, and one seat with the Bharat Adivasi Party (BAP). The INDIA bloc could win 11 seats. Of this, three were of the allied parties. The BJP, along with its allies, had won all 25 seats in the 2019 election.

In Sikar, the CPI(M) candidate won polling 6,59,300 votes, i.e., 50.68 per cent of the votes polled. The margin of victory over the sitting BJP candidate was 72,896. Out of the seven assembly segments, the CPI(M) led in five with over 50 per cent of the vote and in two assembly segments, the BJP had a lead.

The highest number of votes registered for the Party was in Dhod assembly constituency where we polled 99,502 votes (57.02 per cent), which is the strongest base of the Party in Sikar district, having won this seat four times in the past. This victory was made possible because of the full support and cooperation of the Congress leadership and its MLAs and workers of the party. The image of Amra Ram as a militant kisan leader and a four-time legislator also contributed to getting wider support. Our candidate got support from the various peasant communities, Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes and total support of the Muslim minorities.

Maharashtra: We had decided to fight the Maharashtra election as part of the INDIA bloc known as the Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA). We had negotiated with the NCP to concede one seat – Dindori (ST) – for us to fight, in which we had polled 1.09 lakh votes in the 2019 election. However, the NCP which had polled a bigger vote last time did not concede the seat to us. In such a situation, the Maharashtra state committee decided that we should not contest either Dindori or Palghar, where the Party has a relatively stronger electoral base as this would weaken the fight against the BJP alliance.

It was decided that we should fight at least one seat in order to be in the electoral battle. So, at a late stage, the Hingoli seat was chosen. Despite the constraints, the campaign was well organized in this constituency. Our candidate polled 14,644

votes, which is 1.26 per cent of the votes polled. We have got a little less than the votes obtained in this seat in the 2014 Lok Sabha election.

Elsewhere in the state, Party units fully participated in the campaign to defeat the BJP-NDA alliance. Overall, the results have been favourable with the MVA winning 31 seats and the NDA tally being reduced to 17 seats.

Bihar: We contested the Khagaria seat as part of the Mahagathbandhan and secured 3,77,526 votes (35.55 per cent). Though we lost the election, we stood second. The failure of the Mahagathbandhan to succeed in north Bihar has impacted our performance in Khagaria, apart from our own weaknesses.

Assam: We wanted to contest the Barpeta Lok Sabha seat as a constituent party of the 'United Opposition Forum'. However, due to the unilateral and undemocratic stand of the Congress party, this was not possible. The Party, therefore, decided to contest the Barpeta seat with our own candidate Manoranjan Talukdar, who is a sitting MLA from one of the assembly segments, Sorbhog. The BJP alliance candidate was from the AGP.

The Party candidate secured third position with 96,138 votes (5.7 per cent). The seat was won by the AGP and the Congress came second. Despite a good campaign and the acceptability of our candidate, finally the contest got polarized between the AGP and the Congress. In Sorbhog, which is our sitting seat, we got only 18,198 votes (10.17 per cent). This needs to be examined critically and necessary steps taken to improve the work of the Party, mass organisations and the MLA.

Overall, of the 14 seats, the BJP and allies won 11 (9+2) and the Congress 3.

Andhra Pradesh: In Andhra Pradesh, we contested in one parliamentary and 8 assembly seats after concluding seat adjustments with the Congress and CPI. In the assembly elections our performance was poor, except in one tribal seat – Rampachodavaram (which is also part of the Araku Lok Sabha seat we contested), where we polled 21,265 votes (10.1 per cent). In 2019 we got 18,182 votes (9.01 per cent) in this seat. Overall, we could poll only 0.13 per cent of the votes in the Assembly elections and 0.4 per cent in the parliament elections.

In the ST reserved Araku parliamentary seat we secured 1,23,129 votes (10.57 per cent) and contributed to the defeat of the BJP candidate. There are reports that in some places where we were not in the contest, some of the Party's mandal committee members, unit secretaries and Party members worked in violation of the Party line. Corrective steps should be taken in this matter.

Telangana: We contested in Bhongir and polled 28,730 (2.05 per cent) votes. We have extended support to the Congress in the remaining 16 seats. However, some

wrong tendencies that show the serious dilution of our organisational strength were visible in these elections. Some district committee members and whole-timers too did not participate in the campaign, while some members of our local committees left our party and joined the Congress. There were reports of some of our party members voting against the Party line.

Odisha: In Odisha, our Party contested in 7 seats for the legislative assembly and in one seat for the Lok Sabha. The Congress agreed to support us only in our sitting seat Bonai, in all other seats we contested along with CPI. We could retain Bonai, by polling 81,008 votes (43.45 per cent), which is substantially higher than our votes polled in 2019 (59,939 votes, 34.67 per cent). This is the fourth time we have won the Bonai seat, establishing our continued support among the tribals. Overall, we could poll 0.37 per cent votes in these assembly elections.

We contested the Bhubaneswar parliamentary seat and secured 4,148 votes (0.38 per cent). We should have stuck to the earlier understanding of the state secretariat not to contest the seat.

Karnataka: We contested in Chikballapur and got 4,557 votes (0.3 per cent), which is a decline over our votes secured in 2019. In 2019, we polled 18,648 votes (1.34 per cent).

Punjab: We contested the Jalandhar seat and secured 5,958 votes (0.6 per cent). Overall, the Congress won 7, AAP 3 and Akali Dal 1 and Independents 2. Though BJP did not win a seat, it is to be noted that they got 18.56 per cent of the votes.

Jharkhand: We contested from Rajmahal (ST) seat where we polled 37,291 votes (3.06 per cent), slightly improving over the votes we got 35,586, in 2019.

Andaman and Nicobar: We contested Andaman and Nicobar Islands constituency and polled 2.97 per cent votes.

Continuing Decline in our Independent Strength

From this account of our performance, it is clear that the erosion of our mass base noted a long time ago continues. What is of concern is the erosion of our mass/electoral base in our strong states. The preliminary review conducted by our state committees summarized above confirms this erosion of our mass base. In most of these reports, there is no assessment of how our basic classes – working class, poor and middle peasants and agricultural labourers – voted.

We had at the time of the Kolkata Plenum on Organisation analysed the impact of neo-liberal policies on our basic classes and given a direction to reorient our slogans and tactics to mobilise these classes for movements and struggles. In this

period of the last five years, there have been some important struggles such as the historic farmers' struggle, the joint actions of the Central Trade Unions and various struggles of the women, students and youth as well as spontaneous protests against the Agniveer scheme etc. However, such struggles have been uneven across the country. But the developments of struggles at the local levels on class and mass issues have not made much progress. Struggles on a sustained basis, which leads to some success in winning partial demands, have occurred only in some places and not become a widespread phenomenon.

Another feature that must be taken into consideration is the resurgence of identity politics and the resort to such politics to weaken the CPI(M) and the Left. A cursory analysis of erosion of our voting base in strong states like Kerala, West Bengal and Tripura show the adverse impact of identity politics. In Tripura, the resurgence of tribal identity politics has contributed to the erosion of the strong tribal base of the Communist movement. Caste and ethnic-based identity politics resorted to by the TMC and the BJP have affected the base of our Party in north Bengal and other areas. In Kerala, both caste and religious identity politics has affected our traditional base. Generally speaking, identity politics based on caste, community and religion has contributed to further eroding the Party's independent strength in other states too.

We have to find ways to counter such identity politics based on our class-based politics and combine it with our taking up social issues which concern the socially oppressed sections.

Our performance in tribal seats in weaker states is relatively better. We won Bonai (ST) constituency in Odisha for fourth time with increased votes; in Arakku (ST) parliamentary seat in Andhra Pradesh we got 1 lakh 23 thousand votes, better than last time; in Rajmahal (ST) seat in Jharkhand we got 37,000 votes, more or less maintained our vote share. In the 2014, LS election review also we had noted our better performance in tribal seats. State committees where there is substantial tribal population should concentrate and provide adequate resources for work in selected areas.

The weakness in the politicization of the people who participate in our struggles needs to be urgently rectified. Party leaders and cadres must seek to overcome the weaknesses in internalizing our political-organizational orientation. This is urgently required to bridge the mismatch between people's participation in struggles and their voting preferences at the time of elections.

Our weaknesses in enlarging our appeal to the youth and the younger generation continue. Despite seeking to organize work in urban areas, we have not been able

to make any major impact among the urban poor and the middle classes. Worse, in many constituencies, the total votes polled by the party are less than the total membership of our class and mass organizations. Clearly, the process of politicization of our own mass organization membership is far from adequate.

These elections saw a sizable section of the youth participating in some states, particularly in West Bengal. These sections must be drawn to our mass organizations and brought into the Party fold.

While the formation of a broad opposition platform – the INDIA bloc – contributed to the setback suffered by the BJP, the election results show the continuing marginalization of the Left at the national level. For the past more than a decade, the weakening of the Party and the Left in West Bengal, which used to be the main contributor of seats to Parliament, continues. Also, in the past three years, there has been an absence of Left unity and united actions at the national level. The two other major Left parties were more concerned with moves for broader opposition unity.

So, while striving for broad opposition unity in defence of democracy, secularism and federalism, there should be renewed emphasis on Left unity and efforts to build a Left and democratic platform. Continuous efforts must be made to strengthen Left Unity, by overcoming differences. RSP and AIFB are part of the UDF in Kerala and Left Front in West Bengal. CPI(ML) is more focused on wider opposition unity than Left unity. This effort has to go side by side with concentrated efforts to increase the independent strength of the Party.

Organisational Failures

The declining mass base and years of stagnation have had its negative effect on the Party organisation. The election review reports from some states indicate that Party members and Party units have not fully participated in the election work and campaign even in seats where Party candidates were contesting. In West Bengal and Tripura, this is the result of the exceptional situation there with years of repression and attacks on the Party, which has led to the weakening and disruption of the Party's links with the people and the non-functioning of the primary units. But in other states too, the organizational position is very unsatisfactory. Tamilnadu, Andhra Pradesh and Telangana have reported the inactivity of a section of Party members and Party units in varying degrees. There are also reports of Party members and cadres supporting or voting for candidates of certain parties against the line of the Party. There are instances of parliamentary opportunism in choosing to support specific candidates or parties keeping in mind their narrow interests for local body elections etc.

There is also the more general question of the failure of Party units and Party members maintaining live relations with the people.

The election reviews conducted in the states should pinpoint the weaknesses and gaps in our organizational work and formulate immediate steps to rectify or improve our organizational functioning and work.

The follow-up of the election review, which has set out some of the political-organisational tasks to be taken up immediately, should be the link to the deeper review of our implementation of the political-tactical line and our organizational work which will be undertaken in the conferences and discussions to be held preparatory to the 24th Congress.

Tasks

1. The Party should continue to be part of the wider unity to defend the Constitution, democracy, secularism and federalism. We should work for the widest mobilization of all democratic and secular forces.
2. The election result indicates that the Hindutva bloc of votes is more or less intact. This requires the taking up of the ideological-political struggles against the BJP-RSS and Hindutva forces in all spheres in concrete form.
3. The new Modi regime will push ahead with neo-liberal policies as it is part of the communal-corporate agenda. We have to relentlessly oppose these policies and mobilise the working people to struggle against the impact of these policies in the form of attacks on livelihood, privatization, unemployment, price rise, etc.
4. Renewed efforts to forge Left unity and Left united actions. Project Left and democratic alternative in our political campaign.
5. Party must conduct a national campaign against the Modi government's economic strangulation of the Kerala state government and people of Kerala.
6. Weaknesses in politicising those who participate in the class and mass struggles to be overcome. Party building and political work in specific sections and areas to be concretely worked out.
7. Special efforts to draw youth in general to the Left platform and specific system to integrate youth who were active in the election campaign into the Party.

8. Ruling regimes are attempting to build a women's support base through different methods including women specific welfare schemes. We should develop direct ways of intervention to address these attempts.
9. Social media intervention is far from adequate. Give priority to strengthen social media intervention and expand coverage at all levels.
10. Outside our traditional three states recent elections show that we have fared better in tribal seats whether in assembly or Lok Sabha elections. Therefore, we should concentrate on work in selected tribal areas.
11. Pinpoint organizational weaknesses – from inaction of Party members in election campaign, to failure to assess the mood of the people, and take concrete steps to rectify the deficiencies
12. Counter parliamentary opportunism and take steps to check wrong trends.
