



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

Central Committee

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Report on Political Developments

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International

The international situation in the recent period has been dominated by the two conflicts going on – Israel’s genocidal war on Gaza and the expanding conflict with Lebanon; and the Russia-Ukraine war, which is seeing steady escalation. There have been important developments in Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, in our neighbourhood.

Israel’s War on Palestinians

October 7 will mark the first anniversary of the Israeli aggression on Gaza consequent to the Hamas attack. For the past one year, Gaza has been subjected to a brutal war which has resulted in over 41,000 Palestinians killed, most of them women and children; there are at least another 10,000 people buried under the rubble of buildings. Most of the territory has been flattened. The Israelis are deliberately targeting schools and hospital compounds because they are sheltering civilians. Despite the International Court of Justice declaring that Israeli actions can lead to possible genocide and asking Israel to desist from such military activities, Israel has continued its war on the Palestinian people. The impunity with which Israel is conducting its war is because of the full support extended to it by the United States. The standing ovation given by both Houses of the US Congress recently to visiting Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu fully exposed this notorious support. Prime Minister Netanyahu has refused to agree to any ceasefire deal, even that proposed by President Biden.

In the meantime, the cross border shelling and attacks between Israeli armed forces and the Hezbollah in Lebanon have seen a dramatic escalation with Israel targeting Hezbollah leaders and cadres in Beirut and southern Lebanon. Many military leaders of Hezbollah have been assassinated and their communication network blown up as seen in the pagers’ explosion. In Israeli airstrikes, hundreds have been

killed. Israel's belligerent act of bombing territories of Lebanon, Syria and the assassination of Hamas leader Haniyeh in Tehran are all leading to the expansion of the conflict in West Asia.

Ukraine Conflict

The Russia-Ukraine war has seen an escalation of attacks on both sides. Despite all the support given by the United States and NATO in terms of weaponry and finances, Ukraine is unable to push back the Russians from eastern Ukraine or even to hold their present frontline positions. Russia has steadily increased its territorial grip in the Donbas is now threatening a strategic town of Pokrovsk. The Ukrainian armed forces launched a surprise attack into Russia's Kursk region and were able to penetrate upto 50 kilometers from the border. However, this move could not divert Russia from continuing with its offensive in the Donbas region. The United States and NATO have pledged another 40 billion euro in security assistance. The US also announced an additional 225 million dollar military aid package. The US is determined to continue using Ukraine to advance its goal of weakening and containing Russia. If the US allows Ukraine to launch its US-supplied long range missiles into targets in Russia, the war will escalate with Russia taking retaliatory measures against the NATO allies.

Rightwing Gains in Elections

European Union Elections: In the 2024 European elections, far-right parties gained considerable ground in several countries. The center-right European People's Party (EPP) increased its representation to around 184 seats, making it the largest bloc in the European Parliament.

In France, the right-wing National Rally (RN) party led by Marine Le Pen secured 31 per cent of the popular vote, while in Italy, Prime Minister Giorgia Meloni's Brothers of Italy won over a quarter of the votes. The far-right groups, such as the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) and the Identity and Democracy (ID) group, will control a combined 131 seats.

In Austria, the right-wing Freedom Party of Austria (FPÖ) has topped the recent polls, while Italy's Brothers of Italy party, led by Giorgia Meloni, won a majority of votes.

Germany's Alternative for Germany (AfD) party continues its grow in strength in election after election. Following on its good showing in the European parliamentary elections, it received more than a third of the vote, marking the first

time it has achieved such high numbers in two state parliament elections. Four out of five German voters expressed dissatisfaction with the government's performance, and the election verdicts are a punishment for its inept handling of key issues, such as immigration and economic policy.

A new party, the Sahra Wagenknecht Alliance (BSW), which was formed after splitting from the Die Linke (The Left) achieved double-digit percentages in their first election. This newly formed party has adopted a more nuanced approach towards the migrants, considering the concerns of the working class and unemployment. It is also openly opposing the war in Ukraine and the government's continued support, a feeling shared by many people in Europe.

Overall, these elections reflect a growing fragmentation and polarisation within the EU, with both centrist and green parties losing ground to right-wing forces.

French Parliament Elections: In the recent French parliamentary elections, the left-wing alliance, led by Jean-Luc Mélenchon's New Popular Front, emerged as the largest bloc in parliament, defeating Marine Le Pen's far-right National Rally. This outcome resulted from tactical voting and strategic alliances between parties opposed to the far-right, which prevented Le Pen's party from winning a majority. This result created a hung parliament, as no single group has a majority. Using this as an excuse, the President is trying to overturn the verdict by appointing a right-wing prime minister. The outcome represents the polarised nature of the current political landscape.

South Africa: The African National Congress for the first time in the post-apartheid history, lost its majority in the recently concluded elections. It was forced to form a coalition government involving central and right-wing parties like Democratic Alliance and Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). This is a setback to the Left and progressive forces in South Africa, which were mobilised under the tri-partite alliance consisting of the ANC-SACP-COSATU. The economic policies pursued by successive South African governments in the past two decades have benefited the native bourgeoisie, while the majority of the people did not witness any substantial improvement in their living standards. Their anger was reflected in these elections.

UK: In UK, though the Labour Party could win a majority of the seats, for the first time the far-right parties were able to enter the parliament by winning over 14 per cent of the votes. The voting pattern reflects a growing anger among the people against the economic policies pursued by both the Conservatives, who have been in power for the last 14 years, and also the Labour Party, which was viewed as not a

viable alternative because of its shift to the right. The vote was in that sense, more anti-Conservative than pro-Labour. The failure of the Labour Party to support the popular demand for a ceasefire in Gaza also alienated it from some of its traditional voters. Many Left Labour leaders like Jeremy Corbyn were expelled from the party and forced to contest as independents and they have won from their seats, signaling popular dissatisfaction against the Labour Party.

These results show that utilising popular anger against the economic policies, right-wing and extreme-right wing parties are attaining governmental power. These parties in power, not only pursue neoliberal policies, but also encourage the growth of divisive forces that threaten the unity of the society. We are witnessing these features now in Italy, UK and France, apart from many other countries across the world.

75th Anniversary of NATO: NATO celebrated its 75th anniversary with a summit in Washington, from July 9-11. The summit declaration expressed ‘profound concern’ over the deepening partnership between China and Russia. This reflects NATO's recognition of China as a challenge to US’ global hegemony. The focus on China underscores NATO's intent to enhance global partnerships to counterbalance perceived threats from China.

It is in this context that the NATO summit also emphasised the strengthening of NATO's partnerships with countries in the Indo-Pacific region – Australia, Japan, New Zealand, and South Korea – alongside the European Union. The Rim of the Pacific (RIMPAC) military exercise with an eye on China, the world's largest maritime exercise, took place in late July, involving countries like the US, Australia, and the UK.

The US has expanded its restrictions on exports to China, specifically targeting military and defence technologies, including tighter controls on semiconductor exports and the implementation of new restrictions on AI chips. At the same time, since the US cannot completely ignore the economic might of China, so it is showing an interest in the resumption of high-level dialogues between US and Chinese officials. These actions illustrate the US's dual strategy of increasing pressure on China while maintaining channels for dialogue and cooperation open.

At the NATO summit, allies reaffirmed their commitment to Ukraine, pledging financial assistance and a military package.

Global Economy

The exploitation of the workers around the world has increased and can be seen in the decline of the labour income share (which represents the proportion of total income earned by workers in an economy), over the past two decades. In 2024, the annual shortfall is equal to \$2.4 trillion in constant PPP compared to what would have been earned with a stable share since 2004. The estimated \$ 2.4 trillion in lost wages amounts to a transfer of income and wealth to the ruling classes and reflects growing inequalities throughout the world.

With the production process gradually moving towards automation and the annual increase in the workforce, unemployment rates across the world are rising. About 28.2 per cent of young women and 13.1 per cent of young men are unemployed in the world.

Inflation and rising living costs continue to torment the common people, in spite of the efforts to address these concerns through monetary policies.

Workers in various countries have organised significant protests, reflecting a widespread dissatisfaction with governments' handling of economic crises, social inequality, and political corruption. These protests led by the working-class demanded fair wages, improved working conditions, and greater economic justice.

The strike of Royal Mail workers in UK, miners protest in South Africa, hotel workers strike in the US, protests of transport workers in France, health workers in Italy, and port workers in Greece are a few examples of how workers' movements are reacting to austerity measures and falling working conditions. Similarly, protests were also organised by a cross section of the society, who joined the workers in Nigeria, Lebanon, Sri Lanka, Argentina and Ecuador against economic hardships, governmental corruption, falling living conditions and economic reforms.

South Asia

Major developments have occurred in South Asia.

In **Bangladesh**, the authoritarian regime of Sheikh Hasina Wajed fell due to a popular movement led by students. Begun as a protest against quotas for descendants of freedom fighters, student protests faced brutal repression with hundreds being killed in police firings. With the army refusing to intervene in support of the government, Sheikh Hasina had to flee to India. The interim

government set up with Muhammad Yunus heading it, is trying to restore normalcy and work out a plan for a transition to an elected government. But there is a growing perception that the steps to suppress the Awami League and its allies are not based on legitimate Constitutional norms. Amidst the turmoil and chaos which occurred, Islamist fundamentalist forces, some of whom have international links, have been targeting and attacking Hindu minorities to create a communal divide. Recently reports have come about attacks on *chakmas* and other ethnic groups in the Chittagong Hill Tracts.

In the present situation, the United States and its Western allies will also seek to intervene to advance their interests. The student leadership is, by and large, for a democratic and secular outlook. But it remains to be seen how far they can play a role in shaping the future polity.

In **Sri Lanka**, the Presidential election held on September 21 has led to the victory of Anura Dissanayake, the leader of the National People's Power, which includes the largest Left party in Sri Lanka – the Janatha Vimukthi Perumana to which Dissanayake belongs. This is a historic verdict because, for the first time, a Left leader has become the executive head of State in Sri Lanka.

The voters, fed up with the corrupt elites represented by the two main ruling class parties, voted decisively for change. President Dissanayake has dissolved Parliament and elections will be held in November to enable the NPP to have a substantial presence in Parliament. In the meantime, Harini Amarasuriya, a NPP member of Parliament and academic, has been appointed Prime Minister. The immediate challenge is for the new government to renegotiate some of the terms of the IMF loan which have proved burdensome on the people. Another issue which the President has to address is how to devolve powers to the Tamil-speaking areas in the North and East.

National

The hundred days of the Modi government's third term show that there will be no change in the basic direction of its policies. The Union Budget and other economic measures being taken are a reiteration that it will pursue pro-corporate, neo-liberal policies; the promulgation of the three criminal codes and the misuse of Central agencies to target opposition leaders are a clear indication of the authoritarian path it wants to continue to pursue. The Centre continues to adopt a hostile attitude to non-BJP state governments. In BJP-ruled states, there have been widespread attacks against minorities and passage of anti-minority laws. In external relations,

the government has further shifted to forge close strategic ties with the United States.

Union Budget

The Union budget has not provided any relief to the people in the context of the high levels of unemployment, high food inflation rate and unprecedented widening of inequalities. Instead of focusing on expanding economic activities, there is a further squeeze on government expenditure with fertilizer subsidy cut by Rs. 24,894 crores and food subsidy by Rs. 7,082 crores. Expenditure on education, health and rural development, as a percentage of GDP, remain more or less unchanged. The budgetary allocation for MGNREGS is Rs. 86,000 crores, which is less than what was spent in FY '23. Clearly, this will be grossly inadequate to tackle the deep unemployment crisis in rural India.

The new schemes announced as Employment Linked Incentive is yet another avenue of subsidizing corporates in the name of generating new employment. It will also lead to fixed-term apprenticeship with no scope for regular employment. The budget has been notable for ignoring the requirements of the states and the Finance Commission grants to states have been reduced further, compared to the previous year. Overall, the budget is aimed at further enriching the rich and impoverishing the poor.

Indian Economy

GDP growth fell to 6.7 per cent in the first quarter (April to June) of 2024-25. This is compared to 8.2 per cent GDP growth in the first quarter of 2023-24 and 7.8 per cent in the fourth quarter of 2023-24. The deceleration in growth is reflective of a contraction in Government Final Consumption Expenditure (GFCE) by 0.2 per cent in the first quarter.

The retail inflation rate measured by Consumer Price Index (CPI) was reported at 3.65 per cent for August 2024. However, food inflation remains a concern, particularly with the fluctuating prices of essentials such as pulses and vegetables.

Unemployment: As of September 2024, unemployment rate stands at approximately 9.2 per cent, according to the CMIE data. This marks a notable increase from earlier in the year, when it was 7 per cent in May 2024. Rural unemployment rate spiked to 9.3 per cent while urban areas show a slightly lower rate of 8.9 per cent. Female unemployment remains significantly higher at 18.5 per cent.

In contrast to these figures of high unemployment, the Modi government is propagating that unemployment has been declining and is currently as low as 3.2 per cent. The fraudulent manner in which this has been done is to widen the scope of the definition of 'unemployment' compared to the definition used in the pre-BJP government employment surveys. Now the official Periodic Labour Force Survey (PLFS) includes even the unpaid part-time helpers in agriculture as employed. It is this sub-set of employment that has been growing under the BJP rule and not regular wage/salary work or self-employment.

Petrol and Diesel Prices

Since April this year, the international price of crude oil has fallen from \$ 89.40 a barrel to \$ 73.59 per barrel, which is a drop of nearly 18 per cent. Under the market pricing system, the oil manufacturing companies have increased the retail prices of petrol and diesel whenever they have to import crude oil at higher prices. By the same standards, the oil companies should be reducing the retail price of petrol and diesel when there is a fall in the international prices. However, in the past six months, under the direction of the Modi government, the oil manufacturing companies have not reduced the domestic retail prices of petrol and diesel. By not doing so, the government is making huge profits on the petroleum account. It is buying crude oil cheaper but selling the refined products at the old higher prices.

It is essential to expose this chicanery on the part of the government and mobilise public opinion to demand reduction in the prices of petrol and diesel.

Conclave for Fiscal Federalism

LDF government of Kerala took the initiative to organize a Finance Ministers' conclave in Thiruvananthapuram on September 12, in which the Finance Ministers of five states – Karnataka, Tamilnadu, Telangana, Punjab and Kerala – participated. The discussions were centered around the Sixteenth Finance Commission, which will formulate the policies for the sharing of the divisible pool of funds. The concerned state ministers were of the view that political reasons are affecting the distribution of funds. Further, the states which are performing well and creating wealth have been discriminated against in the last decade. The meeting decided to put up a common front before the Finance Commission in defence of fiscal federalism.

For a fair division of funds to be devolved to the states, it is necessary that the states' share should be increased from the present 42 per cent to 50 per cent. All

the opposition-ruled states must be mobilized to put up a common defence of their rights.

New Criminal Laws

The three new criminal laws came into force from July 1, 2024. These laws passed in haste, without debate, in a blatantly autocratic and anti-democratic manner, when a large number of opposition MPs were suspended from Parliament, are draconian in nature.

While the Supreme Court had quite correctly done away with Section 124A of the IPC which defined ‘Sedition’, this is surreptitiously brought in as Section 152 of the new Bharatiya Nyay Sanhita, and along with it are references to the sovereignty and integrity of India which were not there in the original Section 124A. While it is a blatant flouting of the Supreme Court judgment, the new law will make it much easier to charge and convict people of being ‘anti-national’.

There are many provisions which increase police powers to the detriment of citizens. For instance, the new laws give scope for police custody of an accused beyond the 15-day limit set in the previous law. The new provision means a judge can remand an accused to police custody up to 90 days. Even the lodging of an FIR will be done only after inquiry up to 15 days by a police officer in the case of a cognizable offence.

Another extremely dangerous aspect is that while investigation of charges under UAPA are carried out by a senior police officer, charges under the new Section 152 will be investigated by an IO at the police station. While under UAPA, the Government had to give sanction to prosecute someone, under the new Nyay Sanhita, an ordinary police officer can prosecute anybody for terrorism.

While it is a fundamental principle of law that ‘no one can be convicted of an offence unless what they do was criminal at the time committed’, what will happen after July 1 is that for an FIR filed before July 1, the substantive law that was in force at that time will apply, but for FIRs filed after July 1 the new substantive law will apply.

This means that both laws will run concurrently and there will be disputes as to which system is to be applied. Appeals will also become very complicated. These new laws introduce both uncertainty and vagueness as to what the law says, which

is unacceptable. This will only add to the huge backlog of criminal cases running into lakhs.

The CPI(M) has joined the Bar associations, concerned citizens and civil society organisations who have voiced serious concerns and has demanded that the implementation of the new laws be put in abeyance, given the regressive and draconian nature of some of the provisions.

Forced to Retreat

Even though the Modi government is putting up a front of 'business as usual', given the increased strength of the opposition in Parliament and the fact that the BJP is dependent on its coalition partners for a majority, the Modi government finds it not so easy to push through various measures. It has, in fact, had to retreat from certain decisions and allow parliamentary procedures to work in the case of certain legislations.

Lateral Entry: The UPSC had advertised a number of posts at the Joint Secretary level for lateral entry. This was strongly objected to by the opposition, which accused the government of bypassing quotas for SCs/STs and OBCs in the process. The government was forced to cancel the lateral entry scheme, which had been announced.

Broadcasting Bill Draft: Government had prepared a Broadcasting Services (Regulation) Bill to replace the Cable Television Networks Act. Faced with criticism from the opposition and the manner in which consultations were held on the Draft Bill with certain corporate media houses, the government withdrew the Bill and said it will be redrafted.

Waqf Bill: The government introduced a Waqf (Amendment) Bill in the Lok Sabha. Faced with opposition, including from some of the BJP allies, the Bill has been sent to the Joint Parliamentary Committee for consideration.

Aggressive Pursuit of Communal Polarisation

The setback suffered by the BJP in the Parliament elections in some states seems to have spurred the Hindutva forces to step up their anti-Muslim activities in the BJP-ruled states. The Uttar Pradesh and Uttarakhand governments decreed that shopkeepers and street vendors on the route of the Kanwar yatra must display their

name plates. This was meant to target Muslim shopkeepers. However, the Supreme Court stayed the implementation of these orders.

Attacks by cow vigilantes have taken place in Chhattisgarh, Madhya Pradesh and Haryana. In Himachal Pradesh, an alarming situation has developed with a mosque in Shimla being targeted as an unauthorized construction and similar issues spreading to other districts. In Uttarakhand, there have been calls for boycott of Muslim traders and shopkeepers. Boards were put up outside some villages saying Muslims are not allowed to enter.

The Uttar Pradesh government has brought the Unlawful Conversion of Religion (Amendment) Bill, 2024 clearly targeting inter-community marriages and increasing punishment of ten years to a life term in prison.

In Assam, a law is being considered to prevent land sales between Muslims and Hindus terming this as 'land jihad'. Such transactions can only take place with the permission of the Chief Minister. He is also considering introducing life imprisonment as punishment for inter-community marriages termed as 'love jihad' on the lines of Uttar Pradesh. The Chief Minister, Himanta Biswa Sarma has crossed all limits with his provocative statements targeting Muslims as "outsiders" and declaring that "Miya-Muslims" will not be allowed to take control.

In Maharashtra, the BJP-led government introduced the Maharashtra Special Public Security Bill, which seeks to criminalize all dissent in the name of curbing urban naxalism, which is more draconian than the UAPA.

The BJP-RSS is resorting to Muslim-baiting as a fallback in its efforts to sharpen communal polarization.

In Andhra Pradesh, the issue of the alleged adulteration of ghee being used of animal fat in the Tirupati temple ladoos has been turned into a communal issue by the state NDA partners – BJP, TDP and Janasena. All the three parties are competing to outdo each other in rousing communal sentiments.

Supreme Court Judgment on Sub-Classification

A seven-member Bench of the Supreme Court gave a judgment allowing sub-classification within Scheduled Caste reservation. It directed that states could make this sub-classification based on clear-cut guidelines. Our Party has been supporting the demand for sub-classification for certain SC groups, where the demand is genuine based on their social and economic backwardness as confirmed by

concrete data. Such was the demand for sub-classification for *madigars* in united Andhra Pradesh and *arunthathiyars* in Tamilnadu. However, this judgment of sub-classification has been opposed by some of the major dalit groups and parties.

The judgment also created controversy because four of the seven judges separately opined in favour of introducing a creamy layer within SC/ST reservation. Though not part of the operative judgment and only being opinions recorded, this has fuelled further opposition to the judgment. Our Party has made a clear distinction – while we support sub-classification, we are opposed to the introduction of the creamy layer criteria for SC and ST reservation. The government also had to go on record that there will be no creamy layer applied to SC/ST reservation.

‘One Nation, One Election’

In order to show that the third Modi government will pursue the agenda it had set for itself before the elections, the Union Cabinet has accepted the recommendations of the Ram Nath Kovind Committee for simultaneous elections to Parliament, state legislatures and local bodies.

The *‘One Nation, One Election’* model, if implemented, will undermine the parliamentary democratic system itself and the federal structure. We had already spelt out the implications of this centralized and unitary system and how it will violate the Constitutional scheme of five year terms for state legislatures and Parliament.

Implementation of this system would require a number of Constitutional amendments. The Modi government does not have a two-third majority, either in the Lok Sabha or Rajya Sabha, required for passing a Constitutional amendment. The Prime Minister, in his Independence Day speech, appealed to all political parties to support the proposal. It is evident that it is going to keep this issue alive and hope to mobilise popular support.

Our Party has to conduct a campaign among the people to expose how this will be an anti-democratic, anti-federal move to create an authoritarian unitary State.

Manipur Situation

There was a significant deterioration in the situation in Manipur in the last few weeks. There has been a step-up in attacks in the areas bordering the valley and the hill districts. Eight people died in these attacks from both sides. The eruption of violence led to large-scale protests by students in Imphal and other Meitei-

dominated districts. The students are demanding the removal of the Security Advisor and the Director General of Police. They want the Suspension of Operation (SoO) agreement with Kuki militants annulled and transfer of the Unified Command control to the state government. This is a demand which is also voiced by the Chief Minister Biren Singh. It is now sixteen months since ethnic conflict erupted in Manipur. 60,000 people are still displaced and living as refugees.

The Central government and the BJP state government have abjectly failed to address the basic issues, which led to the conflict and have allowed the situation to develop where there is a hardening of the ethnic divide. There are nearly 60,000 Central police forces deployed mainly to create a buffer zone between the Kuki-dominated hill areas and the valley where Meiteis dominate.

Part of the problem is the partisan role of Chief Minister Biren Singh, who is patronizing certain extremist Meitei organisations. The Modi government and the Central BJP leadership, despite knowing fully well the divisive role of the Chief Minister, have chosen to stick with him. The abandonment of the Centre's responsibility towards Manipur is made all the more stark by the fact that Prime Minister Narendra Modi has not thought it fit to visit Manipur even once in the past sixteen months. Unless the Central government directly intervenes and starts the process of political negotiations with major ethnic groups, conditions for peace and normalcy cannot be created along with ensuring the rights of citizens of all communities safeguarded.

West Bengal: Popular Upsurge

Consequent to the gruesome rape and murder of a post-graduate medical student in RG Kar Medical College and Hospital, there was a spontaneous outpouring of people's protests in Kolkata city and which spread to all other cities and areas in the state. People from different professions and walks of life came out into the streets. On August 14, at midnight, history was created with lakhs of women coming out to "reclaim the night". A significant feature was how poorer sections, slum dwellers and middle class people and women in urban and rural Bengal participated in the movement.

Given the spontaneous nature of the movement, there were no party flags involved in the protests. At the same time, the Party and the Left Front have also independently organized to support and strengthen the overall movement throughout the state.

The brutal crime on a doctor inside a hospital led to a countrywide protest movement of doctors and medical personnel demanding safe and secure conditions of work for female personnel. An all-India strike by junior doctors was observed.

The movement is against the ruling party-criminal nexus, which is flourishing in all sectors, including the health sector in the state. Mamata Banerjee and the TMC government's image have been tarnished and they have lost the trust of large sections of the people.

Anti-Working Class Moves

The Modi government is moving ahead for notification of the three labour codes. It is pressing the state governments to frame the relevant rules under these laws. In protest against this move, the Central Trade Unions have observed a 'Black Day' on September 23. Some of the state governments have issued notifications for extending the working hour limit to 12 hours. Such notifications have been issued by the Karnataka and Telangana state governments.

Already the workload in many corporate offices are causing great stress and taking a toll on the employees. A recent case where a 26-year old woman Chartered Accountant working in the Pune office of an international accounting firm, Ernst & Young, died due to the stress and overwork is a graphic illustration of how young professionals and employees are being exploited.

In the **Samsung** plant in Kancheepuram, Tamilnadu, the workers have gone on an indefinite strike with the demand that they should be allowed to form a union of their choice. The stand of the MNC is that it will not permit any such union to function. Such is the clout of the MNC that the Labour Department has not even registered the union as per the law. The struggle of the Samsung workers is significant as it pertains to the basic rights of the workers to organize themselves and no MNC can be allowed to violate the laws of the land.

The workers of **Ferro Scrap Nigam Ltd.** (FSNL) have begun an indefinite strike from September 28 against the move to privatize this profit-making *miniratna* company by selling it to a Japanese MNC.

In the recent period, there have been a number of struggles by scheme workers. Notable among them is the indefinite strike by anganwadi workers in Maharashtra, which has been jointly called by all unions. In Karnataka too, anganwadi workers went on an indefinite strike in August against the government's move to withdraw the pre-school work component from ICDS work. The government was compelled

to retreat. There have been struggles of anganwadi workers in Jammu and Kashmir and Himachal Pradesh.

Growing Sexual Attacks on Women and Children

The recent period has seen a worsening situation as far as attacks on women and minor girls are concerned. Two recent incidents stand out – a six year-old girl was raped and smothered to death by the principal of the school where she was studying in Dahod, Gujarat.

The other incident which shook Maharashtra was the sexual assault on two young girls in a school in Badlapur. The popular outrage grew as efforts were made to cover-up the crime. In order to divert the public anger, the accused was killed in a fake encounter by the police while in their custody.

Wayanad Disaster

The Wayanad district of Kerala witnessed devastating landslides on July 30, which ravaged four villages causing large-scale destruction of life and property. 231 people have died and there are still 47 persons missing.

The LDF government launched full-scale rescue efforts with the help of the personnel of state police, NDRF and SDRF. Steps have been taken to relocate the displaced people and to provide them financial assistance. Plans for rehabilitation have also been worked out.

The Party and various mass organisations have been actively involved in collecting funds and relief materials for the people.

It is shocking that the Central government has so far not given any funds or financial assistance even as an interim measure.

Jammu & Kashmir and Haryana Elections

The assembly elections in **Jammu & Kashmir** with three-phase polling are underway. The CPI(M) is contesting one seat – Mohammad Yousuf Tarigami in Kulgam – in an understanding with the National Conference and the Congress party.

In **Haryana** assembly elections, the CPI(M) is contesting the Bhiwani seat in an understanding with the Congress party.

Foreign Policy and Strategic Affairs

Prime Minister Modi's brief visit to Ukraine on August 23 must be seen as an effort to mollify the United States. Earlier, Modi had made a visit to Moscow in July, wherein he received the highest Russian civilian award from President Putin. Modi's visit to Moscow coincided with the holding of the 75th anniversary meeting of the NATO in Washington. The NATO meeting was meant to marshal all forces against Putin's Russia, when at that very time, Modi was seen hugging President Putin. There was a chorus of disapproval from various spokespersons of the Biden administration. In an unprecedented statement, the US Ambassador in India said: "don't take the relationship for granted" and that there is no such thing as "strategic autonomy" in times of conflict. It is after being chided by the US that Modi decided to visit Ukraine and met with President Zelenskyy. The fact that Modi has again met Zelenskyy in New York on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly shows the eagerness of the Modi government to cozy up to the United States and downplay its traditional ties to Russia.

The reports that the Indian government has not objected to the use of Indian armaments by Ukraine, which had been sold to other European countries, is another example of Modi's efforts to fall in line with the US.

The Quad summit was held in Wilmington, Delaware in the United States on September 21. It was attended by Prime Minister Modi. The statement issued uses stronger language against China and agreements were reached which are more security-oriented. India has become more committed to the Indo-Pacific strategy of the United States, which is sought to be implemented through the Quad.

Further, in line with the United States, India has abstained on a resolution in the UN General Assembly which called upon Israel to withdraw from occupied territories. By this, the Modi government has abandoned the long-held position of India that Israel must vacate the occupied territories. Not only that, the Modi government is helping Israel's aggression on Gaza by exporting Indian arms and weaponry to Israel.

Central Committee Calls

The Central Committee decided that all its Party units should join the Left parties call to observe October 7 as a protest day on the first anniversary of Israel's genocidal war against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The Central Committee decided to conduct a campaign on the following issues:

- (i) Against the 'One Nation, One Election' proposal.
- (ii) Against price rise and for reduction in the retail prices of petrol and diesel.
- (iii) Against unemployment and privatization.
- (iv) Steps to curb crimes against women and sexual assaults on girl children.

The Central Committee decided that a week-long campaign should be conducted in each state between October 15 to November 15, 2024. The state committees should concretise the demands on price rise, unemployment and crimes against women based on the conditions in their states.
