

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)



Central Committee

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Report on Current Political Developments

*(Adopted at the Central Committee meeting held on
August 04-06, 2023 at New Delhi)*

Major important developments since our last Central Committee meeting held in April are noted in this report.

Manipur has been burning for the last 3 months. The PM and the Central government have remained idle bystanders, hence, are complicit in allowing the situation to move into greater anarchy.

The aggressive pursuit of the Hindutva agenda of the fascistic RSS continues to unfold. Modi has raised the issue of Uniform Civil Code, and is seeking polarization in the run up to the 2024 elections. The sharpening of communal polarization by targeting the minorities, particularly the Muslims, is leading to increasing number of lynchings, engineering of riots and intensifying hate campaigns leading to hate crimes.

The gross misuse of Central agencies against opposition leaders; the misuse of the office of Governors and Lt. Governors against the non-BJP governments; vicious attacks on federalism are accompanied by continuing undermining of the foundational pillars of the Constitution, and institutions. Parliament is being paralyzed for the second successive session while the Modi government enacts legislations passed through the din without any discussion.

Election rhetoric is dominating the political discourse with the impending round of assembly elections prior to the 2024 general elections.

Globally, US imperialism is aggressively pursuing its objective of global hegemony, targeting to isolate China and Russia; continuing

the Ukraine war; strengthening its military and strategic alliances and forcing the world to move into a new cold war situation.

In this situation of US imperialism's aggressive hegemonic designs, the Modi government has further cemented India as junior partner deepening military, strategic and foreign policy convergence with US strategic global designs. This is not in India's national interest and completely negates India's hitherto independent foreign policy.

INTERNATIONAL

The Global Economy

The last CC meeting noted that the outlook for the global capitalist economy remains shaky. world capitalist economic crisis continues, slowing down the growth rates. Neo-liberalism that has shown its bankruptcy in providing any solution to the global capitalist crisis, however, pursues successfully the realization of its objective of maximization of profits. Global wealth and income inequalities continue to widen. This clearly indicates that the levels of exploitation of the working people are increasing, imposing greater miseries on the vast majority of the people.

The IMF (July 25, 2023) projects that global growth will decline from an estimated 3.5 per cent in 2022 to 3 per cent in 2023 continuing into 2024. 93 per cent of advanced economies are projected to have low growth in 2023. The largest EU economy, Germany is projected to register a negative growth of -0.3 per cent in the first quarter of 2023. This technically classifies Germany as being in recession since its economy contracted in the last quarter of 2022 as well.

Fall in Real Wages: This intensified exploitation is reflected in the fall in the annual average global wages from 2022. According to the ILO, monthly real wages fell by 0.9 per cent in the first half of 2022, the first negative growth since 2008. If the typically higher wage growth in China compared to other countries is excluded, the real wage growth fell by 1.9 per cent. According to OECD, in the first quarter of 2023, in 31 out of 34 countries there was a 3.4 per cent decline in real wages. Women earn only 82 per cent of what men earn globally, reflecting the gender gap. This decline in real wages is

happening when labour productivity is growing, testifying to the levels of intensified exploitation.

World Trade is projected to decline from 5.2 per cent in 2022 to 2 per cent in 2023. This is well below the bi-decadal (2000-2019) average growth of 4.9 per cent.

Inflation is expected to be high at around 6 per cent through 2023. This is 0.3 per cent higher than what was expected. 96 per cent of the global economies will experience inflation higher than the target.

Food price inflation remains high across the globe. Based on the latest data available between February and May 2023 it was higher than 5 per cent in over 60 per cent of low-income countries and 70 per cent of middle-income countries, with many experiencing double digit inflation. Food price inflation exceeded the overall inflation rate in nearly 80 per cent of 163 countries.

In order to contain inflation, the US Federal Reserve followed by the Central Banks of major countries raised interest rates. This led to a turmoil in the financial sector with the collapse of three US banks and the Credit Suisse. Following this, the US Fed paused interest rate hikes in June. Subsequently, two more US banks collapsed – Silvergate Bank and Heartland Tri-state Bank. With inflation now continuing to be on the rise there would be pressures for further hikes. Central banks of EU, UK, Australia and Canada have continued to raise rates in order to tame core inflation. This will contribute to a further contraction of the economy and of employment generation.

Adverse Impact on People: This slowing down of economic growth; fall in world trade volumes; rising headline inflation, especially in food prices; will lead to a further shrinkage of global employment, imposing greater burdens on the working people.

Chinese Economy: IMF forecasts that the Chinese economy will grow at the rate of 5.2 per cent in 2023. Following a half yearly review of the economy the Communist Party of China concluded that the economy, continues to recover but is facing new difficulties and challenges. Insufficient domestic demand was identified as a major factor that needs to be tackled. For further expansion of

domestic demand as the driver of economic growth, State investments will be substantially increased.

De-dollarization: The last Central Committee had noted the movement for de-dollarization in the global economy. This momentum continues with the Shanghai Cooperation Organization (SCO) summit deciding to encourage trade in local currencies. UAE and India, Saudi Arabia and China have decided to trade in local currencies. However, as noted in the last CC, the US dollar will continue to remain the most dominant medium of exchange and store of wealth.

Ukraine War

Clearly, US imperialism with all its allies seeks the continuation of the war in Ukraine, scuttling all possibilities of talks or a negotiated settlement, in order to consolidate its global hegemony and domination.

The US administration announced an additional security assistance of around \$ 1.3 billion, over and above the \$ 38 billion pledged so far, for providing the most advanced weapons and drones. Following the USA, EU pledged € 6 billion and the UK £ 5 billion.

Despite continuous supply of weapons and intelligence sharing by the US and NATO alliance, the much-touted Ukrainian offensive failed to take off with the Russian military successfully resisting the attacks. The USA is currently providing Ukraine with illegal cluster bombs, while the UK is providing depleted plutonium, which might potentially cause radioactive pollution in the region.

Private Army – Wagner Group: Russian dependency on private mercenary armies for its military actions had roped in the Wagner group of military contractors led by Yevgeny Prigozhin. Following several months of discord between the Russian military and Wagner, Prigozhin directed his armed mercenaries to move towards Moscow. However, Russia met this challenge successfully. However, this episode demonstrates the dangers of using private armies in military operations.

Blocking Sea Routes: To counter the NATO offensive, Russia allowed the UN-brokered Black Sea Grain Deal to expire in July on the grounds that US and NATO did not honour their part of the deal to reciprocally allow the export of Russian wheat and fertilizer as

has been acknowledged by the UN and Türkiye. Russia's food and fertilizer exports were adversely affected by US and EU sanctions. Ukraine subsequently announced a new maritime route on the Black Sea bordering Romania, Bulgaria, and Türkiye, all NATO member countries. Apart from an alternative route to export its grain, Ukraine sees this as providing an enhanced capability to strike at Crimea. The Russian navy is virtually enclosed in the North Sea and Baltic Sea surrounded by NATO member countries. For the navigation of Russia's Baltic fleet, access, if not domination, in the Black Sea is crucial to reach the world markets. NATO's involvement in the Black Sea severely compromises Russia's access. This will lead to sharpening further tension points and prolonging the conflict.

As we had analyzed from the beginning of the war, this is a US/NATO war with Russia in the theatre of Ukraine whose people are the worst sufferers.

NATO Summit

For the first time a NATO summit meeting was held in the capital of a former Soviet republic, Vilnius, Lithuania. Finland and Sweden joined as new members doubling NATO's land border with Russia. USA is seeking to convert NATO into a global military/security alliance, particularly targeting the Asia-Pacific region. Japan, South Korea, Australia and New Zealand attended the meeting as non-members. This was clearly aimed to consolidate US imperialist hegemonic designs and isolating China. NATO loses its North Atlantic geographical significance with the USA seeking to create a NATO in the Asia-Pacific region to isolate China.

US-Taiwan: In its efforts to isolate China, the US administration has announced a military aid package of \$ 345 million to Taiwan out of the \$ 1 billion authorization by the US Congress for aiding Taiwan in the 2023 budget.

New Cold War Situation: The escalation in the arming of Ukraine by USA/NATO and EU; the targeting of Russia and the designs for isolating China; the NATO and the G-7 summits mark the further consolidation of the US military and strategic alliance, strengthening its military aggressiveness.

Driven by its global hegemonic designs, US imperialism is forcing the world to move into a new cold war situation.

Heightened Aggression Against Palestine

Israel launched its biggest aerial and ground military offensive in the occupied West Bank city of Jenin. This two-day military operation was followed with air strikes on the Gaza strip. On an average, Israel is killing one Palestinian every day in 2023 so far. In the West Bank alone more than 200 have been killed.

In the meanwhile, the illegal occupation of Palestinian land by Jewish settlers intensifies. Private militia run by illegal Jewish settlers, patronized and protected by the Israeli government, continue evicting Palestinians from their homes.

Rising Protests in Israel

A big popular protest has been going on in Israel for some months now against the judicial reforms proposed by its most right-wing coalition government. Despite widespread protests, Israel's Parliament approved the judicial reforms where Parliament has the right to overturn a judicial verdict. Such a sweeping power to Parliament is today necessary to protect Netanyahu from certain arrest and punishment over his large-scale corruption and other violations of law. Popular protests continue to intensify. This extreme rightwing political coalition government is resorting to attacks on Palestinian territories to divert people's attention. But this is not succeeding.

France

The killing of a 17-year-old youth of North African descent in a Paris suburb led to angry protesters taking over the streets of major cities for several nights, burning and destroying infrastructure. More than 40,000 police led a crackdown arresting thousands of people. This killing reflects the deep grip of institutional racism in France. This runs through all institutions of the state including the police. With deep rooted penetration of far-right ideology in France, the society is dangerously divided on racial lines. The online fund-raising campaign for the accused police officer who shot dead the teenager collected more than \$ 1 million in donations!

Elections

During the period since the last Central Committee, elections were held in various countries.

The second phase of the Parliamentary elections in **Greece** in June resulted in the formation of a conservative government. New Democracy (ND) got 40.55 per cent, Syriza 17.84 per cent, and Social Democratic PASOK 11.85 per cent. The Communist Party of Greece (KKE) got 7.7 per cent which is a substantial increase from the 2019 elections, increasing its number of MPs to 21.

Following heavy losses in the local elections, the ruling Socialists in **Spain** called for snap parliamentary elections which were held in July 2023. The result was fragmented. The right-wing Popular Party (PP) won 136 seats polling 33 per cent votes, but failed to secure an outright majority. The Socialists won 112 seats with 31.7 per cent, marginally gaining from the last 2019 elections. The new left-wing grouping (SUMAR) of 15 parties including PODEMOS won 31 seats. The far-right Vox was expecting to substantially gain but ended up with 33 seats, down from its earlier 52.

The ruling Justice and Development Party (AKP) and its allies won a majority in the second round of the **Türkiye** Parliamentary elections. AKP and its allies in the far-right Nationalist Movement Party won 323 seats of the total 600 seats. Erdogan won the Presidential election in the second round, polling 52.2 per cent.

The people of **Thailand** led by the youth came out strongly against the country's military, monarchy, and the ruling elite in the general elections to the lower house of Parliament. The new youth-led party, Move Forward Party, polled three times the vote of the leading government party, 1.4 crore, winning 151 seats. The For Thais Party won 141 seats. The military-supported party of incumbent Prime Minister, United Thai Nations Party won a mere 36 seats and none of these secured a simple majority. There are uncertainties over government formation.

Political Rightward Shift

The decline in popular support for far-right political forces, in these recent elections, like Vox in Spain and various neo-Nazi Golden Dawn groups in Greece reflects resistance to the growth of right-wing forces in some European countries. However, these do not

constitute a decisive reversal of the influence of the far right. They continue to retain a sizable influence, like the AfD in Germany. The worsening cost of living crisis, growing economic hardships, and high inflation following supply chain disruptions caused by the Ukraine war, are causing heightened popular discontent. This discontent is being utilized by the far-right to fuel national chauvinism, racism, xenophobia, Islamophobia, and anti-immigrant feelings.

In the USA, the influence of reactionary rightwing policies continues to remain strong particularly amongst the judiciary. The recent judgements on the right to abortion; lenient punishment of police officers found guilty of racist actions; annulment of the law on affirmative actions and student educational loans and the continued support for Donald Trump and his campaigns are an indication of this political rightward shift.

Regional Blocs: Summit Meetings

The online summit meeting of the **Shanghai Cooperation Organisation** (SCO) held in July admitted Iran as its 10th member. Against the backdrop of the Ukraine war and the expansion of NATO, South Asian countries like Nepal, Bangladesh, Maldives, and Pakistan are finding the SCO as an alternative platform to SAARC, which is being rendered defunct by the Modi government and its increasingly pro-US imperialist positioning. Many countries in West Asia, including the Gulf countries, Egypt, and Türkiye, are expressing interest in joining the SCO. The SCO roadmap for the transition to national currencies in mutual trade settlements, coordinated measures to remove regulatory barriers, etc., reflects the mutual desire of these countries.

The **G7 summit** was held in Hiroshima, Japan where an additional 8 countries – South Korea, Indonesia, Vietnam, Australia, Brazil, India, Comoros and Cook Islands – attended as special invitees. The joint statement outlined a direction to enable G7's entry into the EU with the implementation of full-fledged neo-liberal reforms.

Parallel to the G-7 Summit, the **China - Central Asian summit** took place in the ancient Chinese capital of Xi'an. Russia and China have explicitly joined hands for the first time to stabilize the Central Asian region against the US efforts to destabilize the common neighbourhood in Central Asia. There is a consensus amongst the 5

Central Asian countries to work together. The 15-point Xi'an declaration includes concerns of security, logistics, trade and economic cooperation, humanitarian cooperation, and ecology. It also talks about resisting religious extremism and attempts by external forces to impose their rules on the region.

This grouping reflects the desire of Russia, China and the Central Asian states to create more effective mechanisms and draw plans in their common space for a better quality of cooperation.

Climate Change: Urgent Decisive Actions Needed

Since June, rising temperatures across the Northern Hemisphere have resulted in intense heat wave conditions in many countries. Forecasts indicate 2023 to be the hottest ever year since temperatures began to be recorded. Wild fires and floods with droughts and heavy rains were seen in many parts of the world. Millions of people are put to intense sufferings and miseries and the pressures on the cost of living are mounting. The El Nino effect could trigger crop production losses resulting in global food insecurity.

In India, the impacts have led to devastating flood conditions, intense heat waves impacting adversely grain production and leading to heavy loss of lives. Instead of taking measures to mitigate the situation, the Modi government is enacting new laws that will result in a further erosion of our green cover.

Urgent Global and Regional initiatives are imperative to tackle this crisis that could well escalate to pose an existential threat to humanity. These initiatives must work towards ensuring climate justice for all.

NATIONAL SITUATION

Manipur

The mayhem in Manipur continues unabated for over three months now. The double engine BJP government is sharpening polarization through ethnic identity politics.

This ethnic conflict between the Meitei and Kuki tribes has left over 180 people dead (unofficial estimates place the figure at much

higher levels), with hundreds of thousands displaced and tens of thousands surviving in relief camps. Many churches and temples have been destroyed and vandalized. There are casualties on both sides.

A few weeks before May 3rd, when the orgy of violence erupted, Chief Minister Biren Singh publicly declared in an interview to the RSS mouthpiece *Organiser* that the indigenous people (read Meiteis) have been reduced to the status of second-class citizens after 'foreigner Kuki immigrants' took control of social, economic, and political affairs. However, in a letter to the Union Home Minister, the chairman of a Kuki militant outfit alleged that in 2017, his organization along with another Kuki outfit helped BJP in 2017 assembly elections and Biren Singh became Chief Minister, as per an agreement with Assam Chief Minister Himanta Biswa Sarma and BJP North East in charge Ram Madhav. The letter also claimed that they helped BJP win the 2019 Lok Sabha polls.

Manipur is predominantly inhabited by three ethnic groups: Meiteis, Kukis, and the Nagas. The bulk of the Meiteis are associated with various Vaishnavite religious mutts. The Kukis are predominantly Christians. The Meitei – Kuki conflict is also being given a communal color by merging ethnic with religious identities. There are also corporate interests seeking control of lands that reportedly are rich in mineral deposits.

Biren Singh claimed that there has been a substantial rise in the Kuki population along India's international border, with militant Kuki outfits allegedly using black money generated through the drug trade to facilitate the influx of illegal migrants from Myanmar. In doing so, he echoed the RSS propaganda of illegal immigrants flooding the North East and Assam. Biren Singh characterizes Kuki groups as terrorists. The state administration particularly facilitated the loot of arms and ammunition on a large scale from the police and armed battalions. Consequently, large-scale violence erupted with armed clashes and brutal gangrapes, while the police remained silent bystanders. Party's call for countrywide protests should have been given earlier than 21 July, 2023.

In the midst of this strong criticism about the complete collapse of governance in Manipur underlined even by the Supreme Court, the state administration has initiated the process of capturing the

biometric profile of citizens. This is raising widespread fear that this will reinforce the process of ethnic cleansing.

The Manipur ethnic conflict is spreading to the nearby states, particularly to Mizoram and Meghalaya. Many Meiteis have fled from Mizoram. The Chief Minister of Mizoram has come out openly against the Manipur Chief Minister for his role in inflaming the ethnic conflict. The Nagas have so far not played any role in this conflict. There are apprehensions about the future of the Naga Accord. The sharpening of polarization across the North East, particularly the communal polarization in Assam, has made the situation in the North East dangerously tense and incendiary.

Modi's deafening silence for months over this mayhem in Manipur must be seen as an endorsement to continue the violent polarization. It was only after a horrendous video of atrocities against two women that Modi chose to say something, and that too outside Parliament when it was in session. Instead of calling for an immediate end to such violence with the state government and the security agencies firmly acting against such heinous crimes, Modi compared the situation in Manipur with attacks against women in poll-bound Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh! This betrays not only the insincerity of the commitment to uphold the rule of law in Manipur but also the refusal to be accountable to Parliament, amounting to an endorsement of the engineered ethnic violence.

Parliament remains disrupted due to Modi's obstinate refusal to make a statement followed by a discussion. By refusing to be accountable to Parliament, Modi and the 'double engine' government are providing grist to the mill of ethnic polarization and violence. The mayhem in Manipur must stop, and Chief Minister Biren Singh must go.

Opposition Parties' Meetings

Patna Meeting: Mutual discussions and consultations amongst major opposition parties on the need to strengthen cooperation in order to defeat the Modi-led BJP government led to the holding of a joint meeting hosted by the Mahagathbandhan and Chief Minister of Bihar at Patna on June 23. Fifteen parties participated in this meeting and declared their joint resolve to work together and cooperate in defence of the Indian Constitution and democracy.

In the meeting, the CPI(M) underlined the need for cooperation among the opposition parties to safeguard the secular democratic character of our Republic and the guarantees provided by our Constitution to the people on democratic rights, civil liberties and fundamental rights.

We proposed that the opposition parties must jointly conduct all-India campaigns on mutually agreed important issues of national concern and joint protest actions on issues of the rapidly deteriorating people's livelihood. At the level of each state, discussions amongst the opposition parties must begin to minimize the advantage BJP gets from a division in opposition votes, for the coming 2024 general elections.

No written statement was issued after the meeting. It was decided that the next meeting will be held in Bangalore.

Bangalore Meeting: The Bangalore meeting took place on 17-18 July. 26 parties participated in this meeting and issued a joint statement.

The declaration to cooperate to defeat the BJP in order to save India, its Constitution and democracy was made at Patna and it was felt that we should take this forward.

After substantial discussions over the name, consensus finally arrived on Indian National Developmental and Inclusive Alliance (INDIA).

We expressed reservations over the usage of Alliance, reminding them that Left Parties supported the UPA from the outside. Com. Raja also recorded his reservation.

Both CPI and we said that INDIA is an understanding amongst these 26 parties for a common objective and all electoral alliances/adjustments/understanding will have to be worked out at the state level where the situation varies from state to state.

Maharashtra: After the BJP successfully split the Shiv Sena, they have now succeeded in splitting the NCP and inducted 9 of its leaders as ministers, using both ED threats and other blandishments. While Sharad Pawar did not attend the Bangalore meeting on the first day, he participated on the second day and assured that he is fighting the disruptions within his party and is

committed to defeating the BJP in the coming elections. He readily accepted the proposal of Mumbai as the venue of the next meeting, to be hosted by the MVA.

Indian Economy

Inaugurating the new convention centre building for hosting the G-20 summit, Modi boasted to take India to the position of the 3rd largest economy in the world in his third term. Irrespective of who heads the next government in 2024, given the current statistical trends, India in 2027 will overtake Japan and Germany. (Currently 3rd and 4th largest economies). This is because, as per the current levels of growth India's GDP in 2027 will be 38 per cent more than in 2023, while Japan and Germany will be 15 per cent more.

But actual prosperity of the people is better captured by the per capita GDP numbers. In the global rankings on this score India stands at 142. Here, the gap is much too large. India's annual per capita GDP at \$2,600 is the lowest among the top 10 countries. It is substantially lower than the countries India has overtaken such as UK (\$47,000), Italy (\$37,000) and Brazil (\$10,000). Notwithstanding Modi's boasting, India's growth momentum has considerably slowed down under his government. Between 2004 and 2014 India's GDP grew by a total of 183 per cent. Between 2014 and 2023 India's GDP grew by only 83 per cent. Further, in 2027, India's GDP, though third largest in the world, would be 1/6th of the US (gap of \$ 26 trillion) and 1/5th of China (gap of \$ 20 trillion).

Living conditions of the vast majority of people are sharply deteriorating with unemployment rates at a record level, further curtailment in MGNREGA spending, high inflation, particularly the soaring prices of essential goods and food articles.

Corporate-Communal Nexus

The Modi government has announced fresh write offs of bank loans of Rs 2.14 lakh crore in 2023. This is on top of the write offs of Rs. 15.32 lakh crore from 2014. The RBI has reported that only 18.6 per cent of the loans written off were recovered in the last 3 years, nailing the claim that write offs are not waivers. Cronies are permitted to loot people's lifelong savings from bank deposits, with impunity.

On top of this, the Reserve Bank of India has issued a circular legalizing the loot of people's savings by willful defaulters and fraudsters who committed criminal offences. Such willful defaulters who have the capacity to repay the loans, but refuse to, can now go for a compromise settlement with the banks. This circular must be withdrawn and the properties of such people must be confiscated and the loans they have taken must be recovered by the banks.

The probe into the Adani scams continues to be stalled by the Modi government.

Loot of National Assets: Under this corporate-communal nexus, the loot of national assets is being legalized by legislating new laws. Through the disruption of Parliament due to Modi's refusal to be accountable on the Manipur conflict, important bills facilitating the privatization of national assets are being passed. These include the Forest (Conservation) Amendment Bill, 2023 to facilitate unbridled private mining in the forest areas. The consequent deforestation will further adversely aggravate the climate impacts in the country. The Mines and Minerals (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 has been passed that facilitates the private mining of crucial and valuable mineral resources including Lithium. The Offshore Areas (Development and Regulation) Amendment Bill, 2023 has been passed which facilitates private offshore exploration of crude oil.

Deepening Communal Polarization

The efforts by the RSS and its frontal organizations to sharpen communal polarization continue to intensify since our April Central Committee meeting.

Maharashtra: In various parts of Maharashtra, communal violence and riots have taken place – Akola, Ahmednagar, Amravati, Nashik, Aurangabad (now Sambhaji Nagar) with the latest in Kolhapur. In all these places, the minorities were targeted as glorifiers of Aurangzeb and Tipu Sultan and communal frenzy was unleashed. Instead of taking strict action to maintain law-and-order, the Shinde-BJP state government's Home Minister Devendra Fadnavis said that the state government would not tolerate anyone "glorifying Aurangzeb in the land of Chhatrapati Shivaji". The Maharashtra Vikas Aghadi (MVA) leaders have all come out strongly against the

outbreak of such communal violence and have appealed to the people to maintain peace and harmony.

In the recent local body elections, the Shinde-BJP combination could not perform well compared to the MVA. The RSS-BJP in its efforts to garner more support has split the NCP and is stoking the communal fires to bolster its support base. This has serious consequences for Maharashtra's stability in the future.

Lynchings: on 25 June, 150 kilometers from Mumbai, a youth was lynched under the pretext that he was carrying beef. This was the second such lynching in the span of a fortnight. Both youths are Pasmada Muslims, this exposing the duplicity of the RSS/BJP which projects itself as the champion of the Pasmadas.

Under the Shinde-BJP government, such self-proclaimed *Gaurakshak* vigilante groups enjoy patronage and are emboldened to murder people.

In **Bihar's** Saran district, a 55-year-old disabled Muslim driver was lynched to death. He was carrying animal bones for a medicine factory which has been running for the last 50 years.

In Mundra, **Gujarat** on the day of Eid, the principal of a private school was suspended after a video of students wearing skull caps while staging a play, surfaced.

Uttarakhand: BJP Chief Minister Pushkar Singh Dhami, on June 9, directed the Uttarakhand police to take stern action against reported incidents of 'love jihad'. Immediately, posters were put up in front of shops owned by Muslims warning them to leave their establishments before the June 15 Mahapanchayat called by Hindu organizations. Muslim traders in Uttarkashi were asked to shut shops and leave the state amid communal tensions. Many Muslim traders have since left.

The proposed Mahapanchayat called by Hindu organizations was cancelled due to judicial intervention. Following this, the Mahapanchayat called by the minority organizations on June 18 was also called off. Tension, however, continues to simmer.

As the elections to the important state assemblies and the general elections for 2024 come closer, such incendiary communal

polarization is bound to intensify as a means for the RSS/BJP to consolidate their communal Hindutva vote bank.

Haryana: A communal conflagration was engineered at Nuh in the Mewat region of Haryana leading to the death of five persons and incidents of arson. The BJP state government by its acts of omission and commission is responsible and complicit in these developments. Communal tensions are now spreading to Gurugram where a mosque was attacked and its Naib Imam was killed. Tensions are growing in the National Capital Territory of Delhi and other places.

Growing Hate Crimes: The poisonous campaign of hate and incendiary hate speeches have created an atmosphere where hate crimes against Muslims are growing alarmingly. A Railway Protection Force constable shot dead his superior and killed three Muslim passengers. The degree of dehumanization of our society and contempt for the 'other' is sharply escalating.

Uniform Civil Code

With an eye on the 2024 elections, Modi has once again launched the propaganda for a Uniform Civil Code. He made it very clear that the target was the Muslim community when he said that in a family, one son following one personal law and the other following another cannot coexist. Various communities in India have their own personal and customary laws. In many cases within one religious grouping different customs and practices are followed by different sections. Modi does not talk of any of these except targeting Muslim personal law.

Home Minister Amit Shah assured a delegation from the North East that the UCC will not be applied to the tribals, as announced by the Chief Minister of Nagaland. Christians, Sikhs, Jains and the Parsis have been told likewise. There are various personal laws within the Hindu community including the Hindu Undivided Family Act which has been a major avenue for tax avoidance all these years. No other community enjoys such a facility for tax avoidance.

Given this, it is clear that in the name of Uniform Civil Code the effort is to target the Muslim community and sharpen communal polarization.

The Law Commission has started consultations on the issue of a Uniform Civil Code. The last Law Commission had conducted a similar exercise and came to the conclusion in 2018 that, “While diversity of Indian culture can and should be celebrated, specific groups, or weaker sections of the society must not be dis-privileged in the process. Resolution of this conflict does not mean abolition of difference. This Commission has therefore dealt with laws that are discriminatory rather than providing a uniform civil code which is neither necessary nor desirable at this stage. Most countries are now moving towards recognition of difference, and the mere existence of difference does not imply discrimination, but is indicative of a robust democracy.” The CPI(M) endorsed this position.

Uniformity cannot be equated with equality. The CPI(M) has all along championed equal rights for women of all communities. This can be best advanced through reform of personal/customary laws applicable to different communities with active democratic participation of all men and women of these communities.

Gyanvapi Mosque Dispute: It is mystifying as to why the Judiciary at the highest level is not strictly enforcing the implementation of the Places of Worship Act 1991 which provides for status quo regarding all places of worship in the country after independence. The sole exception made at the time of its enactment was of Ayodhya where the dispute was the subject matter of court proceedings. The August 3 Allahabad High Court verdict allowed the ASI to conduct a survey of the Gyanvapi Mosque complex. The Supreme Court which has repeatedly upheld the validity of the 1991 Act has also not stopped the survey. This 1991 Act, which is the law of the land, must be strictly implemented.

Growing Crimes Against Women and Girl Children: As the Modi government informed Parliament of the number of initiatives it had taken for the safety of women across the country, the Union Home Ministry data tabled in Parliament showed that 10,61,648 women above 18 years and 2,51,430 girls went missing between 2019 and 2021. This data was compiled by the National Crime Records Bureau (NCRB).

The NCRB data also shows that on an average 86 rape cases were lodged daily with 49 offenses against women per hour in 2021. The

number of rape cases went up from 28,046 in 2020 to 31,677 in 2021. The number of crimes against women rose from 3,71,503 in 2020 to 4,28,278 in 2021.

Growing Attacks on Dalits: The reports of horrific de-humanized crimes against Dalits, particularly under BJP-ruled states is totally condemnable. Parliament was informed recently that as many as 1,89,945 of crimes against Dalits community were registered in the last four years according to the National Crimes Records Bureau. There are large number of cases that go unregistered making these crimes even more atrocious.

Undermining the Constitution – Federalism

While all the foundational pillars of our Constitution – secular democracy, economic sovereignty, and social justice are under assault, there is a deliberate attempt to weaken the federal structure and the Constitutional rights of democratically elected state governments. The Governors and the Lt. Governors in non-BJP ruled states continue to act as the agents of the RSS/BJP political agenda. The misuse of Central agencies against the leaders of the opposition and the opposition state governments continues to intensify as can be seen in Tamilnadu and other states.

The Union government has recently changed the definition of public borrowing to further squeeze the fiscal space of the states. The off-budget and extra budgetary borrowings of the state governments are to be considered part of their public borrowing. The new interpretation does not apply to Central government borrowing and is being applied retrospectively. The result is that the public borrowing of states like Kerala is reduced from 3 per cent of GSDP as under Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management (FRBM) to around 2 per cent of GSDP for the current year. It may also be noted that while the states have adhered to the 3 per cent norm the fiscal deficit of the Centre has been around 5 per cent.

Delhi: In a brazen authoritarian move, the Modi government issued an ordinance to nullify the recent Supreme Court judgement by a five-member Constitution bench upholding the rights of the elected government of Delhi over major areas of governance including control of the bureaucracy. Not only does this constitute contempt of court, it is a direct assault on the federal character of the

Constitution and the norms of accountability and democratic governance as defined by the Supreme Court.

All the 26 parties belonging to INDIA have decided to vote against the Ordinance when it comes before the Parliament for enactment.

Parliament Disruption: PM Modi's refusal to make a statement on the Manipur situation in Parliament to be followed by a discussion, is disrupting Parliament's functioning in the current monsoon session. This is a brazen abdication of the Constitutional responsibility of the PM being accountable to Parliament.

However, through the disruptions the Modi government is enacting various legislations that have a regressive impact on people's livelihood, further facilitating the loot of national assets and adversely impacting the environment.

Jammu & Kashmir: August 5, 2023 marks the completion of four years since the special status of Jammu and Kashmir under Article 370 was annulled and the state of Jammu and Kashmir dismantled. This assault on the Constitution and federalism presaged an all-round attack on the rights of citizens in Jammu and Kashmir.

The last five years under Central rule have seen steps to alter the very identity of Jammu and Kashmir with change in domicile laws and land rights. There is a concerted move to change the demography of the state.

The period has seen large scale detention of political leaders and activists using draconian laws like the Public Safety Act and UAPA. Hundreds of political prisoners are still in detention, many of them in jails outside J&K.

Despite tall claims, the economic situation has deteriorated with high unemployment, estimated to be three times the national average. The livelihood of different sections of the people like apple growers and small business owners has been adversely affected.

The media has faced severe state repression. Guidelines have been imposed imposing censorship and curbing freedom of expression. Various journalists are under detention under the draconian laws.

The basic denial of democracy and democratic rights of the people is seen most acutely in the failure to hold assembly elections to the

J&K assembly. Even after a delimitation exercise that was weighted to favour BJP's interests and reducing the representation of the people of the Kashmir valley, the Central government is not holding elections.

Thus, in all respects, the people of J&K have been reduced to second class citizens. **Elections must be held to the J&K assembly immediately.**

Restoration of democracy requires the release of all political prisoners and an end to the use of draconian laws to suppress the political opposition and the media.

The Centre should reverse all the measures that erode the domicile status of the permanent residents of J&K and protect their land rights.

PM Modi's US Visit

PM Modi's official state visit to the USA has further cemented India as the subordinate junior partner of US imperialism. The defence deals that have been concluded like joint production of GE-F 414 Jet engine comes on top of the earlier major military and defence deals as a 'major defence partner' of USA.

In the USA's quest for strengthening its global hegemony it sees India as a crucial strategic and military partner to isolate China. Biden administration's refusal to raise issues of human rights and democracy in India under the Modi government has come in for widespread criticism with even former President Barack Obama raising concerns. 75 members of the US Congress have raised issues of concern on the Modi government's record on human rights and democracy. Many of them boycotted Modi's address to the US Congress.

New Parliament Building

Modi inaugurated the new Parliament building on May 28. Twenty opposition parties boycotted the function on the ground that the Constitution of India defines Parliament as consisting of the President and both the Houses. The President is, thus, the head of Parliament who summons the session and adjourns the proceedings *sine die*. The opposition parties boycotted the function stating that the President must inaugurate and not the Prime

Minster. Clearly, Modi and the BJP government are signaling the supremacy of the Executive over the Legislature which is a grave violation of the basic structure of the Constitution.

The highlight of the inaugural function was the focus on Hindu rituals and smacked of a *Rajabhishek* (Coronation of a King). This entire ceremony was marked by an effort to manufacture a new narrative of transfer of power from the British.

Even though the construction of the new Parliament building is not complete and is not functional, the inauguration was done to time it with V.D. Savarkar's birth anniversary. The monsoon session is being held in old building.

Vital to a democratic republic is the relationship between state and its citizen, where all citizens are equal irrespective of caste, creed, or gender. The state is administered by a government elected by the people. The whole inaugural ceremony smacked of destroying the democratic, State-citizen equation with a Raja-Praja autocracy.

Gruesome Train Accident: CPI(M) expressed its deepest condolences to the families of those who lost their dear ones in Balasore, in the worst rail accident in recent times.

The reasons leading to the derailment of the Yeshwantpur Express in the first place which caused the collusion with the Coromandal Express leading to the multiple train accident near Bahanaga railway station in Balasore district, Odisha have to be established through a thorough probe. Serious questions on matters concerning railway safety should be the priority which cannot be ignored in the plans for 'modernization' by the Modi government.

Wrestlers' Protest

The blatant defence by the Modi government and the BJP of the accused in sexual harassment cases who are their supporters has been reflected in its determination to protect its MP and the then chief of the Wrestling Federation Brijbhushan Sharan Singh despite prima facie evidence of sexual harassment made by women wrestlers against him. It bent procedures to deliberately delay investigations into the case including the charges under POCSO to give time to the accused to pressurize the victim to withdraw her

statement. This has serious implications for all cases of complaints by minor victims of sexual harassment.

Pre-paid Smart Meters Project

The smart meters project with pre-paid arrangement for electricity consumers is being implemented by the Modi government. Many states have been forced to implement the scheme and are thereby withdrawing from the responsibility of electricity distribution and are handing it over to private corporates for profit maximization. This will impose unbearable burdens on the poor and the farmers. This project must be scrapped immediately.

Count the Disabled

In the backdrop of the Covid-19 pandemic, which has relatively impacted the disabled more adversely, the exclusion of disability from the National Family Health Survey-6 is telling. Even while the questions posed in the earlier round were flawed, removing them entirely is a regressive step. It is all the more shocking given the fact that the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) require disaggregated data on disability to gauge progress, not to speak of the mandates of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities as also the Rights of Persons with Disabilities Act, 2016. Even the progress in the implementation of the Unique Disability ID has been wanting and it is encountering various hurdles.

Fear of Authentic Data

Questions related to prevalence of anemia have also been removed from the National Family Health Survey – 6.

The previous survey had revealed that over 57 per cent of women and over 67 per cent of children in India suffer from anemia. Anemia is a major contributor to maternal and child mortality amongst other things.

The Modi government has been unabashed in its contempt and dread of accurate data. While data collection through the Census exercise has been going on elsewhere in the world, the exercise has been delayed indefinitely in India.

The suspension of K.S. James, the director of the International Institute for Population Sciences, which conducts the NFHS, is

shocking and condemnable. NFHS-5 had produced data that was not in sync with the Modi government's claims especially on India becoming a "open defecation free" country.

Elections

Karnataka: The people of Karnataka have decisively rejected the BJP in the assembly elections held on May 10. The BJP's defeat was the result of rampant corruption and misrule of its government. The people's verdict also shows the decisive rejection of the virulent communal propaganda conducted by the RSS-BJP under the BJP state government. Even during the election campaign Modi led the communal onslaught by asking people to vote, invoking Bajrang Bali. However, the Congress party won a big majority.

West Bengal Panchayat Elections: The three-tier panchayat elections were finally held on July 8 and the counting was on July 11. The entire exercise was marked by the butchery of democracy and rendered farcical by the ruling TMC's drive to capture all Panchayat institutions. Like in all elections conducted earlier by the present state administration there was an escalating scale of violence, terror and intimidation unleashed by the TMC against political opponents, even against people perceived to be voting against the ruling party.

Terror and violence dominated every stage of the polling process - preventing the filing of nominations by opponents, tampering with nomination papers by the returning officers, delay/refusal in issuing caste certificates to our candidates and issuing fake caste certificates to TMC candidates by the officials, terrorizing opposition candidates using police goons to withdraw, preventing opposition from campaigning, intimidating voters from going to the polling booths, printing excess number of ballot papers, capturing polling booths and ballot boxes and large-scale rigging in the voting process. Despite all this, a large number of people turned up to vote against the ruling party.

Sensing the situation was not favorable, the TMC indulged in large-scale manipulation in the counting process, intimidating and terrorizing opposition counting agents to leave the counting centres, destroying ballot papers, particularly of the CPI(M) and the Left Front candidates. Scores of our comrades were severely injured in the process. Large number of incidents took place of CPI(M)

candidates declared elected, but whose certificates were taken away by the TMC goons and destroyed and in place the TMC candidates were declared as elected. Police fired against local people protesting over a fraud in Bhangar where the winning ISF candidate in the Zilla Parishad seat was replaced by the declaration of the TMC candidate as the winner. Three people died in the police firing and overall more than 60 people lost their lives in this violence. In many other places, our comrades were lathi-charged by the police when they were protesting the fraud.

This time there was growing popular resistance against the TMC goons and their manipulation of the elections. At hundreds of places CPI(M) and Left Front candidates faced these threats courageously and broke barricades to cast votes or enter counting centres.

The Left, Congress and the secular candidates were the main targets of the TMC's terror attacks in comparison to the BJP. The TMC, in fact, was seeking to project falsely that this election is being mainly contested between TMC and BJP. Both TMC and the BJP rely upon the network of the rural rich and the lumpen gangs operated by them. However, as a ruling party, the TMC is backed by the rural neo-rich who are the main beneficiaries of its rule. There is open license to loot the funds of the government welfare schemes through commissions called 'cut money'. The gangs of lumpen elements backed by the neo-rich unleashed violence against all those who opposed such a loot as well as political opponents. The TMC rule is marked by such a corrupt-criminal nexus led by the rural neo-rich.

The CPI(M) and the Left have been the principal force opposing this corrupt-criminal nexus and hence, are the targets of violent terror attacks. A young student leader, Mansoor Alam (21 years) was killed in such a violent attack in North Dinajpur. 56 persons have lost their lives, including six CPI(M) activists.

Even now, the State Election Commission is unable to give the final tally of valid votes polled or specific number of votes secured by different political parties. Since the counting day, the State Election Commission site is constantly changing figures. There are many discrepancies in the results shown by the returning officers in

districts and in the figures provided by the State Election Commission.

Democratic and Left-minded lawyers are continuously playing a heroic role in the High Court exposing all these misdeeds and the biased role played by a section of the police and civil administration. The High Court has stayed the final result of the panchayat polls. In this legal battle, the murder of democracy is getting exposed through the court's observations. The legitimacy of the vote and credibility of the state government is at its lowest ebb.

However, preliminary figures indicate that the vote share of Left and its allies has increased by 11 per cent and that of BJP has decreased by 16 per cent. Even TMC's vote share has decreased as noted, particularly in areas where normal election was held.

Left Parties

The last CC meeting decided: "in consultation with Left parties to launch nationwide protest actions on issues of immediate concern for the country and people's livelihood". This however could not materialize. The distinct Left agenda should be highlighted and we must continue our efforts to pursue the independent projection of the Left.

CC Calls:

1. All Party units will observe an all-India protest week against price rise and for jobs creation from 1-7 September 2023.
2. To make efforts to hold a convention of Left parties at the earliest and give a call for an all-India campaign on a mutually agreed charter of demands.
3. Support the plan of action to be declared by the joint platform of Central Trade Unions and Samyukta Kisan Morcha.
4. Extend support to the all-India Delhi rally on October 5, 2023 called by the All India Democratic Women's Association.
