

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)



Central Committee

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Report on Some Political Developments

*(Adopted at the Central Committee meeting held on
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This report is confined to certain important developments, both at the international and national levels.

INTERNATIONAL

Global Economy

Global capitalist economy continues to be in its systemic crisis. The World Bank Global Economic Prospects for 2024 projects a further slowdown of global growth – the third consecutive year of deceleration. The UN World Economic Situation and Prospects for 2024 predicts a decline in global growth from 2.7 percent in 2022 to 2.4 percent in 2024. Although it projects an improvement in 2025, it notes that growth will remain "below the pre-pandemic level of 3 percent." It predicts that "a protracted period of low growth looms large."

The US economy managed to stave off sliding into a recession as projected by many agencies, but it is expected to decelerate from an estimated 2.5 percent in 2023 to 1.4 percent in 2024. The European Union is projected to slow by 1.2 percent, up from 0.5 percent in 2023, while Japan is projected to shrink from 1.7 percent in 2023 to 1.2 percent in 2024. China is projected to experience a growth rate of 5.3 percent in 2023, an increase from 3 percent in 2022, and projected to see a moderate downturn to 4.7 percent in 2024.

In all other developing countries, the projection is for a moderate slowdown in the growth rates.

Global trade growth saw a sharp fall in 2023, declining from 5.7 percent in 2022 to 0.6 percent. Though projected to recover to 2.4 percent in 2024, it remains below the pre-pandemic trend of 3.2 percent.

The designed prolonging of the Ukraine war by US/NATO and the current Israeli genocidal assault against the Palestinians have benefited the military/industrial complex, sustaining to a large extent the modest levels of economic activity and growth in the developed countries.

While the bankruptcy of neoliberalism in offering any solution to this crisis is obvious, it nevertheless realizes its primary objective of predatory profit maximization through the further intensification of exploitation and consequent widening of income and wealth inequalities.

Unemployment: The UN report says, “labor market conditions in many developing countries are likely to deteriorate in 2024.” Global unemployment is projected to rise by 2 million in 2024. Global Jobs Gap in 2023 remained high at 435 million. Around 58 per cent of the global workforce will remain informally employed in 2024 with persistent working poverty.

Poverty and Hunger: Globally, wage increases failed to keep pace with inflation resulting in declining real wages. In 2023, the number of workers living in extreme poverty (earning less than \$ 2.15 per day in PPP terms) grew by about 1 million. The number of workers living in moderate poverty increased by 8.4 million in 2023. Over 2 billion workers were confined to the informal sector in 2023.

High food prices, globally, are leading to greater food insecurity. In 2023, an estimated 238 million people experienced acute food insecurity, an increase of 21.6 million from 2022.

Israeli Genocidal Carnage Against Palestinians

Israel's brutal assault on the Gaza Strip continues to heap destruction and devastation. Over 25,000 Palestinians have been killed, with about two-thirds of them being women and children. Nearly 60,000 are seriously injured, and over 10,000 are missing. Almost 2 million people, 90 percent of Gaza's population, were forced to evacuate their homes after bombing. Clearly, Israel's intention is to expel all Palestinians from their territories and annex their lands as part of the state of Israel. Attacks in the West Bank have also intensified, confirming that Israel is seeking to obliterate the legal right for a state of Palestine to exist.

South Africa's Case in the International Court of Justice: Invoking the precedent of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) hearing an appeal of Gambia against Myanmar, invoking the *erga omnes partes* (standing based on obligations to everyone), South Africa has filed a case against Israel for violating its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. It seeks a series of provisional measures.

Ironically, the killing of 6 million Jews in the Holocaust, the basis for enacting this treaty on the crimes of genocide, are the ones that Israel is now accused of violating in the ICJ.

Historic ICJ verdict: In an unprecedented historic move, the ICJ decided in favour of issuing provisional measures as requested by South Africa. Though it stops short of calling for a ceasefire ending military operations in and against Gaza as requested by South Africa, it nevertheless put forward six provisional measures for Israel to implement: (a) Israel must take all measures to prevent acts of genocide, (b) Israel must prevent and punish incitement to genocide including by government and military officers, (c) Ensure that Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) do not indulge in acts of genocide, (d) Enable basic services and humanitarian aid to Gaza, (e) Israel must preserve evidence related to violation of the Genocide Convention and (f) Israel must submit a report in one month to the ICJ on the measures it has taken to implement the above.

If Israel has to comply with these provisional measures, then it means that it has to effectively halt its military operations in Gaza. Netanyahu predictably has rejected the ICJ verdict.

The ICJ, in this situation, will now have to refer the matter to the UN Security Council for a resolution to ensure that Israel complies with implementing the provisional measures. With Netanyahu's contemptuous rejection of the ICJ verdict, the USA, in all likelihood, will exercise its veto power.

However, the issue of whether the Genocide Convention has been violated could last years.

Massive US/NATO Aid to Israel: The massive aid and support being provided to Israel to conduct this genocide, primarily by the USA and other imperialist partners, is emboldening Israel to conduct such an extermination of the Palestinian people. If South Africa's case proceeds to the next level – the merit stage – it can have implications for those countries actively supporting and aiding Israel. As a party to the Genocide Convention, the United States has an obligation to take affirmative action to prevent genocide. This can well prohibit the ongoing financial and military assistance to Israel. The Leahy law in the USA prohibits military assistance to foreign security forces where there is credible information of gross violations of human rights being committed. This US law makes genocide as well as incitement to genocide a criminal offence.

Growing Global Protests and Calls for an Immediate Ceasefire: Marking 100 days of Israeli bombardment of Gaza, the global 'Stop the War Coalition' called for

protest actions which took place in more than 120 cities across 45 countries on 6 continents. These actions called for an immediate ceasefire and called upon the governments of every country to exercise pressure on Israel to comply with this global outcry.

In some European countries these protests took a specific form of obstructing transportation meant for Israel. In **Greece**, protests were held at the seaports against the docking of NATO warships which are complicit in Israeli attacks. In **Belgium**, trade unions decided not to load and unload ships and planes carrying weapons for Israel. Shipments were stopped at airports. In **Britain**, workers refused to allow trucks moving out of the BAE factory in Kent that manufactures arms and ammunitions sold to Israel.

The Modi government finally voted in the UN General Assembly for a humanitarian ceasefire. The pressure of the global protests had forced many countries to support the ceasefire in the UN Security Council with 13 of the 15 members voting in favour. Even the UK did not oppose this resolution and was forced to abstain. The USA, however, exercised its veto power.

Setback to Netanyahu: Israel's Supreme Court struck down a key component of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's controversial judicial reforms on 1 January 2024, delivering a landmark decision on an issue that caused nationwide anti-government protests last year.

Thousands of people took to the streets in Israel calling for the return of hostages and early elections to oust PM Netanyahu. Hamas has announced the death of two more hostages. People in Israel fear that Israel's military activity is endangering the lives of hostages as there is a growing feeling that Netanyahu is continuing the military assault in order to protect his position and evade arrest on corruption charges.

Enlarging the Conflict

The Israeli genocidal carnage against the Palestinians is threatening to escalate into a regional conflict. The Yemen based Houthi militia has been attacking merchant vessels disrupting the global oil trade in the Red Sea. US and UK have stepped up military strikes against Yemen targeting the Houthi operational bases to prevent them from attacking merchant vessels and "protecting global trade". US and its allies claim that Iran is backing and supporting the Houthis. Apart from Yemen, Lebanon, Syria and Iraq have also been drawn in these exchanges of military strikes. The Hezbollah operating from Lebanon has been mounting rocket attacks on Israel.

USA carried out air strikes against alleged Iranian facilities in Syria. Iran has conducted military strikes in Iraq and Syria, claiming that they targeted the main Israeli Mossad Head Quarter in the former and the IS in the latter. All these developments are leading to enlargement of the conflict zone in West Asia. Iran also launched missile and drone attacks inside Pakistan claiming to target the militant group, Jaish al – Adli. Pakistan retaliated attacking what it said were hideouts of Pakistani terrorists based in Iran – the Baluchistan Liberation Army.

A drone attack killed 3 US soldiers and wounded at least 34 more at bases in Jordan. Blaming the Iran-backed militias for the first US military casualties since Israel's genocidal assault on Palestinians, President Biden vowed to respond, increasing apprehensions of enlarging the conflict in the middle east.

Oil Trade Disruption: Houthi Militia Attacks in the Red Sea and US/UK attacks on Yemen, forces 70% of all worldwide oil movement to reroute passage at sea.

The world's largest tanker industry body has warned members to stop transiting past Yemen. The International Association of Independent Tanker Owners (Intertanko), which represents almost 70 per cent of all internationally traded oil, gas and chemical tankers, said in an advisory to members to "stay well away" from the Bab al Mendab (Gate of Tears in Arabic) strait, and for vessels travelling south via the Suez Canal to pause north of Yemen. The strait is vital for 30 per cent of the global container traffic. India is heavily reliant on this route for trade, mainly energy (Crude Oil and LNG) and faces increased costs and security risks. The ships going to Europe will now have to move via a much longer route around the Cape of Good Hope, the bottom tip of Africa. This change increases the voyage distance by 40 per cent and greatly raises transportation time and costs.

Modi Government to Send Indian Workers to Israel: Defying the opinion of major Central Trade Unions who have objected to and condemned the decision to send Indian workers to replace the Palestinian workers in Israel, the Israeli construction sector had asked the Netanyahu government to hire up to one lakh workers from India to replace about 90,000 Palestine workers who have been retrenched and sent back to Palestinian territories. The Haryana BJP government has begun the process of recruiting over 10,000 Indian construction workers for different jobs in Israel. This, however, does not come with any guarantee for safety and for ensuring strict compliance of job conditions. Many seeking these jobs were asked if they were aware of the dangers, by the media. The replies indicated the clear desperation of joblessness and consequent insecurities in India. The responses are encapsulated in what a worker said "better we die in Israel than of hunger in India."

Ukraine War

For nearly two years now, the war in Ukraine has been continuing. The UN Human Rights Monitoring Mission has said that at least 10,000 civilians have been killed and more than 18,500 injured.

This war is being deliberately prolonged by US imperialism and its allies who are heavily financing and arming Ukraine. This is aimed at strengthening US global hegemony and pushing the world into a new cold war situation. Apart from the unprecedented financial and military support being given to Ukraine by USA, the UK has announced to increase its military funding to 2.5 billion pounds.

Global Protests

Workers from all over Europe mobilised in Brussels against the ‘austerity’ policies of the European Union and organised a march on 12 December. They were demanding an end to austerity, increase in wages and budgetary allocations for social welfare.

Germany's ailing economy is seeing nationwide protests by farmers against government plans to cut diesel subsidies. Train drivers are planning several days of strikes over wage disputes. The economy, Europe's biggest, was the weakest among its large euro zone peers last year (GDP growth shrinking to 0.9 per cent), as high energy costs, feeble global orders and record-high interest rates took their toll.

The government suffered a huge blow in November when Germany's top court threw out its 2024 budget plans, forcing divisive political wrangling over how to fill a € 17 billion (\$18.6 billion) funding gap.

Chancellor Olaf Scholz's coalition has watered down proposals of its hastily reworked budget to cut diesel subsidies. However, the president of the German Farmers' Association said this did not go far enough and called for strengthening nationwide protests.

Demonstrations Against the Far Right: Hundreds of thousands of people took to the streets in more than a hundred cities and towns in Germany against far-right extremism. These were triggered after details of a plan worked out in a secret meeting of right-wing extremists and the far right political party Alternative for Germany (AfD) to deport millions of migrants and minorities. Battling freezing cold, the protesters raised slogans that ‘fascism isn’t an alternative.’ Calling for

defence of democracy, they urged people to take ‘an active stand against the political right from the entire breadth of society.’

Greece: On 18 January 2024, tens of thousands of university and school students as well as teachers took to the streets all over Greece, holding mass demonstrations rejecting private universities and demanding public and free education for all. Similar demonstrations were held on 11 January also along with various trade unions.

Belgium: Thousands of workers protested against the anti-demonstration bill that was passed by the Belgium government. The government was forced to withdraw the bill after sustained protests led by the working class in which students, women, peace activists and NGOs too participated.

Portugal: In October and November, major demonstrations of the working class were held under the leadership of the confederation of trade unions (CGTP) in Portugal against budget proposals to not increase wages and pensions, reduce corporate taxes and give more benefits to corporates. Thousands of workers were mobilised in mass struggles throughout the country. Two major countrywide protests were organised in Lisbon, the capital city and Porto, the biggest city in the northern region.

Sweden: Automobile mechanics in Sweden are protesting against the auto giant Tesla, demanding better working conditions and their right to unionize. As the management is not ready to negotiate, workers from other sectors too joined the protests in solidarity. Postal workers are refusing to deliver mail to Tesla and similar other services are also held up by the solidarity actions.

US: In the US, two big education unions, the Teachers (AFT) and the National Education Association, plus 1,000 higher education institutions, have launched a fight for educational freedoms. It is a mass campaign to combat the right-wing crusade to destroy public schools and democracy. They are protesting against laws in multiple states aimed at banning books and curricula that deal with racism, attacking teachers, and shaming LGBTQIA+ students while pushing voucher and privatisation schemes to undermine and cut public education.

Workers in the media giant Washington Post, organised a one-day strike demanding better wages.

Global Impact of Forthcoming Elections

In 2024, over 50 nations, collectively around 50% of the world's population, are set to conduct national elections. These elections, spanning countries like the United States, Russia, the United Kingdom, India, El Salvador, South Africa, Indonesia, Pakistan, Belarus, Mexico and the 27-nation parliament of the European Union etc. carry significant consequences for economies, human rights, global relations, and the potential for peace, as they encompass both presidential and legislative contests.

The results of these elections will have a crucial bearing on the crisis of democracy being faced in various countries. Exploiting genuine concerns of peoples' deteriorating living conditions, rightwing forces are rousing feelings of racism, xenophobia and religious conflicts.

With the emergence of Artificial Intelligence, there are also concerns about the degree of misinformation and fake news threatening to pose chaos during electioneering. A survey conducted by the World Economic Forum has shown India to be the global leader in the spread of disinformation/misinformation.

Political Rightward Shift: Already in some elections held recently, this trend of a rightward shift is visible.

Javier Milei, a self-styled anarcho capitalist, won the Presidential election in **Argentina**. He put forward maverick policy proposals, particularly the idea of dollarizing the Argentinian economy replacing the Argentinian Peso with the US dollar and eliminating the Argentine Central Bank as measures to combat hyperinflation which he proclaimed will take up to two years. Though his proposals require Constitutional changes and approval from Argentina's Congress, it is feared that the government's ability to manage monetary policy and insulate against external shocks involving the US dollar will cease. Milei also indicated to snap relations with Argentina's top trading partners, China and Brazil, favouring alignment with the United States and the "free world." He has also raised questions on Argentina's commitment to international climate initiatives.

Milei's victory, reflecting the global trend of a rightward political shift, ushers in a period of economic uncertainties, diplomatic challenges, and environmental policy contradictions in Argentina.

Dutch Elections: Greet Wilders, a pronounced Islamophobic secured a major victory in the Dutch general elections capturing 37 seats for his Freedom Party. However, he needs to forge coalitions to become the Prime Minister needing 76 seats in the 150-seat Parliament. His far-right policies have led major parties to

initially rule out joining a Wilders-led government. However, his scale of victory may create vacillations, but any coalition would necessarily involve complex negotiations over Wilders's views on migration and strict border controls.

Other Elections – Taiwan Regional Elections: Democratic Progressive Party candidate Lai Ching-te's victory shows that status quo in Taiwan's relations with China may continue. With 40% of the vote, Mr. Lai outpaced his closest competitor, Hou Yu-ih of the Kuomintang (widely seen as tilting towards mainland China), who garnered 34%. The third candidate Ko Wen-je (widely seen as seeking total independence from mainland China) got 26.5 per cent votes. The incumbent president, Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party, who assumed office in 2016, is constitutionally prohibited from seeking a third term. Throughout Ms. Tsai's tenure, economic challenges persisted, marked by slow wage growth, high housing costs, and instances of power blackouts.

Climate Change

The COP 28 was held in Dubai. The main issue on its agenda was to take up the first 5 yearly Global Stocktake (GST) – an assessment of where the world stands with regard to the implementation of the Paris Agreement, 2015. These cover emissions reduction, building resilience against climate impacts, financing and other support to developing countries to move towards cleaner energy and greener technologies.

The impact of climate change is already visible with severe heat and cold waves, droughts, forest fires, floods, extreme rainfall etc. experienced all across the world.

The GST inputs found that the 1.5-degree target (restricting global heating to 1.5 degree C above pre-industrial levels) would require reduction in emissions of 43 per cent by 2030, 60 per cent by 2035, with 2019 as the base level, reaching net zero by 2050.

Though a final draft was hurriedly pushed through, this has many loopholes like prolonging the production and the use of fossil fuels favouring the industry and rich developed countries. This declaration did not take further the issue of financial support by the developed countries. The grossly inadequate commitment of \$100 billion per year by 2020 has not been met. The GST estimates that developing countries need nearly \$6 trillion for the pre-2030 period, yet no fresh targets were decided upon. However, a road map towards new targets in 2025 was drawn up. The net result was that the fossil fuel industries and the developed countries went back happy.

Except for PM Modi's speech on the opening day for the heads of government, India remained almost inaudible and invisible. India did not sign or participate in any of the many sectoral discussions and the agreements signed on the sidelines of the COP. India will have to work hard on its new raised Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) targets and also on a National Adaptation Plan that was underlined at COP 28. This would involve a highly participatory planning and implementation partnership with all stake holders, importantly with state governments. With the intensification of the drive towards a unitary state structure under the Modi government's such an exercise appears remote.

India's Neighbours

Maldives: The newly elected Maldivian President Mohamad Muizzu, perceived as being closer to China than India, has asked India to withdraw its troops stationed in Maldives, by March 15. The public announcement to this effect was made in the India–Maldives high-level core group, (set up after a meeting of PM Modi with President Muizzu on the sidelines of the COP 28 in Dubai) that held its first meeting in Male. The statement issued by India after this meeting does not mention any military withdrawal whereas the Maldives statement says both sides expressed willingness to intensify cooperation and agreed to fast track the withdrawal of Indian military personnel.

Earlier, PM Modi's visit to Lakshadweep and the reaction to some offensive observations of junior Ministers of the Maldivian government led to a sharp deterioration of relations. Modi's visit to Lakshadweep was seen as promoting Lakshadweep as an alternate tourist destination. A big social media campaign was unleashed calling upon Indians to virtually boycott Maldives as a tourist destination.

Making a break from tradition, President Muizzu made his first foreign visit to China where he reportedly agreed to elevate strategic ties with Beijing. Upon return from his 5-day state visit he told the media that though Maldives may be a small country it "will not be bullied" by anybody.

Pakistan: General elections in Pakistan are scheduled to be held in February 8. Former Prime Minister Imran Khan's Party, Pakistan Tehreek-e-Insaf (PTI) alleges that the military is attempting to keep it out of the electoral race. Imran Khan remains in jail. Nawaz Sharif and his party have been cleared by the Pakistan Supreme Court to contest the elections. But the Court has rejected the PTI plea to retain its traditional electoral symbol, cricket bat, on the grounds that no intra-party elections were held.

A caretaker government has been in place in Pakistan since parliament was dissolved on August 9, 2023, when Imran Khan was convicted of graft charges. Though the Islamabad High Court suspended his 3-year sentence, he remains in jail awaiting trial in another case of leaking state secrets.

Nawaz Sharif will lead the Pakistan Muslim League in these elections. He was also jailed after being convicted for graft before leaving to the UK for medical treatment. He has been granted bail since his return.

Denied the symbol, the PTI candidates will now have to fight on independent symbols. A military backed crackdown on the PTI is expected to gather pace ahead of the 8 February elections.

Bangladesh: In a one-sided election, the Bangladesh Awami League (BAL) won a 2/3rd majority ensuring a fourth successive term for Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina. The main opposition Party, the Bangladesh National Party (BNP) along with 14 smaller parties boycotted the elections.

In a low polling election, BAL won 225 out of 300 contested seats. BNP leader Khaleda Zia, imprisoned on corruption charges boycotted elections demanding that they be held under a caretaker government. The constitutional provision for this was abrogated by BAL in 2009. Though the Bangladesh Election Commissioner put out a figure of 40 per cent polling at the close of polls at 4.00 pm, this is being questioned as it was shown as 27 per cent at 3.00 pm.

There has been a crackdown on the BNP. The conservative estimate is that over 10,000 of its workers are in jail. The Jatiya party considered as the loyal opposition in the outgoing parliament, won only 12 seats, with 50 independents also winning. In the absence of any official opposition party there is, thus, no opposition in the parliament.

The Awami League is portraying the main contradiction in Bangladesh as being between religious fundamentalism (with the BNP and Jamaat e Islami working together) and the people. While the opposition's charge is that democracy has been destroyed and Bangladesh today is a dictatorial regime which has the security establishments, intelligence agencies and key civil servants with the military as the anchor.

NATIONAL

Economy

There is a high decibel propaganda concerning India's GDP growth rate. In December, 2023 the RBI scaled up its forecast from 6.5 to 7 per cent GDP for

2023-24. The National Statistical Office has projected GDP to grow 7.3 per cent, higher than 7.2 per cent recorded in 2022-23. However, the rating agency ICRA showed that the real GDP has slowed to under 6 per cent in the third quarter (October-December). It said that there was “little to no” growth in the agricultural sector due to a sharp slowdown in kharif output and weak rabi sowing. However, speaking at Davos, the RBI Governor projected India to grow at 7 per cent with inflation averaging 4.5 per cent.

Highly Unequal Growth: The World Inequality Report described India as “a poor and very unequal country” in 2022. The post-Covid recovery has confirmed this with the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer. There are several factors for this.

Along with global stock markets that continued to boom during the pandemic while the real economy was tanking, in India too something similar happened. The miniscule minority who profit from the stock market saw their wealth increasing exponentially. This resulted in the profits of companies listed on the stock market rising to a seven year high in 2022. At the same time, regardless of industry/work, real wages stagnated all across between 2017-18 and 2022-23. Financial Express (July 11, 2023) showed that this was true for all categories of employed – regular wage/salaried, casual and self-employed.

The impact of Covid lockdown on the economy came after demonetization and the ill-conceived GST rollout which left the unorganized informal sector and the MSME devastated. They have still not recovered, resulting in unemployment reaching a 50 year high. Manufacturing employment stagnated at around 60 million since 2012, rising to a mere 63 million in the post-Covid recovery.

Destroying MGNREGS: This has resulted in a reverse migration leading to nearly 50 million workers returning to rural India, many demanding work under the MGNREGS. Instead of strengthening the MGNREGS the Modi government is effectively restricting it. It has imposed an Aadhar Based Payment System (ABPS) snatching away the rights of crores of workers. The MGNREGS card holders have been divided into eligible and non-eligible for ABPS. This resulted in over 10 crore workers being declared ineligible for ABPS and thus denied their legal entitlement to work. In large parts of rural India with poor connectivity and internet accessibility nearly 2 crores are denied wages without online registration. This mandatory linkage to the ABPS must be rescinded in this time of high rural distress.

UN Report on India’s Hunger: A recent UN estimate released in December 2023 has raised doubts about the accuracy of the Indian government's figures regarding

food assistance needs. The UN report indicates that in 2021, over a billion people in India were unable to afford a nutritious diet, contradicting the government's assertion that only 813 million individuals require food assistance.

The 2023 report on food security and nutrition, compiled by five UN agencies, suggests that 74.1% of Indians, approximately 1.043 billion people, couldn't afford a healthy diet in 2021. Additionally, the report projected India's proportion of undernourished population at 16.6% during the period of 2020-2022.

Spreading Disinformation: Despite hard evidence of growing inequality the NITI Aayog has put out an estimate claiming multi-dimensional poverty has fallen with 24.8 crores improving their status, since 2014. This is based on dubious data and an obviously weak methodology.

The SBI reports some improvement in income distribution i.e., reduction of inequalities. This is based on the Income Tax payers who file Returns. Tax payers are barely 5 per cent of our population. Hence, any conclusion based on the Returns filed by tax payers is grossly misleading.

Falling Demand: As noted in our last Central Committee meeting, growing joblessness, stagnant real incomes and relentless inflation, particularly of food items (in December 2023, prices galloped – Pulses 20.73 per cent, Vegetables 27.6 per cent, Spices 19.7 per cent etc) has led to the savings-GDP ratio falling. People are forced to spend most of their earnings on livelihood concerns. This is leading to a reduction in overall demand in the economy adversely affecting industrial, particularly manufacturing growth.

Private Final Consumption Expenditure: While the recent revelation of India's Q2 FY24 GDP growth, exceeding expectations at 7.6% year-on-year, may suggest a thriving economy, an underlying issue poses a threat to this momentum – a troubling decline in demand, especially within the rural sector. This decline is most evident in the Private Final Consumption Expenditure (PFCE), a crucial indicator for household consumption. In Q2 FY24, the growth of PFCE experienced a significant drop, plummeting from 5.97% in the previous quarter to a disappointing 3.1%. Additionally, data from the Ministry of Statistics and Program Implementation indicates sluggishness in PFCE during the first half of the current fiscal year.

The rural segment constitutes a substantial portion of the nation's demand, impacting various industries such as fast-moving consumer goods (FMCG), automobiles, housing, and retail. Multiple indicators point to a sluggish growth trend in rural demand. Notably, data from the Reserve Bank of India (RBI)

underscores a downward trajectory in the growth of key indicators like two-wheelers and tractors, critical markers of rural economic health. These sectors experienced their lowest growth in FY22 and continued this trend into 2023.

Declining Industrial Growth: The falling purchasing power of the vast majority of the people and the consequent fall in domestic demand is slowing down industrial growth which the **Wall Street Journal** describes as, “India appears to be deindustrializing prematurely.” “GDP share of manufacturing fell from 17 per cent two decades ago to 13 per cent in 2022.”

Each of the first three quarters of FY 24 (April-December 2023) saw a sharp decline in new investment projects. Public Capital Expenditure dropped faster at 60 per cent and private by 35 per cent. Worst sectors were Irrigation (-75 per cent); Manufacturing (-61.5 per cent); Mining (-53.65 per cent) and Infrastructure (-56.11 per cent).

Output from the core sectors grew at a 6-month low in November 2023, lowest in 13 months. Index of Core Industries was down to its lowest level since March 2023.

Delayed Projects: in the runup to the 2024 General Elections PM Modi is frenetically inaugurating new projects across the country. Many of these may be subjected to interminable delays post elections, but they can mislead the people prior to the elections.

According to a November 2023 report by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation (MOSPI), which covers projects worth Rs 150 crore or above, there are 845 delayed projects comprising of 46.1 per cent of the total, up from 34 per cent in 2019. The projects were delayed for 36.6 months on average as of November. Out of 845 delayed projects, 38 per cent were delayed for 25-60 months, 23 per cent for 13-24 months, 24 per cent for 1-12 months and 14 per cent for more than 60 months.

Falling FDI: Bloomberg reports that net foreign investment fell from \$ 38 billion (September 22) to \$ 13 billion (September 2023).

Troubling Pattern in India's Exports

India's labour-intensive export sectors such as apparels, marine products, plastics, and gems and jewelry are showing a "troubling pattern" according to Federation of Indian Export Organizations (FIEO) as the country is experiencing a worrying decline in global market share across these segments during the last five years.

These sectors are crucial for India not only for their job creation potential but also for their substantial contribution to net high-value addition. These sectors employ a large number of women workers. They are the worst hit with large scale job losses.

FIEO has issued a cautionary note about a notable increase in export growth of around USD 40 billion, suggesting that this surge may be linked to the ongoing rerouting of crude oil trade routes through India to Europe.

Corporate-Communal Nexus

The Modi government's policies have resulted in the share of India's biggest five firms in total assets to rise to 18 per cent in 2021. This was 10 per cent in 1991. These biggest five industrial groups are Reliance, Adani Group, TATA, Aditya Birla and Bharti Telecom. The resultant crony capitalism and the operation of the totally non-transparent electoral bonds have legalized political corruption.

Adani Case - Supreme Court Exonerates SEBI Role: The Supreme Court judgement in the Adani case, rejecting petitions for an impartial probe is disappointing and unfortunate on several grounds. A statutory body like the SEBI has not been fulfilling its mandate for expeditiously probing allegations against the Adani group. In 2014, the DRI had made a reference to SEBI on a direct charge against Adani. In 2021, Parliament had been informed that the SEBI had been probing allegations against Adani but in its affidavit to the Court, SEBI denied such a probe. It is surprising that the Court took such a denial at its face value without questioning why the SEBI has not acted on the complaints.

Secondly, the SEBI had changed its own rules making them more opaque, and to conceal who the ultimate beneficiary is. The Expert Committee set up by the Supreme Court had itself stated that "SEBI's pursuit of investigations is based on the premise that it is pursuing the 'spirit of the law', which flies in the face of the prospective amendments with deferred effect that SEBI has made on the legislative side." However, the Supreme Court has given approval to these amendments which admittedly act as a wall to conceal identities of the links of foreign investors with the "ultimate beneficiary."

Thirdly, it is most unfortunate that the judgement has given an open license to the government to probe whether Hindenburg Research's allegations "ignored Rules" and to take action accordingly, in other words to shoot the messenger, which would jeopardize all those media outlets which had published the Hindenburg report.

The Supreme Court has not enhanced its credibility with this judgement.

Undermining Fiscal Federalism

NITI Aayog CEO BVR Subrahmaniam has made a startling revelation about the efforts made by PM Modi to influence the then 14th Finance Commission chairman YV Reddy to not increase the share of state governments in the devolution of the total tax revenue. The Commission recommended that the states should get 42 per cent of the Central tax, up from 32 per cent.

The Finance Commission is a Constitutional body and when it refused the pressure by the PM, the Modi government resorted to hiking cess and surcharges which are not sharable with the states. These increased steadily between 2017-18 and 2021-22. The total cess and surcharges collected by the Modi government has more than doubled from 2.66 lakh crore rupees to 4.99 lakh crore rupees – from 13.9 per cent to 18.4 per cent of the gross tax revenue.

Further, the manner in which the GST was conceived and implemented resulted, according to the National Institute of Public Finance and Policy, in a reduction in state revenues. 17 of the 18 states reviewed saw a reduction in revenue generated through state level taxes. The share of tax revenues as a percentage of the Gross State Domestic Product fell in all states except Maharashtra.

Data Fudging: Speaking about the fiscal transparency of the Modi government, Mr. Subrahmaniam said that the Budget is “covered in layers and layers of attempts to cover the truth.” He also added the use of accounting tricks and playing fraud to avoid revealing the levels of debt. For instance, “off budget borrowing i.e., loans taken by the government on entities that are not reflected on government account, but it is the government that has to eventually repay these loans.” State governments are now barred from using this route, effectively reducing their borrowing capacities given the FRBM restrictions, while the Union government can take recourse to this route. The 15th Finance Commission had criticized the rise of such borrowings by the Union government. The recourse to use accounting tricks is all designed to show a falsified lower level of government debt, hence fiscal deficit. This is being done in order not to deter foreign investors whose main criteria is the level of the country’s fiscal deficit.

Ayodhya: Temple Inauguration

The Temple inauguration at Ayodhya on January 22, 2024 has virtually sounded the death knell of secularism, defined as the separation of religion from the State, administration and politics. The whole programme was a State sponsored event directly involving the Prime Minister, UP Chief Minister, UP Governor, and the entire state machinery. Both the President and Vice President of India sent congratulatory messages to the Prime Minister variously hailing him as having ‘redeemed a pledge’, “India’s tryst with destiny in its civilizational trajectory” etc.

The whole function was a direct violation of the fundamental principle of the governance of India as reiterated by the Supreme Court, which is that the State under the Constitution should have no religious affiliation or preference.

This was an event directly aimed at political and electoral gains. The RSS/BJP mounted a massive nationwide campaign in the run-up to this event. Public screenings of the live telecast were organized at various places on giant screens. Educational institutions were closed for the day. All government offices were shut till 2.30 pm in order to facilitate the participation of government servants. So was the case with many public sector institutions and organizations including banks. The entire event was an instrument for political gain. It is planned to mobilise people to visit the temple from every state and Parliamentary constituency. This will be spaced out till March 2024, i.e., till the eve of elections.

The influence of the corporate-communal nexus was more than evident in the construction of the temple, the townships and all other infrastructural facilities like the airport, railway station etc. Also, the presence of the corporate bigwigs at the inaugural function displayed this influence.

This event was virtually a declaration that the secular democratic Constitutional Republic of India is now 'Hindutva Rashtra.' The RSS chief was among the three who spoke on the occasion, apart from the UP Chief Minister and the PM. Modi clearly said that this was an event that changes the wheel of time heralding the ushering of a new era. Indian nationalism is thus being converted into Hindutva nationalism.

This event also signals that the Places of Worship Act, 1991 which mandates that the status quo of all religious places, apart from Ayodhya, will remain the same as it was on August 15, 1947, will now be put in cold storage. The disputes in Kashi and Mathura have once again surfaced with a degree of judicial connivance. Modi profusely thanked the Supreme Court for its Ayodhya Verdict.

Various incidents of violence against minorities, their places of worship and properties were reported on January 22 and after from a few parts of the country, especially BJP-ruled states of Gujarat, Maharashtra and Madhya Pradesh. These have led to increased apprehensions and insecurity amongst the already marginalised minority communities.

Clearly, the sharpening of communal polarization will intensify in the run-up to the 2024 general elections.

The CPI(M)'s policy has been to respect religious beliefs which are the personal choice of every individual. The Party has steadfastly upheld the right of every

individual to pursue their faith. But at the same time it has consistently opposed the efforts to misuse and convert people's religious belief as an instrument for political gain and merging religion with the State, upholding secularism as being separation of religion from the State and administration.

Recent Assembly Elections

The BJP has registered an emphatic victory in the three Hindi speaking states of Northern India – Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Chhattisgarh.

The BJP could successfully overcome its perceived anti-incumbency in Madhya Pradesh where it has ruled for two decades except for a 15-month rule led by the Congress, but this government was toppled by the BJP engineering defections. Though the Congress Party retained its earlier vote share (40.40 per cent), the BJP won with a nearly 8 per cent (48.55 per cent) more vote share than what the Congress has polled. An important feature of this is that BJP got more votes of the young - 48 per cent of below 25 years and 52 per cent of those between 26-35 years. The BJP polled 2,11,13,278 votes against Congress's 1,75,64,353.

It was widely perceived, including by the exit polls, that the Congress would emerge victorious in Chhattisgarh and Rajasthan. While Congress retained its earlier vote share more or less in both the states, the BJP substantially increased its vote share cutting into the vote shares of 'others'. In Chhattisgarh, it won 54 out of the 90 seats polling 46.27 per cent (increase of 13.3 per cent over the last election) against Congress's 42.23 per cent. In terms of number of votes, it got 72,34,968 against Congress's 66,02,586.

Likewise, in Rajasthan where the Congress government led by Ashok Gehlot introduced a slew of welfare measures, the BJP again was able to increase its vote share to 41.69 per cent against Congress's 39.53 per cent and win 115 out of 199 seats.

Apart from all other factors like welfare measures and providing some relief to the people, the central issue that permitted the BJP to register such successes is the consolidation of the Hindutva communal vote bank. The 'overarching Hindutva identity' that we noted in the 23rd Party Congress Political Resolution has become further strengthened, which explains the rise in the voting percentage for the BJP.

Instead of confronting this Hindutva communal consolidation in a forthright manner, the Congress Party and its leaders, particularly in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh adopted competitive soft Hindutva and pale saffron positions which only led to further strengthening the hold of Hindutva on significant sections of the

people. This provided the RSS/BJP and all other Hindutva outfits the opportunity for further communalizing the society targeting the minorities.

This Hindutva communal consolidation must be confronted in a forthright manner. The recourse to competitive soft Hindutva and pale saffron positions only leads to further strengthening the hold of Hindutva on significant sections of the people. This provides the RSS/BJP and all other Hindutva outfits the opportunity for further communalizing the society targeting the minorities.

Of significance is the BJP's increased support, apart from the youth, amongst the tribals which contributed substantially to these victories in Madhya Pradesh and Chhattisgarh. The BJP won 17 out of 29 ST reserved seats in Chhattisgarh and 27 out of 47 in Madhya Pradesh. The consolidation of Hindutva permitted the Hinduisation of the tribal communities spearheaded by various outfits. Further, the communal polarisation of the tribals was consolidated by organized attacks against the Christian tribals in some areas of Chhattisgarh.

The CC review of the 2019 Parliament elections and the 23rd Party Congress Political Resolution point to the fact that the overarching Hindutva identity efforts were combined with micro social engineering undertaken by the BJP. Such an effort paid rich dividends to the BJP in Rajasthan where it fielded candidates based on micro-caste considerations, accommodating a large number of smaller castes. Such an exercise, to a large extent, negated the Congress campaign for a caste census. BJP already had the support of many of the OBCs and the accommodation of the smaller castes drew these sections towards the BJP.

Finally, the Congress approach of not accommodating the secular forces and parties through seat sharing prevented the rallying of all anti-BJP forces. For instance, in Rajasthan, Congress lost 22 seats with a margin of less than five thousand votes, 9 of these with a margin of less than one thousand votes.

Telangana: The Congress, however, scored a decisive victory in Telangana ousting the two term TRS/BRS government. Its victory in the Karnataka elections earlier in May, 2023, rejuvenated the Congress Party in Telangana and it was able to bring back under its fold all anti-BRS forces and its former leaders who had deserted by defecting either to the BRS or to the BJP.

Till six months ago, it appeared as though the main electoral fight would be between the BRS and the BJP which was then gaining ground. But the Karnataka results and the growing charges of mega corruption against the BRS leaders and its whimsical Chief Minister shifted the ground realities. The BJP, however, improved its position significantly, winning 8 seats compared to 1 in 2018. Its vote share

increased by 7 per cent (7 to 13.9 per cent) from the last assembly elections, but compared to the 2019 Parliamentary elections, its vote share declined by about 5 per cent.

Mizoram: The ruling Mizo National Front (MNF) was defeated when the newly formed Zoram People's Movement (ZPM) won 27 out of the 40 seats in the assembly. The MNF was part of the BJP-led NDA. The ZPM has announced that it will not join any national alliance.

Confronting Hindutva: 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.

INDIA Bloc

The fourth meeting of the INDIA bloc was held online on January 19, 2024. The heads of 12 parties were invited. 10 attended with the exception of Mamata Banerjee and Akhilesh Yadav.

The Party reiterated that a series of public meetings across the country mobilizing the people to ensure the defeat of the BJP must be organized in February. Seat sharing talks have begun at the state level in some of the states.

In a shocking somersault, Nitish Kumar switched sides for the 5th time to collaborate with the BJP and was sworn in as the Chief Minister of Bihar for the 9th time.

Having thundered that he would never return to the BJP, Nitish Kumar now heads a JD(U)-BJP government in Bihar. His opportunism was more than matched by the BJP, which had stated that its doors were permanently closed for Nitish Kumar. This is outright crass political opportunism.

Manipur: No Peace Settlement

Manipur has been gripped by ethnic violence between the Meitei and Kuki communities since May 3, 2023. Over 200 people have been killed since the conflict broke out and nearly 67,000 persons have been forced to flee their homes. The situation in Manipur continues to be tense and uncertain. Months after the ethnic clashes between the Meiteis and the Kukis, the Meitei-dominated Valley and the Kuki hill areas remain divided with the buffer zone manned by security forces. Occasionally clashes take place in the bordering areas. The latest incident saw 13

people being killed in violence in Tengnoupal district on December 4. They are all believed to be Meitei youth who were recruited as volunteers against the Kuki militants.

The Central government has made no progress in having talks with all sections to come to a political settlement. Instead, it continues to back Chief Minister Biren Singh, who is widely perceived as being partisan in promoting Meitei's interests. He should be removed. Recently, a ceasefire agreement was signed with the United Nationalist Liberation Front (UNLF) in New Delhi. Home Minister Amit Shah stated that it was the oldest Valley-based armed group. But what was not said is that this is the minority faction of the UNLF, which has only 65 militants. The majority group of the UNLF which has over 300 militants kept away.

In a development that can have far-reaching consequences the Meitei militant group Aramboi Tenggol held a meeting with the attendance of 37 Manipur MLAs and 2 MPs where an oath was taken on January 24 to convey to the Union government about "protecting the integrity of the state." These concerns include (a) updating the base year of the proposed NRC in Manipur to 1951, (b) scrapping the Standard operating Procedure (SoP) with Kuki militants within 15 days, (c) deport all refugees from Myanmar and (d) removing Kukis from the list of Scheduled Tribes. The Arambaoi Tenggol also threatened that "if the Centre does not listen, we will take the movement to the people to protect Manipur."

Undermining Parliament

Parliament functioning was severely undermined during the last winter session. A total of 146 MPs from both Lok Sabha and Rajya Sabha were suspended. In the absence of the opposition, the government adopted important legislations without any discussion or consideration. These include Bills that are mainly directed at strengthening the authoritarian control of the Union government and the foundations of a surveillance state. The replacement of the Indian Penal Code, Code of Criminal Procedure and the Indian Evidence Act were enacted and pushed through without any consideration. There are serious flaws in these new Bills – Bharatiya Nyay Samhita, Bharatiya Nagarik Suraksha Samhita, Bharatiya Sakshya Bill - for democratic rights, civil liberties and the criminal justice system.

A total of 19 Bills were enacted. The important ones include the Telecommunication Bill that strengthens the surveillance structure infringing on the fundamental right to privacy of citizens. The Appointment of the Chief Election Commissioner and other Election Commissioners Bill replaced the Supreme Court suggestion to have the Prime Minister, leader of the opposition and the Chief Justice of India as the panel deciding the appointments. The Chief Justice of India

is now being replaced by a cabinet minister nominated by the Prime Minister. This ensures that the independence of the Election Commission as ordained by the Constitution is severely compromised with the Executive exercising undue influence. Other important Bills were also enacted like the Post Office Bill, the Press and Registration of Periodicals Bill, that strengthen the powers of censorship.

CAA Implementation

The Union Home Minister on 27 December 2023 announced in Kolkata that no one can stop the implementation of the CAA as it is the law of the land. Two sets of more than 200 petitions challenging the Constitutional validity of this Act are still pending before the Supreme Court with the hearings not yet completed.

Such announcements by Union ministers have once again set in motion growing protests particularly in Assam, against this communally designed Act.

Since December 2019, the Modi government has not framed the Rules under this Act. Now, on the eve of the general elections, it is pushing for its implementation with a view to further sharpen communal polarization and hoping to reap electoral gains, particularly in Eastern India.

One Nation One Election

In response to the request of the high-level committee under the chairmanship of former President of India Ramnath Kovind, our Party has submitted its opinion in writing reiterating our clearcut position against this proposal. As decided in our October 2023 Central Committee meeting, it was reiterated that “This proposal would constitute a twin assault on Parliamentary democracy and Federalism as enshrined in our Constitution. Apart from significant amendments to the Constitution, such a proposal would entail either curtailing or extending the life of State Assemblies to synchronize them with Lok Sabha elections. When a government loses its majority on the floor of the House, its continuation is illegal. If Central rule is imposed, denying people their right to elect a government, then it is anti-democratic.”

One Nation One Registration: The Union government appears to proceed with the implementation of the announcement made by the Finance Minister in the 2022 Budget speech about establishing one nation one registration mechanism. This, however, has the very grave danger that it assaults the rights of the states on many matters like land records, land registration etc. revenues of which accrue to the State exchequer. In a system of online registration, these revenues will accrue instead to the Union exchequer, amounting to yet another assault on fiscal federalism.

Jammu & Kashmir - SC Verdict an Assault on Federalism

The verdict of the Supreme Court dismissing the challenges to the abrogation of Article 370 and dissolution of the state of Jammu and Kashmir is disturbing and has serious consequences for the federal structure of our Constitution which is one of its fundamental features.

The verdict says that J&K does not retain any element of sovereignty after the Instrument of Accession was signed and hence rules that the Constitution of J&K is redundant. But, was not signing of the Instrument of Accession conditional to retaining a special status contained in the now abrogated Article 370?

The verdict declares that J&K is like any other state in the Indian Union, thereby depriving it of even the special features granted to the north-eastern states and some others under various clauses of Article 371.

The verdict has evaded going into the merits of downgrading the state of J&K into two Union Territories, stating that the Solicitor General has promised the return of statehood. At the same time, the creation of a separate Ladakh Union Territory is upheld as valid. So, the restoration is not for the original state of J&K, but only a part of it and even that remains an assurance on paper.

Strangely, the Supreme Court directs the Election Commission of India to hold polls in J&K at the earliest, not later than September 30, 2024. The verdict, thus, gives the Central government a long rope to retain control over J&K.

When a state is under President's rule and its statehood is dissolved, in the absence of an elected Legislative Assembly can the concurrence of the President-appointed Governor be taken as the substitute? Again, this has serious consequences for all other states where President's rule can be imposed and its boundaries altered or statehood dissolved.

The proviso under Article 3 of the Constitution states that the President shall refer the Bill for reorganization of any state to the legislature of the concerned state to elicit its opinion. This verdict opens the Pandora's box permitting the Central Government to unilaterally initiate the formation of new states, alteration of areas, boundaries or names of existing states. This may well lead to serious undermining of federalism and the rights of the elected state legislatures.

This verdict has serious implications for the Federal structure of our Constitution and is inclined to strengthen a Unitary state structure in the name of "integration" and by invoking "national security."

Condemn Custodial Deaths: Three civilians in the Poonch district of Jammu and Kashmir were brutally killed while they were in the custody of the army.

Mohammad Showkat, Safeer Hussain and Shabir Ahmad were rounded up by army personnel and subjected to severe torture which resulted in their deaths. The J&K administration has announced compensation for the families of the deceased. But that is not enough. There has to be a speedy investigation and punishment meted out to those responsible.

People of J&K, who have long suffered from such acts of impunity, expect accountability to be fixed in the matter and justice done.

Enacting New Laws: Even before the Supreme Court verdict on the abrogation of Article 370 was delivered, the Lok Sabha recently passed the Jammu and Kashmir Reorganization (Amendment Bill) 2023 and the Jammu and Kashmir Reservation (Amendment) Bill 2023. The former is for reserving 2 seats to be nominated by the Lt Governor in the J&K assembly from Kashmiri migrants (Pandits) and 1 from those who took refuge in India from Pak-occupied Kashmir. The second Bill is for reservations to OBCs.

The reservation of seats for displaced Kashmiri migrants by nominations to be made by the L.G. is contrary to democratic practices. If nominations are to be made, they should be done by an elected assembly. Further, the introduction of such nominations betrays the Modi government's intention of never rehabilitating the migrants (Pandits) in their native places. On many occasions in the past many eminent Kashmiri pandits contested and won assembly elections to serve in governments.

The Modi government must immediately call the assembly elections due since 2018. The completion of the delimitation process, however biased and faulty, the upgradation of the electoral rolls and the claims of restoring peace and order in the state, all conditions spelt out for holding elections by the Union Home Ministry, are now met.

Bilkis Bano: A Welcome SC Verdict

The judgment by the Supreme Court nailing down the Gujarat government's illegal actions of granting remission to 11 convicts who had been sentenced to life for gang raping of pregnant Bilkis Bano, members of her family and also mass murdering at least 14 of them in the 2002 Gujarat communal carnage, is a welcome development. The Court has categorically asked the convicts to surrender back to prison within two weeks. The plea of some convicts seeking extension of time has also been rejected, subsequently.

The Supreme Court division bench, going beyond the 'competence' of the Gujarat government to pass the remission order, has actually stated that it acted in 'complicity' with the convicts. The bench has also stated that a fraud has been played by the Gujarat government in presenting the facts in justifying the remission order. The scathing judgment has stated that if the convicts can "circumvent the consequence of their conviction, peace and tranquility in the society will be reduced to a chimera". The fact that the Gujarat government has furnished that the decision was also based on the concurrence of the Central government, makes the Central government equally complicit in this 'complicity with the convicts'. That the remission did not take into account the brutality of the crimes and its larger consequence on the society and the rule of law is obvious.

Governments are Constitutional entities and if they act in violation of the jurisdiction and considerations of law, it will play havoc with our very existence as a democracy.

Kerala

Governor: Unfit for the Post: Kerala Governor Arif Mohammed Khan has overstepped all boundaries with his constant political attacks on the elected state government and his grossly erratic behavior. Among these is his statement that there is "the beginning of the collapse of the Constitutional machinery in the State". Such threats leveled against the state government will be rejected outright by the people of the state.

The Governor is facing protests from students after he packed the nominated seats in the Senates of Kerala and Calicut universities with RSS nominees, misusing his position as Chancellor of these universities. While the students have the democratic right to protest peacefully, the Governor has sought to blame the Chief Minister for these protests and made insulting references to him.

Earlier, the Governor had sat on 8 Bills passed by the state legislature without either giving assent or returning them for reconsideration. 2 of these were lying with him for two years. When the Supreme Court took up the petition filed by the Kerala government and directed the Raj Bhawan to file a report, the Governor hurriedly gave assent to 1 Bill and referred the other 7 to the President of India. This is a dubious subterfuge as the Constitution does not prescribe a timeframe for the disposal of such references to the President of India.

The Governor has proved himself unworthy of continuing in the high Constitutional post.

Nava Kerala Sadas: In a unique unprecedented action, the entire cabinet of the government of Kerala travelled across all 140 assembly constituencies between November 18-December 23, 2023, interacting with the people, dealing with their problems and petitions and to understand their aspirations for building a modern Kerala.

During the public meetings conducted in 4 assembly constituencies each day, the unfair attitude of the Union government in denying Kerala its rights under the Federal structure of the Constitution, particularly imposing a resource squeeze undermining fiscal federalism were highlighted. The Union government has denied Kerala over Rs. 1.07 lakh crores over the past three years. The revenue sharing policies of the Modi government like denying full GST compensations, withholding around Rs. 5,000 crores of Centrally sponsored schemes etc., have led to a huge decrease in state revenues.

This public outreach programme was very well received by the people with enthusiastic mass participation.

Human Chain: A human chain with enthusiastic mass participation of over 25 lakh youth protesting the Central government's economic policies, discriminatory attitudes towards the state of Kerala and other issues concerning the youth including mounting unemployment, was organized by the Youth Front on January 20, 2024 from Kasargod to Thiruvananthapuram.

West Bengal

Insaaf Yatra and Brigade Rally: Bengal's youth turned up in a massive manner, demanding jobs and denouncing corruption mainly, at a huge rally in Kolkata's historic brigade parade ground. The brigade rally was the culmination of a 50-day insaaf (justice) yatra that covered 2910 kms from Cooch Behar to Kolkata. The war cry was that the youth will not allow Bengal to be plundered.

Jyoti Basu Centre for Social Studies and Research: On the 14th death anniversary (January 17) of Com. Jyoti Basu, the foundation stone for the Jyoti Basu Centre for Social Studies and Research was laid. Kerala Chief Minister, Bihar Chief Minister and Dy CM were invited for a seminar on this occasion on the 'Challenge to safeguard secular democratic republic'. Kerala CM could not attend as PM Modi chose to visit the state on the same day to inaugurate some projects, Bihar CM and Dy CM could not reach Kolkata due to bad weather and all flights cancelled. All of them, however, sent their messages.

Kisan–Trade Union Struggle

Carrying forward their joint protests against anti-worker, anti-farmer and anti-national destructive policies of the Central government, the Samyukta Kisan Morcha (SKM) and the joint platform of the Central Trade Unions, Federations and Associations (CTU) have given a call for massive countrywide mobilizations along with industrial/sectoral strike and a Gramin Bharat Bandh on 16 February 2024.

Student Protest

16 student organizations came together to march for students' rights under the banner of United Students of India. The protests were against the Central government's draconian education policies contained in the New Education Policy (NEP) and demanding the strengthening of the public education system.

CC Calls

1. All state units should continue to intensify the struggles against growing unemployment, price rise and assaults on people's livelihood by the policies of the Modi government.
2. Simultaneously with the protest Dharna organized by the Kerala state LDF government in New Delhi on February 8 against the Modi government's discriminatory policies towards Kerala and assaults on the rights of the states and federalism, all state committees must organize protest programmes in the states.
3. The Central Committee expressed solidarity with the call given by the Samyukta Kisan Morcha and the joint platform of Central Trade Unions for country wide protest actions on February 16, 2024.
4. Given the widespread concerns over the functioning of the EVMs, the Party will campaign across the country that there should be the following re-sequencing of the electronic units in the polling booths – voting units, control units and VVPAT. At least 50 per cent of VVPAT must be tallied with those recorded in the control unit.
