

# **WELCOME SPEECH**

**PINARAYI VIJAYAN (Chairman Organising Committee)**

Dear Comrades,

Today, the 23rd Party Congress of the Communist party of India (Marxist) is opening here, at Kannur. As many of you are aware, Kannur has a valiant history of a series of historic struggles by peasants and working class against exploitative class relations that were sought to be protected by the imperial regime in the last century. Kannur is hosting the Party Congress for the first time. Prior to this, four Party Congresses have been held in Kerala, at Palakkad, Kochi, Thiruvananthapuram and Kozhikode.

Kannur is the birthplace of Com. AKG, a towering Communist leader in the country. Com. Azheekkodan Raghavan, who was martyred while serving as the convenor of the Left Front, was also a native of Kannur. The CPI(M)'s former State Secretarys, Comrades C H Kanaran and Chadayan Govindan also hailed from Kannur.

It needs mention here that Parapuram in Kannur district was the venue of the meeting held in 1939 December, which resulted in the formation of the Communist Party in Kerala. The comrades who participated in the meeting were activists of the freedom movement and were then functioning within the Congress, as leaders of the Congress Socialist Party. The conference elected comrade P Krishna Pillai as the first secretary of the Kerala State Committee. Krishna Pillai is a legendary figure and the name comrade (sakhavu) is associated with his name.

Two years prior to this, in 1937 the first cell of the Communist Party in Kerala was formed with the participation of S V Ghate. The communists have been in the forefront of anti-imperialist, anti-

feudal struggles and have been the leading lights in the agitations of the working class for a decent livelihood, and civil rights.

In the 1940s, party comrades led heroic struggles against the oppressive feudal relations and rack renting. The abject misery of the peasants was sought to be alleviated by organising them and giving them courage to question the feudal order and be part of agitations to overthrow the same, to realise a better tomorrow.

The Communist party in Kannur has its origins in the various peasants' and workers' struggles that emerged as part of India's fight for freedom. As part of the anti war movement, which formed an essential part of the anti colonial struggle, the party organised workers and peasants as well the general public, in the wake of famine and price rise. Morazha, Mattannur, Thalassery and Kuthuparamba where the four centres in which the struggle took place. It was during this struggle that two of our comrades were martyred in police firing, in Thalassery. On 15 September 1940, Abu a school teacher, and Chathukkutty a beedi worker were martyred. They are the first Communist martyrs in Kerala.

The struggle in Kayyur was dealt with by the British regime through brutal oppression and four young comrades Madathil Appu, Kunhambu Nair, Chirukandan and Abubaker were hanged. Their memory still inspires our comrades who are participating in the struggles for a just and equitable social order. The party had to take up several struggles to ensure that the people had food to eat, as the effects of war induced famine continued and was amplified by the feudal lords who hoarded food grains. Struggles were conducted to capture hoarded rice and to distribute it amongst the people. In Karivellur, two of our comrades lost their lives in police firing, as they were resisting goondas of feudal lords who were trying to hoard grains. In Kavumbayi, police fired at a meeting of farmers and five comrades lost their lives. In this period, several

struggles took place in Munayankunnu, Thillankery, Korom, Padikkunnu and so on too.

Even in independent India, the party had to wage struggles to secure the rights of the toiling masses. Under the leadership of the party, 1948 in Onchiyam and 1949 in Sooranad, resulting in the martyrdom of many comrades.

Besides the founders of our movement, comrades P Krishna Pillai, A K Gopalan and EMS have been the leading lights in fighting against discrimination imposed on people based on caste and creed. In the agitation for temple entry, our leaders faced severe attacks from the agents of vested interests, who represented the outdated social order. Krishna Pillai's and AKG's role in Guruvayur Satyagraha, which aimed for temple entry for the oppressed castes and the lead taken by EMS against discriminatory practices followed by the rigid caste system took the renaissance movement far ahead and paved the way for progressive thinking and innovative legislations in the future.

At the dawn of independence, the Congress party which came to power conveniently side stepped the nationalist slogan of linguistic organization of States in India. The Communists championed this cause in Kerala and other parts of the country, since latter half 1940's. The demand for Aikya Keralam was articulated in the book 'Keralam Malayalikalude Mathrubhumi' authored by comrade EMS. Party was in the forefront of this movement in several States.

In the Travancore region, Communist party led the movement against the 'American Model' of the Diwan, C P Ramaswamy Aiyar. The Punnapra Vayalar struggle led by coir workers in Alappuzha, under the guidance of the Communist party, put paid to the anti-nationalist ambitions of the Diwan and the princely rule.

During 1948-1952, our comrades had to face severe state repression and many had to go underground and organise the party. Despite attempts to suppress the movement, our popular support grew. This was because of the organic link our leaders developed with the masses comprising agricultural workers and other sections of toiling masses.

Eventually, we formed the government in Kerala on our own, in 1957. The democratically elected Communist Government was sworn in on April 5, and could last for 28 months, till it was dismissed by misusing Article 356 of the Indian Constitution. The undemocratic and anti-federal act of the Centre evoked country wide protests. The vested interests in Kerala joined hands based on caste and communal politics against progressive measures initiated by the Communist Government in land relations and in the education sector.

However, the party's popular support in fact rose in the 1960 mid-term elections, though we lost power. The aim of the anti-communists to keep us out of Government in the State was soon belied as the seven party united front led by CPI(M) won a massive victory in the 1967 elections. Though this Government could last only 32 months, it could pass the most progressive land reform legislation in the country in 1969. This dealt a death blow to landlordism. Our party also had to lead mass movements to get this legislation implemented on the ground, and these were led by comrade AKG. The Government of 1967 also refused to abide by the central fiat to break the strike of central government employees in 1968, by deploying para military forces.

In 1956, preceding the assumption of office by the Communist party, we had adopted a resolution in our Thrissur Party Conference specifying the way in which the agrarian relations need to be redefined. It acted as a catalyst and formed the basis for the 1957 government to act upon. It acted strictly on the guidelines

that formed part of the Thrissur resolution. Taking a cue from it, we in our State Conference held last month did adopt a document that would go a longway in ushering in a modern Kerala that on the one hand redresses the grievances of the downtrodden and on the other, builds up a modern developed State. I am happy to assure the Party Congress that the present LDF Government will act on those lines.

Our party had to brave the excesses of the regime during the emergency of 1975-77. We could effectively counter all designs of the ruling classes to break our party and keep it permanently out of to form Government. The Left Democratic Front led by us came to form Government in 1980, 1987, 1996, 2006, 2016 and 2021. The works done by these Governments are part of history and has helped Kerala to mark its presence in the world map of human development.

After the disintegration of the socialist bloc, and unbridled attempts of economic liberalisation and globalisation, the ruling classes in our country have taken steps which have caused more misery to the working classes, especially in the unorganised sectors. The lack of job security, the fruits of growth going to a miniscule minority, the dismantling of the public sector, free movement of speculative capital, concessions to the corporate rich are the measures which have caused widening of economic inequality and deterioration of standards of living of the poor. The Congress and BJP governments have been following the same set of policies. Our party along with other left parties has been consistently organising mass movements against these anti-people measures, and we have taken up this campaign in right earnest in Kerala.

We have shown the way not only in the field of struggles, but also in successfully implementing alternative policies within the limited power available for the State Government. We are in times when the federal nature of our polity is under attack. State

Governments' limited financial powers are being further restricted, be it through GST or by imposing conditions on borrowings. At the same time, the States are expected to meet the expenses in the social sector.

Even amidst such challenges, the present LDF Government which is a continuation of the past left governments is focussing on rapid development of infrastructure and ensuring social security. We propose to eliminate extreme poverty, provide food security and aim to give secure homes to every homeless family, a clean environment, make internet as a right of every citizen, render public services hassle free to every person, generate productive employment by revitalising agricultural sector through value addition, incentivising small and medium scale industries by simplifying procedures and creating an environment in the State.

We have been in the forefront of empowering the Local Governments by transferring funds, functions and functionaries. This has made democratic decentralisation and peoples' planning meaningful.

Through the LIFE Mission, a project of the State Government, 2.79 lakh families have been provided secure homes. In the infrastructural sector, we have leaped ahead by successfully increasing power generation, widening of national highways, creating good quality schools and hospitals, successfully initiating industrial corridors, etc.

We are also trying our best to implement the semi high speed rail system making possible travel from the southern most district to the northern most district in Kerala in a time span of 4 hours, by making all efforts to get the approval from the Central Government. The opposition parties in the State are raising arguments which defy logic to stall this project. Our Government believes in developing infrastructure while doing justice by ensuring fare

compensation to people who have to move out of their homes. Our party is organising mass campaigns to drive home this point. Economic growth, social justice, and protection of environment are being given equal importance while implementing projects by the State Government.

In the 2021 Assembly elections, the LDF could come back to power unsettling the trend of alternate innings of rival fronts in power. People of the State reposed their faith in our party and the LDF, which have always stood for democratic rights and secular values. The BJP, which ran a high voltage campaign in the State could not win a single seat and it lost its lone sitting seat in the last assembly election. The vote share of the BJP came down from 15.01 per cent in 2016 to 12.47 per cent in 2021.

Bewildered by the popular support we are getting, our opponents including the Sangh Parivar, other communal organisations and the Congress, are resorting to mindless violence which has taken precious lives of many of our comrades. We have been displaying immense patience and people of the State are well aware of this.

I have great pleasure in welcoming you to Kannur, the land of revolutionary struggles, and communal harmony. It is also fondly called as the Land of Looms and Lores. We are meeting here at a time when the threat of the pandemic is receding. It is with great enthusiasm that our comrades have taken up the task of organising this historic Party Congress in Kannur.

Our venue is Nayanar Academy, named after the freedom fighter and the popular communist, and former State Secretary comrade E K Nayanar, who has a special place in the minds of the people, especially the common public. He is fondly remembered in the State as an affable leader and a great communist.

I welcome the Party General Secretary Com. Sitaram Yechury, CPI's General Secretary Com. D Raja all PB Members, Central Committee members and all participants to Kannur, the venue of the 23rd Party Congress.

Our nation is now in an important juncture. So our Party Congress is keenly watched by the political observers. I wish you a pleasant and comfortable stay, and participation in discussions which will give shape to our party's policies in the coming years.

Revolutionary greetings to you all