



Communist Party of India (Marxist)
23rd Congress,
E K Nayanar nagar, Kannur, Kerala
April 6-10, 2022

Inaugural Speech
Sitaram Yechury, General Secretary
Communist Party of India (Marxist)

President of the inaugural session, Com. Manik Sarkar,
Chairman of the Organising Committee, Com.Pinarayi Vijayan,
General Convenor of the Organising Committee, Com. Kodyeri Balakrishnan,
Com. D. Raja General Secretary, CPI,
Esteemed guests, delegates and observers,
Dear comrades and friends,

Thank you very much for accepting our invitation and joining this inaugural session of the 23rd Congress of the Communist Party of India(Marxist). We are gratified at the presence of eminent public figures, distinguished veteran leaders of the Communist movement and leaders of various contingents of people's struggles.

I wish to thank Com. D. Raja, General Secretary of the CPI, for physically being present here. Com. Debabrata Biswas, General Secretary, All India Forward Bloc, Com. Manoj Bhattacharya, General Secretary Revolutionary Socialist Party and Com. Dipankar Bhattacharya, General Secretary CPI(ML) Liberation, for some compelling reasons, could not be physically present. They, however, sent their greetings to the 23rd Party Congress which are being circulated and will be read out.

In the present context, the working together of the Left Parties to strengthen Left unity is of vital importance to meet the current challenges being faced by the working people, the secular democratic republic of India and its

Constitutional order. Their greetings reflect our mutual desire and resolve to strengthen Left unity.

Comrades and friends,

We are meeting here in this region of Kannur which historically has been the crucible of civilizational churning and the confluences of many cultures. This is the birth place of the communist movement in Kerala.

Religiously oriented people often go on '*Theertha Yatras*' seeking blessings at different shrines. A revolutionary '*Theertha Yatra*' can never be complete without paying homage to the heroic Kayyur and Karivellur martyrs and draw inspiration from the strength of revolutionary movement and traditions here at Kannur.

Pinarayi village hosted the first Communist Party conference in Kerala. The legends of the Communist movement like P Krishna Pillai, EMS Namboodiripad, AK Gopalan and many others were delegates to this conference.

With Com. P Krishna Pillai as the Secretary, the Communist Party started functioning initially from Chirakkal in Kannur braving intense repression, often functioning from the underground, particularly when the Party was banned. These dedicated comrades carried forward the revolutionary struggles laying the foundation of the Communist movement to emerge as a leading political force in Kerala. The emancipatory vision of the Communists and their dedicated struggles earned the confidence of the people to make the Kerala Communist movement a formidable outpost for the Indian revolutionary movement.

The organising committee has compiled this rich history and heritage of the Communist movement in a publication, '*Kannur: the Red Land*' which details its emergence as the Communist stronghold not only in Kerala, but in India. Kannur symbolises the people's struggle for freedom, equality, dignity and democracy in order to move towards Socialism.

In today's conditions and the challenges the country and people face it is most appropriate that our 23rd Party Congress is being held here. My salutes to comrades and friends here for receiving us so warmly.

Comrades and friends,

For more than two years, during this period of four years since our 22nd Congress, the world was impacted by the Covid 19 pandemic. This has wreaked havoc disrupting the lives of millions of people.

Even before the pandemic struck, the global economy as well as Indian economy were both showing signs of a slowdown moving into recessionary conditions. The pandemic worsened the situation. Capitalism's lust for profit maximisation as its sole concern exposed its gross inadequacy in providing universal health care to the people. In contrast, Socialist countries have been able to combat the pandemic and put their economies on a growth path. In India, the manner in which the LDF government in Kerala tackled the situation earned both domestic and international acclaim.

The pincer attack of Covid and economic recession has led to alarming growth in the levels of hunger, poverty, educational deprivation and intensified exploitation of the working people. At the same time total wealth of world's billionaires reached a new height of \$ 10.2 trillion in 2020. The wealth of 10 globally richest people increased by \$ 413 billion in 2021. The top 10 people in India hold 57 per cent of country's wealth; share of bottom half is only 13 per cent.

Political Rightward Shift: The quest for maintaining control of the governments in order to pursue the bankrupt neoliberal policy of profit maximisation is seeing the continuation of the political rightward shift in many countries. This seeks to disrupt the growing united struggles of the working people by whipping up emotional passions fostering divisive appeals and promoting racism, xenophobia, religious sectarianism, fundamentalism, parochialism and in the Indian context, communalism.

This rightward political shift is facing growing resistance with the rise of countervailing trends particularly in Latin America with electoral victories of Left, progressive forces and growing protests and struggles, elsewhere, all across the world.

Quest for global hegemony: US imperialism is aggressively seeking to strengthen its global hegemony in the post Covid world. It has targeted to 'isolate' China moving from its earlier efforts to 'contain' China. US imperialism is mobilising all its allies in this global effort.

Russia-Ukraine War: Today is the 42nd day of the Ukraine-Russia war. This is a war actually between Russia and USA/NATO. The relentless eastward expansion of the NATO moving towards the Russian border with 1,75, 000

combat troops at Russia's borders is the backdrop for this conflict aggravated by the proposal to grant Ukraine NATO membership. This war has to end immediately.

However, this war has set in motion many developments with international ramifications for the future.

This war and India's consistent position of abstaining on UN resolutions against Russia clearly shows the futility of the Modi government's passionate pursuit of cementing India as a subordinate ally of US imperialism in today's world. India must safeguard its own interests by upholding an independent foreign policy and should now seriously consider distancing from US imperialist led alliances like the QUAD.

Comrades and Friends,

During these four years, particularly since the return of the BJP government in the 2019 elections, we in India have been subjected to the aggressive pursuit of the Hindutva agenda of the fascistic RSS by the BJP government. There are multi-pronged attacks along with this unfolding of the RSS fascistic agenda. There is the simultaneous pursuit of rabid neo-liberal reforms strengthening the communal corporate nexus, promoting Crony capitalism brazenly, the whole sale loot of national assets, legalising political corruption and imposing full-fledged authoritarianism.

Undermining Indian Constitution: In this process, systematic efforts are being made to change the character of the secular democratic Indian Republic. The four fundamental pillars of the Indian Constitution — secular democracy, federalism, social justice and economic sovereignty — are being severely assaulted and undermined. The pursuit of the Hindutva agenda of the fascistic RSS requires a unitary state structure negating the federal character of India.

To achieve this objective all the independent institutions created by the Indian Constitution to act as checks and balances for implementing constitutional guarantees — Parliament, Judiciary, Election Commission, CBI, ED etc., — are being undermined negating their independent authority.

Pursuit of this agenda being its sole concern the Union government has thoroughly mismanaged the combating of the pandemic imposing unprecedented misery on the people leading to the loss of huge number of lives. There is a determined systematic effort to fudge statistics and data which severely underestimates the incidents of the infection and death.

Comrades and Friends,

Far from addressing the provision of relief to all suffering people, this BJP union government continues to impose more economic burdens with daily hikes in the prices of petroleum products leading to galloping inflation. Coming on top of growing unemployment, poverty and hunger this is ruining the lives of people.

The RSS and BJP have succeeded in creating the narrative of an overarching Hindutva identity among the people. The sharpening of communal polarisation through the spread of hatred, poison and violence is polarising the Indian society. This sharpening of polarisation is RSS-BJP mainstay for political/electoral mobilisation.

Dear comrades and Friends,

Under these circumstances it is essential that the BJP is isolated and defeated in order to strengthen people's struggles for a better life, safeguard the secular democratic character of the Indian republic and the Indian Constitution.

Isolating the RSS-BJP cannot be achieved only electorally but will have to be undertaken by conducting sustained efforts in the political, ideological, cultural and social spheres. This 23rd Party Congress will discuss the concrete steps that need to be undertaken to strengthen the struggle against this Hindutva agenda.

- The foremost task that needs to be focused upon is to substantially increase the independent strength of the CPI(M) and its political intervention capacities.
- On this basis, strengthen the unity of Left forces by sharpening class and mas struggles.
- To forge the unity of Left and Democratic forces on the basis of an alternative programme to the policies of the India ruling classes.
- In order to defeat the BJP the broadest possible front of all secular forces must be forged against Hindutva communalism.

The CPI(M) appeals to all Left, secular democratic forces to come together in order to isolate and defeat the BJP. All political parties that proclaim secularism must rise to the occasion to discharge this patriotic duty. The Congress party

along with some other regional parties must set their houses in order and decide on where they stand to safeguard the secular, democratic character of the Indian republic. Prevarications and compromising attitudes can only lead, as experience has shown, to an exodus from such parties towards the communal forces. Hindutva communalism can only be combatted by championing uncompromising secularism.

Comrades and Friends,

We are meeting in Kerala today where the CPI(M) and the Left Democratic Front have shown the way to uncompromisingly uphold secularism, respecting equality irrespective of caste, creed or gender while at the same time seeking to implement pro-people policies as the alternative to the neo-liberal agenda. The results are there for all to see with the world acclaiming Kerala's high ranking human development indices.

The CPI(M) shall resolve to strengthen the efforts for building a strong communist party, stronger Left unity and the forging of a Left and Democratic front. We seek your cooperation and appeal to all Indian patriots to jointly resolve to safeguard our Constitutional republic and strengthen the struggles for alternative pro-people policies by forging the broadest front of secular forces against Hindutva communalism.
