

## *The Marxist*

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### KERALA STATE CONFERENCE

#### *Resolution: Assurance to People for a Left Democratic Front Government and a Kerala of Total Prosperity*

1. It is with great expectations that the people of Kerala elected the Left Democratic Front with a substantial majority in the last Assembly elections which was held on the occasion of 50<sup>th</sup> year of the formation of the Kerala state. A great majority of the people in Kerala desires that this government too should be a landmark one, just like the first Communist government gave a new direction for the progress of the state fifty years ago. This is a very complicated task in the era of imperialist globalization.

2. The Central government which pursues the policy of globalization has virtually curtailed the independent activities of the state governments. Instead of providing sufficient funds as grants to the states for expenditure exclusively related to state subjects as per the Constitution, the Central government tries to formulate centrally-sponsored schemes in these areas. As a result of this policy, during the Eleventh Plan period, Rs. one lakh crore is allocated as grants to state whereas Rs. Two lakh crores are earmarked for centrally-sponsored schemes. As the social development of Kerala is quite high, we are likely to get only a minute share of this heavy sum. Decisions of the last three Finance Commissions were against the interests of Kerala. If this is the state of fiscal policy, the Central policy for development remains an impediment in the way of state policies for social development based on the welfare of the people. The ration quota of the state has been reduced. Share of electricity from the Central pool too has been curtailed. Central investment in public sector in Kerala continues to be low. The import policy destroys agriculture and industry in Kerala. The policy of privatization has become a challenge to the social structure of education and health in Kerala.

3. Many of the opportunities available to state governments earlier to pursue an independent policy do not exist today. The LDF government, confined to these limitations, tries to rise to the expectations of the people and to put into practice a Left-oriented alternative policy. Remarkable achievements could be realized in this direction. The state conference of CPI(M) salutes the Left Democratic Front government.

4. The LDF government assumed power at a time when Kerala was facing a dangerous crisis. More than a thousand farmers committed suicide due to the crisis in agriculture. The traditional sector was ruined. The public sector was

in the brink of closure. The number of sick industries increased. Efforts to privatize and commercialise public health and education system after crippling the existing system was in full swing. Welfare pensions were in high arrears. How many brutal attacks unashamedly using black laws and police force on students to suppress their struggle were unleashed by the UDF government in Kerala? The UDF policies resulted in an unprecedented rise in communalism and casteism. Marad will remain for ever a blackmark on all of us. Kerala had become a mad-house once again. Redeeming the state from this chaos was the task before the LDF government when it assumed office.

5. The assumption of power by the LDF government and steps taken by it infused a new confidence in people. The most illustrative example of this is evident in the fact that the mass suicides of farmers during the UDF rule has almost vanished. The government has taken several steps such as writing off the debt of those committed suicide, waiving interest on agricultural loans of farmers in the crisis ridden districts and writing off agricultural loans upto Rs. 25,000/- in Wayanad district as per recommendation of the Agricultural Debt Relief Commission etc. This government even paid up the interest to cooperative banks as per decision of the previous UDF government. This government declared a minimum support price @ Rs. 4 for coconut and Rs. 9/- for paddy. The Vidarbha package has been announced for Wayanad, Kasargod and Palghat districts. The Swaminathan Commission package has been approved for Alappuzha district. For Idukki district, it is under process. The National Employment Guarantee Scheme is going to be implemented in the entire state. Thus, the plan expenditure in the farm sector is tremendously being increased. Above all, this government pursues a policy of opposition to the import liberalization policy of the Central government.

6. The public sector industry is an area that indicates clearly the alternate approach of the Left Democratic Government. The UDF government decided to privatize the public sector enterprises on the basis of the recommendations of the Chaudhary Committee. This move could be stopped through sustained struggle. The UDF approach was to leave the public sector to natural death. In 2005-06, there was 11 public sector units working profitably. All the units together were in a loss of Rs. 95 crores. See how big a change has taken place within a year's time! Profit making units increased to 22 in 2007-08. The public sector units made a profit of Rs. 65 crores in place of loss. The resurrection of public sector was made possible through joint venture with central public sector units, fiscal restructuring packages including increased financial assistance of the state government, technological upgradation and through better cooperation between workers and management etc. Similar package for sick private industry is being worked out.

7. The government is actively engaged in work related to attract new investment in Kerala. But this approach of LDF is not to surrender before the Monopoly Capital at the cost of state's interests as the UDF had done. The Smart City Project is an achievement that clearly reflects our alternate approach. The condition approved by the UDF government was not

acceptable to us. Therefore, we opposed the agreement contemplated by Oommen Chandy. But now the Info Park need not be foregone. There is no hitch in giving financial assistance to other IT Parks in Kochi area. Higher price for the land has been offered by the Smart City people. Thus, we have consented for the agreement. This will pave the way for big strides in the labour front when the project is implemented. Like this, several investors have come forward to invest in the state. The government should have the approach to realize these investments at the earliest protecting the interests of the state. The existing applications will be scrutinized in a time-bound manner and take decisions. It is not at all helpful for the development of the state to create controversy on such initiatives so as to drive away the investors. Everybody will have to cooperate to create an investor-friendly atmosphere.

8. Traditional industrial sector is another area which demonstrates the difference of policies of the UDF and LDF. The government has given top priority to restructure the ruined public sector and cooperative sector segments of the traditional industrial sector. This approach is explicitly seen in coir and cashew sector. Action is also being initiated to revive other sectors such as handloom etc.

9. The UDF undertook a policy to demolish the Kerala State Road Transport Corporation (KSRTC) and the Kerala Water Authority (KWA). It was their policy to formulate new arrangements parallel to Water Authority and to entrust drinking water projects to voluntary organisation etc. The salient features of UDF policy was to provide all assistance for parallel services to the KSRTC to slow down renovation and to make corruption universal etc. The LDF government, on the other hand, took measures to revive these two public sector undertakings. The conference demands immediate formulation of concrete revival packages for KWA and KSRTC.

10. The public distribution system in the state is being destroyed due to the policies of the Central government. The Central policies have resulted in unprecedented inflation. To counter this, steps have to be taken to restore the reduced quota and to strengthen the public distribution system within the parameters. The LDF government did intervene in this area using Maveli stores and cooperative markets. This effort should be further advanced and strengthened.

11. The government is making a serious effort to give a new life to fish sector. Framing of law to ensure the right for fishing during monsoon season for traditional boats, law to ensure contribution to the welfare fund from the exporters profit, debt relief law which is going to be passed now and the tsunami relief project etc have kindled great expectations. This will help in developing infrastructure in coastal belt. It is for the first time a debt relief law has been passed in India for the fisher folk. The liberation of fish sector from debt will lead to basic changes.

12. The scarcity of milk in Kerala points to the need to give more attention to the milk sector. It is absolutely necessary to make more efficient the working

of 'Milma'. Better price has to be ensured to milk producers. The government should also contribute to this welfare fund.

13. A new chapter has been opened for the welfare of Scheduled Caste-Scheduled Tribes. When the UDF was in power, welfare fund for SC/ST given to institutions were either lapsed or spent for other purposes. The LDF government allocated the entire amount from the general fund for their welfare. Not even once, their education facilities were increased during UDF rule. This government has increased it by 50%. Introduced complete medical assistance for ST. Full educational concessions in self help courses run by universities and other central government approved institutions. Arrangements were made to ensure that seats earmarked for SC/ST in professional education institutions are not lost.

14. In contrast to the UDF, steps are being taken to reorganize the Electricity Board within the public sector itself. If the UDF had generated 26 MW of electricity in five years, the LDF is going to generate 500 MW within five years. It has prepared projects to generate 2000 MW electricity within ten years. A 1000 MW installed capacity project has been initiated outside the state. The electricity tariff etc is decided by the Regulatory Commission. Even then relief could be provided in the rates for drinking water and for weaker sections.

15. Basic difference in approach to welfare activities also can be seen between the UDF and LDF. The UDF government remitted power leaving huge amount in arrears. Out of these, Pension arrears have already been cleared. Rs. 165 crores were spent during 2007-08 for agricultural workers pension alone. Now, steps have to be taken to increase the pension amount.

16. Health sector is another developmental area where change of direction is visible. The UDF pursued an approach to weaken the public health system. They projected, instead, an insurance scheme based on private sector for the poor. In place of this, an insurance scheme based on public sector has to be materialized. It should not confine only to 10 per cent BPL households for whom the Central assistance is available. This should be available to all the poor. Total protection has to be ensured. The Public Health System has to be strengthened so as to undertake such a scheme successfully. Kerala needs a comprehensive health programme which includes more staff, facilities, sufficient medicines, awareness programmes and people's participation. The Left Democratic government is duty-bound to formulate and implement such a programme.

17. The approach of the UDF government in the education sector was to grant permission to open unaided schools indiscriminately so as to weaken the general education. The UDF also pursued a policy to grant permission to all those who demanded for and without any condition for opening self financing courses and colleges in the higher education sector. The LDF government instead took initiative to bring in legislation to ensure social justice and merit in higher education sector. These efforts are continuing. The LDF government is duty bound to modernize and expand the higher education

sector. The efficiently-working Higher Education Council is a notable step in this direction. Priority is given to upgrade the quality of school education and to make it universal upto higher secondary level. There are schools and college courses without sufficient teachers or with guest teachers and on daily rate. The government should take the initiative to stop this anarchy. Steps are to be taken in a time bound manner to realize higher education centres with the help of the Central government. We could achieve good results in this. We have succeeded in ensuring the democratic rights of students.

18. The UDF has done away with people's planning. This was not a mere change of name. It was a conscious effort to make it bureaucracy centered, by weakening people's participation in decentralization and to give importance to voluntary organisations. It was an effort to mould the decentralization of power in Kerala to suit the World Bank prescriptions. This trend has been stopped through the restoration of people's planning. Steps have to be taken for reeducation of the bureaucracy and to complete computerization, to rejuvenate training programmes, to ensure people's participation, to formulate necessary rules and to simplify the procedure. Within the month of June next year, plan document will be approved and implementation will begin. Programmes by state government departments parallel to panchayati raj institutions should be avoided. Repetitions and gaps in joint scheme should be removed.

19. The Congress party has once again proved its anti-people character by organising 'Janashree' parallel to 'Kudumba Shree' which is under the leadership of panchayati raj institutions. The LDF is committed to project an alternative model through 'Kudumba Shree' different from Self Help Groups of the World Bank model.

20. The situation under UDF rule was of lock-up terror and police firing even on adivasis. Communal riots had become the order of the day in Kerala, the state which had earned laurels for communal harmony. But this government has brought a change in this situation. It took drastic steps against lock-up violence. This government can be credited with rule without police firing. With the uncompro-mising stand taken against the communal forces, such disturbances could be eliminated. The community police system as part of the effort to develop a harmonious police-people relations is a novel initiative.

21. This government is trying to pursue a Left-oriented alternative approach in fiscal policies. Within two years, revenue income has substantially increased and deficit could be reduced. It may not be necessary to borrow for day-to-day expenditure by 2010. But the approach of the Centre is to deny loan even for developmental activities. This alone compels the states into a situation in which more dependence on foreign investments has become inevitable. The Centre has to rectify this approach. The Central government should adopt an attitude to give more independence to states in fiscal sector.

22. The achievements of the LDF government during the 21 months are commendable. But the vested interests have succeeded upto some extent to camouflage these achievements from the people by creating a smokescreen

of controversies. This alone is the aim of the present day controversy on HMT land. Some people are trying to raise such controversies to drive away the investors. Such anti-development interests have to be realized.

23. The interventions of the government on behalf of the people have provided a lot of relief to the people and have projected an alternative policy within the parameters of the existing system. This approach of the government is against the interest of vested interests and caste and communal forces. It is because of this, that retrograde forces joining together began to dream of a second liberation struggle to take Kerala backward and to pave the way for implementing the agenda of globalization. This conference appeals to all those believe in democracy to join together to resist this move against the overall progress of Kerala and its cultural advancement. This conference congratulates the Kerala government which is engaged in laying a new milestone for the development of Kerala.

24. It is a fact that even though the 21 month's performance of the government is satisfactory, certain drawbacks remain which have to be corrected. This conference assures the people of Kerala that the LDF government, having taken note of this and correcting these drawbacks, will work for implementing a more efficient and people-friendly developmental policy. Assimilating the experiences of the last two years and learning from that, a guideline has to be prepared urgently for the development of the state and for the working of the government. This conference assures the people of Kerala that this programme for building a fully prosperous Kerala will be implemented more efficiently and unitedly within a timeframe with full realization of the promises made in the Manifesto.