

Communist Party of India (Marxist)

Report on Current Developments (Adopted at the Central Committee Meeting October 30-31, 2020)

A detailed report was discussed and adopted by the Polit Bureau at its meeting on September 12, 2020. This has been circulated to all Central Committee members and state committees for reporting to the Party committees. Hence the present report is confined to the post-PB important developments.

International

State of the Covid-19 Pandemic

Confirmed Covid cases across the world have surpassed 40 million. However, experts warned that this is only the tip of the iceberg. The Johns Hopkins University, which collates global data, estimates that the figure of positive Covid cases would be far higher, as testing has been uneven or limited, many cases are asymptomatic and some governments have concealed the true number of cases.

USA, India and Brazil in that order continue to report the highest number of cases and deaths. Alarmingly India's rate of growth of both positive cases and deaths is the highest in the world today.

Many countries like Britain, France, Russia, Spain etc., which are contributing highest to Europe's recorded weekly growth of nearly seven lakhs are now re-imposing various levels of lockdown.

Vaccine: The world's most promising coronavirus vaccine candidates need non-stop sterile refrigeration to stay potent and safe. However, it is estimated that nearly three billion of the world's 7.8 billion people live where temperature controlled storage is insufficient for an immunization campaign to bring Covid-19 under control. While the virus strikes indiscriminately, the world's poor who are amongst the hardest hit by the pandemic are also likely to be last to recover from it. Unless overcome this will prolong the prevalence of the pandemic even when a vaccine is developed.

Socialist Countries: In stark contrast, the socialist countries have been able to contain the spread of the pandemic and restart economic activity and normal life. Till October, **China** reported over 85,000 cases and the death of 4,634 people. Nearly 30 million party members participated

actively on the frontlines to battle the pandemic. 396 party members lost their lives in the process.

Cuba lost 123 people due to the pandemic. Despite the US economic blockade on Cuba, the country has been able to contain the pandemic and save the lives of a large number of people.

In **Vietnam**, so far 139 people have lost their lives and it was able to successfully contain the second wave that surged in the country. The government of Vietnam started weekly super markets for people to shop all essential commodities for free. It has also started rice ATMs where people can take rice free of cost.

The **DPRK** continues to report zero deaths in the country, despite the recent ravage by floods and storms. The huge effort for relief and rehabilitation did not see any spread of the pandemic.

The stark contrast between neo-liberal capitalism and socialism is clearly established on this score, once again, during this period.

Global Economy

IMF's *World Economic Outlook, October 2020: A Long and Difficult Ascent* estimates the global growth rate based on market exchange rates to decline by (-) 4.7 per cent in 2020. Value of world output based on purchasing power parity growth has also declined by a similar figure. The report cautions that "the risk of worse growth outcomes than projected remain sizeable". And further, that this recession "will reverse the progress made since 1990s in reducing global poverty and will increase inequality". The *World Bank* described the current global economy as undergoing the deepest recession since the Great Depression of 1929-30.

Growing People's Miseries: According to the World Bank, by 2021, over 150 million people will be pushed into extreme poverty. Labour force participation remains well below the pre-Covid pandemic level and many more jobs are likely to be lost. According to the ILO, the global reduction in the work hours in the second quarter of 2020 compared to the fourth quarter of 2019 was equivalent to the loss of 400 million full time jobs. This is an alarming increase from 155 million job losses in the first quarter.

China: Amongst the major economies in the world, China is the only country that registered a positive growth of GDP by 3.2 per cent. This is the same quarter in which India registered a (-) 23.9 per cent GDP growth. In the next quarter, for which the figures have come, China grew at 4.9 per cent. The IMF projects that in 2020, China will register a 6.1

per cent growth in its real GDP while the major advanced capitalist economies will see a (-) 5.9 per cent real GDP growth decline.

The IMF's *World Economic Outlook, October 2020* report indicates that China has now overtaken the USA to become the world largest economy. This is the conclusion that is arrived at by the yardstick of Purchasing Power Parity (PPP). According to this, China's economy is valued at \$24.2 trillion compared to America's \$20.8 trillion.

However, traditional estimates made by using the normal, accepted yardstick of Market Exchange Rates (MER) shows that the USA is still the leading economy.

Neo-Liberal Bankruptcy: We had noted earlier that there is no solution to this crisis under the trajectory of neo-liberalism and its economic reforms aimed singularly at maximizing profits. This has sharply widened economic inequalities. This recession has disproportionately affected the employment of women and those with relatively lower skills and qualifications. On the other hand, global billionaires have been fattening their profits even during this pandemic recession.

Roughly three out of four American billionaires have seen a rise in their net worth. *The Huffington Post* says: "No one has benefitted from the Covid-19 pandemic more than American billionaires. 16 American billionaires are worth at least twice as much now as they were in March". Most billionaires, however, have grown their wealth not as business leaders but as investors. This is why the recession has not impacted the stock markets negatively as expected.

The stimulus packages announced by various capitalist countries have benefitted the rich corporates vastly more than the people. Since neo-liberal globalization assumed a momentum, 1980, taxes on the rich have fallen by 79 per cent.

On the other hand, the class offensive against the working class and the working people sharply escalated. The trade unions that represented roughly one in four workers in 1979 in USA has declined to represent only one in ten. This is because of the large-scale informalisation of employment through various methods like outsourcing etc.

After the 2008 global financial meltdown, billionaires restored their wealth in three years and doubled it by 2018. The bottom 80 per cent of income earners have still not recovered. Eleven million Americans lost their jobs between February and August 2020. This data is based on the study conducted by Columbia University researchers for the Institute of Policy Studies. This is the predatory character of neo-liberal capitalism that has

no solution for the economy to emerge from this crisis but imposed unprecedented miseries on the people while maximizing profits.

Protests

In many countries, huge popular protests have erupted against such imposition of miseries. **Greece** saw huge rallies across the country primarily focusing on the protection of people's health and against attacks on livelihood.

In many other countries, the issues of livelihood have merged with other issues of human and democratic rights.

Thailand: Huge protest demonstrations, mostly youth, have defied prohibitory orders demanding the resignation of the Prime Minister, a former Army Chief who masterminded the 2014 military coup and redrafted the Constitution to consolidate his rule. These protests have forced the government to withdraw the State of Emergency it had proclaimed. They are seeking the withdrawal of this Constitution; abolition of draconian defamation laws; curtailing the powers and role of the monarchy to stay out of politics and greater transparency of Royal finances.

Since June, massive protests have erupted in **Belarus** against the economic stagnation and growing people's miseries and on their various demands related to livelihood issues and democratic rights.

In **Indonesia** at the call of trade unions joint forum comprising 32 labour unions and federations, massive countrywide three days strike was held on 6-8 October 2020 to protest and oppose the draconian law annulling all labour rights, braving police attacks.

In **France**, huge demonstrations took place condemning the murder of a teacher by Islamic fundamentalists and terrorist attacks. As usual, such terrorism and the efforts to fan Islamophobia are feeding each other creating a grave situation.

Growing Class Offensive

As we analysed in our CC and PB meetings, in this situation of the pandemic and economic recession, attacks on the rights of the working class and the working people have sharply risen all across the world. The rightward political shift continues to disrupt the growing unity of popular struggles by using emotional issues and spreading racism, xenophobia and creating an atmosphere of hate and violence.

In this situation, the bankrupt neo-liberal order has no other way to maximize profits than to launch an all-out offensive against the working people by sharply intensifying their exploitation.

The Communist parties globally are in the midst of rallying the people in protest actions against this renewed class offensive.

Aggressive US Imperialist Efforts

In this background of China's exemplary efforts to contain the pandemic and revive the economy to register significant positive growth rates, US imperialism is targeting China, that we have noted in our earlier meetings. This has further sharpened during this period.

In August 2020, the USA in a strategic document said that its relationship with China is "one of great power competition". US has prioritized the modernization of nuclear capabilities designed to "deter Beijing and counter its growing ambitions and the PLA's drive for technological parity and superiority".

QUAD: Stronger alliances and partnerships are the cornerstone of its national defence strategy, "fully integrated with allies and partners to deter and deny PRC aggression". Towards this end, it has cemented the **Quad** – USA, Japan, Australia and India – military alliance. For the first time, the Quad is going to conduct joint military exercises. The first joint exercise is the Malabar 2020 naval exercise in order to demonstrate "shared will" to work together on common security interests.

The USA has decided to add nearly \$ 1 trillion of direct investment in the Indo-Pacific region. The Quad is likely to develop into an Asia-Pacific NATO. NATO was designed to counter the might of the former Soviet Union. In this case, it is to advance the US strategic design to counter China.

India's Role

With the LAC standoff with China where both countries have expressly stated to resolve the disputes through dialogue and talks, the Modi government, by cementing the US imperialist led military alliance, is seeking to put pressures on China. This is the complete negation of India's time-tested foreign policy that was based on taking positions independently in the interests of our country without being party to any military or strategic alliance with US imperialism. As noted earlier, under this BJP Central government and PM Modi, India's position as a subordinate junior partner of USA is getting cemented further by the day.

Bolivia

Bolivia's Supreme Electoral Tribunal formally announced Friday that Luis Arce won the presidential election. The candidate of former President Evo Morales' Movement Toward Socialism (MAS) party, captured 55.1% of the votes to avoid a runoff, after five days of vote counting.

Evo Morales was ousted as President, despite overwhelming popular support, by a US engineered military coup. The US-backed interim President initially refused to hold elections. After months of protests led by MAS and others, elections were held in October and the results show that people of Bolivia have decisively rejected US designs and voted for MAS. The MAS is also slated to win a clear majority in both the chambers of Parliament. These results reconfirmed the fact that people's struggles and popular movements can fight and push back US imperialism's efforts to install puppet governments of its choice. USA was also targeting Bolivia's vast lithium reserves, the essential ingredient of battery power, which is the mainstay of future green technologies in the wake of the climate change challenges.

Chile

In a referendum on October 25, the people of Chile, in an overwhelming manner, voted for rewriting the country's Constitution. The Constitution came into effect under the ruthless military dictatorship engineered and backed by USA of Gen. Augusto Pinochet.

For over a year, massive mass protests against growing inequality and greater sufferings of the people were taking place. The key demand was that the country needs a new Constitution to be able to fix deep inequalities in society.

The referendum asked Chileans two questions – firstly, if they wanted a new Constitution, and secondly, what kind of body they would want to draw it up.

A large majority have voted for the new Constitution to be drafted by a convention made up entirely of elected citizens, as opposed to one that would also include lawmakers.

The Communist Party of Chile had urged all the people in the country to unite behind the cause for a new Constitution. Nearly 80 per cent of Chilean people voted to scrap the existing Constitution controversially introduced in 1980 after the US-backed military coup overthrew the Socialist government of President Salvador Allende in 1973.

Greece: Golden Dawn Leaders Convicted

An Athens Court handed down a guilty verdict in a historic trial of the Greek fascist organisation Golden Dawn. Its neo-fascist leaders were given a thirteen year imprisonment sentence. They have been convicted as being part of a criminal gang of fascist thugs and murderers.

The trial started five and a half years ago and went through 454 court sessions. The Communist Party of Greece and the broad anti-fascist movement played a significant role in building up a huge anti-fascist campaign in Greece. The anti-fascist demonstrations during the last past few decades resulted in this court trial and the final verdict.

The Communist party and the other progressive forces say this immediate victory is not the end of the fascist forces but they are bound to regroup and mount their attack against the working class and the toiling people. They continue to remain vigilant and have consolidated the anti-fascist movement in Greece.

New Zealand

Prime Minister Jacinda Ardern-led New Zealand Labour Party swept the elections in New Zealand winning a single party majority and registering the highest number of seats since 1996. New Zealand's tackling of the Covid pandemic and its policies to protect environment, address climate change challenges and reduce social inequalities have been globally noted with appreciation. The incumbent PM's reelection reflects a growth in popular support.

US Presidential Elections

In the last lap of campaigning for the Presidential elections in USA, the Democratic challenger Joe Biden has registered a significant lead in opinion polls. Many commentators say that the size of the lead is unprecedented on the eve of the elections.

Donald Trump and the Republicans are leaving no stone unturned to further cement their divisive appeals to the people. As noted earlier, Trump's answer to the *Black Lives Matter* movement was to advance the slogan of "*White Power*". Defying medical opinion, Trump, after contracting Covid, took an elephantine doze of Corona SARS 2 antibodies to show that he is healthy and will not transmit Covid. Only time will tell the veracity of this assertion.

National

Covid Situation

As noted by us earlier and confirmed by the developments since the last Polit Bureau meeting, the number of Covid-19 positive cases and deaths are relentlessly on the rise. Our testing rate continues to be low. India today ranks next only to the USA in terms of total number of cases. However, these figures keep varying.

The world average of infections is 5,241 per million. Asian average is 2,764. Indian average is 5,544.

Covid pandemic deaths per million in Asia is 49. In India, it is 84.

We had earlier noted that the Central government and PM Modi have virtually abdicated their responsibility towards containing the pandemic. Worse is the fact that crores of people have been subjected to a double whammy assault of the pandemic and the deepening economic recession. PM Modi refuses to announce cash transfers and distribution of foodgrains freely as demanded by us since the national lockdown was imposed on March 25. There is absolutely no relief for growing sufferings of the people, galloping unemployment and rising hunger.

Vaccine: The Party has always stood for the universal access to vaccine for all people free of cost. This is the practice in independent India since the very beginning – from the campaign for the eradication of smallpox and the vaccination to latest campaigns on eliminating polio. The Central government is primarily responsible and has always conducted big awareness programmes urging people to get vaccinated.

It should be similar with the Covid-19 vaccination, which hopefully, will be available soon. The Central government, however, seems to abdicate its responsibility on this score as well by passing the buck to the state governments saying that they shall decide on this matter. This is unacceptable. The Central government must make this into a national campaign and ensure free universal access to the vaccine for everybody.

The BJP's election manifesto for Bihar has promised that if it forms the government in the state, vaccine will be given freely. It is the Central government's responsibility to ensure the universal access to vaccine to everybody, all over the country.

Economic Situation

The economic situation continues to worsen imposing further hardships on vast sections of our people. Unemployment continues to soar despite all

propaganda of a revival. It is now estimated by CMIE that to reach the pre-Covid levels of employment and labour participation, the economy would have to generate 80 lakh new jobs annually.

The RBI has projected a (-) 9.5 per cent contraction in the financial year 2020-21. The IMF has subsequently put this figure at (-)10.3 per cent. RBI says that this contraction comes on the top of a steady decline in the GDP from 8.3 per cent in 2016-17 to 7 per cent in 2017-18; 6.1 per cent in 2018-19; 4.2 per cent in 2019-20; and (-) 9.5 per cent in 2020-21. Clearly, for the last five years, the economy has been on the decline.

The RBI projection of (-) 9.5 per cent GDP growth comes with the caveat of `risks tilted towards the downslide'. Therefore, further growth of unemployment and further miseries for the people are in store.

Mounting Further Miseries on the People: This economic decline has impacted on unemployment very severely. As noted by us earlier, labour participation rate has dropped drastically and nearly 15 crore people have lost their livelihood. The latest CMIE Survey, October 18, 2020, says that the unemployment rate data means little when labour participation rate (percentage of people in the working age group) in India is falling alarmingly. As against the global average of around 66 per cent; India's is around 40 per cent despite our youthful population. In the absence of jobs, over 20 million have stopped looking for jobs and have returned to the rural areas to eke out some livelihood. CMIE anticipates that India needs to create 8 million new jobs every year to stop further fall in labour participation.

Growing Hunger: The Global Hunger Index has ranked India at 94 amongst 107 countries. In comparison with all our neighbours, this is the dismal performance of the policies of this BJP government. Sri Lanka, Nepal, Bangladesh, Myanmar and Pakistan, apart of course from China (which is in the top bracket of countries with least hunger with a score of less than five) have performed better on this index than India.

India's low ranking on this index indicates a very high level of malnutrition and undernutrition of our people, particularly of our children. The incidence of stunted growth and early childhood mortality due to hunger and lack of nutrition have increased significantly. 14 per cent of India's population is undernourished, not getting enough calories. India's child stunting and wasting parameters show alarming levels. Around 17.3 per cent of our children under 5 are wasted due to lack of nutrition. This is the highest prevalence of child wasting in the world. Almost 42 per cent of adolescent girls aged between 15 and 19 years have low body mass index (BMI), 54 per cent are anemic.

Such growing pangs of hunger amongst a large number of our people is unacceptable. There are several crore tonnes of foodgrains rotting in the central godowns even before the current procurement season began. These must be used to provide free food to the hungry immediately.

Widening Inequalities: In obscene contrast to this growing hunger, India's 50 richest people grew wealthier by 14 per cent in 2020, so far.

Stimulus Package - Another Farce: On October 12, the Central government announced a new stimulus package of Rs. 1 lakh crore claiming to boost consumption in the economy. However, like all earlier packages announced by the Central government, this again is an exercise in re-packaging and continues to base itself on leveraging stimulus through private investment, with minimal fiscal cost to the government.

These measures are too measly for any meaningful impact on economic growth with no additional spending by the government itself. The additional capital being provided for capital expenditures on roads, defence, water supply etc. is to come from reallocation of already allocated resources. This entire stimulus amounts to just 0.2 per cent of the GDP and, hence, is more of a hype than any material benefit to the economy or to the people.

The much tom-tomed scheme of Leave Travel Concession (LTC) to government employees being provided with tax benefits without travelling comes with stringent conditionalities that require an employee to spend three times the LTC fare component to purchase items that attract 12 per cent or more GST. Only when this amount is shown as spent can the tax concession be availed.

The festival advance scheme provides all Central government employees to get interest-free advance of Rs. 10,000 that will be recovered in ten instalments, is too meagre to provide any demand stimulus for the country.

The so-called special assistance to be provided to the states in the form of interest-free fifty year loans of Rs. 12,000 crore be used only for capital expenditures, once divided among all states and UTs, means very little to each.

With the GDP contracting by 23.9 per cent in the April-June quarter, the RBI projection of contraction of (-) 9.5 per cent for the whole year can be maintained without a further downslide, only by a big fiscal intervention through higher government spending. This is not forthcoming, hence, a further contraction of the economy is imminent.

Clearly, the economy and the people need substantially higher public investments to build our much-needed infrastructure. This will generate large-scale employment and expand domestic demand that could kickstart the economy in the direction of a revival.

Assaults on the Working Class and Working People

29 existing labour laws have been repealed and replaced by four labour codes bulldozed in the truncated monsoon session of Parliament. Almost all beneficial provisions relating to rights and protection of the workers and those related to regulation in control of employers are either substantially diluted or removed altogether. These codes seek to convert workers into slaves.

More than 70 per cent of the industrial establishments in the organized sector itself, not to speak about the vast unorganized and service sectors, can now implement a 'hire and fire' policy. The labour code empowers employers to employ workers on a "fixed term" in regular jobs and throw them out after the end of the term without any notice or compensation. Atrocious conditions have been imposed amounting to annulling the basic rights of working class to collective action including the right to strike.

Contrary to the Party's demand for strengthening the inter-state migrant labour laws (further highlighted by the painful experiences of migrant labour during the lock down period), this codification of all labour laws has virtually eliminated all legal protection for the rights of migrant labour.

Growing Protests: There have been numerous work place level actions centering around issues of non-payment of wages during the lockdown even in the service sectors like IT and ITES. There have been big struggles against wage cuts, non-payment of wages, retrenchment and forced retirement. All sectoral trade unions like construction workers, road transport workers, scheme workers have undertaken protest movements and struggles. The historic coal workers three-day strike against privatization is leading to the preparation for another united strike in November coinciding with the last day of bidding for commercial mining of coal. The build up campaign is receiving overwhelming support from the people in the mining bloc areas. The national coordination committee for electricity employees and engineers have earlier given calls for countrywide protest actions on October 6. This was supported by the entire trade union movement. In UP the united struggles and indefinite strike action from 5th October 2020 by the joint forum of electricity employees and engineers was preceded by seven days three hours work-boycott from 29th September onwards which forced the UP government to retreat and withdraw the privatization move of UP Electricity distribution entities. The defence production unit employees served a notice for a joint

indefinite strike on October 12. Facing this, the government called for conciliation and expressed willingness to discuss the involved issues and agreed not to proceed further on privatization during the pendency of the conciliation.

Big anti-privatisation agitations have taken place in many public sector units like BHEL, some NTPC units, BPCL and other oil PSUs.

Almost all sections of the working class and the working people have embarked on protests and struggles against these anti-worker policies of the Modi government. The countrywide programmes, along with kisan and agricultural workers organisations on September 5, September 23 and September 25 saw big mobilisations. Preparations are now on for the November 26 countrywide general strike.

Disastrous Farm Bills

As we had noted earlier, the entire package of economic reforms being pursued by PM Modi in the name of self-reliance is tantamount to self-subservience of our economy to private profit.

Carrying this trajectory forward, the Central government has enacted, in a most dubious manner, brazenly curtailing the rights of the Indian parliament, the farm Bills. The government violated all parliamentary norms and rules to enact these laws through deceit and disruption.

Jeopardizing India's Food Security: These new laws handover Indian agriculture, our produce and our markets to foreign and domestic agribusiness corporations. This immensely benefits foreign and domestic corporates to reap super-profits, imposing misery both on the farmers and the people. The Minimum Support Price is bound to be abolished. Though very shoddily implemented, the MSP, nevertheless provided some security of income to the farmers. With the amendments to the Essential Commodities Act, the scope for large scale hoarding creating artificial food scarcity and price rise, threatens the country and the people. The proposals for "land pooling" and legalising the contract system with benefits to agribusinesses will completely destroy traditional farming. *India's food security is at stake.*

These legislations bypass the elected state governments and hence are a further serious undermining of federalism, a basic feature of our Constitution. Some opposition state governments have announced to enact their separate laws. Punjab, for instance, has announced a three-year prison sentence to those buying below the MSP.

Many opposition ruled states are moving towards rejecting these Agri laws and enacting state level legislations. Punjab has passed laws

concerning the MSP, Rajasthan has announced that they are proceeding in this direction.

Kerala: The LDF government in Kerala has decided to move a special leave petition (SLP) in the Supreme Court against the Agri laws as they violate the state rights which is anti-federalism. The LDF government has taken various measures to further strengthen the agriculture sector and the security of the farmers and those whose livelihood depends on land. Paddy cultivation has been incentivised by announcing procurement through cooperatives. A comprehensive programme called '*subhiksha Keralam*' was launched which comprehensively ensures every aspect of agriculture and allied sectors including fish farming. The LDF government has declared a minimum support price for 16 vegetables from November 2, 2020. This is the first time in the country where vegetables are being brought under the MSP. In order not to allow agriculture being put at the mercy of the corporates, alternative set of policy instruments are being implemented. These include the protection of paddy land by giving monetary incentives to the farmers, and an agriculture farmers welfare fund board has been created for payment of pensions to the farmers.

These are all novel interventions in agriculture happening for the first time in the country. This outlines a Left alternative in the times of this grave crisis for the peasantry and our people.

Nationwide Protests: The Party supported the call given by a large number of Kisan organisations supported by the working class and other sections for a countrywide protest action on September 25. In many parts of the country, normal life was disrupted and virtual bandh-like situation emerged. These protests are continuing in many parts of the country even now as the issue involves the very future of Indian agriculture and the country's food self-sufficiency.

Relentless Pursuit of `Hindutva' Agenda

As noted by the Central Committee, this BJP Central government is utilizing the period of the pandemic and the consequent disruption of normal life and activities due to lockdown restrictions etc. to advance the core RSS agenda of converting India into their conception of a rabidly intolerant fascistic '*Hindutva Rashtra*'.

This course is being relentlessly pursued during the period since the last PB meeting.

Babri Masjid Demolition Case: The verdict of the Special CBI Court at Lucknow acquitting all 32 accused in the Babri Masjid demolition case amounts to a travesty of justice. It took 28 long years for this verdict to come but not justice to be delivered. All the top leaders of the BJP-VHP-

RSS who were present at the scene guiding the criminal act have been found to be innocent of the charge of conspiracy to demolish the mosque.

The Supreme Court in its Ayodhya judgment on November 8, last year had called the demolition an "egregious violation of the law". Yet, the Lucknow court has found the main perpetrators of this crime not guilty.

This verdict will blemish the image of India as a secular-democratic country governed by the Constitution. In normal course, CBI should have appealed against this judgment, by now.

This judgment comes in conformity with the political narrative of 'New India' that this government and PM Modi have unfolded which we had noted in Central Committee and Polit Bureau meetings.

Increasing Assaults on Dalits and Women: The horrendous **Hathras** dalit rape crime and the manner in which the Uttar Pradesh BJP state government dealt with that issue, once again, highlighted the anti-dalit women and adivasi Manuvadi orientation of the BJP and its governments. The victim was grievously injured in this barbaric rape crime committed by upper caste men on September 14. The UP police initially refused to file an FIR for five days. The administration denied the victim the much-needed medical treatment which could have saved her life. In the ultimate instance of caste cruelty, the police cremated her body in the dead of the night denying the family the right to give their daughter a dignified funeral.

This gruesome incident is reflective of the larger narrative being pursued by the UP CM and the BJP state government providing patronage to casteist and reactionary forces for indulging in such crimes against dalits and women with the administration and police providing impunity to the rapists.

Following a national outrage, the UP government announced handing over of the investigation to the CBI. Given the CBI's track record, such an investigation must be monitored by the courts and proceeded under the supervision of the judiciary.

Hathras crime is not an isolated incident. This was followed by the gangrape and murder of another dalit girl in Balrampur, Uttar Pradesh, apart from in many other places. According to the latest data released by the National Crime Records Bureau, Uttar Pradesh had the highest number of cases of crime against women in 2019.

Targeting of Muslim Minorities, Intellectuals and Political Leaders: In pursuance of its designs for sharpening communal polarization accompanied by large-scale authoritarian attacks on democratic rights

and civil liberties, the BJP Central government has intensified its indiscriminate arrests under draconian laws like the UAPA, NSA and Sedition.

The crass misuse of these draconian laws can be seen by the fabricated chargesheets in the Elgar Parishad case against 16 activists and intellectuals, widely respected for upholding human rights, civil liberties and democratic rights. This shows the extent to which the BJP can go to criminalise dissent. These 16 along with other political prisoners must be released immediately and all false cases be dropped.

The targeting of the Muslim minorities in the name of investigating Delhi communal violence of February, the Delhi police under the Union Home Ministry is increasingly arresting anti-CAA-NRC-NPR protestors through a manufactured conspiracy theory that these peaceful protests in defence of the Indian Constitution were the cause for the communal violence.

However, serious questions backed by incontrovertible evidence about the role of Delhi police itself during the violence and the manner in which it is harassing and falsely implicating activists and young people have come to light.

There are several publicly documented accounts and videos of police being complicit in the violence, directing mobs pelting stones or looking the other way when mobs were indulging in violence. During the violence, disturbing video emerged showing uniformed policemen assaulting young men lying injured on the road and forcing them sing the national anthem while repeatedly beating them with lathis.

The notable silence in the chargesheets on the role of leaders associated with the BJP, who gave inflammatory speeches, raises serious concern about the impartiality of the probe. Since December 2019, there are publicly documented speeches by leaders of the ruling party instigating and provoking violence against those involved in the anti-CAA protests, including that of a minister raising slogans to "shoot the traitors".

The Delhi police is pursuing a line of inquiry criminalising the protests against the Citizenship Amendment Act (CAA) and portraying them as a conspiracy which resulted in the communal violence. The entire investigation appears to be aimed at arriving at a pre-meditated theory about a conspiracy propounded by the Home Minister in Lok Sabha in March 2020, before any investigation had even begun into the riots.

A delegation of several leaders of opposition parties met the President of India and submitted a memorandum demanding the institution of an inquiry into this investigation under the Commission of Inquiry Act, 1952, headed by sitting/retired judge(s).

The BJP president has recently announced the restarting of the process of the implementation of the CAA/NPR/NRC which, he says, was interrupted due to the pandemic and the lockdown. That the president of the ruling party can announce on behalf of the government is itself anti-democratic and unconstitutional. The Party has opposed the CAA and the entire process both in the parliament and outside through people's movements. Our opposition through a challenge in the Supreme Court tragically continues to remain pending for over a year.

Contempt Case: The Supreme Court displayed intolerance to criticism by holding senior lawyer Prashant Bhushan guilty of contempt of court. It has displayed an illiberal attitude which does not befit the highest court of the land and will only reinforce the prevailing atmosphere of intolerance and repression where the executive is using draconian laws such as the sedition clause to suppress dissent and journalistic freedom.

These apart, this period also witnessed increasing attacks on media personnel. Arrests and filing of charges against journalists critical of the current dispensation continue.

Narrative of `New India`

A new political narrative is being scripted. This narrative of a `New India` suggests that on August 15, 1947, India achieved its independence; on August 5, 2019, with the abrogation of Articles 370 and 35A of the Indian constitution; and August 5, 2020, when the Ram temple construction was formally launched by the prime minister is the day of India's real freedom.

This new narrative is the complete negation of and the antitheses of India's epic struggle for independence and the Republic that emerged under the Indian constitution.

The establishment of such a `New India` is not a product of this Modi government alone, it has a history of nearly a century – from the founding of the RSS in 1925, Savarkar's theses on Hindutva and the ideological construct and the organisational structure to achieve the aim of a fascistic `Hindu Rashtra` by Golwalkar in 1939.

The first and foremost requirement for this `New India` is the destruction of the old India as defined and concretised by the Indian constitution. This assault on the constitution, we have seen intensifying during the last six years of this BJP government with Modi as prime minister by the undermining of every foundational

pillar of our constitution – secular democracy; federalism; social justice; and economic self-reliance.

This assault on the constitution has to necessarily be accompanied by undermining, rendering ineffective all constitutional institutions and authorities that are designed as instruments of checks and balances to preserve the functionality of the Constitution and the Constitutional guarantees for the people.

For such a narrative of a 'New India' to succeed, it is necessary to rewrite Indian history to make it dovetail to sustain the ideological content of this narrative.

Indian education system, hence, would have to be necessarily revamped to ensure that it promotes irrationality in thinking and practice as opposed to rationality; promotes obscurantism/mythology/blind faith instead of nurturing scientific temper. In the field of culture, the character of the institutions and academies must be so changed as to conceal the syncretic evolution of Indian culture by imposing a uniformity and a mono-cultural narrative. The lopsided composition of a committee set up recently to study 12,000 years of Indian culture reflects this. History has to be rewritten and reconstructed. Archeology has to produce evidence to prove a Historical and unscientific assertions of Hindutva as against conducting a scientific study of our past.

Role of Sections of Media: In all these campaigns of the BJP, its media drumbeaters have been playing a very active role in spreading false news and polarising the viewers. The TRP scam that has emerged has shown how the pro RSS/BJP media has been manipulating, with the central government looking the other way and aided by its provision of handsome advertisement revenues. It is clear that this complicit media functions under the patronage of the central government. Even when its illegal activities have been exposed, the government and its spokespersons unashamedly come to their defence. Particular mention must be made of the *Republic TV* channel which leads this RSS/BJP servile media.

In the last PB meeting report we had noted the nefarious connection between the social media platforms like Facebook/Instagram/Twitter projecting and propagating the BJP. The Standing Committee of parliament which took up this matter has recommended strong regulatory oversight over this, while asking for an independent investigation into the whole affair of Facebook-BJP nexus.

Bihar Assembly Election

Finally, after long and hard discussions, secular opposition parties came together to defeat the ruling BJP-JDU alliance. The RJD, the Congress, the CPI(M), CPI and CPI(ML) along with some other smaller parties have forged this arrangement. According to agreement on seat sharing, the three Left parties would contest 29 seats [CPI(ML) – 19, CPI – 6 and CPI(M) – 4].

There is a strong anti-incumbency against the Nitish Kumar government. The alliance between the BJP, JD(U) and the LJP has run into problems with the LJP deciding to not support the incumbent Chief Minister, Nitish Kumar, and the JD(U), but to have an understanding with the BJP.

Other fronts have also emerged to contest these elections. For instance, the MIM and Pappu Yadav along with other caste-based parties. This is bound to eat into the anti-BJP-JD(U) votes and help the present ruling combine.

The CPI(M) has decided its candidates and the campaign has begun. However, with the pandemic raging across the state, normal campaigning is severely hampered. Within these limitations, the Party is trying its best.

The Party has taken up with the Election Commission of India to exercise its Constitutional mandate to conduct a free and fair poll providing a level-playing field to all contestants. However, the BJP with its access to unhindered financial resources is bound to use its money power to influence the results. In the current situation of the pandemic and associated restrictions, the reliance on digital modes of communication and technologies further increases and this goes in favour of the BJP and the ruling combine.

Politically winning these elections is crucial for the BJP. It seeks to use this result in its favour to absolve itself of its complete mishandling of the pandemic and its destruction of the economy heaping miseries on large sections of our people.

Electoral Bonds

The Central Government notified the issuance of electoral bonds just on the eve of the Bihar state assembly elections. According to its January 2, 2018 notification, electoral bonds are to be issued in four tranches every year – January, April, July and October. However, in April and July this option was not exercised since there were no elections. This clearly establishes that electoral bonds is a conduit for raising funds for the BJP to consolidate its money power to be used both during elections and after elections for horse-trading and formation of governments negating people's popular verdict.

Once again, it is a pity that despite such clear linkage between the BJP's sleaze funding and the electoral bonds, the Supreme Court is yet to hear petitions seeking a ban on the electoral bonds that have been pending for over a year. The Election Commission which had initially submitted an affidavit to the Supreme Court against electoral bonds is now complying with the government's moves. This only confirms once again that the Constitutional mandate of the Election Commission to hold a free and fair election providing a level playing field to all contestants is being dangerously eroded.

Jammu & Kashmir

The release of Ms. Mehbooba Mufti after over a year of detention is welcome. However, several other political leaders and activists in the state continue to be under detention, some of them in unknown destinations.

A meeting of political parties that were signatories to the "Gupkar Declaration" was held recently. A front called the 'Peoples' Alliance for Gupkar Declaration' was announced, which will strive for the restoration of Articles 370 & 35A of the Indian Constitution and the statehood of Jammu & Kashmir.

Further Encroachment: Through an extraordinary Gazette notification, the Ministry of Home Affairs on October 5, 2020 has proposed collection of property tax from the urban centres of Jammu & Kashmir, by the central government. This clearly violates not only the powers of the state legislature but also is an encroachment into the domain of urban local bodies. Urban development is a state subject and the ministry is taking away this justifying by saying that J&K is now a Union Territory. The elected representatives of the urban local bodies are not being consulted, making a mockery of the 74th Constitution amendment provisions. 50 per cent of seats in these bodies are still lying vacant as elections could not be held because of the double lockdown in the state. Many in Jammu & Kashmir see this move as a virtual 'colonisation'.

New Land Law Permitting Outsiders to Purchase Land & Property: After the changes brought about in the domicile rules, new laws have been promulgated. The design behind the new land laws permitting outsiders to buy land and property appears to be to change the demographic composition of the state while looting the resources of Jammu & Kashmir and its people.

It is high time that the Central Government permit normal political activity in the state and restore communications and public transport and

other services in the state. All those who continue to be under detention must be released forthwith.

Unfortunately, legal challenges of the abrogation of Article 370 & 35A continue to languish, pending before the Supreme Court for over a year now.

Federalism: GST

The Central government was finally forced to backtrack and rescind from its position of asking the state governments to borrow to meet the shortfall in the GST compensation that the central government is legally bound to give them. The central government has now announced that they shall borrow, in accordance with the demand made by the Party and the Kerala LDF government to pay the states their dues. This however is only part of the problem. The centre's announcement is confined to borrowing Rs. 1.1 lakh crore for clearing the backlog of dues. However, there is an additional amount of Rs. 1.9 lakh crores that is due to the states as GST compensation for this entire financial year. The Centre has to pay the states their legal dues. The payment of the complete final commitments to the state governments as enacted by parliament must be adhered to. The central government should not be allowed to absolve itself of its legal obligations.

Such attacks on federalism are being extended to every sphere. Education is in the concurrent list of the Constitution, yet the new education policy is unilaterally announced and its implementation process begun by the centre. Agriculture is a state subject but the farm bills are enacted by the parliament bypassing the states' rights.

Increasingly the role of the Governors is becoming one of political agents of the ruling party at the Centre rather than a high constitutional authority. The dignity of the high office is regularly violated by the governors, most of whom are RSS pracharaks in various states, the latest being the letter written by the Maharashtra Governor to the Chief Minister rebuking him for upholding secularism.

Kerala Situation: As noted by the PB/CC earlier, while the LDF government has embarked upon a unique and unprecedented development initiatives and strengthening social sector activities, the BJP and the Congress, working in tandem, are seeking to destabilise the LDF government, in the run-up to the forthcoming assembly elections early next year.

Central agencies like the CBI are being unscrupulously used to target the LDF government in Kerala by the BJP central government. The people of Kerala will give a fitting rebuff to these machinations.

New Education Policy

In the last Polit Bureau meeting we had demanded that the New Education Policy must be discussed thoroughly and approved by parliament, in the last session, before its implementation proceeds. The central government however refused to do so.

In the critique of the NEP 2020, we observed that it is more of a RSS vision document than a real policy document and that it lacks any roadmap for its implementation. Many specific proposals are impractical and would cause enormous disruption for institutions, students and teachers, and would require considerable increase in public expenditure on education which remains a distant dream.

The NEP militates against various provisions of the Right to Education Act. The concept of neighbourhood schools is sought to be buried and school complexes encouraged. This will adversely impact socially and economically marginalized sections.

It is obvious that there is a push towards increased centralization to govern and regulate education undermining federalism, and autonomy of academic bodies, accelerated commercialization, deepening inequity of access, and advancing RSS ideology by promoting irrationality rather than nurturing and strengthening rationality and scientific temper amongst our children.

The glaring example of such centralization is the latest UGC circular which is a blatant violation of constitutional provisions. This circular concerns 'governance reforms' which falls under the State list (Article 246, Schedule 7, list 2, entry 32).

Open and online digital learning is put forward as one major method to ensure equitable access and as the main instrument for increasing Gross Enrolment Ratio. There is overpowering centralization in all measures proposed in NEP, leaving little or no role for States in higher education. The NEP proposes to do away with affiliated Colleges and move towards large, multi-disciplinary Universities or HEIs which would offer courses, on payment of hefty fees, across disciplines and categories, along with some Autonomous Colleges with powers to grant degrees.

The thrust of the NEP is on the three Cs of - commercialization, centralization and communalization. The Party must intensify our efforts to mobilise all sections of people connected with education, intellectuals and people's movements, to thwart its implementation.

Truncated Parliament Session

In the course of this truncated and short monsoon session of parliament, the government did not permit the question hour and hence absolved itself from being accountable for its arbitrary executive actions.

In the most undemocratic manner 22 bills were adopted by the parliament without any discussion whatsoever and by curtailing the legal rights of the MPs, procedures and rules.

As noted earlier, the agri bills were passed in the pandemonium by suspending 8 MPs for demanding exercising their right for a vote on them in the Rajya Sabha.

The bulldozing of the ordinances concerning Indian agriculture as laws was done denying the MPs the opportunity to discuss and refusing to have a division through a vote on these Bills. This is unprecedented and tantamount to murder of democracy.

Every Member of Parliament has the inalienable right to ask for a division of vote on any matter that comes before the parliament for approval. This right was trampled upon with utter contempt. In a highly condemnable manner 8 RS MPs, who sought a division of vote, have been suspended. It is clear that the BJP/NDA did not have a majority in the Rajya Sabha with all the opposition parties arraigned against these legislations. These new laws are therefore illegitimate and illegal.

Likewise, all the labour codes have been legislated by the parliament in a similar fashion denying the MPs the right to debate, discuss and vote against these Bills. All this is making a mockery of parliamentary democracy under this BJP central government.

This is unprecedented, tantamount to the murder of parliamentary democracy. This is unacceptable. Our MPs must in consultation and coordination with all opposition MPs mount pressure on the government to adhere to parliamentary procedures and norms.

The destruction of Parliament and its functioning must be made into a public issue by us along with other secular parties.

Electoral Tactics for the Forthcoming Assembly Elections

For the forthcoming state assembly elections in Kerala, Tamilnadu, West Bengal and Assam, the CC endorses the proposals sent by the respective Party state committees.

In Kerala, the Party will continue to contest elections as part of the LDF. In Tamilnadu, the CPI(M) will contest the elections as part of the DMK led alliance. In Assam, the CPI(M) will contest the elections in cooperation with all secular opposition parties including the Congress to defeat the incumbent BJP government in the state, which is sharpening communal polarization, destabilizing social harmony and heaping miseries on the people. In West Bengal, the CPI(M) and the Left Front will have an electoral understanding with all secular parties, including the Congress, which seek to defeat the BJP and the TMC.

Calls by Party and Mass Organisations

During the period since the last Central Committee and Polit Bureau meetings, the Party independently, jointly with the Left parties and on certain issues with other opposition political parties issued protest calls and other activities.

The Polit Bureau gave a call for a national level protest programme from September 17 to 22, 2020 during the Parliament session.

Issues such as the intensification of communal polarization; targeting of minorities; large-scale attacks on democratic rights and civil liberties of our people; release of all political prisoners; against the mounting brutal attacks on women, Dalits, Adivasis and other marginalized sections, loot of national assets through privatization and scrapping of labour laws were highlighted along with demanding that the BJP central government urgently address the immediate needs of the people.

The campaign mainly focused on four basic demands: immediate cash transfer; free distribution of foodgrains; expansion of MNREGA and for an Urban Employment Guarantee Act; and safeguarding Indian Constitution. Additional demands were added by several states.

Reports have shown that this call was widely observed all across the country and in all the states, our committees have been active in reaching out the people on these issues.

Left parties issued a joint call extending support to the September 25 call for a nationwide protest against the farm Bills by the kisan organisations. We also issued a call for support to the struggles of the trade unions against the abrogation of labour laws, large-scale privatization etc.

On the issue of targeting Muslim minorities in the investigation conducted by the Delhi police into the February communal violence, a delegation of several opposition parties met the President of India demanding an independent judicial enquiry into this violence. The victims of this violence have been targeted on the basis of a clear-cut communal profiling while

the perpetrators of this violence are exonerated and move around scot-free.

Several political activists and people's movement activists are being summoned and regularly harassed through questioning by the police.

The central trade unions, along with CITU, have held many protest actions during this period over the draconian abolishment of the labour laws and the enactment of four labour codes and other working class issues. These struggles have impacted upon the positions of some opposition parties. All the central trade unions have now given a call for a nationwide strike on November 26.

The All India Kisan Sabha and the All India Agricultural Workers Union have given several calls against the attacks on the peasantry particularly against the farm Bills that have now been enacted. Several calls were given, including all-India protest action on the opening day of the Parliament on September 14. Their call for a resistance day, along with many other Kisan organisations under the banner of the All India Kisan Sangharsh Coordination Committee, on September 25 was observed angrily by the peasantry across the country. In certain parts like the green revolution belt, a bandh call was given. In other states, programmes of rasta roko, rail roko, hartals and effigy burning of the farm Bills were undertaken. The response was massive. It is broadly estimated that around one crore people participated in this resistance all across the country. Various calls for campaign on this issue were given and these are ongoing. They are now preparing to implement the call 'March to Delhi' and 'Parliament gherao' on November 26-27, 2020.

These struggles and protest actions by kisan organisations have put pressure on secular opposition parties and the opposition ruled state governments to reject these farm bills and enact their own legislations as agriculture is on the concurrent list. Punjab assembly has already done so, Rajasthan has announced its roadmap, other opposition ruled state governments are also preparing their own ways to enact state laws.

During this period, the coordination between the trade union, kisan sabha and agricultural workers union has further strengthened. The kisan sabha call for Parliament gherao and the Central trade union call for a nationwide industrial strike on November 26 will converge into a massive country level protest action against the anti-agriculture, anti-kisan and anti-worker labour codes. This campaign should be taken to the grassroot level.

During this period many struggles of adivasis have taken place over the non-implementation of the Forest Rights Act and their displacement in

many states from their traditional forest habitat. There are also instances of protest against dilution of reservation rights for the adivasis.

During this period, our student front is active in the protests against the new education policy and in defence of people's civil liberties and democratic rights in solidarity with the students, who are being picked up by the police in various universities for participating in the peaceful anti-CAA/NPR/NRC protests.

Our women's front has organized protests against dangerously growing criminal attacks on women, particularly sexual crimes across the country.

The youth front, however, has to intensify its activities on the issue of growing unemployment in the coming period.

Organisational Tasks

The decisions taken by the Central Committee and the Polit Bureau earlier must be implemented more vigorously. The Party's focus should be:

- 1) Strengthen struggles on local issues
- 2) Strengthen Left unity
- 3) Forging broader joint actions on common issues
- 4) Further strengthen political campaigns against RSS/BJP

Likewise the organisational tasks:

- a) Activation of all Party members and branch functioning
- b) Reviving committee functioning at all levels
- c) Further strengthening and utilising technological communication methods for conducting Party meetings, political/ideological campaigns and Party schooling
- d) Focus on consolidation of drawing in the new contacts made during this period by our Party and mass organisations into organisational structures

Central Committee Calls

The Central Committee decided on a nation-wide campaign:

- 1) To conduct independent campaigns and protest actions against Agri laws; labour codes; privatisation of PSUs and loot of national assets; growing unemployment; for education and health for all and the escalating price rise that is further ruining people's livelihood.
- 2) Extend Party's complete solidarity and support to the kisan protest action calls of November 26-27, 2020.

- 3) Extend full support and solidarity with the call of the Central trade unions for a nationwide general strike on November 26, 2020.
- 4) During the two months between November 26 and January 26, 2021, to set up broad coalitions of secular democratic parties, people's movements, intellectuals and other eminent personalities on issues of protection of human rights, civil liberties and democratic rights; of workers and peasantry; demanding the release of all political prisoners booked under draconian laws like UAPA, NSA, Sedition Act etc; against mounting atrocities on Dalits, adivasis and women; against the undermining of independent constitutional authorities like parliament, judiciary, election commission etc.; and against BJP's massive use of money power to negate people's electoral verdicts.

December 10 is International Human Rights Day and December 18 is the International Day for Minorities Rights. This week from December 10 to 18 must be observed all across the country on the issues of human and minority rights.

State level coalitions on each of these issues or some of them together must be forged, mobilizing widest possible forces, culminating with a call for the protection of our Constitution on Republic Day, 2021.

- 5) Strengthen ideological campaigns around the programmes commemorating the anniversary of the October Revolution on November 7 and Frederick Engels 200th birth anniversary on November 28.
