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# COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

## Central Committee



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### Report on Certain Political Developments

(Adopted at the Central Committee Meeting held on October 29-31, 2022)

#### International Developments

Certain major important developments since the last Central Committee meeting in July 2022 are covered in this report.

#### Global Economic Crisis

Global economic crisis is deepening. IMF World Economic Outlook, October 2022 says: “Global growth is forecast to slow down from 6.0 percent in 2021 to 3.2 percent in 2022 and 2.7 percent in 2023. This is the weakest growth profile since 2001 except for the global financial crisis and the acute phase of the COVID-19 pandemic periods.

The latest Bloomberg Economics model projects a 100% probability of a recession in the US by October 2023.

On October 3, the UN issued a warning that the world is headed for a recession that would inflict more harm than the Covid-19 pandemic because of the behaviour of wealthy nations. The Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) also made estimates along these lines. The group lowered its estimate of global economic growth for 2023 from 2.8% to 2.2%, which translates to a loss of about USD 2.8 trillion in global GDP.

Central banks all across the world were compelled to increase interest rates as the cost of food and gasoline rose dramatically. Global inflation is forecast to rise from 4.7 per cent in 2021 to 8.8 per cent in 2022. The United States, which has the largest economy in the world, started hiking interest rates in March. In 2022, the US Fed raised interest rates five times in a row.

## **Ukraine War**

Our 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress Political Resolution said: “Ukraine has become a flashpoint between Russia and the western alliance, The North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO).” The war continues with a massive military assistance being provided to Ukraine by USA and NATO. This is actually a war, as we have noted, between Russia and the US/NATO with Ukraine as its theatre.

To meet Ukraine's urgent security and military needs, the Department of Defense (DoD) authorised a Presidential Drawdown of security assistance worth up to \$725 million on October 14, 2022. Since August 2021, the Biden Administration has authorised a total of 23 equipment withdrawals from DoD stocks for Ukraine. Since the start of the Biden administration, the US has provided Ukraine with more than \$18.3 billion in military support. Additionally, the US secured extra aid to Ukraine from its NATO allies and friends. The threats of using nuclear arms and ‘dirty bombs’ are creating a dangerous situation.

**Sanctions and its Impact on Global Economy:** The USA, G7 and the EU imposed severe sanctions on Russia. Consequently, Russian exports of essential metals and minerals are being choked off, there are shortages of food supplies, non-renewable energy sources and green energy, and inflation is rising. The world economy might soon experience one of the biggest energy supply shocks ever given the part Russia plays in the supply of energy. European Union countries face the brunt of the war with runaway inflation and severe energy crisis.

The impact of oil sanctions on Russia is, so far, limited, while repercussions on the global economy and several countries' abilities to achieve energy security are severe.

**Nord Stream Developments:** On the recent series of explosions and subsequent gas leakages on Nord Stream pipeline, Berlin claims to be aware of who damaged the pipelines but won't speak because it could jeopardise German national security! Sweden also argues that the subject is simply too delicate for it to share the data it has gathered with any nation.

Having received no positive response from Berlin to Russia's proposal to use the intact Nord Stream 2 to send 27.5 billion cubic metres of gas to Europe during the winter, Putin made a proposal to build a new gas pipeline to Turkiye. This has astounded the US and allies. This will help Russia in bypassing the threats on Nord Stream which crosses the Exclusive Economic Zones (EEZs) of several countries.

Russian global oil exports are still booming and EU is still reliant on Russia. Sanctions targeting Russian global oil exports are scheduled to come into effect on December 5. Kpler's data shows that Russia's seaborne crude exports averaged 3.4 million barrels per day during the seven months since the war began. That's up 17% versus the same period in 2021.

In this background the decision of the OPEC to cut oil production by 2 million barrels per day is pushing up global oil prices. This also underscores the fragile bilateral relations between USA and Saudi Arabia.

As the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress Political Resolution said "this war must immediately end and contentious issues must be settled through talks and negotiations." USA/NATO must immediately ensure that the eastward expansion of NATO is halted and the sanctions that are having a crippling effect on the global economy must be immediately lifted.

### **Rising Livelihood Concerns**

Global economic crisis and the impact of the Ukraine war are imposing severe burdens on people's livelihoods.

Domestic **food price inflation** has risen around the world to very high levels. World Bank data between May to September 2022 shows high inflation in almost all low-income and middle-income countries; 88.9 percent of low-income countries, 91.1 percent of lower-middle-income countries, and 96 percent of upper-middle-income countries have seen inflation levels above 5 percent. High food prices have triggered a global crisis that is driving millions of people into **extreme poverty, magnifying hunger and malnutrition**. Average wheat, maize, and rice prices in October 2022 are 18 percent, 27 percent, and 10 percent higher, respectively, than in October 2021. According to IMF, \$5 billion to \$7 billion in further spending is needed to assist vulnerable households in 48 countries most affected by the higher food and fertilizer import prices. An additional \$50 billion is required to end **acute food insecurity** over the next 12 months. The number of people who are experiencing acute food insecurity and will need urgent assistance is likely to climb to 222 million people in 53 countries and territories, according to a FAO report.

### **Global Protests**

Trade unions in different sectors have taken collective strike decisions in recent weeks across the globe as their purchasing power erodes in the face of rising inflation. Alongside the disputes over pay raises, workers are also demanding

improvement in working conditions and pension rights. In EU countries multiple strikes were called in same sectors within short periods reflecting the extreme hardships of the workers.

**UK Protests:** Demanding pay deals that keep up with the rising cost of living, tens of thousands of workers have downed tools in recent months in the **UK**. Inflation rate being at 10 per cent – the highest level for 40 years – workers are experiencing their living cost rising faster than their wages. Even in sectors where unions could strike deals for pay increases such hikes are below inflation pay revisions. In 2019, on average 19,500 days a month were lost due to strike actions. In July 2022, the figure was 87,600, according to the Office for National Statistics.

The railways have seen a series of strikes since June, bringing the rail network to a virtual standstill.

Workers at Royal Mail have held strikes since August. Around 115,000 members of the Communication Workers' Union took part in these strikes.

Around 40,000 workers at BT and Openreach went on strike in October for the first time ever.

Criminal Barristers in England and Wales have been in action since June to demand higher fees for representing clients, delaying thousands of trials.

Around 70,000 staff at 150 universities have been balloted for strike actions by the Universities and Colleges Union over pay and pensions. Teachers unions, health workers, oil and gas workers and other sections gave strike calls.

Bus drivers in the **Netherlands** went on a three-day strike from October, 19-21 demanding better pay and working conditions.

Demanding a new contract that includes greater pay, a set time schedule, and safer working conditions construction workers in **Switzerland** staged a massive protest march on October 17.

**French** workers took part in a nationwide strike to demand higher wages to keep pace with the soaring costs of living. Workers from France's major oil refineries started the protest actions, which spread to transport, schools, healthcare, civil services, energy and other sectors.

On October 16, more than 100,000 people protested in **Paris** against Emmanuel Macron's failure to address the rising cost of living and the climate problem. The march was attended by activists and leaders from the recently created left-wing

coalition New Ecological and Social People's Union (NUPES), as well as from the Communist Party of France (PCF), La France Insoumise, and labour organisations including the General Confederation of Labor (CGT).

Workers in **Cyprus** marched to the Ministry of Finance in Nicosia on October 15, demanding specific actions to combat inflation and the ongoing cost-of-living issue.

As part of the weekly Fridays of Rage rallies that the Workers Party of **Belgium** (PTB/PVDA) has been organising, cadres demonstrated in front of the Engie offices in Brussels on October 14 demanding the government to tax on the enormous profits the business made during this period.

In the **US**, the rise in living expenses, which has added \$460 to a family's monthly costs, is leading to many protests by the working class. 15,000 nurses in Minnesota participated in one of the largest private sector health care strikes in US history; 6,000 Seattle teachers walked out of classrooms; and more than 100,000 railroad workers struck work.

Huge rallies were held in **Greece** demanding increase in wages and pensions, cheap electricity, fuel and food, abolition of taxes, price cuts and caps on basic consumer goods, and cancellation of debts. Trade unions, together with other mass organisations gave a call for general strike on 9<sup>th</sup> November.

Similar working-class protests were witnessed in **Germany, Czech Republic, Serbia, Hungary and Moldova** in Europe; **Tunisia, Guinea, South Africa, Kenya, Sudan and Central African Region** in Africa and **Ecuador and Argentina** in Latin America.

These strike actions are only a few that are being mentioned. The rising cost of living conditions is generating widespread protests in many countries across the globe.

**Iran:** Iran is witnessing massive protests against the attacks on women's rights. Many burdened by the worsening economic situation are also joining in these protests. These protests are being brutally suppressed with reports suggesting many deaths.

**Palestine:** There has been a brutal suppression of Palestinians in the West Bank and occupied territories. This year so far, 184 Palestinians have been killed by Israeli security forces. Israeli authorities escalated their assault on Palestinian Human Rights defenders and civil society organisations in occupied West Bank on

the heels of the most recent round of assaults in Gaza. Many of these organisations were arbitrarily outlawed earlier. These raids are aimed at punishing those who criticize Israel for gross violation of international law and practicing policy of apartheid and persecution of millions of Palestinians. The illegal occupation of Palestinian territories and the establishment of Jewish settlements continue to enlarge.

## **Elections**

A spate of election results, in various countries, in the recent period show growing political right-ward shift, that we noted in the 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress. The rising inflation, lack of wage increases to offset the growing prices of essential commodities and the failure of the economic policies of both social democrats and conservatives are fueling discontent among the people. Religious sentiments and racism are being utilised by the extreme-right wing forces to fuel their advance in many countries.

**Italy:** The far-right led by arch-conservative Giorgia Meloni, president of the Brothers of Italy, won the elections to Italian parliament by winning 44 percent of the vote. Her party is part of a coalition that included Forza Italia, led by former Prime Minister Silvio Berlusconi, and Matteo Salvini's Anti-immigrant League. This is Italy's first far-right government since fascist dictator Benito Mussolini. Meloni is fiercely opposed to immigration and supports conservative 'family values'. Meloni is staunchly pro-US and advocates repressive national security policies. Her political career began as a teenage activist in the youth wing of the neo-fascist Italian Social Movement. Italy has a huge public debt at 135 percent of GDP and the cost of the servicing this debt is rising as global interest rates rise and has a high rate of youth unemployment (around 25 percent) – the factors that sharply heightened popular discontent and contributed to the rise of the far-right.

**Sweden:** Moderate Party leader Ulf Kristersson was elected as the prime minister of Sweden as the head of a three-party minority coalition that for the first time includes the anti-immigration Sweden Democrats in government. The far-right Sweden Democrats (SD) party was the real winner in the country's election, increasing its share of the vote by two to three percentage points and emerging as the second largest party. The right-wing bloc had 49.7 percent of the vote, giving it a majority of one seat in parliament over the incumbent left-wing bloc. The SD emerged from Sweden's neo-Nazi movement in the mid-1990s. The SD has increased its vote at each of the past nine general elections. SD was able to exploit fears over violent crime through its anti-immigration campaign. Voter concerns such as energy price rises, failing schools and long queues for healthcare were diverted through its relentless focus on immigration and crime.

**Brazil:** On 2<sup>nd</sup> October, Brazilians voted in the first round of presidential elections. Jair Bolsonaro, who has been president since 2019, did better than expected. For months the polls had given former Leftist president Lula a double-digit lead. In the end Lula garnered 48 percent of the vote, while Bolsonaro won 43 percent. Lula won the first round of elections, with more than six million votes, despite Bolsonaro's abuse of government machinery, huge money and threats to democracy and institutions. Bolsonaro spread fake news through his control over media, social media and manipulated the religious sentiments of the people using the Pentecostal preachers. Bolsonaro has stated that he will not accept the results if the election goes against him. As none of the candidates could get 50 percent of the votes, they will now go to a run-off on October 30th. Lula hopes to win most votes of Ciro Gomes, a centre-left former state governor and women, while evangelicals favour Bolsonaro.

**Chile Referendum:** Voters in Chile have rejected a new constitution which was due to replace the constitution of the Pinochet era. In a referendum, almost 62 percent voted against the progressive draft. The rejected Constitution declared Chile a 'plurinational' State, recognised the rights of Chile's indigenous populations, included key demands by women's groups such as the right to abortion and granted women at least 50 percent of positions in government institutions. Voters who had even slight doubts about one of the articles rejected the entire constitution in the hope that a new version would prove more to their liking. The rejected constitution would have been one of the world's most progressive constitutions, paving the way for stronger protections for indigenous Chileans, the environment and women. It would have also mandated the State to provide social goods such as health care and housing. This defeat is not an endorsement of the current dictatorship-era constitution as a poll held in July showed that 74 percent of Chileans supported a new constitutional redrafting process in the event of the rejection. However, the defeat in the referendum is certainly a setback to the Left and progressive forces in Chile.

In the by-elections held in **Pakistan**, the opposition Pakistan Tehreek Party won the majority of the seats in the parliament. This is a huge blow to the ruling party coalition. The results also show that the people of Pakistan are concerned about the economic hardships they are facing and are supporting the demand for fresh general elections.

**UK Developments:** Rishi Sunak has been elected the leader of the Conservative party MPs in the British Parliament and assumed office of the PM. He is the third PM of the year. He is being variously described as the first non-white PM in

British history, the youngest in over two centuries estimated to be wealthier than the King Monarch, etc. However, the main point to note is that he is the choice of Global Finance. A former employee of Goldman Sachs, a former Hedge Fund manager, he is from the world of finance. The 23<sup>rd</sup> Party Congress Political Resolution had noted the strengthening of the “grip of global finance capital not only over the economy but also in shaping the political dispensations in many countries that favour aggressive neo-liberal policies.”

In the forty five days that Liz Truss was the Prime Minister (shortest in British history) the country was rocked by severe economic crisis which was compounded by the further tax concessions to the rich. Financing these concessions would have required huge rise in government borrowings. This fear led to a crash of the value of the pound.

The all-round economic crisis has a disastrous impact on people's livelihood. This has led to a situation where the Conservative Party is increasingly losing popular support. Opinion polls indicate the Labour Party is leading against the conservatives by a big margin. However, the Labour Party has not been able to provide a viable alternative to the economic policies pursued by the Conservative Party. Clearly, the Conservative MPs did not want an early election, hence, elected a new leader and are seeking to cling on to office till the end of the parliament's term in 2024.

### **Shanghai Cooperation Organization Leaders' Summit**

One of the most important issues discussed at the SCO Leaders' Summit held in Samarkand on September 15-16, 2022 was the expansion of trade with the use of national currencies of the member states. The creation of a roadmap for the use of national currencies in trade and the development of alternative payment and settlement systems are issues that the SCO has been working on in recent years. At the Samarkand Summit, the leaders of the member states approved the proposed roadmap to increase trade using national currencies. This will be a step towards de-dollarization of international trade.

With the dollar dependence doing more harm than good, countries are beginning to reduce their dollar exposure. Statistics on official foreign exchange reserves published by the IMF show how nations are lowering their holdings of assets denominated in dollars. In March 2022, the percentage of dollars in the world's foreign exchange reserves fell to 58.8%, the lowest level since 1995.

## CPC Congress

The 20<sup>th</sup> Congress of the Communist Party of China (CPC) was successfully held from 16<sup>th</sup> to 22<sup>nd</sup> October 2022. In the past five years, the CPC achieved the first of its two centennial goals – elimination of absolute poverty and progressing towards the establishment of a moderately prosperous society in China by 2021 (coinciding with the centenary of the foundation of the CPC).

CPC was able to lead the country's economy in the background of global economic crisis. In 2021, China's gross domestic product reached 17.7 trillion US dollars, accounting for 18.5 percent of the world's total. From 2013 to 2021, it grew at an average annual rate of 6.6 percent, beating the global average of 2.6 percent. During the 2013-2021 period, its contribution to global economic growth averaged 38.6 percent, higher than that of the G-7 countries combined. In 2020, the country surpassed the United States to become the world's largest trading country for the first time. In 2021, it retained this place with a foreign trade volume that expanded to 6.9 trillion dollars.

China's per capita gross national income reached \$11,890 last year, doubling from the figure recorded in 2012. Thanks to the income growth and improvements in education and health care, the average life expectancy of Chinese people reached 77.9 years in 2020, 5.2 years above the global average.

**Amendments to the Party Constitution** have become a regular feature in all the Party Congresses since 1982. Advancing the rejuvenation of the Chinese nation on all fronts through a Chinese path to modernisation has been designated as the central task of the Party and was included in the revised Party Constitution.

Another major amendment to the Constitution is to incorporate the principle that 'basic socialist economic systems, including the system under which public ownership is the mainstay and diverse forms of ownership develop together, the system under which distribution according to work is the mainstay while multiple forms of distribution exist alongside it, and the socialist market economy, are important pillars of socialism with Chinese characteristics'.

The Party Constitution was revised to include the resolve to build China into a great modern socialist country in all respects, realizing socialist modernization from 2020 through 2035; and building China into a great modern socialist country that is prosperous, strong, democratic, culturally advanced, harmonious, and beautiful from 2035 through the middle of this century – the second centennial task. (coinciding with the centenary of the founding of PRC, 2049)

The Congress agreed to add to the Party Constitution statements on developing a broader, fuller, and more robust whole-process people's democracy; establishing sound systems and procedures for democratic elections, consultations, decision-making, management, and oversight.

Provisions related to Party discipline are amended directing Party officials at all levels to oppose privilege-seeking mindset and practices and a constitutional provision to curtail corruption.

The Congress elected a new Central Committee and Central Commission for Discipline and Inspection. The newly elected Central Committee re-elected Xi Jinping as the general secretary of the CPC, and a new Polit Bureau. A 7 member Standing Committee (including the General Secretary) of the Polit Bureau was elected. 4 of them are new entrants. Xi Jinping is also re-elected as the chairman of the Central Military Commission.

## National Situation

### Economy

The Indian economy is plunging into a deeper crisis with growing recessionary trends. All international agencies as well as the RBI have downgraded their earlier growth forecasts. World Bank's first forecast - 8.7 per cent growth for FY 23. It trimmed this down to 8 per cent in April and then to 7.5 per cent and now in October to 6.5 per cent.

While the World Bank slashed the forecast for the third time the RBI has reduced it from 7.8 per cent to 7.2 per cent and now to 7 per cent. The UNCTAD has warned that India's GDP growth can further decelerate to 4.7 per cent.

**Declining Industrial Growth:** According to data released by the Ministry of Statistics and Programme Implementation on October 12, India's industrial growth decreased to an 18-month low of -0.8 percent in August from 2.2 percent in July. From April to August of current fiscal year, production growth in eight infrastructure sectors—including coal, crude oil, natural gas, refinery products, fertiliser, steel, cement, and electricity—was 9.8% as opposed to 19.4% during the same period last year.

**Plummeting Forex Reserve:** India's foreign exchange reserves fell to a new low as per the data released by the RBI. This fell to \$528.37 billion as of October 14, the lowest since 2020 and sharply down from \$ 642.4 billion last year.

**Rupee Crash:** The rupee has crashed more than 10 per cent against the US dollar this year and slipped below R. 83 to a dollar for the first-time last week. About a third of the decline in foreign exchange reserves is due to the RBI's intervention to protect the rupee from further fall.

**Widening Trade Deficit:** India's Current Account Deficit widened to 2.8 per cent of GDP in the June quarter up from 1.5 per cent in March quarter. The fall in rupee's value make imports more expensive. The uncertainties over global oil prices following the cut imposed by OPEC and India's huge dependence on imported oil will lead to further widening of the deficit. Coupled with the large outflow of FII which crossed \$ 7 billion in September the pressure on the value of the Indian Rupee to depreciate will further increase. With the prices of petroleum products already very high these factors will lead to greater burdens being imposed on the people.

### **Worsening Living Conditions**

The immediate consequence of the deepening economic crisis is the greater miseries imposed upon people's livelihood. **Unemployment** rate has shot up to 7.86% - rural 8.01 and urban 7.53 per cent - in festive October from 6.43% in September, as per the latest data from the Centre for Monitoring Indian Economy (CMIE).

Despite the dismal employment situation, the MGNREGS continues to be squeezed. Between April 1 and October 21, 2022 nearly 1.5 crore applicants for work were refused. This is on top of the fact that in the crippling conditions of the pandemic years, 2020-21, 2.1 crore persons seeking jobs were turned back and in 2021-2022, 1.73 crore were refused work. The main reason is the insufficient allocation of funds and also the tardy release of these funds with dues being carried forward from one year to the next. The Modi government's explanation that this scheme is demand driven and funds are released as per the demand turns out to be bogus given the crores of people who are turned back. Allocations for MGNREGS must be substantially increased guaranteeing at least 200 days of work per year.

A study by the World Bank (Poverty and Shared Prosperity, 2022) has concluded that nearly 80% of people who slipped into **poverty**, globally, in 2020 due to the COVID-19 pandemic hailed from India. Out of 7 crore people globally who became poor in 2020 due to economic losses caused by the pandemic, Indians accounted for 5.6 crore.

**Growing Hunger:** Global Hunger Index score released on October 14 ranks India 107 out of 121 countries. This index is measured based on a formula that combines four nutritional indicators of undernourishment, childhood stunting, childhood wasting and childhood mortality. Modi government rejected this ranking, as it rejects all global indices, questioning data sources. For India's 2022 score, data on undernourishment is sourced from the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) Food Security Indicators dated July 2022, stunting and wasting data were taken from the latest National Family and Health Survey-5, 2019-'21 and child mortality rates were sourced from 2021 United Nations estimates.

**Backbreaking Price Rise:** India's consumer price inflation was 7.4% in September 2022. For more than nine months, it has exceeded the RBI inflation band's highest limit of 6%. Food inflation accounts for roughly 39 percent of the CPI basket. The CPI for rural India climbed somewhat more than the CPI for urban India, showing a larger impact of inflation on the rural livelihoods.

The rise in September CPI inflation is largely driven by vegetables (18.05 percent), spices (16.88 percent), and cereals and other products (11.53 percent). These inflation figures for cereals and products are the highest since September 2013. The two most important cereals—non-PDS categories of rice and wheat—have undergone inflation rates of 9.2 percent and 17.4 percent in September.

**Paltry Increase in MSP:** The MSP for wheat has been increased by Rs 110 from Rs 2,015 in 2022-23 to Rs 2,125 in 2023-24 per quintal, while the MSP for barley has been increased by Rs 100 from Rs 1,635 per quintal to Rs 1,735 per quintal. The minimum support price for gram has been increased by Rs 105 from Rs 5,230 per quintal to Rs 5,335 per quintal, while safflower MSP has been increased by Rs 209 from Rs 5,441 to Rs 5,650. The MSP for rapeseed and mustard has been increased by Rs 400 from Rs 5,050 to Rs 5,450 per quintal. This is far below the rise in input costs due to inflation. Even this declaration of meagre hikes in MSP are meaningless unless there is substantial increase in procurement. Modi government has betrayed its promises of Cost+50 per cent MSP and compulsory government procurement.

This is an alarming situation. Basic survival diet of dal/atta/rice is going beyond the reach of majority of people on a daily basis. While inflation is high and soaring, food stocks in central godowns are at a 5 year low. This dangerously pushes India onto becoming food deficient and prone to food security crisis.

**Obscene Growth of Inequalities:** While people's lives are getting miserable the economic/wealth inequalities between the rich and the poor are widening obscenely. The tax concessions to the rich and loan waivers amounting to nearly 11 lakh crore rupees to the cronies are contributing to this. Run-away inflation feeding super profits, on the one hand, and, on the other, imposing GST on staple food items is resulting in widening inequalities. Modi government must tax the super-rich and provide relief to the people.

### **Sharpening Communal Polarization**

Ignoring these travails of the people and their miseries due to this economic ruin, Modi is personally leading campaigns to sharpen the communal divide amongst the people. Media space is overcrowded with Modi's religious ceremonies in Badrinath, Ayodhya and other religious rituals. Muslims are routinely targeted under some pretext or the other. Muslims are increasingly being subjected to grievous physical assaults. The spread of poisonous hate and violence campaigns are growing. The public flogging of the Muslim youth in Kheda in Gujarat by policemen in plainclothes is shocking.

**Bilkis Bano Case:** In the most shocking manner, the Modi government cleared the release of the eleven convicts in the Bilkis Bano case on grounds of remission for good behavior. These eleven were convicted for rape, murder and as perpetrators of most heinous crimes. The incident of gang rape and murder took place in front of Bilkis Bano, who herself was gang raped while being five months pregnant. Her three year old daughter along with thirteen others were killed after women being gang raped. Bilkis Bano was left under the impression that she was already dead.

The Gujarat state government filed an affidavit in the Supreme Court saying that despite the opposition by the CBI, the Centre had cleared the release. The Modi government chose to grant the remission of sentence to the perpetrators of heinous and grave crimes. This is an ominous signal that targeting the Muslim minority community is no crime. Modi government's patronage of perpetrators of such heinous crimes signals the inhuman levels they can sink for sharpening communal polarization.

Efforts to realize the 23<sup>rd</sup> Party Congress call for the broadest mobilization of secular forces against such sharpening of communal polarization must be strengthened.

## **Undermining Federalism**

Growing efforts continue to undermine federalism, a fundamental feature of our Constitution, and the rights of elected state governments. RSS/BJP's efforts are to impose a unitary State structure in India. Law and order is a state subject. Modi's call for 'One Country One Uniform' for police violates this.

**Fiscal Federalism:** The Central government has recently modified the scope of fiscal deficit of the state governments, further squeezing their fiscal space. The Centre now wants to include the extra budgetary borrowings by states in the calculation of fiscal deficit, thereby severely reducing the permissible normal borrowing of the states. At the same time, the Centre which raises rupees two to three lakh extra budgetary borrowings a year excludes such borrowings while calculating Centre's own fiscal deficit.

**Reject Imposition of Hindi:** The Amit Shah led Parliamentary Committee on Official Languages has recommended the mandatory use of Hindi as medium of instruction in all educational institutions including Central Universities. Imposing the RSS vision of 'Hindu, Hindi, Hindustan' on India's unique and rich linguistic diversity is simply unacceptable. All 22 official languages listed in the 8<sup>th</sup> Schedule of our Constitution must be treated and encouraged equally.

**Encroachment in Education Sector:** Education is in the Concurrent List with the elected state governments having an equal say in matters of educational policy. The New Education Policy 2020 unilaterally announced by the Central government, under conditions of Covid restrictions, grossly violated the rights of the states and their opinions were not considered.

In the ongoing conflicts between the BJP-appointed Governors of the state, who also function as Chancellors of universities in the state, has brought to the fore serious concerns that need to be addressed. A recent ruling of the Supreme Court of treating UGC regulations as part of Central law binding on all states needs to be reviewed. The UGC's regulations are a subordinate legislation; rules framed under the UGC Act adopted by the Parliament. Rules are Executive actions and cannot supersede or annul any law passed by state legislatures or Acts of the state governments in a subject that falls under the Concurrent List of our Constitution.

The efforts to **destabilize elected state governments** continue as seen in the BJP's attempts to poach TRS MLAs in Telangana offering huge sums of money.

## Judiciary

The infringement of personal liberty of citizens guaranteed by the Indian Constitution was highlighted once again in the case of Dr. G.N. Saibaba and others detained under UAPA. This detention was declared as null and void by the Bombay High Court on October 14 which ordered their release. Within hours, the Maharashtra government moved the Supreme Court seeking immediate stay on release. The SC constituted a special hearing the very next day, a non-working Saturday, and nullified the Bombay High Court judgment. G.N. Saibaba, a disabled person and wheel chair user, is suffering from multiple ailments. One of the other detainees Pandu Narote died under detention due to ill health. The tragedy of the death of Father Stan Swamy due to ill health in custody earlier obviously did not come under consideration.

The Delhi High Court has once again refused bail to Umar Khalid and the Bombay High Court to Jyoti Jagtap.

The BJP Government's delay in clearing the Supreme Court collegium's unanimous recommendations for elevation and appointment of Judges is a cause for concern. The Law Minister has recently commented that the government alone must have the authority in appointing Judges. One of the appointments kept on hold is that of Justice Muralidhar as the Chief Justice of Madras High Court. Justice Muralidhar was unceremoniously transferred from Delhi High Court within hours after he came down heavily on the Delhi police and Union Government for grievous inaction against those who made inflammatory speeches provoking communal violence in Delhi in February 2020.

**Pegasus Spyware:** New investigations by the Organized Crime and Corruption Reporting Project (OCCRP) have revealed that the Intelligence Bureau bought hardware from Israeli spyware NSO Group that "matches the description of equipment used elsewhere to deploy the company's flagship Pegasus software, import documents show". The Modi government has brazenly brushed aside the earlier New York Times report that said that the Indian government purchased Pegasus spyware in 2017 as "sensationalism". The SC has said that the government did not cooperate in its investigation on this issue. The Judiciary must take notice all these latest revelations and the Modi government must be held accountable for such blatant unconstitutional acts strengthening what our 23<sup>rd</sup> Congress report stated as the "architecture of a surveillance state"

## **Election Commission**

The Election Commission has been proactive in recent times in advancing the political agenda of the ruling BJP. The EC has proposed to amend the Model Code of Conduct to guide political parties to disclose how they plan to finance promises made in their election manifestos and how this would impact the financial situation of the state governments concerned or Central government. This is a totally unwarranted move.

The Constitution mandates the Election Commission to conduct free and fair elections. It is not the job of the Election Commission to regulate the policy pronouncements and welfare measures that political parties promise to the people. This is an area which is solely the prerogative of political parties in a democracy.

The Election Commission had, in an affidavit to the Supreme Court in April, stated that the Commission cannot regulate policy decisions of political parties and that it would be an “overreach of powers”.

Party has written to the EC strongly opposing any effort to circumscribe or regulate the right of political parties to address people’s concerns and offer policy measures to ameliorate their problems.

Modi has been addressing several rallies all across poll-bound Gujarat and Himachal Pradesh promising freebies and ‘Diwali gifts’ to the people by spending people’s money. The EC has raised no objection on this but it seeks to impose restrictions on all other political parties and prevent them from providing any assurances of relief to the people. This is completely unacceptable.

**Gujarat MoUs:** In an outrageous manner the EC has signed MoUs with more than 1000 corporate houses in Gujarat to monitor electoral participation of their work force and publish names of those who do not vote. This ‘name and shame’ policy is a coercive step towards compulsory voting. This is a clear violation of Article 326 of the Constitution that guarantees the right to vote. The Union Minister for Law and Justice had in an affidavit filed in the Supreme Court in 2015 stated that if a regime of compulsory voting is introduced, it could result in the creation of an undemocratic environment in the country. The Union Government also contended that right to vote also includes the right to not to vote in its submission to the Supreme Court. The Union Government had also quoted the Law Commission report on electoral reforms stating that the Commission had noted that the right to vote cannot be imposed as a fundamental duty.

The current move by the EC of involving corporates in enforcing the right to vote as a fundamental duty is outright unconstitutional. Apart from this it further involves the corporates in the conduct of the elections in an already controversial background of anonymous corporate funding through Electoral Bonds. Further, in the current EVM machine counting process the earlier practice of mixing the ballot papers no longer exists in practice. EVM counting gives transparently the voting pattern of each booth. This makes the workers being verified by this process of corporate supervision very vulnerable to intimidation and vindictive action. This makes a mockery of the secret ballot.

Further, the fact that the EC did not announce the schedule for the Gujarat assembly elections while announcing the schedule for Himachal Pradesh is clearly a move to provide more time delaying the Model Code of Conduct coming into force for Modi to make more announcements and offer more ‘gifts’ to the people luring their votes.

### **PFI Ban**

The Popular Front of India (PFI) is an organization which holds extremist views and has been indulging in violent activities against its perceived opponents. Party has been strongly opposed to these extremist views and has always condemned the violent activities of the PFI.

However, the notification of the PFI as an unlawful association under the Unlawful Activities Prevention Act (UAPA) is not the way to tackle this problem. Past experience has shown that bans on organisations like the RSS and the Maoists were not effective. There has to be firm administrative action under the existing laws against the PFI whenever it indulges in illegal or violent activities. Its sectarian and divisive ideology must be exposed and fought politically among the people.

The PFI and the RSS have been engaged in killings and retaliatory killings in Kerala and coastal Karnataka, vitiating the atmosphere with a view to create communal polarization. There are also extremist organisations like the Sanatan Sanstha and the Hindu Janajagruti Samiti, elements of whom have been implicated in the killings of noted secular writers and personalities.

All these forces, whether they represent extremist majority or minority groups, must be combated by utilizing the regular laws of the land and by firm administrative action.

## **Jammu and Kashmir**

The situation in Jammu & Kashmir continues to deteriorate. The highly authoritarian and communal policies being pursued by the Union government have resulted in deep and massive discontentment among larger sections of the population in this region. Arbitrary misuse of draconian laws, denying freedom of expression, curbing the media, disallowing peaceful protests and indiscriminate arrests of youngsters has virtually put Kashmir under siege.

The UT administration has made far reaching alterations to the polity of the region. It replaced through Re-organisation Act the State Subject certificates with domicile certificates that opened up property and voting rights to outsiders, altered land laws etc.

The weightage of the valley and Muslim majority areas in Jammu has been reduced through Delimitation Commission's faulty exercise which took divergent population yard sticks for Jammu and the Kashmir valley without any justification. Efforts are continuing to manipulate the ongoing process of revision of electoral rolls to help the BJP to secure majority for forming the Government.

The tall claims of the Government of investment and development, providing job opportunities are baseless. Even those sectors like Horticulture which has been major source of livelihood for majority of the people is facing deep crises due to price crash, infrastructural bottlenecks, increasing costs of inputs and lack of smooth passage of fruit laden trucks on National Highway.

Under such circumstances people's alienation is unprecedented. Though the administration seems to be satisfied with forced silence of the people but in the long run such a situation can only benefit those who want to destabilize the situation further and can only give a fillip to militancy. Already the region is witnessing unfortunate increase in targeted killings of Kashmiri pandits and labourers.

Kashmir cannot be left to the mercy of communal and authoritarian regime of BJP. The secular democratic forces must act in defence of the rights of the people.

## **Secular Opposition Parties: Recent Developments**

**Bihar:** Soon after our July Central Committee meeting the Nitish Kumar led JDU decided to break its alliance with the BJP and rejoin the *Mahagathbandhan*. After resigning as Chief Minister he staked claim to form the government with the RJD

and the Congress. This government was formed with Nitish Kumar as the Chief Minister and Tejashwi Yadav as Deputy Chief Minister including 2 ministers from the Congress Party. This proved its majority at the floor of the assembly. The Left parties, which contested the assembly elections in an understanding with the *Mahagathbandhan*, extended support to this government.

Coming soon after the BJP's horse-trading and destabilization of the Uddhav Thackeray led Maha Vikas Aghadi (MVA) in Maharashtra and the formation of the alternate government of Eknath Shinde with BJP's Fadnavis as Deputy CM, this Bihar development came as a shot in the arm for the secular forces in rallying against the Hindutva communal offensive.

**Telangana:** Sheding all ambivalence of the past, the Telangana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) has come out strongly against the BJP. The TRS Chief Minister is taking initiatives to rally some secular parties at the national level against the BJP. The BJP's aggressiveness and brazen efforts at engineering defections from other parties was also a factor for this changed position of the TRS. The Chief Minister has launched a national Party, Bharat Rashtra Samiti (BRS) aiming to play a national role.

A sitting Congress MLA defected to the BJP which necessitated a by-election in the Munugodu assembly constituency. This by-election is due on November 3. The main contest would be between the TRS and BJP. TRS sought support from our Party and the CPI for its candidate to defeat the BJP. Our Party state committee has decided to extend support to the TRS in this by-election while keeping the issue of any further understanding to be considered later.

**Efforts at Forging Secular Opposition Unity:** Following these developments, interactions among secular opposition parties have increased. Nitish Kumar came to Delhi and met major opposition leaders proposing unity to defeat the BJP. Sharad Pawar was reelected as the President of the NCP at its national convention in Delhi and similarly proposed unity among opposition secular parties. Om Prakash Chautala of INLD organized a big public meeting at Fatehabad, Haryana on the occasion of late Devi Lal's birth anniversary. Many national leaders were invited and participated in this meeting.

**Congress:** The Congress party launched its Bharat Jodo Yatra led by Rahul Gandhi from Kanyakumari to Srinagar spanning over 150 days. This is evoking response particularly in the Southern states. As it enters in the BJP strongholds, we will have to watch the response of the people. Given the recent developments of disarray within the Congress and the defection of many of its leaders in some

states to BJP this yatra appears as an effort to unify the party and salvage its position by strengthening its links with the people.

Leader of the opposition in the Rajya Sabha Mallikarjun Kharge has been elected as the President of the Congress party. This is the first time that a non-Gandhi person is Congress President in 24 years.

**CPI:** The 24<sup>th</sup> Congress of the CPI was held at Vijayawada, Andhra Pradesh from 14<sup>th</sup> to 18<sup>th</sup>, October 2022. General Secretaries of the CPI(M) and CPI-ML greeted the Congress and attended its inaugural session.

### **Efforts to Destabilise Kerala LDF Government**

In a brazen attack on federalism the Governor of Kerala is functioning to further the political objective of the ruling BJP to destabilize the LDF government. The latest is his salvo against Kerala's higher education system. The manner in which he demanded the resignation of various Vice Chancellors of the universities in Kerala in his capacity as the chancellor of the universities in the state has no authority given by the University Acts passed by the state legislature to initiate such actions. The Kerala High Court has given an interim stay on this order pending the seeking of explanation from Vice Chancellors. Though the judiciary is now seized of the matter this is a politically motivated move to capture higher education system in Kerala to facilitate the promotion of the Hindutva ideological agenda of the fascistic RSS.

Subsequently, the Governor wrote to the Chief Minister demanding the resignation of the Finance Minister. He has neither the authority nor sanction under the Constitution to do so. The CM has replied informing that the right to choose members of the cabinet rests with the CM.

All those who value and respect the fundamental features of the Indian Constitution and its secular democratic foundations will have to rally together in the defense of Constitutional rights. Unfortunately, within the UDF while the IUML and RSP have categorically condemned the Governor's actions, the Congress party is equivocal.

People of Kerala will unitedly resist such brazen partisanship shown by the Governor and defeat all efforts to destabilize the LDF government.

## **West Bengal**

The July CC meeting had noted the exposure of mega corruption scams and the arrests of ministers in West Bengal particularly TMC strong man Partha Chatterjee. These developments are a vindication of our stand that the TMC government is both anti-democratic and thoroughly corrupt. The gross misgovernance and the criminal-corrupt nexus that is patronized by the TMC government is now facing growing mass protests led by our Party and mass organisations. These large protests are being met with severe repression. Comrades are braving these attacks and the protest actions against the misrule of the TMC government and the CM are growing.

The serious predicament that Mamata Banerjee and TMC government finds themselves in after the exposure of sordid corruption and widespread scams rousing public anger and revulsion explain the willing softness Mamata Banerjee is showing towards the RSS and Modi. After stating in a press conference that “RSS was not that bad” she made another public statement exonerating PM Modi as not being behind the misuse of Central agencies, ED and CBI. The sudden *volte face* of the TMC during the Vice-Presidential election to abstain renegeing the earlier assurance to opposition political leaders of supporting the united opposition candidate preceded these statements.

Mamata Banerjee has a history of association with the RSS/BJP in the past also being a cabinet minister in the Vajpayee government. The rise of the TMC as an anti-Communist force in West Bengal was often in alliance with the BJP. These recent developments have disillusioned those who saw the TMC as a committed anti-fascist fighter. The growing mass protests are drawing wider and wider sections of the people in Bengal who are bravely facing police repression and intensifying the struggles to end this gross misgovernance and criminal-corrupt nexus, while firmly opposing and isolating the BJP and communal forces.

## **Tripura**

The last Central Committee meeting discussed the report of the Tripura Party Secretariat and State Committee that were attended both by the General Secretary and Com Prakash Karat. Both of them again attended these meeting in August and the General Secretary attended the Secretariat meeting on 20<sup>th</sup> October. The last CC decided that the Party needs to strengthen its independent activities in the state and programs should be undertaken post *durga puja* festivities.

Two months long campaigns were undertaken in August and September. Over 200 activities were held with total participation of more than one lakh people across the state. Such programmes took place in some areas (where such activities were not possible earlier) by foiling efforts by the ruling party and BJP to create impediments.

Elections to the state assembly have to be conducted by 2023 March. The Electoral rolls revision is slated to be finalized on January 5, 2023.

A very large public meeting was held by the Party on 21<sup>st</sup> October in Agartala despite the obstacles created by the BJP hoodlums who prevented more than 60 vehicles from reaching Agartala, injuring comrades who were proceeding to participate and while they were returning. Despite this an estimated nearly 40,000 people participated and it was a truly impressive show of strength generating confidence among party ranks and people.

Efforts must be made to mobilize secular opposition parties to unitedly condemn the attacks on democracy, democratic rights and the reign of terror unleashed by the BJP and its state government.

### **Forthcoming Assembly Elections**

The disarray in the main opposition party, Congress, is providing advantage to the BJP in the forthcoming elections to the assemblies of Himachal Pradesh and Gujarat. The incumbent BJP government suffers a high degree of anti-incumbency in both the states. It is, however, banking on the disunity among the secular forces to retain its governments. Modi has spearheaded the BJP's campaign in both the states focusing mainly on sharpening communal polarization and declaring 'freebies' to the people at the cost of the Union exchequer. Helped by the ECs delaying announcement of Gujarat elections, Modi is continuing to declare his "personal gifts" to the people using State funds.

The AAP has put up its candidates in both the states. While in Himachal it is not making major inroads, in the urban areas of Gujarat it is having some impact.

The CPI(M) state committees have decided to independently contest few seats with an understanding with other Left forces particularly the CPI. CPI(M) has fielded 11 candidates in Himachal Pradesh. In Gujarat discussions with other secular forces are continuing as the election schedule has not been announced so far.

## **CC Calls**

All major mass organizations are in the process of conducting their All India conferences. Under these circumstances, giving a call for an all-India time bound action programme may not be feasible.

Party must strengthen local struggles and protest actions against the growing burdens on people's livelihoods, growing attacks on Dalits; women and the marginalized people; in defence of democracy and against attacks on democratic rights and civil liberties. These local struggles must focus on ensuring MGNREGS is properly implemented and wages paid on time and forcing the authorities to provide works as per demand.

Party will support the series of protest actions across the country called by the Trade Unions, Kisan Sabhas and Agricultural Labour Unions on the miseries being imposed on the people and on their specific 14 point demand charter culminating in a march to Parliament in April, 2023.

Completely ignoring the travails of the people and their miseries, Modi election campaign is focusing on its staple weapon of sharpening the communal divide amongst the people. Modi has nothing to answer about the plight on Indian economy, the ruination of the people's lives due to his policies, the loot of India's national assets etc., but is busy in projecting religious events led by him like his *puja* performance in Badrinath and at the makeshift temple in Ayodhya promising that the temple construction will be completed by January 2024. Clearly, this is their mascot for the 2024 General Elections.

Under these circumstances, it is essential for the Party to seriously undertake activities and interventions on the lines of what we have decided in the 23rd Party Congress on how to combat the Hindutva communal offensive. The steps outlined in the political resolution must be seriously implemented in order to prevent the 'overarching Hindutva identity' pushing on the issues plaguing people's lives to the background and diverting their attention and consolidating the Hindutva communal vote bank.

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