

**Report on Political Developments  
Since the Last Central Committee Meeting**  
*(Adopted by the Central Committee Meeting held between  
September 2 and 4 in New Delhi)*

**International**

The international developments since the 18<sup>th</sup> Congress held in April broadly conform to the main conclusions arrived at in the international section of the political resolution. The political resolution had stated:

“With the re-election of President Bush, the aggressive reactionary sections of the US ruling classes will continue to espouse the doctrine of a neo-liberal imperialism which intervenes globally to establish ‘democracy’ and free markets and goes about this business with a big stick in hand.”

**US Aggressive Moves**

Even after getting bogged down in Iraq, President Bush continues to adamantly justify the invasion and occupation. There are no prospects for a US withdrawal of troops. In the meantime, the resistance to the occupation is mounting. After the January elections and the formation of the new government, attacks on the Iraqi security forces trained by the Americans have gone up and personnel of the government targetted. Large parts of the country are out of the control of the government.

The new constitution has failed to get the support of the Sunni representatives. It undermines the long-standing secular character of the Iraqi state. It states that laws contravening Islamic laws will be negated and women’s rights are curtailed. The unity of Iraq which was forged in the struggle against colonialism is now being undermined by American imperialism. A division of Iraq into the Kurdish region in the North, the Sunnis in the Central part and the Shia dominated South is built into the American sponsored transition to a client state. The mounting casualties of American soldiers whose death toll has crossed 1800 is once again reviving anti-war sentiments in the US. For the first time public approval of Bush’s handling of Iraq has gone down to 34 per cent.

The US-British occupation of Iraq has unleashed a spiral of violence and fundamentalist reactions. Iraq, which was staunchly secular, is daily witnessing suicide bombings. The shadow of Iraq has now touched London.

The horrific suicide bombings of July 7 were directly related to the Blair government's brazen role in the occupation of Iraq.

The United States has also begun to target China and criticise its growing military expenditure. Leaders in the Bush administration are voicing concern about China's growing military might and economic strength. The US has blocked a Chinese oil company's bid to buy Unocal, a major US oil company. Similarly, other bids by Chinese companies are being rebuffed. The United States continues its hostile manoeuvres against Cuba and Venezuela. Bush has put his stamp of approval to the Sharon government's plans to annex the West Bank to Israel after the withdrawal from the Gaza strip. The United States refuses to arrive at a reasonable settlement with the DPRK on the nuclear issue even though South Korea has declared that the DPRK should be able to develop nuclear energy for peaceful purposes.

### **EU Constitution**

Another important development in this period has been the rejection of the European Union Draft Constitution by France through a referendum. After this decisive rejection, Netherlands too followed by registering a No verdict. This has effectively killed the draft constitution.

The rejection of the EU constitution is a victory for all the forces in Europe who are opposed to European integration based on big business and finance capital which would have led to the dismantling of the social welfare system and the public sector. Fears that national sovereignty would further be curbed also contributed to the No vote in the referendum.

### **Anti-Hegemonic Trends**

As noted in the Party Congress resolution, the resistance to US hegemony is growing. In Latin America, the close ties developing between Cuba and Venezuela is viewed with apprehension by the United States. The rightwing in the US openly calls for the destabilization of the Venezuelan government and a Christian fundamentalist preacher close to Bush even called for the assassination of President Chavez in his TV programme. Chavez has openly declared that Venezuela will adopt the socialist road and closely partner Cuba in providing an alternative to the neo-liberal model in Latin America. In Bolivia, mass demonstrations and protests demanding nationalization of the huge natural gas industry led to the resignation of the President.

Russia and China have signed a series of agreements on energy, electricity and defence for strengthening cooperation. The first major joint military exercise of the two armed forces was conducted recently. The Shanghai Cooperation

Organisation meeting was held in Kazakhstan in July. The six member states are China, Russia, Kazakhstan, Kyrgystan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. The meeting asked the coalition members to decide on a deadline for the use of the temporary infrastructure by foreign military contingents in their countries. Uzbekistan has already asked the US troops to withdraw from their base in the country.

Another major development has been the presidential elections in Iran which led to a landslide victory for Mahmoud Ahmadinejad who belongs to the conservative Islamic camp. The new government has reiterated that Iran will not bow down to US and EU pressures to give up its development of nuclear technology for civilian purposes. The US continues to push for sanctions against Iraq and Bush has announced that the military option is not ruled out against Iran.

### **South Asian Region**

Important developments have taken place in our neighbourhood.

In Sri Lanka, the Janata Vimukhti Perumuna (JVP) withdrew from the government protesting against the tsunami relief mechanism which would involve LTTE representation. Though the government has no majority in parliament after the JVP withdrawal, it is continuing because the UNP has decided not to pull down the government. The assassination of foreign minister Lakshman Kadirgamar was a shocking event. The LTTE hand in the killing is evident. This will further complicate the efforts to resume negotiations and add to the already tense situation regarding the ceasefire. The LTTE continues to target Tamil leaders and groups who do not toe its line. Based on the Supreme Court decision, presidential elections will be held in November. Till then no progress in the peace process can be expected.

In Bangladesh, the growing menace of Islamic fundamentalist forces was highlighted by the spate of bomb blasts all over the country. There were bomb blasts in 500 places in 63 of the 64 districts. Fundamentalist organisations such as the Jamatul Mujahideen through these bomb blasts want to show their strength. The Khaleda government continues to soft-pedal the extremist threats.

In Nepal, the king has refused to take any substantive steps to restore democracy despite his assurance to the Indian Prime Minister in Jakarta that he has a roadmap for democracy. Repression of political activists and arrests continue. Many student leaders have been imprisoned. The government employees organisations have been banned. More and more the king has set himself on a course which will spell the end of the monarchy. The democratic

forces in Nepal are now questioning the need for a monarchy. The demand for a constituent assembly to draft a new constitution is gaining ground with the seven party coalition voicing it. Our Party has reiterated its demand that the Indian government should stop resumption of military supplies to the king.

## **National Situation**

In the three months since our last meeting in June some of the main highlights have been the continuing crisis within the BJP and its inability to resolve the leadership issue. The CPI(M) and the Left parties asserted that the UPA government cannot breach the CMP taking the Bhel disinvestment issue as an example. An important achievement of this period has been the passing of the Rural Employment Guarantee Act, an issue the Left has been pressing the government to take up. The India-US agreement particularly the one on defence has been sharply criticised for accommodating India to the US strategic interests. The Party and the Left played an important role on all major issues which came up such as the Nanavati Commission report and the follow up action, the discussions on the women's reservation bill and the continuing judicial intervention in favour of commercial private professional institutions.

The Party has also launched its August campaign on land, food and employment and is preparing for the struggles to get some of these demands implemented in September.

### **Crisis Within BJP**

A major development has been the crisis within the BJP consequent to the visit of L.K. Advani to Pakistan. The remarks made by Advani about Jinnah sparked off an angry response from the RSS and many veteran leaders of the Party. Advani sought to defend his remarks and submitted his resignation from the presidentship. Initially, Advani rejected the Parliamentary board's request to reconsider his resignation. For four days the stalemate continued. Finally, the BJP adopted a resolution which reiterated their stand on Jinnah and partition in line with the RSS viewpoint. Advani was compelled to take back his resignation because he found not much support for his stand.

The withdrawal of Advani's resignation did not end the matter. The RSS in its annual *pracharak* meeting in Surat reiterated that there can be no deviation from the Hindutva ideology and conveyed that the one-man one-post principle should be implemented. This meant that Advani would have to step down from either the presidentship or as leader of the opposition. Within the BJP, once again, this caused turmoil. Finally, a patch-up was made with

Advani continuing as President for the time being. It is clear that Advani's position within the party has been undermined. But the RSS has relented to allow the BJP to remain united to face the parliament session and the Bihar elections thereafter.

The main point in this episode is that contrary to all the BJP claims of being a "democratic" party with a difference, it has been exposed as a front of the RSS. The role of NDA allies was also exposed. George Fernandes, convenor of the NDA, shamelessly tried to broker a peace between the RSS and the BJP and got snubbed by both for his pains. The episode has put them on the defensive vis a vis BJP's links with the RSS.

Dissidence in the various states where the BJP runs governments has also surfaced. In Gujarat, 40 MLA belonging to the anti-Modi camp have made public their differences. In Madhya Pradesh and Jharkhand too, dissident activities were stepped up. In other states too, problems have developed. In Karnataka and Kerala, the divisions are open. Madanlal Khurana, a senior leader has been suspended from the party for criticising L.K. Advani

The whole episode has lowered the image of the BJP among the people. The ideological confusion and disarray became evident to all. The BJP was hoping to recover some ground by returning to parliament after the boycott of the last session. But it failed to present itself as an effective opposition.

### **Rural Employment Guarantee Act**

The adoption of the Rural Employment Guarantee Act in parliament is a major achievement. It fulfills the commitment made by the UPA government in the Common Minimum Programme. By this Act, one person in every rural household is entitled to hundred days work at a minimum wage of Rs. 60.00. The scheme will begin in 200 districts and will be extended to the whole country in five years. Our Party intervened along with the Left to ensure certain key provisions and improvement in the draft bill. This concerned extending the scope of the scheme to the entire country in five years, one-third reservation for women, pegging the minimum wage at Rs. 60 which the draft bill had left undefined and diversification of the work offered.

This Act should now be taken up for implementation. The Party and the mass organisations should take up the issues in the 200 concerned districts and launch struggles wherever necessary for the proper implementation of the Act.

## **Indo-US Relations**

The Defence Minister visited the US as part of the preparations for the Prime Minister's first visit to the USA. He announced before his departure that it was an "exploratory" visit. But the India-US Defence Framework Agreement for the next ten years was signed while he was there. Our Party has viewed this agreement with serious concern as it drags in India further into the US global strategy. We have sharply criticized the agreement on four counts.

Firstly, it talks of both sides conducting multinational operations by their troops in other countries without mention of United Nations auspices. This would mean that joint operations would be under US command. Secondly, the agreement states that both sides will "expand collaboration relating to missile defence". This is connected with the US effort to get India to be part of its missile defence system. Thirdly, there is a proposal for co-production of defence equipment. This is clearly meant to lure India to buy F16 fighter planes and open the market for US weapons. Fourthly, India has agreed to ensure the security of the sea-lanes in the region. This ties with the US interest in getting the Indian Navy to patrol the Malacca straits and other international seas. Finally, the defence agreement comes at a time when the United States is actively working to prevent China from enhancing its defence potential.

Following this agreement, during the Prime Minister's visit a joint statement has been issued. Our Party has put out a comprehensive statement. We have highlighted the fact that this joint statement is a continuation of the trend of India being accommodated as a strategic ally of the United States. We have objected to the Indian government agreeing to become part of a global democracy initiative with the United States which is supposed to be to help democracy being strengthened in third countries. The US is notorious for its aggression and violation of national sovereignty in the name of spreading democracy. Further, India acknowledges the US as leading the fight against terrorism and pledges partnership. This goes against the whole range of experience where US intervention has promoted terrorist activities rather than suppressing it as it has happened in the case of Iraq. As far as nuclear cooperation is concerned the United States has agreed to supply nuclear fuel to India provided Indian nuclear reactors come under IAEA safeguards. Our Party was opposed to nuclear weaponisation after the Pokhran blasts in 1998. We have nothing in common with the BJP and the nuclear hawks who wish to have no restrictions on developing nuclear weapons. Our caution is that India's independent nuclear technology being developed for peaceful purposes should not be in any way restricted by the agreement with the US. For this there has to be strict reciprocity at every stage and India should not make any unilateral concessions.

Finally, the joint statement does not commit the US to provide us high technology. Moreover, most of the promises are intangible. The impression from the joint statement is that the United States is giving India the status of a strategic ally and internationally it is being interpreted as putting India as a counterweight to China. Our Party should campaign against the Indo-US military agreement and the trend of allying India with the US in political and strategic matters.

### **Nanavati Commission Report on Anti-Sikh Violence**

In the monsoon session of parliament, the government tabled the Nanavati report and the Action Taken Report. The judicial enquiry by Justice Nanavati produced a disappointing report without pinpointing those responsible for organizing the planned attacks on the Sikh community. Even the limited recommendations of the Nanavati Commission were not taken seriously and accepted by the Action Taken Report of the government. Our Party conveyed to the government that this is unacceptable. In the light of the adjournment motion moved by the BJP, we demanded that the government make amendments and state clearly that the recommendations would be accepted and taken up for implementation. The government did this subsequently and the Prime Minister made an apology for what happened to the Sikh community in 1984. The stand taken by the Party and MPs in parliament was widely appreciated by the secular and democratic forces.

### **Petrol-Diesel Price Hike**

It was decided in the June Central Committee meeting that if the government goes ahead with the price hike of petroleum products, the Left parties should call for an all-India protest day. When the petrol price hike was announced on June 20, the Left parties gave a call for an all-India protest on 28<sup>th</sup> of June. The price of petrol was increased by Rs. 2.50 per litre and diesel by Rs. 2 per litre. Even before that in many places demonstrations and protests took place. The protest day on June 28 was well observed and there was widespread participation all over the country. The anger of the people against this price hike was evident and the UPA government's image has suffered.

With the international oil prices crossing the \$60 per barrel mark, once again the government is contemplating a price rise. An immediate concern is the loss suffered by the public sector oil companies in recent months. This has once again raised the prospect of increase in the prices of petroleum products. The Party has demanded that the government first take the steps suggested by the Left parties which includes scrapping the increase in the prices due to readjustment of excise duties in the last budget, the 50 paise per litre road cess,

constitution of an oil stabilization fund and doing away with the incentives given to the private oil refineries.

### **Women's Reservation Bill**

The Left parties issued a statement urging the UPA government to bring in the original women's reservation bill in the monsoon session of parliament. The home minister floated an alternative proposal to add one-third more seats in parliament and the state legislatures on the basis of a fresh delimitation. Out of these enlarged seats, one-third would be reserved for women. The Party considered this proposal as impractical, as delimitation and creation of new seats would involve a protracted process. Further, this would lead to the issue being postponed and it would not satisfy those parties who are demanding OBC reservation within women's reservation. When the Prime Minister called the UPA and supporting parties for discussions, our Party took the stand that the original bill should be brought and only if there is wider acceptance for the new proposal can it be considered. Most of the parties preferred the original bill. However, when the meeting with opposition parties was held, the BJP stated that it preferred reservation in the party list, thereby going back on its stand of support for the original bill.

In such a situation the CPI(M) and the Left parties should push for bringing the original bill in the winter session of parliament.

### **Gujarat Situation**

In Gujarat, the people belonging to the minority community continue to be treated as second class citizens. Rehabilitation in their homes, the right to resume their occupations and conduct business is being thwarted. The recommendations of the Pota review committee on those detained under Pota is being refused to be implemented by the state government. The Central government should take all the necessary steps to see that investigations into incidents of serious cases are handed over to the CBI by making suitable submissions in the Supreme Court.

### **Attacks on Women's Rights**

In the recent period, fatwas were issued by a religious organisation which went against the basic rights of women. In the case of Imrana, who was raped by her father-in-law, the fatwa shockingly decreed that she has to leave her husband because of the rape committed by her father-in-law. The Party condemned this dictat as a violation of human rights and victimising the victim. Another fatwa placed restrictions and conditions on the participation of Muslim women in the local body elections. Such objectionable fatwas is

being opposed by strong voices within the Muslim community. The Party alongwith other democratic forces should stand firmly in support of the rights of Muslim women and oppose violation of the basic rights.

### **Supreme Court Judgment On Professional Institutions**

A seven-member bench of the Supreme Court ruled that private unaided professional educational institutions are free to decide on their admissions policy and the fees they fix. Further, it declared that the State has no role to play in these spheres. Further, it set apart the 15 per cent NRI quota in the professional colleges. It has decreed that there can be no reservation of seats on the SC, ST and OBC quotas. This judicial intervention has worsened the situation which got earlier aggravated with the TMA Pai Foundation judgment. Giving professional private institutions a free run to decide on whom to admit and what fees to charge will make higher education out of the reach of a vast majority of the people. It opens the floodgates for further commercialisation.

Already the Party and other democratic forces have been demanding a central legislation to enable the states to regulate admissions and fees. With the latest judgment this has become all the more urgent. The government has agreed to draft such a legislation and it should be able to check commercialisation and also restore quotas for SC, ST and OBCs.

### **Floods in Maharashtra**

There was heavy loss of lives due to torrential rains in Maharashtra. More than 1000 people died in the devastation which mainly affected Mumbai, Thane, Raigad and other districts where opening of the dams caused flooding. Mumbai was totally paralysed. The state administration and the Mumbai Municipal Corporation came to a standstill. They failed to respond to the grim situation by providing immediate relief or restoring essential services like electricity and water supplies. Farmers suffered heavy losses due to destruction of crops and cattle.

Lessons have to be learnt from the Mumbai disaster and urgent measures for urban development instituted without giving in to the promoter-builder lobbies. The central government has to provide adequate support to see that planned urban development and disaster management procedures are put in place.

## **Terrorist Attack At Ayodhya**

Four members of a suicide squad sought to storm the disputed site at Ayodhya but they were shot down by the paramilitary forces. For some time reports were coming about a possible terrorist attack. The security forces were alert and were able to foil the attack. The BJP was in the midst of the Advani crisis when this event occurred. They sought to cash in on this by giving a call for an all-India protest day and a bandh was observed in BJP ruled states like Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and centres in Chattisgarh and Jharkhand. However, they did not get much public response. The Party condemned this terrorist attack as designed to provoke communal tensions and appreciated the role of the security forces in countering and foiling the attack.

## **Jammu & Kashmir Situation**

The Kashmir valley has seen a spate of attacks in Srinagar and other areas which have targeted both soldiers and the civilian population. The spurt in attacks is also accompanied by the efforts to step up infiltration during the summer season, though the scale of this is less than previously. However, the army was responsible for a serious attack on the civilian population. In a shocking incident in Kupwara, three young boys were killed by the army in the night mistaking them to be terrorists. This tragic incident underlines how important it is to prevent such excesses which further adds to the alienation of the people.

It is necessary for the central government to immediately initiate talks at the political level with all the parties and forces in Jammu & Kashmir. Such a political dialogue should accompany the Indo-Pakistan talks. Without such a political initiative there can be no improvement in the situation and the people will lose confidence that anything tangible will emerge for a political solution.

## **Manipur**

The situation in Manipur became serious after the blockade of the two national highways by the Naga Students Union with their demand for a greater Nagaland. This had serious repercussions in the whole area. With essential commodities not reaching the state, prices shot up and there was a severe shortage. The Left parties wrote to the Prime Minister asking the Central Government to intervene to see that the blockade is lifted.

## **IMDT Act Annulment**

The Supreme Court struck down the IMDT Act. The SC judgement is flawed as it has gone into extraneous matters based on the Governor's report. Our Party's stand is that illegal migration has to be checked. While doing so, the rights of minorities who are Indian citizens have to be protected. There should be no harassment of Muslim citizens. The Centre should devise suitable measures to protect their rights. Further deportation of illegal entrants can be accomplished only by an agreement with Bangladesh.

## **Agrarian Crisis**

The situation in the rural areas continues to be marked by acute unemployment and the distress caused due to the agrarian crisis. Shortage of rainfall has led to the problem of drought in certain states. A shockingly large number of deaths of children had occurred due to malnutrition in the tribal areas of Maharashtra and other states. This is taking place in the background of the public distribution system being defunct in these areas.

The importance of conducting the struggle in September on issues like land, food (public distribution system) and employment assumes importance in this context.

## **Struggle of Rajasthan Farmers**

In Rajasthan, the farmers in Ganganagar and Hanumangarh districts have resumed their struggle after the state government went back on the agreement arrived at on the supply of canal waters. The movement of the farmers led by the Kisan Sabha, the Party and other democratic forces has met with brutal repression. For the past two months, hundreds of leaders and activists have been jailed. Hetram Beniwal, a state secretariat member of the Party, was brutally beaten up after being taken into custody.

Apart from this struggle, kisans in large numbers have mobilised to conduct a massive *padhav* (sit-in demonstration) protesting against the steep hike in electricity rates in Jaipur. The mobilisation by farmers for this rally is the biggest in the history of Rajasthan. The Central Committee fully backs the movement and calls upon all democratic forces to demand that the Rajasthan government accept the genuine demands.

## **Gurgaon Atrocity & Attacks On The Working Class**

The brutal attack on the workers of the Honda factory in Gurgaon, near Delhi, evoked widespread outrage. Hundreds of workers were injured in the

premeditated attack by the police under the direction of the district authorities. The Left parties raised the matter strongly in Parliament and walked out over the statement by the Home Minister which gave purely the state government's version. Protest actions were held all over the country against this attack. Because of the strong public reaction, the state government intervened and an agreement was reached to take back all the workers in the factory and to release those in jail.

The struggle of the Honda factory workers was related to their basic right to form a union. The denial of trade union rights and violation of labour laws is a common phenomenon in the factories run by multinational and Indian companies. In Ludhiana, Punjab, thousands of workers in the cycle industry have been in struggle for their union to be registered by the authorities which has not been done for the last two years. In Ferozabad, Uttar Pradesh, glass and bangle workers face repression because of their decision to unionise and fight for their rights which are accorded by the laws of the country like minimum wage, eight-hour working day etc.

While even the limited rights provided by the labour laws are being brazenly violated, pressure is being built up in the name of reforming laws for doing away even with the minimum protection offered.

### **Power Privatisation Fiasco**

After the privatisation of distribution of electricity in the capital, Delhi, the bitter experience of the citizens has been -- no improvement in services and rising tariffs. The two big power companies, which were allotted zones for distribution have miserably failed to improve the services and worsened the situation while extracting unjustifiable benefits from the Delhi government. The recent hike of 10 per cent in power rates led to widespread opposition and popular protest which compelled the Delhi government to cancel the increase. Even then, the government has offered to subsidise the private companies upto 5 per cent of the reduction. In Mumbai, after the torrential rains and floods, areas which were supplied power by the Reliance Company could not get their power restored for days while the public sector utility was able to restore power supply immediately. The drive to privatise both electricity and water supply in the cities must be opposed and a popular movement built up against it.

### **UPA-Left Coordination Committee**

During the June Central Committee meeting it was noted that the disinvestment of shares in BHEL is a serious breach of the CMP. We decided to convey to the Congress leadership that this should not be proceeded with.

After the Central Committee, we requested for a meeting of the Coordination Committee. This was held on the 19<sup>th</sup> of June in which the government reiterated its stand that disinvestment in the BHEL is allowed in the CMP. In the light of this the Left parties met and decided to suspend participation in the coordination committee given the fact that the government was going ahead with the disinvestment.

Subsequently, the UPA leadership offered to reduce the percentage of shares to be disinvested to 5 per cent and no further disinvestment in navaratna companies. The Left parties did not agree with this proposal, as the issue was not the quantum of disinvestment but the very sale of shares of navaratna companies.

In the recent period there are indications that the government will not proceed with the sale of the ten percent BHEL shares. When this is communicated to us officially we can resume our participation in the coordination committee. Till then our dealings with the government will be in parliament where there is floor-level coordination. We will also be meeting the government and the UPA leadership on issue-to-issue whenever necessary.

### **September 29 Strike Call And Other Campaigns**

The convention of central trade unions has given a call for an all India strike on a 16-point charter of demands. The demands include against privatization/disinvestment, provident fund rate of interest, unorganized sector workers legislation, right to strike etc. The Kisan Sabha has decided to mobilise peasants on their demands and conduct rasta rokos, rail rokos and picketing. The Central Committee extended full support to the September 29 strike call.

It called upon all Party units to implement the September struggle for land, food and employment by launching local struggles on the concrete demands connected with these issues.

The Central Committee called upon all Party units to launch protests immediately when the hike in petroleum products are announced. The Central Committee resolved to conduct a campaign for bringing the women's reservation bill for adoption in the winter session of Parliament. The date for such a campaign will be decided by the Polit Bureau at an appropriate time.