

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

MANIFESTO FOR THE 15TH LOK SABHA ELECTIONS, 2009

PART I

Elections to the Lok Sabha are a significant event in the political life of the country. For the fifteenth time, the people of India are being called upon to elect a new government.

In the sixty years of independence, the people of India have suffused life into the democratic system by exercising their right to elect representatives to parliament. Yet, the aspirations of the people remain unfulfilled. The rich, urban and rural, have reaped the benefits of “development”, while the vast majority has sunk further and further into poverty and hunger.

These elections are being held at a time of unprecedented global economic crisis. The jobs and livelihood of millions of Indians are at stake. Economic progress and the social well being of the people face uncertain prospects.

In the May 2004 elections, the people rejected the BJP-led NDA combine, which had ruled the country for six years with disastrous effects. The CPI(M) was committed to keeping the BJP and the communal forces out of power. Accordingly, the CPI(M) and the Left parties extended support to the Congress-led UPA coalition so that a secular government could be formed at the Centre. This was done with the understanding that the UPA government will implement its own Common Minimum Programme (CMP).

The CPI(M) and the Left parties consistently worked to see that the UPA government implemented the pro-people commitments made in the CMP. Legislations such as the Rural Employment Guarantee Act and the Forest Tribal Bill were adopted only due to the continuous pressure of the Left. The CPI(M) constantly demanded increased allocations in agriculture, education and health in keeping with the promises in the CMP; it demanded measures to curb the communal forces and strengthen the secular principles; it emphasized the pursuit of an independent foreign policy.

However, the Congress-led government did not adhere to the understanding of the CMP. It persisted in pushing through neo-liberal, anti-people policies and violating the commitment for an independent foreign policy.

The results are there for all to see:

Five years of the Congress-led UPA government have widened further the divide in society. The rich have become super-rich while the poor have been further impoverished.

Neo-liberal economic policies have resulted in distorted growth accompanied by agrarian crisis, rising prices, unemployment and depleting wages.

The forces of communalism have continued their divisive and violent activities. Parallel to this is the terrorist violence which continues to stalk the land.

The Manmohan Singh government betrayed its own Common Minimum Programme to forge a strategic alliance with the United States to sign the unequal Indo-US nuclear deal, thus undermining our independent foreign policy.

A minority government determined to push through neo-liberal policies and a strategic alliance with the United States denigrated parliament and displayed contempt for democratic procedures.

Tolerance of bribery and corruption and misuse of public institutions became the hallmark of a regime hell bent on survival.

For all its supposed concern for the *aam admi*, the UPA government worked overtime to pamper the super rich. The government flaunts a 8.6 per cent growth in GDP for four consecutive years till 2008. What does this growth mean? Till 2007, India recorded the fastest growth rate of billionaires in the world. Four out of the ten richest people in the world are Indians.

We are a country with rich natural resources, skilled manpower and scientific and technological prowess. Yet, predatory crony capitalism has condemned us to be a society with some of the worst human development indicators in the world:

- 230 million people are undernourished
- More than half of India's women are anaemic
- 40 per cent of children under three years are underweight
- 2,19,000 habitations have no access to clean drinking water
- 39 per cent of adult population is illiterate
- 77 per cent of the population spends less than Rs. 20 a day
- The share of wages in the organised industrial sector is among the lowest in the world

Under the Congress-UPA dispensation:

- The agrarian crisis continues. Suicides by farmers have not abated.
- The public distribution system has been further enfeebled. The BPL category excludes large sections of the poor. 52 per cent of the agricultural labour households are excluded from the PDS. Allocations for the APL category have been drastically cut.

The food policy is callous and inhuman. Three crore tonnes of foodgrains lie in the godowns but the government refuses to undo the cut in the allocations to the states.

PRICE RISE

The people have suffered from continuous price rise of all essential commodities. Even though the government claims the rate of inflation has come down below 4 per cent, the prices of food items continue to rise at above 10 per cent. When the international prices of oil dipped to \$40 a barrel, the government reduced the prices of aviation turbine fuel eleven times between September 2008 and February 2009 to help out the private airlines. But the prices of petrol and diesel was reduced only twice during this period and cooking gas only once. The inability to curb price rise and protect the people from the ravages of inflation has been one of the biggest failures of the Congress-led government.

The Manmohan Singh government promoted policies favouring big business and big corporates, both Indian and foreign. SEZs were designed to help these interests grab large tracts of land and they were given a bonanza of tax sops. The refusal to restore capital gains tax in the stock market and stop the massive tax evasion through the Mauritius route is meant to help Indian and foreign speculators to reap huge profits. The backdoor entry of FDI in retail trade is jeopardising the livelihood of lakhs of small shopkeepers and traders.

There has been rampant privatisation of health and education systems, thus depriving the common people of health and education facilities.

Allowing FDI in real estate and encouragement of real estate speculation has led to land grabbing and a massive increase in land prices in and around urban areas. It has become impossible for the poor and the middle classes to own a decent home.

The Congress-led government has promoted public-private

partnerships in various infrastructure projects whereby the public sector bears all the costs and the private party reaps all the profits. The Hyderabad Metro, now mired in the Satyam-Maytas scandal, is one such glaring instance.

The rights of workers and employees have been curtailed. The EPF rate of interest was reduced to 8.5 per cent. The government has promoted contractualisation and casualisation of labour. Ignoring the recommendations of the National Commission for Enterprises in the Unorganised Sector and the Standing Committee on Labour, the government passed an Act in parliament which makes a mockery of the rights and protection for workers of the unorganised sector.

The UPA government went back on its commitment to implement one-third reservations for women in the legislatures and parliament, as promised in the CMP. The dependence on the Samajwadi Party after the Left's withdrawal of support sealed the fate of the women's reservation bill.

The UPA government failed to implement the main recommendations of the Justice Sachar Committee on the status of minorities. The key suggestion, of working out a sub-plan for the Muslim minority, was rejected by the Government.

During the last six months of the Congress-led government, the country has experienced the adverse impact of the global economic crisis. The government's response has been both inadequate and wrong. The fiscal stimulus packages announced by the government have been grossly inadequate and mainly aimed at providing tax concessions to bail out big corporates. Even such concessions have not been linked to any conditionalities to protect the workers from lay-offs and retrenchment. No measures have been undertaken so far to protect the peasantry from price crashes and import competition. The Centre has ignored the plight of the overseas migrant workers and not included them in the stimulus package. The only way to come out of the crisis is by creating demand and new jobs. This requires massive public investment in employment generation, rural development, agriculture, social sectors and infrastructure. This is exactly what the government has refused to undertake.

The neoliberal policy framework is today discredited worldwide. The Congress-led government, however, stubbornly clings to neoliberal dogma.

Even after the crisis unfolded, it liberalised financial flow even further by lifting some restrictions on participatory notes and revising FDI guidelines to facilitate backdoor entry of FDI in all sectors.

DANGER OF COMMUNALISM

The BJP-RSS combine and their many outfits have been fomenting communal violence and targeting the minorities. In these last five years attacks on Muslim minorities have taken place in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan, Chhattisgarh, Gujarat, Karnataka, Maharashtra, Andhra Pradesh and Uttar Pradesh. Kandhamal district in Orissa saw the worst violence against Christians, with churches and houses being burnt and large scale attacks on priests and nuns. In Karnataka, there were vicious attacks on Christians in Mangalore, Davanagare and other places after the BJP assumed office. Instead of taking action against the perpetrators of the attacks, the BJP governments in Madhya Pradesh, Rajasthan and Karnataka often arrested the victims of the violence.

Whether it is Gujarat under Narendra Modi, or Karnataka, or any of the other BJP-ruled states, artistes have been intimidated, cultural performances and films attacked, and writers threatened. The assault on young women by gangs of Hindutva thugs in Mangalore and other places display the symptoms of a fascist mentality.

The 2004 verdict against the BJP should have been utilised to act firmly against all forms of communalism and their regressive activities. The Congress-led government was unable to adopt a firm and consistent stand against the depredations of the communal forces. Minorities are being harassed and terrorised in various parts of the country. The Centre should have cracked down on organisations like the Bajrang Dal after the violence in Kandhamal and elsewhere in the country. But it did not do so.

TERRORISM

During the last five years, the country experienced a spate of terrorist attacks, starting with the October 2005 serial blasts in Delhi. The Central Government failed to tackle the problems of terrorism adequately. It should have revamped the intelligence system and ensured better coordination between the intelligence and security agencies. It required the horrific Mumbai attack to awaken the Government to the defects in the intelligence and security systems. In the name of combatting terrorism,

there have been innumerable instances of the police and security agencies indiscriminately rounding up innocent Muslim youth, detaining them and torturing them. Such targeting of a community only alienates the youth and provides a breeding ground for extremism.

Terrorism has diverse origins in India. There is terrorist violence involving some extremist elements from the Muslim community. In the recent period terrorist attacks like in Malegaon and certain earlier blasts in Maharashtra were perpetrated by extremist Hindutva elements. In the North-East, terrorist attacks by ULFA and the other ethnic chauvinist groups have taken place.

The CPI(M) has consistently advocated firm steps to tackle the terrorist networks and elements irrespective of their source or origin. As for the terrorist attacks emanating from Pakistan, India should mobilise international opinion to mount pressure on the Pakistan government to crack down on the terrorist and extremist outfits there.

MAOIST VIOLENCE

The self-styled Maoists are indulging in indiscriminate violence in certain states, which they claim is revolutionary activity. Devoid of any political platform except the use of the gun, the Maoists are resorting to killings of their political opponents. While it is necessary to curb such terrorist violence, it is equally important to implement a programme of socio-economic development in the backward and remote areas where these groups operate so that these anarchist elements are isolated.

CURB REGIONAL CHAUVINISM

The growth of regional chauvinism and the attacks on people from other states by parties like the MNS in Mumbai required a firm response. However, neither the Congress-led state government, nor the Central government displayed the political will to check the violence and bring the culprits to justice. The CPI(M) strongly opposes all forms of regional and ethnic chauvinism which targets people of other regions or communities.

VIOLATION OF FEDERALISM

The Congress-led government has been insensitive to the rights of states and failed to implement steps to devolve more powers and resources to them. Despite the CMP commitment, the debts of states were not

substantially reduced nor was the share of the states in the divisible pool of taxes enhanced.

The Inter-State Council was not activated, nor were Centrally sponsored schemes transferred to states. The UPA government violated the CMP in framing the terms of reference for the 13th Finance Commission and the Commission on Centre-State relations.

The Congress-led government has sought to use Governors for its partisan purposes. The attempt to dismiss the Uttar Pradesh state government in December 2006 was a reminder that misuse of Article 356 by the Congress party at the Centre is not a thing of the past.

Neither the Congress nor the BJP can promote the federal principle which needs to be strengthened to democratise our system.

CORRUPTION

The ruling alliance vitiated the parliamentary democratic system by large scale use of money, bribery and intimidation to purchase and encourage defections from the opposition to win the vote of confidence in July 2008. Earlier, in 1993, faced with a no-confidence motion, the Narasimha Rao government had bribed opposition members of Parliament. The Congress-led government, however, took this to new and sordid heights.

The government displayed complete contempt for Parliament by extending the July 2008 special session till the end of December, and doing away with the winter session altogether. Thus, the number of Parliament sittings in 2008 were reduced to a mere 46. Misuse of public institutions and investigative agencies was also the norm under this government.

The UPA government has presided over a massive telecom scam. It first sold 2G licences to favoured companies. The companies then divested their shares at huge profits. In the process, the exchequer lost at least one lakh crore rupees. The government has refused to order a probe into this massive scam.

The Satyam-Maytas scandal is a shocking example of how crony capitalism is leading to institutionalised corruption. The patronage given to the Satyam-Maytas combine by the Congress government in Andhra Pradesh involves lucrative contracts and transfer of thousands of acres of land. Special Economic Zones have become the instruments for large scale transfer of land to corporates depriving the farmers and the rural poor of their meagre landed assets.

STRATEGIC ALLIANCE WITH THE UNITED STATES

The biggest betrayal by the Manmohan Singh government was to forge a strategic alliance with the United States of America and to resile from the commitment to pursue an independent foreign policy.

- The Congress-led government signed a ten-year Defence Framework Agreement with the US for military collaboration. This was done secretly without any discussion or information given to the country.
- The Manmohan Singh government shamelessly lined up with the United States to vote against Iran in the IAEA in order to get the nuclear deal through the US Congress.
- In place of the CMP, the agenda of the Indo-US CEO Forum, which recommended FDI in retail trade, insurance, banking, education, etc., became the guiding light of the Manmohan Singh government.
- The Manmohan Singh government has pursued the US-Israel-India axis, an idea mooted by the BJP-led government. It has entered into deep security and military collaboration with Israel. Israel has become the biggest supplier of weapons to India and the billions of dollars spent by India helps Israel suppress the Palestinian people.

NUCLEAR DEAL

The Congress-led government signed the nuclear deal with the US with conditions no self-respecting government should accept. The Hyde Act passed by the United States Congress directed India to adopt a certain course in foreign policy and set conditions for nuclear cooperation which dovetailed India into security and military collaboration with the US. The UPA government misleadingly raised the issue of shortage of uranium, a lie nailed down by the recent report of the CAG. The Congress is propagating that the nuclear deal will result in electricity being provided to all villages and homes. This is a cruel joke when the cost of electricity from an imported nuclear plant will be Rs. 8 per unit – far out of the reach of the common people.

BREAK WITH UPA GOVERNMENT

The Left parties withdrew support from the UPA government on July 9, 2008 after the government decided to go ahead with the Indo-US nuclear deal as part of its ongoing quest for a strategic alliance with the United States. In December 2007, when the matter was debated in parliament, it

became clear that a majority of Members of Parliament were not for the deal. The Manmohan Singh government concentrated its entire energy to pursue the deal without caring for the people's suffering due to galloping price rise and the growing rural distress. The CPI(M) and the left parties could not support a government which was so intent on acting at the behest of the US agenda for India to the detriment of an independent foreign policy and strategic autonomy.

ROLE OF CPI(M) AND LEFT VIS-À-VIS UPA GOVERNMENT

The CPI(M) and the Left acted as sentinels of the people's interests vis-à-vis the UPA government. At least two major legislations – the NREGA and the Forest Tribal Rights Act – would not have come about in the present form without the CPI(M)'s intervention.

The Left parties made crucial interventions in NREGA legislation which have proved to be of great benefit to the people. These include: (1) the deletion of a clause which gave Government the right to terminate the programme if it so wanted; (2) to ensure that it be made a universal right for anyone who was willing to do manual work and not limited to BPL families alone as suggested by the Government; (3) a special provision to ensure that at least one-third of the beneficiaries are women; and (4) to ensure more flexibility in the type of projects that may be taken up through the introduction of a clause that gives State Governments the scope to make suitable project proposals.

It was the sustained intervention by the Left and particularly the CPI(M) that led to the enactment of the Scheduled Tribes and other Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act. Here again without the Party's intervention, the Act in the present form would not have been possible. The interventions by the CPI(M) and the Left resulted in (1) change in the cut-off year from 1980 to December 2005; (2) inclusion of other traditional forest dwelling communities as beneficiaries; (3) increase of land ceiling from 2.5 hectares to 4 hectares; (4) inclusion of expanded rights to minor forest produce; (5) expanded role of gram sabhas and panchayats; (6) right to development projects in forest areas within a limited area; and (7) securing equal rights of women.

Similarly, the CPI(M) intervened to modify the Patents Amendments Act of 2005 to protect the interests of the country with regard to the provision of less expensive generic drugs for the people. The Left did not

allow dilution of the Right to Information legislation. It is due to the continuous pressure of the CPI(M) and the Left that there was increased allocation for education even though it did not attain the 6 per cent of GDP mark promised in the CMP.

The role played by the CPI(M) and the Left in the past five years led to the protection of financial sector from the ravages of speculative finance capital.

- The Left protected the banking sector by not allowing the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Act which would have facilitated the takeover of Indian private banks by foreign banks.
- The Left defended the insurance sector by preventing any legislation to increase FDI in the insurance sector from 26 to 49 per cent.
- Pensions of lakhs of government employees were protected by the Left's decision to oppose the Pension Fund Regulatory Act which would have led to pension funds of government employees being privatized and put in the stock market.

The CPI(M) and the Left firmly defended the public sector and national sovereignty.

- The integrity of the 'navaratna' PSUs was protected by the Left which did not agree to the disinvestment of shares in BHEL.
- To protect the interests of lakhs of small shopkeepers and traders, and workers employed by them, the Left opposed the opening up of the retail trade to MNCs and prevented their full-fledged entry.
- To protect the farmers' interests, the Left did not support the Seed Bill which could not be passed in the Parliament.
- To protect the integrity of the educational sector, the Left stopped the passage of the Bill to allow foreign educational institutions and universities to be set up in India.
- To protect the interests of the working class, the Left prevented the introduction of anti-labour laws.

All through the four years when the CPI(M) and the Left supported the government, the CPI(M) worked assiduously to protect national sovereignty and to prevent implementation of some of the worst aspects of the neo-liberal policies which would have harmed the people's economic interests and livelihood.

BJP: A REGRESSIVE FORCE

The BJP seeks to pass off majority communalism as “nationalism”. It extols the RSS vision of Hindu rashtra and passes it off as “cultural nationalism”. The politics and practice of the BJP represents distilled communalism that can only weaken national unity. The BJP has come out against any efforts to ameliorate the conditions of the 150 million Muslims in the country as recommended in the Justice Sachar Report by branding it as “minority appeasement”.

The BJP has provided political cover to the depredations of the Bajrang Dal and the Vishwa Hindu Parishad against the Muslim and Christian minorities whether in the Kandhamal district of Orissa or attacks in Karnataka, Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajashtan and Chhattisgarh.

The BJP stand on terrorism is equally pernicious. It has no compunction in ascribing all terrorist activities to the Muslim community. It refuses to accept that terrorism has diverse sources. It has sought to protect the accused in the Malegaon blasts case who are Hindutva extremists by branding the ATS investigation as prosecution of “Hindu religious figures”. The BJP’s double standards on terrorism stands fully exposed.

Throughout the five year period when it was in the opposition, the BJP had nothing to offer except communalisation of the serious issue of terrorism and minority baiting. The BJP harps on building the temple at the site where the Babri Masjid stood in flagrant violation of the law and the constitution.

The records of the BJP-run state governments makes it amply clear that it is a party fully wedded to rightwing economic policies of privatisation and a free market economy. Its governments have been steeped in corruption. When in government at the Centre, the BJP took several steps to cement a strategic alliance with the United States. Today, there is no difference in the foreign policy postures of the BJP and the Congress.

The people of India cannot accept this regressive, backward-looking party based on an obscurantist ideology to run the Central government.

SUPPORT CPI(M)

The CPI(M)’s role in the past five years speaks for itself. It has intervened consistently in Parliament and elsewhere to defend the interests and the livelihoods of the people, protect national sovereignty, curb

communalism, ensure social justice and fight against growing imperialist penetration.

Scores of members and supporters of the CPI(M) became martyrs by laying down their lives for the cause of the working people, fighting communal and divisive forces and in police firing.

The three Left-led governments of West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura have shown that alternative policies can be implemented despite the constraints of having a Central government pursuing neoliberal policies. Over the years, West Bengal, Kerala and Tripura have implemented land reforms and broken up large scale landlordism. They have institutionalised and ensured the democratic functioning of the three-tier panchayat system. Despite the limited resources and the constraints that state governments work under, the Left-led governments have protected the interests of the peasants and agricultural workers by ensuring agricultural development and taken steps to promote industrial development. The public distribution system which is under attack by the Centre has not been dismantled. The rights of the working class and other working sections are protected. All the three states have an exemplary record in maintaining communal amity and upholding secular values.

The CPI(M) sets out the alternative path for the country. This platform is based on the following major components: (i) defence of secularism and national unity; (ii) for a democratic transformation of agrarian relations and land reforms; (iii) for a self-reliant economic system and path of development which will develop the productive forces, maximise employment and reduce economic and social disparities; (iv) for a democratic and federal political system with necessary Constitutional changes; (v) defence of the rights of the working people, their livelihoods and social security; (vi) social justice, end to caste discrimination and protection of rights of women, dalits, minorities and tribal people; and (vii) for an anti-imperialist, independent foreign policy.

FOR A NEW ALTERNATIVE

Five years of the Congress-led government have been a major disappointment for the people and a let down of the mandate of the 2004 Lok Sabha elections. The Congress party is committed to the policies of liberalisation and privatisation, which are today discredited in the entire world. These policies have proved inimical to the interests of the workers,

peasants, agricultural workers, artisans, small entrepreneurs, women, students and youth. A party which sees the future of India tied to the coattails of the United States does not deserve to run the government of our sovereign democratic republic.

The BJP represents the most reactionary force in the country. The six-year rule from 1998 to 2004 was marked by the pursuit of pro-rich and communal policies. BJP's ideology is inimical to the concept of a secular state. It wants to use the NDA as a cover for its Hindutva politics. Through these five years, all it did as the major opposition party was to raise various issues, including terrorism, from a communal standpoint.

It is necessary that both the Congress and the BJP are defeated by the people in the forthcoming elections.

The country requires alternative policies. Pro-people economic policies; provision of social equity; consistent secularism; genuine federalism; and an independent foreign policy. The CPI(M) appeals to all democratic and secular forces to support such alternative policies.

For this, an alternative political platform is required. The CPI(M) will work for the creation of a non-Congress, non-BJP government which will strengthen democracy, ensure equitable economic development and social justice.

VOTE FOR THE CPI(M)

STRENGTHEN LEFT AND DEMOCRATIC FORCES

FOR AN ALTERNATIVE SECULAR GOVERNMENT

PART II

Promote Secular Values

The CPI (M) stands for the separation of religion and politics and necessary legislative measures to firm up this separation. Communal violence should be dealt with firmly. Secular values should be promoted by the State in all spheres. The CPI (M) will work towards:

- Enacting a comprehensive law against communal violence; ensuring speedy justice and adequate compensation to the victims of communal violence like the Gujarat pogrom of 2002 and for the implementation of the Justice Sri Krishna Commission report
- Ensuring exemplary punishment for perpetrators of communal violence regardless of their public or official position
- Purging all school textbooks of content reflecting communal bias and prejudices
- Reining in organisations and institutions involved in spreading communal hate and attacking minorities through appropriate legal measures
- Enforcing the Protection of Places of Worship Act to prevent raising of disputes on religious places

FOR ALTERNATIVE ECONOMIC POLICIES

Enhanced State Intervention

In the light of the global economic crisis and its adverse impact on India the CPI (M) stands for:

- Increasing annual Plan Expenditure amounting to 10% of India's current GDP (currently it is below 5%)
- Aggressive expansion by CPSUs utilizing their vast cash reserves
- Scrapping the Fiscal Responsibility and Budget Management Act and raising borrowing limits of State Governments to enable higher public expenditure; Comprehensive debt relief for the State Governments

Immediate Relief Measures

- Specific relief packages for affected sectors like textiles and garments, gems and jewellery, leather, handicrafts, coir, cashew, marine products,

software and IT etc., aimed mainly at the small and medium enterprises

- Moratorium on job cuts for workers; Labour laws to be duly invoked to prevent retrenchments and lay offs; Enhancing social security measures for workers
- Preventing wage and pay cuts for workers and employees; burden of cost cutting to be borne by profit earners
- Extending the employment guarantee to urban areas
- Income tax relief for salaried employees, pensioners and senior citizens
- Massive increase in public investment in agriculture and irrigation; Protection against price crashes of crops through price support and increased import tariffs

Resource Mobilisation

In order to mobilise resources to undertake the massive public spending plans, the CPI (M) proposes steps to:

- Effectively tax speculative capital gains by restoring Long-Term Capital Gains Tax and increasing Securities Transaction Tax
- Halt further tax concessions to corporates; Launch a drive to unearth black money, especially those stashed in Swiss Banks and other off-shore tax havens
- Increase wealth tax for the super rich; introduce inheritance tax
- Plug the Mauritius route; Review Double Taxation Avoidance Agreement with Mauritius and other countries

Financial Sector Regulation

In order to ensure strong regulation of the financial sector, maintain predominant state control over finance and revival of development finance, the CPI (M) stands for:

- Reversing moves towards Full Capital Account Convertibility (Tarapore Committee recommendations); reimposing strict controls on the outflow and inflow of finance capital
- Prohibiting Participatory Notes used by the Foreign Institutional Investors (FIIs); discourage speculative finance
- Halting any further dilution of Government equity in public sector banks; strengthening the public sector in banking and insurance and ensuring strict adherence to priority sector lending norms
- Scrapping the Banking Regulation (Amendment) Bill; preventing

takeover of Indian banks by foreign banks

- Scrapping the proposed legislation to increase FDI cap in the insurance sector
- No privatisation of pension funds; No diversion of pension and provident funds to stock market

Revival of Agriculture

In order to reverse the agrarian crisis, make agriculture remunerative and ensure enhanced incomes of the peasantry, the CPI (M) proposes steps to:

- Implement the pro-farmer recommendations of the National Commission on Farmers
- Expand MSP coverage to more crops, including oil seeds, other cash crops and traditional staples; Revive commodity boards to set floor prices for commercial crops
- Ensure institutional credit to the agricultural sector at a maximum 4% rate of interest
- Expand public investment in power supply in rural areas and stop privatization of electricity; Ensure uninterrupted supply of power to agriculture; Expand irrigation facilities
- Ensure provision of high quality inputs at affordable prices to all cultivators through public production and marketing; repeal the Seed Bill and introduce farmer-friendly seed legislation
- Repeal the model APMC Act which advocates contract farming; bring farmer-friendly reforms in agricultural markets
- Scrap the Indo-US Knowledge Initiative in Agriculture and make public all its records; Increase public investment and expand public institutions for agricultural research and extension
- Reverse changes in the intellectual property regime that favour big business; Ensure strict regulation of private agricultural research with regard to protection of biodiversity

Food Security and Public Distribution System

To ensure food security the CPI (M) advocates:

- Reintroduction of the universal PDS and abandoning the targeted PDS based on flawed poverty estimates; Provision of foodgrains at subsidized rates in the PDS

- Expansion of the Antodaya scheme to cover wider sections of the rural and urban poor; Special measures to include tribal communities in Antodaya coverage
- Supplying 14 essential commodities including sugar, pulses and edible oils under the PDS
- Reversing the cut in food grain allocations to the States under the PDS and giving States their full quota of grain
- Strengthening the FCI and expanding of FCI godowns, particularly in the Eastern and North Eastern regions; Curbing procurement of foodgrains by private corporates and MNCs

Checking Price Rise of Essential Commodities

The CPI (M) considers the following steps as essential to check price rise:

- Reduction of retail prices of petrol and diesel by cutting the customs and excise duties on oil
- Banning futures trading in all agricultural commodities as per the recommendations of the Parliamentary Standing Committee
- Taking stringent action against hoarding of essential commodities; Strengthening the provisions of the Essential Commodities Act to deal with hoarding and black-marketing
- Strengthening disclosure norms for private stocks of foodgrains held in godowns and warehouses

Land Issues

The single most important step for rural transformation is the implementation of land reforms. The CPI (M) stands for:

- Reversing the current thrust to dilute land-ceiling laws; Speedy and comprehensive steps for implementing land reforms
- Takeover and distribution of all surplus land above ceiling and handing over of cultivable wasteland to landless and poor peasant households free of cost, with priority to SCs and STs; Joint pattas to be distributed including equal right of women to the land
- Recording of tenancy and protection of the rights of tenants in all States where this has not been done
- New Land Acquisition Act to protect the interests of land owners and others dependent on land; Ensuring informed consent of those affected;

Prohibit land grab for real estate speculation; Enact Rehabilitation and Resettlement Act to ensure adequate compensation and rehabilitation for all affected

Industrial Development

Balanced growth of industry and agriculture is vital for employment generation and economic development. For the Planned development of industry, the CPI (M) stands for:

- Strengthening and expansion of the public sector in the core and strategic areas by injecting fresh capital and technology; promoting autonomy and efficiency in the public sector
- Complete halt to disinvestment and privatisation of profit-making and potentially viable PSUs
- Encouragement to small and medium enterprises in labour intensive sectors with adequate incentives, infrastructure support and sufficient credit from banks
- Protection of traditional industries such as handloom, coir, etc.; yarn to be provided at controlled rates for the weavers and adequate facilities for the marketing of their goods
- Protection of domestic industry from indiscriminate lowering of import duties and takeover of existing Indian companies by foreign companies; Encouragement to the private sector to invest in manufacturing and services sectors; Incentives to the private sector to be linked to job creation and R&D efforts
- Prohibition of FDI in Retail Trade; Regulation of domestic corporate retailers through a licensing policy
- Reverse FDI guidelines to prevent backdoor entry of FDI; Foreign capital to be channelled in areas based on need to build productive capacities and acquire new technology
- Amending SEZ Act and Rules to do away with myriad tax concessions and regulate land-use; Ensuring strict implementation of labour laws in all SEZs
- Halting further liberalization and privatization of the mineral sector; Prohibiting export of iron ore; Increasing royalty rates on coal and other minerals

Infrastructure

- Increasing public investment in infrastructure; Adequate Plan outlays for power, communications, railways, roads, ports and airports
- Reviewing energy and telecom policies in tune with the interests of self-reliant national development; Review the Electricity Act 2003
- Reviewing of privatisation of infrastructure through PPP
- Emphasis on rural infrastructure; Increased outlays on rural roads, electrification etc.

WTO and Trade Issues

The CPI (M) stands for:

- Protecting Indian interests and that of the developing countries in the ongoing Doha Round of WTO; no further tariff cuts in agriculture and industrial goods
- Restore measures to protect small and marginal peasants, including quantitative restrictions
- Keep sectors like health, education, water resources, banking and financial services out of GATS; Press for review of the TRIPS agreement
- Review existing Free Trade Agreements (FTAs); Make public India's negotiating positions in the FTA negotiations with EU and EFTA

Strengthening Federalism

For a thorough restructuring of Centre-State relations the CPI (M) stands for:

- Amending Articles 355 and 356 to prevent their misuse
- Governors to be appointed by the President from a list of three eminent persons suggested by the Chief Minister of a State
- Devolving 50% of the total pool of collection of Central taxes to the States; Raising States' share of market borrowing to 50%
- Conditionalities imposed upon the States like the passage of FRBM Act to be withdrawn; States to have a say in the composition and terms of reference of the Finance Commissions
- Transferring Centrally Sponsored Schemes under the State subject with funds to the States
- Constitutional amendment to make the decisions of the Inter-State Council binding on the Union Government; National Development

Council to be granted Constitutional status; Planning Commission to act as an executive wing of the NDC

- Setting a target minimum level of Local Self-Government expenditure to GDP; funds devolved to the local bodies to be routed through the State Governments

Jammu & Kashmir

- A political solution to the Kashmir problem based on maximum autonomy for the State based on the full scope of Article 370 of the Constitution; autonomous set-up to be created with the regions of Jammu, Kashmir and Ladakh being given regional autonomy
- Strong steps to be taken to prevent excesses by security forces against innocent people
- Ensure economic development of the State, focusing particularly on generating employment for the youth and reconstructing the damaged infrastructure

North-East

- The North East to be declared a priority region for development; Developing physical infrastructure and special employment schemes for the youth; Border fencing to be completed expeditiously
- Protecting and expanding the administrative and financial powers under the Sixth Schedule; protection of the identity of the various ethnic groups and nationalities

Against Terrorism

The CPI (M) stands for:

- Revamping the intelligence machinery and enhanced coordination between security and intelligence agencies
- The Federal Investigating Agency functioning without violating the federal structure and ensuring association of State Governments for investigation within a particular State
- Modernisation of the Police forces
- Strengthening of the coastal security system
- Amending the Unlawful Activities (Prevention) Act to remove draconian provisions like detention without bail for 180 days, three years imprisonment for withholding information, etc.

TOWARDS AN INDEPENDENT FOREIGN POLICY

Foreign Policy

CPI (M) will work for:

- An independent and non-aligned foreign policy, which defends India from imperialist pressures; Initiatives for South-South cooperation and reviving the Non-Aligned Movement on a new basis
- Promoting multipolarity in international relations; strengthen BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa) cooperation, improve relations with China and expand trilateral cooperation between Russia, India and China
- Opposing US military interventions; distancing from US-sponsored “war on terror”
- Strengthening multilateral forums like the UN to deal with all disputes between countries; democratizing the Security Council and the UN structure
- Amending the Constitution to make legislative sanction mandatory for any international treaty
- Promoting people to people relations between India and Pakistan; Resuming Indo-Pak dialogue at a suitable time
- Diplomatic and political efforts to protect the lives of Tamil people in the war zone in Sri Lanka; Working for an immediate political settlement based on autonomy for the Tamil speaking areas within the framework of a united Sri Lanka
- Giving special attention to promote SAARC cooperation and improving relations with all neighbouring countries in South Asia; coordinate efforts with South Asian countries to combat terrorism and religious extremism
- Building close ties with West Asian countries; pursue Iran-Pakistan-India gas pipeline resisting US pressure
- Extending support to the Palestinian cause; severing military and security ties with Israel
- Pursuing the Look East policy; strengthen economic cooperation with South East and East Asian countries

Security Matters

- Reviewing and reworking the 123 Agreement with the US for civil

nuclear cooperation to remove the harmful clauses; Pursuing self-reliance in civilian nuclear energy based on domestic uranium and thorium reserves

- Pursuing universal nuclear disarmament through the UN; Providing parliamentary sanction for moratorium on testing; Striving for a de-nuclearised environment in South Asia; Seeking removal of nuclear weapons from the US military base in Diego Garcia in the Indian Ocean.
- Abrogating the Defence Framework Agreement with the US and cessation of Indo-US joint military exercises
- Promoting the policy of no foreign military bases in South Asia
- Creating a national security apparatus, which will work within the framework of the parliamentary democratic system

FOR PEOPLES' RIGHTS, SECURITY OF LIVELIHOODS AND SOCIAL JUSTICE

Working Class

- Revising the minimum wage rate for workers based on the 15th ILC norms; Revising the price indices
- Ensuring strictest implementation of all labour laws including the law on inter state migrant workers; discouraging contractualisation and casualisation of work
- Improving the legislation on Unorganized Sector Workers and implement the recommendations of the Standing Committee on Labour in this regard; Special social security measures for migrant workers and plantation workers
- Ensuring recognition of trade unions through secret ballot and protection of trade union rights; Adopting an effective scheme for workers' participation in management in both public and private sector
- Ensuring equal remuneration for women workers in all areas of work; adopting social security measures for working women including maternity benefits, pension and health insurance for women workers in the unorganized sector including home based workers
- Adopting steps to prevent sexual harassment of women workers at

work place and enacting legislation based on the Vishakha judgement

- Providing job and social security for anganwadi workers, rural health workers and mid-day meal workers by recognizing them as Government employees
- Setting up special welfare board for fish workers and providing them identity cards and social security schemes; Banning foreign trawlers and destructive fishing practices by big trawlers; Scrapping the draft Coastal Management Zone notification

Right to Strike

- Safeguarding the right to organize, collective bargaining and the right to strike for all workers, including government employees; Enacting legislation to annul the Supreme Court judgment prohibiting strikes
- Ratifying the ILO Convention 151, which accords government employees the rights, which other citizens enjoy, subject to their administrative responsibilities

Peasantry

- Ensuring stable and remunerative crop prices
- Protecting the peasantry from falling world prices by increasing import tariffs
- Ensuring comprehensive loan waiver for distressed peasants covering both institutional and private debt owed to money-lenders
- Providing comprehensive insurance to all farmers for crop and cattle, with subsidies for small and marginal farmers
- Promoting and strengthening co-operatives for water use, input purchase, crop storage, output marketing and dairy

Agricultural Workers

- Increasing minimum wages for agricultural workers; Ensuring equal wages for women agricultural workers
- Enacting a separate and comprehensive legislation for agricultural workers to ensure minimum wages, the right to bargain collectively and measures of social security such as pensions, accident compensation etc. with central funding

- Redistributing land to agricultural workers, free of cost; Providing homestead land to all rural households; Constructing rural dwellings for all rural workers

Women

- Enacting the Women's Reservation Bill to ensure one-third reservation for women in the legislatures
- Enacting a comprehensive law against sexual violence including against children; Legally recognize joint rights in matrimonial property; Separate law against honour killings; Law against acid attacks and special measures to ensure help for acid attack victims
- Reversing the dilution of clauses in crimes against women made through recent amendments to the Cr pc
- Providing credit at 4% interest rate to Self-Help Groups; Providing training and assistance to SHGs to market their products
- Ensuring equal rights for women of all communities; Making registration of marriages compulsory
- Undertaking as a National Mission the eradication of dowry and female foeticide
- Increasing allocation of resources for women in central budget; Special employment schemes and pensions for widows; Priority in Government schemes for female headed families

Children

- Universalizing the ICDS to cover all children in the 0 to 6 years age group; stopping privatization of the ICDS
- Providing nutritious meals to children in the anganwadis; Ensuring universal immunization
- Implementing the Child Labour Prohibition Act effectively; Ensuring rehabilitation of rescued child labourers

Dalits

- Ensuring stringent action against untouchability and atrocities against Scheduled Castes
- Increasing allocations under the Special component Plan; Launching a comprehensive National Programme of Minor Irrigation for all un-irrigated lands of dalits and adivasis

- Extending reservation to dalit Christians and dalit Muslims
- Enacting legislation to provide reservation in the private sector
- Filling all the backlogs in reserved seats and posts and in promotions for SCs with special recruitment drive; Scrapping the Scheduled Castes (Reservation in Posts and Services) Amendment Bill
- Initiating special measures, like increasing scholarships and hostel facilities, to curb the school dropout rate among SCs
- Ensuring total liberation and full rehabilitation for scavengers (safai karamcharis) and bonded labourers; Regularisation of contract labour in safai services

Adivasis

- Filling all vacancies for ST reserved posts in all Government services; Extending reservation in the private sector
- Protecting land rights of adivasis and restoring land illegally alienated from them
- Implementing the Scheduled Tribes and Other Traditional Forest Dwellers (Recognition of Forest Rights) Act 2006, in full; Amending the Act to include traditional forest dwellers on a more reasonable definition
- Providing autonomy for tribal compact areas wherever necessary by coverage under the Fifth or Sixth Schedule; Extending the democratic panchayat system to the fifth and sixth schedule areas
- Ensuring recognition and development of tribal languages and scripts; Kokbarak to be included in the eighth schedule of the Constitution
- Expanding PDS, drinking water facilities, health centres, schools and hostels in the tribal areas

OBCs

- Ensuring proper implementation of 27% OBC reservation in Central educational institutions; Extending OBC reservation to all private educational institutions
- Strengthening the National Commission for Backward Classes
- Simplifying procedures for issuing OBC certificates

Minorities

- Forming an Equal Opportunity Commission with adequate powers to redress discrimination against minorities
- Formulating a sub-plan for the Muslim minorities on the lines of the tribal sub-plan in order to implement Sachar Committee recommendations; Special initiatives in the sphere of employment, education and health to be undertaken targeting districts where the Muslim population is concentrated
- Making public the Ranganath Mishra Commission report and ensure full public debate; As an immediate measure all OBC Muslims which form the vast majority of the Muslim community to be included in the OBC quota with specific State wise allocations
- Earmarking 15% of priority sector lending by banks for the Muslims; subsidised credit to be ensured for the self-employed Muslim youth
- Special emphasis to be laid on the education of Muslim girls; scholarships and hostel facilities should be substantially increased for Muslim girl students
- Promoting the teaching of Urdu in schools; Publishing good quality textbooks in Urdu and filling vacancies of Urdu teaching posts

Senior Citizens

- Upgrading pensions of all categories of pensioners in consonance with the cost of living; one-rank one-pension for ex-servicemen
- Building a network of old-age homes/day care centres with State support
- Introducing differential and higher interest rate for senior citizens in all deposits and savings schemes

Differently Abled People

- Strengthening of the Persons with Disabilities Act
- Properly implementing reservations provided for persons with disabilities in public sector employment, poverty alleviation programmes and education
- All buildings, public places, transport, information and other avenues to be fully accessible and barrier free to people with disabilities
- Ensuring free provision of aids and equipments for differently abled people by the Government

Youth

- A national youth policy to be adopted which comprehensively deals with issues of special concern to youth
- Providing a network of sports and cultural facilities for youth in all parts of the country
- Restructuring the Nehru Yuva Kendra to promote India's cultural diversity and national unity

FOR PEOPLES' WELFARE

Employment Guarantee

- The employment guarantee to be extended to cover all adults and for as many days as demanded; Employment guarantee to be extended to the urban areas through the enactment of legislation
- The list of permissible works under the NREGA to be expanded to include all activities that improve the quality of life in rural areas
- Minimum wages should be ensured through fair and objective Schedule of Rates; Part of wages to be paid in subsidised foodgrains

Education

- Public expenditure on education to be 6% of GDP
- Enacting the Right to Education Bill; Central Government to assume the major part of the financial commitment for its implementation
- Expanding secondary education to arrest dropouts; Improve quality of education and infrastructure in SSA schools
- Enacting legislation to regulate fees, admissions and curricula in private educational institutions
- No FDI in higher education; Scrapping the Foreign Education Providers' Bill
- Formulating progressive and democratic curriculum and syllabi at all levels of education that recognizes India's social and cultural diversity
- Revising pay scales for elementary school teachers; Regularizing informal employment in teaching
- Ensuring democratic rights of students, teachers and non-teaching staff in all educational institutions; Students' union elections to be made mandatory in all higher educational institutions

Health

- Public expenditure on health to be raised to 5% of GDP
- Strengthening and expanding the public health system to guarantee the delivery of all basic health services; Reversing the trend of privatization of healthcare through PPPs
- Ensuring regular supply of all essential medicines through the public health system; All essential drugs to be brought under price control; Hazardous formulations of medicines to be weeded out from the market
- Reviving the public sector in the production of essential drugs and vaccines
- Prohibiting indiscriminate clinical trials by big pharma companies; Strict control and regulations for clinical trials

Urban Issues

- Promoting planned urbanization; increasing public investment in urban infrastructure; Ensuring modern and affordable public transport and Mass Transit Systems
- Ensuring affordable basic services like drinking water, sanitation, transportation, ration shops, health facilities, schools, etc., for the urban poor
- Halting demolition of slums; Ensuring in situ development of slums with facilities
- Expanding public provisioning of housing, especially for the socio-economically weaker sections; Curbing unbridled real estate development catering to the affluent classes

Environment

- Making the Environmental Impact Assessments (EIA) process transparent, accountable and independent of vested interests; Reviewing the EIA Notification, 2009
- Undertaking steps to control emission of greenhouse gases through energy efficient technologies and effective regulation; Promoting solar and other non-conventional energy sources
- Increasing central allocations for Natural Calamity Relief Fund; States to have more powers in tackling natural calamities and disasters

- Checking pollution of rivers and other water bodies through effective regulation
- Implementing the Coastal Zone Regulation Act and the Wetlands Regulatory Authority in ways as to promote long-term interests of the people and of the environment

Water Resources

- A National Water Policy to be formulated to enhance water availability for domestic use, irrigation and industry; Provision of potable drinking water to all habitations to be accorded priority
- Curbing privatization and commercialization of water resources; Tackling depletion of ground water through greater regulation

Science and Technology

- Enhancing public funding of indigenous research in science and technology to promote self-reliance; Decentralization in funding for R&D; Fundamental research in the sciences to be accorded priority
- Promoting free software and other such new technologies, which are free from monopoly ownership through copyrights or patents; “knowledge commons” should be promoted across disciplines, like biotechnology and drug discovery
- Scrapping the Public Funded R&D Bill, that seeks to allow patenting of products that are developed through public funded laboratories
- Revamping the functioning of the Patent offices to ensure strict adherence to the Indian Patent Act; Stop training and orientation of Indian Patent office personnel by the US and European Patent offices

Culture and Media

- All national languages listed in the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution to be equally encouraged and developed
- Promoting secular, progressive and democratic culture; attacks on cultural personalities and productions by the communal forces to be firmly dealt with
- Curbing glorification of violence and commodification of women and sex
- Strengthening the Prasar Bharati Corporation to make it a genuine public broadcasting service for TV and radio; States to have a say in

the programmes aired by the public broadcasting service

- Prohibiting cross-media ownership to prevent monopolies; Reversing the entry of FDI in the print and electronic media
- Setting up of a Media Council which can act as an independent regulatory authority for the media

FOR INSTITUTIONAL REFORMS

Fighting Corruption

- Enacting the Lok Pal Bill to stop corruption at high places including the Prime Minister, Members of Parliament and the Judiciary
- Suitable legislative changes to be brought to empower regulators and investigating agencies to thoroughly probe corporate crimes
- Strengthen the Right to Information Act

Judicial Reforms

- A National Judicial Commission to be constituted as an independent Constitutional body comprising of representatives from judiciary, executive, legislature and bar for appointment, transfer and dismissal of judges and to ensure judicial accountability
- Reforming the judicial system to provide speedy relief at affordable cost to the common people; Filling up vacancies in the judiciary
- Suitable amendment in the definition of criminal contempt to be made in order to prevent its misuse in suppressing dissent
- Public declaration of their assets by the Judges to be made mandatory

Reform of the Election Commission

- Members of the EC to be appointed by the President on the advice of a committee consisting of the Prime Minister, the Leader of the Opposition and Chief Justice of Supreme Court
- The Election Commissioners must be legally debarred from enjoying any office after their retirement either under the Government or as a Governor or MP
- The Representation of the People Act needs to be amended to specify the jurisdiction of election observers
- Constitutional amendment to specify EC's jurisdiction vis-à-vis law and order in order to avoid conflict with elected State Governments

Electoral Reforms

- Proportional representation with partial list system
- Effective steps to prohibit persons with criminal background from contesting elections
- State funding in the form of material for recognized political parties
- Prohibition of corporate funding to political parties