

Tel. 23344918,23747435
23363692, 23747436
Fax: 23747483



COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)

Central Committee Office

A.K. Gopalan Bhawan, 27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg New Delhi 110 001
Website: <http://www.cpim.org> email: cpim@vsnl.com

Report On Current Developments

(Adopted At The Central Committee Meeting Held Between
January 29 & 31, 2004 at Hyderabad)

The last report on the international and national developments was presented to the Central Committee in September 2003. The Central Committee meeting held in November was called specially to discuss the assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh and the line to be adopted. So the current report covers the period since the end of September last year.

INTERNATIONAL SITUATION

Iraq: Growing Resistance

Ten months after the US occupation of Iraq, the resistance by the Iraqi people continues to grow and intensify. By mid-January, 500 US soldiers had been killed since the war began. The capture of Saddam Hussein in December has not led to any decline in the resistance put up against US military occupation. Attacks have widened and targeted soldiers of the allied countries stationed in Iraq such as the Italian, Spanish and Polish armed forces.

Faced with increasing resistance the United States administration announced in November 2003 that a new legislative assembly would be created and a new provisional government elected by July 1. This would be followed by an elected body to prepare a constitution and national elections held by 2006.

The plans for handing over power to a provisional government backed by the Americans ran into difficulties when the topmost Shiite cleric Ayatollah Al Sistani publicly opposed the proposal for indirect elections. He has demanded that the elections planned for in June should be by direct ballot and not by indirect elections. Consequent to this opposition, big demonstrations have been held in the cities of southern Iraq which are dominated by the Shia population demanding direct elections and the handing over of power to the Iraqis. It is in such a situation that the United States is pressurising the United Nations to return to Iraq and supervise elections for a transition. The United Nations Secretary General has agreed to send a team to assess the situation.

In the meantime the United States is tightening its grip over Iraq's economic structures to ensure that US companies will be the prime beneficiaries of the huge oil resources and in the rebuilding of Iraq's infrastructure.

Israel-Palestine Situation

The Sharon government has gone ahead with its plan to build a "security wall" running across the entire West Bank. This wall will cut off many Palestinian people from the lands they cultivate and access to other parts of the West Bank affecting their livelihood and freedom of movement. The UN General Assembly passed a resolution in October 2003 demanding that Israel remove the wall it is building. The United States, despite publicly criticising the construction of the wall has done nothing to stop Israel building such a wall. The "road map" to peace promulgated with much fanfare by President Bush last June has not taken off given the Israeli intransigence.

US: Counter-Proliferation Measures

The United States in the past few months has pursued its goal of "checking nuclear proliferation" by applying pressure on Iran and continuing with its efforts to make North Korea abandon its nuclear programme. Iran agreed to suspend its nuclear enrichment programme and allow international inspections after negotiations with the IAEA and the European Union. Libya has been under continuous pressure to open up its installations for inspection and to stop any efforts at deployment of nuclear technology. Col. Ghaddafi after prolonged negotiations has submitted to the US and Britain in return for an end of all sanctions. In the case of the DPRK, negotiations are continuing after the six-nation meeting in Beijing to find a solution to arrive at a settlement. The United States has failed to intimidate North Korea to unilaterally halt its nuclear programme. Various proposals are being discussed through the five nations who are involved in the negotiation process viz. China, Japan, South Korea, US and Russia. In Brazil too the United States has been demanding unannounced inspections just as in Iran. However, the Brazilian government has stood firm and stated that its uranium enrichment effort is solely for providing fuel for its nuclear power plants and refused to accept spot inspections by the IAEA.

All these efforts to force third world countries to stop development of nuclear technology is being done in the name of stopping proliferation of weapons of mass destruction. Behind this is the US aim of keeping the monopoly of nuclear arms and other weapons of mass destruction within its block of allies.

World Economy

From the third quarter of 2003 there have been signs of revival of economic growth in the US and the major European countries like Germany, France and

the Netherlands. However, the US growth is not creating new jobs at the pace expected. In the month of December only a thousand new jobs were added. One of the major factors in the revival of the global economy has been the striking GDP growth rate of China which is 9.1 per cent in 2003. Meanwhile, the International Monetary Fund in a report has warned that the net financial obligations of the United States to the rest of the world could be equal to 40 per cent of its total economy within a few years. The huge debt and the large budget deficits pose “significant risks” for the US and for the rest of the world.

Latin America

The struggles against neo-liberal reforms and imperialist hegemony continue to manifest themselves in various forms in South America. In Bolivia, President Sanchez de Lozada a close ally of Bush was forced to resign after massive strikes and demonstrations for over a month against the decision to export natural gas to the US. In Venezuela, the Chavez regime has been vigorously fighting off attempts to destabilize the government by right-wing forces backed by the United States. In Colombia, for the first time a Left-wing candidate won the Mayoral election in the capital Bogotá.

Takeover in Georgia

Shevardnadze, the President of Georgia was toppled after large-scale demonstrations by the opposition which refused to accept the results of the parliament elections. The movement for “democracy” was financed and guided by a foundation set up by George Soros, the billionaire financier, who had set up such foundations for the whole of Eastern Europe. The United States fully backed the takeover of Georgia by the pro-Western opposition. The Presidential elections held in January was won with hardly any opposition by Mikheil Saakashvili. Such a blatant takeover by pro-American forces in Georgia has alarmed the Russian government which has announced that it is not prepared to withdraw Russian soldiers who are still based in Georgia.

Sri Lanka

The talks to restore peace between the Sri Lankan government and the LTTE were stalled in April 2003 after the LTTE withdrew from the peace process. Efforts were made to revive the talks by the Norwegian mediators. The LTTE submitted a plan for the setting up of an interim administration for the North Eastern region which was a blueprint for a State within a State. President Kumaratunga strongly opposed the LTTE’s proposals. The differences between the President and the Prime Minister got aggravated. The Supreme Court upheld the constitutional position that the President has full jurisdiction over the defence forces. The ruling party talked about removal of the Chief Justice by an impeachment motion in parliament. It was at this juncture that the President removed three ministers and took over their portfolios including defence. The Prime Minister in retaliation has stated that it is upto the President now to continue the peace talks. Efforts at settling the differences through talks and the setting up of a committee has yielded no results. The

Norwegian government decided to stop its mediatory efforts till there was political agreement.

With the President belonging to the SLFP and the Prime Minister belonging to the UNF, the situation has now reached a deadlock. The only way out can be fresh elections. It is keeping this in mind that the SLFP has come to an agreement with the Janata Vimukhti Perumuna (JVP) which has the third largest number of MPs in parliament. The JVP which claims to be a Left party has a sizeable following in the southern districts. But it is opposed to grant of autonomy to the Tamil areas and the setting up of a federal system. So far the ceasefire is in effect. Neither the government nor the LTTE want hostilities to resume given the widespread desire for peace among all sections of the people. Unless the two major political forces the SLFP and the UNP can come to an agreement on provision of autonomy to the Tamil speaking areas, it will be difficult to arrive at a political settlement which will maintain Sri Lankan unity and provide justice to the Tamil people.

NATIONAL SITUATION

Indo-Pakistan Relations

In November 2003 both India and Pakistan took steps to reduce tensions and normalise relations. Pakistan declared a ceasefire along the line of control which was reciprocated by India. Steps to increase representation in the diplomatic missions of both countries, resumption of travel links by air, road and rail were proposed. By December, agreement had been reached for restoration of air links which was followed by the resumption of the Samjhauta Express train service. These steps were a prelude to Prime Minister Vajpayee attending the SAARC summit in Pakistan in the first week of January. The SAARC summit was a success with the signing of the South Asia Free Trade Agreement. The most significant was the joint declaration made by the Indian Prime Minister and the Pakistani President announcing the commencement of a composite dialogue from February 2004 on all outstanding issues including Kashmir. The Pakistan side on its part noted the necessity for reduction of violence in Kashmir.

The Vajpayee government had been taking the position that it cannot talk to Pakistan until “cross border terrorism” is stopped. The CPI(M) had disagreed with this stand and argued that the process of dialogue must continue and it is better to initiate a bilateral dialogue than let the United States or other external forces set the agenda. The Party has been consistently advocating peace and normalcy be restored between the two countries.

This important development has come about because of the continuous pressure exerted by the United States behind the scenes. The US Secretary of State welcoming the joint statement has stated that two years of efforts by the United States has paid off. The agreement to resume dialogue between the two countries is a positive development whatever the pressures exercised. It meets the aspirations of people of both countries for peace and an end to hostilities.

Indo-US Strategic Ties

The US and Indian governments have announced plans for expanding the strategic ties between the two countries in the realm of civilian nuclear, space and high technology. India has accepted that it is a partner with America in controlling the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction which mean that US insistence of safeguards and conditions have been accepted in the hope of getting access to advanced technologies. India has also agreed to discuss cooperation with the US Missile Defence System. The US administration has made it clear that it will continue to restrict Indian access to high technology which can be used for nuclear weapons or missile programmes. This joint announcement is one more indication of the eagerness of the Vajpayee government to make India part of the US global strategic plans.

Bhutan Drive Against Extremists

For a number of years, the ULFA extremist organisation operating in Assam had taken shelter in the jungles of Bhutan. The ULFA also helped the Kamatapur Liberation Organisation (KLO) and the National Democratic Front of Bodoland (NDFB) to set-up camps inside and train them. The KLO which demands the setting up of a separate state in North Bengal has been utilising armed squads to kill CPI(M) cadres. The West Bengal government and the government of India have been requesting the Bhutanese government to take action against the entrenched militants inside its territory. For over three years, the Bhutanese government was engaged in talks with the ULFA to close its camps and vacate its territory.

After all these efforts failed, the Bhutanese army launched a full scale operation on December 15, 2003 against the extremist camps. In the course of a fortnight, all the 30 camps run by the ULFA, KLO and the NDFB were destroyed and hundreds of their activists detained and scores killed. Practically, the entire leadership of the KLO was apprehended and handed over to the Indian authorities. The smashing of the camps in Bhutan is a major setback to the ULFA and the other north-eastern extremist groups. Those who managed to escape have joined the leadership of the ULFA in Bangladesh. Unfortunately, the ULFA and other extremist groups are still sheltered in camps in Bangladesh. The Bangladesh government continue to deny their existence. It is essential for the Central government to continue to press upon the Bangladesh government to shut down the extremist camps and apprehend the terrorist groups.

Conflict Over Jobs

The growing problem of unemployment led to an ugly eruption of regional chauvinism and fratricidal conflicts. The problem was sparked off when entrance examinations were held for posts advertised in the 'C' and 'D' categories in the railways. For around 38,000 vacancies spread over 17 railway zones, 55 lakh valid applications were received. When the examinations were held in Guwahati, Hindi-speaking persons from outside were prevented from appearing for the test by some chauvinist elements. This, in turn, led to attacks on passengers from the North-East travelling by trains through Bihar. These attacks on innocent passengers, including molestation of women, inflamed feelings in Assam. The AASU called for a bandh and large-scale attacks took place against Biharis living in Assam. The ULFA led attacks which resulted in the deaths of some Bihari labourers. The violence led to the death of around 60 people.

In Maharashtra, the Shiv Sena physically assaulted and drove away people from the northern states who went to appear for the examinations in Mumbai. Underlying this display of chauvinism in the name of preference for "sons of the soil" is the acute unemployment situation. Lakhs of young men and women are unable to find jobs and this breeds frustration which is utilised by

the reactionary and divisive forces. These events are a graphic illustration of the failure of the Vajpayee government to generate employment and the harmful consequences of its policies which have killed employment opportunities.

Impact of Assembly Elections

The major political development in this period was the assembly election in five states held in the beginning of December. Apart from Mizoram, the results of the other four states -- Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh, Chattisgarh and Delhi -- had a bearing on national politics. The BJP won the elections in Rajasthan, Madhya Pradesh and Chattisgarh. The Congress could win only in Delhi. In Mizoram, the MNF government was voted back to office.

In both Madhya Pradesh and Rajasthan, the Congress was decisively defeated and there has been a decline in its vote of 8.9% and 9.3% respectively compared to 1998. In all the three states where the BJP won, a common feature was the big defeat of the Congress in the tribal areas. The three states have a substantial tribal population which has been the traditional support base of the Congress. For the first time the BJP has made big headway by winning 76 of the 99 scheduled tribe reserved seats.

In Madhya Pradesh, the verdict was against the Congress government's performance and its chief minister Digvijay Singh in particular. The power crisis with no electricity for hours on end and the bad state of roads fuelled the discontent. There was a degree of OBC consolidation behind the BJP with the choice of Uma Bharati as the Chief Ministerial candidate. State government employees worked for the defeat of the Congress. In Rajasthan too the government employees went against the Congress.

The BJP is trying to project that the election victory is due to the campaign against the performance of the Congress governments and the good governance by the Centre. The media has been also toeing the line by stating that Hindutva was not utilised. This is a myth. The communal agenda was in full play in the tribal areas where the BJP secured its biggest success. Much before the elections the RSS through its outfits like the Vanavasi Kalyan Ashram and the Hindu Jagran Manch was active in the tribal areas. For instance, in Jhabua district in Madhya Pradesh, the VHP had conducted a big campaign to install Hindu idols in each tribal house. In Madhya Pradesh, the BJP-RSS combine used the Bhojshala issue in Dhar and the cow slaughter issue much before the polls. Narendra Modi was used extensively in the campaign in Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh. While the Congress did lose support among the people because of its wrong policies and misrule, it is also a fact that the communal work of the RSS and its outfits played an important role in the BJP gathering more support.

In both Rajasthan and Madhya Pradesh, caste mobilisation increased dramatically as caste organisations and lobbies were used effectively by the

BJP. Other factor has been the lavish use of money by the BJP. In both MP and Rajasthan the scale of money used was not seen in assembly elections before. The BJP deployed vast resources of money which left the Congress far behind.

The people could not make out any difference between the Congress and the BJP as far as the economic policies were concerned. The Congress-run state governments had pursued liberalisation and privatisation policies. These governments pushed for privatisation of power sector, downsizing of government employees, cutting back the public distribution system and withdrawing the state from public services. All these had a deleterious effect on the common people and in particular the poorer sections. These policies aggravated the employment problem further. The BJP whose central government is responsible for much of these policies succeeded in putting the Congress in dock for lack of development and misrule.

Towards Lok Sabha Polls

The victory of the BJP boosted the morale of the BJP while the defeat of the Congress put it on the defensive. The success of the BJP immediately led its leadership to consider advancing the Lok Sabha elections. According to its calculations, the Congress is in disarray and with the momentum generated by the election victories it can project the BJP-led government's "achievements" and go for an early poll in an advantageous position. By mid-December the BJP leadership had decided to advance the Lok Sabha elections. Keeping this in mind, during the parliament session in December it pushed through measures such as the Constitutional amendment to modify the anti-defection law and limit the size of the cabinet. Parliament also added in the 9th schedule Bodo, Santhali, Maithali and Dogri as national languages. The month of January saw a spate of announcements ranging from cuts in excise and customs duties amounting to Rs. 10,000 crores and various pre-election sops for farmers, pension scheme for unorganised workers, raising of the ceiling for income tax payers and concessions to the affluent sections.

The decision to advance the elections was formally taken at the BJP national executive in Hyderabad on January 11 and 12. After a vote on account in parliament in the first week of February, the process of dissolution of Parliament will take place with election expected sometime in April.

The imminence of a parliament election has sparked off various political responses and change in alignments. We can briefly summarise these developments state-wise.

Tamilnadu: A notable change has taken place in Tamilnadu. The DMK announced its break with the NDA. This was followed by the departure of the MDMK and the PMK from the ruling coalition. The DMK has taken steps for an electoral alliance with the Congress, the PMK, MDMK and the Left parties. As a consequence, the BJP is now working towards an understanding with the AIADMK. The new political alignment would therefore lead to an electoral

contest between the two combinations with the DMK and the AIADMK ranged against each other alongwith its electoral partners. The combination against the AIADMK-BJP in terms of electoral arithmetic is a strong one going by the percentages of votes got by the concerned parties in the previous elections. It should be possible for the DMK and its allies to win a majority of the seats. Last time the NDA alliance which included the DMK had won 25 of the 39 seats.

Apart from the sitting seat of Madurai, the secretariat has made a list of three seats from which we should negotiate to contest – Coimbatore, North Madras and Nagercoil.

Uttar Pradesh: This being the biggest state with eighty seats is of vital importance for the BJP if it has to improve its tally. In the last elections, the BJP had won 29 out of the 85 seats (including Uttaranchal). The Samajwadi Party had won 26, the BSP 14 and the Congress 10. Subsequently in the assembly elections, the BJP slipped down to the third position with the Samajwadi Party getting the highest number of seats and 25.4% of the votes followed by the BSP with 23% and the BJP with 20%. The Congress was in the fourth position with 9%. Since Mulayam Singh Yadav took over as the Chief Minister in September last year, the Samajwadi Party has consolidated its position.

The BSP's base amongst the dalits is intact even after the Mayawati government's fall. The BJP is still in third position. If Kalyan Singh joins the BJP which is expected, then SP tally of seats will go down to some extent and it will also help the BJP. But it wont be sufficient to make the BJP get the largest number of seats.

If the Congress and the BSP forge an alliance it may help the Congress in some seats but the BSP will not get the same benefit as the upper-caste voters of the Congress may not vote for the BSP candidates (unless they are upper-caste candidates).

The electoral prospects of the various parties can be summed up as follows:

- i) The Samajwadi Party-Ajit Singh combine, if it remains intact, can get the largest number of seats.
- ii) The BSP has still got its voting strength intact. If the BSP-Congress alliance is there, then it will be contending with the BJP for the second position in terms of winning seats.
- iii) The BJP is, at present, in the third position. When Kalyan Singh joins them, then they will be in a position to get some more seats.

Mulayam Singh has announced that his existing combination will fight the elections and is not prepared to have any other alliance.

Andhra Pradesh: We had discussed the situation in Andhra Pradesh during the last CC meeting held in November. Since then the TDP government has been undertaking various steps to try and strengthen its position for the elections. Naidu's hopes of having early elections in February did not materialize given the Election Commission's stand. This has deprived him of some of the perceived advantages such as the sympathy factor after the PWG attack on his life. The Congress party is trying to gear up and face the elections unitedly as it considers these elections as a life and death matter for its future. With the holding of the Lok Sabha elections alongside the assembly polls, it becomes important to cut down the tally of TDP-BJP in Lok Sabha. In the 1999 elections the TDP-BJP had won 36 of the 42 seats from the state.

The performance of the TDP government has caused discontent and the TDP-BJP alliance will find it difficult to maintain the existing strength in the last assembly elections. The Congress and the CPI would like to have an understanding with the Telengana Rashtra Samiti (TRS) which is a force in the Telengana region. The CPI held talks with the TRS for seat adjustment. We have publicly stated that we will have no truck with the TRS which advocates a separate Telengana. So far both the Congress and the state unit of the CPI have announced that they will demand a second State Reorganisation Commission to consider the demands for new states. TRS is demanding that both the Congress and the CPI come out with a categorical stand in support of a separate Telengana. The CPI is pursuing opportunistic tactics on the question of a separate Telengana state and on having an understanding with the TRS.

The secretariat has selected a list of 27 assembly seats where we have substantial strength and three Lok Sabha seats to consider for contest.

Maharashtra: The coalition government of the Congress and the NCP was formed after the last assembly elections. Sharad Pawar had formed the NCP and contested against both the Shiv Sena-BJP combine and the Congress in 1999 Lok Sabha elections and the assembly elections held later. The split in the Congress had resulted in the BJP-Shiv Sena combine winning 28 out of the 48 Lok Sabha seats. The Congress-RPI alliance had won 12, NCP - 6 and the Janata Dal (Secular) and PWP, one each. In the assembly election, the Congress won 75, the NCP 57 and the Left and others 11. Thus, it was possible for the NCP-Congress combine to come to power with the support of the Left and other secular parties.

The performance of the Congress-NCP government in the last four years has been disappointing and its policies have led to serious problems for the workers, peasants and other sections. There is considerable discontent against the state government and this can lead to a negative vote against the NCP and Congress and benefit the communal alliance. That is why the Shiv Sena-BJP combine is demanding simultaneous elections. So far, the Congress and Sharad Pawar have said that there will be no simultaneous elections. Efforts were made to rope in the NCP in the NDA and Sharad Pawar's statement about his various options confirmed this. However, the Shiv Sena's opposition

to his entry into the NDA and the compulsions of Maharashtra politics where the NCP and the Congress have a common base, have led to the Congress and the NCP continuing an uneasy alliance. The coming together of the Congress and the NCP will help to check the prospects of Shiv Sena-BJP combine winning the majority of the seats in the Lok Sabha elections.

Efforts are being made to bring together the CPI(M), CPI, PWP and Janata Dal (Secular) and some smaller parties for some electoral understanding. While doing so, we shall confine ourselves in fighting a few seats and not helping the communal alliance in any manner. Where we and our allies are not contesting, we shall call for the defeat of the BJP-Shiv Sena candidates. We shall fight at least two seats in the State. Dahanu, Wardha, Malegaon and Dadra & Nager Haveli (Union Territory) have been listed.

Madhya Pradesh: In the last Lok Sabha elections, the BJP had won 29 out of the 40 seats. The Congress got 11. After the recent assembly elections, the BJP is on the offensive while the Congress, after its defeat, is demoralised and is in disarray. After the separation of Chattisgarh, there are 29 seats in the state. The BJP may maintain its existing number of 21 seats. An understanding with the BSP will benefit the Congress, in which case it may improve its position to some extent from the existing 8 seats.

In the extremely polarised situation in the state, the Party can only think of contesting one seat where we have some strength and conduct an independent campaign.

Jharkhand: Jharkhand, after its separation from Bihar, has not held assembly elections. It has a BJP-led state government. During the last parliament elections, the BJP won 11 out of the 14 seats which falls in the present Jharkhand. 2 seats went to the Congress and 1 to the JMM. There is a strong anti-incumbency sentiment against the state and central governments. The BJP can be defeated only if there is an alliance between the Congress, RJD and the JMM. But the JMM is an opportunist force which can go with anyone. The Left has some influence but it cannot play any determining role.

We are working for an understanding of all the Left parties -- CPI(M), CPI, CPI(ML) and the Marxist Coordination Committee. Amongst the secular opposition parties, the JMM is the biggest party followed by the RJD. If there is agreement amongst the Left, we can try for some adjustment with them.

We would be contesting one Lok Sabha seat (Ranchi) and supporting one independent in Jamshedpur as a common Left candidate.

Assam: In the last Lok Sabha elections, the Congress had won 10 seats, BJP - 2, Bodo - 1 and CPI(ML) (Karbi Anglong) - 1. The Congress is the biggest party and is making all efforts to retain its position. The BJP is having an alliance with the Bodo group. As far as the AGP is concerned, it has weakened. There are differences in the AGP of having an alliance with the BJP. The state unit of

the BJP is opposed to an alliance with the AGP. If Prafulla Kumar Mahanto is elected as the new President of AGP, he will go for an alliance with the BJP. But if the present President continues, there may not be an alliance. If the BJP forges an alliance with the AGP, then the Congress will face a serious challenge in the state. If there is no alliance between BJP and AGP, then there will be a four-cornered contest in the coming elections -- Congress will go alone; BJP and Bodo group will go together; AGP; and Left parties alliance. If there is a four-cornered contest, Congress may get more seats than they have at present.

The Party will be contesting in two seats -- Barpeta and Silchar.

Orissa: In the last Parliament elections, the BJD-BJP alliance had won 19 out of the 21 seats with the BJD getting 10 and the BJP 9. The Congress could win only 2 seats. In spite of the erosion of the support base of the BJD-BJP alliance due to the discontent generated by its anti-people policies, it still maintains an edge over the Congress. Naveen Patnaik has consolidated his position in the BJD and his image is of a clean Chief Minister. The Congress, which should be naturally the beneficiary of the anti-establishment vote, is divided. The handing over of the organisation to J.B. Patnaik can ensure some improvement. The break-away groups from the BJD like the Janasakti and Orissa Gana Parishad are trying for an understanding with the Congress. The JMM is a force in three tribal Lok Sabha seats.

The CPI(M), CPI and the JD (S) are in no position to win any seat or get a substantial vote. In such a situation, we shall have an understanding with these two parties and any of the break-away BJD, if possible.

Since Naveen Patnaik decided to hold assembly elections simultaneously, the Secretariat wants to contest the Bhadrak (SC) seat under which we have our assembly seat.

Punjab: In the last Lok Sabha elections, the Congress had won 8 out of the 13 seats. The Akali Dal (Badal) - 2, BJP - 1, CPI - 1, Akali Dal (Mann) - 1. In the assembly elections held in February 2002, the Congress won a majority of the 65 seats out of the total 117. Since then the Congress government targetted the corrupt practices of Badal and other Akali Dal leaders. This campaign was a blow to the Akali Dal. However, the factional fight within the Congress in the recent period has given some sustenance to the Akali Dal. Though the Tohra group merged with the Akali Dal (Badal), differences still persist. The alliance with the BSP can help the Congress. At present, the main contest will be between the Congress and the Akali Dal -BJP combination. The situation is not different from that of 1999 Lok Sabha election.

Last time we have contested the Sangrur seat. This time we propose to fight the Hoshiarpur Lok Sabha seat.

Karnataka: There are 28 seats in the Lok Sabha. In the last elections, the Congress won 18, BJP 7 and JD(U) 3. In the Assembly election held

simultaneously, the Congress got a majority. At present, the situation is favourable to the Congress though it may not be able to maintain the number of seats won last time. JD(S) led by Deve Gowda has been able to consolidate most of the JD section and it will be giving the main fight to the Congress. The BJP strength has declined. The JD (S) has announced that it will fight all 28 seats and it is prepared to have an understanding with the Left and other secular parties only in the assembly elections.

We should fight one seat in the state to register our presence. If there is assembly elections alongside, we can reconsider the matter.

Chattisgarh: After coming to power in the state, the BJP is in an upbeat mood. The Congress is sharply divided between the Jogi and anti-Jogi factions. The role of the NCP and the BSP must be seen. If they go with the Congress, then the BJP's tally will go down.

We can contest in one seat -- Kanker.

Haryana: There are 10 Lok Sabha seats which were all won by the INLD-BJP alliance (5 seats each) in the 1999 elections. In the assembly elections held in February 2000, the INLD had acquired a majority on its own. The Chautala government's performance has alienated various sections of the people. But inspite of the decline in the mass support, the INLD cannot be underestimated due to its caste base in support of the vested interests. The Congress is in a better position though it is faction-ridden. It is banking mainly on the anti-Chautala mood. BSP has some influence among the SCs though its appeal has weakened in the recent years. If the BSP is aligning with the Congress, it will enhance the prospects of the Congress.

The state committee prefers to concentrate in the assembly elections due in February 2005 and not contest a Lok Sabha seat.

Bihar: Bihar has 40 Lok Sabha seats (after separation of Jharkhand). In the last Lok Sabha elections, the BJP-led alliance swept the polls and got 29 seats. The RJD could get only 6 seats. In the subsequent assembly elections held in 2000, the RJD emerged as the single largest party and was able to form the government with an understanding with the Congress. It will be difficult for the BJP-JD(U) alliance to maintain the position it got last time. If the RJD has an understanding with the Congress, the Left parties and Paswan's Lok Janshakti Party, it will be able to put up a better performance.

We should contest our sitting seat and negotiate with RJD for one more out of the four seats (Samastipur, Madhepura, Jhanjarpur, Nawadah) which have been selected by the secretariat. None of these seats are held by the RJD.

Northeastern States: With Sangma and his North East People's Forum joining the NDA, the seats in Nagaland, Mizoram, Arunachal Pradesh and one seat in Meghalaya will go with the NDA. In Manipur and Meghalaya, Congress and non-NDA parties have the chance to win.

Tripura: The CPI(M) won both the Parliament seats in the last Lok Sabha elections. In the by-election to the Tripura West seat after the death of Com. Samar Chaudhury, we won the seat with a big majority. The victory of the Left Front in the assembly elections in 2003 has led to the demoralisation of the Congress. The Congress-INPT alliance is also in disarray. A section of the INPT is not in favour of continuing with the Congress. The INPT leadership has been trying to get close to the BJP. The Trinamool-BJP alliance will also be in the fray.

The activities of the Left Front government have helped to expand and consolidate the Party's mass base. In such a situation, the Party is confident to retain both the Lok Sabha seats with a comfortable margin.

Kerala: In the last Lok Sabha elections, the LDF had won 9 seats and the UDF 11 out of the total of 20 seats. Later in Ernakulam by-election, we wrested this seat, so the tally of LDF is now 10. The Ernakulam seat is a difficult seat for us to retain. There will be tough fight in Kannur, Idukki and Kottayam constituencies. In last election, the CPI lost in all the three seats it contested -- Trichur, Adoor and Thiruvananthapuram. If the work is properly planned, there is a chance of winning these seats. The BJP cannot win any seat in Kerala. Our effort will be to maintain the present strength of the LDF in the elections.

West Bengal: In the last Lok Sabha elections, the Left Front had won 29 seats out of the 42. Of which, the CPI(M) has got 21. The Trinamool-BJP alliance had won 10 seats and the Congress 3. In the assembly elections held in 2001, the Left Front had won 199 seats getting 49 per cent of the vote. For the coming Lok Sabha elections, our effort would be to increase the number of seats won by the CPI(M) and the Left Front. The Trinamool influence has declined. If the Congress does not come to any tacit understanding with the Trinamool-BJP combine, then there is every possibility of the Trinamool-BJP tally getting reduced.

The Party proposes to contest 32 seats with the rest of the 10 seats going to the CPI, RSP and the Forward Bloc.

Main task in the elections

The BJP has been in office at the Centre from 1998 for a stretch of six years. The danger posed by the RSS guided BJP controlling the levers of power has been evident in this period. The BJP won the 1999 elections by forging a broad-based coalition in which it was able to rally many of the secular and regional parties. It is under the cover of the NDA government that the BJP-RSS combine is working towards consolidating its hold on State power. The policies of the BJP-led government in the economic, political, social and foreign policy spheres in the past five years illustrate how it will be harmful for the country if their

rule continues. This pro-imperialist government has pushed through right-wing economic policies which have increased the burdens of the working people. The BJP's continuance in government could mean further steps to intimidate the minorities into submission by the Hindutva forces. This will heighten the threats to national unity.

The BJP is going for the elections with the NDA alliance as it knows it cannot win on its own strength. It has no chance of winning on its own. It is trying to retain and expand its alliance.

Defeating the BJP and its allies is the main task for the CPI(M) and the Left and democratic forces in the forthcoming elections.

Tactics For the Elections

In the political campaign which we will conduct during the elections, we should highlight the danger posed by the BJP with its communal agenda. The steps taken to penetrate the State apparatus and communalise Indian society must be halted and reversed. We have to mobilise the people against the harmful and anti-people policies which have played havoc with the lives of the ordinary people. The BJP's pro-American policies which are harmful to the national interests and national sovereignty must be exposed. The opportunist nature of the alliance which is the NDA must be highlighted. In doing so, we must be able to set out the alternative policies that the CPI(M) and the Left represents. This will require an independent campaign alongwith the joint platform and united campaign that we may conduct.

We have to rally the secular and democratic parties in the different states, so that the widest forces can be mobilised to defeat the BJP and its allies. While doing so, we cannot have any alliance or joint platform with the Congress. We must expose the harmful economic policies of the Congress. We should mobilise the people on our political platform so that we are able to increase the influence and strength of the Left.

Like in the 1999 Lok Sabha elections, there is no possibility of having an all India alliance for the elections. We have to see the situation in each state and the political forces operating there and work out our election tactics which should help to target the BJP and its allies and forge an understanding with the non-Congress secular parties. We should see that the division of the anti-BJP votes is minimised to the best extent possible.

In 1998, we had brought out a joint Left manifesto of the CPI(M), CPI, Forward Bloc and the RSP. This time such a joint stand is not possible, given the political stance taken by the Forward Bloc and RSP of equidistance between the BJP and the Congress.

In states like Tamilnadu and Bihar, where the main force fighting the BJP alliance would be a non-Congress party like the DMK and RJD, we should

have an understanding with these parties even as they enter into an alliance with the Congress. In such cases, we should not project any state level front or alliance with the Congress.

In Uttar Pradesh, if the Samajwadi Party is determined to go it alone, we should adopt suitable tactics to see that the BJP is defeated by our extending support to those parties and candidates who can defeat the BJP.

In the states where the main polarisation is between the BJP and the Congress, as we have been doing in the past, we should be in the electoral battle fighting a seat or two and conduct a general campaign calling for the defeat of the BJP alliance.

The electoral struggle against the BJP and its allies must also result in increasing the Party's strength and the Left influence.

The Central Committee calls upon all its Party units to prepare for this important electoral battle. We should use all our resources to go amongst the people and mobilise them to reject the BJP-NDA alliance. Our efforts must be directed towards mobilising maximum support for the Party and Left candidates. We must be able to rally the widest forces to ensure the defeat of the BJP and for the formation of a secular government as an alternative.
