

Tel. 23344918,23747435

23363692, 23747436

Fax: 23747483

COMMUNIST PARTY OF INDIA (MARXIST)



Central Committee

A.K. Gopalan Bhawan, 27-29, Bhai Vir Singh Marg New Delhi 110 001

Website: <http://www.cpim.org> email: cc@cpim.org

Review of the State Assembly Elections

**(Adopted by the Central Committee at its Meeting
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The results of these elections have shown a very impressive performance by the CPI(M)-led LDF in Kerala leading to the formation of an LDF government with Comrade Pinarayi Vijayan as the Chief Minister.

In the other three states of West Bengal, Tamilnadu and Assam, the results were disappointing.

In this round of state assembly elections, the BJP has made substantial gains. It has formed the government in Assam for the first time. The BJP has by itself won 60 seats in the state which has a total of 126 Assembly seats. Its allies, the AGP won 14 and the BPF has won 12, thus, makes it a total 86 which is a two-third majority. The BJP polled 29.5 per cent of the vote in the state and with its allies nearly 42 per cent. The Congress having been in the government for the last fifteen years has suffered a severe setback.

Even in the other states, particularly in West Bengal and Kerala, the BJP has made gains as compared to last assembly elections in 2011. It had conducted a very aggressive campaign in Kerala and has mounted serious post-poll violence against the CPI(M).

In Bengal, the BJP won 3 seats. Both in Bengal and Kerala, the state reports suggest that there has been some degree of a vote transfer from the UDF to BJP in Kerala and from the Trinamool Congress to the BJP in Bengal. In Tamilnadu, however, the BJP could poll only 2.8 per cent of the vote. It nevertheless conducted a vigorous campaign here, as well.

Overall, the Congress suffered a setback in these round of elections. The BJP's performance has emboldened it to take a more aggressive posture in the country's politics post-elections.

Kerala

The elections to the 14th Kerala Legislative Assembly was held on 16th May, 2016. This was a crucial election for the Kerala society. The CPI(M)-led LDF in Kerala has registered a very significant victory. This victory has, to a certain extent, strengthened the CPI(M)'s role in national politics. At the Party Congress and soon after, including in the Party Plenum, it was clear before the Party that given the situation of unprecedented terror and violence in West Bengal, the CPI(M)'s national presence and its efforts to strengthen itself on the basis of the Party Congress and Plenum decisions, will be dependent crucially on our electoral performance in Kerala. This victory has given confidence to our Party and served as a morale booster in the present circumstances.

Kerala's Assembly elections used to be the scene of political battle between two fronts until now. BJP also used to contest the elections by showing its presence in a few places. However, the situation has changed in this election. BJP conducted its elections campaign by assembling the caste, religious organizations under its fold. The present leadership of SNDP, an organization which had played a great role in the Kerala's renaissance movement, formed a political party named BDJS and aligned with BJP for contesting the elections.

Utilizing the influence in Central government and unleashing money power on a large scale, BJP conducted a communally coloured propaganda in Kerala. The elections took place in the background of a political campaign which questioned the basic secular traditions of Kerala. NDA put forward the agenda of destroying the Left in order to advance their communal goals. They conducted strong propaganda against Left Democratic Front. On the other hand, UDF adopted a soft attitude towards BJP. We conducted our campaign raising the slogans of ousting UDF from power and checking BJP. The Party took a strong stand against corporatization, corruption and communalism. The LDF victory in the assembly elections is recognition for the policy of building up Left alternative to the BJP and Congress adopted in the 21st Party Congress.

Out of 140 seats the LDF won 91 seats (CPI-M 58+5 Party supported independents), CPI -19, JD(S) -3 , NCP - 2, KC(B) - 1, Congress(S) - 1, RSP(L) - 1, CMP- 1.

UDF - 47; Congress -22, IUML -18, KC(M) - 6, KC(J) - 1.

BJP - 1 and independent (PC George) 1.

LDF got 87,25,939 votes (9,17,196 votes more than the UDF). BJP got 30,20,886 votes. Percentage wise LDF in these elections polled 43.35 per

cent, UDF 38.79 per cent and BJP 15.01 per cent. LDF had 45.13 per cent in 2011 assembly elections whereas UDF had 46.03 and BJP 6.08.

Share of LDF votes in 2014 Lok Sabha was 40.2 per cent and UDF 42.04 per cent. BJP had 10.83 per cent.

In 2015 panchayat/municipal election, LDF had 41.85 per cent, UDF had 40.23 and BJP 14.2.

In comparison to 2011 assembly election, there is a fall in the voting percentage of the LDF. On the contrary, since 2011 there is a systematic fall in the voting percentage of UDF.

Another alarming feature is the systematic increase in the vote share of BJP – 6.08 (2011), 10.83 (2014), 14.21 (2015) and 15.01 (2016).

While the resounding victory of LDF has inspired the democratic sections of our people in the entire country, the lone opening made by the communal BJP into the Kerala legislature for the first time is to be noted with concern. The shift of Congress votes in Nemon constituency is the immediate reason for the victory of BJP candidate is beyond doubt.

It is also to be noted that the vote of LDF candidate increased significantly in that constituency, though the massive shift from Congress to BJP ensured we lost it to BJP.

Apart from this, BJP secured second place in 7 constituencies (two constituencies in Kasargode district, two constituencies in Palakkad district, one constituency in Kollam district and two constituencies in Thiruvananthapuram district, part from Nemon which they won in the same district.)

In many constituencies, NDA and UDF had helped each other. The gain of NDA/BJP is mainly due to erosion of UDF votes. At the same time there are constituencies where small sections of our sympathisers have shifted away from us. Some of these might have moved towards NDA/BJP also.

In the course of the election preparations, the Party Centre regularly interacted with the Kerala comrades, secretariat and the state committee. A separate report is circulated to the CC.

Party, thus, entered the election campaign unitedly, which in turn strengthened LDF unity.

Post election results, the BJP unleashed a spate of violent attacks against the CPI(M). Two comrades were killed by the RSS-BJP men – one in the Chief Minister Pinarayi Vijayan's constituency and another in Thrissur district. There were attacks on Party offices and comrades in various places.

However, the BJP had sought to make a national issue by falsely accusing the CPI(M) of unleashing violence in Kerala. On these false allegations, BJP organized a protest at Central Committee office, A.K. Gopalan Bhawan on May 22, indulging in vandalism. Central BJP leaders are regularly visiting the state trying to whip up an anti-CPI(M) feeling amongst the people on absolutely fabricated charges.

We must be vigilant of the BJP's efforts to try and create a law and order situation by sponsoring violent activities against our Party.

West Bengal

In West Bengal, the Trinamool Congress returned to form the government winning 211 out of the 294 seats and secured a two-third majority. The Trinamool Congress and its allies polled 45 per cent of the vote. The Left Front and its allies polled 26.30 per cent and the Congress polled 12.25 per cent. In West Bengal as well, the BJP polled over 10 per cent of the vote. Though this is significantly short of the 2014 Lok Sabha percentage of 16.84, it was significantly higher from the 4.06 per cent that it polled in the 2011 Assembly elections. In the 2014 Lok Sabha election, it had won two MP seats and was leading in 24 Assembly segments. In this round of Assembly elections, the BJP has won three seats.

The elections were held in a very difficult condition faced by our Party. During the course of last five years, the terror unleashed by the Trinamool Congress had even before the campaign began consumed the lives of 176 of our comrades apart from internally displacing over 60,000 families of Party members and sympathizers, the ransacking and looting of Party and mass organization offices, the specific targeting of women comrades etc.

Despite this situation, the Party and its cadres faced the situation with a remarkable courage and fortitude.

CPI(M) call to 'Oust TMC government to save Bengal; oust BJP government to save India' found some response among the terror-affected people of West Bengal who were eager to restore democracy and bring peace. In this context, the Party and the Left appealed to unify all to unseat the TMC and to marginalize the BJP. A desire and urge of unity from

below became visible among the people. It was in this situation the CC meeting, 17-18 February 2016, resolved and stated publicly that the main task in West Bengal was to restore democracy and foil the aggressive efforts by the communal forces to polarize the people in the state by ousting the present Trinamul Congress government. The CPI (M) would seek the cooperation of all democratic forces in the state to strengthen people's unity in West Bengal to defeat the Trinamul Congress, isolate the BJP and their machinations. Political parties like RJD, JDU, JMM and NCP etc announced their willingness to join hands with the LF in the electoral battle.

During the entire period of election preparation, the LF met every now and then. Bi-partite meetings were held on all crucial occasions. Seat adjustment issue, formulation and finalization of LF Election Manifesto, campaign and agitation and all other allied issues were discussed properly and a common consensus was arrived at on all the election related matters.

However, the results show that the Trinamool Congress' victory was not only on the basis of the terror and violence. The other measures that were undertaken like the provision of grains under the Food Security Act passed by the Central government to the poor, schemes such as provision of cycles to girls, patronization of clubs to mobilize the youth and ensure their loyalty to the TMC also played a positive role in favour of the TMC. Notwithstanding the charges of blatant corruption, the Narada and the Saradha cases etc, the TMC was able to overcome those negative factors. Trinamool Congress's linkage with some Muslim fundamentalist organizations saw a communal polarization. This, on the other hand, had benefitted the BJP with the counter Hindutva communal consolidation.

There is, thus, a very serious situation before the Party. The West Bengal unit of the CPI(M) is our biggest unit and even today, in these adverse circumstances, they have polled a sizeable vote. The Party, at the cost of tremendous sacrifice continues to uphold the CPI(M)'s flag facing terror and violence which, in many instances, is much worse than what the Party faced during the semi-fascist period in the 1970s. This struggle continues. The post-poll violence, which is both widespread and intense, appears clearly designed to cripple the CPI(M) in West Bengal thereby marginalizing the CPI(M)'s presence in national politics.

Given this situation, the defence of our Party, which is the essential pre-requisite to proceed to implement the far-reaching decisions we have taken in the Party Congress and the Plenum to strengthen the independent strength of the CPI(M) and on that basis, to forge the unity of the Left and democratic forces can only proceed in full swing if we are able to fight

back this terror politics in West Bengal. Our West Bengal comrades are in the midst of this battle.

Under these circumstances, there has to be united resistance to this murder of democracy and civil liberties in the state. The strength of the broadest people's resistance is the answer to meet this unprecedented unleashing of violence.

The Central Committee in its meeting on June 18-20, 2016 concluded that the electoral tactics adopted in West Bengal was not in consonance with the Central Committee decision not to have an alliance or understanding with the Congress. This should be rectified and the Central Committee stressed the importance of adhering to the political-tactical line adopted at the 21st Congress of the Party.

The Central Committee authorized the Polit Bureau to ensure its implementation in consultation with the state leadership of the Party.

Tamilnadu

The Tamilnadu Assembly elections have resulted in the victory for the AIADMK which has won in 131 seats and 3 supported by it. The DMK has won in 89 seats. Its ally, the Congress, won in 8 seats and the IUML in 1. The six-parties alliance consisting of the People's Welfare Front (MDMK, CPI(M), CPI and VCK) and the DMDK and TMC could not win any seat. So also the PMK, the BJP and other smaller parties.

The elections this time was more closely contested and the difference between the AIADMK and the DMK alliance is just 1.1 per cent. The outcome of the election confirms the bipolar nature of the politics in Tamilnadu where the AIADMK and the DMK between them have got around 70 per cent of the vote and have alternatively formed governments.

A major feature of the Tamilnadu elections has been the use of money power in a big way with both the AIADMK and DMK distributing cash to the voters in most of the constituencies on an unprecedented scale. Though money power has played a major role, the victory of the AIADMK can also be attributed to the various welfare measures and freebies distributed by the Jayalalithaa government. The running of Amma Canteens, free rice upto 20 kg and other free entitlements have helped the ruling party apart from the promises made in the Manifesto for lowering of electricity charges and waiving of crop loans for farmers.

The DMK has improved its position by winning 89 seats compared to the 23 in the previous Assembly. It was unable to get more electoral allies which could have helped it to overcome the AIADMK. The Congress party which was its ally could win only 8 out of the 41 seats it contested.

It should be noted that the Pattali Makkal Katchi (PMK) which fought the elections alone was able to secure 5.36 per cent of the votes polled by mainly targeted the vaniyar caste vote. The BJP secured 2.86 per cent of the votes polled. It commands influence in Kanyakumari district where it came 2nd in four out of the six constituencies and in Coimbatore where it secured 3rd place in seven out of ten constituencies. Overall, the BJP got the third position votes in 32 constituencies. This shows that the RSS and BJP are working consistently in Tamilnadu to increase their influence.

The formation of the *Makkal Nala Koottu Iyakkam* (People's Welfare Front) consisting of the MDMK, CPI(M), CPI and VCK did initially provide an alternative focus to the AIADMK and the DMK. The common minimum programme of the front evoked a good response from the people. However, the momentum could not be sustained and in the course of the election campaign, the six-parties alliance got marginalized. The understanding with the DMDK and its leader Vijaykant was forged on the basis that he would be projected as Chief Ministerial candidate of the alliance. The projection of Vijaykant did not carry any credibility and it affected the prospects of the alliance. The last minute withdrawal from contesting by Vaiko, the DMDK leader and his different approaches to issues such as Sri Lankan Tamils, Mullapperiyar etc also affected the credibility of the front.

The CPI(M) contested 25 seats out of the 232 as part of the six-party alliance. The Party has got 3,07,303 votes, which is 0.7 per cent of the total votes polled. The low number of votes polled indicates the continuing decline in our independent voting strength which was seen also in the 2014 Lok Sabha election.

The highest votes polled were 25,821 votes in Vilavancode and 23,314 votes in Chidambaram. In another 13 constituencies, we polled between 10,000 and 20,000 votes. In the remaining 10 constituencies, we have polled less than 10,000 votes.

While more Party members have worked in the election to the 25 constituencies we contested ranging from 70 to 90 per cent, still in many places, a substantial number of Party members could not be involved in election work. This is a weakness which has been persisting in Tamilnadu

and necessary organizational steps should be taken to ensure that Party members fulfill their minimum responsibilities.

There are 35 lakh members in class and mass organizations in which the Party working. Few among them are voting for the Party's candidates. This underlines the need to politicize the masses on these organizations and to build the Party amongst them.

The Party state conference had reviewed the electoral tactics pursued in the state as part of the tactical line followed in the past and concluded that entering electoral understanding with the DMK and the AIADMK which pursued neo-liberal policies and indulged in corruption has led to people not seeing us as a political alternative. This has led to a decline in our voting strength. "One reason for the decline in the independent strength of the Party and its political influence is our entering into electoral alliance with DMK and AIADMK continuously over the past forty years." It is keeping this in mind that the Party sought to have an electoral alliance with non-AIADMK, non-DMK secular parties. This could not succeed given the weakened influence of the Party and the limited electoral strength of the allied parties.

Therefore, the emphasis must be on building up the independent strength of the Party through class and mass struggles and taking steps to rally all the Left and democratic forces. Electoral tactics to be pursued in the future must dovetail to this tactical goal.

Puducherry

In the elections to the Puducherry Union Territory Assembly, Congress-DMK alliance won the election defeating the NR Congress which had been in power for the last ten years. In Puducherry, the alliance of People's Welfare Front, in which CPI(M) and CPI were part of it as in Tamilnadu, lost the election. In the 30-member Assembly, CPI(M) supported independent won from Mahe seat after a long time.

Assam

As noted earlier, the BJP formed the state government for the first time in this important state which has strategic role in the North East. The Congress was badly routed winning only 26 out of the 126 seats after having formed government after the last three elections successively.

The Left parties appealed to the voters to oust the Congress from power, defeat the BJP and elect the Left candidates for strengthening the unity of

the people and ensuring all-round development of the State. The Party comrades conducted the election campaign on this slogan.

However, the CPI(M) with 19 candidates in the fray, the total vote polled by the Party is 93,508 which is 0.6 per cent of the total votes polled. On an average, less than 5,000 vote per constituency. Six Left parties together contested 44 seats and secured only 1.5 lakh votes.

The major hurdles faced by our Party were its organisational weaknesses and shortcomings. We failed to mobilise a sizeable section of the Party comrades during the campaign. Even a section of Party's district and local committee members did not take any initiative to involve the members in this political battle.

The basic weakness remains, of our limited independent strength and intervention capacities of the Party. Unless this improves, it would not be possible to expect better election results. The Plenum directives should now be thoroughly discussed in Assam Party secretariat and state committee and concrete programme worked out for their implementation. On the basis of this review, it becomes clearer that unless the Party addresses the fundamental issue of vastly enhancing the independent strength and intervention capacity, the tasks that we have laid out for ourselves of forging the Left and democratic front cannot simply materialize. This task, as emphasized by the Party Plenum, should serve as a primary focus in our immediate future.

Conclusion

As stated earlier, the detailed review reports from states are being circulated separately to CC members.

The BJP's aggressiveness post these elections is taking different forms in different states. Apart from the standard RSS scheme of sharpening communal polarisation to consolidate the Hindutva communal vote bank, the BJP is undertaking specific exercises in social engineering in various states. In the southern states particularly various caste combinations are being created and a caste based coalitions are sought to be built by the BJP in addition to its hardcore communal agenda. In a situation where in different states the Congress party is in a state of disarray for various reasons, the BJP is taking full advantage by undertaking both these tasks. The Party must be conscious of these efforts by the communal forces and strengthen our intervention among the people against these.

On the basis of state reviews, an important lesson that the Party must draw is the reconfirmation of our Party Congress and Plenum understanding that the Party's electoral performance is crucially and directly dependent upon our ability to urgently increase the independent strength and intervention capacity of the Party.

Unless this is done the decision taken by the 21st Party Congress and the Party Plenum to work for the forging of the Left and Democratic Front as the objective of the Party to project an alternative to the ruling classes cannot be achieved. In order to change the correlation of political forces amongst the people in our favour, it is of utmost importance that we devote our energies to the task of increasing the independent strength and intervention capacity of our Party.

Since the conclusion of the Kolkata Plenum, the Party has been pre-occupied, especially in two of our strongholds, in these Assembly elections. Now the utmost priority must be given by the Central Committee to implement the Plenum decisions starting from the Party Centre, Polit Bureau and the Central Committee. Some states have already prepared their state level documents and the proposals which are being considered by the PB's Organisational Sub-Committee. These states should proceed with their timetable for implementing the Plenum decisions while the Party Centre and other states where elections took place must immediately get down to this important task.

Votes Secured by CPI(M) and Allies

Name of State	CPI(M)				Allies	
	Seats contested	Won	Votes	%	Votes	%
Assam	19	Nil	93,508	0.6		0.9 (6 parties)
Kerala	84+8*	58+5*	58,70,786	29.17	87,25,939	43.35
Puducherry	4+1*	1*	13,811			
Tamilnadu	25	Nil	3,07,303	0.7	26,18,250	6.1 (6 parties)
West Bengal	148	26	1,08,02,058	19.7	1,40,48,751 (LF) 1,43,86,196 (LF+allies) 1,48,64,106 (LF+allies+ind) 2,15,65,044(LF+allies+ind+Cong)	25.7 26.3 27.2 39.4

*CPI(M) supported Independents