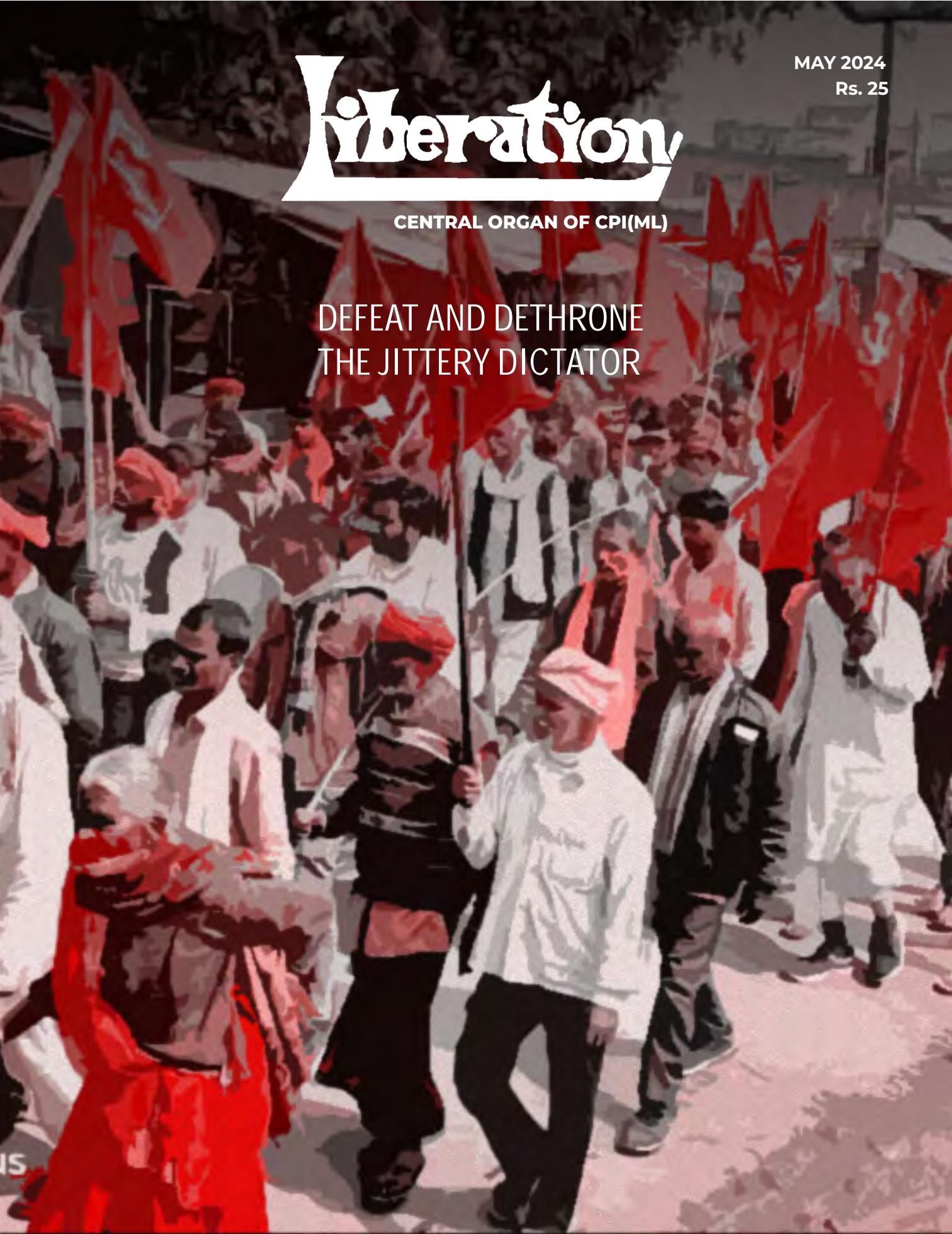


MAY 2024
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Liberation

CENTRAL ORGAN OF CPI(ML)

DEFEAT AND DETHRONE
THE JITTERY DICTATOR



DEFEAT FASCISM!



22 April 2024

PLEDGE

55TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE FOUNDATION OF
CPI(ML)



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Defeat and Dethrone the Jittery Dictator

Just one phase of the elections has been enough to make the BJP bare its fascist fangs before the whole world. The main talking point after the first phase was the drop in voter turnout. The first phase was the biggest phase covering 101 seats (with elections countermanded in one seat) across sixteen states and four union territories, and the voting percentage dropped almost universally by close to five points. Observers have also pointed out that the drop in voter turnout is significantly greater in seats currently held by the BJP/NDA than in seats held by non-NDA parties.

This drop in turnout is clearly a reflection of waning interest and enthusiasm among the BJP's own voters, many of whom feel badly betrayed after voting in the name of Narendra Modi in 2014 and 2019. Sensing the disillusionment and fatigue among BJP supporters and the diminishing impact of the much hyped 'Modi magic', the regime tried to inject aggression into the campaign by setting its sights on an overwhelming 400+ majority. But the low turnout figures clearly indicate that this aggressive call has failed to trigger any ground level enthusiasm. On the contrary there are signs of disgruntlement and division in the BJP camp in state after state. This has made the BJP top brass jittery and desperate and the surest sign of this desperation can now be seen in the kind of unmitigated hate campaign being spearheaded by Narendra Modi himself.

Modi had already hinted at the kind of polarising campaign to come with his absurd accusation of the imprint of Muslim League on the Congress manifesto. And the 'blame' for the points of economic justice and social welfare in the Congress manifesto was placed at the doorsteps of communists. Muslims and communists remain the chosen targets of the Sangh brigade from the very beginning alongside their contempt for the radical egalitarian ideas of Ambedkar and the constitution drafted under his leadership. In his election speech in Rajasthan's Banswara, one of India's most deprived districts, Modi set a new benchmark for hate and lies, making even his past speeches sound somewhat mild.

Modi returned to the BJP's mischievous propaganda in circulation since 2006 about Manmohan Singh reportedly granting Muslims the first right on India's resources. Factchecks have repeatedly exposed this malicious lie and brought the truth to the fore. In the course of his address at the 52nd meeting of the National Development Council, Prime Minister Manmohan Singh had outlined the priorities of the UPA-I government. In this address, while mentioning the collective priorities that merited greater attention of the government, Manmohan Singh had emphasised measures to develop sectors like agriculture, irrigation, health and education and uplift deprived social sections including SC/ST, OBCs, minorities, women and children. The Sangh propaganda has always sought to delink the question of Muslim welfare from this overall context, pitting Muslims against other deprived sections of the society and Modi has now taken it to a new level of toxicity.

His attempt to instigate Hindu women by telling them that their 'mangalsutras' or wedding necklaces would be taken away and the wealth redistributed among Muslims if the Congress came to power will go down as the most brazen instance of scare-mongering and hate-peddling ever by any leader. To demonise Muslims, Modi invoked typical anti-Muslim prejudices like the bogey of population growth and infiltration. And when such venom is spewed by a Prime Minister holding office for ten years, it only underlines the severity of the threat to the constitutional framework of India's parliamentary democracy.

The experience of the people of ten years of Modi rule has actually exposed the Modi government as the biggest enemy of the assets and income of the common people. It is this government which has systematically robbed the common people of their limited savings and earnings by inflicting one blow after another from demonetisation to lockdown and eviction to wholesale privatisation, measures that have further impoverished the working people and enriched the wealthy upper echelons. And a sadist Narendra Modi was actually celebrating the plight of the people in the wake of demonetisation as a

great victory in the battle against black money. In Modi's economics, the first right to all resources belongs to his corporate cronies while eighty crore Indians are asked to remain content only with five kg free ration a month.

A campaign which began with the swagger of a 400-plus majority in a house of 543 members now revolves around making people scared about a Congress comeback and about a shift in policies away from the disastrous pro-corporate mantra of reckless privatisation. This shows the panic that now haunts the powers that be. Apart from hate-mongering, the panic-stricken regime will also resort to all kinds of conspiratorial measures to hold on to power. Anyone who might have expected the regime to be restrained after being caught red handed with the Chandigarh vote-counting scam, will only have to look at the shocking Surat model of stealing an election. The model of horse-trading has now been perfected to the art of buying and disabling candidates to secure victory without any election.

As the 2024 election proceeds through the scorching summer, the forces of democracy will have to fight harder with greater alertness and determination to oust the fascists from power. The panic

in the eyes of the dictator clearly shows that the regime has been hit hard by the growing mobilisation of the people around the core agenda of jobs and justice and the popular assertion in defence of Ambedkar's Constitution, the system of multiparty parliamentary democracy and India's diverse and inclusive culture. Had there been an Election Commission worth its salt we would have by now seen some action against the Prime Minister for this toxic hate campaign. But with the EC turning a blind eye, we the people of India will have to punish this campaign at the people's Court. We need to intensify the battle, stick to the agenda and ensure that the momentum generated in the first phase is carried forward to ensure an emphatic defeat of this disastrous decade-old reign of hate, lies, terror and loot. ■



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CPI(ML) Manifesto

Lok Sabha Elections 2024

**End the Disastrous, Dictatorial Modi Reign of Corporate loot,
Communal Hate and Constitutional Subversion!**

Defeat BJP, Save Democracy!

Vote for CPI(ML), Elect India Candidates!



Dear fellow Indians,

For years we took India's Constitution and constitutionally mandated system of multiparty democracy and federal framework for granted. The build-up to the 2024 Elections tells us that we can no longer afford to do that. The Modi government is bent upon converting India into a one-party state. Two Chief Ministers including the sitting CM of Delhi have been arrested in the poll season and the CJI is being heckled for striking down the unconstitutional Electoral Bonds that had legalised corruption.

In the ten years of Modi rule, the undermining of parliamentary democracy has already reached an alarming level. And now the government is aiming at manufacturing a 400+ majority to inflict more damaging blows to the Constitution. A third successive term for the Modi government will be an absolute disaster for our constitution and parliamentary democracy, for our cultural diversity and everyday existence.

The government is using every unconstitutional measure and unscrupulous trick to hold on to power with the backing of its corporate cronies and the Godi Media. We the people of India have to apply our constitutional power of the vote to end this reign of disaster and rebuild India as a robust democracy. Please exercise your vote and make it count in this decisive battle for the future of India, for the triumph of democracy over dictatorship.

CPI(ML) Liberation will fight for the following charter, both inside and outside the Parliament. We believe that these changes will enable the INDIA Alliance, of which we are a part, to meet peoples' aspirations.

01. DEMOCRATIZING ELECTIONS

1. Voting must be conducted by paper ballots. Electronic Voting Machines, prone to rampant manipulation, should be discontinued.
2. Scrap the Chief Election Commissioner and Other Election Commissioners (Appointment, Conditions of Service And Term of Office) Act, 2023 and appoint CEC and ECs through a transparent process by a selection committee comprising the CJI, PM and leader of the opposition as advised by the Supreme Court of India.
3. An enforceable limit be imposed on the election expenses of political parties.
4. Electorate must be given the right to recall elected representatives.

- Defections by elected representatives must invite automatic cancellation of their memberships from elected bodies.

02. EQUAL CITIZENSHIP FOR ALL



- The rights to employment, nutrition, health, and housing must be declared fundamental rights.
- The discriminatory CAA-NRC-NPR must be scrapped.
- Any idea of a Uniform Civil Code should be discarded.
- Scrap Aadhaar and all biometric linked identification cards and processes and provide universal access to all welfare schemes.
- Pass an anti-discrimination law which prohibits discrimination on grounds of sexual orientation, gender identity, disability, caste and religion.
- Stop using OCI as a tool of persecution against Indian diaspora.

03. PROSPERITY FOR YOUNG INDIA

- All pending vacancies, including reserved posts, in all Central and State government institutions and organisations, government companies, Public Sector Undertakings must be filled immediately.
- An unemployment allowance must be provided to all people out of employment for any duration.
- Reservation for marginalized castes and communities in education and employment must be implemented in the private sector.
- Scrap Agnipath Scheme in armed forces.

04. DIGNITY AND DECENT LIVES FOR WORKERS AND EMPLOYEES

- The national minimum wage must be fixed at Rs. 35,000 per month.
- The four anti-worker Labour Codes must be scrapped.

- The Old Pension Scheme must be restored.
- Extend social security benefits (including health, education and retirement) to unorganised and irregular workers. A minimum monthly pension for all, including EPS pensioners, be instituted at Rs. 10000 per month linked with VDA.
- All contractual and ad-hoc positions, including those in scheme, contract, outsourced and platform workers must be regularized.
- Paid maternity leaves for women and childcare facilities in all workplaces must be provided. All gender discriminatory policies regarding employment and promotion must be scrapped.

05. REVIVING AGRICULTURE & RURAL ECONOMY

- There must be a legally guaranteed Minimum Support Price (MSP) for all crops with C2+50% formula, as per the recommendations of the Swaminathan Commission.
- All debts of farmers and rural workers, from public and private entities, must be waived.
- Agricultural subsidies must be assured, and fertilizers and agricultural inputs must be made available at affordable rates.
- All sharecroppers must be registered and their rights as farmers ensured; ceiling-surplus lands, homestead lands, bhoodan lands, temple and mutt lands and wastelands must be distributed to the landless.
- Job-seekers must be guaranteed a daily minimum wage of Rs. 600/- as well as 200 days of work under the Mahatma Gandhi National Rural Employment Guarantee Act (NREGA).

06. ENSURE RIGHT TO THE CITY FOR ALL

- All town and city dwellers must have equal access to affordable housing, potable water, sanitation facilities and civic amenities.
- The demolitions of homes must be immediately halted and the rights of slum dwellers must be protected. In-situ rehabilitation of displaced people should be the norm.
- All urban residents must have access to affordable public transportation.
- An Urban Employment Guarantee Act should be immediately enacted to meet the needs of urban job-seekers.

07. EXPANDING SOCIAL WELFARE

1. An All India Caste Census must be conducted and the ambit of reservation should be widened on that basis.
2. Free housing for all houseless families in urban and rural areas.
3. Universalisation of PDS under the National Food Security Act with a monthly supply of 50 kg food grains along with sugar, milk, pulses and edible oil to each family, is an urgent necessity.
4. The prices of essential commodities and services need to be stringently controlled.
5. The SC/ST Sub-Plan Act, 2013; SC/ST Prevention of Atrocities Act, 1989/1995; and the Manual Scavengers Act, 2013, must be strictly implemented and regularly monitored.
6. Persons with Disabilities (PwD) must have equal access to all public places and transport, 5% seats in education and employment must be reserved for them, their earnings should not be taxed, and they should be assured adequate state funded support for assistive technologies and devices.
7. DA-linked pension of Rs. 10000 per month must be guaranteed for senior citizens, PwDs and widows.
8. Effective and time-bound implementation of the recommendations of Sachar Committee and Ranganath Mishra commission.

08. ASSURING RIGHTS OF WOMEN, TRANSGENDER & LGBTQIA+ COMMUNITIES

1. 33% reservation for women (with provision for OBC quota) in the parliament and state assemblies must be immediately implemented. Additionally, 50% seats in all local bodies must be reserved for women.
2. State-aided protection mechanisms, effective helplines and support systems for survivors of sexual abuse, domestic violence, "honour" crimes, and inter-caste or inter-faith couples facing violence, must be strengthened.
3. Reform personal laws to bring them in line with women's constitutional rights.
4. The constitutional rights of the transgender community must be guaranteed. All necessary protections and welfare measures mandated by

the NALSA judgement must be provided.

5. There must be adequate legal protection and support mechanisms for LGBTQIA+ persons. Pass a legislation recognising the right of any two persons to enter into a civil union without discrimination on sexual orientation and gender identity.
6. Strictly Implement Vishaka guidelines to stop harassment of women at workplaces. Implement all recommendations of Justice Verma Committee report.

09. EDUCATION FOR ALL

1. The National Education Policy 2020 must be scrapped. The education budget must be increased to 10% of the total budget.
2. Free education at all levels with schooling in mother tongue. Forced imposition of Sanskrit or any other language should not be allowed.
3. Existing legal provisions regarding reservation in education must be rigorously implemented. These provisions should be extended to private institutions.
4. The eradication of caste and gender discrimination in educational institutions must be a top priority. The Rohit Vemula Act must be enacted and a Gender Sensitization Committee Against Sexual Harassments (GSCASH) must be set-up in all higher educational institutions.
5. There must be an increase in the budgetary allocation for the mid-day meal scheme in schools. The mid-day meals must include eggs and meat.
6. Repeal NEET and CUET.

10. STRENGTHENING PUBLIC HEALTHCARE SYSTEM

1. Free and universal healthcare and immunisation and access to affordable medicines must be ensured for all.
2. The number of public hospitals and PHC clinics must be increased and their quality improved.



11. ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION AND CLIMATE JUSTICE

1. All pro-corporate policies and amendments to forest/ environmental laws must be scrapped. Industries polluting the environment must be strictly punished.
2. Forest Rights Act (FRA) must be strictly implemented. There should be no dilution of forest dwellers' rights over forest land and resources. Eviction of Adivasis from forests and their lands must be stopped, scrap Adani's project in Hasdeo forest.
3. All large constructions projects in the ecologically fragile Himalayas and other sensitive areas must be banned. A special rehabilitation, rebuilding & stabilisation package should be put in place for the disaster-affected people of Joshimath.

12. ADOPTING PRO-PEOPLE ECONOMIC POLICIES

1. There must be a mandatory wealth and inheritance tax of 1 percent on the super-rich and increase corporate tax rates. All written-off and pending Non-Performing Assets (NPA) from corporate companies must be recovered.
2. A comprehensive law on corporate accountability should be framed, including provisions for workers' representation on company boards, financial transparency, restriction on party donations, prevention of tax evasion and workplace democracy.
3. Privatisation of key infrastructure and financial sectors must immediately stop. Public sector units, and medium and small-scale industries, need to be revitalized and strengthened. National Monetisation Pipeline must be scrapped.
4. The privatisation and commercialisation of forest lands, coastal areas and traditional fishing zones must stop.
5. GST must be withdrawn and a progressive taxation policy for goods and services implemented.

13. HOLDING THE STATE ACCOUNTABLE

1. The Right to Information Act must be strengthened.
2. There is an urgent need for police and prison reforms, in order to ensure public accountability and an end to human rights violations in the name of enforcing the law. Police reforms geared towards inculcating greater transparency and accountability should be initiated.
3. All draconian laws such as the Unlawful Activities Prevent Act (UAPA), the Armed Forces Special Powers Act (AFSPA), and three Criminal Codes must be

repealed. All political prisoners must be immediately released.

4. A special tribunal for crimes related to caste and communal massacres, and extra-judicial killings, must be set-up. Reparations and compensation for victims of these must be ensured.
5. The Places of Worship (Special Provisions) Act, 1991, must be strictly implemented.
6. The Amir Das Commission must be revived and a probe into the political links of the banned private feudal army Ranvir Sena in Bihar must be initiated.

14. RECONSTRUCTING FEDERALISM

1. The principles of federalism must be popularized. Payment of dues of States must be done in a time-bound manner, and the post of Governor should be abolished.
2. Special support needs to be provided backward states by giving them a special status, in order to end regional disparity.
3. Jammu & Kashmir, Delhi and Puducherry must be accorded full statehood. Ladakh must be included in the 6th Schedule of the Constitution.
4. More autonomy to the Autonomous District Councils in the north-eastern region. Article 244-A must be implemented in order to confer the status of an autonomous state upon the Karbi Anglong region in Assam.

15. TOWARDS A SOVEREIGN, DEMOCRATIC & HUMANITARIAN FOREIGN POLICY

1. India must cultivate a friendly relationship of close cooperation with its neighbouring countries. The Non-Alignment policy must be retained and bolstered. We must ensure for ourselves a foreign policy free from the interests and priorities of the United States-led western powers.
2. All Indian youths who were deceived and forced to work as mercenaries / military helpers in Russia and other countries must be immediately brought back.
3. All military, economic, and labour agreements with the apartheid and genocidal state of Israel must be scrapped. India must push for an international arms embargo against Israel.

VOTE, SUPPORT, ELECT CPIML CANDIDATES!

VICTORY TO THE INDIA ALLIANCE! ■

Elections 2024

Meet the CPIML Candidates

Under the banner of INDIA alliance, CPIML has fielded Lok Sabha candidates in Bihar's Arrah, Karakat and Nalanda, Jharkhand's Kodarma and also for the bye-election in Agiaon assembly constituency. Independently, CPIML is also contesting one Lok Sabha seat each in West Bengal, Andhra Pradesh and Odisha. The party has also fielded candidates for Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh and Odisha.

COMRADE RAJARAM SINGH will be contesting from **Karakat Lok Sabha** constituency in Bihar. He was the President of the All

is contesting from **Nalanda Lok Sabha** constituency. He was the former JNUSU General Secretary and ex-General Secretary of AISA

oppressed caste peasants in Bhojpur, continuing the glorious legacy of the late Comrade Ram Naresh Ram, the iconic leader and unbeaten MLA of



RAJARAM SINGH
Karakat Lok Sabha



SANDEEP SAURAV
Nalanda Lok Sabha



SUDAMA PRASAD
Arrah Lok Sabha

Bihar Students' Union in 80s, and is also the Founder President of the Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA). He represented Obra Assembly constituency as MLA from 1995 to 2005. While he was MLA, he organised development conferences where he presented his report card amongst tens of thousands of people. The model that he presented as a people's representative is worthy of being followed. At present, Comrade Rajaram Singh is the General Secretary of the All India Kisan Mahasabha and a member of the working group of the Samyukt Kisan Morcha. He is at the forefront of the countrywide farmers' struggle. Rajaram Singh has stood firmly with the struggles of workers, Dalits, women, minorities, Anganwadi and other scheme workers.

COMRADE SANDEEP SAURAV, sitting CPIML MLA from Paliganj

and is an experienced organiser and leader of struggles for the rights of students, youth, oppressed and backward groups. Sandeep joined JNU, Hindi Department as a Masters student in 2007. A tireless left activist from his college days, he led the struggle in JNU against the scuttling of OBC reservations. Even in times of tremendous personal difficulties, Comrade Sandeep chose to lead the organisation and went on to become the National General Secretary of AISA. He was also selected as an assistant professor in Bihar, but he chose to work for the poor and marginalised as a humble CPIML activist in his home state.

COMRADE SUDAMA PRASAD is currently the sitting CPIML MLA from Tarari will be contesting from **Arrah Lok Sabha** constituency. He had been at the forefront of anti-feudal resistance of poor and

the party from this region. He also played a crucial role in organising the small traders in the region for their rights and livelihood. While MLAs from then ruling formation evade accountability, Comrade Sudama has set an example by publishing a thick "report card" of his term as MLA: accounting for every paisa spent and every decision taken. Sudama Prasad is the National Vice President of All India Kisan Mahasabha.

In Jharkhand, **COMRADE VINOD SINGH**, who is currently the sitting MLA in Jharkhand's Bagodar Assembly and a politburo member of CPI(ML) will be contesting from **Koderma Lok Sabha** Constituency. He completed in Masters in Sociology from Banaras Hindu University. Known for his dedication and unwavering commitment to the cause of the people, he had played a pivotal role in supporting the migrant



VINOD SINGH
Koderma Lok Sabha

workers from Jharkhand who were stuck in various states during the Covid lockdown. Carrying forward the red flag of CPI(ML) and the revolutionary legacy of martyr comrade Mahendra

Singh, Comrade Vinod is a strong voice who championed the issues and concerns of peasants, workers and oppressed sections inside the Jharkhand Assembly and on the streets.

After the conviction of the CPI(ML) MLA Manoj Manzil and 22 other comrades in a politically motivated case, the election commission has notified the bye-election in Agiaon assembly. **COMRADE SHIV PRAKASH RANJAN** will be contesting from **Agiaon assembly in the bye-election**. He is the Bihar state secretary of Revolutionary Youth Association (RYA) and the state committee member of the CPI(ML)



SHIV PRAKASH RANJAN
Agiaon Assembly

in Bihar. Along with Comrade Manoj, he had been at the forefront of various movements in Agiaon, including the historic Sadak Par School campaign for improvement of schooling. ■



SAJAL KUMAR DE
Bardhaman Purba Lok Sabha

COMRADE SAJAL KUMAR DE contesting from 38 - **Bardhaman Purba (SC) Lok Sabha** constituency in **West Bengal**, is presently the State President of RYA. A school teacher by profession, Comrade Sajal is one of the leading organisers of the ongoing movements of Government job aspirants who have been deprived due to recruitment scams. He is a popular activist known for organizing agricultural labourers, adivasi oppressed and marginalized communities. He has also led the movement of microfinance debt quittance for rural women and agricultural workers. Bardhaman Purba constituency, has a strong presence of CPIML among farmers and agricultural labourers for decades.



PRAKASH HIKAKA
Koraput Lok Sabha

In **Odisha** too the party is in fray at few selected constituencies independently while supporting INDIA candidates in rest of the constituencies in parliament as well as assembly elections. CPIML has fielded **COMRADE PRAKASH HIKAKA in Koraput parliamentary constituency** while contesting in five assembly constituencies. The party has fielded **Ashok Pradhan from Satyabadi assembly constituency, Anasima Sabar from Gunupur, Ram Chandra Paska from Bissam Cuttack, Rajesh Madangi from Lakhimpur and Krishna Palka from Rayagada assembly constituencies.**



B BANGAR RAO
Kakinada Lok Sabha

CPIML central committee member and **Andhra Pradesh** State Secretary **COMRADE B BANGAR RAO** will contest from **Kakinada parliamentary constituency.**

In the Assembly elections in Andhra Pradesh, CPIML fielded candidates on five seats in Srikakulam, Anakapalle, Kakinada and Guntur districts. P Kameshwar Rao will contest from Palasa assembly constituency in Srikakulam district. **S Ganesh is fielded at Chodavaram in Anakapalle district and in Guntur Ch. Gopal will contest from Tenali. In Kakinada district, V Shiva is contesting from Tuni and Y Arjun Rao from Prathipadu assembly constituency.**

CPIML Election Campaigns in States



TAMIL NADU



DELHI

CPIML is organising campaigns in support of INDIA candidates in states where the party decided not to contest to avoid division of anti-BJP votes. Here are some glimpses of our campaign from major states.

Tamil Nadu

Tamil Nadu elections for 39 constituencies are over in first phase, on 19 April. We did not contest elections in Tamil Nadu. But, the party independently carried out an active campaign in almost 25 constituencies in support of candidates of INDIA alliance across Tamil Nadu. The party carried out a completely independent campaign

without depending on any alliance parties, for money or vehicles.

The party conducted a politically sharp campaign that exposed the fascist Modi led BJP regime. It was effective right from social media to house to house campaigns. Even other INDIA alliance parties in the state in several constituencies distributed our leaflet in their local campaign.

The campaign also witnessed hundreds of common people and activists joining the party in some constituencies attracted by the political ideas and sharpness.

Comrades in hundreds of party branches in about 25 constituencies

went door to door in residential areas, wards, and panchayats and engaged in political discussions with the public. There were countless attempts to convince even those who were the fence sitters. "Defeat BJP, Vote for INDIA" was the slogan reverberating all over the state. We hope to see the success in that endeavour on 4 June.

Two-wheeler rallies and campaign processions were successfully held in Tiruvallur, Kanchipuram, Villupuram, Chidambaram, Trichy, Sivagangai, Coimbatore, Tirupur, Salem, Tirunelveli, Thoothukudi constituencies. Public meetings were held in Salem, Mayiladuthurai and Chidambaram constituencies attended by hundreds of people. In Kanyakumari Constituency, many vehicle-canvassing and general campaign processions were conducted. A false case has also been filed. Vehicle canvassing, extensive canvassing visits were undertaken in constituencies like Vellore, Tiruvannamalai, Vadachennai, Sriperumbudur, Kallakurichi, Cuddalore, Nagapattinam, Namakkal, Dharmapuri, Dindigul, Madurai, Karur, Thanjavur, Tenkasi etc.

Delhi

The BJP is trying to spread a malicious campaign against the AAP in the wake of the arrest of AAP leaders including the Chief Minister of the state. So long as BJP's malicious campaign against the AAP does not succeed, the former is certainly going to face a tough challenge. The seat-sharing arrangement between the Indian National Congress (INC) and the AAP has laid the ground for a close fight.

On March 31, at the INDIA bloc rally in Ramlila grounds, the entire spectrum of INDIA constituents



UTTARAKHAND

demonstrated a rock solid political unity in articulating the shared resolve to free India from Modi's communal-fascist and utterly corrupt rule. At the Loktantra Bachao Maharally (Save Democracy Rally), at Ramlila Maidan, leaders of INDIA parties from across the country addressed the gathering to demand the immediate release of Arvind Kejriwal, Hemant Soren and other persecuted opposition leaders, guarantee of a level playing field in elections and a SC-monitored SIT to probe the Electoral Bond Scam. A large number CPIML members, from industrial areas to slum clusters, joined the rally.

CPIML and its mass organisations are playing an active role in garnering support for the INDIA candidates. In South Delhi, the party is spearheading a "Vote for INDIA" campaign, with a focus on 15 areas across 6 assembly segments. The campaign will run from 5 May to 21 May and will culminate in a public meeting to be addressed by the INDIA candidate Sahi Ram Pehalwan and other INDIA leaders.

Uttarakhand

Party campaigned with full strength in support of INDIA bloc candidates on all five seats in Uttarakhand. Party's campaign was prominent in Nainital-Udham Singh Nagar, Garhwal and Almora seats. Party

leaders jointly campaigned and addressed rallies in these seats, all party branches also conducted independent campaigns in favour of Congress candidates. Printed pamphlets were distributed and street corner meetings were organised. Party members with party flags and INDIA banners also took part in nomination processions of candidates. Massive mass contact campaigns were taken up in the party's areas of work.

Party state secretary Indresh Maikhuri organised press meets in major cities and appealed to vote for Congress candidates in order to get rid of the anti-people BJP government. CPIML cadres and supporters engaged themselves in campaigning in various areas and towns including Joshimath, Karnprayag, Srinagar, Almora, Pithoragarh, Nainital, Haldwani, Bindukhatta, Rudrapur and Bazpur.

The ASHA workers affiliated to All India Central Council of Trade Unions (AICCTU) actively took part in the election campaign and also issued an appeal to oust BJP from power.

INDIA Alliance has given all five parliamentary seats to the Congress, although CPIML had staked its claim on Garhwal seat, which has been a traditional left bastion since the time of Chandra Singh Garhwali,

the freedom fighter, communist and leader of the Peshawar Rebellion. Eventually CPIML decided to strengthen anti-fascist forces by avoiding division of votes in this important election.

The party independently distributed thousands of pamphlets throughout the state. The left parties including CPIML, CPI and CPIM also held joint press conferences in the capital Dehradun which received wide coverage. The active campaign by CPIML certainly gave an edge to campaigns of Congress candidates in the state.

Uttar Pradesh

CPIML has not fielded any candidate in UP and decided to campaign actively in favour of INDIA bloc candidates.

In Allahabad, CPIML cadres are campaigning for Congress candidate in Allahabad and SP candidate in Phulpur constituency. District in-charge Sunil Maurya said that the party here is raising issues which are important for the people mainly attacks of democratic institutions, on universities, unconstitutional CAA, persecution of activists and misuse of ED, CBI and IT department to serve the vested interests of BJP and its cronies. The question of unemployment, caste census, attacks on the rights and livelihood of vulnerable communities, Yogi government's bulldozer raj etc are major issues here.

CPIML state committee member Ramesh Singh Sengar is leading campaign teams in rural parts of the state capital Lucknow. Party units are also holding independent campaigns in the capital city.

In Mathura, CPIML will campaign in support of INDIA candidate Mukesh Dhangar. A plan was finalised for ward-wise campaigning and pamphlet distribution. The party condemned BJP's communal



RAJASTHAN

attempts to vitiate the atmosphere of this important religious centre which has been a model of syncretic culture and communal harmony till a few decades ago. CPIML leader Nasir Shah Advocate deplored the plight of various developmental projects under the BJP rule in this constituency, a glaring example is the ever polluted Yamuna river even after spending billions of rupees in the name of cleaning.

The election campaign with the slogan 'Defeat BJP, Save India' is also going on in Raebareli, Lakhimpur-Kheri, Pilibhit, Jalaun, Urai and other districts. Activists are appealing to the electorate through door to door visits and pamphlets and by holding press meets etc. to oust the fascist forces from the seat of power.

Party's campaign is being conducted through people's involvement and support in arranging all logistics, funds are being collected through contributions by masses with Rs. 20, 50 and 100 coupons.

Rajasthan

CPIML members have been actively campaigning in many parliamentary constituencies in Rajasthan in support of INDIA candidates. The party has taken up campaign in its own areas of work independently as well as jointly with other constituents of the INDIA bloc in rest of the constituencies. CPIML cadres are making intense door to

door interactions with the electorate discussing major issues which the NDA/BJP are mischievously, and quite unsuccessfully, trying to hide behind BJP's open and tacit communal divisive propaganda.

Many CPIML leaders and supporters enthusiastically joined the nomination procession of CPI(M) leader Amra Ram who is INDIA candidate from Sikar. CPIML is distributing pamphlets while campaigning in this parliamentary seat. The adjoining Jhunjhunu seat is being fought by a Congress party candidate, where an intense campaign is being done with the appeal to defeat authoritarian and divisive BJP and defend the constitution. CPIML central committee member and AIKM leader Phoolchand Dhewa accompanied comrade Amra Ram at his nomination. He also led a campaign team covering many villages of Neemka Thana area. Comrade Dhewa addressed an INDIA rally in Jhunjhunu in support of Congress candidate. He also addressed meetings in villages including Ghadana Kalan, Singhana, Charawas, Loyal, Manota and Bakra.

CPIML and Congress leaders held a joint meeting in Salumbar which was attended by party district leaders Gautam Lal Meena and Shankar Lal Meena.

The opposition parties united under the banner of Rajasthan Loktantrik

Morcha held a joint meeting in Jaipur to ensure the defeat of the BJP. The Joint Platform of Trade Unions also held a meeting in support of INDIA candidates and decided to conduct a campaign throughout the state.

CPIML leader in Jaipur Manjulata addressed a joint cadre meeting of INDIA parties in Jaipur on 8 April which was held at the premises of CITU office. She is leading teams of activists in Jaipur town and adjoining rural areas along with other constituent parties of the bloc.

In Udaipur, Chittorgarh and Banswara region, party members are taking part in canvassing in various areas. A joint cadre meet was also held in Udaipur where left parties' leaders were present. There is clear resentment visible against the ruling BJP among common people which is reflected in the enthusiasm of voters during the polling held on 10 April on 12 seats in Rajasthan.

Chhattisgarh

Party held joint meetings in a few Lok Sabha constituencies where plans were chalked out for joint campaigning. Trade Unions also issued an appeal to support INDIA candidates. All India People's Forum Chhattisgarh has issued a separate appeal.

Maharashtra

The India alliance led by Mahavikas Aghadi in Maharashtra has already declared the candidates for majority of the seats and the campaigning has started in various parts of the state.

CPIML comrades at Nagpur were involved in the campaign of the Congress candidate contesting against Nitin Gadkari of BJP. Party members along with other constituents of the alliance campaigned in Ramtek constituency also.

Joint activists' conventions are being held by the INDIA-MVA

alliance in various constituencies in Maharashtra. Comrade Shyam Gohil attended a convention in South Central Mumbai while one such convention in the North East Mumbai seat was addressed by the party's senior leader Ajit Patil. A similar convention is being called by a group of students at Mulund in North East Mumbai constituency and will be attended by CPIML leaders.

Comrade Gohil addressed a joint convention of activists in Palghar district. This was also attended by a large number of CPIML members. As the member of the coordination committee for Palghar constituency, we are taking active part in our areas as well as other areas in India-MVA alliance rallies and campaigns.

Karnataka

The CPIML has undertaken a 'Vote for INDIA, Defeat the BJP' campaign in all its working constituencies during the time of elections. CPIML as part of the INDIA alliance decided not to contest elections this time and instead, provide support to the Indian National Congress to strengthening the INDIA alliance.

In INDIA alliance meeting held in Bengaluru, CPIML had put forth that this election is a fight between fascism and democracy. This was accepted by the alliance parties, and the same tag-line was declared at a joint press conference. The CPI(M), however, decided to contest in Chikkaballapur constituency. Despite this, the CPIML has taken a stand that Congress is better placed to defeat the BJP in all 28 seats in the State.

The people of Karnataka, who have benefitted from the five guarantees of the Congress, have heaved a sigh of relief especially since inflation under the BJP regime has hit the working class people very hard and pushed the people into an economic

crisis. The anti-BJP wave that was witnessed during the State Assembly elections, has remained etched in the minds of the people, especially since the BJP-RSS and its outfits weaved communal frenzy in the State.

The CPIML took up campaigns in its working constituencies, including Mysore-Kodagu, Dakshin Kannada, Davangere, Ballari, Raichur, Koppala, Bengaluru North and Bengaluru Central constituencies. Campaigns were held door-to-door, through vehicle announcements, bike rallies, and meetings of mass organisations at branch levels.

In the Mysore-Kodagu region, the CPIML has a base among the coffee plantation workers, who

belong to Adivasi communities. Equipped with a jeep and speakers, the Adivasi comrades, along with Kodagu District Secretary Comrade Mohan, reached every Adivasi settlement in the constituency with a message to defeat the BJP and to vote for the INDIA candidate. In Dakshina Kannada, which is the stronghold of the Sangh, CPIML comrades undertook door-to-door campaigns among auto drivers, ready-mix workers and in other residential working constituencies. In Davangere, CPIML comrades organised meetings at AIARLA branches, and spoke to agricultural workers. These workers, who benefitted from the struggles of AIARLA and received employment



KARNATAKA



WEST BENGAL

under NREGA, stated that they have been reeling under economic crisis due to inflation, as well as that unemployment has deprived them of livelihoods. In Koppal LS constituency, a bike rally was undertaken to defeat fascism. Several meetings were held in villages where AIARLA branches have been set up. The agricultural workers expressed that even when Modi has built Ram Mandir in Ayodhya, they were not allowed to enter their own village temples. They lamented the growing inequality and depravity that has been exacerbated under the Modi rule. They clearly said that the BJP is a pro-rich party, which would not do anything to erase inequality and discrimination they faced every day.

In Bengaluru, door-to-door campaigns were held in Anandapuram, Chinnappa Garden, Doddi and Chikkagollarahatti slums. Pamphleteering was also carried out in public areas of Peenya, Electronic City and Yelahanka industrial belts, outside factories, bus stops, shops, etc. In Shivajinagar market, the street vendors affiliated with AICCTU undertook pamphleteering, asking the people to vote for Congress. AISA comrades held campaigns outside St. Joseph's University and Bangalore City University, speaking

to young voters to vote against corporatisation and privatisation of education. A pamphlet under the name of Krantikari Slum Nivasigala Sangha (RYA) was also floated to uphold housing rights and address the concerns of slum residents, who constitute a majority of the population, especially in Bangalore. The AICCTU Bengaluru District Committee organised a general body meeting of all constituent unions, and gave a call to the workers to give a thumping defeat to the anti-worker BJP, who has introduced the four labour codes, which will reduce workers as slaves.

CPIML also undertook a social media campaign, where posters and videos on the assault of the Modi government on the working class in the past 10 years of its rule was highlighted, including on various issues, ranging from farmers' crisis, workers' crisis, assault on women, economic assault on working class was highlighted.

West Bengal

In the Lok Sabha elections, CPIML is contesting only one seat in West Bengal - Bardhaman Purba (SC) constituency. Throughout the state, CPIML is taking forward the intensive "Defeat BJP, Save

Democracy" campaign using diverse forms.

After a decisive loss in the last assembly election, the BJP is using all its machinery to gain better footsteps in WB by spreading lies, hatred and communal propaganda. CPIML and its mass organizations are engaged in vigorous campaigns in the major districts of our party work with a call to end this disastrous, dictatorial Modi reign of corporate loot, communal hate and Constitutional subversion. As the pre poll INDIA alliance could not be forged in West Bengal, in the rest of the 41 constituencies we appeal to the people to vote for any party that can effectively defeat BJP. Respective district committees have adopted specific plans and campaigns have already started in Bankura, Hooghly, Nadia, North 24 Pgs, Howrah, South 24 Pgs, Darjeeling, Jalpaiguri, Malda and Kolkata. The campaigns are highlighting the unconstitutional NRC CAA, electoral bond scams and how the central agencies are being used to curb any voice of opposition and dissent. We also continue to engage with various progressive democratic forces in the ongoing fight against fascism. ■

TRAILBLAZING 'JANATA COUPON' CAMPAIGN BY CPIML PUTS PEOPLE OVER CORPORATE IN ELECTIONS



With call of 'People's coupons, not clandestine corporate bonds,' ranks of CPIML are visiting houses of people as part of 'Har Ghar Chalo' campaign requesting for vote and a contribution of Rs. 20. At a time when, electoral bonds and corporate donations to political parties have dented the electoral process in India, Janta Coupon campaign will put people over corporate.

CPI (ML) General Secretary Dipankar Bhattacharya said that the Janata Coupon or People's coupon is people's answer to the electoral bond and massive corruption from which the BJP got Rs. 8252 Crores from the corporates and rich. We are conducting this door-to-door coupon campaign on the ground to take on the might of the unconstitutional electoral bond in these elections.

The campaign is already in full swing in Bihar's Arrah, Karakat, Nalanda parliamentary constituencies and Agiaon assembly constituency and Jharkhand's Koderma LS seat where CPIML is contesting Lok Sabha elections. The campaign will soon expand to other contesting where CPIML is contesting. ■



Ulgulan Maharally in Ranchi Sounded the Bugle against Modi's Hate, Lies and Loot

A massive Ulgulan Nyay Maharally was organised by INDIA alliance in Ranchi on April 21. The rally, with the slogan of 'Jharkhand Jhukega Nahi, INDIA Wont Stop' [Jharkhand will not surrender, INDIA Bloc will March on] was a great show of unity and resolve of the fighting people of Jharkhand. The rally held in historic land of Birsa's Ulgulan sounded the bugle against Modi regime's hate, lies and loot.

CPIML General Secretary, Comrade Dipankar addressing the rally said Modi regime is hell bent to make people of Jharkhand to surrender to the BJP-RSS's politics of hate and division. The then BJP double engine government had tried to use all its tactics of sedition, draconian laws and police brutality-firing on fighting people of Jharkhand to silence the voices of justice and democratic rights. But they had not succussed due to the resolve of the people.

Today despite Jharkhand begin hub for several public sector industries, the Modi regime brazen privatization had led to massive migration of youth from the state in search of jobs and livelihood. Today, the public sector HEC employees, who played a vital role in India's moon mission are still running piler to post to get their salaries. This government is not bothered about issues like unemployment, price rise and livelihood that hit the people, but are busy dividing people on communal lines and attacking our constitution.

"We appeal to you to give a befitting reply to such forces who want to destroy Babasaheb Ambedkar's constitutional and its values. This Lok Sabha election is the voice of youth demanding employment against a regime that only works for the corporates. Defeat BJP and ensure victory of INDIA alliance," added Com. Dipankar. ■

Pledge of April 22, 2024

We are observing April 22, 2024, the 55th anniversary of the foundation of CPI(ML), in the midst of the crucial Lok Sabha elections.

On this occasion we extend our warm greetings to all our members, well-wishers and the fighting people of India at large. We take this opportunity to appeal to every adult Indian to exercise the fundamental right to vote to save the constitutional foundation and parliamentary and federal framework of our democratic republic from the growing fascist assault.

April 22 is also the birthday of Comrade Lenin, the supreme architect of the world's first socialist revolution and socialist state. We pay revolutionary tribute to Comrade Lenin and rededicate ourselves to the great communist mission of creating a world without exploitation and war where humanity will be truly free.

From its inception, the CPI(ML) has fought relentlessly to transform India into a genuine people's democracy and create an egalitarian social order. A return of the Modi government to power for a third successive term would mean a massive setback to that revolutionary quest. In Ambedkar's words, it will be the greatest calamity. We must therefore treat the 2024 elections as a historic people's movement to deliver a decisive blow to the fascist forces in power and dethrone the dictatorial Modi regime.

As part of the INDIA bloc we are contesting four seats in Bihar and Jharkhand. Beyond these two states we are also independently contesting one seat each in West Bengal, Odisha and Andhra Pradesh. We are also contesting a few Assembly seats in Andhra and Odisha and the by-election caused in Bihar because of the unjust conviction and disqualification of Comrade Manoj Manzil. While supporting our election campaign with all our might we are also actively working for the defeat of the BJP/NDA and victory of INDIA across the country.

On this Party foundation day we pay our respectful revolutionary homage to Comrade Charu Mazumdar, our founder General Secretary and Comrades Jauhar and Vinod Mishra who succeeded Comrade CM and rebuilt and lead the party in the wake of the setback of the early 1970s. We salute the memories of Comrades Nagbhushan Patnaik, Ramnaresh Ram, Anil Barooah, Mahendra Singh and all other beloved martyrs and leaders who sacrificed their all for the party, people and revolution. We salute all our comrades who remain incarcerated in various jails of India and demand unconditional release of our comrades and all other prisoners of conscience and opposition leaders.

**Inquilab Zindabad! Long live CPI(ML)!
We shall fight, we shall win! ■**

Tides will turn, tyranny will have to end

The Modi government has evidently been rattled by the belated striking down of the Electoral Bond scheme by the Supreme Court and the disclosure of the donor and recipient details. Lawyers associated with the BJP have mounted an orchestrated campaign to harass the CJI and intimidate the judiciary. Prime Minister Modi has not only thrown his full weight behind this campaign by endorsing the letter signed by the dubious group of lawyers, he is missing no opportunity to justify the bonds system struck down as unconstitutional by the Supreme Court. The government which had told the Supreme Court that the people had no need or right to know about who donated to whom and how much, the party which had told the Election Commission that it did not maintain any record of the sources it received its electoral bonds from, is now praising the bonds for bringing transparency to corporate funding.

At a time when the Modi regime has been exposed to be the most corrupt regime in the history of independent India, the BJP has the gall to try and delegitimise the opposition as a coalition of corrupt parties and leaders. The Electoral Bond disclosures have revealed an intricate system of corruption which the government had thought would never get exposed. We now know that while several companies have used the scheme to secure contracts through bribery, many have donated after being raided, to buy impunity. There are also some who have been coerced into collaborating with the state to implicate opposition parties and leaders. The Delhi Liquor Policy case built up against AAP is a brazen example of this shocking technique of combined application of ED raids and the EB scheme to target an opposition party.

Today while frontline AAP leaders including Arvind Kejriwal are in jail in the Delhi Liquor Policy case, co-accused like P Sarath Reddy and Raghav Magunta Reddy who have turned approvers are out on bail. The latter is campaigning for his father Magunta Srinivasulu Reddy who is contesting from Ongole as an NDA candidate from TDP. The ED has been indiscriminately invoking the Prevention of Money Laundering Act against opposition leaders to keep them in jail for long periods without bail. Delhi government health minister Satyendra Jain has been in jail for the last two years and deputy CM and education minister Manish Sisodia for more than a year now. The arrest of Arvind Kejriwal has however evoked widespread protests in India and even given rise to international concern about the growing lack of fair play and justice in Modi's India. After languishing in jail for six months, AAP Rajya Sabha MP Sanjay Singh finally got bail when the Supreme Court took a strong stand and the ED did not have the courage to oppose his bail application any longer.

The BJP's rhetorical crusade against corruption has started sounding utterly hollow and hypocritical. From Himanta Biswa Sarma and Subhendu Adhikari to Ajit Pawar, Praful Patel and Naveen Jindal, leaders once denounced by the BJP as icons of corruption today enjoy pride of place in the BJP. Even Godi Media anchors are now forced to pose these questions to senior Modi cabinet ministers. In a recent interview with Navika Kumar of Times Now, finance minister Nirmala Sitharaman bluntly said that all tainted politicians were welcome in the BJP. A senior BJP leader in Madhya Pradesh described the Congress turncoats joining the BJP as dry or wet trash.

While the demand for the institution of a Supreme Court monitored SIT to probe the Electoral Bond disclosures gains traction, Justice B. V. Nagarathna, who had dissented on the 4-1 Supreme Court judgement on demonetisation, recently again reminded us that demonetisation had merely turned black money white. As much as 86% of the total currency in circulation had been demonetised through the banning of 500 and 1,000 rupee notes, and 98% of that amount got deposited and exchanged in banks in the wake of demonetisation. If black money was indeed held in cash, it thus became white without inviting any investigative and punitive action. Likewise, by allowing all kinds of companies including loss-making and shell companies to buy any amount of electoral bonds, the Electoral Bond scheme had actually facilitated money laundering and legalised corruption. The Electoral Bond disclosures therefore must be duly investigated to get to the root of the enormous bribes that have swelled the coffers of ruling parties, especially the BJP.

The nineteenth century English saying "power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely" has acquired an uncanny resonance in Modi's India. The concentration of unbridled power in the hands of PM Modi and his close coterie has led to arbitrary economic decisions like demonetisation and electoral bonds which can only be described as brazen institutionalisation of corruption. The unconstitutional measures and their disastrous fallouts must now be reversed by citizens exercising their constitutional right to vote. The constitutional power of the people must prevail over the unconstitutional designs of the despotic Modi regime. Tides are turning, tyranny will have to end. ■

The Modi Manifesto: Deceptive Rhetoric and Real Threats

Just five days before India goes for the protracted seven-phase Lok Sabha elections, the ruling BJP released a 76-page manifesto. It does not talk about the Modi government's failure and betrayal on every promise it has been making since 2014, it does not address the core issues that are on top of the common people's agenda, instead it weaves a rosy dream for India in 2047! It is the BJP which introduced the word 'jumla' in Indian politics when Amit Shah described the Modi 2014 campaign talk of crediting 15 lakh rupees to every account as a jumla. Now that the word jumla has become the universal metaphor for false promises, the BJP has discovered a new word for jumlas: 'Modi's Guarantee'. But then a jumla remains a jumla no matter what name you give it!

After disowning the 2014 promises of creating two crore jobs every year and bringing back black money, the Modi government had got busy drawing up a fresh list of promises for India in 2022. The 75th anniversary of India's independence was advertised as the target year for a number of achievements: universal housing with access to toilets and tap water, doubling of farm income, one hundred smart cities, ten world-class universities. Two years have elapsed since 2022 and before bombarding the nation with new promises, the government should display its balance sheet on the 2022 promises! But now the goalposts have again been shifted - this time to hosting the Olympics in 2036 and becoming a developed country by 2047!

The CSDS-Lokniti pre-poll survey collating responses from 10,019



people from 19 states in end-March and early April gives us a fairly precise picture of the issues that concern the people the most. The top two concerns were unemployment (27%) and rising prices (23%). By contrast, the claimed achievements of the Modi government like inauguration of Ram Mandir in Ayodhya and the perceived enhancement of India's international image in the Modi era had only 8% and 2% takers. There is no public appreciation for the changes in laws that the BJP parades or promises as its achievements - like the CAA, UCC, new criminal laws or labour codes. In fact, the Uttarakhand template of UCC evoked considerable public criticism because of its 'uncivil' nature which subjects individual liberties and choices of citizens to invasive state control and conservative social interference.

There are any number of studies and reports that tell us about the staggering scale of unemployment and economic inequality in India today. The India Employment Report 2024 released recently by the ILO and the Institute of Human Development pointed to

the preponderance of youth among India's unemployed. More than 80% of jobless are young people, more than 65% among them have degrees of secondary education and more. Young educated women have an even higher rate of unemployment. Inequality in Modi's Billionaire Raj is worse than in colonial period with the richest 1% owning more than 40% wealth and pocketing more than 22% of annual national income. While income has stagnated, indebtedness has grown alarmingly among the poor and middle classes. The BJP manifesto continues to turn a blind eye to this extremely disturbing economic situation.

Narendra Modi keeps telling us that his mission is to fulfill the ambition of 140 crore Indians. On one hand, the Modi government claims to have lifted milli

ons of Indians out of poverty, but on the other hand his government claims credit for supplying 5 kg free grains to 800 million Indians. This clearly belies the government's claim of both reducing poverty and representing the ambition of 140 crore Indians. Actually, the growing economic inequality

in the country is being actively promoted and celebrated by the Modi government and its policymakers and propagandists. The government reserves the term 'wealth creators' for the billionaire class of wealth accumulators while treating 80 crore people as being deservant of no more than five kg free grains per month.

Just like the undeclared Emergency imposed by this government, the real goal of the BJP manifesto remains officially undeclared. But BJP leaders and candidates like Anant Kumar Hegde, Jyoti Mirdha, Lallu Singh and Arun Govil are increasingly giving it away with their orchestrated clamour for changing the constitution. This is why they say Modi has set the bar at crossing the 400 mark. Alarmed by the prospect of democratic India rallying around the constitution drafted by Babasaheb Ambedkar, Modi now audaciously 'guarantees' that even Ambedkar will not be able to destroy the Constitution. If he really wanted to reassure India about the Constitution he should have taken Golwalkar's name for it was the RSS which did not recognise the Constitution at the time of its adoption and batted for Manusmriti in its place.

Babasaheb had actually warned the people not to be complacent about the Constitution and instead pay attention to the quality and intent of the people who are entrusted with the job of administering the Constitution. A good constitution in bad hands could produce disastrous results. This was quite similar to the warning sounded by Bhagat Singh about 'brown Englishmen' usurping power in free India. It was again Babasaheb who had pointed to the equality of 'one citizen, one vote' becoming meaningless in the face of unchecked economic and social inequality. Today India will have to heed the warnings of Ambedkar and vote out the anti-Constitution fascist forces to save democracy and its constitutional foundation. ■

Remembering Phule and Ambedkar on their Birth Anniversaries



April 11 and 14 mark the birth anniversaries of two of India's greatest names in the battle for social equality - Jyotirao Phule and Babasaheb Ambedkar. This year we are celebrating the 197th birth anniversary of Phule (11 April 1827 - 28 November 1890) and the 133rd anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar (14 April 1891 - 6 December 1956). At a time when modern India is experiencing the most vicious assault on the constitutional foundation of the Indian Republic and an aggressive recrudescence of feudal patriarchal values and shackles, the messages of Phule and Ambedkar have become ever more pertinent and inspiring.

Progressive people across the world remember 1848 as the year of publication of the Communist Manifesto. The same year, a young Jyotirao (popularly known as Jyotiba) Phule, just 21 years old then, and his wife Savitribai Phule, who was only 17, started India's first school for girls at Bhidewada, Pune. This was also the year when Phule had read American philosopher Thomas Paine's book "Rights of Man" defending the French Revolution. This pioneering initiative to impart education to women and oppressed castes invited the wrath of the Manusmriti-abiding conservative upper-caste elite, and the Phules, ostracised even by their near and dear ones, could carry on their women's education campaign only with the exemplary backing of two of their Muslim friends, Fatima Sheikh and her brother Usman Sheikh.

This was the beginning of an iconic comradeship and a great chapter of social justice and women's education in the history of modern India. Women's education became a tool of women's empowerment, raising a strong voice against infanticide and for widow remarriage. In stark contrast to today's hypocritical 'beti bachao, beti padhao' jumla by blatantly misogynistic forces, this was the original and genuine campaign for women's education and equality that shook up a hostile feudal setting. In 1873 Phule wrote his seminal work 'Gulamgiri' against India's own order of social slavery called the caste system and dedicated the book to those fighting racialised slavery in America.

Phule passed away in 1890, just around the time Ambedkar was born. By the 1920s, the social justice movement had found a great new champion in Ambedkar who had returned to India after obtaining degrees in economics and law from the UK and the US. Ambedkar recognised Phule as his great teacher and source of inspiration next only to Buddha and Kabir. 1927 was the defining year when Ambedkar took two historic steps - the Mahad Satyagraha in March 1927 asserting the right to water as a public good without any discrimination, and the public burning of the Manusmriti in December 1927, denouncing it as a code of slavery. In 1936, Ambedkar issued his clarion call: 'annihilation of caste'. The same year he formed the Independent Labour Party which identified caste and capitalism as its twin targets.

The next two decades saw Ambedkar in bigger roles, shaping a series of radical ideas and initiatives as colonial India gained freedom and the Constituent Assembly adopted the Constitution of free India which Ambedkar had drafted as chair of its drafting committee. The adoption of the Constitution did not mark the end of Ambedkar's journey, the battle for justice and social equality continued on the basis of the newly adopted Constitution. The Hindu Code Bill aimed at modernising Hindu personal law to ensure equal rights for Hindu women was his last major battle before he took the final step of embracing Buddhism, exercising the religious freedom guaranteed in the Constitution to choose one's own religion.

Today in the face of India's most decisive electoral battle where the very future of India's constitutional democracy is at stake we need to draw every strength and inspiration from the radical legacy of Phule and Ambedkar. We must remember that Babasaheb Ambedkar not only gave us the Constitution and reservation, he also warned us about the ominous implications of bhakti in politics, which he called a sure recipe for dictatorship, and the great calamity that would hit us if Hindu Rashtra were to become a fact. While commemorating the birth anniversaries of Phule and Ambedkar let us remember the insightful words of Ambedkar and work with all our might to save the Constitution and the democratic future of India. ■

May Day Call

Workers Manifesto 2024



Overthrow the Fascist Modi Regime!

Fight for Workers Rights and Dignity!

The 2024 Lok Sabha Elections are declared. The election will be held in 7 phases from April 19 to June 1. As the most populous nation of the world with an estimated population of 143 crores, the people prepare to elect the next government. It is important for every citizen to arrive at an informed decision that should uphold the well being of people over money and muscle power of the ruling forces.

Last 10 years of the BJP regime led by Narendra Modi has been disastrous for the working population of the country. The BJP has used its majority strength inside the parliament to implement policies that facilitate profit mongering of the corporates at the cost of economic well being and rights of the people. Four anti-worker Labour Codes designed for decimating legal rights of workers are passed by the parliament. Unemployment rates and price rise are skyrocketing while real wages of people are steeply declining. Bulldozer governance that displace people from their houses and livelihood options has become the symbol of the Modi regime. International institutions estimate that India has 94% of its workforce as informal workers. These workers are not only out of any formal contract with the employer, but also are deprived of any social security measure. The precarity of the Indian working class was witnessed in its nudity during the two years of pandemic Lockdown. The fact that Indian workers who toil to keep the country's economy running are the first ones to be dispensed off when a crisis hit. It was much more clear than ever as millions of workers were retrenched from jobs within hours of declaration of the Lockdown and were forced to walk thousands of kilometres to reach their villages as no social protection was accessible to them. The essential anti-worker and pro-corporate nature of the

ruling regime was further exposed as the Modi government found an opportunity in the disaster to adopt the anti-worker Labour Codes.

As the next Loksabha election is around the corner and the workers who have been at the receiving end of the anti-worker policies of the ruling government for last 10 years get an opportunity to use their right to vote to demand a dignified life.

Withdraw the Anti-Worker Labour Codes:

In September 2020, as the country was still crippling under the devastating impact of the Lockdown, the Modi led BJP government passed three labour codes - the Industrial Relations Code, Code on Social Security and the Occupational Safety, Health and Working Conditions Code. The Code on Wages was passed by the parliament in 2019 itself. These codes were supposed to replace 44 existing labour laws that were formulated assimilating several demands of the working class movement for over a century to ensure rights for the working class.

The Code on Wages passed by the present government provides several provisions for employers to escape payment of minimum wages to the workers. It introduces the concept of floor wage which is much lower than minimum wages. The Code dilutes enforceability of minimum wages. This code also opens up avenues for violating the principle of 8 hour work-day accepted internationally. It facilitates overwork without payment of overtime wages.

The Code on Industrial Relations (IR) is designed to facilitate employers to terminate workers without any notice or accountability. It institutionalizes the regime of hire and fire, thus destroying any semblance of industrial democracy. It introduces the concept of 'fixed term' employment that necessarily makes permanent jobs a distant dream for the majority of

the workforce in India. This Code also weakens the workers' right to unionisation and recognition of trade unions to negotiate with the employer for their rights and benefits. The IR Code significantly weakens measures of redressal for workers in case of violation of rights. Under this Code, the labour courts are done away with and the government has been given a significant amount of power to overturn decisions of the Industrial Tribunals.

The Code on Social Security entails a massive crackdown on existing provisions of social security for workers. For example, this code makes all existing social measures like ESI, PF, gratuity, pension, maternity benefit and other benefits dependent upon notification by central and state governments. In fact, the Code makes the workers responsible for their own social security relieving the employers of the same. This code also excludes a huge number of workers from being covered under social security and reduces employer's liability towards the social security funds such as ESI and PF.

The Occupational Safety, Health and Working Condition Code is probably the most elaborate one in diluting existing provisions of occupational safety. The code not only dilutes the provision of defining hazardous work, but also excludes around 80 percent of the workforce from the purview of the codes. This code enables the employer to refuse proper working conditions to its own workforce to such an extent that the employer is now being relieved of the responsibility of providing mandatory creche.

In totality, the four codes, if implemented, will give a free hand to the employers and corporates to exploit workers by denying proper wages, social security and dignified working conditions. The workers and farmers of the country have time and again demanded withdrawal of the

four disastrous Codes.

Ensure Minimum Wages at the Rate of Rs 35,000 per month: The union government has not fulfilled its mandate to revise minimum wages prevailing in the country for more than five years as mandated by the law. Given the present situation of standard of living of Indian workers as well as of reducing access to health and education, the basic rate of minimum wages must be increased to Rs 35,000 per month. All workers including scheme, platform, domestic and other informal workers must be brought under the purview of minimum wages.

Restore the Old Pension Scheme: In 2004, the BJP led government withdrew the pension scheme that ensures old age pension at the rate of 50 percent of last drawn salary. Under the New Pension Scheme, the possibility of a secured pension after retirement has been done away with. The NPS not only makes old age pension vulnerable to market fluctuations, but also provides only a pittance in the name of pension which is much lesser than the pension under the Old Pension Scheme (OPS). Right to a dignified and secured future of Indian workers must be the basis of policy making and not corporate profit mongering. The OPS must be brought back for every salaried person. For all other workers, including workers under EPS 95, a monthly pension at the minimum rate of Rs 10,000 per month linked with DA must be ensured.

Health Insurance and Provident Fund for All Worker: Access to health insurance guaranteed by the government like the ESI must be made accessible to all workers including workers in the unorganised and informal sector. Likewise, the benefits of PF, the retirement benefit, shall also be made available to all workers including unorganised and informal workers.

Recognise Dignified Employment as Fundamental Right :

Employment with dignified wages, working conditions and social security must be recognised as a fundamental right of every Indian citizen in the working age population. An Urban Employment Guarantee Act must be enacted and the scope of MNREGA must be expanded to 200 days per year with wages of Rs. 600 per day. The government must not be allowed to ignore the serious situation of unemployment in the country.

Stop Demolitions, the Recognise Right to Housing:

Dignified proper housing for everyone must be guaranteed. The new government must prohibit demolition of houses without proper rehabilitation in nearby areas. Proper accommodation must be provided for every working person near the area of their present residence or work.

Roll Back National Monetisation Pipeline, Stop Selling Out Public Sector Undertakings:

The last 10 years of Narendra Modi led union government can definitely be identified as a regime of privatisation of the country's infrastructure and public sector undertakings which we built over decades to become a self reliant, independent country. The Modi government has introduced a scheme of National Monetisation Pipeline (NMP) which is essentially a design to sell out the country's major infrastructure to private corporate companies. Railways, defense, roads and power sector comprises 66% of the total monetisation scheme. It is well known that these sectors generate the largest employment in the country. The other sectors designated by the government to be handed over to private hands are telecom, aviation, ports, natural gas, petroleum product, warehouses and stadiums. By selling out these major sectors that have been the source of a large number of employment, the Modi government is not only planning to destroy these

sectors for facilitating private profit mongering, but also ensure that they no longer remain a source of jobs that the youth of India aspire for. We are already seeing massive unrest among the youth against non-fulfillment of posts in railways and other government sectors.

Along with NMP, the plan of disinvestment through which the government has announced to withdraw public investment from PSUs and open up Public Sector Undertakings (PSU) for purchase by corporates. This reckless act of privatisation is destined to cause a havoc in the lives of youths by denying them a scope for any dignified employment. The Adani Group, a well known favourite of the present regime, is offered relaxation in all rules to handover coal production in the country.

The National Monetisation Pipeline and proposal of Disinvestment must be rolled back. The proposal of Foreign Direct Investment in all sectors including defence must be rolled back. The government must be held accountable for maintaining the country's major production and infrastructural resources. Future of the country's economic well being and opportunities of dignified employment must not be compromised for the sake of profit mongering corporates.

Recognise Scheme Workers, Domestic Workers and Platform Workers as "Workers" with Associated Benefits:

More than one crore scheme workers are running major schemes of the government for primary health, education, childcare and nutrition. Yet, these workers are denied any legal rights and are not even recognised as "workers" by the union government despite street protests throughout the country by millions of scheme workers. Similarly, domestic and platform workers are also denied any legal right. While the government continues to propagate that these

workers can be included under social security schemes in the new codes, the reality is that no employer-employee relation has been recognised and the government continues to deny their basic rights such as minimum wages, health insurance and social security. The scheme workers must be recognised as government employees and their rights including wages and other benefits must be guaranteed on par with government employees. Right to minimum wages, ESI, PF, pension and other benefits must be recognised for domestic workers and platform workers as well.

Fulfil All Vacant Government Positions, Halt Contractualisation: Around 30 lakh government positions are lying vacant as per latest reports. In the last ten years, the Modi government has systematically destroyed the employment in various ways, including surrender of posts, unfilling vacancies and by delaying any recruitment. Rampant corruption and paper leaks in recruitment exams have also become a normal in the present regime. Rather than filling vacant positions, the present government has introduced rampant and indiscriminate contractualisation, even in such an important department like army where the national security is the most important concern. Agnipath scheme is not an exemption but a rule. Fixed term employment is another form of creating insecure jobs with hire and fire as a norm. This trend must be reversed. All vacant government positions must be filled immediately and all contractual workers must be regularised. The ratio of permanent and irregular workforce in any department or industry shall be fixed.

Indian Workers Being Exiled to War-torn Countries

Recently, several reports appear detailing of usage of Indian Labour in the war. The workers are being exported to war-torn countries

like Israel in the name of employment opportunities through agreements between governments. The working class should oppose all such attempts by the Modi-led BJP government.

Revoke UAPA, Stop Criminalising Workers

The Modi led BJP government is indiscriminately and brutally throttling all voices of democracy. New Labour Codes also allow using black laws like UAPA and new criminal laws against the working class. Some such attempt to jail drivers for 7 years confronted a massive strike and resistance which ultimately forced the government to put the section on hold. One does not know if it is only until elections. Some workers in reliance power company in Mumbai were put behind bars under UAPA. New criminal laws are bound to be invoked against toiling masses in the coming days. The government should be halted from such brutal usage of black laws including UAPA and new criminal laws.

Punish Perpetrators of Communal Violence and Hate Mongering: We have seen in the last ten years how hate speeches targeting Muslims and subsequent communal violence have rocked different parts of the country. In most of the cases, the perpetrators are given freehand to spread communal venom. State institutions have remained mute spectators, and on several occasions become protectors of the hate mongers and rioters. The state is playing the politics of hate. A Government that has unleashed a policy regime to take away hard earned rights of workers, has been consistently trying to create division among the working population in the name of their religion, caste, food choices and festivals. The state must stop protecting communal rioters and acts against those who spew communal venom and spread rumours creating communal hatred.

Let the Lok Sabha Election, 2024 become an opportunity to claim the rights of workers and to hold the betrayers of people accountable.

Save the Democracy! Save the Constitution! Save the Workers!

Strengthen the left and democratic voice in the Lok Sabha elections 2024! Defeat the Modi led BJP Government!

Ladakh's Fight is Our Fight

▲ **INDRESH MAIKHURI**

Ladakh, nested high in the freezing Himalayas, has been facing a lot of heat for a while. Climate change is warming the entire earth and it is affecting Ladakh too. In addition, there is growing political heat. The tribal identity of Ladakh is facing a severe threat under the current political circumstances. The policies and decisions that are adversely affecting Ladakh are being made unilaterally and elsewhere; the people of Ladakh have little scope to participate in the decision-making and planning process.

In 2019, the union government under Narendra Modi abolished Article 370 of the Constitution, which had given special status to Jammu and Kashmir. Furthering the politics of polarization and minority hatred was the sole purpose behind the move. At that time, prominent activists of Ladakh like Sonam Wangchuk were under the illusion that the abolition of Article 370 could open the way for Ladakh's betterment by ending the decades-long neglect. Today it is clear that the abrogation of Article 370 has not only destroyed Jammu and Kashmir's autonomy and statehood, but it has also laid the foundation for Ladakh's destruction.

The residents of Ladakh are now fighting an uphill battle to save their identity and their culture, and to protect the delicate ecology of this region from tourists and resource-sharks. The union governments "integration" plan has led to an unprecedented tourist influx. During the tourist season, the local people are getting outnumbered by visitors. Large quantities of land have been taken over to build military infrastructure. That has angered people.

The union government is all set to systematically exploit the natural resources in this area. There are plans to establish more than seven hydropower projects. Many industrial groups have shown interest in mining minerals like borax, gold, granite, chalk, and marble. Preparations are underway to clear 157 hectares of forest land for the installation of power transmission lines. The residents of Ladakh are realizing that this kind of development will benefit only a few industrialists who have no connection with the region, its culture and ecology. It will spell disaster for this area and its people.

Renowned activist Sonam Wangchuk fasted for 21 days under the open sky in the bitter cold from March 26, in order to draw attention to the impending disaster, and to voice the demands of Ladakh. Wangchuk and other protesters in Ladakh also allege that Chinese encroachment is continuing unabated in Ladakh. They are complaining that nomadic pastoralists are losing their prime pasture land to heavy industrial factories in the south and to Chinese encroachment in the north.

A protest march till Changthang on the China border was called on 7 April, in order to draw attention to Chinese encroachment. The Ladakh administration deployed heavy police and security forces in the area, imposed Section 144 and disrupted internet services, to prevent the march from taking place.

Such insensitive and authoritarian strategies of the administration compelled the Leh apex body (LAB) leaders, who led the movement along with the Kargil Democratic Alliance, to postpone the march. While announcing the postponement, they said that the government had turned the area into a war zone. “This government is behaving like a mad elephant, completely unconcerned with the security of the nation, the sentiments of the people and their problems”, the LAB leaders remarked.

The most important demands of the Ladakh movement are autonomy for Ladakh, status of a separate state, and inclusion of Ladakh in the Sixth Schedule of the Constitution.

The people of Ladakh are fighting to protect their democratic rights and the nature, environment and ecology of the region. But apart from undertaking vague and empty talks with them, the Modi government is not ready to grant any concessions to the people of Ladakh. That is why Sonam Wangchuk has asked what right the government has to call India the mother of democracy when it has willfully abrogated Ladakh’s democratic rights and is keeping it under the control of bureaucrats from Delhi? Isn’t the government behaving like the stepmother of democracy, especially in the case of Ladakh, Wangchuk asks.

Ladakh’s fight against the capitalist predatory model of development is a fight to save not only the Himalayas – from Ladakh to Joshimath. It is part of the fight to save the entire country from the havoc wrought by this model; it is a fight to protect nature, environment and ecology of the whole country. Their struggle is an integral part of India’s struggle to defeat fascism, and to save and strengthen democracy. ■

The Inequality Question

▲ MAITREYI KRISHNAN & AKASH BHATTACHARYA

The Prime Minister Narendra Modi, in a recent speech, suggested that the politics of wealth distribution will transfer wealth away from Hindus to Muslims. The majoritarian theme and language used in his speech has already become a major public issue. Here we note that his attempt to deflect the burning question of inequality shows how deep the question is and how reluctant the current government is to answer it. In this article, we share short summaries of two major reports published in the last one year. These reports recount how the current government is squarely responsible for increasing inequality in India.

OXFAM REPORT, 2023

Oxfam India’s “Survival of the Richest: The India Supplement” revealed a truth that we knew all along – that neo-liberal economic policy, being rabidly followed by the BJP Government at the Centre, has drastically increased inequality and widened the gap between the rich and the economically deprived classes. It reveals the way in which the taxation policy has resulted in the economically deprived classes effectively subsidizing the rich and also the impact of the inequality.

Below are some of the key findings of the Report.

The inequality that has grown:

1. The top 30% own more than 90% of the total wealth. The wealthiest 10% own more than 72% of the total wealth, the top 5% own nearly 62% of the total wealth, and the top 1% own nearly 40.6% of the total wealth in India. In contrast, the bottom 50% of the population (700 million) has around 3% of total wealth.
2. Since the pandemic begun and till Nov 2022, billionaires in India have seen their wealth increase by 121%, or INR 3608 Crore per day in real terms (Around INR 2.5 crore every minute).
3. In comparison, following the pandemic in 2019, the bottom 50% of the population has continued to see their wealth reduce. By 2020, their income share was estimated to have fallen to only 13% of the national income and they have less than 3% of the total wealth.

Impact of India’s Taxation Policy:

(a) Reduction in Corporate Taxes:

1. In 2019, the Central Government reduced the corporate tax slabs from 30% to 22%, with newly incorporated companies paying a lower percentage of 15%.
2. These tax cuts resulted in corporate tax collections declining by approximately 16% in their first year and resulted in a total loss of INR 1.84 lakh crore. Corporate tax collections were 82% of the collections in 2019-20 and 68% of the collections in 2018-19.
3. In 2020-21, the projected revenue foregone by the government in the form of incentives and tax exemptions to corporates is INR 1,03,285.54 crore.
4. Consequently, the burden of taxation has shifted away from the

corporates towards the individual income taxpayer.

(b) Increase in Indirect Taxation:

1. To increase revenue, the Union Government adopted a policy of hiking the GST and excise duties on diesel and petrol while simultaneously cutting down on exemptions.

2. Since 2020-21, the share of indirect taxes in the state exchequer has risen by 50%.

3. Since the implementation of GST, the share of direct taxes out of the total gross tax revenue receipt declined by 5% by 2020-21. Similarly, revenue from corporate taxes as a percentage of gross tax revenue declined by 8%. Under the GST regime, there is a decline in the proportion of corporate taxes in the total revenues of the government.

4. The bottom 50% of the population at an All-India level pays six times more on indirect taxation as a percentage of income compared to top 10%.

5. GST: Of the total taxes collected these food and non-food items, 64.3% of the total tax is coming from the bottom 50%. A little less than two-third of the total GST is coming from the bottom 50%, one-third from middle 40% and only 3-4% from the top 10%.

6. Simultaneously, increase in excise duties on diesel and petrol when the price of oil barrels fell to record lows (INR 1,722 a barrel in April 2020). Between 2014-15 and 2021-22, the excise duties on petrol increased by 194%, while the excise duties on diesel were hiked by 512%.

1. In October 2021, PRS Legislative Research reported that taxes made up 54% of the price of petrol (of which 31% were central excise duties and



23% were States' Sales Tax/VAT). For diesel, taxes comprised 49% of the retail price (of which 34% were central excise duties and 15% were States' Sales Tax/VAT).

7. While income tax is based on the income they earn, extracting more from individuals with higher income, an indirect tax like GST and excise of diesel and petrol would tax all individuals the same amount, irrespective of their income. In this way, a person with a lower income would end up paying more as a percentage of their income.

8. Of the Total GST collected,

1. 64.3% of the total GST is from the Bottom 50%, i.e., almost 2/3 of the total GST is coming from the bottom 50%

2. 1/3 from middle 40% and

3. Only three to four % from the top 10%.

9. The poor pay a larger part of their income towards taxes than the rich.

(i) The bottom 50% spends 6.7% of their income on taxes for food and non-food items.

(ii) Middle 40% spends half of that at 3.3% of their income on food and non-food items.

(iii) The top 10% wealth group spends a mere 0.4% of their income on food and non-food items.

(iv) The bottom 50% of the population at an All-India level pays six times more on indirect taxation as a percentage of income compared to top 10%.

The failure to tax rich people and corporations fairly is not only a missed opportunity to reduce inequality – it actually worsens it, as governments must resort to taxing the rest of the society more, or cut spending on health, education and other public services, and social protection that support the reduction of inequality. Heavy reliance on consumption taxes like VAT increases inequality and is regressive in nature because poor people pay a larger share of their incomes. Inequality also has a massive negative impact on basics such as food, health and education – all necessary civic amenities in which the government expenditure has been declining.

THE INDIA EMPLOYMENT REPORT, 2024

The India Employment Report 2024 released by the Institute for Human Development and International Labour Organization on March 26, presented a gloomy picture of the Indian economy. The report has flagged concerns about poor employment conditions: the slow transition to non-farm employment has reversed; women largely account

for the increase in self-employment and unpaid family work; youth employment is of poorer quality than employment for adults; wages and earnings are stagnant or declining.

The report uses the 'employment condition index' to understand the economy. The index is based on seven labour market outcome indicators: (i) percentage of workers employed in regular formal work; (ii) percentage of casual labourers; (iii) percentage of self-employed workers below the poverty line; (iv) work participation rate; (v) average monthly earnings of casual labourers; (vi) unemployment rate of secondary and above-educated youth; (vii) youth not in employment and education or training.

The report has focused on almost two decades: 2000 to 2022. The report brutally exposes the current government's claim of having ensured all-round development and generated millions of jobs.

Employment Quality

Informal employment has risen — around half the jobs in the formal sector are of an informal nature. Self-employment and unpaid family work has also increased, especially for women. Almost 82% of the workforce is engaged in the informal sector, and nearly 90% is informally employed, the report said. Self-employment remains the primary source of employment — 55.8% in 2022. Casual and regular employment accounted for 22.7% and 21.5% respectively.

The share of self-employment remained almost stable around 52% between 2000 and 2019, while regular employment increased by almost 10 percentage points, to 23.8% from 14.2%. This is reversed by 2022, with self-employment increasing to 55.8%, while the share of regular employment declined to 21.5%. Casual employment consistently declined to 22.7% in 2022 from 33.3% in 2000.

Participation of Women

The female labour force participation rate (LFPR) in India remains among the world's lowest. Female LFPR declined by 14.4 percentage points (compared to 8.1 percentage points for males) between 2000 and 2019. The trend reversed thereafter with female LFPR rising by 8.3 percentage points (compared to 1.7 percentage points for male LFPR) between 2019 and 2022.

There is a considerable gender gap — women's LFPR (32.8%) in 2022 was 2.3 times lower than men's (77.2%). India's low LFPR is largely attributed to the low female LFPR, which was much lower than the world average of 47.3% in 2022, but higher than the South Asian average of 24.8%, as per ILO data.

As on 2022, 48.4% women are not in employment, education, or training. This is nearly five times that of men (9.8%).

Structural Transformation

There has been a reversal of the slow transition towards non-farm employment after 2018-19. The share of agriculture in total employment fell to around 42% in 2019 from 60% in 2000.

This shift was largely absorbed by construction and services, the share of which in total employment increased to 32% in 2019 from 23% in 2000. The share of manufacturing in employment has remained almost stagnant at 12-14%.

However, since 2018-19, this slow transition has stagnated or reversed with the rise in the share of agricultural employment.

Youth Employment

Youth employment and underemployment increased between 2000 and 2019 but declined during the pandemic years. However,

unemployment among youths, especially those with secondary-level or higher education, has intensified over time.

In 2022, the share of unemployed youths in the total unemployed population was 82.9%. The share of educated youths among all unemployed people also increased to 65.7% in 2022 from 54.2% in 2000.

The unemployment rate among youths was six times greater for those who had completed secondary education or higher (18.4%) and nine times higher for graduates (29.1%) than for persons who could not read or write (3.4%) in 2022. This was higher among educated young women (21.4%) than men (17.5%), especially among female graduates (34.5%), compared to men (26.4%).

The unemployment rate among educated youths grew to 30.8% in 2019 from 23.9% in 2000, but fell to 18.4% in 2022. Even though there has been a rise in youth employment recently, the quality of work remains a concern, especially for qualified young workers.

Forty percent of technically qualified youth engaged in vocations which do not correspond to their qualifications. Highly skilled youth are taking up blue collar jobs. At an aggregate level only 4% of youth have access to formal vocational training. In 2005, only 11.61% of youth had access to vocational training. That increased to a mere 15.62% in 2022. Among them only 3.6% were OBCs, 3.66% were SCs, and 1.79% STs. The education-employment gap gives a lie to the government's claim of having bridged this gap through the National Education Policy (NEP 2020).

The Lies of the Present Government

Employment grew at only 1.6% annually between 2000 and 2012. After 2012, it declined to 0.01%. It increased after 2019, but mainly in agriculture. The share of manufacturing in

employment was stagnant throughout the Modi years, at around 12% to 14% per year. This indicates the failure of Make in India and other flagship employment generation schemes. During these years, employment in manufacturing increased by only 1.7% annually (2000 to 2019) and then by 3.5% between 2019 and 2022. This is a far cry from the government's claim of generating lakhs of manufacturing jobs every year.

Two-thirds of incremental employment after 2019 comprised self-employed workers, among whom unpaid women family workers predominate. Nearly 82% of the workforce engages in the informal sector, and nearly 90% is informally employed. A large number of youths are employed in the gig and platform economy where jobs are insecure, poorly paid and the labor regime is very oppressive and controlled by algorithmic functions.

As much as 62% of the unskilled agriculture workers and 70% of such workers in the construction sector at the all-India level did not receive the prescribed minimum wage in 2022. A large proportion of regular workers (40.8%) and casual workers (51.9%) did not receive the average daily minimum wage prescribed for unskilled workers.

All this is proof of low-quality employment, characterized by poor wages, job insecurity, lack of social security and workplace rights. The way the report draws attention not only to unemployment but also to the poor quality of employment makes it highly significant.

While unemployment is a potent issue in Indian politics, the quality of employment still remains somewhat as a hidden problem, as does inequality as a political question on the whole, encompassing inequalities of caste, class and gender and their impact on all spheres of life. The Prime Minister's anger at the slightest hint of an effective politics of quality shows the power that this has to throw up an alternative, democratic political discourse. ■

CPIML files Complaint with ECI against PM Modi for Communal and Hate-filled Speech in Rajasthan's Banswara

CPI(ML) Liberation filed a complaint with the Election Commission of India against Prime Minister Narendra Modi for gross violation of Section 123(3A) of RPA and Model Code of Conduct (MCC) and promoting enmity and hatred on grounds of religion.

In this widely reported speech, Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Rajasthan's Banswara on April 21, 2024 while referring to the Congress Manifesto has engaged in blatant lies, crudity and communal dog-whistling against the Muslim community, which is violative of the Representation of People's Act, 1951 and the Model Code of Conduct for the elections.

In this speech, Modi has insinuated that the Congress intends to survey, appropriate and distribute properties including gold and silver of common citizens to the members of the Muslims community.

The speech by Prime Minister Narendra Modi at Banswara, Rajasthan on 21st April 2024 violates section 123(3A) of the Representation of the People Act, 1951 that clearly prohibits the promotion of, or attempt to promote, feelings of enmity or hatred between different classes of the citizens of India on grounds of religion, race, caste, community, or language, by a candidate or his agent or any other person with the consent of a candidate or his election agent for the furtherance of the prospects of the election of that candidate or for prejudicially affecting the election of any candidate. It is also in blatant violation of the Model Code of Conduct and the "Advisory to political parties on plummeting level of public discourse during campaigning" dated 1st March 2024.

This speech of Prime Minister Narendra Modi follows up on his various speeches (speech on 6th April at Ajmer, Rajasthan, 7th April at Nawada, Bihar, speech on 9th April at Pilibhit, Uttar Pradesh) where he has repeatedly made references to the Ram temple at Ayodhya and the Hindu community. We understand that there are several complaints pending with the ECI in regard to these speeches.

Prime Minister Narendra Modi has resorted to such a speech, unbecoming the position he holds as the Prime Minister. CPI(ML) Liberation urged the Election Commission of India to take strict action against PM Narendra Modi to protect any possibility of free and fair elections. The party also urged the ECI to implement Model Code of Conduct in a strict manner and take strict action against Narendra Modi for this disgraceful speech which is highly venomous, communal and hate-filled in nature, aimed at promoting enmity between the citizens of India on grounds of religion, and seeks to vitiate the poll atmosphere and spread hatred against the Muslim community.

Full text of letter can be accessed is available at www.cpi.ml.net ■

AILAJ Condemns ‘Lawyers’ Group’ Statement on Judicial Independence

AILAJ in a statement issued on March 31 condemned the letter issued by a “Lawyers’ Group”, and its immediate endorsement by Prime Minister Modi on the heels of the electoral bonds judgment, as a thinly veiled attack on the Chief Justice of India and the very idea of judicial independence.

A Lawyers’ Group including several lawyers who openly identify with the BJP and the Sangh Parivar, had issued a letter to the Chief Justice of India on 26.03.2024, cautioning about what they call a “vested interest group” who they allege is trying to “pressure the judiciary, influence judicial process and defame our courts on the basis of frivolous logic and state political agendas”. Within hours, Prime Minister Modi issued a tweet attacking the Congress for trying to “browbeat and bully others” and aiming for a “committed judiciary”. Unsurprisingly also came the outpouring of support

from the online right-wing ecosystem.

AILAJ statement noted that, bereft of any particulars or details, this “letter” is an exercise in obfuscation and misdirection. It is particularly telling for its timing. It comes on the heels of certain judicial actions that have clearly ruffled the executive’s feathers – the electoral bond judgment declaring the scheme unconstitutional and directing SBI to disclose the names of donors (which the Modi government desperately tried to avoid), the stay on the Fact Checking Unit under the IT Rules 2021, the setting aside of the Office Memorandum of the Environment Ministry diluting environmental norms in regard to linear projects and the judgment holding that it is not a crime to criticise the decision of Modi government to abrogate Article 370 and withdraw special status to Jammu & Kashmir. Moreover, it comes at a time when the Supreme Court is slated to hear

crucial cases concerning the use of EVMs, constitutionality of CAA and the arrest of Opposition leaders and political activists.

It is unsurprising that the “Lawyers’ Group” maintain stoic silence at this concerted assault on the judiciary by the Modi government. unsurprising since they are part of a ploy to unsettle the highest judiciary from holding the Modi government accountable to the Constitution in any manner whatsoever.

This letter, bereft of any semblance of constitutional morality, is an open declaration by this “Lawyers Group” of their allegiance to the Modi government, and their disregard for its attack on the Constitution and the judiciary.

AILAJ condemns this thinly veiled threat to the judiciary and the blatant effort to divide the legal fraternity, and calls on all members of the legal fraternity to unite against any attacks on judicial independence and the Constitution. ■

Saffronisation of Sainik Schools

The CPIML expresses deep concerns over recent reports which state that Sainik Schools across the country will be handed over to private players, a majority of whom belong to the BJP-RSS and other Hindu Supremacist organisations. Sainik Schools, which is run under the Ministry of Defence, play a vital role in the recruitment process in armed forces.

According to the The Reporters’ Collective, between 2022 and 2023 the Centre awarded 40 Sainik School agreements to educational institutes linked with the Rashtriya Swayamsevak Sangh, Hindutva organisations and leaders of the Bharatiya Janata Party or its allies.

The report further notes that Nasik’s Bhonsala Military School, which was established in 1937 by the Hindu right-wing ideologue and leader of Hindu Mahasabha BS Moonje has been approved to operate as Sainik School.

Students across sections, including marginalized communities, apply for admissions to these schools in the hope of getting quality education. Students from rural and oppressed communities are given a chance to excel academically. A significant section of students from Sainik School joins various branches of armed forces.

Privatisation and communalisation of these schools, not only impacts the

quality and access to affordable education but also is a grave threat to secular character of our armed forces. Clearly the move is part of the Modi-RSS game plan to destroy India’s constitutional ethos. Moreover, the allotment of Sainik schools under PPP model to people part of close to ruling BJP regime points to a political corruption and a system of quid pro quo benefiting the BJP and its key people.

CPIML condemns the move by Modi regime to run Sainik Schools in PPP model and handing them over to BJP-RSS functionaries. Ministry of Defence must immediately roll back the PPP model imposed on Sainik Schools.

Red Wave in JNU Students Elections, Students Cast Decisive Mandate



Dhananjay of AISA elected JNUSU President

The United Left Panel has emerged victorious in the JNUSU Elections held after a gap of four years on March 22. The results are a decisive mandate against the right-wing ABVP and the politics of communalism and hatred.

The President, Dhananjay of AISA, won with a total of 2,598 votes in his favour, and a lead of 922 votes. Avijit Ghosh of SFI won the post of vice president securing 2409 votes and for the post Joint Secretary, Md Sajid of AISF won with 2574. Meanwhile, Priyanshi Arya of BAPSA was elected as General Secretary securing 2887 votes. After the last-minute cancellation of candidature of left panel candidate Swati Singh of DSF for the post of Joint Secretary, the United Left issued the call to support Priyanshi to ensure 'Not an Inch to ABVP'.

At a time when the BJP government along with the ABVP had been constantly attempting to destroy JNU's democratic ethos and idea of inclusive education, the result of JNUSU elections have reverberated across the country. The election witnessed highest voter turnout of 73% with 5,656 students participating in the voting process.

CPIML's Anti-Caste Struggle Inspired Me: Dhananjay

Dhananjay joined AISA in 2014 when the struggle against Four-Year Undergraduate Programme (FYUP) was undertaken in University of Delhi. At present, he is pursuing a PhD from the School of Arts and Aesthetics.

He has been part of multiple struggles led by AISA, starting from FYUP and 'red bus' pass, to 'Re-Open JNU' protest, 'Unlock JNU' movement, and all other student-led struggles. During the lockdown, he and other AISA activists stood with the JNU workers' struggle for their rights. From raising his voice for the safe working conditions of sanitation workers and against retrenchment of workers of contractual under the garb of a lockdown, he took part in AISA's initiative of covid helpdesk to reach out to the migrant workers, slum residents and other informal workers with necessary relief materials, such as ration, safety gear, oxygen cylinder and medicines.

Dhananjay is also a cultural activist who was part of 'Sangwari', a Delhi-based cultural troupe, which performed across the country. He is a street theatre artist who performed for the protesting DTC workers, in

solidarity with the Pricol workers of Tamil Nadu, and in the working-class areas across Delhi.

Student's Reply to Modi Regime's Attack on Education and Democracy

Dhananjay said in his speech during the Presidential Debate, this was a referendum on the Modi Government and the election was being fought for the farmers fighting against the anti-farm laws, the workers who are fighting for their rights, the Dalits who are fighting for dignity, the students fighting for affordable and equal education, and the youth fighting for dignified employment! He said, "I stand here as a voice of the Dalit landless workers of southern Bihar who bravely fought for their land-economic rights and social dignity, who faced massacres by the feudal-upper caste army, Ranveer Sena, and, yet, bravely continued their fight against feudal dominance. I stand here as a voice for Comrade Manoj Manzil, a popular Dalit youth leader of CPIML, who has been imprisoned by the feudal-fascist government in Bihar. I stand here to tell today's fascist regime that your jails will not be enough to suppress our voices. We will speak and fight for justice."

Dhananjay, in this victory address said that, "Despite all attempts by the RSS-ABVP to clamp down and corrode on the democratic space of JNU and the continued incarceration of JNU students like Sharjeel Imam, Umar Khalid, Anirban Bhattacharya and others branding them as 'Anti-nationals', JNU has stood tall amongst all adversities. Even after defeat, ABVP is attempting to portray JNU community as 'anti-national' and spread communal polarisation through screening of movies like 'Bastar: The Naxal Story' and 'JNU: Jahangir National University.' But such regressive forces will fail in their conspiracy. ■

Ambedkar Jayanti: Defeat the BJP to Save Democracy and Constitution

Paying tribute to Babasaheb Ambedkar on his death his birth anniversary on April 14, a public meeting organised by INDIA Alliance in Charpokhari block in Arrah's Agiaon. Before the meeting, a life-size statue of Ambedkar was unveiled by CPIML General Secretary Dipankar and other leaders at Maulabagh welfare hostel in Ara. Several ex-students and current students of the hostel joined to fulfill their long-awaited dream of having an Ambedkar statue in the hostel campus.

A march to Ramna Maidan was also organised to garland the main Ambedkar statue in town. Many leaders of the INDIA bloc, including CPIML Bihar state secretary Kunal, CPIML candidate from Arrah parliamentary constituency Sudama Prasad, Agiaon Assembly by-election candidate Shivprakash Ranjan, RJD leaders Satyanarayan Yadav, Ramchandra Singh, Lalan Singh, Manu Yadav, Chandrama Ram, Vimal Yadav and other leaders.

Addressing the public meeting, Dipankar Bhattacharya said that in today's meeting our elected MLA from Agiaon Comrade Manoj Manzil should have been among us, but feudal BJP forces have put him behind the jail in a fabricated case. These forces fear people's assertion and that is why they hatched the conspiracy. But people of Arrah will give a befitting reply to these forces, who want to change the constitution and constitutional right Ambedkar had given to us.

Comrade Dipankar added that today in the face of India's most decisive electoral battle where the very future of India's constitutional democracy is at stake we need to draw every strength and inspiration from the radical legacy of Ambedkar. We must remember that Babasaheb Ambedkar

not only gave us the Constitution and reservation, he also warned us about the ominous implications of bhakti in politics, which he called a sure recipe for dictatorship, and the great calamity that would hit us if Hindu Rashtra were to become a fact. While commemorating the birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, let us remember his insightful words and work with all our might to save the Constitution and the democratic future of India.

Appealing to ensure victory to Sudama Prasad and Shivprakash Ranjan, Comrade Dipankar said that INDIA alliance will work hard to protect the Constitution and democracy in the country.

CPIML had organised program to pay tributes to Babasaheb Ambedkar in Karakat, Nalanda and other areas in Bihar, where people resolved to carry forward the dreams of Ambedkar and protect the constitution and democracy.

In Jharkhand, a program organized at Block Headquarters, Birni on the occasion of Ambedkar Jayanti, which was addressed by Comrade Vinod Singh, CPIML MLA from Bagodar and candidate from Koderma Lok Sabha. Com. Vinod said that today this BJP regime wants to destroy the principles and thoughts of Babasaheb in the name of 'Amrit Kaal'. The BJP-Sangh brigade is on a mission to destroy the secular and democratic structure of India! But people of this country will not allow this and in the Lok Sabha elections, these fascist forces of hate and tyranny will be completely defeated.

Dr. BR Ambedkar's anniversary was commemorated in all districts in Uttar Pradesh. In Lucknow floral tributes were offered on his statue in front of Charbagh Railway station and a pledge was taken to build an India of his dreams. In Urai, Galla Mandi Palledar Union organised a

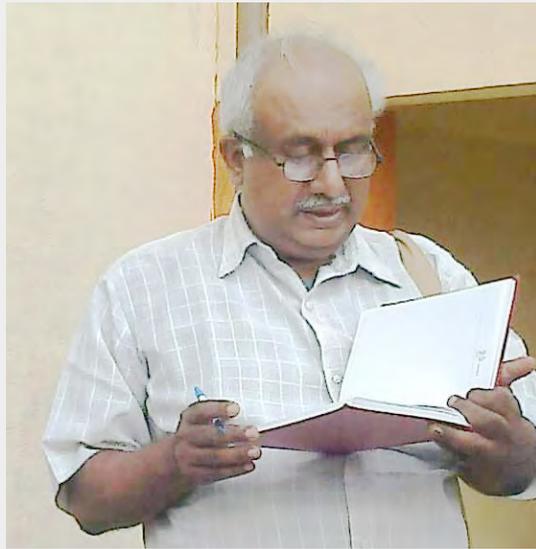
convention which was addressed by CPIML Jalaun district secretary Rajiv Kushwaha.

In Benaras, AIPWA Young Girls organised a cultural programme and presented a play on the life of Dr. Ambedkar. All those present took pledge to defend the Constitution of India. The event was inaugurated by AIPWA leader Vibha Vahi. Comrade VK Singh addressed the gathering and called for organised efforts to defend the Constitution and the legacy of Dr. Ambedkar. Prof. Manish Malaviya, Smita, Sutapa, Kusum and many others also spoke. AISA leader Chanda Yadav, RYA's Soni, Domestic workers' Union leader Dhanshila and Vimla were also present. The programme was conducted by Naina and Karina.

In Balia, CPIML activists organised an event on the eve of Dr. Ambedkar's anniversary where 133 candles were lit and a pledge was taken to carry forward his legacy by defeating the fascist forces trying to attack the constitution.

In Bangalore, AICCTU and CPIML activists organised Ambedkar Jayanti in Anandapuram, Chinnappa garden, KR Puram, Peenya industrial area and St. Philomena Hospital. In Koppal, powrakarmikas (sanitation workers) and members of AICCTU paid tributes to Ambedkar by resolving to carry forward struggles for equality and dignity and protect the constitution. Ambedkar Jayanti programs were also held in Kodagu and districts.

In West Bengal, Ambedkar's 133rd birth anniversary was celebrated at the 24 Parganas district party office and a march was carried out calling for the defeat of BJP to save the constitution. In Delhi, AICCTU hospital union comrades at the Mehrauli T.B. Hospital organised a program to pay homage to Babasaheb Ambedkar. ■



Red Salutes to Comrade Doctor Lakshminarayana!

Eminent human rights and anti-caste campaigner and long-standing leader of the CPI(ML) in Karnataka, Dr. V Lakshminarayana breathed his last around 11.30 pm in Mysore on 22nd April 2024. Comrade Lakshmi was a dermatologist by profession.

Comrade Lakshmi's political journey began in the wake of the Naxalbari peasant uprising when its reverberations were felt in Karnataka. A veteran of the Marxist-Leninist movement in Karnataka, Comrade Lakshminarayana was a staunch Marxist champion of civil liberties and the anti-caste stream of social justice. He was closely involved with the PUCL, Indian People's Front, Indian Institute of Marxist Studies and the All India People's Forum.

He was regularly running a Friday Forum in Mysore which had several brainstorming sessions on various theoretical ideological issues confronting the communist and democratic movement in the country. He was passionate about disseminating Marxist ideas of social transformation and imparting Marxist education to young activists.

Along-standing member of the Karnataka State Committee of CPI(ML) Liberation, Com Lakshmi was a key member of the editorial team of Kannada Liberation, the party organ. He was a member of the Central Education Department of the party too. Comrade Lakshmi is survived by his partner and comrade-in-arms Rati Rao, a well-known champion of the women's liberation movement and President of the All India Progressive Women's Association and their son Apurva who is based in Germany. The CPI(ML) Central Committee pays respectful homage to Comrade Lakshminarayana and expresses deepest condolences to Comrade Rati Rao, all their dear and near ones and comrades and friends. ■

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